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**WHAT ARE WE MISSING?: A COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCES OF RACE-BASED
TRAUMA BY BLACK AMERICANS AND BLACK JAMAICANS**

by

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ABSTRACT

WHAT ARE WE MISSING?: A COMPARISON OF THE EXPERIENCES OF RACE-BASED TRAUMA BY BLACK AMERICANS AND BLACK JAMAICANS

Bianca R. Augustine
Old Dominion University, 2021
Director: Dr. Narketta Sparkman-Key

Current literature explains that events resulting from instances of white supremacy and racism are traumatizing for Black individuals (Phillips, 2020). Prior literature illuminates the impact of racism and resulting race-based trauma on Black individuals but is lacking regarding the lived experiences of race-based trauma in Black individuals in the U.S. and Black individuals from Jamaica. The goal of this study was to fill a gap in current literature by providing counselors and counselor educators with information regarding the experiences of Black clients to better inform multicultural, trauma-informed counseling practices and counselor education pedagogy. This study explored the experiences of race-based trauma in Black individuals in the U.S. and Jamaicans identifying as non-white using phenomenological methodology through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Using a phenomenological methodology grounded in Critical Race Theory, semi-structured interviews were completed with 5 individuals identifying as Black Americans and 5 self-identified Black Jamaicans. Questions used in the interviews were aimed to explore (a) ways in which Black individuals have experienced race-based trauma as previously defined; (b) the impact of majority versus minoritized ethnic group status on the experience of race-based trauma; (c) resiliency factors employed by Black individuals to cope with race-based trauma; and (d) if and how race-based trauma impacts the daily functioning and

behaviors of individuals self-identifying as Black. The findings of this study illuminate the experiences of these individuals as it relates to race-based trauma and the resiliency factors employed to facilitate coping. Furthermore, a cross-cultural examination of the experiences of racism when the individual is in the majority racial group in their nation, compared to when they are not within the majority racial group is presented, thereby providing the counseling profession with a broader illustration of the Black experience. Implications for licensed professional counselors, supervisors, and counselor educators are presented.

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This dissertation is dedicated to Black individuals everywhere who continue to be traumatized by the oppressive phenomenon of white supremacy. May your voices always be elevated and heard.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study aims to explore the experiences of race-based trauma in Black individuals in the U.S. and Jamaicans identifying as non-white using phenomenological methodology through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Chapter one provides the problem statement and purpose of the present study. This includes an overview of the research questions, research design, and theoretical framework used in this study.

Problem Statement

Impacts of Trauma

Trauma is a longitudinal, socio-psychological process in which a threatening experience interrupts an individual's information process, leading to the activation of maladaptive processes (Sar & Ozturk, 2006). Altered self-perceptions and an altered perception of the relationship between one's internal world or experiences and external reality are often the result of traumatic experiences. In other words, after a traumatic experience, an individual expends extensive amounts of energy attempting to reconcile their altered perceptions of reality. This does not mean, however, that the individual is actively processing said trauma to begin the healing process. Traumatic events often result in hypervigilance, increased startle response, elevated heart rate, higher blood pressure, and potentially memory impairment and anxiety disorders (McGinn & Campbell, 2020). These experiences have been shown to have negative impacts on one's immune function, substance use, obesity, stress responsivity, aging, and psychopathology even if they are not aware of it. This is also the case for vicarious trauma, in which an individual witnesses the trauma of another individual on an ongoing basis, as is often the case following the murder of Black Americans by law enforcement (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019).

Trauma may take many forms, including acute, chronic, and complex trauma (Ross et al., 2020). Acute trauma refers to the experiencing of one traumatic event or a traumatic event that is short-term (Ross et al., 2020). Conversely, complex trauma refers to chronic, ongoing exposure to multiple traumatic events (Ross et al., 2020). Chronic trauma includes the experience of multiple traumatic events over a period of time, such as discrimination, poverty, and intergenerational trauma (Larson et al., 2017; Wamser-Nanney & Vandenberg, 2013). Based on these definitions, race-based trauma is both complex and chronic, as it encompasses ongoing discrimination or violence based on one's racial identity (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019).

Race-Based Trauma of Black Individuals

The literature explains that events resulting from instances of white supremacy and racism are traumatizing for Black individuals (Phillips, 2020). Furthermore, Black individuals often internalize these traumas (Phillips, 2020). These traumatic experiences of racism can range from overt racism, such as witnessing the murders of Black individuals by law enforcement, to less overt forms of racism (i.e, a Black person being mistaken for a janitor), or microaggressions (Phillips, 2020; Delapp & Williams, 2015). Microaggressions may include vague remarks, insults, non-verbal actions, and flippant comments, causing Black individuals targeted by microaggressions to exert extensive energy and lose mental resources as they try to make meaning of the microaggression (Delapp & Williams, 2015). For example, Black individuals often second guess or minimize their own experiences (i.e., “Did that really just happen?” “Am I overreacting?”) or attempt to rationalize the offensive actions of the microaggressor. Microaggressions are experienced frequently by Black individuals in a variety of contexts, including the workplace, school, via the media, and in casual social interactions, to name a few, resulting in difficulties managing the volume of race-based stressors they encounter (Delapp &

Williams, 2015). Similarly, negative stereotypes regarding Black individuals take an increasing toll on them (Delapp & Williams, 2015). These pervasive social cues communicate to Black individuals that they are expected to assimilate to white culture to be accepted in society or be penalized for espousing their authentic cultural expression (Delapp & Williams, 2015). As a result of these ongoing experiences of racism and discrimination, Black individuals must develop specialized resiliency factors (Mushonga et al., 2021). While other minoritized racial groups, including Asian and Latinx individuals, experience racism and resulting trauma in the U.S., Black individuals experience significantly higher rates of racism and discrimination (Chao et al., 2012). This pervasive phenomenon is rooted in the commodification of enslaved Africans for the economic gain of white colonizers (Ogbu, 2004). Historically, Black Americans' acceptance and access to opportunities were based on their ability to assimilate. This resulted in Black Americans conforming to Eurocentric norms and expectations to not only survive but also gain access to upward mobility, such as academic and economic opportunities. This continues to be demonstrated in Black Americans adopting European standards for hairstyles, dress, and mannerisms, among others.

