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Experiences of Black American Millennials: A Qualitative Study of Internalized and
Externalized Coping in the Face of Racial Trauma

A Dissertation presented to

The University of San Francisco

School of Nursing and Health Professions

Department of Health Professions

Clinical Psychology PsyD Program

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Psychology

By
Natalia Giles

August 25, 2023

PsyD Clinical Dissertation Signature Page

This Clinical Dissertation, written under the direction of the student's Clinical Dissertation Chair and Committee and approved by Members of the Committee, has been presented to and accepted by the faculty of the Clinical Psychology PsyD Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the student alone.

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ABSTRACT

The experiences Black Americans have faced when standing against racial trauma have impacted the Black community for generations. Though previous generations faced overt styles of racism throughout the eras of slavery and Jim Crow, the invalidation and discrimination have remained consistent within the experiences of the Black American millennial (BAM) generation. Current experiences BAMs face are a combination of both overt and covert styles of racism, which increase mental exhaustion, reduce motivation, and leave the individual psychologically defenseless. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences of BAMs in the face of racial trauma. This qualitative research study utilized thematic analysis to explore the lived experiences and narratives of BAMs through in-depth interviewing to assess the experiences of eight BAMs. The final analysis yielded four domains and 12 themes: (1) specific locations BAMS experience racial trauma: (a) school, (b) work, (c) community, (d) perpetrators; (2) the style of racism BAMs experience and strategies utilized to navigate BAMs' environment: (e) microaggressions, (f) adaptability; (3) strategies BAMs are using in the face of racial trauma: (g) internalized coping, (h) externalized coping; and (4) conflictual viewpoints have BAMS identified in the face of racial trauma: (i) community, (j) COVID-19, (k) social media platforms, and (l) protest engagement. This study provides insight on the locations BAMs identified with an increased amount of racial trauma, perpetrators that impact BAMs' experience within the various locations, internalized and externalized styles of coping, and conflictual viewpoints on salient topics that impacted BAMs' experience. Furthermore, results from this study can be utilized to inform all generations not only of the set of challenges BAMs experience but also to spark dialogue across generations that will promote collective healing and resist racial trauma.

DEDICATION

This study would not have been possible without giving all honor to God, my resilient parents, my courageous God-siblings, and the blood, sweat, and tears of my ancestors and past generations who all contributed to my eagerness to raise awareness and build capacity for the Black community to remain connected, engaged, supportive, and strong.

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persistent challenges you each set to push me to become a better, dynamic, resilient Black woman of color.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview and Identification of Problem

The impact of racial trauma on Black American millennials (BAMs) affects various contexts, including personal, generational, and cultural levels. French et al. (2019) note that BAMs have come into a new era where racism takes on the shape of an increased covert form. The election and administration of President Obama was observed to be a salient factor that helped spread the false notion that America had entered a post-racial stage. However, increases in race-based trauma continue to be caused by individuals and institutions that protect systems of racism and white supremacy in efforts to nourish the divide, thus creating inequality and injustice, in addition to denying access to well-needed resources for people of color (French et al., 2019).

Considering the traumatic effects of racism, strategies for healing and coping that correlate with biological, psychological, environmental, and cultural factors are imperative in efforts to resist oppression and barriers to individual wellness (French et al., 2019). Focusing on healing creates the opportunity for individuals to join both justice and wellness and to shift from an individual lens to more collective collaboration, allowing for individuals to feel better supported with community and social support. In addition, coping strategies help individuals identify the source of emotional injury, encourage interaction within collective resistance, and promote hope (French et al., 2019). This study was guided by a qualitative approach to investigate BAMs' experiences of race-based trauma and to evaluate what healing and coping techniques are utilized as protective factors by BAMs living in the greater San Francisco (SF) Bay Area region.

Specific Aims

1. To conduct qualitative research, involving in-depth interviews, to discover themes that emerge from BAMs' narratives who have had experiences of race-based trauma.
2. To target the various aspects of healing and coping strategies that BAMs use in the face of race-based trauma, as well as the obstacles in place that prevent them from potentially engaging in healing or coping strategies.
3. To promote and heighten awareness of issues related to implementing healing and coping strategies for BAMs.

Research Questions

1. Where are BAMs experiencing racial trauma and who are impacting their experience?
2. What strategies are BAMs using in the face of racial trauma?
3. What conflictual viewpoints have BAMs identified that have significantly impacted their experiences in the face of racial trauma?

Project-Specific Terms

Definitions used in this study were generated from various evidence-based articles. I also relied on the data generated from my participants in my qualitative study. The following terms used throughout the study are defined for the reader's understanding.

Activism refers to direct action in support of or antagonistic to one side of a controversial issue including political activism and/or environmental activism (Grayman-Simpson, 2012; Szymanski & Lewis, 2014).

Anti-Black racism refers to societal policies and practices rooted in institutions involving education, health care, and justice that reflect and perpetuate beliefs, attitudes,

prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination toward people of Black-African backgrounds (Neville et al., 2013).

Black American millennials refers to the Black-identified generation born between the years 1982–2001, although other sources cite the beginning as early as 1978 or as late as 1985 (Darby, 2022)

Coping refers to an individualistic approach to face and deal with responsibilities, problems, or difficulties (Szymanski, 2011).

Healing refers to a collectivistic approach to restore former amity through the experience of belonging within the larger community (French et al., 2019; Heilbron & Guttman, 2000).

Racial trauma refers to the mental and emotional injury caused by encounters involved with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes (Helms et al., 2010; Williams-Washington & Mills, 2018).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anti-Black Racism

Racism has affected the lives of Black-identified Americans throughout generations. According to Neville et al. (2013), racism is a multifaceted social system involving multiple entrenched, foundational structures that serve to organize society economically, politically, and socially. Current research suggests a relationship between ideological and structural racism that manifests as a collection of communal and individual practices and beliefs (Neville et al., 2013). At the micro level, racist perpetrators provoke, enact, and endorse racial conflicts including, but not limited to, verbal and physical abuse or assault (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). These practices, beliefs, and conflicts perpetuate and are perpetuated by myths of white racial superiority. For example, white supremacist myths are used to justify depriving racial minority groups' access to privileges available to white individuals, even while ignoring the individual and generational impact of that exclusion (Neville et al., 2013).

In addition, further research reveals how the dehumanizing historical and contemporary experiences of physical violence can negatively impact people of color both immediately and over the long term (Ming Liu et al., 2019). Additionally, continued exposure to dehumanizing actions and messaging adversely impacts the development of people of color, including the development of internalized racism (Ming Liu et al., 2019). Internalized racism is a harmful manifestation of how prejudiced belief systems and structures keep people of color subjugated and divided. Racism across sociopolitical contexts—including individual, institutional, and cultural levels—can be a significant source of trauma. As a result, when considering methods to effectively address the traumatic effects of racism, it is important to consider strategies for

surviving and building resilience that correlate with biological, environmental, and cultural factors (French et al., 2019).

Examples of Historical and Contemporary Anti-Black Racism

For generations, the Black community has experienced racism in various settings, including slavery and Jim Crow Laws, as well as in sectors such as healthcare, housing, law enforcement, and education.

Slavery

The first Africans to be enslaved arrived in the Americas in the early 1500s. The actual date is debatable across sources due to the quality of available data (Klein, 1978). Three hundred years later, in the year 1808, the transatlantic slave trade was deemed illegal in the United States—though it continued in other areas of the Americas until 1870 (Leary, 2017). In nearly four centuries, “between 20 to 30 million enslaved Africans were captured and transported” (Leary, 2017, p. 34). Slavery, one of the largest imports in American history, was based exclusively on the significant enforcement of the belief in racial inferiority. Between 1619–1860, Africans were labeled as “presumed” or “natural slaves” due to their skin color alone (Leary, 2017, p. 33). Africans were cataloged as “thinking property” and “rightless persons” (Leary, 2017, p. 33). In other words, Africans were deemed less than human, leading Europeans and Americans to enact, legislate, and perpetuate the further dehumanization of slavery. In one example of dehumanization made law, the founding of the American government included the 1787 Three-Fifths Compromise, officially designating that each state would count only three-fifths of the enslaved population toward its total population, thereby reducing the state’s representation in Congress. This is where the coined term, “three-fifths of a human” became a recognized label for enslaved Africans (Leary, 2017, p. 38).

Jim Crow Era

In an effort to fortify societal racial division post slavery, Southern states established Jim Crow laws. The historical period of Jim Crow is described as an authoritarian regime that planted ground rules to demonstrate and enforce a caste system and segregation which emphasized white superiority and sustained Black oppression (Wilkerson, 2020). For example, during the Jim Crow era, newspapers would read as follows: “Two men and two women were killed, and four Negroes” (Wilkerson, 2020, p. 54) Journalists would report the genders of white people but provide only race-based descriptors for Black people (Wilkerson, 2020). This newspaper example demonstrates the dehumanization of the Jim Crow era because during this time overt racism, active exclusion, and aggressive behavior were prevalent toward people of color (Pieterse & Powell, 2016). The Jim Crow era was enforced by the former confederacy and the illegal caste system of Jim Crow officially lasted nearly into the 1970s—over 100 years after the end of the Civil War (Wilkerson, 2020). Walker (2000) captured how segregation for African American children in the Southern schools between the dates of 1935-1969 were deemed inferior due to inequalities in facilities, overcrowding, and poor teaching to further dehumanize African Americans students in connection with the school system and education. As a system for defining the status of all Black-identified people and whites, Jim Crow was a system that served as the foundation of social, economic, and psychological frameworks for generations to come.

Healthcare

Healthcare is a salient area where Black individuals have reported experiences of racism; the subset of the population currently includes those who are older in age and do not trust the healthcare system. Among the historical incidents fueling Black individuals’ mistrust in healthcare is the Tuskegee Experiment, which took place between the years 1932 to 1972.

During this study, government health officials poisoned Black males with syphilis with the intention of studying the disease's progression (Alsan & Wanamaker, 2018; Brandon et al., 2005). The impact of the Tuskegee Experiment created more challenges for Black individuals to trust the medical field and to adhere to taking medication due to the fear their healthcare would be ignored and utilized as a genocidal plot. Hinton's (2020) study of Black American hypertension patients appears to further validate these findings. Evaluating participants' exposure to systemic racism, exposure to racial bias, mistrust of healthcare, and adherence to hypertension treatment, Hinton examined perceived exposure to systematic racism as a mediator between (a) recognized exposure to medical provider bias on treatment cohesion and (b) mistrust of healthcare. The study's results found that the heightened recognition of systemic racism was connected with increased mistrust and elevated perceptions of medical provider racial bias. Results also demonstrated that an increase in anticipated provider bias contributed to a decrease in treatment obedience (Hinton, 2020). The historical evidence and studies of perceived exposure to racism provide insight into how Black individuals observe and experience racism as a continuous challenge in healthcare, leading to decreased interactions with providers and a reduced likelihood to trust and adhere with physician instruction.

Law Enforcement

Centuries of negative experiences with racism in law enforcement have led Black individuals to hold a negative view of law enforcement officers. According to Brooks et al. (2016), Boston established the first American police force in 1838, and by the year 1880 police forces were settled in the majority of all United States cities. Characteristics of the police organizations included being supported by the public, having fixed rules and regulations, receiving full-time wages, and being held accountable to government authority (Brooks et al.,

2016). However, the development of police organizations originated in the southern states of the United States in 1704 and were watchpersons for slaves (Brooks et al., 2016). Characteristics of the slave patrol included running after and returning slaves to their owners, administering ways of organized terror to discourage slave revolts, and maintaining discipline for slave workers that breached any violation (Brooks et al., 2016). After the Civil War, characteristics from the slave patrol were modified in the Southern state police departments in the United States in efforts to control freed slaves. This control was carried out by enforcing Jim Crow segregation laws, which were constructed to revoke freed slaves' equal rights and means of entry to the political system (Brooks et al., 2016).

Currently, negative race-based experiences with law enforcement are still causing emotional injury amongst the Black community, ultimately contributing to Black individuals' negative point of view about the United States justice system and law enforcement officers, which have developed over many years. In one study demonstrating this negative view, Mbuba (2010) focused on associations between higher education and Black views of police officers. Participants of the study were students of color ($n = 333$), 14% composed of Black, Hispanic, Asian, and other nonwhite racial groups, enrolled at a 4-year public university. Participants were queried to determine how strongly they acknowledged, or did not acknowledge suggested statements, such as the role of police officers are important to the community and to not treat minorities justly (Mbuba, 2010). The results demonstrated that among students who achieve higher education, race was the most significant factor influencing attitudes toward law enforcement; specifically, Black students indicated the least favorable view of police officers.

Hinton (2020) analyzed how the rise of the #BlackLivesMatter movement impacted the relationship between law enforcement and Black individuals. In one analyzed study, Brooks et

al. (2016) conducted interviews with Black counselors, educators, undergraduate students, graduate students, and a law enforcement representative. The interview discussion centered on topics, such as Black males' interactions with law enforcement, strategies to prevent racist individuals from entering and sustaining careers in the police force, shoot-to-kill policies, and other issue-relevant topics. Participants largely shared the opinion that, due to poor historical and present-day treatment, Black people should be granted the right to be passionate and that passionate outrage should not be suppressed. Participants also concluded that the killing of unarmed Black men at the hands of law enforcement works against instilling trust in law enforcement (Brooks et al., 2016).

Education

Education is another area where Black individuals repeatedly recount experiences of racism. Starting with educational disparities during segregation, Black students did not receive the same academic opportunities and treatment compared to white students. Pickett (2020) stated that American school systems communicate racial messages to Black students due to identifying Black students as receivers of disciplinary actions around scholarly opportunities when compared to white students, thus perpetuating the negative stereotype that Black students are intellectually disadvantaged and prone to behavior challenges. Education continues to be considered of prominent importance for societal advancement (Harper et al., 2011). Black people are increasingly pursuing college degrees and higher education, and research demonstrates Black students have different experiences compared to white students. (Harwood et al., 2012). Harwood et al. (2012) investigated racial climate on college campuses by examining the narratives of students of color residing in predominantly white institutions' residence halls. Participants included 81 students of color, of which 36 students were Black. The students were

then put into focus groups based on three categories of racial microaggressions: microinsults, often communicated in covert behaviors, such as dismissive looks; microassaults, such as racial slurs or insults; and microinvalidations, such as minimizing or denying the recognized racist experiences (Harwood et al., 2012). Harwood et al. coded 400 occurrences of racial microaggressions of all three types, including racist jokes and comments, racist slurs used in communal spaces, and segregated areas and unfair treatment. These results provide insight into how Black students view and experience covert racism on college campuses and further, how these experiences may decrease Black students' access to the anticipated enhancements of living and learning on campus.

Racial Trauma

Many people live with the distressing biological and psychological aftereffects of trauma. Previous traumatic experiences can decrease the nervous system's capability to decipher between organic and perceived threats, ultimately resulting in a constant state of hyperarousal or hypervigilance very similar to that observed in posttraumatic stress disorder (Williams-Washington & Mills, 2018). The continuous presence of a traumatic threat negatively impacts the body and mind, resulting in severe terror, confusion, and helplessness (Williams-Washington & Mills, 2018). Chronic stress disturbs the body's ability to maintain homeostasis, resulting in allostatic load, or wear and tear on the body, and an inability to adapt and conform to reoccurring stressors (Williams-Washington & Mills, 2018).

Racial and ethnoviolent trauma can be a primary etiological factor of an adjustment or stress disorder. Expressly, racially charged incidents are traumatic, impacting survivors with an intensity comparable to that of interpersonal violence Helms et al. (2010). Similar to interpersonal violence, expressions of racism can include physical and psychological assaults

that can be overlooked if racism is not considered to be a significant cause of physical and emotional anguish (Helms et al., 2010). Race-based physical and verbal assaults and threats impact one's emotional welfare, psychological sense of self, and overall well-being.

Additionally, racially charged incidents can be perceived as trauma due to the ways privileged individuals wield racist language and actions to perpetuate the victimization of historically marginalized ethnic and racial groups, producing traumatic symptomatology that includes helplessness and fear.

Empirical data shows that, in the United States, symptoms which adhere to the aftereffects of ethnoviolence may be challenging to separate from symptoms resulting from racism due to American society's fusion of ethnicity and racial designations Helms et al. (2010). Black people experience heightened stress associated with various reactions involving intrusive thoughts, hypervigilance, depression, and anger linked with traumatic stress (Carter & Kirkinis, 2020). Danzer et al. (2016) suggested that shared suffering is what guides African Americans to identify colloquially as Black people. This resulting identity is painted through vibrant emotionality, spirituality, and a more in-depth connection to the world that is rooted in tribal Africa (Danzer et al., 2016). Williams-Washington and Mills (2018) also described that race-based discrimination creates adverse consequences to the mental and physical health of African Americans, as they firsthand or indirectly experience, demonstrate, witness, or perceive threats due to misinterpretations of their lived experience.

Examples of Historical and Contemporary Racial Trauma

Historical trauma is the cumulative emotional and psychological injury over a lifespan and across generations, which is derived from massive group experiences (Williams-Washington & Mills, 2018). African American historical trauma, specifically, is defined as the cumulative

spiritual, psychological, emotional, and cognitive distress perpetuated intergenerationally and shaped by an immense span of belittling and dehumanizing experiences originating with slavery and continuing in various forms of racism and discrimination to the present day (Williams-Washington & Mills, 2018). African American history begins with the enslavement of Africans, and the relentless violence enslaved adults and children suffered both before and after emancipation. Enslavement set the foundation for what has been a continual violent attack on Black identified individuals' minds, bodies, and spirits, resulting in a condition experienced by many Black Americans called posttraumatic slave syndrome (Leary, 2017).

Throughout history, Black Americans have faced ceaseless race-related traumatic events on a national level. These traumatic events involve but are not limited to the Rosewood Massacre (1923), the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment (1932–1972), the Los Angeles riots following the death of Rodney King (1992), mass incarceration, the school-to-prison pipeline, and more recently, incidents of police brutality, including the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor (Williams-Washington & Mills, 2018). Due to the minimal recognition and acknowledgment of both the traumatic injuries currently inflicted on African Americans and African Americans' need to mourn their history, present-day Black people of all ages continuously carry the mental and social wounds of their history, including feelings of inadequacy, a sense of powerlessness, and challenges with self-identification (Williams-Washington & Mills, 2018). Related to all of the above experiences and more, the Black community's ongoing narrative of trauma involves two notable factors: poverty and distrust in systems.

Poverty

Following the Civil War, enslaved Africans were freed; however, they were forced to be social outsiders in the white dominant society—a marginalization that persists today. For example, Black people were and continue to be denied opportunities for both education and employment. Additional struggles include living in the poorest and lowest-resourced neighborhoods. Societal division and a lack of resources lead to poverty, resulting in an increase of crime rates, domestic violence, drug problems, and other social challenges. The U.S. Census shows that a disproportionate number of African American families live below the poverty line (Danzer et al., 2016). Poverty significantly increases African Americans' risk for interpersonal trauma, which is itself a significant risk factor for developing posttraumatic stress disorder (Danzer et al., 2016). Research also shows that impoverished African Americans who are interpersonally traumatized are more likely to experience additional psychological maladjustment, lower spectrums of spiritual wellness, insufficient primary support systems, unhealthily low levels of self-esteem, challenges seeking professional help, and difficulty developing and utilizing coping strategies (Danzer et al., 2016).

Distrust in Systems

Throughout history, public and authoritative systems have so often been corrupt, abusive, and discriminatory that they are not a viable option to help protect the Black community (Danzer et al., 2016). In fact, for various Black Americans, interactions with such systems have an increased likelihood to inflict trauma than incite support. For example, law enforcement also has the tendency to specifically over patrol African American males, treating them with automatic suspicion. In 2010, Black people represented 13.6% of the U.S. population but accounted for close to 28% of all arrests and 38% of incarcerations (Danzer et al., 2016). Discrimination within

law enforcement heightens the trauma vulnerability of young African Americans. This discrimination can often be found inscribed in official policy; for example, the stop-and-frisk strategies practiced by the New York City and Philadelphia police departments were repeatedly discovered to disproportionately target African American and Latino youth (Danzer et al., 2016). African Americans are affected by systemic racism in ways that are linear to the effects of interpersonal trauma. The traumatic effects of discriminatory law enforcement practices are extensive within the African American community. Discriminatory practices include Black people being victimized by law enforcement and criminalized by police officers due to harmful stereotypes (i.e., Black people are aggressive and lazy), all which threaten Black people's sense of identity due to internalizing racism. As a result, Black people develop a heightened sense of sensitivity, ultimately increasing Black people's vulnerability to manifesting PTSD symptoms (Danzer et al., 2016).

