The racial pandemic experienced by Black American men:

Cognitive-behavioral and structural implications

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Abstract

Issues of systemic racism, mass incarceration, and cultural trauma (CT) are linked to emotional sequelae sufficient for treatment. However, attempts to explain the psychosocial reactions of Black American (BA) men to racial injustice and treat CT must be considered in the context of the current and past structural environments in which they live. The purpose of the present study was to obtain in-depth, thick description of two related factors: BA males' perceptions of injustice during the racial pandemic and the consequent psychosocial implications for theory and treatment. An interview guide addressing racial injustice, CT, and coping was used to conduct individual and focus groups interviews with 20 BA men. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The qualitative analysis found 5 themes which collectively fulfilled the study's aims: 1) A Violation of the Social Contract for Black American Men, 2) Black American Male Distrust for Police, 3) Tripartite Black American Male, Police Fear & Heterogeneous Emotions, 4) Spiritual, Technological, Appraisal, and Relational (STAR) Black American Male Coping for Racial Injustice, and 5) Black American Male Resilience Despite Permanence of the Racial Status Quo. As it pertains to BA male racial injustice and the residual CT, the qualitative data suggested multidimensional interventions that are cognitive-behavioral and structural in nature may be worthy of further empirical investigation. From a CT intervention perspective, the 5 emerging themes can be directly translated to cognitive-behavioral principles regarding therapeutic rapport, cultural adaptation, emphasis on positivity, and collaborative empiricism when working with BA men.

Keywords: Cognitive-Behavioral, Cultural Trauma, Racial Injustice, African American Men, Police Violence, Fear

Public Policy Relevance Statement: Given the complex nature of structural racism and its psychological implications, multilevel interventions are necessary for constructive change. The present study, conducted with Black American men, provides theoretical, clinical, and policy level implications for addressing cultural trauma and the systemic racism from which is stems.

The racial pandemic experienced by Black American men: Cognitive-behavioral and structural implications

When the term "racial pandemic" is heard, many may think of more recent events such as the killings of George Floyd or Breonna Taylor and associated Black Lives Matter Protests. However, a more critical examination, may find the term misleading as it possibly suggests that various forms of recent anti-Black racism are a new occurrence or have receded and returned. In fact, anti-Black racial injustice has been a longstanding feature of American society (Breland & Stanton, 2021). Take for example American Anti-Black structural racism, Black-male specific disparities, social environmental influences, and the cultural trauma sequalae that follow. All of these issues have received empirical attention and collectively point to research questions that remain unanswered.

Black Americans and Structural Racism

Racism has been referred to as America's original sin (Hulteen & Wallis, 1992) and has a history containing the ebbs and flows of Black American (BA) racial equity. The evolution of American structural racism against BAs has included the 1619 slave trade, Black Codes, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration (the New Jim Crow; Alexander, 2010). Nested within these structures, racist policies exist (Kendi, 2019) that have been used to explain BA policing, medical, income, housing, education, and criminal justice disparities (Hardeman, Hardeman-Jones, & Medina, 2021). In response to BA racial injustices, several promising hallmark policies have also been used to balance social and economic inequity. Although there is some controversy regarding several of these policies; the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, the 1965 Voting Rights Act (Okonta, 2018), and Brown versus the Board of Education (Reber, 2005) were viewed by many as progress toward BA equity. Despite fluctuations in American policy and BA progress, the consequences of BA inequity are demonstrated in national statistics regarding the

overrepresentation of BAs who are incarcerated (Carson, 2020) and disproportionate mortality among BAs (Benjamins et al., 2021).

Black American Male Disparities

Ogungbure (2019), incorporating the writings of W. E. Dubois and Martin Luther King, has provided a synopsis of systemic/structural factors that victimize BA men via financial and social ostracization and the gender-based enervation of BA men. In accordance with the longstanding American systemic and structural issues that targe BA men, some of the most alarming statistics associated with racial injustice, can be found within this group. By the end of 2019, for every single Caucasian man that was imprisoned in America, approximately 6 (5.7) Black men were imprisoned. Data between 2013 and 2018 determined that, BA men were at the highest risk of being killed by police (2.5 times more likely than Caucasian males; Edwards et al., 2019). Among Hispanic and non-Hispanic ethnic and racial groups, Caucasian, and American Indian or Alaskan Natives, BA men had the second to lowest life expectancy at birth (71.3 years; Arias et al., 2021). It has been argued that the overrepresented risk of BA male Covid-19 mortality can be explained by converging racist policies, chronic conditions, environmental factors that foster the contagious spread of disease, and stress (Griffith et al., 2021). In addition to Covid-19, racial trauma is also an essential concern as it pertains to BA men, particularly cultural trauma. Cultural trauma has been defined by Alexander (2016) as a particular group's collective response to a horrific event that results in shared and permanent recollection of the event and dramatic changes in their prospective identity. Issues of systemic racism, mass incarceration, and cultural trauma are linked to emotional sequelae sufficient for treatment (Gregory, 2019). Yet data published from the Centers for Disease Control Prevention (Blumberg, Clarke, & Blackwell, 2015) has shown that with regard to depression and anxiety symptoms, BA (non-Hispanic) men

were 26.4% less likely to have used mental health treatment, in contrast to their Caucasian male counterparts (45.4%). Compared to BA women, BA men were significantly less open to accessing mental health services (Ward et al., 2013). The aforementioned BA male disparities may be explained by social and environmental context.

The Social-Environmental Context of Racial Injustice and Psychosocial Response

As indicated by Stern's Need x Press = Culture theory, the impact of environmental influence on intrapersonal functioning is important (Stern, 1970; Walsh, 1975). Stern's theory, suggest that an individual behavior is a result of both the person and the environment in which they live and psychological factors are linked to both behavior and the environment. As it pertains to the crucial interplay between individuals and their environments, issues of racial trauma are no exception. The environmental context is necessary to advance the understanding of BA male psychosocial reactions to structures that impact their thoughts, beliefs, emotions, familial functioning, and future aspirations. Prior attention has been provided to environmental stress and Black families (Peters & Massey, 1983). Contemporary attempts to explain the psychosocial reactions of BA men to racial injustice must also be considered in the context of the current and past social and structural environments in which they live (Aymer, 2016). The last several years in American history, have seen issues of judicial (Katz, 2016) and legislative (Garcia & Stout, 2020) BA injustice, social inequity (Jackman & Shauman, 2019), technological advances, and a disproportionate impact of COVID-19; all converge to form what many have referred to as a racial pandemic (Acosta, 2020). The extant and relevant quantitative data documents various forms of inequity in the Black community and within BA males specifically.

The Cultural Trauma Impact of the Racial Pandemic on Black American Men

In addition to quantitative research, qualitative methods have been used to explore important BA male behavioral and social issues such that are indirectly associated with cultural trauma: violence (St. Vil et al., 2018), perceptions of depression (Hudson et al., 2018), mental health service utilization (Bauer et al., 2020), healthcare related behaviors (Mitchell et al., 2019), health constructs (Griffith et al., 2018), and criminal justice issues (Higgins, 2021) among others. Yet still missing in the behavioral science literature is research that qualitatively documents psychosocial factors associated with BA males' lived experience during the racial pandemic and subsequent cultural trauma. This conspicuous gap in BA male research precludes the development of empirically derived theory and clinical intervention, as well as social justice initiatives. The aims of the present study were as follows:

Aim 1: Understand the experiences and beliefs of BA adult men regarding injustice during the racial pandemic

Aim 2: Identify the clinical and psychosocial implications of adult BA men's' experiences and beliefs about racial injustice during the racial pandemic

Materials and Methods

Ethics

The qualitative research conducted in this study was approved by the Indiana University, Indianapolis Campus, institutional review board (IRB) for research with human participants. In lieu of an informed consent form, IRB approval was obtained to provide research participants with a study information sheet.