These higher rates of discrimination and racism mirror Black American's increased rates of PTSD diagnoses (Delapp & Williams, 2015). The literature indicates that Black (8.7%) individuals in the U.S. have the highest prevalence rates of PTSD, compared to that of their white (7.4%) counterparts (Alegría et al., 2013; Sibrava et al., 2019; Delapp & Williams, 2015). Similarly, Black individuals experience concerning health, socioeconomic and educational disparities, compounding their traumatic experiences (Boddie, Kyere, & Adedoyin, 2019; Popescu et al., 2018; Volpe et al., 2019).

Intergenerational Trauma

Trauma has intergenerational effects, meaning that if an individual experiences trauma, their offspring and future generations may experience adverse outcomes (Stenson et al., 2020). This phenomenon of historical or intergenerational trauma as it relates to Black individuals is defined as, “the collective spiritual, psychological, emotional, and cognitive distress perpetuated intergenerationally deriving from multiple denigrating experiences originating with slavery and continuing with pattern forms of racism and discrimination of the present day,” (Hampton, Gullotta, & Crowel, 2010, p. 32). The impacts of these traumatic experiences may include feelings of inferiority and helplessness and difficulties related to self-identity (Carter, 2007). These negative impacts and self-concepts are passed down intergenerationally and may contribute to increased rates of mood disorders, and various health disparities, including higher mortality rates and higher prevalence rates of various diseases, including cancer, HIV, and hypertension (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005; Williams-Washington & Mills, 2017). These past traumatic experiences may lead to the nervous system’s inability to distinguish between real and perceived danger, much like what occurs for individuals who directly experience trauma (McEwen, 2000; & Smith, 2010). Along with intergenerational trauma, specialized resiliency factors and strategies are passed down intergenerationally, as well, preparing later generations of Black individuals to cope with racism (Mushonga et al., 2021).

Comparison of Race-Based Trauma in Jamaica and the U.S

Like the U.S., Jamaica was colonized, and its Black inhabitants were enslaved until their emancipation in 1834 (Bell, 2011; Burnard, 2020). Colonization, paired with the later immigration of individuals from China, India, and the Middle East, resulted in a vast array of racial groups and skin tones in Jamaica (Bell, 2011; Kelly & Bailey, 2018). Upon the emancipation of enslaved Jamaicans, emancipation was first granted to those of lighter skin-

complexion, beginning with the slaves who were raped by the slave owner and their resulting children (Henriques, 1968). The Black children fathered by the slave owner inherited the property and wealth of their father, perpetuating the division based on skin color (Henriques, 1968). Similar to in the U.S., social status and political power in Jamaica were made on the basis of skin color (Bell, 2011; Charles, 2017; Kelly & Bailey, 2018; Longman-Mills, Mitchell, & Abel, 2019). In other words, the more European an individual appears, the more social capital they are granted in both the U.S. and Jamaica (Charles, 2017; Kelly & Bailey, 2018).

Over time, middle-class Jamaicans distanced themselves from Jamaicans of lower socioeconomic status due to increases in crime and violence, demonstrating similar effects of intersectionality seen in Black American communities (Henriques, 1968; Kelly & Bailey, 2018). The rise in crime rates and violence among poor Jamaicans was and continues to be the result of a lack of resources, as the government and those in power continue to deprive them of opportunities and support (Henriques, 1968). In summary, although Black Jamaicans compose the majority of Jamaican citizens, racism, mostly in the form of colorism, persists (Kelly & Bailey, 2018). Colorism is a phenomenon of skin stratification in which those of lighter skin tone are afforded privileges denied to those of darker skin tone, including social capital, income, education, and housing, for example (Dixon & Telles, 2017; Hunter, 2007). Research demonstrates the presence of colorism in the U.S. resulting from colonialism, as well (Reece, 2019). Historical U.S. Census data demonstrates that individuals were allotted increased privilege based on their biological proximity to whiteness, creating a historical legacy of increased privilege for Black Americans of lighter complexion (Reece, 2019). This was evidenced in their increased wealth, ownership of successful businesses, longevity, and increased rates of manumission (Reece, 2019).

Race-Based Trauma in the Field of Counseling

Until 2009, graduate counseling programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), were not required to meet educational standards in crisis, disaster, and trauma (Webber et al., 2017). Based on Webber and colleagues' (2017) meta-analysis of traumatology counseling literature, race-based nor race-related trauma was not listed as a category of trauma literature, suggesting that literature in this area was absent. This supports Arredondo and colleagues' (2020) assertion that counselors, counselor educators, and counseling students often, possibly unintentionally, perpetuate racism and white supremacy through silence, inactivity, and non-commitment to taking an active stance against structural and institutional racism. This phenomenon is evidenced by the overdiagnosis of Black individuals with schizophrenia and other highly stigmatized mental health diagnoses (Phillips, 2020; Platt, 2018; Thombs et al., 2019). The literature explains that overdiagnosis of such mental health diagnoses may be due in part to misdiagnosis (Thombs et al., 2019). Therefore, individuals do not receive appropriate treatment. To more closely adhere to the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, it is important that members of the counseling profession are aware of the experiences of Black individuals, as research demonstrates that environmental factors and experiences faced by Black individuals may explain overdiagnosis (Harnett, 2020; Ratts et al., 2016). A cross-cultural comparison of the experiences of race-based trauma in Black individuals is currently lacking. To more fully develop counselors' understanding of race-based trauma, it may prove beneficial to demonstrate how context, and thereby majority versus minority group membership in one's country of origin impacts these experiences. The context in which an individual is socialized and educated may impact their

experiences of race-based trauma. This may also impact the resiliency factors employed within a racialized context.