Current State of Black Millennials in the Face of Racial Trauma

According to Waterfall (2012), millennials are the generation born between the years 1982–2001, although other sources cite the beginning as early as 1978 or as late as 1985. Salient traits describing millennials include upbeat attitudes, confidence, tolerance, separation from institutions, and increased attunement with and connection to social support. In addition, members of the millennial generation are civic-minded due to their focus on highlighting cultural factors related to one's heritage or ancestry (Waterfall, 2012).

Within the broad millennial category exist numerous groups with more specific shared traits and experiences, including BAMs. Symbolic racism theory is a framework that captures the essence of the current state of BAMs (Sears & Henry, 2003). The symbolic racism framework provides insight into the myriad ways covert racism became apparent during the millennial

generation (Neville et al., 2013). The framework highlights how BAMs grew up in a very different racist environment than the one navigated by preceding generations. Prior generations came of age in times when unequal treatment and reduced opportunities for Black people were often explicit and rarely out of view. Throughout the eras of slavery and Jim Crow, the hardship and discrimination Black people faced were overt—supported by hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan—and segregationist politics and policies saturated American society (Bullard, 1998). Black American millennials, however, grew up in an era in which society was presumed to be post-racial, color-blind, and dedicated to providing equal opportunity for everyone (Dawson & Bobo, 2009; Neville et al., 2013). Symbolic racism theory hypothesizes that racism has transformed from a palpable, overt form to a more intangible, subtle one. The framework also articulates how covert racism persists in a variety of settings and scenarios; for example, reviews of discriminatory hiring and selection practices reveal how organizations might claim to reject candidates based on names or mannerisms rather than race (Sears & Henry, 2003).

A major point in the generational shift between overt and covert racism was the election of the nation's first Black president, Barack Obama, which fueled predictions that American society was entering a post-racial stage (Dawson & Bobo, 2009). The post-racial stage was heightened by common claims of racial color blindness (namely, not seeing the color of a person's skin) and suggestions that such color blindness be taken seriously in all interactions with all individuals (Neville et al., 2013). Contrary to these predictions and claims, the election and subsequent presidency of Barack Obama either reflected the resolution of racism nor caused racism to recede; instead, it enhanced the transformation of overt racism into covert racism, a dangerous form, which is more difficult to target, classify, and locate (Sears & Henry, 2003).

After centuries of exposure, generations of Black Americans have developed methods for detecting and guarding against overt racism (Graham et al., 2015), as well as methods for healing from its effects (Jones-Eversley et al., 2017). However, the Obama-influenced racial paradigm shift has forsaken BAMs with minor defense mechanisms against and/or coping methods for the unique, unexpected obstacle of covert racism (Luckerson, 2015). Due to the façade of the post-racial stage spearheaded by the effects of the Obama administration and presidency, BAMs have been undermined and rendered psychologically defenseless (Luckerson, 2015). Understanding the ideology of racial color blindness reveals that, although racism may have taken covert forms throughout BAMs' formative years, racism is still very much present Neville et al. (2013). Additional studies are needed to further inform current research on reflecting racism BAMs experience in healthcare, law, and education as well.

Despite the belief that many individuals in the United States view the Obama administration as ushering in a post-racial stage, evidence also indicates the contrary: racism increased during the Obama administration and ultimately contributed to the election of Donald Trump (French et al., 2019). Evidence to support the increase of racist events toward people of color during the Trump administration includes preventing individuals from Muslim countries into the United States; deporting, segregating, and holding undocumented immigrants in detention centers; and mirroring racist beliefs (French et al., 2019). President Trump reinforced racist beliefs by failing to condemn acts of white supremacy and indicated that the organizers of the dangerous Charlottesville rally were commented on as very suitable people (French et al., 2019). Although racism amongst people of color is not a new approach, the racial climate projected by the Trump administration negatively impacted the Black community due to the

highly recognized state-sanctioned police killing of Black identified men and boys, which prompted, among additional factors, the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM).

Race-based trauma (RBT) is a prominent lens to capture the racial trauma experiences of Black millennials (Pickett, 2020). Race-based trauma is defined as an accumulation of emotional injury and stress that people of color may go through as a result of experiencing racism, oppression, and biased treatment (Carter, 2007; Pickett, 2020). Other proposed definitions of RBT describe how an individual's personal experience of racism causes emotional distress, physical harm, and fear (Evans et al., 2016), as well as how these racial assaults can appear in the form of verbal attacks, physical attacks, and threats to one's livelihood and selfhood (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). For Black people, the RBT lens unpacks the various effects of oppression encountered by generations, spanning from slavery to contemporary racism (Leary, 2017; Pickett, 2020).

Race-based trauma also takes place in the form of racial microaggressions, which are broken down into three types: assault, insults, and invalidations (Lee & Hopson, 2018). Assaults are defined as explicit charges of wrongdoing and attacks on the humanity of people of color (e.g., calling someone outside of their name, avoidant behavior, or premeditated discrimination)—actions that mirror the overt racism endured by persons of color, including BAMs (Lee & Hopson, 2018). Racial insults are negative racial stereotypes, communicated verbally or nonverbally, that demonstrate disrespectfulness and belittle a person's racial identity, reflecting subtle and covert racism (Lee & Hopson, 2018). The third type of racial microaggression is racial invalidation, deemed the most life-threatening of the three because it involves communication patterns that negatively impact individuals and communities, and also

derail the narratives of people of color, such as BAMs, as racialized human beings (e.g., color-blindness; Lee & Hopson, 2018).

Today, because of significant racial disparities in the American education system, RBT both stems from Black youth's school experiences and negatively affects their school achievements. The disparities are evident in scholarly performance, standardized test scores, high school graduation rates, suspension and expulsion rates, program quality access to higher level courses and gifted and talented programs, and more (Pickett, 2020). These disparities, as well as racial profiling and microaggressions, contribute to the RBT conditions that cause Black students to demonstrate psychological hardship (Carter, 2007; Pickett, 2020).

According to Pickett (2020), Black students who experience RBT may also experience related depression, anxiety, chronic anger, irritability, and damaged self-image; RBT may further manifest itself in antisocial behavior, insomnia, detachment, and challenges with concentration (Pickett, 2020). These emotions and manifestations are significant because they cause the brain to set loose stress hormones that hinder the brain's ability to learn (Hammond, 2015; Pickett, 2020). In addition, Black students who appear to have RBT behaviors often feel less motivated to develop positive relationships with peers and teachers with white backgrounds, instead separating themselves as a way to protect themselves from betrayal and repeated distress (Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Pickett, 2020). Furthermore, the identified results illuminate the narrative of BAMs' experience with racial trauma by offering insight into how Black students are destabilized by and are unequipped to address covert styles of racism, including microaggressions, possibly causing them to feel an active sense of hypervigilance and deflated motivation suggested by Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Pickett, 2020 to achieve new achievements within their lives.

Additional studies give insight into how RBT impacts both adolescents and adults by identifying how race-based stress influences emotional responses and how that influence varies by racial group. Carter and Kirkinis (2020) investigated the different responses to negative race-based incidents of white ($n = 60$) and Black adults ($n = 115$), ranging from ages 17 to 73, with a particular focus on emotional and race-based traumatic stress symptomatology. Findings revealed that Black participants experienced more intense reactions and symptoms of intrusive thoughts, in addition to depression, anger, hypervigilance, and physical symptoms associated with traumatic stress while white participants experienced fewer reactions related to race-based stress and some symptoms of intrusive thoughts. Carter and Kirkinis gave insight into the Black adults' experience of symptomatology following negative race-based incidents, specifically noting how negative race-based situations can cause more damage to Black adults than to white people. Additionally, Carter and Kirkinis reported the significant finding that descriptive data played an important role in differentiating race-based incidents by providing additional context. For example, when describing their experience with negative race-based events, white adults primarily reported vicarious and verbal assault. In reporting vicarious experiences, which included witnessing a racial assault on someone else or watching police brutality via video, white participants shed light on the adverse impact of indirect race-based violence and/or aggressive narratives. In reporting verbal assault, white participants demonstrated that, despite their social dominance and race-based privilege, whites exposed to antagonistic language can still feel insulted and may experience race-based stress. Among Black adult participants, the highest reported negative race-based incident was verbal assault accompanied by belligerent work settings and treatment stemming from stereotypes. Carter and Kirkinis further suggested that

hostile work environments and stereotypes negatively impact the overall well-being, financial security, and mental health of Black people more than that of white people.

Existing literature gives insight into how RBT impacts both adolescents and adults, although there are gaps around the current state of millennials facing racial trauma. Researchers who conducted studies on BAMs and racial trauma found that salient factors, including but not limited to, scholarly achievement and work environments contribute to BAMs' perception of how society can be presumed to be post-racial, with equal opportunity for everyone, when in actuality, the heightened state of covert racism makes it more challenging to track down covert incidents of racism (Carter & Kirkinis, 2020; Pickett, 2020; Sears & Henry, 2003). The past two presidential administrations demonstrated noticeable covert and overt racial factors that negatively impacted the Black community. Hinton (2020) suggested that because of the illusion of a post-racist society during the Obama administration, perpetuating color-blind ideologies left BAMs destabilized. French et al. (2019) argued that overt racism beliefs were rehydrated during the Trump administration due to the state-sanctioned police killings of Black identified people. Recognizing that BAMs are left with minor defense mechanisms and rendered psychologically defenseless against both overt and covert racism, researchers proposed new methods of resilience, coping, and healing that can help BAMs become more equipped, aware, and proactive in not only their healing but the healing of Black Americans of all ages, for generations to come (Luckerson, 2015).

Another factor that impacts BAMs currently includes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Maness et al. (2020), social determinants of health involving healthcare and job disparities contributed to the negative impact COVID-19 had on BAMs. Data extracted from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention exhibits that mortality rates from COVID-19

amongst the Black community nationwide are twice the rate of whites (Blake et al., 2021). According to Maness et al., the Black community had 2.6 times higher rates of COVID-19 cases, 4.7 times higher rates of hospitalization, and 2.1 times higher levels of death in comparison to non-Hispanic white people. BAMs bear hardship from implicit bias and healthcare stigma from healthcare providers due to healthcare providers perpetuating the narrative to refuse care and disregard Black individuals' experiences of chronic pain. Implicit bias from healthcare providers can affect clinical decision making in factors, such as diagnosis, treatment, pain management, and referrals (Maness et al., 2020). The refusal of care is a significant risk factor because it can further exacerbate risks for mortality among BAMs and the greater Black community and prevent appropriate delivery of treatment, ultimately putting the Black community at an increased risk for adverse health outcomes from COVID-19, and thereby perpetuating the vicious cycle of systemic racism (Blake et al., 2021; Maness et al., 2020).

In addition to the impact of both the Trump and Obama administrations with increasing covert and overt styles of racism, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed various racial injustices across the United States, specifically around stipulations of social distancing, mask guidelines, healthcare stigma, and socioeconomic status terms and conditions (Blake et al., 2021). Additionally, the stipulations involved with wearing a mask were problematic among BAMs and the greater Black identified community, as many individuals voiced fear of being mistaken for criminals due to the stereotypical fusion of race and criminality (Maness et al., 2020). The requirements around COVID-19 included the capability to social distance, which is a luxury for many individuals due to significant aspects, such as housing, jobs, and economic status. People with reduced-waged jobs did not have the luxury to work from home due to being deemed essential employees, which posed another potential risk factor for the Black community because

of the increased interaction with the public. Black individuals account for 13.4% of the U.S. population and in terms of jobs, 17.1% are involved in the service sector. For example, Black identified people account for 19.9% of cashiers, 27% are bus drivers, 29.5% are taxi drivers, 14.4% are housekeepers, 18.2% are janitorial staff, and 18.2% are sanitation workers (Maness et al., 2020). Although systematic racism and social determinants of health affected BAMs and the larger Black identified community during the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers, such as Blake et al. (2021) reflected a way to approach these disadvantages during and after COVID-19. Blake et al. advocated for understanding differences among racial groups, healing and coping strategies to attempt to reach multifaceted groups, and equitable resolutions to help combat coping with stress in the face of race-based trauma (Blake et al., 2021). Previous Black generations responded to racial trauma utilizing collective strategies such as Black led movements (Darby, 2022) when faced with an increased overt style of racism. Healing and coping strategies will further be explored and how these strategies have been an integral part in the Black community.

Healing, Coping, & Activism Strategies

Major political, social, and economic reform from Black-led movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, in addition to reform from the Jim Crow era shaped how previous generations utilized strategies within the larger Black collective to combat more forms of overt styles of racism. Previous generations' response to racial trauma was through collective disruptive tactics such as marches, riots, working in political systems, and organizational membership (Darby, 2022). According to Cox et al. (2023), previous Black generations utilized emotion-focused coping strategies to manage race-based stress. Szymanski (2011) explained how reflective coping promotes development in resolving stressful and challenging life circumstances which have a high likelihood of applying to the African American

experience when faced with race-based trauma. Healing and coping strategies are significant for Black people's wellbeing and resiliency on both individual and collective levels.

Healing Strategies

Healing includes one's experience of belonging within the larger community, including collective strategies to enhance both the individual and society (French et al., 2019; Heilbron & Guttman, 2000). This community-based concept of healing moves beyond mere coping, shifting the goal beyond surviving an oppressive society to thriving (French et al., 2019; Watts, 2004). Amplifying Black voices and standing in unity with the larger Black collective has been a collective strategy Black led movements have utilized to raise awareness and fight for social justice (Darby, 2022). In previous Black generations there is an increased likelihood that healing took place as mobilization spearheaded by various Black leaders such as Angela Davis and Dr. Martin Luther King and movements such as the Black Panther Party (Darby, 2022).

The idea of healing captures the connection between justice and wellness. The idea of healing also emerges when people of color boost their consciousness about their oppression and investigate ways to combat the associated race-based trauma (French et al., 2019; Heilbron & Guttman, 2000). Strategies for survival, building resilience, and healing in efforts to combat the traumatic effects of racism also open up the option to heal the traumatic wounds and scars of the oppressed (French et al., 2019). Additionally, healing strategies geared toward supporting the Black community's response to environmental manifestations of racial microaggressions include religion and spirituality, armoring, shifting, support networks, sponsorship and mentorship, and self-care (Holder et al., 2015).

Coping Strategies

Coping differs from healing because it centralizes the needs of the individual rather than the collective (French et al., 2019; Heilbron & Guttman, 2000). Coping is essential because it helps people of color conceptualize their individual challenges and obstacles, as well as their unique problem-solving skills. Further, coping strategies in response to racism are imperative for social and environmental survival. Individual coping strategies include confronting the perpetrator or verbal assaulter and relying on internal resources, such as one's faith, religion, and spirituality (Szymanski, 2011). According to Bacchus and Holley (2004), religion is defined as an outward expression of one's faith, incorporated with worship practices, personal beliefs, and ethical bases for behavior. Comparatively, spirituality is recognized as the individual's journey toward personal meaning and relationship with self, others, the environment, and God (Bacchus & Holley, 2004).

Turner et al. (2019) explored the connection between religiosity/spirituality and mental health in an effort to understand the effect a person's beliefs may have on mental healthcare utilization. A significant barrier to seeking mental healthcare treatment is stigma; engagement in religious and spiritual practices can increase willingness to accept mental health counseling due to faith in a higher power (Turner et al., 2019). Spiritual practices, such as prayer, prove helpful when dealing with health concerns and stressful life circumstances; notably, spiritual practices are more likely to be used as coping strategies by African Americans than by nonHispanic whites (Chatters, 2000; Turner et al., 2019). Additionally, Black-identified people, including African Americans and Caribbean Blacks, rely on the strength of God as a sense of support and resilience, and are more likely to select spiritual resources necessary for dealing with life circumstances (Turner et al., 2019). Additionally, the beliefs and practices that older African

American women use to integrate spirituality into their daily lives and meet their daily needs—including prayer, the Bible, the church community, and faith in God—are believed to be health-protective (Harvey, 2006). Spirituality influences self-management practices among people of color (Harvey, 2006). For example, Harvey (2006) stated spirituality is a significant factor in health management. Self-agency is deemed an important factor in managing a chronic illness; there is a possible connection between building confidence in oneself through one's relationship with God and the use of management strategies (Bandura, 1997; Harvey, 2006).

Spirituality is profoundly important within the African American community and manifests itself in Black people's attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. For example, greater involvement was found among Black people in comparison to other people of color, with involvement in Black churches ultimately intensifying the strength of older African Americans' worship practices and faith (Thompson et al., 2020). One's individual relationship with spirituality develops over one's lifespan, often evolving or shifting as a result of engagement within one's chosen spirituality or belief systems (Bacchus & Holley, 2004; Haug, 1998). Regardless of one's specific spiritual beliefs, spirituality influences domains, including understanding, forgiveness, liberation, hope, justice, salvation, the meaning and purpose of life, and responses to oppression, individual relationships, social obligations, selection of romantic partners, community involvement, physical and psychological wellness, as well as political participation and political beliefs (Bacchus & Holley, 2004; Mattis, 2002).

Cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of spirituality provide insight into how spirituality lends meaning to life events, equips individuals with a sense of agency in giving and receiving love and compassion, and influences ethical and moral motivations for behavior (Bacchus & Holley, 2004). Due to the various elements of spirituality, there is an established link

between the role of spirituality in making meaning of life, and coping. Spirituality is a necessary influence in African Americans' lives, possibly more vital for African American women who utilize spiritual practices to cope with adversity. Spirituality is a primary aspect of African American women's ability to cope with life challenges and adversity, involving stress related to racism, classism, and sexism; family responsibilities; financial issues; illness; psychological distress; and daily endeavors (Bacchus & Holley, 2004).

Another individual coping mechanism includes confronting the perpetrator, minimizing, ignoring, or avoiding the racist behavior, and engaging in role changes. Changing one's role may include altering behavior or presentation to better camouflage within the dominant culture in an effort to lessen the effect of negative racial stereotypes and events (Szymanski, 2011). Beyond identifying coping strategies, Szymanski (2011) identified three coping styles that hint at an individual's likelihood of engaging with the larger collective to help confront the sources of oppression, discrimination, and environmental stress. These three individual coping styles are reflective, suppressive, and reactive (Szymanski, 2011).

The reflective coping style is characterized by examining interpersonal relationships, remaining organized, and engaging in behaviors needed to produce change internally, externally, emotionally, and cognitively (Szymanski, 2011). Reflective coping promotes progress in resolving stressful and challenging life circumstances. In contrast, the suppressive coping style centers avoidance and denial, while the reactive coping style features strong emotional responses, impulsivity, and cognitive distortions have the semi-unintended results to ineffectively problem solve, appear less interpersonally assertive, and appear less trustworthy to others in efforts to protect oneself from harm. Both suppressive and reactive coping styles reduce the possibility of resolving stressful life circumstances and are linked to psychological distress.

Out of the three individual coping styles, reflective coping is the most likely to foster engagement with the larger African American collective because it involves actively confronting the foundation of environmental and social stressors (Szymanski, 2011).

Activism Strategies

A strong relationship exists between coping and resilience, the latter of which is understandable as the sustainable management of chronic or acute life challenges (Nettle & Pleck, 1996). Specifically, resilience includes the development, space, or result of favorable adaptation in spite of deeply distressing or life-threatening experiences (Nettle & Pleck, 1996). According to Theron (2013), distressing or negative experiences include illiterate or absent parents, poverty, communities threatened by social injustice, terrorism, war, violent neighborhoods, and natural disaster. Resilience is defined as a positive adjustment to adverse circumstances, as well as a characteristic of a personal strength and self-protection (Nettle & Pleck, 1996; Theron, 2013). However, resilience cannot be developed without active support (Theron, 2013). On an individual level, such support is implemented by protective systems, which include healthy interpersonal relationships that encourage self-regulation. Additional supports include (a) self-guidance and mastery of skills due to societal issues; (b) problem-solving abilities due to lived experience; (c) existential meaning-making through interactions that affirm one's morality, values, and community; and (d) cultural and spiritual practices (Masten & Wright, 2010; Theron, 2013).