Philosophy of Science

Given the fluid and diverging perspectives of racism, some substantive attention must be paid to philosophical issues that may impact science (Saini, 2020). In the conceptualization, conduct, analysis, and writing of the present manuscript, the authors subscribed to a postpositivist philosophy of science (Guba, 1990). As it pertains to BA men and issues of racial injustice and cultural trauma, from a postpositivist philosophy of science perspective, the authors acknowledge that an absolute reality exist however the ability to fully grasp that reality is limited. Although the authors have used various methods (described below) to isolate the reality of BA men from biases created by their own experiences and consequent perspectives (bracketing; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The ability to do this was also limited. Given the ontological and epistemological factors, the methodology of the study was based on a critical multiplist perspective (Tanlaka et al., 2019). Critical multiplism was expressed in the methodology via using different interview methods, study sites, coders to collect, analyze, and interpret the data, and other efforts to improve the overall rigor of the study (See the Qualitative Rigor section below).

Qualitative Inquiry: Phenomenology

With the two aforementioned aims of the study focusing on beliefs and experiences, the study adopted a phenomenological perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological psychology approach was used (Creswell & Poth, 2019), as the approach also allowed for flexibility in using methods that best suit the study focus (Polkinghorne, 1989). Consistent with the postpositivist philosophy of science, the use of bracketing (embedded in the critical multiplist methods) embraced the postpositivist epistemological stance. Data analysis followed a phenomenological interpretive model of Data Reduction, Data Display, and Conclusion Drawing

and Verification (Monaro et al., 2022). This phenomenological data analysis approach is described in the later articulation of coding and thematic analysis.

Qualitative Method: Intensive Interviewing

Interview guide. The present study used intensive interviewing addressing several areas: Police Brutality, the American Justice System, Emotional Reactions to the Killings of BAs, the Family Impact of Racial Injustice, Spirituality, Coping, Views of the United States of America and Views of Self. The appendix contains the interview guide that was used in this study. The individual interviews were anticipated to last approximately one hour.

Online Synchronous Focus Groups and Individual Interviews. The intensive interviews were collected using two methods: individual interviews and focus groups. Research participants were able to opt for a synchronous online individual interview or a synchronous online focus group. The focus group could have a maximum number of seven participants. By including individual interviews and focus groups, the authors sought to maximize the advantages of both data collection methods and balance their respective limitations (Lefever et al., 2007; Zwaanswijk & van Dulmen, 2014). Notable advantages of the online focus groups and/or individual interviews included: the ability for participants to share their experience in their natural settings and the convenience of participating from home, the potential perception of comradery that may exist in a group setting with other BA men, and the potential to discuss sensitive or taboo topics in an individual interview without concern for potential judgement from others in a group setting.

Study Sites and Participant Recruitment

For the present qualitative study research participants were recruited from two sites, predominantly comprised of adult BA men. Both community partner sites were in an urban

midwestern location in the United States, that addressed the needs and issues of Black men, and had an articulated organizational mission that was consistent with the aims of the study. Although both sites included participants that were eligible for the study, an anticipated benefit of using two sites was the ability to include a broader socioeconomic continuum among participants.

Participant recruitment was based on the relationships the first author had with the leadership and staff/support persons of the two respective sites. For study site 1, both the researcher and the community partner had previously written multiple grants together, the first author had trained staff on methods that were relevant to the sites mission and the author's research agenda, and both the first author and the study site 1 had a shared mission of improving Black male well-being. Study site 1 was involved in the conceptualization of the research. The first author and study site 2 also had a mutual concern and vision for addressing Black male well-being and each party used their respective skills and resources to accomplish that goal. For study sites 1 and 2, both the first and second authors routinely came to the agencies to discuss the studies goals and inclusion criteria. The study site leadership were asked to identify participants in their respective agencies who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The study site leadership and staff/supporting persons used their dual knowledge regarding the potential participants at their agency and the study inclusion criteria to determine whom they would refer to the study. Once the respective study sites identified participants, they deemed eligible (based on inclusion criteria), the study authors met with the potential participants to discuss the study further and determine if the participant had additional questions or concerns. In summary, the relationship the first author had with the study sites and the study sites unique knowledge of participants, and

the inclusion criteria were integral in the identification of eligible participants and recruitment of said participants.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for the study required that participants meet the following criteria: 1) be Black and male, 2) be 18 years of age or older, 3) had various experiences with racial injustice, 4) had the ability to clearly communicate these experiences, 5) had the ability to be introspective, 6) able to read or have the research materials read to them, 7) able to respond verbally, 8) were willing to be in the study, and 9) have an affiliation with the one of the two aforementioned sites from which data was collected. For the purposes of the study BA was defined as individuals who self-identified as being Black (including biracial with a Black parent).

Sample Size and Saturation

A number of factors were considered when determining the sample size for the present qualitative study. Given the intensive interview research method that was employed, the chief factor under consideration was saturation. Saturation occurs when additional data collection does not produce any new codes (Padgett, 2017). There is a non-monolithic, within-group diversity of ideas and perspectives among Black people, regarding cultural trauma and racial injustice. Therefore, a larger qualitative sample was necessary before the researchers would have confidence that saturation was reached. The authors identified 20 Black male participants as being minimally sufficient for saturation. However, to provide confirmation that 20 BA male participants would be sufficient to exhaust the codes, the codes were reviewed to determine the number of codes that had only one endorsement across all ten interviews. Evidence of saturation would be supported if codes that were only endorsed in one interview, appeared at the earlier stages of data collection. Qualitative interviews for the present study were conducted on the

following dates: 11/18/20, 11/27/20, 12/3/20, 12/17/20, 1/14/21, 1/22/21, 2/11/21, 2/18/21, 3/11/21, and 4/1/21. If codes that were only endorsed once, appeared at the latter end of the data collection dates, this would lead to more skepticism regarding saturation. A correlation coefficient between the interview number (*X*, 1 – 10; ordinal level of measurement treated as continuous [Byrne, 2016]) and the number of single codes for each interview (*Y*, ratio level of measurement) for each interview were calculated using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics 28 software.

Interview Transcription

The interviews were audio and visually recorded. A professional transcriber was paid to transcribe the interviews using only the audio data.

Coding, Thematic Analysis, and Qualitative Software

The present study was analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and included the previously identified phenomenological interpretive steps (Monaro et al., 2022). First each transcript was read, and line-by-line coding was manually and independently conducted by two authors in a MS Word document (Data Reduction). After reading and manually coding each transcript, each author identified a series of codes that collectively constituted an initial code book with rows of codes (Data Display). The codebooks for each author were then reviewed and discussed to arrive at a consensus. Similar codes with identical meanings were collapsed to help ensure that each code was distinct (Conclusion Drawing and Verification I). Next, all the transcripts were uploaded to NVivo (QSR International, 2020) and the manuscripts were read and individually coded by two authors a second time. Again, differences in coding were resolved via discussion and consensus. Similar codes across distinct interviews were combined to constitute themes (Conclusion Drawing and Verification II). Several considerations were used in

determining themes across the independent interviews: 1) The extent to which the theme answered the questions that were asked in the interview guide, 2) The total frequency and percentage with which codes appeared across and within the independent interviews.

Qualitative Rigor

Basic foundations of qualitative rigor have been articulated (Dyar, 2022). The following is a brief description of specific efforts to improve the rigor of the present qualitative study. As detailed in the aims and Method section, factors pertaining to critical multiplism, phenomenological qualitative inquiry and data analysis with two coding intervals (typed codes and software), recruitment of participants who were identified as having had substantive experiences with and necessary means to communicate their experiences/phenomena, and data collection occurring in the natural environment of the participants are some of the factors that speak to the rigor of the study. Brief reflexivity statements (Gilgun, 2015) were provided that included the researchers' motives for conducting the research on cultural trauma with Black men and what cultural trauma with Black men means.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative analyses were used to describe the demographic factors of the sample participants. The IBM SPSS 28 software was used to analyze the sample data. The demographic data was analyzed using frequencies, measures of central tendency, variation, and normality.