Purpose of the Study

Traumatic experiences alter individuals' self-perceptions and perceptions of the relationship between their internal world or experiences and external reality. More specifically, after a traumatic experience, an individual may expend extensive amounts of energy attempting to process that trauma. Over 70% of individuals globally have experienced at least one traumatic experience, with an average of more than three traumatic exposures per person (Stenson et al., 2020). Minorities comprise approximately 23.4% of the United States population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition* (DSM-V) defines post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as resulting from "...*death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence...*" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 271). Thus, being Black in a racialized context may be traumatic, as one's Blackness may result in "... *death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threated sexual violence...*" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 271). Based on this diagnostic criteria, 7-8% of the United States population is estimated to have PTSD at some point over their lifetime (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2019). This prevalence rate, which is higher for Black individuals, however, excludes individuals who have experienced trauma(s), such as race-based trauma, but do not fit within the narrow criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2019). Furthermore, PTSD diagnoses may not embody the symptoms that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) may experience as a result of race-based trauma, racism, and colorism (Charles, 2017; Williams-Washington & Mills, 2017). Prior literature illuminates the impact of racism and resulting race-

based trauma on Black individuals but is lacking regarding the lived experiences of race-based trauma in Black individuals in the U.S. and Black individuals from Jamaica. The findings of this study may illuminate the experiences of these individuals. Furthermore, the results of this study will provide a cross-cultural examination of the experiences of racism when the individual is in the majority racial group in their nation, compared to when they are not within the majority racial group, thereby providing the counseling profession with a broader illustration of the Black experience. These findings may also contribute to members of the counseling professions' understanding of race-based trauma and the imperative resiliency factors that allow individuals to cope with such experiences. Furthermore, by completing this study cross-culturally, findings will add to the literature and broaden counseling professionals' understanding of how positionality within the social hierarchy impacts experiences of race-based trauma.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

- R1:** What are the ways in which Black individuals experience race-based trauma?
- R2:** What are the similarities and differences in experiences of race-based trauma cross-culturally based on majority versus minoritized racial group status?
- R3:** What role do class distinctions play in experiences of race-based trauma?
- R4:** How does the experience of race-based trauma influence how Black individuals interact with society?
- R5:** What resiliency factors are used by Black individuals to aid in coping with experiences of race-based trauma?

Research Design

This study will be conducted using the phenomenology methodology. This research methodology is appropriate in that the researcher aims to amplify the voices and experiences of participants (Finlay, 2014; Harris, 2012). It will allow the participants' narratives to be used to illustrate their experiences and answer the research questions posed (Finlay, 2014). This phenomenological study will employ individual interviews and focus groups to explore the research questions. The research design will be further delineated in Chapter 3.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) will be the theoretical framework guiding this study. One of the preeminent themes of CRT posits that scholar should look to marginalized racial groups for insight and understand their voice, because marginalized groups possess knowledge through their experiences that privileged racial groups lack (Harris, 2012). CRT expands the concept of racism to include unintentional prejudices and actions (Harris, 2012). According to CRT, racism is a systemic phenomenon, as colonial contexts rooted in white supremacy are embedded in the structural foundations of post-colonial societies, such as through the creation of laws and policies that are Eurocentric in nature (Albold & & Miller-Dyce, 2016; Salter & Haugen, 2017). CRT also posits that whitewashed narratives, such as those surrounding “liberalism, individualism, colorblindness, choice, and meritocracy,” (Salter & Haugen, 2017, p. 125) perpetuate the systemic racism of American society by attributing inequality and related outcomes to factors unrelated to race and racism. Also at the center of CRT is interest convergence, or the idea that BIPOC receive support for civil rights only when supporting such rights also benefits the interests of white individuals (Salter & Haugen, 2017). The concept of interest convergence is illustrated in the literature by explaining Abraham Lincoln's decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. This illustrates interest convergence in that Lincoln emancipated Black individuals

who had been enslaved to preserve the Union, not out of motives rooted in social justice and equality (Brown & Jackson, 2013).

Supporting this tenet, CRT posits that white identity affords white privilege and is therefore treated and regarded much like a prized possession (Salter & Haugen, 2017). White privilege includes the public and private privileges afforded white individuals due to their socially constructed racial identity, including increased economic, social, and political security (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Also included in white privilege is the assumed naturalness of whiteness, evidenced in the social, political, psychological, and epistemological norms within postcolonial society (Matias, 2020). White individuals are therefore invested in defending white identity and biased historical narratives that positively portray white individuals to protect and maintain white privilege and normalcy (Brown & Jackson, 2013).

CRT centers counter-storytelling to illuminate and deconstruct the racism inherent in American society (Salter & Haugen, 2017). Through the use of counter-storytelling, parables, and chronicles, scholars are able to demonstrate that an individual's interpretation of racial phenomenon is based on their positionality within societal hierarchies (Brown & Jackson, 2013; McCoy, 2018). Counter-storytelling affords BIPOC the opportunity to reveal that racism and discrimination are not occasional parts of their lives, but are persistent parts of life for everyone, and while white individuals benefit from its existence, BIPOC are negatively impacted and oppressed by it (Brown & Jackson, 2013; McCoy, 2018). Intersectionality is also an important concept within the works of CRT scholars (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Intersectionality refers to the intersection of multiple minoritized or oppressed identities (Crenshaw, 1991; Few-Demo, 2014). As such, CRT recognizes and examines the phenomena in which possessing multiple,

intersecting oppressed identities results in greater oppression than the minoritization associated with any of these individual identities (Few-Demo, 2014; Teranishi & Pazich, 2013).