Black people as a collective have developed resilience generationally, utilizing collective responses to racial oppression in efforts to move toward racial visibility and improved social and economic conditions, which is considered a fundamental response to racism (Szymanski, 2011). Two major factors shaping African American activism are exposure to racist events and

individual coping styles. Collective responses, such as African American group level activities like marching in a group, holding up posters or signs, or chanting slogans serve as tools for coping with racism because they provide African Americans space to engage with validation, empathy, and support for their narratives regarding racism. Additional collective responses include counteracting the devaluation associated with racism, placing harmful experiences in a wider context rather than internalizing oppression, gaining resources to help alleviate heightened stress linked with oppression, and achieving collective African American survival. Ultimately, Black people who have a first-hand account of racist events may gravitate toward the collective to deal with minority and racial stress and receive the support necessary for resilience (Szymanski, 2011).

By continuously responding to oppression as a collective, Black people can remain resilient as they employ the coping strategy of activism. According to Szymanski and Lewis (2014), civic and communal unity and sociopolitical development contribute to both individual and collective strategies to resist oppression. Black activism includes meaningful action targeted to developing social and political change, with particular focus on decreasing and eliminating racism, along with all of its negative effects on Black people's daily lives. Benefits connected to Black activism include social, emotional, psychological, and spiritual wellness (Grayman-Simpson, 2012; Szymanski & Lewis, 2014). The social benefit highlights the positive impact of observing change in others and relying on and contributing to networks of shared support. The emotional element includes fulfillment of the self and one's identity, while the psychological benefits follow the development and maintenance of supportive interpersonal relationships. Lastly, spiritual wellness involves the focus of one's spiritual connection as opposed to materialistic attachments. Additional factors that influence how and when Black individuals

might engage in activist efforts to enhance the wellbeing of the Black community and enact social justice reform include education, social class, and one's racial identity (Szymanski, 2011). For instance, Black people who have experienced increased racial discrimination interact in reflective coping strategies, which are the most likely to correlate with collective response. Although levels of activist engagement vary from low to high, Black people are more likely to engage in activism following upticks in racist events, which may affirm that involvement and engagement in activism is one method African Americans use to cope with racism and heal from racial wounds (Szymanski, 2011).

Black people have long fought back against overt and covert racism through activism. The strong generational lineage of Black-led movements—along with the similarities echoing between movements—has strongly marked Black people's perceptions of racism as an ongoing problem. Black-led movements (e.g., civil rights movement [CRM], Black Power [BPM], and BLM) have carved space for Black people and other people of color to come together in efforts to combat pressing issues, such as negative relationships with law enforcement. Black millennial activists have a place within a larger historical context of Black-led movements, originating with the foundational CRM. Driven by members of the silent generation (i.e., born 1928–1945) and baby boomers (i.e., born 1946–1964), and specifically led by Martin Luther King, Jr., this movement arose in response to poverty in the segregated South and primarily aimed to assure that Black people receive equal rights under the law (Jones-Eversley et al., 2017). During this time, CRM activists were chronically and violently targeted by white supremacy organizations, circumstances which resulted in injuries and deaths among Black people (Jones-Eversley et al., 2017). Overlapping with the CRM was the 1960s BPM, led by generation X, Kwame Ture, and the influential minister Malcolm X. Specifically, the BPM called for Black people to be viewed

in society as human beings and to be allotted a fair chance at life (Jones-Eversley et al., 2017; Yeboah, 2019). The leaders of the BPM pulled inspiration and support from Africa's liberation struggles (e.g., the fight against racial apartheid), which reflected Black Americans' excruciating past of Jim Crow segregation, the deprivation of constitutional rights, and profiling and murder by the justice system (Yeboah, 2019). According to Perry (2016), influence provided by movements, such as the CRM and the BPM had a significant impact on the BLM, which was mobilized by social media platforms to form a healing channel, connecting the collective efforts of the past to the collective efforts of the present, a link strengthened by identified cross-time commonalities (e.g., protest methods employed, media coverage of protest events).

Current Black Millennial Activism Strategy

Following the legacy of Black-led movements, BAMs utilize activism as a form of resistance against race-based stressors, as well as a salient strategy for developing resilience (Jones-Eversley et al., 2017). Black America helps and fuels Black millennial activists to navigate the world around them (Jones-Eversley et al., 2017). The systematic and policy advances that emerged from previously Black-led movements, such as the BPW and the CRM paved a way for the millennial generation to speak out on behalf of the publicized murders of Black youth and young adults (e.g., Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner, George Floyd, and Trayvon Martin). The BLM was organized utilizing the social media platform Twitter and the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter (Hinton, 2020). The BLM movement was a call to action to demand social justice, alertness, and responsibility and accountability for gruesome murders at the hands of white-identified police officers (Hinton, 2020; Jones-Eversley et al., 2017). Due to the damaging emotional toll that BLM has had on its members and leaders, the risk for suicide

among Black youth and young adults has become a prominent threat to the Black community (Hinton, 2020; Jones-Eversley et al., 2017).

This threat is ultimately prompting previous generations of activists to spring into action in efforts to pass knowledge to BAMs. Jones-Eversley et al. (2017) pointed out that emotional intelligence repeatedly needs to be passed down from older, experienced generations of Black activists to the younger generations, including BAMs who are currently on the frontline in efforts to combat intergenerational and racial trauma and further promote communal healing. The BLM movement has utilized social media to spread awareness, create safe spaces to vocalize Black narratives, and provide resources to the community. The BLM movement also uses internet resources to recruit American citizens to fight in this movement and bring the conflict to the center stage (Hinton, 2020; Jones-Eversley et al., 2017). For example, Colin Kaepernick is a well-known BAM athlete who began to kneel down on one knee during the national anthem, and in response, the BLM movement launched protests in major city streets to enlarge visibility and heighten awareness of police brutality against Black males (Abad-Santos, 2018; Hinton, 2020; Jones-Eversley et al., 2017). I postulate that social media platforms open channels to safely provide greater opportunities to nurture the conversation between generations, fostering awareness of emotional intelligence and better equipping BAMs to navigate and address covert racism.

According to the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire-Community Version (PEDQ-CV; Brondolo et al., 2005), an assessment tool primarily developed to evaluate perceived exposure to unfair, ethnically biased treatment among college students, contrary to the promises of post-racial America, BAMs perceive more racially motivated stigmatization than past generations. The stigmatizing subscales involved in the PEDQ-CV are perceptions of unfair

treatment from the justice system and non-Black people's views of Black people as deceptive, filthy, and slothful (Hinton, 2020). A commonality demonstrated from research studies includes how race-based stressors can cause harmful threats to the Black community, including exposure to unfair treatment and damage to an individual's emotionality (Hinton, 2020; Jones-Eversley et al., 2017). However, the studies also point to ways to help combat race-based stressors, including engaging in conversation with Black activists from prior generations in efforts to pass down emotional knowledge, and utilizing various assessments and questionnaires to further develop treatment options for the Black community (Hinton, 2020; Jones-Eversley et al., 2017). By examining the narratives of BAMs in the face of racism and race-based traumatic experiences, this project seeks to add to existing research by not only capturing how the experience of race and race-based trauma has been trailblazed by the Black community in the past, but also by providing insight into how the past has informed and shaped the current state of racism and trauma experienced by the BAM generation.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework chosen for the lens of this study is Black feminist theory (Pérez & Williams, 2014). This theory was chosen because it opens opportunities for bridging the separation between communities specifically bridging Black generations. Highlighting the lived experiences explained by BAMs and honoring their stories not only demonstrate their contributions to the larger Black community, but the narratives also develop Black feminist thought as social theory, according to Pérez and Williams (2014). This theory poses an activist approach that aligns with BAMs social justice approach that builds relationships with communities offering support to BAMs efforts to dismantle matrices of power and generate important efforts for collectively resisting oppression and social injustices (Pérez & Williams,

2014). Black feminist theory captures the challenges and empowerment of Black women, women of color, and the intersectionality of BAMs. The theory creates spaces for resistance and possibilities for change within oppressive circumstances. The lived stories BAMs exhibit engage in various forms of racial justice social movement activities and the researcher utilizes Black feminist theory as a method of activism that focuses on the struggles, empowerment, and resilience of the Black collective. Black feminist theory is also a framework that conceptualizes and examines power dynamics that contribute to inequalities within society (Pérez & Williams, 2014). This theory was chosen because it best represents the targeted population in this study by providing more understanding around the systems of racial inequality and creating spaces for resistance and opportunities for change.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Rationale for Qualitative Research

A qualitative research approach was utilized for this study because the approach provides techniques through an interview format to highlight lived experiences of participants. Qualitative research methods allow the researcher to explore participants' responses to race based trauma, locations where participants experience an increased rate of racial trauma, coping strategies, and conflictual viewpoints that impact their everyday lives. The primary focus of qualitative research is to heighten the level of understanding through the lens of experiences of participants who have direct experience recognizing the value of participants' various viewpoints that can only be contextualized by their lived experiences and worldview (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Qualitative research holds value because it provides an in-depth understanding of the meaning that participants place on actions, circumstances, and interpersonal relationships creating a space for BAMs to expand on their lived experiences, Black identity, and challenges. The study consisted of a small sample size. According to Boddy (2016), the determination of sample size depends on the population under investigation. For example, in-depth qualitative research can consist of one highly informative case; however, in some circumstances, 12 cases or more can lead to theoretical saturation (Boddy, 2016). In other words, quality qualitative research sample sizes can vary from one or more cases to provide in-depth analysis. This research methodology was chosen because it offers significant insight into common themes that may arise from participants as a collective. The common experiences from the participants are necessary to understand the study's concepts, frameworks, and ideas. Data collected within this study will ideally be beneficial and applicable to additional global majority communities and

populations. The descriptive nature of the qualitative approach allows the researcher to develop a complex, and holistic picture of the Black American Millennial footprint within the larger path set by the previous Black generations.

Rationale for Use of Thematic Analysis

The researcher utilized a thematic analysis framework for this research study. A qualitative methodology thematic analysis involved in-depth semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was chosen because it allows the researcher to methodically identify and manage patterns of insightful themes to further conceptualize participants' shared experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Repeated themes and patterns within the data collection were identified to allow the researcher to capture narratives experienced by BAMS. The examiner utilized a constructionist approach to evaluate the themes to highlight potential participant bias. Black feminist theory was utilized to help the researcher navigate the thematic analysis framework in efforts to explore BAMS complex experience to help close the gap between the work of researchers and the Black community. During the investigation of this study, participants were encouraged to share their narrative by conjuring underlying emotions that unveil their personal stories (Dempsey et al., 2016). Throughout the interview process participants were asked to provide insight around sensitive topics, coping strategies and participants highlighted due to the increase in access to mental health services heighten the likelihood of BAMS utilizing mental health services as a coping strategy to combat racial trauma.

Participants

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria and Sampling Method

The target population was Black American millennials between the ages of 22–38 who reside in California. The inclusion criteria also included individuals who have experienced race-

based trauma and who utilize healing and resilience strategies. The sample size for this research study was eight participants. The sampling method employed was convenience sampling.

Convenience sampling is a nonprobability method where the researcher selects participants to participate in the study (Stratton, 2021). The researcher did not want to generalize the findings of the Black American Millennials and selecting participants that fit the study's criteria helped the researcher to capture BAMs narrative to provide deeper insight into the current study. Social media platforms were utilized as a salient, quick, and accessible way to recruit participants instead of randomly selecting them. Convenience sampling provided a low-cost method for data collection that fit well with the budget and time constraints associated with the study (Stratton, 2021). The sample size was small enough to allow for the organization and management of research data and big enough to provide lively and ample insight into the narrative of BAMs utilizing healing and/or resilience strategies to address challenges that arise with racial trauma (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Recruitment Strategy

The researcher recruited participants from various social media platforms. The social media platforms included Facebook, the Facebook group: Black Millennials Mental Health, and Instagram. These platforms were chosen for recruitment due to their significant involvement with the Black community. The researcher created an online flier offering a concise description of the research study, as well as contact information for various mental wellness and mental health resources. In an effort to increase the sample size, the researcher asked participants to refer to additional religious institutions and social media platforms that are predominantly utilized by BAMs.

Screening of Potential Participants

Participants interested in this study reached out to the researcher by email to solidify eligibility. The screening instrument (see Appendix A) posed questions to help ensure participants reflected the appropriate age range (22–38), reported life events of race-based experiences, as well as endorsed internalized and externalized coping strategies. A Zoom link was generated through the students' HIPAA-compliant USF Zoom portal and the participants who qualified for the study were asked to schedule a 60-minute interview with the researcher. A waiting room was also employed to ensure no other individuals would be allowed to enter the room. At the onset of the interviews, the researcher reviewed the inherent limits of confidentiality since the researcher ultimately could not control where the participants were at the time of their interviews. However, the researcher gave each participant the ability to pause the interview should the participants be interrupted. The researcher only conducted the Zoom interviews in a private closed-door room at the University of San Francisco's library. Once each interview was complete, the recording was saved and password-protected.

Trustworthiness

The utility of the qualitative research method is important for generating data. What is also important is exhibiting rigor in qualitative studies in efforts to establish stability and forthrightness to make an impact on various studies (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Trustworthiness includes the criteria of credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability to mirror the quantitative research method criteria of reliability and validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In efforts to demonstrate rigor and to ensure quality data the researcher employed multiple bracketing strategies to ensure trustworthiness was achieved. Bracketing is defined as a strategy to refrain from viewing things in an everyday perspective and is a method for the researcher to

separate themselves from the study (Weatherford & Maitra, 2019). The first strategy the researcher used was peer debriefing to ensure the study's credibility, as recommended by Hadi and Closs (2016). According to Hadi and Closs, research students' supervisors can act as peer debriefers, especially if the supervisor has skill in qualitative research to awaken critical thinking for the researcher. The researcher discussed the study's methods, and interpretations throughout the research project with her supervisor and her supervisor presented feedback to the researcher so that it might be utilized throughout the studies process. As the researcher would continue to meet with the supervisor throughout the study's process it gave the researcher time to revisit the data collected in efforts to carefully choose the language used to develop labels and themes to create a definitive codebook necessary for writing up the participants' results (Weatherford & Maitra, 2019). The researcher's supervisor also offered insight into the researcher's potential bias and assumptions to ensure the results are derived solely from the data gathered.

The second strategy the researcher used was self-description and self-reflection to promote credibility and conformability (Hadi & Closs, 2016). The researcher self-reflected and discussed her position within the study and how her personal beliefs and past training influenced her research findings with her supervisor and graduate school cohort peers. The researcher managed her biases by reflecting on her role as a researcher, including the concept where the researcher is conscious of the biases, values, and life events they bring to the qualitative research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The author identifies as the sole researcher of this study supported by her committee members, ancestors, and village. She also identifies as a cisgender, BAM woman residing in the SF Bay Area region in California who grew up in church, attends church now, and engages in spirituality and religious practices. She is an only child, college educated, born and raised in a lower-class, marginalized community. She has had the pleasure of

working in various school, hospital, and community mental health settings throughout the SF Bay Area. She also has utilized both internalized and externalized coping strategies to combat against racial trauma, which has allowed her to interact and support Black Americans across generations. Acknowledging aspects of her identity and past experiences guided her reflection as she conducted this research, deepening her understanding of her own influence in this process instead of avoiding or eliminating my positionality.

Reflexivity

As the examiner identifies as a Black American millennial woman with clinical experience supporting and working with Black-identified children, parents, and families, additional precautionary steps were in place to identify and prevent bias throughout data collection and analysis. One salient way the researcher reduced bias and increased adherence and commitment to the study was through the practice of grounding techniques, such as deep-breathing exercises and reflection. The researcher utilized Black feminist Theory as a framework to express herself and create a space of resistance to highlight the lived experiences of the Black community and more specifically BAMs. The researcher continuously utilized Braun and Clarke's (2012) recommendations while navigating and managing the thematic analysis process, ensuring the thoughtful reflection and grounding techniques were empirically informed. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), positionality is the ongoing practice of the researcher to illustrate factors of the study, including the way data are gathered or interpreted that may reflect an influence on the research method. This research study is significant due to the insight it reveals regarding the experiences of BAMs. An important factor within this study was the researcher's commitment to amplify BAMs' voices. Keeping that in mind, the researcher's identity as a BAM woman was a commonality she shared with her participants. This

commonality allowed the participants to answer the open-ended interview questions genuinely, truthfully, and authentically. The researcher holds a college degree, another commonality she shared with almost all of her participants, which also contributed to a welcoming interview space in which the participants felt open to share their experiences. The researcher's higher education as a doctoral candidate is a particular area where she held differences and privileges that her participants did not share, which had the potential to impact participants' responses. Because the researcher had the ability to compensate participants for their engagement in the study, some participants may have viewed the researcher as holding privilege; therefore there was a potential that this privilege impacted participants' responses. Furthermore, the researcher's connection and relationship with BAMs may have positively impacted participants' level of comfort to engage in the study.

Data Collection

The purpose of the data collection was to seek BAM participants that experienced racial trauma utilizing internalized and externalized coping strategies. Once interested individuals reached out to the researcher, the individuals and researcher scheduled a time to conduct screening via phone call. During the screening procedure, and once eligibility was confirmed, participants were notified of the purpose of the study; description of the research project, including its aims, benefits, and risks; topics related to interview questions; and a discussion around availability to schedule the Zoom interview. All participants received information regarding the informed consent procedure that is consistent with the University of San Francisco's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the interview. In addition, each participant was made aware that they could withdraw from the study without any penalty at any time. Participants were provided multiple opportunities to ask any questions or provide any additional

information outside of the interview questions asked by the researcher. Field notes were taken once interviews were concluded throughout to note highlights of the participants' narrative and personal reflections of the researcher.

Informed Consent

The examiner started each interview by first notifying the participant of the study's steps and purpose and their participation role and then gaining their written consent to participate (see Appendix B) in addition to verbal consent via Zoom. The researcher explained the nature of the study, interview process, associated risks, and measures taken to protect confidentiality.

Interviews were recorded and stored in a password-protected electronic file. Confidentiality of participants' personal narratives were rigorously maintained by providing all participants with pseudonyms assigned by the researcher. All identifying information was removed from records and safely stored in a password-protected electronic file.

Interview Process

The screening involved questions about the participants' age, gender, racial and ethnic background, and scheduling questions. The 60-minute interview included a semistructured format focused on questions about participants' experiences in the face of racial trauma and their perspectives on the effectiveness of internalized and externalized coping strategies. Once the participants completed the interview, they were given \$20 virtually via CashApp. The interview guide can be found in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

The researcher utilized Braun and Clarke's (2012) six phases of thematic analysis to recognize patterns and themes necessary to make sense of the collected data. The first phase included two steps: (a) becoming familiar with the verbal data obtained from the interview

videos by using online software by Otter AI (Otter.AI Technology Software Development Program) to transform the videos into written transcripts, and (b) further engage with the verbal data by taking note of significant ideas to become better engrossed in the data. In the second phase, the examiner created initial codes to tag various features of the data utilizing the Otter.AI software to further support the production of themes in phase three. Otter.AI is an electronic program that provides features that allow researchers to become familiar with the verbal data by tagging and color-coding similar features across participants' narratives. In the third phase, the examiner looked for themes within the collected codes and categorized all the data that would be essential to each selected theme. Next, during phase four, the researcher reviewed the collected themes against extracts of data found in the initial verbal data transcripts to ensure the themes were of premium quality, with significant relevance to the examiner's study.

