



# Race- and Gender-Based Oppression Increase Black Women's Vulnerability Posttraumatic Stress: The Psychology of Radical Healing Fosters Posttraumatic Growth

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## Vulnerability to Stress & Trauma

More likely than white women to experience unemployment; Black women were 6.8% of the adult labor force in January 2024 and had an unemployment rate of 4.8%

More likely than boys to experience sexual assault and develop into women who continue to experience higher rates of sexual assault (CDC, 2020)

More likely to suffer childhood sexual abuse by a family member

Almost 3.5X more likely to be murdered by men than White women (VPC, 2020)

3X more likely to experience pregnancy-related death (Melillo, 2020)

More likely to be killed by a significant other, spouse, or family member as compared to Black men

2X as likely than white women to experience IPV (Lacey et al., 2021)

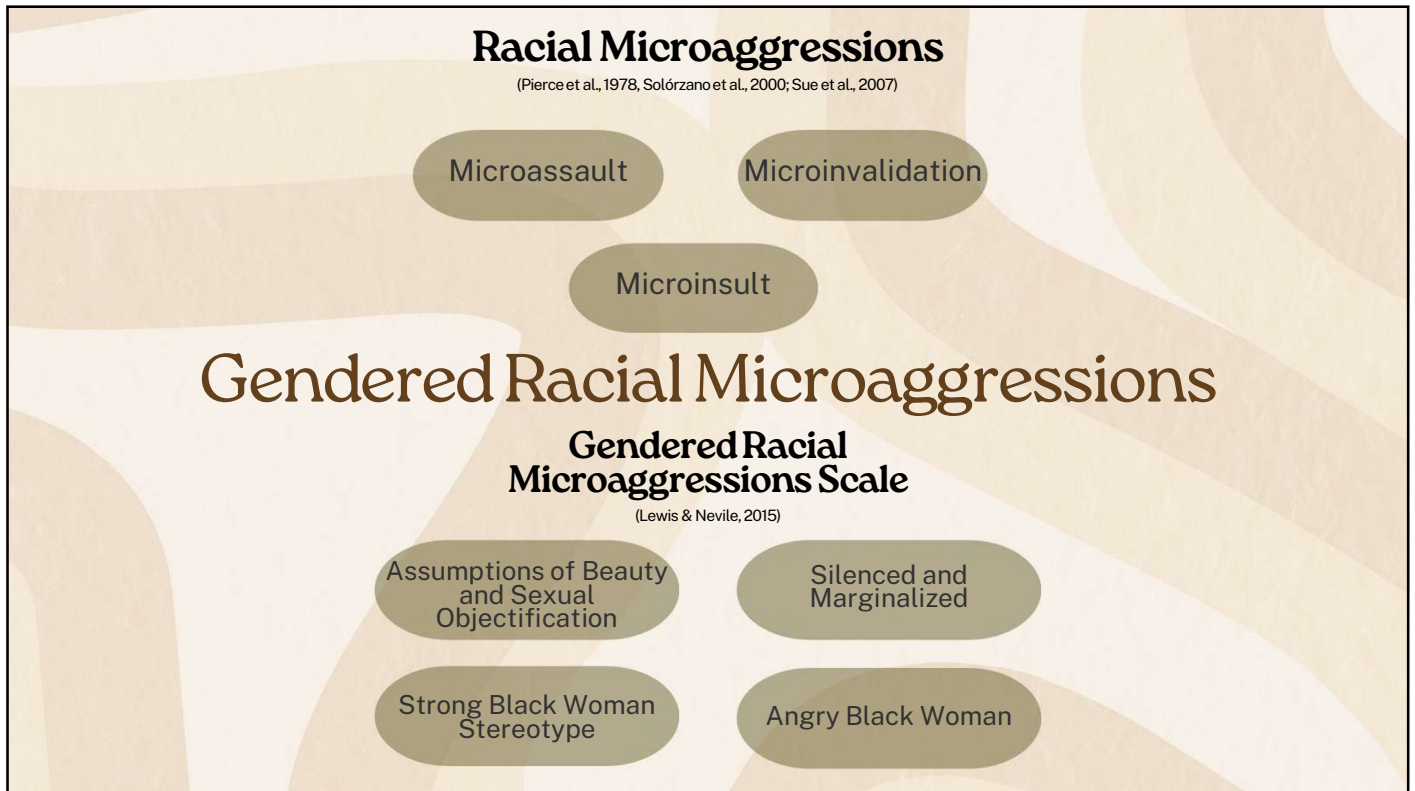


## Gender- and Race-Based Stereotypes



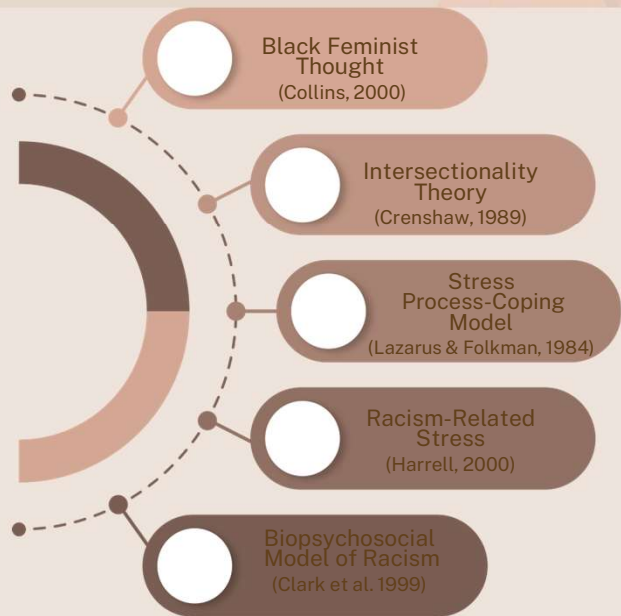
Perpetuation of Oppression of Black Women through Controlling Images and Racialized stereotypes


(Cheers, 2020; Collins, 2000; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2025; West, 2018; Woods-Giscombe et al., 2016)



# Biopsychosocial Model of Gendered Racism

- Intersectional experiences of gender- and race-based oppression contribute to poor health (Lewis, 2023)
- Mediators or Moderators affect the relationship between gendered racism and health outcome or behaviors





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**Facilitating Healing for Black Women Experiencing Gendered Racism and Traumatic Stress: The Moderation of Psychosocial Resources**

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**Abstract**

Black women must navigate a tumultuous sociopolitical terrain while simultaneously managing their psychological health. Experiences of gendered racism increase Black women's vulnerability to psychological distress. Gendered racial microaggressions, a specific type of microaggression, account for the intricate ways racism and sexism intersect. The association between Black women's experiences of gendered racial microaggressions and traumatic stress was investigated among 201 Black female-identified