Definition of Terms

Terms used in this study are specific to race-based research. Those terms and a brief overview, as they are used in this study, follow:

Black Americans: Individuals who self-identify their racial identity as Black, and whose reside in America

Black Individuals: Individuals self-identifying as Black American, African American, Black Jamaican, or Mixed-Race, non-white Jamaican

Black Jamaicans: Individuals of Jamaican descent who may or may not currently reside in Jamaica but have lived in Jamaica at some point in their life. This excludes white Jamaicans. Individuals of Jamaican descent who are multiracial and identify as Black Jamaicans are included.

Majority Racial Group: The racial group in one's country of which most of the citizens or inhabitants identify. This term refers only to the numerical composition of the country and does not take power differentials into account.

Minoritized Racial Group: The racial group of which a small portion of the country's citizens or inhabitants identify as

Race-Based Trauma: Distressing events that threaten the physical, emotional, or mental safety or dignity of an individual and occurs due to the person's racial identity

Trauma: A longitudinal, socio-psychological process in which a threatening experience interrupts one's information process, leading to the activation of maladaptive processes (Sar & Ozturk, 2006).

Summary

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the current study examining Black individuals' experiences of race-based trauma in the U.S. and Jamaica. An introduction to the research question, research design, and theoretical framework guiding the study were provided. In Chapter 2, the current literature will be reviewed to present the basis for the current study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of critical literature related to the conceptualization of trauma experienced by Black individuals through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). An overview of CRT begins this chapter, followed by an exploration of trauma, and more specifically, race-based trauma and intergenerational or historical trauma, in America and Jamaica, the two post-colonial nations being examined in this study. Throughout this chapter, aspects of trauma will be related to CRT and the traumatic experiences of Black individuals. This chapter concludes with an exploration of current trauma assessments currently used in the counseling professions, followed by the basis for the current study.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) appeared in the legal field in the 1980s due to rising concerns regarding the minimal legal gains of Black Americans and other people of color (POC) in the fight for equality (Crenshaw, 1988; Ansley, 1989). Prior to the development of CRT, legal frameworks regarded legality objectively, colorblindly, and neutrally, thereby ignoring the systemic and legal impacts of race and racism (Salter & Haugen, 2017). In doing so, racism was viewed and regarded as resulting from and being committed by racially biased and irrational individuals. As explained by Freeman (1978), the legal system, and as a result, many within American society, asserts that for an act to be considered racist, the perpetrator must have intended to cause harm due to conscious race-based prejudice. Through this lens, Freeman argues, the legal system, and thereby much of society, defines racism based on the intentions and motivations of the perpetrator, not based on the effects imposed on the victim (Freeman, 1978).

Conceptualization of Racism

CRT expands the concept of racism to include unintentional prejudices and actions (Harris, 2012). In response, CRT aims to part from the legal system's conceptualization of racism as an "intentional prejudice" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Harris, 2012). According to CRT, racism is a systemic phenomenon, as colonial contexts rooted in white supremacy are embedded in the structural foundations of American society (Salter & Haugen, 2017). Lawrence (1987) supports and explains this phenomenon in their cognitive approach to racism, which theorizes that individuals frequently unintentionally engage in racism in an attempt to rationalize and create meaning of their relationship with other groups while still maintaining their integrity. This often results in individuals taking the position of "color-blindness," which views race as inconsequential and posits that equality is reached by treating individuals the same (Crenshaw, 2010). According to CRT, this position ignores the ways in which individuals of different races experience society differently, are treated differently by society, and the fact that BIPOC individuals have historically and continue to fight for justice in ways that white individuals have not had to (Crenshaw, 2010). By failing to acknowledge the different experiences and treatments of individuals of various races, colorblindness contributes to the unequal and unjust treatment of BIPOC (Crenshaw, 2010). To address this and other aspects of racism, CRT centers race in both epistemology and practice (Salter & Haugen, 2017).

Interest Convergence

CRT holds those whitewashed narratives, such as those surrounding "liberalism, individualism, colorblindness, choice, and meritocracy" (Salter & Haugen, 2017, p. 125) foster the systemic racism of American society by masking inequality and related outcomes as being the result of factors unrelated to race and racism. Also at the center of CRT is interest

convergence or the idea that BIPOC receive support for civil rights only when doing so also benefits the interests of white individuals (Salter & Haugen, 2017). Interest convergence, first introduced by Bell (1980), explains that legal decisions, including that of *Brown v. Board of Education*, are made in support of the rights of BIPOC only when making such decisions “secure, advance, or at least [do] not harm societal interests” of white individuals (Brown & Jackson, 2013, p. 17). The concept of interest convergence is also used in the literature to explain Abraham Lincoln’s decision in issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, in which Lincoln emancipated Black individuals who had been enslaved to preserve the Union, not out of motives rooted in social justice and equality (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Supporting this tenet is the perspective that white identity affords white privilege and is therefore treated and regarded much like a prized possession (Salter & Haugen, 2017). White privilege includes the public and private privileges afforded white individuals due to their socially constructed racial identity, including increased economic, social, and political security (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Due to these inherent privileges, white individuals are invested in defending white identity and silencing historical narratives to positively portray white individuals and to protect and maintain white superiority (Brown & Jackson, 2013). This is demonstrated in the Eurocentric diagnostic criteria for PTSD used in the DSM-V. To include race-based traumas as an event that may lead to PTSD would mean reckoning with and admitting to society’s perpetual traumatization of BIPOC through discrimination and systemic oppression.

Counter-Storytelling

CRT often employs the practice of counter-storytelling to illuminate and deconstruct the racism inherent in American society (Salter & Haugen, 2017). Through the use of counter-storytelling, parables, and chronicles, one is able to demonstrate that an individual’s

interpretation of racial phenomenon is based on their positionality within societal hierarchies (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Counter-storytelling affords BIPOC the opportunity to reveal that racism and discrimination are not occasional part of life but are persistent parts of life for minoritized racial groups (Brown & Jackson, 2013).