The researcher chose qualitative data analysis software, Otter.AI and ATLAS.TI (Atlas.TI Scientific Software Development GmnH, Version 8.1). All interviews were voice-recorded via Zoom with the consent of the participants and were transcribed verbatim. Participants' confidentiality was protected through the de-identification of distinguishing information. Transcribed interviews were entered into Otter.AI for analysis. ATLAS.TI is an electronic program that provides tools that allow researchers to organize the collection of thematic data where the researcher can annotate information and categorize it under various themes from participants' interviews. For this study, ATLAS.TI was utilized to directly import interview transcripts. The coding features in Otter.AI allowed the researcher to explore participants' experiences in depth by color-coding common words and life events across various participants. Once the data extracts were reviewed, the researcher checked the themes against the entire verbal data set to produce a thematic map. Then, in the fifth phase, the examiner

developed coherent labels and definitions for each selected theme and, with the use of ATLAS, created a definitive codebook wherein all themes were accounted for and organized. The researcher utilized both online platforms to continuously check the coding process and thematic map process. Finally, during the sixth phase of analysis, the examiner drafted a report that highlighted the narratives indicated by the collected data to authenticate the analysis.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Description of Participants

TY identifies as a 30-year-old Black American woman, mother of one who believes in a higher power but currently does not engage in spiritual or religious practices. She has achieved her master's degree and works as an entrepreneur for her own trucking business. She lives in the Inland Empire in California and identified experiencing racial trauma significantly in the school and work setting. She also identified internalized coping strategies in efforts to combat racial trauma she experienced.

DD identifies as a 31-year-old Black American man who grew up going to church and who engages in spiritual or religious practices. He has obtained his bachelor's degree. He lives in the SF Bay Area region in California and identified experiencing racial trauma significantly in the school and with law enforcement. He also identified internalized and externalized coping strategies to help him build resilience against racial trauma.

PL identifies as a 33-year-old Black American man who grew up going to church and who engages in spiritual or religious practices in addition to being a choir director. He has achieved his doctorate degree and works as a music artist and music teacher. He lives in the SF Bay Area region in California and identified experiencing racial trauma significantly in the school and work settings. Similar to DD, PL identified both internalized and externalized coping strategies in efforts to combat racial trauma he experienced.

BE identifies as a 31-year-old Black American man who believes in a higher power but does not engage in spiritual or religious practices. He has achieved his master's degree and works in the tech industry. He lives in the Los Angeles region in California and identified

experiencing racial trauma significantly in the school setting. BE identified externalized coping strategies to help build his resilience against race-based events.

NA identifies as a 29-year-old Black American woman who grew up going to church and who engages in spiritual or religious practices. She has achieved two bachelor's degrees. She lives in the SF Bay Area region in California and identified experiencing racial trauma significantly in the school setting and experiencing physical assault in the community. She indicated using both internalized and externalized coping strategies to help build resilience against racial trauma.

MT identifies as a 31-year-old Black American woman who grew up going to church and who engages in spiritual or religious practices. She has achieved her bachelor's degree and CNA credential. She lives in the Los Angeles region in California and identified experiencing racial trauma significantly in the work setting and experiencing physical assault in the community. She indicated using both internalized and externalized coping strategies to help combat race-based events.

CA identifies as a 30-year-old Black American woman who grew up going to church and who engages in spiritual or religious practices daily alongside her mother. She has achieved her bachelor's degree and is a resident studying to become a medical doctor. She lives in the SF Bay Area region in California and identified experiencing racial trauma significantly in the work setting and indicated using both internalized and externalized coping strategies to help combat against race-based events.

RA identifies as a 33-year-old Black American woman who grew up going to church and who engages in spiritual or religious practices daily; she is a mother of three. She works as a full-time mom. She lives in the SF Bay Area region in California and identified experiencing racial

trauma significantly in the community setting and expressed navigating various conflicting viewpoints that impacted her experience as a BAM. Each of these participants' narratives shed insight into the lived experiences of BAMs and spoke to specified domains and themes.

Domains and Themes

All eight of the participants shared their individual experiences as BAMs navigating racial trauma. While their experiences varied across contexts, there were consistent themes that emerged across their narratives. The participants collectively provided narratives connected to the three research questions, (a) Where are BAMs experiencing racial trauma and what perpetrators are impacting their experience? (b) What strategies are BAMs using in the face of racial trauma? and (c) What conflictual viewpoints have BAMs identified that have significantly impacted their experiences in the face of racial trauma? Twelve distinct themes surfaced to describe the various narratives found within the BAMs' experiences of navigating racially traumatic events. The 12 themes are listed in Table 1, along with the number of participants who endorsed each subtheme. As the researcher immersed herself with each participants' story, the themes began to cluster under four broad domains. Each participants' story began by identifying locations where BAMs experienced racial trauma, and the types of trauma connected to each of these experiences of racism. Participants were able to describe methods they used to navigate their environment. The two major coping strategies across the participant pool were internal versus external. Another major theme arising in the narratives was how BAMs are forced to navigate conflictual feelings and thoughts connected to the COVID-19 pandemic. The domains are organized through thematic analysis to help identify and understand the different themes. A detailed illustration of the themes, with quotations from participants to support important representation of their experiences and narratives follows.

Table 1*Themes Encapsulated Within Domains*

Domains and Themes	Participants With Theme
1. Specific Locations BAMS Experience Racial Trauma and the Perpetrators Who Create Further Harm for BAMS' Livelihood	TY, DD, PL, BE, NA, MT, CA, RA
• School Setting	TY, DD, PL, BE, NA
○ School Administrators and Teachers	BL, PH, DH
• Work	MT, PL, CA, TY
Employees in the Workplace	TM
• Community	MT, NA, RA
• Law Enforcement	CF, BL, DH, NJ
2. BAMS Utilize Internalized and Externalized Strategies to Combat Experiences of Racial Trauma	MT, CA, NA, PL, DD, TY, BE
• Internalized Coping	MT, CA, NA, PL, DD, TY
• Externalized Coping	PL, MT, NA, CA, BE, DD
3. Navigating Conflicting Viewpoints	TY, DD, PL, BE, NA, MT, RA, CA
• Community	BE, DD, TY, PL, MT, RA, NA
• COVID-19	NA, RA, PL, BE, CA
• Social Media Platforms	BE, MT, DD, CA, PL, RA, TY
• Protest Engagement	NA, PL, DD, TY

Domain 1: Specific Locations BAMS Experience Racial Trauma and the Perpetrators Who Create Further Harm for BAMS' Livelihood

When participants were asked to describe their experiences of racial trauma, microaggressions and overt racial acts emerged as the two predominant forms. As participants began to share their experiences of covert and overt racial acts, each story started with emphasizing a particular location. While microaggressions were described more often in school and work settings, participants described overt racial acts occurring in their community setting. As the participants' stories unfolded, narratives emerged around specific people in each setting, including school staff, teachers, law enforcement, and employees in the workplace. The majority of participants began in a school setting where perpetrators were teachers and school administrators.

Theme 1: School Setting

Across all participants, the school setting was identified as their first introduction to racial trauma. Participants described being mislabeled and harmfully exploited, becoming targets of verbal aggression, enduring discrimination by peers and teachers, and receiving academic consequences without probable cause. Specifically, Participant PL expressed being addressed as a racial slur at his elementary school based on what his white-identified peer heard from the media. He shared:

Like, in third grade, there was just this this white kid, walked up to me and the other Black friend in the class, and he was like, “What’s up, my ni**a?” And, he was like, he heard this from, from music or on TV, and whatever.

Another participant, BL, shared his experience within the elementary school setting where a teacher threatened to hold him back. Without his mother’s support, this incident could have negatively impacted his academic progression. He stated:

There is some microaggressions that my mom picked up on, and there was one example where my teacher wanted to hold me back in third grade, and my mom didn’t think that was right because I would come home and do homework and turn it in, and like, I got full credit and like, grades are good. But my teacher was saying there’s something missing, and that there’s something wrong with me that I needed to get held back and do third grade over.

Participant DD discussed multiple elementary school experiences where administrators and teachers perceived Black students grouping together as an issue and attempted to dismantle the peer group by applying harsh consequences to separate them:

I remember in elementary school a handful of minority students created a social support group and the teachers and school administrators labeled us a gang, and my group of friends did not create harm. We were just a group of students of color who happen to hang out and have a really good time. Ultimately, the teachers and school administrators told us we had to stop the social group and that we couldn't hang out together.

Participant DD also shared a life event where his brother's teacher bestowed unfair harsh consequences in response to his behavior, separating DD's brother from his learning environment by suspending him from school. DD shared:

I also remember my twin brother got kicked out of school because the teacher suspected he had a bad attitude, and my brother dropped a textbook in his chair as he walked out and the principal immediately suspended him from school.

Participant NA highlighted her perspective on how college advisors require painful narratives from Black students, harmfully exploiting their experiences as a means for Black students to enter college institutions:

I also talk about how high school students feel, like, in order to apply to college, they have to tell the sad stories about where they've come from in order to get in the door, and there are college advisors who are advocating that the kids do that. And institutions shouldn't require Black students to show Black pain or develop Black pain in order for them to get into school or university.

This participant also reflected on an experience where a junior college professor discredited her experience and perpetuated harmful stereotypes by denying her medical experience in an effort to project their own perspective onto the participant:

I actually got sick and reported to a professor because I was in high school, but I was taking a college class. And I was like, “I think I have strep throat. I’ve been going in, like, to get tested.” And the professor was like, “I really do not think that that happened, and you’re having a hypochondriac episode.”

School Administrators and Teachers. Participants described experiences where teachers and school administrators treated them unfairly. They shared how school administrators and teachers perpetuated racism by discrediting participants based on skin color, intentionally separating peer students of color social groups, and inaccurately teaching school materials that involve people of color.

Another participant, BE, described how his third grade experience involved being threatened by his teacher to be held back based on unfair stereotypes instead of academic performance. However, once his mom picked up on this discrepancy, she advocated for the participant’s academic progress. BE further expressed gratitude for his parents advocating and showing up to his school to help mitigate the teacher’s unfair claims of his academic progress:

So once my parents understood my elementary teacher was treating me unfairly my dad came and my mom came to my school and sat in the classroom with the principal. And they talked to the teacher and they found out that this teacher had been fired from another district for doing things that she shouldn’t be doing. I credit my parents for actually being on top of my education and making sure that I was okay.

Participant PL explained his own experience as a Black teacher viewing white identified teachers weaponizing the curriculum to harm Black students and not be held accountable for their actions.

I'm also an arts teacher, then I'm Black, I'm already not valued. I've talked to my colleagues about it, but I have no position of power. ... The school I taught at I would not recommend because they destroy like Black people. like they, they reward loyalty, especially if you're white. And they don't fire anybody. And, you know, like white history and English teachers get to use the N word all the time without any explanation and no purpose. And nothing happens to them and they get reported by students. And teachers get to keep doing the same microaggressions over and over and over again. And nobody cares.

Participant DD shared his unfair experience where teachers and school administrators disbanded the participant's peer group due to how the school system perceived the process of students of color creating community together. Participant DD's narrative, although previously mentioned is like the previous participant's narrative where the school system, including the school's curriculum, can be used to perpetuate racial trauma.

Validating Aspects. Despite all participants experiencing invalidation in the school setting, they were also able to speak to how the school system promotes identity development and promotes strategies for students to better navigate their environment. Participant TY described how her college curriculum helped her navigate her environment.

I was an ethnic-studies major in college and it taught me about what great leadership looked like and what toxic leadership looked like ... to go through this internal battle of internalizing microaggressions and having to deal with it myself and having to move away from it and let it be. And I think one of the biggest things that helped me with that was my master's degree in business management. ... So I understand what it is to make someone a character. ... When you have an understanding of who you are, some social

exchanges don't bother you. ... But when I was studying, you know, and learning these things, and really delving into these books and writing my papers, it really helped me to navigate how the world works.

Participant DD shared a similar narrative around how his private school experience helped him collaborate with his peers and administrators.

It's the little things that create character and change how someone really develops around people, like ... I can deal with other cultures and ... I had to learn how to deal with other people and other perspectives due to my private school experiences.

Teachers and school administrators in the school environment can become a source of stress for students, parents, and teachers. In addition, two participants mentioned how people of the Black community and women of color are not supportive of people in the Black community. The excerpts above describe stressful experiences in the school setting that continue to perpetuate harmful environments for Black individuals. The school environment often became a dichotomous source of stress and identity development. The excerpts above illustrate how these experiences in school continue to perpetuate stressful environments, specifically in the workplace.

Theme 2: Work Setting

Developmentally, the experience of racial trauma continued for participants as they moved from a school setting to a work setting. Racial trauma in the workforce was characterized as events leading to negative stereotypes, harmful and uncomfortable conversation exchanges, and employment and compensation inequality. Participant MT's story highlights the poignant intersection of how inequality in compensation fosters hurtful conversations and negative stereotypes for BAMs:

So my interviewer she tells me, “You cannot start the job until we have documentation confirming that you passed your nursing exam.” So I said, “Okay, fine. This must be operating procedure. I don’t have a problem with it.” Another non-Black person identified woman of color went through the same program. So I said, “Hey, you know, how did you do on your exam?” And she was like, “Oh, I didn’t take my exam yet. It’s not scheduled for another month.” And I said, “Excuse me. So you’ve been here for two weeks during orientation already?”

Participant MT shared her life event that included Black workers being valued as less than and how the workforce is perpetuating a hierarchical structure to perpetuate racism.

Participant MT stated,

So then we get on the topic of pay. I’m a CNA. I only make a little above minimum wage and a non-Black woman of color mentioned she got a \$500 sign on bonus after 3 months and gets paid 50 cents more than I do. And what did I get? I got paid less than her with no signing bonus.

Participant MT also described an experience in the workplace where she navigated an uncomfortable encounter with a coworker touching her hair. Participant MT set boundaries to protect her humanity:

Another incident was when a coworker walked up to me during lunchtime and said, “I’ve always wanted to grab your hair.” And so I looked at her and I said, “Well, I’m glad you have not done that. But, you know, since my hair is just so interesting to you, if you would like to touch it, you can ask me.” And so she goes, “Well, can I touch your hair?” And I was like, “Yes, you can touch it, but do not grab it. Do not pull it, do not pat me like a dog.” And so she touches and she’s like, “Oh my gosh!” like she was excited. And

I thought it was so weird. Like, I thought it was really weird that she was just so excited to touch my hair.

Participant MT also reflected on an uncomfortable experience within the hospital setting where an older, white-identified male patient inquired about her work benefits due to racial identity:

And so I'm like, "I'm a professional you know, I did this for X amount of years, which is why I'm here." And he goes, "Well, are there any extra advantages for colored people?" All I could do is walk out of the patient's room once I finished my work duties.

Participant PL's narrative was used again due to the participant explaining his experience feeling undervalued in the academic work setting as a Black teacher recognizing how the school is a harmful environment for Black students and how the school setting does not hold white identified teachers accountable for the harm they inflict on Black students and teachers.

Participant CA described her experience in the hospital setting where patients utilize microaggressions and harmful assumptions to recognize that the participant is not a native descendent of the place where she is working currently:

That's a microaggression. In the workplace they would tell me like, "Oh, for Black woman you speak so clear." I have had patients who ask me, "Oh, where are you from?" Because they assume that because I'm Brown and all of the people on the island are Black and my English is very clear with no Caribbean accent, then they are like, "Oh, where are you from?" And I'm like, "I can say one of two things. I can say I'm from the Netherlands, which is a neighboring country, or I can say I'm from the United States."

Participant TY shared a life event where the participant's supervisor made a degrading assumption regarding the participant's mother, which created a harmful work environment:

The supervisor that I was working with knew that my mom worked in the healthcare field; my mom actually got her masters in nursing from that same area I worked. So she made it a point to purposely come up and ask me, you know, “Oh, did your mom still work at Walmart?” Now, there’s no problem with working at Walmart, a job is a job. But it was a purposeful attempt to, you know what I mean, to degrade her work in what she does, like, you know she works in the healthcare field; you know that she has a master’s and that she’s educated. Those negative stereotypes out there.

Employees in the Workplace. One participant identified other employees in the workplace as perpetrators of racial trauma due to perpetuating harmful stereotypes and assumptions that targeted participants’ physical features, medical state, and family members. While only one participant illustrated this narrative, it is important to demonstrate how perpetrators engage in racial trauma and how it is different based on location. Participant TY explained another example where she encountered verbal assault from her employees; the employees asked damaging questions involving harmful stereotypes toward the participant:

I was in a workspace with additional coworkers and I was pregnant with my daughter, and two coworkers asked me did I know who the father of my child was and I know that was said to make me upset, and mirroring harmful negative stereotypes. I filed a grievance complaint and through that grievance complaint, I found out that there were multiple students and staff who had the same issues with the same coworkers, and they just never said anything.

While school and work were predominately viewed as stressful environments, perpetuating harmful and uncomfortable experiences, participants navigated dichotomous life events within their own communities.

Theme 3: Community Setting

In addition to school and work, participants also spoke to how they encountered racial trauma within their communities. They illustrated how unsafe public spaces, regions, and locations negatively impacted their ability to exercise, walk, and engage in their own communities. Multiple participants (MT and NA) described encountering racially motivated assaults in their communities. For example, Participant MT stated:

But just living here. Like, I like my area. I live in a small town, which is right outside of a larger city, like I walked down the street and then I tried to come home and walk five more miles just around the neighborhood. People throw bottles of water at me while they were driving, and I'm walking, minding my business. ... Like I've been a member of 24-Hour Fitness for a long time. I will drive all the way to neighboring [areas] instead of going to the one up the street, and there's no space, there's no Black community here in Orange County.

As participants experienced racially motivated trauma in their communities, they were forced to change how they navigated their own neighborhoods. Many times, participants encountered life-threatening situations. Participant NA described how she would be spit on as she was simply trying to enjoy a walk with her mother when she was a senior in high school:

So I was in San Francisco with my mom out for like a walk and I actually got spit on by an Asian-identified woman. And that was an extremely interesting experience, especially as a senior in high school. And the reason for it was because I was Black. And as an outcome my mother called the police.

As participants experienced an increase in community racial trauma, they described feeling desensitized to unsafe experiences in their communities. Participant RA highlights this phenomenon in her story:

Living in East Oakland and being involved the street life, I see so much on a daily basis I am desensitized and see my experiences just like normal. Like, when I hear gunshots. I experience life and death situations living out here and it's like, hey, look, others can't understand what I go through.

These narratives speak to how community racial trauma leads to feeling unsafe, requiring participants to be strategic in navigating their day-to-day activities, and how they become desensitized to the impact the violence is having on each of their lives.

Theme 4: Law Enforcement

Half of the participants spoke to the ways in which law enforcement perpetuates the experience of racial trauma within their communities. Specifically, these participants described the ongoing reality of being detained by police at a higher rate, and recognized how this reality shapes the way in which they navigate their community. Participant CA described her encounter with white-identified police officers as harmful based on a police officer romanticizing her identity as a Black American woman. She articulated feeling dehumanized and being a victim of a verbal sexual assault:

My experience with police has been the older white male who is fantasizing or fetishizing, the young Black girl, and it's like, oh, the young Black girl with the thick eyebrows, the thick lips. And they're like, "Oh, well, just slowdown, sweetheart, you know, don't worry, I'm not going to give you a ticket this time."

Participants BE further illustrated how he was made uncomfortable by the style of police questioning:

I remember being pulled over by the police. Oh, I remember like, the police was like saying, “Oh, I’m going to search the car,” and I’m like, “Okay, well, you know.” And he was like, “Are you the owner of the car?” and I’m like, “Well, it’s my parents’ [car].” And then the police asked, “What are you doing in the area?” And it’s like, I live here. Like my license has my address. The police was just very intense for no reason. I just remember like, him asking, “What do your parents do?” And I was like, “Oh, my mom’s a psychiatrist and my dad’s a lawyer.” And then once that happened, everything just switched, and the police mentioned to just get the car’s headlight fixed and they let me go home.

Participant DD also explained feeling uncomfortable by police questioning in addition to an increased police presence during the traffic stop.

I was riding in a car with two of my brothers and our good friend, making it four of us, and we were pulled over by the police. During the stop seven police cars arrived and my friends and I were only in one vehicle. In my mind I thought, “Why are there so many police cars?” When we first get stopped, we’re being asked so many questions like if we’re criminals versus the real reason why we were pulled over in the first place.

While participants identified locations involving unsafe perpetrators, such as school administrators, teachers, employees of the workplace, supervisors, and law enforcement, participants expressed insight into their lived experience in efforts to help them navigate challenging situations. Each participant expressed experiences in which they were being treated unfairly by teachers, school administrators, employees in the workplace, and law enforcement.

These experiences involved being discredited based on skin color, joining with a group of students, and educators inaccurately teaching school materials that involve people of color. Participants discussed locations, such as school, work, and communities as stressful and racially harmful spaces that must be navigated through when interacting with perpetrators in their community.