undergraduate and graduate students attending a Historically Black College or University. Whether psychosocial resources (i.e., resilience, social support, mastery, self-esteem) moderated the linkage between gendered racial microaggressions and traumatic stress was also examined. Gendered racial microaggressions were positively associated with traumatic stress. The microaggression Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification was the most strongly associated with traumatic stress, followed by Angry Black Woman. Resilience and mastery were protective factors, reducing the influence of gendered racial microaggressions on traumatic stress. In addition, high levels of social support reduced the impact of Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification on traumatic stress. To foster healing and posttraumatic growth for Black women, psychologists must decolonize their understanding and treatment of mental illness. Practice and research implications are discussed.

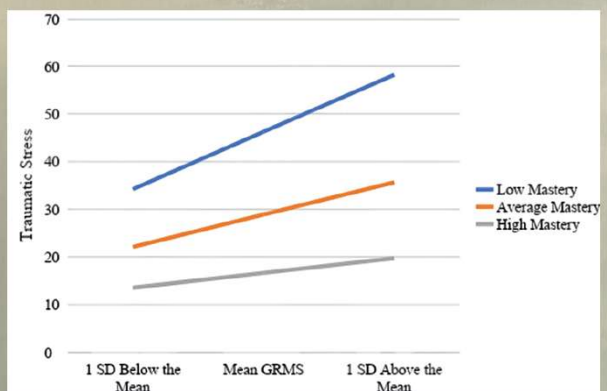
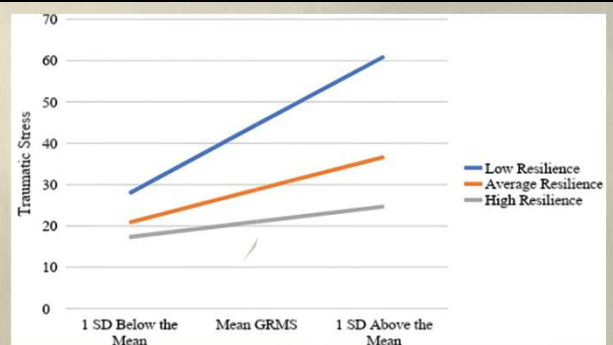
# Gendered Racial Microaggressions and PTSD

Hypotheses (N=201 Black women)

- Greater frequency of reporting gendered and racial microaggressions will be positively associated with traumatic stress.
- Greater endorsement of gendered and racial microaggressions will be associated with lower levels of psychosocial resources
- High levels of psychosocial resources will be associated with lower levels of traumatic stress.
- The association between gendered racial microaggressions and traumatic stress will be weaker among Black women with high levels of each psychosocial resource.

## Protective Factors: Resilience and Mastery

- The microaggression *Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification* was the most strongly associated with traumatic stress, followed by *Angry Black Woman*.
- Resilience and mastery were protective factors, reducing the influence of gendered racial microaggressions on traumatic stress.
- High levels of social support reduced the impact of *Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification* on traumatic stress.
- To foster healing and posttraumatic growth for Black women, psychologists must decolonize their understanding and treatment of mental illness.