Intersectionality

Introduced by Crenshaw (1991), intersectionality refers to the intersection of multiple minoritized or oppressed identities. Intersectionality is an important concept within the works of CRT scholars (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017a; Howard & Navarro, 2016). One of the preeminent themes of CRT posits that all scholars should look to marginalized racial groups for insight and center their voices and ideas, as marginalized groups possess knowledge through their experiences that privileged racial groups lack (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017a; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Harris, 2012). More specifically, Crenshaw explains that sexism and racism are often examined and addressed separately, although the impacts faced by individuals possessing minoritized identities in race and sex/gender are often intertwined (Crenshaw, 1991). Literature has since used intersectionality to refer to the impacts and experiences associated with the intersection of any multiple minoritized or oppressed identities, such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual/affectual identity, and ability status (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017a; Dumas, 2013; Harris, 2012; Teranishi & Pazich, 2013). As such, CRT recognizes and examines the phenomena in which having multiple, intersecting oppressed identities results in greater oppression than the minoritization associated with any single one of these individual identities (Teranishi & Pazich, 2013).

Researcher Counterstory

Research rooted in CRT aims to dismantle racism through the practice of elevating the voices of minoritized racial groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017a; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2017; Harris, 2012). To honor CRT's tradition of counter-storytelling, it is also necessary to acknowledge the counterstory of the researcher. As a Black American, I recognize that my experiences may mirror or be similar to participants in this study. I have been subject to the whitewashed narratives of our society that CRT aims to dismantle and counter through counter-storytelling (Salter & Haugen, 2017). Specifically, I have been exposed to whitewashed narratives by way of biased American history education curriculums. This societal experience, paired with my Black identity, may facilitate gaining entry and trust from participants due to our shared identity. As highlighted in CRT literature, I possess intersecting identities, belonging to the marginalized racial and gender identity groups as a Black woman (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 1992; Delgado & Stefandic, 2017; Howard & Navarro, 2016). This will allow me to connect to and have an enhanced understanding of some of the experiences of Black women participating in this study. While I may have some understanding of the lived experiences of Black individuals based on my own lived experiences, I still have much to learn from the counterstories of participants. That is to say that I have insider knowledge as a Black person and can gain more insight and knowledge as an outsider in the role of researcher. For instance, I have lived in the U.S. as a Black woman my entire life. I also have limited insider knowledge pertaining to being a Black person in Jamaica, as I have studied abroad there. However, my knowledge of being Black in Jamaica is limited, as I was only there for a short period of time and did not spend my formative years there, nor did I receive ongoing formal education in Jamaica. I also recognize that the experiences of participants identifying as a gender other than female will be different than my own lived experiences, allowing me the opportunity to learn from them.

As a Black American in a post-colonial, white nation, I have experienced systemic racism, discrimination, and oppression. I have endured race-based trauma due to the stereotypes of Black people that exist in America. Throughout my educational journey, I have been continuously presented with whitewashed versions of American history that silence the experiences, hardships, and contributions of my Black ancestors. For instance, much of my education as it relates to American history has focused on the contributions of white Americans, with little mention of Black historical figures. Furthermore, the horrors of slavery were glossed over and minimized throughout my formal education. Therefore, I have had to research Black history on my own and seek information regarding Black individuals in America from other sources outside my formal education.

Additionally, I have had to learn to code-switch and adapt in order to survive and succeed in white systems. For instance, when in predominantly white spaces, such as school, extracurricular activities, and most spaces within the wider society, I have had to be intentional in the way that I speak, as not to be stereotyped as “ghetto,” ignorant, or lesser. This has been especially prevalent within educational spaces, such as when interviewing for admission into my graduate program. While traveling to Jamaica as part of a study abroad service-learning program, I experienced for the first time what it was to live within a Black, post-colonial society. I was not met with stares when entering spaces, as those spaces were filled with individuals who were Black like me. I no longer felt the pressure to conform, acculturate, and code-switch to preserve the comfort and gain the acceptance of white peers. I, instead, felt comfortable being myself in all my Blackness without fear of repercussions. While in Jamaica, the sense of pride and community was overwhelming. As I reflected on this experience, I began to wonder what

impacts colonialism continues to have on Black Jamaicans. I wondered what the experiences of race-based trauma include when being Black in a predominantly Black society.

In keeping with the tenet of CRT that seeks to elevate the voices of those that society often silences, I also acknowledge my privilege as a researcher. Similarly, CRT posits that those possessing privilege can learn from the experiences of the silenced (Delgado & Stefandic, 2017a; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Harris, 2012). Therefore, I will elevate the voices of my participants by highlighting their experiences, not my own, in telling their counter-stories. Although I, too, am a Black individual, I recognize the wealth of knowledge that I can gain from the participants of this study and disseminate to the counseling community.

Trauma

Trauma is defined as a longitudinal, socio-psychological process in which a threatening experience interrupts one's information process, thus leading to the activation of maladaptive processes (Sar & Ozturk, 2006). Traumatic experiences result in altered self-perceptions and an altered perception of the relationship between one's internal world or experiences and external reality. More specifically, after a traumatic experience, an individual expends extensive amounts of energy attempting to process said trauma. The person's active memory may handle the trauma as if it were occurring in their present context (Sar & Ozturk, 2006). Each time the traumatic event is replayed, new psychological realities are formed as the mind attempts to provide solutions to the perceived trauma. Because the trauma is not occurring in that present moment, these cognitions are not helpful and are often self-destructive (Sar & Ozturk, 2006). That is to say, trauma leads to a modification in the individual's perception of self in context, leading to increased vigilance, need for control, concentration, and awareness (Sar & Ozturk, 2006).