The participants' narratives personify how BAMs navigate a distinct range of racial traumas, from minor insults to more overt acts. The experience of repeated microaggressions and overt styles of racism was a central theme in the narrative of the participants. All the participants highlighted a process of building a façade where their true emotions needed to be constricted to navigate difficult circumstances.

Domain 2: BAMs Utilize Internalized and Externalized Strategies to Combat Experiences of Racial Trauma

In response to experiencing racial trauma beginning in the school setting, through work, and in the community, BAMs spoke to how they developed both internal and external coping strategies. All of the participants spoke to how various strategies were instrumental in maintaining their health and wellness. Some strategies targeted the individual, while others were more geared toward healing the collective community. Internalized coping strategies were focused on promoting a sense of identity, health, self-care, spirituality, and sense of belonging within the greater Black community, while externalized coping strategies targeted social support and advocacy.

Theme 5: Internalized Coping

Internalized coping techniques took the form of exercising, listening to music, cooking from old family recipes, travel, self-reflection, hair care, and journaling. For example, Participant MT shared:

I want to walk five to 10 miles a day. But if I just walk up the block and back to my front door just to clear my head, that helps, you know; there is no fitness goal. No, no health goal in mind ... is just movement. Yes. Moving to release, okay, it's calming. ... Also, definitely cooking, you know, and keeping those family recipes going and that, that has always been a big thing for me. ... I need to feed myself, but also just being in the spirit of feeding other people. ... My family loves to feed anybody and everybody around them.

So for a long time, that was a big coping strategy, and sometimes it still is.

Participant CA highlighted how she uses travel to engage in personal self-reflection, wellness, and spirituality:

I love to travel. I feel like being able to kind of put yourself in a different space to reflect and meditate is very helpful. ... I like to put whatever emotions on the paper. And I want to know how I was feeling, how I processed it. ... I feel like self-care is everything. I will go to the spa. I love the spa. I will get a massage and facial, my nails done, hair done because I always feel like if you look good ... there's nothing that can shake me because God has already given me everything that I want right now. I'm living in one of my unanswered prayers, or one of my answered prayers where you're not going to stop me.

Participant NA mentioned how her individual coping strategy of taking care of her hair heightens her sense of belonging with the greater Black community, as she celebrates and embraces the natural texture of Black hair:

Everybody rocking their natural hair right now. It's part of the natural hair movement.

The concept is just, I'm Black and I have curly hair. And we're going to have a community and be happy together because we have curly hair and we're Black.

One participant, DD, described how his process of intentionally suppressing outward emotion in response to racial trauma was a critical internal coping mechanism: "I had to learn don't cry, just pull it together, and that's a mechanism to protect myself and an aspect of surviving and not thriving. And at some point, I get tired of surviving and want to get into the thriving aspect." He also detailed how he engages in journal-writing to effectively create a safe space from him to process his emotions:

I also journaled most of my life. So it's definitely getting able to write, like, get those feelings and things out, because I feel like that's what eats people up; they hold on to certain emotions and won't feel them.

The role of spirituality was highlighted when Participant TY explained how believing in a higher power helps her cope with racial trauma and better adapt to her daily living environment:

I don't consider myself a Christian. I'm not an atheist either. I definitely do believe in higher power and we're part of this beautiful art piece that a higher power created to let us see things that we're supposed to see.

While participants shared strategies they use on an individual internal level, participants also described using externalized styles of coping to promote healing strategies with the greater collective of Black American social support.

Theme 6: Externalized Coping

Externalized coping mechanisms were defined by the participants as advocacy, community engagement, and family events such as collectively cooking a meal. Advocacy was

defined by the participants as either having someone stand up for them or learning the skill of advocating for the community. For example, Participant PL expressed how he utilizes his platform as a faculty advisor to advocate for middle school students of color:

Some of the students discuss things with me ... because I'm a faculty advisor for the Students of Color alliance for the middle school. So I guess from kids to faculty, I'm in an awkward place. But, you know, it's like, kids are telling me about what my racist colleagues are doing and I want to advocate for them [the students].

Additionally, Participant MT explained how her school director serves as an ally because she advocates for her and places her in active academic roles where she can thrive:

My director of my nursing school and her husband identify as Indian. She is an ally and very sweet. She appointed me to be class president. She makes me team leader in clinicals and advocates for me.

Advocacy was also identified as coming from within a participant's family. For example, Participant NA described how her mother's advocacy throughout the duration of the participant's physical assault was salient in her experience while she faced racial trauma.

I was like, this Asian-identified woman spit on me. And so my mother was being my advocate in that moment, and literally actively calling the police and following them. But I was in disbelief because of what happened.

Participant CA's narrative highlights how she utilizes her mother's support on a day-to-day basis to successfully navigate racial trauma. "My mom actually prays with me over the phone every day." Furthermore, Participant PL discussed his experience of feeling supported when his mother advocated for him in the school setting after he encountered a racially charged incident.

So right when I told my mom that my white identified third grade classmate called me a racial slur, she flipped and turned the school upside down to report the incident I told her, and she really supported me.

Participant MT's narrative mentioned how cooking in a community was identified as a therapeutic, externalized coping mechanism. "My family has always coped through cooking. And that's probably one thing I'll never let go of, oh, whether it's in a traditional sense or in a health promoting way." This coping mechanism highlights how family traditions strengthen the health and identity for BAMs. Humor was another salient coping strategy within the participants' narratives. Specifically, DD stated: "It's just different for the Black community. And I know a coping strategy of ours is humor."

Participants reflected on feeling a sense of belonging, support, and advocacy from family, friends, and school administrators. An aspect of externalized coping that was salient in participants' narratives is how advocacy can be found in the support of family members and allies. Participants' narratives captured how social support can be deemed as a protective factor through advocating and validating BAMs' experience. Internal and external coping strategies aid participants to endure daily life challenges on an internal level and leave space to heal and share experiences with their chosen social support system. In addition to internalized and externalized coping participants also shared the difficulties associated with navigating various spaces and online platforms, including pros and cons that impact BAMs' life experiences.

Domain 3: Navigating Conflicting Viewpoints

When participants were asked to illustrate their experiences with engaging with the larger Black community, social media platforms, their experiences around COVID-19, and protest engagement, two conflictual viewpoints emerged. Participants' narratives described how each

viewpoint led to feelings of dehumanization, invalidation, and widening the gap between generations. As the participants' stories unfolded, narratives emerged around feelings of advocacy from their social support networks, engaging in self-reflective practices, creating spaces on social media platforms to tell their stories around their lived experiences, and raising their voices as a collective in support of social justice. Most of the participants' narratives started in the community setting where they experienced both invalidating and validating aspects that further captures their lived experience.

Theme 7: Community

Participants explained both validating and invalidating facets that impact developing a sense of community and safety. Participants shared how family and friends demonstrate supportive aspects that validate the sense of belonging through advocacy, family tradition, communication, and teaching life lessons. Participants also shared how lack of support from family and friends, the inability to express emotions, and no communication between generations invalidate the feeling of community and safety.

Validating Factors. Through their narratives, participants identified social support from friends and family as a mitigating factor to combat racial trauma. Participant BE explained having the support of his parents enhanced his sense of safety and belonging. Specifically, Participant BE recognized his parents advocated for and checked on his wellbeing when he shared,

I credit my parents for actually being on top of my education and making sure that I was okay. ... But mental health has definitely been like, a topic that I feel the Black community has had a lot more information around. And so, it has definitely opened a

platform for like, Black therapists and like Black folks who are in mental health to really speak up on issues, coping strategies, and triggers.

Another Participant DD discussed how his grandparents provided a sense of belonging by educating him on life events to help him better navigate the world around him. Participant DD shared,

I mean, I have wonderful grandparents who tried to educate me about racism and tried to provide a different sense of like, “We’re gonna try to provide you with the best we can, especially growing up in a big city.”

Participant PL also described how family and friends are an important support that allows him to process life events and make meaning of his emotions. “The way I deal with my emotions and life events are through talking with my family and friends.”

Invalidating Factors. Participants described invalidating aspects that prevented them from further developing unity and safety within the Black community. The experiences included shared feelings around division between generations, lack of space to express emotional vulnerability, and lack of social support. Specifically, Participant MT shared that no sense of social support and advocacy promote an unsafe and toxic environment.

There’s no sense of community here in this large city. There’s no sense of advocacy; like this is really like a toxic environment. But it also just shows like it’s a place where Black folks really pass through, like, I’m here to get to a destination and get up out of here.

Participant RA discussed that she feels more heard and received by the individual relationships she develops instead of the larger community due to feeling a lack of support in the community. “There was no sense of community growing up in this small city. I have a healthy point. I have good people or a good buddy to have a conversation with but never a group.”

Participant TY shared feelings unsupported by the community due to the lack of safety to express emotional vulnerability. “The community creates another generation of people who can’t really express their feelings or they have a hard time. ... Like, I’m 29 years old, and I still hate that I cry in front of people.”

Participant NA explained in her narrative how different barriers faced within the community between generations create a divide; conversation between generations can open more channels of understanding.

I think a huge part of the disconnect is when you’re dealing with different generations, not understanding where they are. ... But the disconnect is, you’ll have older generations who are like, okay, we have something to lose, because we no longer have to deal with redlining, because we no longer, you know, have to deal with loan processes that areas discrimination, as discriminatory as they were before. We no longer have, like so many hurdles to get over to make it possible for you to purchase a home; there are still hurdles, but there are not as much. And then you have millennials who are like, no, here are still these hurdles that I have to go over without understanding that they’re something that another generation feels like they could lose, because of the opportunities that they’ve gained in that space. And I use redlining again, just as an example, because that applies to pretty much every category of civil rights advancement. ... For older generations, they know what they have come from, so they have something to lose. Whereas younger generations don’t necessarily identify what or where they come from, or they think that it’s been so far away, that they don’t feel that they have those things to lose and that they’re coming from a different starting point. And I feel like when you can acknowledge that there’s a different starting point, it opens up room for a greater conversation between

generations, because it requires one side to acknowledge, a lot of work has been accomplished.

Participants expressed narratives around how community can be built within the Black American community in addition to narratives around how division between generations, the inability to express emotional vulnerability, and feeling of disconnect from the larger Black community impact a lack of a sense of safety. Participants also explained the conflicting viewpoints within the Black community around COVID-19.

Theme 8: COVID-19

Another conflictual viewpoint emerged for BAMS when they were asked to describe their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants narratives described how the COVID-19 pandemic stay-at-home order and social distancing created a space for BAMS to engage in self-reflection that promoted their well-being. As the participants' experiences unfolded, narratives emerged around feeling desensitized and dehumanized based upon the overly displayed deaths of Black lives on various media platforms due to the state-sanctioned killings by law enforcement against Black individuals. All participants shared stories that captured invalidating and validating aspects that further captures their lived experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Validating Aspects. Participants explained how the COVID-19 pandemic opened additional opportunities for the Black community to engage in self-reflection. Specifically, Participant NA expressed how the pandemic created additional opportunities for healing due to sheltering in place.

But I also feel like I feel like there's more opportunity for healing in the pandemic, than we've had in a long time ... because we didn't have to go into our workplaces and put on

a brave face and leave our home. ... And that's not to say that the pandemic was easy, because it often required us to sit and deal with microaggressions and the impact that had on our psyche and our health, and I think it for some people, it strengthened the community. ... But the pandemic required a reckoning around our own personal self-awareness and how we deal with race-based trauma within ourselves.

Participant NA also discussed her perspective of how the pandemic allowed BAMs to take more agency in choosing the members of their community with which they feel the safest. Participant NA stated,

A big part of what the pandemic taught a lot of millennials ... the question came up, "Who's here for me, in the midst of all of this?" And just because somebody looked like you didn't mean they were gonna be there for you. ... And just because somebody didn't look like you didn't mean they wouldn't be there ... it was really about how do you create a community that fosters who you are, accepts and engages with your Blackness and empowers you to be the best version of you that you can be? I think that that's what most millennials want, is to feel like they're in that space every day, and have that community every single day. ... And the pandemic gave us the opportunity to be like, "No, I have the choice to be in that space and have that community connection."

Participant RA explained how the pandemic, alongside the death of George Floyd, created a sense of belonging in the greater community in the city of Oakland. "Especially around the pandemic, when George Floyd passed, during the protest I really remember how the Oakland community and Oakland neighborhoods came together."

Invalidating Aspects. As the participants' narratives around COVID-19 developed they also identified invalidating aspects, such as how the pandemic overly displayed state-sanctioned

killings on various media platforms and created a distrust within the Black community, healthcare system, and service industry. Participant BE commented on how the pandemic introduced new challenges that impacted people's behavior.

During COVID I noticed more disadvantaged people that have to work in the service industry. And they're kind of faced with ... they put a mask on, where they also don't want to get sick and then bring it home to their family. Right. And so that I think that's why right now you're kind of seeing like a rebellion. COVID-19 had everyone acting a fool. So it's hard to say if people were really showed their true colors, or if they were acting irrationally.

Participant CA explained how the pandemic widened the sense of distrust with health care in the Black community.

COVID had the Black community in a state of fear. And unfortunately for the Black community, already having trust issues with health care. ... I feel like it's kind of widened that distrust in a sense because, you know, me being in healthcare, my goal is to kind of bridge that gap. But the gap has gotten so much bigger, because now people are like, there's a vaccine. Okay, now they have multiple brands of the vaccine. Okay, now we have to take the booster. Oh, right, and there's possibility of another booster and a booster every other year. What? So now they're going to start charging for shots. Like, what's going on here? So of course big pharmaceutical companies has their hand and everything which we all know, it's capitalism.

Participant PL identified the state-sanctioned killing of George Floyd by police as a public lynching and how airing George Floyd's death on television gained a lot of communities' attentions due to the shelter in place requirements. "Memorial weekend 2020 many were all

forced to watch a public lynching on TV and everybody was sitting at home because of the pandemic.” While participants discuss both validating and invalidating aspects that took place during the pandemic, participants also identified the dichotomous experience with the usage of social media platforms during the pandemic as well.

Theme 9: Social Media Platforms

In addition to community and COVID-19 viewpoints participants also expressed how they encountered conflictual viewpoints with the usage of technology. They described the usage of social media platforms support the Black community, such as keeping the community informed, connected, creates opportunities for BAMs to express themselves, and heightens a sense of belonging within the larger Black community. As the participants’ narratives continued to develop negative aspects emerged that captured BAMs feeling that social media creates a barrier in closing the gap between generations creating harmful spaces that perpetuate racism, dehumanization, and desensitization to Black American grief.

Validating Elements. Participants’ narratives identified validating elements of social media that support the development of the Black community creating a space for humor, connectedness, and raising awareness.

Specifically, Participant BE reflected on how social media platforms opened spaces for humor, created a place to inform the larger Black community, and created opportunities for advocacy and activism.

Black Twitter is the funniest. And the most at home. I feel like when things go on, if you go on Twitter, like it is just nothing but, and I don’t know if it’s a good thing or a bad thing, I don’t know if it’s just how we process trauma. ... My cousin is an activist and leads that activist space. And there’s other activists that I follow on social media, as well.

... Social media has been a platform for us to really inform our community and really break down barriers and generational traumas, so I feel like social media can be a double-edged sword and I feel like it's definitely a balance because some Black folks feel like social media can't be perfect.

Participant TY similar to Participant BE's narrative explained how content creators from various social media platforms create space for humor for the Black community to enjoy:

My coworker introduced me to Clubhouse and I think that's been a really good space for people of our Black community to use ... just having moments of laughter. ... YouTube Live has really good content creators that dive into various topics that I can identify with.

Participant MT shared how social media platforms create online spaces for the larger Black community to come together.

Social media keeps us connected, so we do have a chance to commune together no matter how far apart we are; that's a big advantage. And social media makes it easier to navigate a lot of things, Instagram is linked to Facebook, is linked to Snapchat and you can find anything you need. And one, by clicking a hashtag, which is dope at the end of the day because we can find community just from a hashtag.

Participant CA, similar to Participant MT, explained in her narrative how social media has created additional channels of communication and more spaces to highlight the Black community's uniqueness. She also expressed how the channels create opportunities for the Black community to connect and reach out to others stating,

Social media has definitely allowed an easier form of communication for individuals within the Black community, I feel like there are more spaces that are specific to the Black community, like Black Excellence, or Black Girl Magic, or whatever it is. And I

see like the different people who are on social media portraying their talents or just starting businesses. And it's like, well, I want to support that, or I want to be a part of that. ... Also, you can send whatever you need to send to anyone, anywhere in the world. And you can connect on an experience. You can connect on a post that will hold true to everyone. And it's funny because like, I was laughing at my post that I seen where it was like things that Black people say. ... I will say social media makes it's nice to be able to talk to people online. ... I get so many people that ask me questions about medicine or say can you say a prayer for me or something? But overall, when you respond to people, there's a connection being made, that you don't necessarily think is being made. Even if you answer a question or you encourage someone.

Another Participant PL similar to narratives by CA and MT further reflect that social media platforms create a sense of belonging. "Social media helps us to become closer and better connected so I'm a part of at least one social media group." Participant DD's narrative captured how social media platforms created space for an awareness within the Black community and highlighted, "Social media has done a good job trying to just create awareness for Black people in the Bay Area."

Invalidating Aspects. As the participants' narratives around the usage of social media platforms continued to develop they also described invalidating aspects. All participants shared that invalidating aspects negatively impact experiences of Black lives due to social media perpetuating racism through content shared on social media platforms. For example, content regarding state sanctioned killings by law enforcement against Black individuals that is broadcasted through social media platforms creates spaces for larger communities to dehumanize and desensitize Black suffering. Specifically, Participant BE described how the oversharing the

visuals of state-sanctioned killings reinforce the feeling of desensitization and dehumanizing Black lives.

I feel like social media does a lot of oversharing and I feel like sometimes it takes away the humanity in that person. It just dehumanizes and desensitizes us to human suffering, and things that we should not be witnessing over and over again. The George Floyd video was played 24/7, and everywhere you turned that video was just playing, and it's just really traumatic. But at the same time, when you have to deal with that trauma, you have to not let it affect you in a way. So then you kind of become numb to it.

Participant MT, similar to BE described in her narrative how mentally stressful it is to continually be exposed to visuals of state-sanctioned killings involving individuals in the Black individuals lead to heightened feelings of desensitization toward Black grief, which can serve as a barrier to building the Black community. Participant MT shared,

Social media also perpetuates a lot of the racial trauma porn is what I call it. Like, reposting the police murders and everything else is like trauma porn, and it's mentally just stifling when you have to see that every single time. Social media censors things that have to do with certain keywords, which is normally like discriminating and they are good at blocking and censoring content. But as soon as a Black person gets gunned down by the police, and it's posted under hashtags, social media don't censor that material. And the community is so sensitive to it. Social media wants us to become desensitized to it to make us think that it's normal. And so that's why I just try to I stay off of social media a lot. Because it's too much for me. I'm here trying to find a social group and I'm here to try to find community. I'm here trying to find entertainment and solace that are away

from the happenings of everyday life. Social media is great, but it's a double-edged sword.

Participant DD shares similar perspectives narrated from Participants BE and MT expressing how the overexposure to violent visuals of Black individuals on social media desensitizes individuals' views toward violence and dilutes opportunities to have and maintain meaningful conversations in the Black community. Participant DD shared,

I think top social media platforms are trashed when it comes to trying to hold real decent conversations, because it just gets convoluted with Black organizations starting to have kind of real conversations about race, and other races sometimes making it such a different issue. Such as, why give a space to the whole Black Lives Matter movement when Blue Lives? The Black community have been grieving for so long; the larger community sees Black people die on camera and now people are desensitized. And I tell people there's a certain aspect of watching violence and people don't seem bothered by that. And I think that's where I feel it started to become so desensitized to violence. No one cares no more, like when someone dies.. I've seen people not stand up in the midst of assaults and people are recording the incident rather than trying to defuse it.

Participant TY explained how the use of cell phones recording Black deaths are harmful due to the content uploaded on social media platforms and how the focus has shifted from being empathetic to one's life to how quickly the content can be shared to the larger community.