Results

Sample Statistics

All of the individuals that were referred by their respective study sites, met the inclusion criteria. The sample descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1. In accordance with the study purpose, the sample consisted exclusively of 20 BA men. The 20 BA men were interviewed in

individually (n = 7) and collectively in focus groups (n = 13). The interviews occurred between the dates of 11/18/20 and 4/1/21. Of the participants who responded to the ethnicity question, all were non-Hispanic. The mean age of the participants was 36 years, with a range of 26 to 54 years old. Ninety percent of the sample had at least a high school education or high school equivalency diploma and half of the sample reported being currently employed. With all valid responses included, the mean income was $15,313.79 with a standard deviation of $20,089.83, thereby indicating a large amount of variability. Most of the participants (40%) reported having a Christian/Protestant religion. On average, participants reported having approximately 12 face-to-face interactions with the police during their lifetime. However, this number may be underestimated given that four of the participants provided invalid responses such as "many," "…a lot," "to[o] many," and "one too many." Two other participants that provided invalid responses mentioned "several" and one mentioned "a few." Participants were asked "What percentage of your interactions, with police, would you state have been positive overall?" The mean and median of 20.47% and 5%, respectively. The responses to this question indicate a severe, positive skew (2.71) with scores tending to be lower and indicative of few positive interactions with police.

Racial Pandemic: Timeframe and Icons

Table 2 provides a summary of the number of interviews and references there were to icons and pivotal events occurring during the racial pandemic.

Theme 1: Violation of the Social Contract for Black American Men

Several prominent codes emerged that collectively accounted for a theme regarding a Violation of the BA men's Social Contract with the United States (U.S.) The social contract is an implied agreement that exists between each individual (U.S. citizen) and the social structures or

systems; whereby the citizens give up their individual liberties for the system's protection, defense, and the common good for all members (Rousseau, 1920). The codes underlying this theme collectively speak to various manifestation of anti-Black male racism and a perceived failure of the US to implement its promises and policies in just manner.

Two-Tiered Justice System: Black and White

Among the Black male sample in the study, many of the most prevalent beliefs about the American justice system, embodied various forms and consequences of structural racism (Table 3). Each of these codes have direct and indirect impacts regarding Black male psychosocial functioning in the context of the American social environment. The most common code in the study was that of the race-based Two-Tiered Justice System, endorsed by 100% of the interviews in the study (40 total references). Across the ten interviews participants repeatedly referred to Black racial identity as a catalyst for unjust treatment in the American justice system. The two-tiered racial justice system addressed legal issues regarding police arrests, sentencing, perceptions of experiences in court, and overall due process. Participant "J" (3/11/21) summarized his beliefs about the American justice system with the following sentiments: "…we Black folks, we get the shorthand of the stick – ok, a lot of people say that we are innocent until proven guilty, but as Black men, we are guilty until proven innocent…" A focus group participant on 12/3/20 commented: "it's not a justice system for us because we're not getting no justice out of this, no way form or fashion, you know?" On 4/1/21, another focus group participant echoed this stating:

> "...the plea of a White woman to give them the pass in just about any and every situation that we see in the court of law…but those same cries coming from a Black individual – especially

a Black male were not awarded or afforded the same…level of understanding and sympathy…"

Lack of Accountability for Police Behavior

Ninety percent of the interviews (30 references) believed there was a lack of just legal consequences following police killings of unarmed BAs. Participant DC mentioned "Nobody ever gets brought to justice…everything gets swept under the rug." On 12/3/20 a focus group participant said, "I believe it was NBC about how police over the years, over decades of time have been killing Black men and the thing of it is, they don't even get in trouble!" On 2/11/21 another focus group participant expressed his beliefs that the lack of legal consequences regarding police killings of unarmed Black Americans increases the likelihood of such events occurring in the future: "… I feel like they should go to jail for that,…some of the police officers – wouldn't use so much force if they see that the other police officers are going to jail for some of the stuff"

Deliberate Vanquishment of Black People

A third prominent code, was the "Deliberate Vanquishment of Black people." This code was the articulated belief that the U.S. justice system represents a systematic intent to incarcerate or kill Black people. Participant DC stated, "It's all about getting rid of us, incarcerating us and throwing away the key... It's White supremacy throughout our nation and if they're not the dominant individuals, then there's no room for nobody." A focus group participant on 4/1/21 echoed this sentiment and stated "...the great time for them was when they had everybody under their foot – their foot on their necks and that's what they want, and the justice system is the same way!" Another 4/1/21 focus group participant stated "...it seems to be the purpose of some of the policing…to kind-of eliminate certain people – however you can kind-of do it."

Theme 2: Black American Male Distrust for Police

Police Heuristics or Rules of Thumb

As can be seen in Table 4, several prominent codes arose from the Black male participants' experience with police brutality. Eighty percent of the interviews included an identification of some Police Heuristics or Rules of Thumb (27 references) to be used when interacting with police. These codes essentially constituted messages addressing what is colloquially referred to as "the talk" regarding Black male interactions with police. These heuristics included changes in attitude, movements or other behaviors, emotional responses, and communication. These changes were all perceived to have an impact on the outcomes of, or protection against police escalations. Participant "MS" discussed a behavioral rule of thumb regarding always having your phone accessible:

> If it weren't for the fact that I had got on the phone…to talk to my sister and say hey, just call our lawyer, have somebody on the phone to be able to record this...like I said, my family has always said, keep your phone on you.

Participant "UH" also discussed behavioral heuristics: "...they always tell me [have my], hands on the steering wheel, don't move or do anything out of the ordinary."

Perceptions of Police Presumed Black Criminality

Many of the interviews (70%) contained a code pertaining to Presumed Black Criminality. A prominent code in this theme included many participants' perceptions of being racially profiled. In the context of his experience with police brutality participant "J" expressed his views of presumed Black criminality via drawing a contrast between himself and other Black men in comparison to his and their White male counterparts:

> ...first off, us being Black men, I think …we are judged more than anybody. If a White dude crossed the street and walked down the street and sees a group – let's just say a group of scientists and they're all Black – ok, he ain't gonna look at them being scientists, he's gonna think they're _____...I wouldn't care if I was the smartest man on Earth, but a White man won't look at me like that – they'll consider me as trouble, just because I'm Black.

Participant "MS" described his perception of police viewing him in a monolithic criminal context that neglected the complexity of Black male identity and the ability to change:

> What irks me with the police is that they try to make us be this horrible person and they don't ever see the fact that, that person …could be a saved Christian, to be all of those things that could say, yes, they used to live a bad lifestyle, ...

Empathizing with Police Perspectives

An equally prevalent (70%) code emerged, that included the Black male participants' viewing Black male-police interactions, from the police perspective. In the context of the overall theme, these codes were complex as they demonstrate a thoughtful, nuanced, and multidimensional deliberation of matters regarding Black male-police interactions. A focus group member on 2/11/21 stated: "...in a lot of these situations, I do see the officers pulling their guns and shooting because they're scared or because they think someone might have something or think somebody's gonna try to do something." Similarly, in his reflection on a specific police interaction that occurred while he was driving participant "KL" stated:

> I was 100% honest because I knew I was in the wrong, and I mean, I know I shouldn't be driving, you know, I know my license is suspended…so yeah, you can go ahead and search the car and if I'm going to jail today, that's just what I'm gonna have to accept because I was in the wrong, I shouldn't have been doing what I've been doing.