Traumatic events often result in hypervigilance, in which “...the brain’s neural alerting response is exaggerated and persistent,” (McGinn & Campbell, 2020, p. 12). More specifically, the amygdala, responsible for creating an individual’s fear response, prepares the individual to respond to a threat even when no threat is actually present (McGinn & Campbell, 2020). This results in an increased startle response, elevated heart rate, higher blood pressure, and potentially memory impairment and anxiety disorders (McGinn & Campbell, 2020). Traumatic experiences are also linked to changes in neurology, epidemiology, behavior, physiology, and mental/emotional health (Stenson et al., 2020). More specifically, traumatic exposures, such as childhood trauma, have been shown to have negative impacts on one’s immune function, substance use, obesity, stress responsivity, aging, and psychopathology (Stenson et al., 2020). Research by Smith and colleagues (2003) found a correlation between exposure to community violence and police brutality, both of which are more prevalent for racial/ethnic minorities in America, and hypervigilance.

Trauma is prevalent in the field of counseling as demonstrated by current statistics on traumatic experiences (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2019; Anda et al., 2006). Globally, over 70% of individuals have experienced at least one traumatic experience, with an average of more than three traumatic exposures per person (Stenson et al., 2020). According to the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, 63% of the 17,337 participants experienced one or more types of childhood trauma, with 20% of participants experiencing 4 or more types of childhood traumas (Anda et al., 2006). Participants experiencing 4 or more types of childhood trauma experienced increased physical and mental health risks in adulthood (Anda et al., 2006).

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition* (DSM-V) defines post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as the result of “...*death, threatened death, actual*

or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence...” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 271). Based on these parameters, 7-8% of the United States population is estimated to have PTSD at some point over the course of their life (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2019). This statistic, however, excludes individuals who have experienced trauma(s) but do not fit within the narrow parameters for a diagnosis of PTSD (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2019). Therefore, individuals who are exposed to persistent forms of racism, discrimination, white supremacy, and oppression are left out of this diagnosis (Williams-Washington & Mills, 2017). Furthermore, PTSD does not embody the symptoms that a BIPOC may experience as a result of race-based trauma (Williams-Washington & Mills, 2017). The DSM-V, however, does not take these forms of chronic and complex trauma into account. According to the DSM-V, the traumatic event must include, “*actual or threatened death, serious, injury, or sexual violence,*” experienced directly, witnessed in person as it occurs to others, have happened to a family member or close friend, or “*repeated or extreme exposure,*” excluding exposure via electronic means, such as television, movies, or pictures, unless that exposure is work-related (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 271). This is yet another example of whitewashed narratives within our society.

Racism and Race-Based Trauma

Research states that racism and white supremacy have long resided at the core of the psychological, behavioral, and emotional racial injustices and resulting racial tensions experienced in the U.S. (Arredondo et al., 2020). white supremacy, and therefore racism, is a global phenomenon affecting Black individuals and results from the belief that people of African descent are bestial and therefore inferior to white individuals (Aymer, 2016). Racism is a growing concern in American society, as demonstrated by increasing numbers of Black

Americans citing racism as being a significant issue in our society (Bialik, 2018). In 2017, 80% of Black Americans cited racism as a significant issue in American society, increasing from 44% in 2009 (Bialik, 2018). Concerns regarding racism have also increased among white Americans, with 52% citing racism as a significant issue in 2017 compared to 22% in 2009 (Bialik, 2018). Furthermore, Black children are more likely than their white peers to be exposed to traumatic experiences, or those experiences likely to lead to toxic stress due to their frightening and/or threatening nature (Morsy & Rothstein, 2019).

Vicarious Trauma

The literature explains that events resulting from instances of white supremacy and racism, such as the killings of Black individuals by law enforcement and the circulation of such videos, are traumatizing for Black individuals, as they often internalize these traumas, knowing that such events could happen to them (Phillips, 2020). Instances of observed trauma, such as witnessing the murders of Black individuals by law enforcement, in churches, and in correctional facilities is termed “vicarious traumatization” (Willimas, 2015). Because of Black Americans’ history of racialized violence and trauma, the Black community has developed a cultural knowledge of these traumatic events (Willimas, 2015). This primes Black individuals for vicarious traumatization when similar instances of race-based trauma are witnessed or heard about (Willimas, 2015).

Less overt instances of racism, such as reading racist comments online and the prevalence of negative stereotypes, are traumatizing for Black individuals, as well (Phillips, 2020; Williams, 2015). Phillips (2020) provides the example of a Black individual seeing disparaging comments made by a supervisor on social media, then having to return to work and coexist in close proximity with that person, while knowing their true feelings about them. Through this study, the

ways in which situations such as these impact the functioning, self-concept, and contextual conceptualizations of Black individuals will be further explored. These microaggressions, often taking the form of vague remarks, insults, non-verbal actions, and flippant comments, cause Black individuals targeted by microaggressions to exert extensive energy and lose mental resources as they try to make meaning of the microaggression (Williams, 2015).

Microaggressions may be experienced frequently by Black individuals, resulting in difficulties managing the volume of race-based stressors they encounter (Williams, 2015). These experiences are unpredictable, tend to produce anxiety, and may be dismissed by others, leading the individual to feel as though they are “going crazy” (Williams, 2015). Fear related to the potential of experiencing a microaggression may lead to vigilance, paranoia, traumatization, and difficulty coping with other forms of trauma (Carter, 2007). This is supported by research by C’de Baca and colleagues (2012), in which they attribute Black women veterans’ higher rates of paranoia and persecution to being an adaptive response to racism. These traumatic experiences unique to Black individuals evidence the wealth of knowledge that non-Black individuals stand to gain from the counternarratives of Black individuals.

Collective Trauma

Similarly, negative stereotypes pertaining to Black individuals take an increasing toll on them, as well (Williams, 2015). These pervasive social cues indicate to Black individuals that they must assimilate to white culture for acceptance in society (Williams, 2015). These stereotypes impact Black individuals of all social statuses, with Black individuals of higher social status sometimes facing more discrimination because they pose a threat to social order (Gaetner & Dovidio, 2005).