Participant TY stated,

The camera phone has just been so traumatizing, to say the least, because it's filmed a lot of state-sanctioned deaths like Sandra Bland, George Floyd, and Brianna Taylor. So it's like being desensitized to it and how folks are so quick to pick up a camera in hopes that

they'll be notarized or legendary members, because they were the one who got the footage first. It's like, these are people's lives. This person is someone's father or uncle. Participant DD shares his similar perspective with participant TY around how cell phone recording of death of Black lives can lead to feelings of desensitization.

It's just been challenging to navigate this narrative, keeping in mind the civil rights movement, and let's not pretend George Floyd popped out of nowhere. ... Death, in my perspective, makes the world desensitized to things like George Floyd. And his death was recorded, and what I feel the world experienced being desensitized to his death, because the Black community has been grieving as a nation since years ago.

These narratives speak to how invalidating aspects about social media platforms, perpetuate racial trauma leading to participants feeling dehumanized based on the over sharing of visuals depicting state sanctioned killings by law enforcement against Black bodies on social media platforms, requiring participants to be mindful in how much social media engagement they are interacting with, and how they vulnerable to becoming desensitized to the impact death of Black lives has on each of their experiences. While validating and invalidating aspects of social media was captured, participants also explain the conflictual viewpoints that emerge around protest engagement.

Theme 10: Protest Engagement

Alongside community, COVID-19, and social media viewpoints shared, participants also expressed how they experienced conflictual viewpoints around protest engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants narrated that protest engagement opened spaces for Black voices to be amplified around social justice allowing the Black community to come together in unity to combat racial trauma and injustice. As participants' narratives continued to mature,

negative aspects emerged illustrating how protest engagement increased negative emotionality and negatively impacted communities where the protesting took place.

Validating Aspects. Participant NA and PL described validating aspects capturing how protest engagement opened a multifaceted space for Black voices to be amplified against racial injustice, liberation to be celebrated, and increased the sense of feeling connected with the larger Black collective. Specifically, Participant NA expressed how talking about protesting brings about feelings of liberation and unity:

When I talk about protests, they're moments of liberation. It's a place for someone to be in a space where they can go and scream in solidarity with other people, and, if someone is looking for it to be more than that, it requires a better understanding of how the organization that put the protest together is moving, and what their accountability is. If you really needed to get out there and fight and scream, and I say fight, I mean scream, because most of our protests were nonviolent, right?

Participant PL reflected on how protesting can take different forms and the various forms amplify voices toward injustice. "Protest comes in a lot of different forms. ... Writing letters and sending some letters to some of the officials at the district attorney's office ... or whether through the arts.

Invalidating Aspects. As participants' stories continued to build they also illustrated negative aspects of protest engagement. Participants NA and DD discussed how protest engagement can negatively impact emotionality and neighboring communities. Participant NA expressed in her narrative how protesting can promote feelings of frustration and disappointment with society; there is the possibility of negative outcomes from the protest. Participant NA's narratives captured Black feminist theory as she highlighted the challenges Black women face

related to empowerment and intersectionality of BAMs. Her response illustrates the Black feminist theory framework that discusses power dynamics that contribute to inequalities within society (Pérez & Williams, 2014). Participant NA shared,

But I think that there are many times that Black people leave protest more frustrated than when they arrived, when the protest doesn't produce the outcome that they desired. ... I think the second protest, I went to Berkeley, we planned this, it was all the Black students. And the news media came and all this happened, but the agreement was, none of us were going to speak to them, we would only have one person to talk to them and decided not to talk to them for 2 days. But by then, the energy that goes with a protest that someone came to film is gone. ... So all of the momentum was lost, and the impact that was expected to have did not transpire, right? ... So for me, that was frustrating, because I was like, it was a protest, the protest is great ... you can't change America overnight. Or you can't change the police department overnight, or you can't change the way jury structures work overnight. ... And you got to figure out how to deal with that. So that's what I feel like the pandemic did; it required Black Americans to figure out how we were going to deal with what we already had been dealing with, and whether or not we were going to do it in a new way.

Participant DD expressed in his narrative how protesting can create opportunities of harmful disruptive behavior that negatively impact the community, such as rioting. Participant DD also spoke about the importance of thinking of additional ways to create change outside of protesting to better protect the communities and local businesses.

The George Floyd protest ended in a riot in Oakland, and it tore up most of Foothill Square and looting. ... Having seen so many other riots and understanding they happen ...

now you're just taking Black death and using it as a means of rioting and looting when that's not, that's not the purpose. And then better yet, you're tearing up your own community, which I've heard people argue this before. ... What our generation is missing is that we have so much more power than just protesting because then most of the time, the protesting leads to loitering and tearing it up. We're now losing in the chaos versus it being like, I want to see somebody do a strategic way that shows what a protest looks like and bringing people out, that type of thing, but I feel like they tried a few years ago. It's just the disconnection between the different Black people at this point. Because I feel like how are we feeling on the West Coast is definitely different from how Black people feel in the South.

All participants' narratives described encountering conflictual viewpoints regarding community, COVID-19, social media, and protest engagement. Across all viewpoints validating aspects narrated by participants included heightened sense of belonging through advocacy, increase in individual wellness through self-reflection, increase in connectedness within the larger Black collective, and Black voices unifying against racial trauma. Across all viewpoints invalidating aspects illustrated by participants captured the larger Black collective not being a source of safety, negative emotionality, inability to express emotionality, social media overly sharing Black deaths leading to the participants feeling desensitized and dehumanized, and protest engagement further dividing communities. The participants' stories painted here in the results chapter exhibit how their lived experiences are an integral element in how they respond to racial trauma. The discussion chapter will add evidenced based interpretations alongside the participants' narratives to further shed insight into BAMs unique reality.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore emergent themes that captured the experiences of BAMs in the face of racial trauma while looking at essential externalized and internalized coping strategies employed by BAMs when encountering racial trauma. As illustrated in the results section, data were collected from eight participants utilizing semistructured interviews. Findings revealed three domains and 10 themes. Although there were variances in participants' narratives, the identified emergent themes operated as important aspects that described participants' understanding of their identities and life events.

Black participants were first asked to describe locations where they experience racial trauma and the actors who impact their experience of racial trauma. Participants' stories began by identifying salient locations of racially driven events and systems that perpetuate the opportunities for racial trauma. The participants' narratives of racial trauma highlighted and identified areas where the participants recognized an increased volume of racial trauma, such as school, work, the greater Black community, and with law enforcement. The school setting can promote or destroy academic environments (Griffith et al., 2022). Participants reported the school setting perpetuated racial trauma in addition to building resilience. In comparison to previous generations who were products of segregation in the school setting, BAMs receive unfair treatment resulting in disciplinary action and subtle racism in the form of racial microaggressions and microinsults (Griffith et al., 2022; Harwood et al., 2012; Pickett, 2020). Additionally, BAMs are distrustful of school staff and have a tendency toward displaying challenging behavior (Griffith et al., 2022; Harwood et al., 2012; Pickett, 2020).

The work setting is also a location participants deemed harmful due to experiences of racial trauma. Black employees comprise a significant portion of the working population. In 2016, 12.3% of the working population was Black. This percentage is projected to increase to 12.7% by 2026 (Rolen & Toossi, 2018, para. 4). In comparison to previous generations where access to mental health was scarce, BAMS have increased access to mental health services due to employee assistance programs (Alleyne, 2004). However, BAMS still experience hesitancy utilizing the programs based on limited sessions offered and not enough Black identified mental health clinicians (Nelson, 2022). BAMS experience covert styles of racism resulting in feeling shame and feeling isolated from other employees (Alleyne, 2004). In contrast to the experiences of previous generations, participants expanded on how BAMS do not feel a sense of safety and advocacy in the community setting, and how chronic stress from the environment can put BAMS' health at risk (Cozier et al., 2007). Crucial community setting areas involve various institutions and hierarchical systems that serve to propagate and perpetuate racial trauma. Participants further identified each setting as places where multiple accounts of verbal assaults occur, and no action is taken to hold perpetrators accountable. Thus, participants deemed the settings unsafe and harmful environments for BAMS.

BAMS' experiences shed light on how this generation navigates covert and overt styles of racism. Bullard (1998) highlighted how the narrative of racial trauma is shifting between the generations. Historically, racial trauma—including the era of slavery and Jim Crow—was overt, easy to witness, and resulted in visible scars (Bullard, 1998). The experiences faced by BAMS today involve aspects of both covert and overt styles of racism, making this generation unique compared to preceding generations (Neville et al., 2013). The BAMS' lived experience captured their narration of daily encounters with microaggressions and illuminated how their adaptability

to their experiences ultimately shaped their emotional response development and resilience. BAMs' experience is different from previous generations because while prior generations of Black people navigated through the eras of slavery and Jim Crow while managing the hardship and discrimination styles of overt racism, BAMs are exposed to discrimination styles of overt racism and covert racism due to postracial aspects sparked by the effects of the Obama administration and presidency (Luckerson, 2015). It is more difficult for BAMs to navigate racism today because it is less overt and more covert. According to Bonilla-Silva (1997), the concept of racism is viewed as systematic and organized around races' different interests. Bonilla-Silva also shared how, in previous generations, racial aspects of social systems were associated to hierarchical structures between races (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). What has shifted from previous generations is the concept of racism that BAMs face today, including racial practices derived from the Jim Crow era that reproduce racial inequality, which are increasingly covert and embedded in various institutions.

BAMs experienced the historic event of having the first Black president. During the Obama presidency, conflictual viewpoints were exhibited and surfaced amongst political parties. For example, liberals held the notion that Obama's racial identity might be viewed as an important milestone to increase racial opportunity in America while conservatives believed Obama's identity might heighten a threat to their perceived control over the country (Harris & Lieberman, 2013). According to Harris and Lieberman (2013), Obama's racial identity served as a contingency cue and an important feature that conveyed information about the barriers faced by minority groups and the opportunities afforded to minority groups. Harris and Lieberman stated that Black Americans perceived Obama's identity as a milestone of Black progression. Therefore, Harris and Lieberman suggested that Obama's administration and presidency granted

opportunities within the Black community to increase feelings of comfort and belonging in settings where Black people have experienced discrimination, including work, school, and community. In addition, Obama's influence, which was guided by his popularity amongst American voters, suggests the concept of a postracial era that may impact BAMs' experience of being exposed to an increased style of covert racism alongside a reduced style of overt racism (Harris & Lieberman., 2013).

The results showcase how BAMs' navigation of microaggressions can induce high levels of stress and anger, accumulating Black people's feelings of invisibility and marginalization (Franklin, 1999; Pierce, 1988; Sue et al., 2007). Sue et al. (2007) emphasized the level of mental exhaustion connected to navigating microaggressions and explained microaggressions as brief; commonplace; and everyday verbal, behavioral, and environmental factors directed toward Black Americans automatically, which can cause considerable psychological distress. BAMs experience microaggressions daily; participants experienced an increased amount of microaggressions in the school and work setting. BAMs' narratives connect to Sue et al.'s findings in that microaggressions are associated with unconscious racism, but are broader, illustrate the dynamic between the perpetrator and recipient, and focus on BAMs' daily encounters. For BAMs, racial trauma is just as detrimental because when exposed to certain situations, BAMs encounter a mix of both covert and overt styles of racial trauma. BAMs experience overt styles of racism due to state-sanctioned killings by law enforcement toward Black bodies and covert styles of racism due to microaggressions, including both microinsults and microinvalidation. According to Sue et al. (2007), microinsults and microinvalidations can be expressed unconsciously by the perpetrator and can communicate a negatively impacting message to the Black individual. Contributing participants shared experiences detailing

microaggressions they had navigated and how adaptability impacts how they process and deal with racial trauma.

Due to the navigation of racism being more complex and less overt, BAMs' responses to discrimination include unifying their voices to raise awareness around social justice. Participants' explanations also captured how their emotional reactions added to their resilience and adaptability to navigate racially traumatic events. According to Bowleg et al. (2003), resilience is the product of successful adaptation despite significant challenges and barriers; BAMs adapt to racially traumatic events through resiliency. Reed and Miller (2016) shared that resilience is a process by which marginalized Black individuals maintain psychological well-being despite oppressive conditions by developmentally thriving and adapting to negative experiences. The participants' explanations correspond to a large body of previous empirical literature highlighting social support as an important element of resilience (Cooper et al., 2013; Griffith et al., 2022; N. M. Hurd et al., 2012; N. M. Hurd & Sellers, 2013; Sánchez et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2013; Wittrup et al., 2019; Zimmerman et al., 2002). Authentic mentoring relationships are connected to a broad scope of positive developmental and educational outcomes among Black students, specifically when the relationships are built by strong trusting bonds and emotional closeness that can positively impact the development of BAMs' identity development, adaptation, and resilience toward harmful race-based events (Cooper et al., 2013; Griffith et al., 2022; N. M. Hurd et al., 2012; N. M. Hurd & Sellers, 2013; Sánchez et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2013; Wittrup et al., 2019; Zimmerman et al., 2002). Previous generations may not have taken into consideration harmful behaviors that can damage one's psychological wellness within both platonic and intimate relationships compared to BAMs who have the element of choosing their social support network in addition to utilizing technology to further assess the potential of a new

addition or reduction to their social circle. Research further suggests BAMs adapt to challenging circumstances through resilience by identifying supportive social relationships that help them build a strong sense of identity and seeking opportunities to engage with their community (Reed & Miller, 2016). BAMs' experiences are different compared to previous generations because they navigate the world as descendants of Black-led movements, the Jim Crow era, segregated communities, and systematic inequality (Darby, 2022). The difference is important because the contribution BAMs bring to the greater Black lineage includes BAMs' responses to racial trauma, including engagement in protests, entering the workforce, and amplifying their voices to fight against social injustice (Darby, 2022).

While researchers, such as Luckerson (2015), discussed that BAMs are left with minor defense mechanisms and rendered psychologically defenseless against both overt and covert racism, BAMs use coping and healing strategies to combat experiences of racial trauma on an individual and collective level. Coping strategies promote BAM wellbeing and resilience. Healing strategies involve encouraging one's sense of belonging within the larger community and receiving advocacy from family members, friends, and school administrators (French et al., 2019; Heilbron & Guttman, 2000). Participants indicated that BAMs utilize internalized and externalized coping strategies to help mitigate and combat overwhelming experiences involved with racial trauma. Participants expressed useful coping strategies both on an individual and collective level to promote identity development alongside feeling a sense of connectedness with friends, family, and the greater Black community.

According to T. L. Brown et al. (2011), coping is a key element of an individual's adaptation to stressful life events and African Americans are at a heightened risk for experiencing stressful life experiences. Blacks have an increased burden of coping with race-

based stress, and experience negative outcomes that are accumulated from the stress of being the target of racial harassment, including hypertension, psychological distress, and financial strain (T. L. Brown et al., 2011; Harrell, 2000; Nazroo, 2003). Participants shared individual coping strategies that help promote their sense of self, health, and spirituality to help combat race-based stress. Previous Black generations utilized strategies such as religion, humor, and venting to cope with race-based events (D. L. Brown, 2008). According to K. D. Brown (2018) and Darby (2022), coping is different for BAMs compared to previous generations because BAMs use of racial socialization. Researchers, such as Darby (2022), highlighted that BAMs are utilizing technology and social media platforms as a method of social justice and to spread positive messages of awareness around race-based events being faced alongside building empathy within the larger Black community.

The second relevant focus participants explained is the importance of utilizing externalized coping and how externalized coping can take the form of healing within the larger community. Previous generations of Black Americans have a higher likelihood to cope with stress through social support and spiritual support seeking (D. L. Brown, 2008; Chapman & Mullis, 2000; Plucker, 1998). Participants highlighted how externalized coping can encourage a sense of belonging and advocacy from the larger Black community. A goal of this study was to seek internalized and externalized coping strategies for BAMs because, in agreement with previous research (D. L. Brown, 2008; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2008), improving adaptation to stress is deemed a significant approach to mitigate stress-inducing experiences in the future. For previous Black generations, externalized coping involved social support derived from the community, African American churches, and family members. What sets BAMs apart, according

to the literature, is that this generation creates bonds with individuals within their family unit as well as persons in the Black community as an important part of their social support network.

Furthermore, as healing and coping strategies were highlighted in the findings, BAMs also expressed conflictual viewpoints on various factors, such as feeling a sense of belonging within the Black community, experiences within scholarly institutions, perspectives on social media platforms, and thoughts around protests during COVID-19. Participants expanded on supportive and validating factors that increase their sense of identity and wellness, while discussing invalidating and unfavorable factors that negatively impact their sense of belonging to the larger Black community and reinforce distrust amongst harmful systems.

The participants' narratives highlighted how cognitive dissonance occurs for BAMs as they navigated their own community, the COVID-19 pandemic, protest engagement, and social media involvement. There is a high likelihood that BAMs express higher levels of cognitive dissonance because of an increased exposure to inconsistencies and expressions of conflicting beliefs. According to Festinger (1957), cognitive dissonance occurs when an individual is seeking consistency across their beliefs. When consistency is not achieved, the individual faces conflict and, as a result, will experience an unpleasant state that motivates them to change one of their beliefs to maintain consistency across all beliefs (Festinger, 1957). Participants' narratives illustrated how community, protest, and social media platform engagement both increased their sense of belonging to the larger Black community and hindered their sense of belonging, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants' narratives also captured the dichotomy experienced during the pandemic as an illustration of cognitive dissonance because the conflicting dialogues were at polar ends of the spectrum. For example, participant NA shared her contradictory experience around protest engagement, citing that protesting creates opportunities

for BAMs to unify their voices and stand together in solidarity around social injustice, yet also leaves protestors feeling defeated in response to how political figures and legislatures respond to BAMs' social activism. Festinger argued that cognitive dissonance is an aversive mental state that motivates the individual to reduce the dissonance. Festinger's argument supports BAMs' experience of conflicting viewpoints related to protesting.

A salient way participants reduced the dissonance they felt around social issues was by focusing on things that support their Black identity, such as increasing a sense of belonging with the larger Black community, feeling more connected to others via social media platforms, and standing in solidarity to amplify Black voices toward social justice. The narrative speaks to when BAMs experience cognitive dissonance around topics such as community, social media, and protest engagement there is a heightened likelihood they will experience additional stress related to their Black identity. Darby (2022) explained BAMs' experience with technology as a dichotomous relationship, stating it has created a space for BAMs to express themselves and raise awareness around social justice while also becoming a place where BAMs are attacked online for sharing their narratives with other social media users. Online aggression increases BAMs' feelings of isolation. Because of this heightened stress related to social media engagement, BAMs vacillate between engaging in creative ways to support Black unity and feeling unsupported in the community or online platform setting.

While participants expanded on their own individual experiences as BAMs in addition to the healing and coping strategies utilized to help mitigate and combat racial trauma, participants also recognized having conflicting viewpoints on aspects impacting their identity development, social support, well-being, and feeling connected to others. Reed and Miller (2016) identified important aspects, such as social support, connecting in safe social groups, and social action

through advocacy and activism that contribute toward Black individuals feeling safe from harm, having increased willingness to engage with the larger Black community, resilience, and identity development. The findings involve BAMs' perspectives on their sense of community, school experiences, and social media platforms, and reflect their thoughts around protests during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants' descriptions of their experiences were summarized in a narrative form to further convey each participant's unique reality. Each theme illustrates the salient and impactful life events BAMs experienced that further illuminate BAMs' resilience and the challenges they face. This chapter contains the interpretations of the findings; clinical, training, and research implications, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for clinical practice, training, and research.

Interpretations of Findings

Domain 1: Specific Locations BAMs Experience Racial Trauma and the Perpetrators That Create Further Harm for BAMs' Livelihood

RQ1 asked: *Where are BAMs experiencing racial trauma and who are impacting their experience?* Domain 1 and its associated themes were utilized to address this question. This domain concerned participants' explanations about the negative impact of racial trauma in three locations: school, work, and community; trauma was perpetuated by school administrators, teachers, law enforcement, and employees in the workplace. All participants spoke to how the school, work, and community locations perpetuate racial harm.