Police with Unresolved Trauma or Displaced Anger

Half of the interviews attributed uncontrolled police behavior to unresolved trauma or displaced anger. For example, a focus group member on 12/3/20 stated: “Don’t put your anger out on me, and that’s what these cops do –…they be having anger problems because they see so much drama and they start taking it out on Black people.” Another focus group participant on 4/1/21 commented: “Are you really protecting and serving as your job requires you to do or did you just …resigned from the Army and you’re still in combat mode – so everything’s on the table...”

Disrespected by Police

Although not as prevalent as some of the other codes, disrespect from the police (40%) was prominent as it pertains to its relevance for the topic of police brutality. Participant “UH” stated:

> I’ve been in so many situations to where, you know, I can talk straight to them like a regular man to man conversation and they come at me like I’m nothing, try to get out the car, throw me on the floor, they…how can I say it – they always overcheck me – like it’s never nothing – well, like maybe my seatbelt was off, but they want to throw me out the car, put your face in the grass or whatever they do, check the car you know, a whole hour process just because my seatbelt was off.

Theme 3: Tripartite Black American Male, Police Fear & Heterogeneous Emotions

Various codes emerged that accounted for the trauma resulting from various exposures to racial injustice (Table 5). The qualitative analysis showed a constellation of fear, the center of which was police violence. Three specific interrelated codes addressed the relationships among fear and police violence: the Black men’s fear for themselves, the Black men’s fear for their

family members, and their family member's fear for the Black men's safety. These three components of fear suggested a Tripartite Model of Black Male, Police Fear.

Fear for Self

In the majority of the interviews (80%), the Black men articulated a fear for themselves as it pertained to police violence. Participant DC explained:

> I gravely feel concerned – like I said, I have been harassed, I have been on the backend of a Billy club, so I understand what's going on and who's to say that my next encounter with law enforcement won't be my last encounter with law enforcement due to the way they treating and acting...so I'm genuinely concerned about my well-being when I'm interacting with law enforcement.

Participant MS provided a very powerful statement that illustrated the impact of fear in his daily life:

> I could be out minding my business- doing nothing and I have that fear. That's an innate fear that is in any Black American in today's society, is the fact that we have to wonder will there ever come a point that I don't feel like I'm a target?

Similar to participant MS, a focus group participant from 2/11/21 described his emotional reaction to seeing BA dies from police violence:

> the way they're killing…killing people...it's like, you know, when I go outside and like I see a police officer in my rear-view mirror and I see them flash their lights, my heart gets to beating because that might be me getting shot or anything because it's unfair!

Fear for Family Members

As it pertained to police violence and other forms of racial injustice, the data demonstrated that Black males were not only fearful for themselves but also shared this fear for their family

members. Eighty percent of the interviews included the Black male participants descriptions of how they feared for the safety of their family members as it pertained to police violence and racial injustice. Participant MS shared his insight regarding fear for his family relative to the fear he has for himself, "it isn't just a personal thing for me, but it'd be different if I just feel it for me... Will my kids be ok? Will my family be ok?" A 2/11/21 focus group participant, considering the various instances of unarmed BAs dying at the hands of police commented regarding his anticipatory fear:

> ...what if that was my brother, my nephew, my daughter – anybody – what if my daughter seen that and now she's growing up scared to even come to the police and she's in a situation where she actually might need help – something might be going on and she'd be too scared to even contact them because she think the consequences may be worse than what she's going through or whatever...

Family Members' Fear for Black Males

As seen in Table 5, nearly all the interviews included expressions of the family members' fear for the Black male participants as it related to police violence or other racial injustice-oriented experiences. A 12/3/20 focus group participant stated, "what family wouldn't be concerned about their family members when they seeing Black men getting killed like this?" More specifically, the BA men often referred to women, of the same or previous generation articulating some expressed fear for the BA man's safety regarding police violence. These women were often mothers and spouses/significant other. A 4/1/21 focus group participant described his mother's fear as he attended a protest to exercise his first amendment right regarding the racial pandemic: "I remember having the conversation with my mom before I left home and she was just scared

and concerned of me being down there during…these protests because of what could possibly happen." Another 4/1/21 focus group participant stated:

> My significant other – she's afraid for me because I'm on the front line, you know, I put my life out on the line for equal justice for everyone and she doesn't feel comfortable with me being out there the way that I am...

Heterogenous Emotions and Empathic Isolation

In addition to fear, other important, emotionally oriented codes pertaining to psychosocial implications of injustice (during the racial pandemic) included a term called "Upset," sadness, anger, rage or vengeance, and empathic isolation. The frequency of various emotional codes through the interviews can be viewed in Table 5. The term Upset represented negative emotional heterogeneity including feelings of being hurt, shocked, or sick. In accordance with the examination of the BA men's psychosocial experience within its environmental context, the code underlying the concept of empathic isolation is particularly meaningful. Empathic isolation has been defined as a lack of empathy from others regarding lived experiences, in this case racial injustice (Jo et al., 2019). As it pertained to empathic isolation participant DC commented, "They don't empathize or sympathize with us at all – we always at the bottom of the barrel." Participant KL discussed empathic isolation at his place of employment:

> ...if I wanna sit at work and be like man, you heard what happened to George Floyd, that's messed up and then somebody say, well, he should'a just obeyed the law, you know, he should'a just cooperated, you know – I can go on and on about that all day and not get mad or not get mad at you for feeling how you feel, you know…but a lot of people can't do that, you know, so I was never able to just to have a conversation, you know, outside of the family

A participant from the 4/1/21 focus group echoed this sentiment, as he discussed a lack of empathy from other non-Black individuals, and he openly considered what this meant for himself and his relationships:

> Non-Black people who don't get what the issue [is], but think that they understand it and try to tell me how to think about it and how to respond and how to act…it makes me feel betrayed by people who I've known for years, people I've labored with – broke bread with and seeing their reactions that not only disagree with my stances and my experiences and my reality, but also justify the killing of those individuals. It makes me think like what if that happens to me? Are you all gonna say the same thing? Even though you all know me, you know my track record.

Theme 4: Spiritual, Technological, Appraisal, and Relational (STAR) Black American Male Coping for Racial Injustice

The Black men in the focus groups and individual interviews identified a variety of coping mechanisms for addressing racial injustice. As indicated in Table 6, the coping methods for dealing with the recurring deaths of unarmed BA at the hands of police were: Spiritual, Technological, Appraisal, and Relationally (STAR) oriented. There were also codes that spoke to factors that, in the current sample, had less utility for coping with racial injustice.

Spirituality

Although there was some skepticism regarding the role of traditional religion and spirituality in coping with the killings of unarmed BA, the most frequently identified method for addressing racial injustice and its psychosocial consequences included various aspects of religion and spirituality. Several of these religious and spiritual components were epitomized in participant KL's response: "I feel like it plays a pretty major role…especially if you have a strong sense of

faith…I come from a family of prayer…a long line of prayer and I believe that having faith goes a very long way." Several participants used a spiritual context or at least spiritual language to make sense of or find meaning in recent racial injustice events. For example, participant AZ used spirituality to explain what he perceived to be racially motivated driving citations: "I know why you're talking like that, I know why you're acting like that – yeah. Yeah, you're not spiritually educated."

Technology

Six of the interviews discussed using technological advances to collect and distribute video evidence of racial injustice to spur racial change and accountability. Participant DC stated:

> With the camera phones and people finally being able to see it firsthand, what's been going on in back alleys and neighborhoods throughout the country for ions – you know – for many a year – ever since we got here – so now that people are finally getting to see the type of brutality that we undertake and undergo on pretty much a daily basis.