# Anticipated Race-Related Stress and PTSD

Hypotheses (N=216 Black women)

- Perseverative cognition will be positively associated with traumatic symptoms.
- Anticipatory race-related stress will be positively associated with traumatic symptoms.
- Social support and resilience will moderate the association between perseverative cognition and traumatic symptoms.
- Social support and resilience will moderate the association between anticipatory race-related stress and traumatic symptoms

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## Do Resilience and Social Support Moderate the Association between Race-Related Stress on Black Women's Reports of Trauma Symptoms?

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### Abstract

Black women uniquely experience a myriad of intersecting oppressions along with racial discrimination that increases their vulnerability to trauma. Experiences of racial discrimination manifest as race-related stress, or worse an emotional wound, race-related trauma. Protective factors that facilitate coping for black women are resilience and social support. Under investigation were black women's experiences of racial stress, specifically, perseverative cognition (PC) and anticipatory race-related stress (ARRS), and trauma symptoms. PC and ARRS derive from the Prolonged Activation and Anticipatory Race-Related Stress Scale. The moderating effects of resilience and social support were also examined. Data were collected from 216 black female students at a Historically Black College or University. The findings indicate (1) PC was associated with higher trauma symptoms ( $\beta = 4.46; p < .001$ ); (2) ARRS was positively associated with trauma symptoms ( $\beta = 4.82; p < .001$ ); (3) Social support ( $\beta = -2.04; p < .001$ ) and resilience ( $\beta = -2.80; p < .05$ ) moderated the association between ARRS and trauma symptoms such that the association between racial stress and trauma symptoms was stronger under the condition of low social support and resilience. Treatment must include culturally relevant interventions and capitalize on protective factors to facilitate healing for black women.

**Keywords** Race-related stress · Traumatic stress · Social support · Resilience · Black women

## Protective Factors: Resilience and Mastery

- Preservative cognition was associated with higher symptoms of PTSD
- Anticipated race-related stress was positively associated with trauma symptoms
- Social support and resilience moderated the association between anticipated race-related stress and PTSD symptoms
  - association between anticipated race-related and PTSD symptoms was stronger under the condition of low social support and resilience.
- Treatment must include culturally relevant interventions and capitalize on protective factors to facilitate post-traumatic growth and radical healing for Black women.

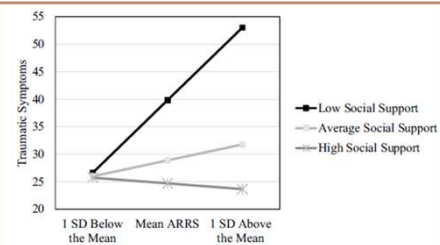


Fig. 1 Predicted values of traumatic symptoms by anticipatory race-related stress (ARRS) and social support. Source: Gendered Racism and Well-Being Questionnaire, 2020–2021. Predicted values are based on Table 4, Model 4

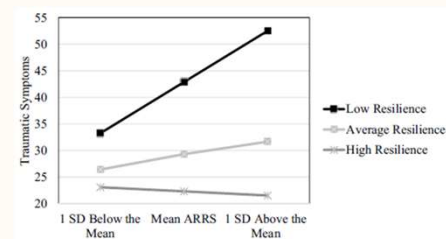


Fig. 2 Predicted Values of Traumatic Symptoms by Anticipatory Race-Related Stress (ARRS) and Resilience. Source: Gendered Racism and Well-Being Questionnaire, 2020–2021. Predicted values are based on Table 4, Model 5

# Clinical Implications

Operate from decolonial perspectives (e.g., liberation psychology, psychology of radical healing, race-informed therapeutic approach)

Exercise cultural humility and sensitivity to avoid further oppression

Center healing (as opposed to coping) to thrive (as opposed to survive) in a society that perpetuates gender- and race-based oppression

Mindful of the affect(s) of gendered racism on psychological health

Capitalize on strengths, facilitate building resilience and self-mastery

Provide a safe, affirming, and nonjudgmental spaces for exploration of racial, gendered, or other cultural narratives



## Psychology of Radical Healing

*Critical consciousness:* Encourage self-reflection on sociopolitical realities, deeply questioning, and discerning for oneself how and why power relations are structured and maintained.

*Radical Hope:* Hope allows for a sense of agency to change things for the greater good.

*Strengthen and Resistance:* Empower Black women to have a commitment to living joy-filled lives in the face of a critical awareness of racial trauma and oppression.

*Cultural Authenticity and Self-knowledge:* Returning to ancestral roots and help develop a sense of self-definition and cultural authenticity in which we are not defined by our oppressors.

*Collectivism:* Communal healing and recognition that as being part of a collective struggle and radical healing occurs includes sharing one's story as a way of testifying and building solidarity with others.



## Thank you!!

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