School Setting

The first theme under Domain 1 was school setting. Within that theme, two subthemes arose: (a) contributes to ability to adapt and build resilience, and (b) perpetuates racial harm. The first subtheme involved eight participants discussing how they believe the school setting

contributed to their ability to adapt and build resilience. This narrative is congruent with Hollis (2023), who stated that students who have positive academic outlooks and the ability to adapt demonstrate more educational resilience. An example of this concept was illustrated by participant TY, who explained, “Really delving into these books and writing my papers really helped me to navigate how the world works.” Participant DD added, “I had to learn how to deal with other people and other perspectives due to my school experiences.” This research captured the perception of the participants to validate how the educational setting can have a positive impact on BAMs’ academic development.

The second subtheme involved five participants who shared how the school setting perpetuates racial harm. This subtheme is congruent with previous literature. According to Griffith et al. (2022), Black students report an increase of unfair experiences in the school setting, including more frequent and harsher discipline. Experiencing racial discrimination at school is linked with a decrease in academic achievement, competence, and persistence among Black students. Participant PL provided an example of this subtheme when he shared, “This white kid walked up to me and the other Black friend in the class, and he was like, ‘What’s up my ni**a?’ And, he was like, he heard this from, from music or on TV.” Participant PL experienced this verbal assault in third grade at his school. Participant DD added a similar narrative, saying, “A handful of minority students, created a social support group and the teachers and school administrators labeled us a gang ... and school administrators told us we could not hang out together.” Participant DD encountered this racial harm perpetuated against him and his social support group in elementary school. Griffith et al. (2022) validated this participant’s challenging experiences around the school setting. Griffith et al. further confirmed how the school setting can promote or tear down academic environments for Black students.

Although school systems' mandated curricula include cultural awareness, and even though efforts are made to extend educational access to the Black community, BAMs are still identifying schools as a primary location where racial trauma occurs. This finding suggests there is still tremendous work needed to combat racial trauma within schools because Black students report racially harmful behavior that negatively impacts their contributions, communicates reduced expectations, and excludes their participation in school activities, leaving Black students feeling a sense of self-doubt, lowered self-esteem, and exhaustion resulting in reduced academic performance (Solorzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2007). Participants' narratives captured that the school setting is a traumatizing environment for BAMs due to unfair treatment from school administrators, which can undermine BAMs' academic achievement in school as well as their trust in authoritative figures (DeBard, 2004; Griffith et al., 2022). Taken together, what sets BAMs apart from previous generations within the school setting is that due to the trauma BAMs experience there is a high likelihood that BAMs have a reduced value for respect for authority and loyalty in institutions.

Work Setting

The participants' narratives identified work environments as settings that perpetuate racial harm and negative stereotypes. The narratives also focused on how racial trauma in the workplace creates harmful environments for BAMs. Miller and Travers (2005) and Sue et al. (2007) reported racial trauma in the workplace creates a harmful environment for Black individuals as perpetrators send messages of exclusion and expectations of failure that drain Black individuals' energy. Although more opportunities have been created to increase diversity and inclusion in the workplace, BAMs still identify their places of work as racially harmful because, according to Alleyne (2004), workplace oppression for Black people mostly begins by

subtle comments and behavior targeted toward their race or cultural identity. The psychological impact previous generations faced from microinsults compared to overt styles of racism in the workplace today include shame, reduced feeling of belonging, and sadness, resulting in defensiveness toward other employees (Alleyne, 2004).

Community Setting

Regarding the analysis of the community setting theme, three participants mentioned how the neighborhood and larger community can be a place where negative race-based events occur as well. This corresponds with past literature (i.e., Cozier et al., 2007; Sundquist et al., 2006; Wallace & Wallace, 1990) that neighborhoods with limited financial and social resources may experience heightened stress related to the type of crime, unemployment, and reduced services including police, fire, and sanitation. Participant NA provided an example, “I was in San Francisco with my mom, out for like a walk, and I actually got spit on by an Asian identified woman.” A similar narrative surrounding crime was shared by participant MT who explained, “I tried to come home and walk 5 more miles just around the neighborhood. ... People throw like, open bottles of water at me while they were driving.” In the narratives, BAMs identified being in the community as a part of daily living, yet still expressed the neighborhood as a place where racial trauma occurs. This finding is consistent with Cozier et al. (2007), who shared that chronic social and environmental stress are associated with increased levels of health concerns that over time can develop into hypertension. Such situations heighten the risk for Black individuals, including BAMs, who are relatively low risk for health challenges yet are prone to develop chronic health conditions.

Perpetrators

The fourth theme incorporated narratives from seven participants around the perpetrators who maintain racial harm in various settings, including school staff, law enforcement, and employees in the workplace. This finding aligns with previous research by Griffith et al. (2022), who stated how bias consequences from teachers and school staff can cause a series of harmful implications for Black students that ultimately can shape distrust in both systems and authoritative figures. Participants' narratives also aligned with Sue et al. (2007)'s findings that racially harmful work environments contribute to the glass ceiling effects for Black employees by conveying messages of exclusion. According to Bryant-Davis et al. (2017), law enforcement misconduct is identified as a contributing factor to experiences of dehumanization for racially and ethnically marginalized persons. Although scholarly institutions, employment, and municipal services, including law enforcement are important aspects for BAMs' livelihood, more work needs to be done to reduce the racial trauma derived from perpetrators within the school, work, and justice departments. Compared to other generations, racially motivated attacks on Black bodies by white people, racial attacks toward President Obama's presidency, and mass incarceration are examples of overt style of racism experienced by BAMs.

Domain 2: BAMs Utilize Internalized and Externalized Strategies to Combat Experiences of Racial Trauma

RQ2 asked: *What strategies are BAMs using in the face of racial trauma?* Domain 3 and its associated subthemes were utilized to answer this question. Domain 3 explored BAMs' utilization of coping strategies to combat experiences of racial trauma. BAMs internalized and externalized coping strategies are different compared to previous generations because their strategies are in response to both overt and covert styles of race-based trauma (Darby, 2022).

Participants captured individualized strategies connecting with the larger Black and People of Color community to help combat experiences of racial trauma. In the analysis of the results, seven participants mentioned how internalized and externalized coping strategies were used to help participants mitigate and combat lived experiences of racial trauma. Two themes emerged from this domain: (a) internalized coping, and (b) externalized coping.

Internalized Coping

In the first theme participants' narratives identified coping strategies they utilize on an individual basis. Participants' narratives aligned with research by Cox et al. (2023), who suggested race-related stress is more damaging to BAMs and leads to negative outcomes, such as reduced well-being, increased anger, higher depression, and reduced positive health outcomes. Participants' narratives also support the research conducted by Cox et al. (2023) and D. L. Brown (2008), who explained Black Americans utilize various strategies, such as self-distraction, venting, religion, and hobbies to cope against racial trauma. Strategies identified by participants included exercise, cooking, and watching television. Participant MT explained this perception and said, "I just walk up the block and back to my front door to just clear my head, that helps. ... Also, definitely cooking, that was a big coping strategy and sometimes still is." Participant CA added to this perception stating, "I feel like self-care is everything; I will go to the spa. I will get a massage and facial, my nails done, hair done." Participant DD added, "being able to write, like, get those feelings and things out, because I feel like that's what eats people up." The participants' explanations connect with previous literature because, according to K. D. Brown (2018), coping strategies utilized by BAMs today involve being productive, planning, self-distraction, and humor to positively impact their Black identity, wellness, and self-care. For BAMs, individual coping strategies are complex because coping may be different depending on

whether BAMs are managing general stressors from what life may bring, stressors related to race-based circumstances, or both.

Externalized Coping

In the second theme, six participants explained how externalized coping strategies can take the form of healing within the larger collective of the Black community to combat racism-related situations. These results support K. D. Brown's (2018) research, who stated that due to the nature of racism, which can be subtle and targeted toward the racial group instead of just the individual, coping requires more communal strategies. For example, humor, religious and spiritual practices, in addition to seeking moral support through interpersonal relationships are likely to be effective toward combating race-based trauma. Examples from this study's findings include Participant MT's statement, "My director of my nursing school ... appointed me class president ... makes me team leader in clinicals and advocates for me." Participant MT also stated, "My family has always coped through cooking and that's probably one thing I'll never let go of." Participant CA further added, "My mom actually prays with me over the phone every day." Participant DD shared, "It's just different for the Black community and I know a coping strategy of ours is humor." These participants' narratives are further supported by previous researchers who found that strategies, such as collective styles of coping like emotional support and religious engagement are emotion-focused strategies, which can be more effective in enduring race-based encounters that are not susceptible to change (K. D. Brown, 2018; Cox et al., 2023; Smith & Dust, 2006). Engaging with the larger Black collective is an important externalized coping strategy because social support fuels BAMs' resilience, according to K. D.

Brown (2018), and serves as a tool to combat racial discrimination by amplifying BAMs' voices in response to social justice.

Domain 3: Navigating Conflicting Viewpoints Impact BAMs' Community, Social Media Platforms, and Protest Engagement

RQ3 asked: *What conflictual viewpoints have BAMs identified that have significantly impacted their experiences in the face of racial trauma?* Domain 3 and its associated themes were utilized to answer this question. Domain 3 concerned participants' conflicting viewpoints about four themes: community, validating and invalidating aspects during COVID-19, usage of social media platforms, and conflictual viewpoints on protest engagement. Eight participants contributed to this domain, highlighting how the four topics validate and invalidate BAMs' experience.

Community

The first conflicting viewpoint topic identified was community. Participants shared their narratives while discussing validating and invalidating aspects that impact BAMs' experiences in the face of racial trauma. The first subtheme, validating aspects about community, captured how participants identified social support as a mitigating factor to combat racial trauma. For example, participant BE shared, "I credit my parents for actually being on top of my education and making sure I was okay." Participant MT added, "My family has always coped through cooking ... whether it's in a traditional sense or in a health promoting way." Participant DD shared, "I have wonderful grandparents who tried to educate me about racism and try to provide a different sense of like, were going to provide you with the best we can, especially growing up in Oakland." These participants' narratives are supported by K. D. Brown's (2018) study which explained the Black community has developed social support as the core element of their cultural pattern that

contributes to the Black community's ability to overcome adversity. Such tactics can serve as a primary line of defense when dealing with psychological distress and are an important aspect of coping.

The second subtheme captured how participants felt the community invalidates their sense of belonging to the larger Black community by creating division between generations. Examples of invalidation included Participant MT's explanation, "There's no sense of community here in Orange County, there's no sense of advocacy; like this is really like a toxic environment. ... It's a place where Black folks really pass through." Participant RA shared, "There was no sense of community growing up in Oakland. I have good people or a good buddy to have a conversation, but never a group." Participant TY further confirmed the subtheme by sharing, "Community creates another generation of people who can't really express their feelings, or they have a hard time. ... Like I'm 29 years old, and I still hate to cry in front of people." Limited research was found to explain this narrative. Schwab-Stone et al. (1995) discussed not feeling a sense of safety and connectedness in the community is related to increased willingness to use physical aggression, display dysphoric mood, antisocial activity, and decreased academic achievement, which all can significantly impact healthy development with marginalized individuals.

COVID-19

The second conflicting viewpoint captured participants' narratives around the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants' narratives illustrated validating and invalidating aspects that took place while the stay-at-home order and social distancing mandates were enforced. These aspects impacted BAMs' experience. Cox et al. (2023) supported participants' narratives, illustrating that the pandemic reduced the ability of individuals to engage with others, increased isolation, and

negatively impacted work-life balance. Participants' explanations also illustrated how the pandemic called for BAMs to mobilize in response to the state-sanctioned killing of George Floyd. Participants explained validating aspects that emerged during the pandemic, such as an increase of self-awareness, self-reflection, and promotion of well-being. Participant NA shared,

There's more opportunity for healing in the pandemic. ... That's not to say that the pandemic was easy, because it often required us to sit and deal with microaggressions and the impact that had on our psyche and our health, and I think for some people, it strengthened the community.

Participant RA added, "Especially around the pandemic, when George Floyd passed, during the protest I really remember how the Oakland community and neighborhoods came together."

Research supports the participants' narrative. Cox et al. (2023) explained that Black Americans responded to race-based events by coping to navigate challenges that came up during COVID-19. Cox et al. further explained how Black Americans relied on emotional support in addition to taking affirmative steps to cope, such as following mandated recommendations to slow the spread of COVID-19. What sets BAMs apart from previous generations is that they have engaged in activities, such as creating spaces to unite on social media, engaging in various organizations to bring awareness to social justice, and participating in activism strategies, such as marches, protests, and boycotts (Darby, 2022).

The second subtheme explored how participants felt the pandemic invalidated their Black identity due to the media overtly displaying state-sanctioned killings of Black bodies by law enforcement, which further created distrust within the Black community and systems of oppression. Participant BE expressed, "During COVID-19, I noticed more disadvantages for people that must work in the service industry. ... They put a mask on, where they also don't want

to get sick and then bring it home to their family.” Participant CA added to this subtheme and highlighted, “COVID-19 had the Black community in a state of fear and, unfortunately, for the Black community, already having trust issues with healthcare ... I feel like it’s widened that distrust in a sense.” Participant PL further added, “Memorial weekend 2020 many were all forced to watch a public state-sanctioned killing by law enforcement on TV and everybody was sitting at home because of the pandemic.” Research that further supports the participants’ explanation includes Cox et al.’s (2023) explanation of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing state-sanctioned killings of Black people by police, which caused significant amounts of stress and resulted in increased unemployment and increased challenges for paying for basic needs, as well as revealing that Black people got sick and died from COVID-19 at disproportionate rates. What set BAMs apart from previous generations is that they followed a path set by previously Black-led movements to unify their voices and mobilize the BLM movement as a response to racial discrimination and health disparities that took place during the pandemic (Darby, 2022).

Social Media Platforms

Social media lends itself to conflicting viewpoints and provides a tangible display of opposite viewpoints. Participants’ narratives captured validating and invalidating aspects that developed or hindered their sense of connection with the larger social media user community and the Black community. Darby (2022) suggested the conflictual viewpoints BAMs’ experience with social media platforms are due to BAMs utilizing various ways to spread the narrative of Black resistance. While BAMs are more intentional in selecting how resilience messages are displayed, they are faced with navigating backlash from being targets of racial and violent bullying that takes place on social media platforms. What sets BAMs apart from previous

generations is that BAMs advocate for social change and raise awareness around social justice by engaging with the larger Black community on a wider platform due to the usage of technology (Darby, 2022).

The first subtheme encapsulated participants' expression of validating elements about the usage of social media. Narratives depicted how participants saw social media developing the communication within the Black community by providing space for laughter, conversation exchanges, and heightened awareness. Examples included Participant BE, who mentioned, "Social media has been a platform for us to really inform our community and really break down barriers and generations' traumas." Participant MT added to this subtheme and highlighted, "Social media keeps us connected, so we do have a chance to commune together no matter how far apart we are ... and one by clicking a hashtag, which is dope at the end of the day, because we can find community just from a hashtag." These participants' narratives are supported by Carney's (2016) research, who purported that the use of social media platforms, specifically features such as hashtags, has opened opportunities for Black individuals, including BAMs, to actively engage and shape discussions around the injustice of state-sanctioned killings of Black individuals by law enforcement. Social media platforms create spaces for BAMs to express individual challenges, which can develop empathy and raise awareness regarding the larger Black community experience (Darby, 2022).

Participants' narratives also captured how the use of social media platforms can invalidate BAMs' experience. Participants believed the media overly displays the death of Black bodies at the hands of law enforcement, and because content regarding violence toward Black lives is broadcasted through social media platforms, the platforms become harmful spaces for

social media users to dehumanize and be desensitized to Black suffering. Examples of this notion included Participant BE's summary:

I feel like social media is a lot of oversharing and I feel like sometimes it takes away the humanity in that person. It just dehumanizes and desensitizes us to human suffering, and things we should not be witnessing over and over again. George Floyd video was played 24/7 and everywhere you turn, video was just playing, and it's just really traumatic.

Participant MT shared,

Social media also perpetuates a lot of the racial trauma porn, is what I call it. Like reposting the police murders and everything else is like trauma porn, and it's mentally just stifling when you have to see that every single time.

The experiences of the participants are consistent with previous researchers' findings (see Bor et al., 2018; Cox et al., 2023; Galovski et al., 2016; D. R. Williams, 2018; M. T. Williams et al., 2018) that continuous sharing and media coverage of the murder of Black individuals produces collective trauma and negatively impacts health and psychological well-being for Black Americans. Such actions make Black Americans more prone to vicarious trauma by witnessing state-sanctioned killings of Black bodies. In addition, the impact of killing Black Americans by police represents a significant shock to Black people's psychological well-being (Bor et al., 2018; Cox et al., 2023; Galovski et al., 2016; D. R. Williams, 2018; M. T. Williams et al., 2018). What sets BAMs' experience apart from previous generations is that the usage of social media can decrease the presence of BAMs' humanity when other social media users project and attack BAMs for advocating for themselves or the larger Black community when they are being represented and reduced to just their social media profile or avatar instead of a valued human being (Darby, 2022).

Protest Engagement

The fourth conflicting viewpoint identified by participants was protest engagement. Participants' narratives captured validating and invalidating factors that developed or hindered their sense of connection with the larger Black community with the intent of amplifying Black voices toward racial injustice. The first subtheme involved participants sharing validating elements about protesting being a space for Black voices to be heard and brought together in unity to fight injustice. As previously mentioned, an example of Black voices being amplified to fight racial injustice is when the BLM movement initiated protests in large cities to raise awareness of police brutality against Black males in response to Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the national anthem (Abad-Santos, 2018; Hinton, 2020; Jones-Eversley et al., 2017). Participant NA highlighted, "When I talk about protests, they're moments of liberation; it's a place where someone can be in a space where they can go and scream in solidarity with other people." Participant PL added, "Protests come in a lot of different forms ... writing letters, and sending letters to some of the officials at the district attorney's office ... or whether through the arts." Skoy (2020) stated that protests impact political beliefs; areas of the country that experience a heightened amount of police violence against Black people have an increased amount of Black involvement in protests. Research by Audet et al. (2023) and Darby (2022) further supports the participants' narrative, reflecting that BAMs' experiences are different compared to previous generations. Black American millennials' autonomy, which led them to construct their own narratives surrounding COVID-19 and protesting was associated with

positive adjustment to adversity, identity development, and a call to action against racial injustice (Audet et al., 2023; Darby, 2022).

The second subtheme conveys how participants felt protest engagement invalidates BAMs' experiences by promoting negative emotions and desensitizing deaths perpetuated against the Black community by law enforcement. As previously mentioned, BLM had negative emotional impacts on both members and leaders; channels of communication between generations are needed to combat race-based trauma (Hinton, 2020; Jones-Eversley et al., 2017). Examples included Participant NA's comment, "Black people leave protests more frustrated that when they arrived, when the protest doesn't produce the outcome that they desired." Participant DD shared,

The George Floyd protest ended in a riot in Oakland, and it tore up most of Foothill Square and looting. ... Now you're just taking Black death and using it as a means of rioting and looting when that's not the purpose and then better yet, you're tearing up your own community.

Other participants contributed to this subtheme. Participant DD explained,

Death, in my perspective, makes the world desensitized to things like George Floyd. And his death was recorded, and what I feel the world experienced being desensitized to his death, because the Black community has been grieving as a nation since years ago.

Limited research was found to support the narratives of the participants. According to Skoy (2020), BLM protests were widespread and garnered an increased amount of media attention. Due to the attention the protests received, there could be probable cause linked to increased scrutiny by the police, which in turn opened opportunities for more crime. D. K. Brown and Mourão (2021) provided more support to the participants' explanations, highlighting

that the use of visuals to gain an understanding of how media contributes to the overall public resulted in negative images, which had contrary effects on protestors' ability to connect with new audiences. Violent rioting behavior had counterproductive effects on the injustice for which protestors were standing in solidarity. Cox et al. (2023) also highlighted the dichotomy between capturing police violence with the usage of technology and cell phones to inform the larger Black community across the nation and exposure to the constant overload of the murder of Black lives by police. This dichotomy produces collective trauma for the Black community and negatively impacts the psychological wellness of the Black community, including BAMs.