Likewise, participant MS commented, "I think one of the greatest things that we have is our own ability to record because...that's the only way to tell your story...if you have some type of log that's other than their word."

Appraisal/Cognitive Restructuring

Among the interviews, a frequently occurring code regarding coping with cultural trauma included the concept of changing one's thinking regarding different aspects of racial injustice and/or cultural trauma (80%). These codes all included cognitive shifts that were made to address residual trauma and undesirable emotions stemming from racial injustice and cultural trauma. These codes did not necessarily preclude additional behaviors or action to address racial injustice or the emotional sequalae. Several participants referenced the use of Reframing and

attributions of internal Black male positivity or the need to be seen as respectable. For example, "KL" stated:

> I've just learned to sit and think about the good that can come out of [this], this will wake up a lot more people, you know, maybe when something like this happened, it'll get the attention of _____ we need to get more justice for this.

and "...part of the focus on the positivity is knowing that we can overcome certain obstacles that we face…not just as individuals, but as a race." Included in the code of appraisal/cognitive restructuring was "KL's" reference to the cognitive model: "Going through life negative and always having a negative mind towards everything…it didn't bring me nothing but negativity…and it was literally nothing positive out of anything that I was doing because of my negative mind..."

Likewise, participant "J," when asked about his decision-making process as it pertained to responding to racial injustice, stated "I don't know how to put it, but it's got something to do with my beliefs, that's all I can say." When asked a follow-up question participant "J" confirmed that his beliefs, specifically religious ones, dictated his actions as it pertained to his response to coping with the deaths of BAs from racial injustice. One participant in a 12/3/20 focus group stated, "stop and think – that's one of the main things we need to do is stop and think." Another participant in the same focus group discussed changing his thinking and an element of spirituality: "...even when I see situations like that, racial injustice – that God, you know what I mean – will eventually…give us the justice that we desire or that we deserve,…" Pertaining to the intersection of spirituality and cognition participant QX said "Yes, yes – it does help me cope with it. I know they're in a better place, man, you feel me? So now they can watch down on me and look after us..."

Relational/Interpersonal

Social support was another commonly identified method for addressing racial injustice and its psychosocial consequences. Participants cited their communications with pastors, Black coworkers, friends and family members, open online discussions and online closed groups devoted to issues of racial justice, and fellow church members as beneficial for coping with seeing the deaths of unarmed BAs.

Participant MS discussed his use of social support:

> I have fraternity brothers and so I talk to them, and they'll sit and do the same thing, so like whether it's in a group message or individual or we'll call, and we just have a weekly check-in, and so I may talk to like 20 people in the week and that may be either phone call, text, and that's just a minimum

Reluctance or Refusal to Talk to Mental Health or Medical Professionals about Racial Injustice

In an overwhelming majority of the interviews (80%), the BA men articulated their unwillingness to discuss issues of racial injustice with mental health or medical professionals. A focus group participant from 12/3/20 articulated his desire to use other resources concerning the issues of racial injustice: "Me personally, I haven't talked to any medical professionals or mental health experts about stuff like that – anybody that I would probably confide in, it would probably be a pastor or something like that, you know." In a 2/11/21 a focus group participant indicated a lack of resources as a barrier to discussing such issues with a mental health or medical professional: "…no, I haven't...you know, not having talked to any doctors or psychologist. I feel like I can't afford [it]– I ain't gonna lie." In the same focus group participant NC said, "I

wouldn't see the need to speak about it to my doctor or like a medical professional – psychologist or whatever…personally, I probably just wouldn't"

Inability to Cope

All though not frequent, a still very relevant response to the question of ...How do you cope with the deaths of BA from police? participant J indicated:

> I can't even cope with it...The reason why I say I can't cope with it [is] because anytime I see situations like that, it's gonna upset me, so therefore, I mean, and no matter what I say or no matter what I do, you're still gonna have it. So therefore, I mean, ain't nothing I can say about it. I mean, I could say something till I'm blue in the face, but that ain't gonna change nothing.

Theme 5: Black American Male Resilience, Despite Permanence of the Racial Status Quo

The final theme that emerged from the data was a dualistic view of the BA male self and the U.S. in which he lived. As indicated in Table 7, there was a pessimistic view of America, indicative of beliefs that the country will not change regarding the current racial status quo, the country is racist, and hypocritical. There was also a tendency for BA male participants to indicate some sort of disappointment in the U.S. Despite these perceptions the BA men in the sample remained aware of their resources/strengths, contemplated their ability to make responsive changes, and considered the various forms those changes could include.

The United States is Racist

In half of the interviews, the BA male participants viewed the U.S. as historically and/or currently racist. Participant DC articulated his viewpoint, "I view it as this is a racist country, you know what I mean? It's White supremacy throughout our nation and if they're not the dominant individuals, then there's no room for nobody." Participant KL had a similar perspective and stated:

> Racism never really went away – they just got good at hiding it... once I started to see how the country treated certain situations when it came to the cry for help for Black people…how we scream Black Lives Matter…and they turned it into Blue Lives Matter.

Change (in the U.S.) Will Not Occur

As it pertains to change never occurring, participant DC stated "it seems like it's never gonna stop" ... "we been mistreated and stepped on for – throughout the whole existence of us being in America, so I don't see it changing..." A 4/1/21 focus group participant commented "Basically it boils down to the fact that…these things are probably never gonna go away..."

Enduring Positive Self-Image

To the contrary, the BA males viewed themselves as resilient to intersectional inequity (BA race and male gender). For example, one 12/3/20 focus group participant stated, "...if you actually look at society now, everybody trying to be like us...all they listen to now is our music, you know what I mean? It's our culture that everybody loves..." Reflecting on the contrast between his perception of the country and his own racial self-perception, a 4/1/21 focus group participant stated, "...it's made me realize like how much I need to love myself…especially intentionally and like it's helped me see ways in which people suck at loving others – they suck at learning people and understanding people..." Again, regarding his view of himself as a BA man, participant J noted, "I have vision of myself...like I always say I'm a trustworthy individual and everything. I looked at myself like that then, I look at myself now and I'm quite sure I'm gonna be looking like that in the future."

Self-Reflection and Preparation for Change

Most of the interviews identified the current racial pandemic as an inflection point and opportunity for positive change. As it pertains to self-reflection and change, a 2/11/21 focus

group participant stated, “It’s really like…it’s opening my eyes like that I need to speak up more about…about racism, you know, because it’s not too many people that speaking up about it,” A participant from focus group 12-3-20 stated:

> We as Black men have to do something – if we keep – it like this, if you keep allowing somebody to treat you a certain way, they gonna continue to treat you that way! Why? Because you letting them treat you that way, you’re giving them permission to do that.

A 4/1/21 focus group participant also stated:

> I’ll find myself, you know, even more today, looking at things and having something to say about it, you know, as opposed to keeping it to myself...if you let this stuff stay within you, you may end up doing something that you don’t really wanna do because it just festered and you may not be able to control yourself.

As it pertains to the type of change several ideas were articulated and one summed up the essence of a BA male moral dilemma created by the George Floyd murder: “You’re sitting with a camera watching a man die and my life is valuable, so you know, I don’t want my brother – somebody I love and if he’s over there roughing him up – no, I’m getting involved!”

Saturation

Table 8 contains the consecutive interview numbers, dates, and the number of single coded items for each interview. The last interview had no new codes; however, a cursory glance and the numbers does necessarily show a clear downward trend of single codes across interview dates and times. There was a negative ($p > .05$), moderate correlation coefficient of -.37 showing that as the interview dates increased there was a decrease in the number of new codes. Additionally, when considering this saturation data, readers should keep in mind the racial pandemic timeframe and the fact that the interviews occurred in real-time. Newer events were occurring in

latter interviews that previous participants and society in general had not yet seen, for example the capital riots.