While other racial groups, including Asian and Latinx individuals, experience racism and resulting trauma, Black individuals experience significantly more racism and discrimination in the U.S. (Chao et al., 2012). These higher rates of discrimination and racism mirror Black American's increased rates of PTSD diagnoses (Williams, 2015). While white individuals have a PTSD prevalence rate of 6.8%, the prevalence rate for Black Americans is 9.1% (Williams et al., 2015). Similarly, Black individuals diagnosed with PTSD report lower expectations regarding the benevolence of the world than do their white counterparts and report perceiving the world more negatively, skeptically, and through a more distrustful lens (Zoellner et al., 1999).

These instances of racism also have a collective or communal effect, resulting in collective trauma (Phillips, 2020). Collective trauma occurs when exposure to a stressful event threatens the safety or perceived sense of safety of a group of individuals (Phillips, 2020). Collective trauma is correlated with increased symptoms of depression and PTSD, including avoidance, hyperarousal, numbing, and reexperiencing the traumatic event (Phillips, 2020).

Historical and Intergenerational Trauma

Historically, Black individuals in America have endured physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological violence during enslavement, the Jim Crow era, and the civil rights movement (Aymer, 2016). Literature suggests that these state-sanctioned acts of violence and the resulting discrimination and unequal treatment of Black individuals must be analyzed before the liberation of Black individuals can be realized in American society (Aymer, 2016). Research has demonstrated that trauma has intergenerational effects, meaning that if an individual experiences trauma, their offspring and future generations may experience adverse outcomes (Stenson et al., 2020). Intergenerational and historical trauma has been studied in survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants, as well as Indigenous Peoples of the United States and their descendants

(Williams-Washington & Mills, 2017). The phenomenon of historical or intergeneration trauma as it relates to Black individuals in the U.S. is defined as, “the collective spiritual, psychological, emotional, and cognitive distress perpetuated intergenerationally deriving from multiple denigrating experiences originating with slavery and continuing with pattern forms of racism and discrimination to the present day,” (Hampton, Gullotta, & Crowel, 2010, p. 32).

Research has demonstrated that BIPOC whose ancestors were victims of genocide and whose racial and ethnic groups are subjected to historical oppression may live with the impacts of the trauma that their ancestors were exposed to (Brave Heart, 2003). These traumatic experiences began during slavery, continued through the Rosewood Massacre of 1923, the state-sanctioned Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment from 1932-1972, the Los Angeles riots of 1992, the current overrepresentation of Black individuals in the school-to-prison-pipeline, the increasing rates of Black individuals murdered by law enforcement, and the lack of resources afforded Black individuals during the ongoing Flint, Michigan water crisis (Kruger et al., 2017; Williams-Washington & Mills, 2017). The impacts of these occurrences range from feelings of inferiority and helplessness to difficulties related to self-identity, to premature death and negative health outcomes (Carter, 2007). These past traumatic experiences can lead to the nervous system’s inability to distinguish between real and perceived danger, much like what occurs for individuals who directly experience trauma (McEwen, 2000; Smith, 2010). Opposed to healthy, prosocial coping mechanisms, the impacts of race-based trauma are passed down intergenerationally, resulting in adverse coping mechanisms such as increased rates of childhood abuse, intimate partner violence, alcohol use disorder, mood disorders, and various health disparities (Williams-Washington & Mills, 2017).

Many studies to date on intergenerational trauma have focused on how a parent's experience of trauma may impact their children's health outcomes, psychopathology, and mortality (Stenson et al., 2020). Specifically, research shows that a mother's trauma exposure negatively impacts her children's abilities to modulate fear responses (Stenson et al., 2020). Similarly, mothers' early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) have been shown to be passed down to their children through adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that the child then experiences (Zeynel & Uzer, 2020). EMS refers to maladaptive beliefs, attitudes, and cognitions that typically result from early adverse experiences (Zeynel & Uzer, 2020). In other words, if the mother has adverse or traumatic experiences in childhood, she may develop EMSs. This may contribute to the development of ACEs for her children, then leading them to develop EMSs.

Trauma, Black Individuals, and the Field of Counseling

Traumatology literature in the counseling profession increased rapidly following the events of September 11, 2001 (Webber et al., 2017). Until 2009, graduate counseling programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), were not required to meet educational standards in crisis, disaster, and trauma (Webber et al., 2017). While this information is now required by CACREP, it is only required that this information be integrated into core courses (Sommer, 2008; Webber et al., 2017). Therefore, there is no requirement for crisis, disaster, and trauma courses. As a result, the many ways that trauma may be experienced, especially race-based trauma, are often overlooked and not adequately addressed in counseling programs (Gere, Dass-Brailsford, & Tsoi Hoshmand, 2009). Based on Webber and colleagues' (2017) meta-analysis of traumatology counseling literature, race-based nor race-related trauma was not listed as a category of trauma literature, suggesting that literature in this area was lacking. This supports Arredondo and colleagues'

(2020) assertion that the counseling profession is “...the handmade of the status quo,” in that counselors, counselor educators, and counseling students often, possibly unintentionally, perpetuate racism and white supremacy through silence, inactivity, and non-commitment to taking an active stance against structural and institutional racism (p. 41). This phenomenon is evidenced by the overdiagnosis of Black individuals with schizophrenia and other highly stigmatized mental health diagnoses (Phillips, 2020). Results of this study provide a framework for elevating the counterstories of oppressed communities and cultivating resilience while disrupting harmful, whitewashed narratives. Furthermore, the results present ways in which the systems that counselors exist within continue to traumatize Black individuals. Through a deeper understanding of how counselors are complicit in systemic oppression, we are provided the opportunity to disrupt those systems and be agents of change as we operate from a culturally aware and sensitive conceptualization of trauma.