Implications

The analyses from this study provide implications for individuals who are committed to working with the Black population and, specifically, the BAM generation, to support them as they continue to amplify their voices to demonstrate resilience, build empathy, and further develop the larger Black community. The participants' narratives were able to provide insight into the location where BAMs are experiencing an increased volume of racial trauma, in addition to the perpetrators who add to the stress BAMs are experiencing; internalized and externalized coping strategies; and topics identified by BAMs that have both validated and invalidated their experiences and impacted their identity development and connection with larger Black community. These findings have significant implications to inform both older and younger generations of individuals about the unique set of challenges BAMs experience while illuminating the places where BAMs feel unsupported. It is essential to continue to discuss generational differences in experiences of racial trauma to promote collective healing and individualized strategies that may help Black individuals navigate future racially charged overt and covert styles of racism. More literature is needed regarding BAMs' mental health

implications. By engaging participants in conversation around how their experiences impacted their mental health, this study highlights areas of growth for clinical, training, and research practices.

Clinical Implications

Among clinicians there is a lack of understanding around BAMs' lived experience and how their generational order fuels the lineage within the larger Black community. Because BAMs experience a heightened level of stress in locations, including work, school, and community-based settings, they are vulnerable to developing both medical and mental health concerns (Cox et al., 2023). A significant element of BAMs' experiences involves their response to racial discrimination; BAMs cope by creating ways to express their Black identity and raise awareness around Black social issues through both online platforms and in the front line of marches and protests. It is imperative for clinicians to actively listen to the narratives being told by BAMs, collaboratively create a safe space, and attempt to conceptualize the BAMs' narrative alongside the Black ancestry in efforts to further develop BAMs' internalized and externalized coping strategies to combat racial trauma (Darby, 2022).

In addition, it is important for clinicians to engage in their own self-reflection practices and operate within a cultural framework to help provide appropriate therapeutic care to BAMs. According to Bridges et al. (2022), clinicians under supervision can seek guidance and mentorship from their supervisors about how their clinician orientation and role as a clinician influence their developing awareness around BAMs' experience and intersecting identities. It is imperative for clinicians to strive for cultural competence because it captures identity aspects, such as race, age, education, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and gender. Supervisors can seek guidance through consultation from other culturally focused clinicians, engage in self-

reflection practices, and utilize open -ended questions to help adapt early career clinicians to the supervisory relationship.

An additional implication is derived from participants sharing experiences of feeling forced to constrict their outward emotional expression as a survival and safety strategy to help navigate their environment. One clinical implication is to access the effective means of therapy to promote how talking with a mental health provider can create a safe space for BAMs to process challenging, racially charged experiences. Examples of how mental health professionals can increase BAM buy-in can include having mental health professionals at Black-led marches to further build rapport with BAMs. Darby's (2022) suggestion that mental health professionals collaborate with clergy, community, and school administrative leaders can increase the likelihood for more healing spaces outside of therapy sessions. This initiative would also require mental health professionals to provide services at reduced fees to increase therapy retention in an effort to open more opportunities for BAMs to receive mental health care.

Training Implications

Training implications highlight how psychology training programs can better support BAMs. According to Gee et al. (2022), an important goal of clinical psychology is to decrease suffering caused by mental health conditions. BAMs have identified encountering a heightened amount of race-based stress which can be further developed to decrease racial trauma, increase retention, and foster active engagement within the school, work, and community setting. It is imperative for psychology training programs to review and discuss evidence-based prevention and intervention, so training programs are in a responsive position to support Black students, seeking help from medical and mental health providers (Snowden & Pingatore, 2002). In

addition, psychology training programs need to review and discuss evidence-based practices to address microinsults, covert and overt styles of racism experienced by BAMs.

According to Darby (2022), an increase of Black mental health clinicians will increase BAMs utilizing mental health services. Gee et al. (2022) suggested that systematic inequalities within psychology training programs have adverse impact on BAM students who are training to be clinicians and it is important that BAM students are equipped with research and clinical skills to highlight health disparities and deliver culturally responsive care. Minority stress within psychology training programs, academia, and mental health work can negatively impact Black clinicians and trainee's well-being and organizational effectiveness. In addition to BAM trainee's and clinicians being equipped, increasing support and mentorship from advanced Black clinicians can help mitigate the negative manifestations such as stress, burnout, lower productivity and morale, and mental health problems (Gee et al., 2022).

Furthermore, it is necessary for psychology training programs to strive to be culturally responsive to address the needs of BAM clients and their community by conceptualizing the rise in liberation due to the fight for racial equality within the BAM generation. Also, it is important for leaders within religious settings, school administrative settings, and community settings to work alongside clinicians to create spaces that are outside of traditional therapy frameworks. As Darby (2022) noted, this will not only increase access to mental health services; it will also allow BAMs to take control of their healing and coping strategies. It is important for mental health clinicians to heighten their presence in cyberspace and in the streets where marches take place to increase psychological presence and to further honor BAMs' response to racial trauma through amplifying their voices for social justice. Training implications within the school, work, and

community setting will further help BAMs seek support within specific locations as an attempt to decrease the amount of race-based trauma that negatively impacts BAMs' lived experiences.

Research Implications

For future research, it will be important to build off this current study. While this study was exploratory in nature, a more concentrated effort on how current cultural treatment modalities can be adapted to better suit BAMS should be prioritized. Freire (1996) suggested that research in current culturally appropriate treatment modalities should be expanded to add liberation psychology. Darby (2022) supported the addition of liberation psychology interventions alongside cultural treatment modalities, adding that new treatment types could come from collaborating with community leaders in an effort to open more healing opportunities outside of the normal one-to-one therapy session. The addition of liberation psychology can also afford BAMs a space to feel safe and can fuel their Black identity by giving them a chance to feel a sense of agency and autonomy in taking control of their healing process. Having clinicians develop this concept can lead to an increased level in support for BAMs across institutional and community settings. BAMs are currently using creative ways to express themselves and Paulo Freire's (1996) model combined with cultural treatment modalities allows BAMs a safe space to continue to spread the narrative of their resistance.

Future research is also needed to explore the psychological impact of experiencing both overt and covert styles of racism. Further research will provide a more in-depth analysis of how racially harmful systemic practices that have held Black Americans back from societal advancement changed from overt style of racism to covert (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). Since BAMs are experiencing more types of racism the field needs to understand how this impacts

neurological development, generational transmission of trauma, rates of depression and anxiety, resilience, response to treatment, and overall quality of life.

Limitations

When utilizing a qualitative methodology, there are inherent limitations that the study presents. This study only yielded the perspective of eight participants. Thus, the results cannot be generalizable to all BAMs. The sample could also be more diverse in highlighting various intersecting identities, capturing more in-depth identity aspects outside of race and age, and including further elements that discuss education, disability, and sexual orientation. The participants' self-reported analysis could open the possibility for potential bias, which can be deemed as a limitation.

The participants' biases may have involved answers that were not personal to themselves but were more so generalized to address the questions given by the researcher. Another limitation relates to the participants involved in the study. The sample for this study were BAMs. The participants were important for studying the experience of BAMs in the face of racial trauma, navigating race-based experiences using healing and coping strategies. The sample of participants were BAMs in the state of California from the Bay Area. The homogenous sample derived entirely from the Bay Area living in the state of California can be considered a limitation for this study as well.

Recommendations

Clinical Recommendations

A clinical recommendation that has been highlighted across both school and work settings is increasing Black mental health professionals. Cokley et al. (2014) offered that due to the high likelihood of Black students hesitating to seek mental health support due to cultural

mistrust in the school setting, an increase of Black mental health professionals is an important step to address the mental health needs of Black students. Within the work setting, Black employees shared the preference of obtaining mental health care from Black clinicians (Carbral & Smith, 2011). Increasing mental health services provided by Black clinicians will increase the likelihood of Black employees receiving culturally specific mental health care.

Another recommendation is to provide BAMs with different forms of engaging in mental health support. For example, participants shared feeling a lack of belonging due to not feeling connected with the larger Black community. Providers can help support BAMs by increasing their psychological representation on social media platforms, serving as consultants or by creating campaigns to understand the health effects of exposure to racially motivated violence, in addition to offering support groups specific to Black wellness and events in the community that can help Black Americans reconnect with the larger community. To align with the study's results, communities can offer different forms of engagement to help increase BAMs' resilience and encourage their autonomy with internalized and externalized coping strategies as a way to mitigate racial trauma.

Training Recommendations

A recommendation for training programs to address systematic inequalities and racism includes support by increasing Black representation within the training programs in addition to enhancing training in culturally responsive care, evidence-based interventions, and responsive research practices (Gee, 2022). Enhancing training in culturally responsive care includes discussing and reviewing political, social, and economic reform from Black-led movements as well as how the Jim Crow era spearheaded how Black generations combat both overt and covert styles of racism. An important addition for training programs to utilize for research practices

include liberation psychology that provides more evidence-based interventions, insight into safer healing spaces, and celebrating BAMs Black identity (Darby, 2022). According to Gee (2022), it is also important for psychology training programs to increase investment in diversifying clinical science and graduate training. Increasing investment can include utilizing evidence-based practices written by Black identified clinicians and other clinicians of color.

A recommendation psychology training programs can utilize to support the needs of BAM students who are training to be clinicians involve academic departments and programs developing and implementing plans to support Black student mental health (Gee, 2022). Like how employee assistance programs are used to strive toward a reduction in behavioral health challenges, behavioral risk reduction, and treatment (Greer & Quick, 2021), psychology training programs can adopt a similar assistance program for BAM students. For example, Nelson (2022) suggested psychology training programs can refer to and offer reduced or no cost for mental health services. Psychology training programs should also increase the amount of communication regarding availability of mental health providers who are culturally competent toward the Black experience, authentic, nonjudgmental, and goal oriented.

Further, psychology training programs should provide strategies to support Black wellness. For example, it might be helpful for psychology training programs to provide support around how BAM students can safely seek out the larger Black community to further connect with other Black identified students and celebrate their Black identity. It is imperative for BAMs and BAM students who are training to be clinicians to continue to engage in self-reflection to help nourish their autonomy and identity development and remain encouraged to continue to

share their stories and raise their voices through social media and podcasts to help ensure their generation's signature has not gone unnoticed within the Black lineage.

Research Recommendations

The qualitative research presented in this study opens opportunities for future researchers to administer a similar study on a relatively similar topic following a mixed-methods strategy. Utilizing a qualitative approach to capture participants' experiences alongside a quantitative approach would enhance findings to incorporate both an experience and statistically significant analysis. Participants' narratives captured the need to further censor social media platforms around constant viewing of state-sanctioned killings of Black bodies, and the need to find additional ways to peacefully protest without promoting negative and destructive behaviors in others. Further research needs to be conducted to explore the effects of viewing traumatic images to understand the mental health effects of exposure to racially motivated violence.

Future research should also include participants outside of the Bay Area to expand the findings to the greater areas of California. This study did not contain an analysis of BAM narratives from different cities across the state of California. Involving participants from a larger geographical area would make the findings richer and increase the generalizability of the findings. Future research endeavors should also explore how conflictual viewpoints experienced by BAMs can be used to foster empowerment to help further combat against racial trauma. It may be useful to understand how the conflictual viewpoints can help inform researchers to highlight strategies that celebrate Black liberation and emphasize BAMs' strengths and contributions to social justice without silencing their voices and invalidating their experiences.

Conclusion

The present study was investigated through a qualitative thematic analysis lens to capture experiences of Black American Millennials in the face of racial trauma looking at internalized and externalized styles of coping strategies. This study relates not only to how the BAM generation responds to racial discrimination following their previous generations footsteps by organizing Black led movements, but also how in response to racial trauma mental health has been an important aspect following the political climate of the Obama administration. The impact of racial trauma on Black American millennials (BAMs) affects various contexts, including personal, generational, and cultural levels. Participants highlighted spaces where they encounter racial trauma in addition to those who perpetuate racial harm in various settings, including school staff, law enforcement, and employees in the workplace. This research discussed how BAMs have the unique and complex experience of facing both overt and covert styles of racism that impact how BAMs internally process their lived experience, develop resilience, and turn to the larger collective for support. It is imperative for clinicians to understand BAMs lived experience to provide culturally sensitive and responsive treatment to better support this generation. Also, BAMs have made a demand to increase Black-Identified clinicians as a strategy to increase the likelihood of BAMs feeling safe to seek mental health services.

BAMs have a unique footprint compared to previous generations and what sets them apart is their dichotomous experience around the larger Black community, COVID-19 pandemic, social media, and protest engagement. Each of these aspects have significantly impacted their experiences in the face of racial trauma either by heightening their sense of belonging with the larger collective, engaging in self-reflection, expressing themselves through an online platform,

and standing in solidarity against racial discrimination. Each aspect also negatively impacted their experience in the face of racial trauma by widening the gap between generations, being vulnerable to cyber-attacks from social media users, feeling desensitized to overly shared visuals of state sanctioned killings by law enforcement against Black lives, and feeling racial justice issues are unresolved despite organized Black led movements fighting for racial equality. Both validating and invalidating aspects have effects on BAMs interpersonal relationships, work-life balance, and psychological effects. BAMs have the dual responsibility of honoring the Black ancestral history, engaging in historical forms of racial justice social movement activities, in addition to creating spaces that can provide internalized healing and wellness as a framework to continue to trailblaze for upcoming generations.

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APPENDIX A
SCREENING TOOL

Assigned Code: _____

Today's Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Age: _____

Gender:

_____ Prefer to not answer

_____ Self-describe: _____

I identify my religion as:

_____ None

_____ Self-describe: _____

I identify my spirituality as:

_____ None

_____ Self-describe: _____

I identify my ethnicity as:

_____ African American

_____ Black

_____ Latinx or Hispanic

_____ Chinese

_____ Vietnamese

_____ Japanese

_____ Korean

_____ Southeast Asian

_____ American Indian, Alaskan Native

_____ Indian

_____ Middle Eastern

_____ White Caucasian

_____ More than one ethnicity

Please specify: _____

_____ Prefer to not answer

_____ Prefer to self-describe: _____

I identify my race as:

_____ **White**

Please specify: _____

_____ **Black**

Please specify: _____

Latinx or Hispanic
Please specify: _____

Asian
Please specify: _____

American Indian, Alaskan Native
Please specify: _____

More than one race
Please specify: _____

Prefer to not answer
 Prefer to self-describe: _____

Education level

- None
- High School Diploma
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Professional Degree

Socioeconomic status

- Under 20,000/yr
- 40,000-60,000/yr
- 60,000- 80,000/yr
- 80,000-100,000/yr
- Above 100,000/yr

Sexual orientation

- None
- Heterosexual / Straight
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bi-sexual
- Transgender
- Self-describe: _____
- Rather not disclose

Phone Screening Questions

1. Are you between the ages of 22-38?
 - a. Inclusion criteria: Is between the ages of 22-38
 - b. Exclusion criteria: Is not between the ages of 22-38

2. Do you reside in the SF Bay Area?
 - a. Inclusion criteria: Does reside in the SF Bay Area
 - b. Exclusion criteria: Does not reside in the SF Bay Area

3. Have you experienced any forms of race-based trauma. Forms of race-based trauma include microaggressions: microinsults, such as dismissive looks; microassaults, such as racial slurs or insults; and microinvalidations, such as minimizing or denying the recognized racist experiences?
 - a. Inclusion criteria: has experienced race-based trauma
 - b. Exclusion criteria: has not experienced race-based trauma

4. Have you utilized healing and coping strategies ?
 - a. Inclusion criteria: has utilized healing and coping strategies
 - b. Exclusion criteria: has not utilized healing and coping strategies

Scheduling Questions

1. Would you rather complete your interview over the phone or through Zoom, a free video meeting service?
 - a. If in phone interview:
 - i. What phone number do you prefer I use to conduct the interview?
 - b. If Zoom interview:
 - i. What email address do you prefer I use to send the project's consent form and the link to our Zoom meeting?

2. Would you mind if I share with you a reminder via text or email prior to your scheduled interview?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. You should read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, you will sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information on this consent form. You are entitled to and will receive a copy of this form.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Natalia Giles, a doctoral student in the School of Nursing and Health Professions at the University of San Francisco. The faculty supervisor for this study is Dr. Michelle Montagno, PsyD, a licensed clinical psychologist and associate professor in the School of Nursing and Health Professions at the University of San Francisco.

WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:

The purpose of this study is to learn about the experiences of Black identified millennials and their narratives of healing and coping in the face of race-based trauma.

WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO:

During this study, you will be asked to discuss your experiences as a Black identified millennials in the face of race-based trauma in addition to what healing and coping strategies they have found impactful.

DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:

Your participation in this study will include one interview session that lasts no longer than 60 minutes. The interview will take place over the phone or over Zoom video conferencing, based on availability.

- **Natalia Giles USF Zoom conference ID:**
- **Natalia Giles Personal Phone number: 510-364-1612**

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

The research procedures described above may include minimal potential discomfort in talking through some issues while you participate in this study. There are no anticipated

challenges to you that are heightened than those encountered in everyday life. The issues discussed during this interview have each been selected by the researcher and her dissertation committee to reduce the potential for psychological discomfort. Due to the nature of this research topic, you may encounter some emotional discomfort while answering questions. If you wish, you may choose to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any moment during the study without penalty.

BENEFITS:

You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study. However, you may obtain increased insight into your own experiences or perhaps think more analytically about healing and resiliency strategies utilized for lived experiences of race-based trauma. The potential benefits for others involve heightened awareness and insight for mental health providers who provide services to Black American millennials who experience race-based trauma and who may encounter obstacles to mental health care.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:

Any data you provide in this study will be kept private and confidential unless the law requires disclosure. In any report we publish, we will not include information that will make it possible to identify you or any individual participant. Specifically, we will keep private research data that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

The researcher will request you to select a pseudonym so that the only area your name will appear in our records is on the consent form and in our data spreadsheet, which connects your name to a pseudonym and your data; only the research team will have access to this information. The only exceptions to this are if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board ethics committee.

The researcher will use a recording device to capture the responses of the participants. The recordings and collected data of this session will be kept in a locked cabinet at the University of San Francisco. The names of participants will not be visible in the transcribed records of this study. Certain people may need to see the study records. The only person(s) who will have access to see these records are the study staff, and the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board, and its staff.

The data of this study may be used in publications and presentations. If the results of this study are published or presented, you will be notified, and we will not involve information that will make it possible to identify you or any individual participant.

The researcher has made an email account for the sole purpose of this study. This email account will be utilized to interact with participants and will be deactivated following the completion of this study.

The researcher will destroy confidential information, including the participant's emails, phone number, audio recordings, and other personal information and data provided within one year following the completion of this study.

COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:

You will receive a gift card valued at \$20 for your participation in this study following the completion of the phone or zoom interview.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:

Your participation is voluntary, and you may refuse to withdraw or cease to participate at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. Furthermore, you may skip any questions that make uncomfortable and discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. The researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:

Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you should contact the principal investigator: Natalia Giles at (510) 364-1612 or [dissertation email address]. You may also reach the dissertation chair of this study, Dr. Michelle Montagno, at mjmontagno@usfca.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

I have read the above information. Any questions I have asked have been answered by the researcher. I agree to participate in this research project, and I will receive a copy of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE

DATE

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Describe an experience where you were faced with subtle forms of racism (i.e., microaggression, racial slur, verbal assault)? What was the setting? What emotions or reactions came up for you following this event?
- Describe an experience where you observed other Black identified people faced with subtle forms of racism (i.e., microaggression, racial slur, verbal assault)? What was the setting? What emotions or reactions came up for you following this event?
- What type of settings have you observed Black identified people discuss race-based trauma in efforts to help unify the Black community?
- Has there been any ways you have sought to engage in discussions around obstacles the Black community faces involving race-based trauma?
- How has social media affected your life and other Black identified youth, adults, and elderly lives?
- How has social media provided opportunities to open and invite conversations around race-based trauma and Black American history?
- What are some ways you have sought out healing and coping strategies to help combat against race-based trauma?
- How has your experience been utilizing healing and coping strategies when faced with race-based trauma?
- How effective do you find healing and coping strategies among you and your peers?
- Have any healing or coping strategies been passed down to you from prior generations? Did you find them helpful, Why or Why not?
- How effective do you find healing and coping strategies among the Black identified population?
- If any, what strengths or improvements have you observed in utilizing healing and/or coping strategies?
- If any, what weaknesses have you observed in utilizing healing and/or coping strategies?

- What type of support or counseling have you received in efforts to provide a safe space to discuss these occurrences?
- How have you experienced the pandemic with COVID-19, and current race-based trauma?
- Is there anything you would like to add?