Reflexivity Statement

After coding the results and themes, the researchers provided a reflexivity statement. The first author had years of clinical experience providing substance use and mental health treatment in an urban community mental health center with adult BA men and other clients that were predominantly court-ordered. The first author often struggled with the issue of not finding clinically relevant research for BA men, that could be translated to evidence-based clinical practice. After the public murder of George Floyd, the authors discussed the need to address cultural trauma and its specific clinical and societal implications for BA men. Prior to conducting the research, both authors viewed cultural trauma as a public health issue, that includes both macro and micro factors, with specific significance and impact on BA men. Part of the impetus for conducting the present study was to provide a timely and relevant qualitative analysis, from which BA male clinically relevant studies with designs further up the research hierarchy would spur.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to advance the understanding of BA males' experiences with injustice during the racial pandemic and identify the consequent psychosocial implications. The data from the present qualitative analysis found five themes which collectively addressed the study’s aims: 1) a Violation of the Social Contract for Black American Men, 2) Black American Male Distrust for Police, 3) Tripartite Black American Male, Police Fear & Heterogeneous Emotions, 4) Spiritual, Technological, Appraisal, and Relational (STAR) Black American Male Coping for Racial Injustice, and 5) Black American Male Resilience Despite Permanence of the

Racial Status Quo. In addition to psychosocial factors, themes 1, 2, and 5 speak to the environmental or macro context of the research. These three themes converge with other research that has considered BA adult males coping with racial injustice and highlighted the implications of long-standing structural inequity (Aymer, 2010; 2016; Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019, Teasley et al., 2018). These three themes are consistent with current racial disparity criminal justice research (Krohn, 2020) and research documenting the higher likelihood of BA death resulting from police killings (Edwards et al., 2019).

As it pertains to the social contract and BAs, the social contract has received some consideration regarding its meaningfulness in the context of Black racial injustice disparities (Brown, 2008). Relative to past writings that frame the contemporary BA male experience in terms of the social contract, the present study provides a first-person, lived racial pandemic-oriented experience that documents the violation of the social contract in thick description. Moreover, when the violations of the BA males' social contract are taken into account with themes 2 (distrust for police) and 5 (pessimistic views of the country), these themes could potentially account for a reluctance to engage in other potentially beneficial structures or aspects of society such as mental health treatment, Covid-19 vaccinations, and other disparities (Gregory & Clary, 2021; Hutler, 2021) that have been referenced in the present manuscript.

The themes emerging from the present qualitative study, focused on what has been referred to as the racism pandemic (American Psychiatric Association, 2021). These five themes do echo many of the findings from prior research that has evaluated BA male coping with racial injustice. However, before further discussing prior research, a brief discussion of the contrast between fear and anxiety is necessary. Themes 3 and 4 address cognitive-emotional responses and coping skills pertaining to cultural trauma, respectively. Fear was a prominent component of theme 3,

but an operational definition is necessary. Fear and anxiety have been defined and distinguished from one another in several ways. Fear has been considered a present-oriented (Norton, 2012) cognitive process (Beck, et al., 1985). Anxiety has been conceptualized as a future-oriented (Norton, 2012) emotional process (Beck et al., 1985). Barlow (2002) has defined fear as universal and having undisputable practical benefits from an evolutionary perspective. In the present study, the discussion of fear in theme 3 has much in common with Barlow's conceptualization of the emotion. Therefore, in this study, fear is broadly defined as functional cognition and emotion that appraises danger, serves to protect, prevents harm, and occurs without temporal constraints.

The present study's findings suggest a tripartite model of police fear regarding the BA men themselves, their families, and their families fear for the BA men. The authors reference prior research that examined BA men's legitimate fear of police (Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019). Similar to the present study, research conducted by Smith Lee and Robinson also documented BA men's fear (one component of Theme 3) and distrust of police (Theme 2). The present study provides a model of BA male police fear that extend beyond BA men's fear for themselves and community members, which can be translated into cognitive-behavioral considerations for clinicians who may work with BA men addressing related issues. Clinicians working with BA men who report issues of racial injustice and/or race-related trauma, can use the model to both conceptualize structural inequities that may be penetrating the BA male's family system. The Tripartite Black American Male, Police Fear model could ultimately be used to conceptualize the BA male client's case as it pertains to the racial pandemic and could be used to inform the treatment plan. Similar to the present study, Smith Lee and Robinson also acknowledge and

discuss the consequent trauma and mental health concerns that negatively impacted the young BA men in their study.

In addition to showing that the present study's themes are robust to time and sociopolitical circumstances, data from the present study also provides much needed BA adult male context for CBT. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is among the most researched psychotherapeutic interventions (Butler et al., 2006). The cognitive-behavioral implications in this study are profound with regard to theory, given that CBT has been legitimately critiqued for its lack of external validity regarding BAs (Gregory, 2016). The psychosocial implications of theme 3 (Tripartite BA Police Fear and heterogeneous emotional reactions) are linked to theme 4 (STAR Coping). Regarding themes 3 and 4, there is less research examining fear or anxiety regarding BA men and CT psychosocial treatment implications. However, a cognitive-behavioral meta-analysis discussed the environmental context of fear and anxiety in Black individuals and determined that distinguishing fear from anxiety had BA implications for therapeutic rapport and treatment plan intervention choice (Gregory, 2019; problem-solving and/or cognitive restructuring). The five themes and their subsidiary codes (for example, Police Distrust, Two-Tiered Justice System-Black and White, Enduring Positive Self-Image, The United States is Racist, Appraisal/Cognitive Restructuring) can be directly translated to cognitive-behavioral principles (Beck, 2021) regarding therapeutic rapport, cultural adaptation, emphasis on positivity, and collaborative empiricism when working with BA men. The implications for therapeutic rapport from the present study, are also seen in other behavioral science literature addressing BA men and coping with the psychosocial consequences of racial injustice (Aymer, 2016; Teasley et al., 2018). Regardless of the race of the clinician or if a clinician is using CBT or not, one significant take away from the results of this study is when a clinician is working

with a BA man and he begins to discuss issues of racial injustice, personal racial trauma, cultural trauma, and/or police violence, the clinician should demonstrate those therapeutic rapport attributes that Rogers has identified as "…Necessary and Sufficient…:" (1992, pg. 95): empathy, genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and the like. When working with Black men addressing issues of cultural trauma and/or other race-related traumas, the attention to factors that foster therapeutic rapport are even more substantial when the body of research attributing psychotherapeutic progress to general effects, rather than treatment specific active ingredients (Messer & Wampold, 2002) is take into consideration. Black and other non-White clinicians, when working with BA male clients who discuss issues of racial injustice, should should always be cognizant of internalized racism (Speight, 2007) and its implications for both transference and countertransference.

The emphasis on BA male resilience and positive self-identity identified in theme 5 has also been discussed by prior published research that examines BA coping in the context of structural racism (Aymer, 2010). Theme 4 included an Appraisal/Cognitive Restructuring code indicating that the BA men were reframing their perceptions of self and situations to address the cultural trauma stemming from racial injustice. Likewise, theme 5 contained the code Self-Reflection and Preparation for Behavior Change. This code indicated that coping with racial injustice and cultural trauma was not only cognitive, but also behavioral as it pertained to taking steps to problem-solve or address the racial injustices from which cultural trauma originates. Due to the BA male participants' perceptions being rooted in fear rather than dysfunctional anxiety, comprehensive responses to the racial injustice and consequent cultural trauma must be multidimensional. Effective multidimensional interventions must target policies that catalyze disparate BA male arrest and conviction as well as the residual emotional suffering that exists

within cultural trauma. The STAR coping strategies and problem-solving articulated in theme 4 and 5, respectively, may provide some clinical insight regarding future BA male cultural trauma treatment interventions.

Limitations

There were several limitations that should be considered regarding the present qualitative study. First given the inherent limitations of the qualitative methodology, the results from the study cannot be generalized to the broader population of BA men. The obtained results could have idiosyncratic, geographic, and numerous other sample dependent factors that may preclude valid BA male population inferences. As indicated in the Results section, the data collected for the present study was obtained after the murder of George Floyd and several other seminal events that characterized the racial pandemic. It is unknown if or the extent to which the same BA men would have responded to questions (located in the Appendix) pertaining to the U.S. Justice system or their perceptions of the U.S. had they seen the subsequent convictions regarding the murders of George Floyd or Ahmaud Arbery. Given the real-time data collection during the racial pandemic, racially significant events occurred at the end of data collection that participants at the beginning of data collection were not exposed to. However, the basic quantified numeric trend, evidenced by the negative correlation coefficient and the overall code consensus provided support that saturation of meaningful codes was accomplished.

Future Research

The present study represented an initial, BA male-oriented investigation in the environmental and psychosocial implications of the racial pandemic, many important research questions have yet to be answered. Based on the findings in this study, the next research steps include the development and psychometric evaluation of a reliable and valid instrument for measuring BA

male cultural trauma, perceptions of the US and the American justice system, coping skills and resources, and family issues. Institutional review board approved research is currently underway regarding psychometric research to evaluate measurement models pertaining to BA male cultural trauma. Future research should also include a nationally representative survey and statistical models that examine the relationships among observable and latent BA male racial justice variables. Clinical research should examine a cognitive-behavioral manual for addressing BA male cultural trauma. Given the reluctance of the qualitative sample to use professional mental health services, the support for spirituality, and the recognized importance of family, several modalities or settings could be optimal for such an intervention. Forthcoming research could consider evaluating STAR oriented interventions in a family modality, church or other religious settings that may be preferrable to a traditional community mental health center or private practice.

Conclusions

Given the dearth of clinical research that exists to inform theory and intervention regarding BA men and racial trauma, and the environmental context in which they live, the authors anticipate that the findings of this qualitative study will spur nuanced research that improves understanding, clinical and macro interventions for meeting such unmet needs.

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Table 1

Black American Men, Racial Injustice, & Cultural Trauma: Sample Descriptive Statistics (N = 20)

Sex	N (%)
Male	20 (100%)
Race	
Black American	20 (100%)
Ethnicity	
Not Hispanic or Latino	16 (80%)
Missing	4 (20%)
Education (Highest Level)	
Eighth Grade or Less	2 (10%)
High School Equivalent Degree	3 (15%)
High School Graduate	2 (10%)
Completed Some or Currently Taking Vocational or Technical Education	2 (10%)
Graduated Vocational or Technical Education	1 (5%)
Associate degree	1 (5%)
Junior in College	1 (5%)
Bachelor's Degree	3 (15%)
Master's Degree	1 (5%)
Missing	4 (20%)
Employment Status	
Employed	10 (50%)
Unemployed	8 (40%)
Missing	2 (10%)
Religion	
Christian/Protestant	8 (40%)
Muslim	2 (10%)
Nothing in Particular	3 (15%)
Other	5 (25%)
Missing	2 (10%)
Data Collection Method	
Focus Group 1	6 (30%)
Focus Group 2	2 (10%)
Focus Group 3	5 (25%)
Individual Interviews	7 (35%)

Continuous Variables	Mean	Md	SD	Skewness Quotient	Kurtosis Quotient	Valid	Missing
Age (Years)	36.22	32.5	9.99	1.1	-1.17	18	2
Income ($)	$15,314	$696.50	$20,090	1.45	-0.83	14	6
Self-Estimated Number of Face-to-Face Lifetime Interactions with Police	12.18	10	10.59	1.18	-0.41	11	9
Self-Estimated Percentage of Positive Police Interactions[a]	20.47	5	29.02	2.71[a]	1.13	17	3

Abbreviations: Md = Median, N = Number of Research Participants, SD = Standard Deviation

[a]This value is indicative of severe skewness

Table 2

Racial Pandemic Timeframe and Icons

Racial Pandemic Events referenced in Interviews[a]	Percentage of Interviews Endorsing Codes	Total Number of References
Ahmaud Arbery Murder: 2/23/20	10%	1
Atatiana Jefferson Killing: 10/12/19	10%	1
Breonna Taylor Killing: 3/13/20	20%	3
Capitol Riot: 1/6/21	20%	3
Dreasjon Reed Killing: 5/6/20	50%	6
George Floyd Murder: 5/25/20	50%	9
Kaia Rolle Arrest: 9/19/19	10%	1
Protests: 2020	50%	6
Rayshard Brooks Killing: 6/12/20	10%	1

[a]An event was defined as a Racial Pandemic Event if the situation met any of the following criteria: a Black American was the recipient of violence, a civil and/or criminal suit was filed, a police officer was involved in the violence, the event was publicized in local or national media in the context of racial justice and/or police brutality, the event was mentioned in response to one or several of the questions asked in the semi-structured interview, the event occurred during or one year before or after 2020

Table 3.

Theme 1: Violation of the Social Contract - Codes

Code Name	Code Description	Percentage of Interviews Endorsing Codes[a,b]	Total Number of References[c]
Two-Tiered Justice System: Black and White	The identification of Blackness as the catalyst for American Injustice	100%	40
Lack of Accountability for Police Behavior	A systemic, profound, and/or predictable absence of legal consequences for police and other historic killings of Black Americans	90%	30
Deliberate Vanquishment of Black People	The American justice system as a mechanism to systematically and intentionally kill and/or incarcerate; thereby maintaining social and economic Black racial disparities	70%	27
Desire to see the American Justice System Reformed	Identification of policy or procedural changes that are necessary to make	60%	13
Secondary or Subsequent Negative Consequences associated with the American Justice System	Lost opportunities, continued community oversight, negative financial or occupational consequences stemming from police involvement and the American justice system	50%	8
Two-Tiered Justice System: Rich and Poor	The identification of economic status as the catalyst for American Injustice	30%	8
A Profound Absence of Diversity in the Justice System	The identification of racial homogeneity as a problem in the American justice system	20%	4
Justice System's Dereliction of Relevant or Mitigating Factors	Failing for justice system to take into account mitigating factors	20%	2

[a]There were a total of 10 interviews, 3 focus groups and 7 individual interviews

[b]The percentage of responses to a set of questions will not necessarily equal 100, given the inclusion of multiple and diverse responses in focus groups

[c]The total number of references indicates that number of times a code appeared across the 10 interviews

Table 4.

Theme 2: Distrust for Police - Codes

Code Name	Code Description	Percentage of Interviews Endorsing Codes[a,b]	Total Number of References[c]
Internal Attributions	The participants made internal attributions for police behaviors	80%	31
Police Heuristics or Rules of Thumb	The practices participants engaged in and communicated with others, regarding police interactions	80%	27
Police Distrust	Distrust for law enforcement	70%	14
Presumed Black Criminality	The perception that the justice system and its subsidiary agents prematurely view Black males as criminals/bad actors	70%	23
Empathizing with Police Perspectives	Considering decisions, motives, and behaviors from the police perspective	70%	23
An Escalating Cycle of Police Interactions	Situations, factors, and/or decisions that may lead to police violence	60%	17
Daily to Talks about Police Brutality and/or Racial Injustice	Daily Discussions of Police Brutality and/or Racial Injustice	60%	8
Police with Unresolved Trauma or Displaced Anger	Participants' attribution of Police Brutality or Killings to childhood trauma, mental health issues, and/or displaced anger	50%	8
Traumatic Event with Police	An event, involving police and including death, shock, horror, and/or subsequent reoccurrence in thought	40%	11
Disrespected by Police	Behavior by police that demonstrates a lack of respect	40%	8

[a]There were a total of 10 interviews, 3 focus groups and 7 individual interviews

[b]The percentage of responses to a set of questions will not necessarily equal 100, given the inclusion of multiple and diverse responses in focus groups

[c]The total number of references indicates that number of times a code appeared across the 10 interviews

Table 5.

Theme 3: Tripartite Black American Male, Police Fear & Heterogenous Emotions - Codes

Code Name	Code Description	Percentage of Interviews Endorsing Codes[a,b]	Total Number of References[c]
Upset	Negative emotional heterogeneity including feelings of being upset, hurt, shocked, or sick	100%	22
Family Members' Fear	Fear their family members have for them (Black participants) regarding racial injustice	90%	22
Fear for Self	Fear for their own safety regarding Black people dying by police killings	80%	33
Empathic Isolation	A lack of perceived or actual validation or support from others regarding racial injustice or cultural trauma, in routine day-to-day settings	80%	14
Fear for Family Members	Fear for their family members' safety regarding racial injustice	80%	20
Devalued Black Life	Perception that Black men and/or Black people are viewed with contempt and/or neglect for their inherent worth	70%	11
Sadness	Sadness associated with Black people dying by police killings	60%	12
Rage or Vengeance	An expression of an intense, potential behavioral response to racial injustice	50%	7
Anger	Anger associated with Black people dying by police killings	50%	22
Biracial Implications	Meaning and/or experiences attached to biracial identity in the context of racial injustice and/or cultural trauma	40%	5

[a]There were a total of 10 interviews, 3 focus groups and 7 individual interviews

[b]The percentage of responses to a set of questions will not necessarily equal 100, given the inclusion of multiple and diverse responses in focus groups

[c]The total number of references indicates that number of times a code appeared across the 10 interviews

Table 6.

Theme 4: Spiritual, Technological, Appraisal, and Relational (STAR) Coping for Racial Injustice: Codes

Code Name	Code Description	Percentage of Interviews Endorsing Codes[a,b]	Total Number of References[c]
Spirituality	Identification of the benefits associated with religious and spiritual beliefs and practices including scriptures or other religious texts, faith, individual or collective prayer, communal gatherings	90%	51
Relational/Interpersonal	Using social relationships and communication as resources for support regarding racial injustice	90%	29
Appraisal/Cognitive Restructuring	Coping with racial injustice via changing thought patterns or reframing situations	80%	21
Reluctance or Refusal to Talk to Mental Health or Medical Professionals about Racial Injustice	Black men indicating that they do not talk to mental health or medical professionals about racial injustice	80%	20
Technology	The collection and/or distribution of video evidence of racial injustice to spur racial change or accountability	60%	8
Futility of Religion or Spirituality	Pessimism or uncertainty regarding the usefulness of religion and/or spirituality	50%	5
Avoidance Coping	Coping with racial injustice via avoiding or staying away from triggers or warning signs	50%	8
Policy or Rights	Using policy or rights to protect oneself from racial injustice	20%	6
Inability to Cope with Racial Injustice and/or Cultural Trauma	An unambiguous statement regarding the inability to cope with racial injustice and/or cultural trauma	10%	1

[a]There were a total of 10 interviews, 3 focus groups and 7 individual interviews

[b]The percentage of responses to a set of questions will not necessarily equal 100, given the inclusion of multiple and diverse responses in focus groups

[c]The total number of references indicates that number of times a code appeared across the 10 interviews

Table 7.

Theme 5: Black American Male Resilience, Despite the Permanence of the Racial Status Quo

Code Name	Code Description	Percentage of Interviews Endorsing Codes[a,b]	Total Number of References[c]
Change (in the USA) Will Not Occur	The perception that USA racial injustice and/or it's consequences will never change	70%	18
The United States is Racist	The perception that the USA has a racist history and/or racism that continues to endure today	50%	6
Enduring Positive Self-Image	Maintaining a positive self-image despite racial injustice	50%	6
Self-Reflection and Preparation for Behavior Change	Introspective appraisal of racial injustice and considering the best response(s) to it	50%	12
American Hypocrisy	Viewing the USA as being hypocritical	30%	3
Disappointment in the USA	Being disappointed in or let down by the USA	30%	3

[a]There were a total of 10 interviews, 3 focus groups and 7 individual interviews

[b]The percentage of responses to a set of questions will not necessarily equal 100, given the inclusion of multiple and diverse responses in focus groups

[c]The total number of references indicates that number of times a code appeared across the 10 interviews

Table 8.

Saturation: Singly Endorsed Codes Across Dates and Interviews

Interview Number	Data Collection Method	Data Collection Date	Single Endorsed Once (*f*)
1	Individual Interview	11/18/2020	3
2	Individual Interview	11/27/2020	9
3	Focus Group	12/3/2020	0
4	Individual Interview	12/17/20	1
5	Individual Interview	1/14/21	3
6	Individual Interview	1/22/21	4
7	Focus Group	2/11/21	1
8	Individual Interview	2/18/21	5
9	Individual Interview	3/11/21	1
10	Focus Group	4/1/21	0

Abbreviations: *f* - Frequency

Appendix: Cultural Trauma Interview Guide

Interview Introduction: "Greetings and thank you so much for agreeing to be part of this focus group. I am [Author's Name], please call me [Author's First Name]. [Second Author] is also present and co-facilitating the interview. In this focus group we are only interested in your honest feedback regarding the questions. There are no right or wrong answers. All of your answers will be anonymous. Throughout the focus group you can also respond to other members of the focus group as well. The focus group will last for one hour [however with only three persons present it may be shorter than one hour]. Throughout the focus group please use your initials and if you are referring to someone else use their initial or just make up a name for them. Please give your consent to participated in this recorded focus group by simply stating your initials and stating, "I consent to be recorded." The purpose of the focus group is to learn more about your beliefs, thoughts, and opinions regarding Black men, racial injustice, and traumatic events. I would like to quickly allow [Second Author] some time to introduce himself: …

1. Experience with Police Brutality
    a. How many people do you personally know that have been impacted by police brutality?
    b. How often do you talk about racial injustice and police brutality (daily, weekly, monthly, as little as possible)?
2. American Justice System
    a. What are your overall thoughts about the American justice system?
3. Emotional Reactions to Killings of African Americans
    a. Please describe your thoughts regarding the killings of unarmed African Americans.
    b. Please describe your emotional reactions to seeing African Americans die at the hands of police.
4. Familial Impact of Racial Injustice
    a. Is your family concerned about your safety, with regard to racial injustice?
        i. What specific concerns do they have?
        ii. What concerns, if any, do you have?
    b. Are your family concerned about your safety, with regard to police brutality?
        i. What specific concerns do they have?
        ii. What concerns, if any, do you have?
5. Coping Questions
    a. What personal strengths help you deal with seeing African Americans killed on the news and social media?
    b. What role does religion play in coping with deaths of Black people?
        i. What religious resources/practices (reading sacred texts, studying sacred texts in groups, attending religious services) do you use to cope and respond to deaths of black people?
        ii. How often do you engage in these resources or practices?
    c. What role does the funeral or memorial services play in coping with and responding to the deaths of Black people?
        i. What is the way that you honor or memorialize the deaths of Black people in this country? (sharing articles, religious ritual, political action)

    d. Do you talk about these deaths in other spaces outside of your home and religious spaces (barbershop, work, etc.)?
    e. Do you talk to medical and mental health professionals to deal with the deaths of black people?
        i. Do you see the conversations about racial injustice and deaths of black people impacting your children and other members of your family?
6. Has racial injustice changed how you view the country?
    a. How has racial injustice changed how you view the country?
7. Has racial injustice changed how you view yourself?
    a. How has racial injustice changed how you view yourself?