Counseling literature emphasizes the importance of counselor competence and awareness in treating individuals living with race-based trauma (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2008). To effectively address race-based trauma in counseling, clinicians must be prepared to identify and process the race-based trauma without attempting to change, justify, or fix the client’s perspective of their lived experiences (Evans et al., 2016). As treatment progresses, the literature suggests that counselors address the client’s race-based trauma through the lens of post-traumatic growth, focusing on the strengths and resiliency of the client (Evans et al., 2016). Furthermore, the literature explains the importance of community and connectedness in healing from race-based trauma and counselors’ understanding of the necessity and benefits of such supports (Evans et al., 2016). Through connectedness and a sense of community, individuals feel seen, validated, and safe, increasing their self-concept and ability to develop prosocial coping

mechanisms (Schultz et al., 2016). Through this study, a framework for fostering community, and thereby resilience, is formulated. Additionally, counselors must also confront racism and seek continuing education related to racism and race-based trauma (Hemmings & Evans, 2018). Current conceptual literature on the treatment of race-based trauma is sparse and lacks depth in recommendations for counselors, evidencing the necessity of further research into this phenomenon (Evans et al., 2016). Specifically, ways in which we as counseling professionals can facilitate healing and assist in the development of prosocial coping mechanisms following race-based trauma are needed. Moreover, an in-depth look into the varied experiences of race-based trauma will provide counselors insight into the experiences of the clients they serve. This will also provide counselors with information regarding how they can disrupt systems of oppression and learn from those that society attempts to silence. Similarly, counseling education literature reports the importance of teaching the assessment and treatment of race-based trauma in counseling programs and supporting research related to race-based trauma (Carter, 2007; Hemmings & Evans, 2018). This material, however, is not standard in counseling graduate programs (Carter, 2007).

Racism in the United States

The United States' documented history of anti-Black racism predates 1619 when English ships first brought enslaved Africans to Jamestown, Virginia, the first of over 400,000 Black individuals who would come to be enslaved in America (Morabia, 2019). Prior to America's participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, other nations had already begun the colonization and exploitation of Black individuals. The Africans who had been kidnapped and enslaved by European colonialists were forced to work in tobacco and later cotton fields in America in harsh conditions and under the violent supervision of white enslavers (Morabia, 2019). Through the

forced labor of enslaved Africans, the American economic system thrived. The Black individuals whose labor benefited the economic growth of America, however, were unable to enjoy the fruits of their labor due to slavery and systemic oppression (Acharya et al., 2016). Throughout slavery, enslaved Black individuals fought tirelessly to maintain a sense of order, dignity, and hope for a better future, despite being dehumanized and having their culture stripped from them (Morabia, 2019).

The Civil War, the deadliest conflict in American history in which the southern states attempted to leave the Union due to the South's desire to maintain slavery, ended in the emancipation of enslaved Black Americans (Bobo, 2017). President Abraham Lincoln emancipated enslaved Black Americans to preserve the Union of the United States, thereby acting in the interests of the Union which so happened to also benefit Black Americans, illustrating the CRT tenet of interest convergence (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Following the emancipation of slavery in America in 1865, racism progressed and evolved, despite racial progress (Kendi, 2016). Following the Civil War was a period lasting over a decade marked with tireless fights for racial equality, desegregation, and affirmative action, often met with violent opposition (Bobo, 2017). This period of time often referred to as the Jim Crow era, was marked by institutional racism supported by a cultural matrix favoring segregation, demonstrating CRT's assertion of racism's pervasiveness across history to maintain white supremacy and thereby power (Bobo, 2017; Salter & Haugen, 2017). Dangerous stereotypes about Black Americans persisted, including notions that Black individuals are more closely kin to apes than to white Americans and were intellectually inferior, furthering the narrative of supremacy (Bobo, 2017; Salter & Haugen, 2017).

Over time, racism in America has evolved into a cultural matrix referred to as Laissez-Faire Racism, characterized by colorblindness or race neutrality (Bobo, 2017; Bonilla-Silva, 2006). This is depicted in the lower health outcomes for Black Americans compared to their white counterparts, for instance (Morabia, 2019; Platt, 2018). Racism in America has continued to be structural, in which racial advantages and disadvantages are evidenced in cultural histories, ideologies, and institutions, continuing to perpetuate the oppression of Black individuals in today's society (Salter, Adams, Perez, 2018). As a result, income and wealth inequality has continued to place Black Americans at a disadvantage due to structural racism that has persisted in American society and politics (Bobo, 2017). As demonstrated in the literature, class, race, gender, and other identities in which an individual either holds privilege or is oppressed cannot be separated from one another (Collins, 1993). As such, class and race continue to be intertwined in systems of oppression, resulting in varying degrees of oppression within the Black diaspora (Collins, 1993). This is an illustration of CRT's principle of intersectionality, in which the more oppressed identities possessed by an individual the greater the degree of oppression they endure (Crenshaw, 1991). Eurocentrism, a form of white supremacy, has continued to pervade American society, demonstrated through the Eurocentric values of independence, individuality, and competition accepted as societal norms, as Black individuals continue to be a minority of the U.S. population (12.1%) (Bobo, 2017; Frey, 2020).

Racism in Jamaica

Jamaica was colonized and its Black inhabitants were enslaved until their emancipation in 1834, although Jamaica did not gain independence from British rule until 1962 (Bell, 2011). As a result of slavery, Jamaican creoles of African and European ancestry (Afro-European) emerged (Shepherd, 2007). This resulted in the denigration and partial erasure of African culture

as Eurocentric culture prevailed, as is demonstrated in the pervasiveness of colorism (Shepherd, 2007). Those of Afro-European lineage grew to regard themselves as superior to Jamaican individuals who heavily identified with their African heritage (Shepherd, 2007). Upon the emancipation of enslaved Jamaicans, emancipation was granted to those of lighter skin complexion first, beginning with the slaves who were raped by the slave owner and their resulting children (Henriques, 1968). The children resulting from the slave owner having raped an enslaved Jamaican woman inherited the property and wealth of their father, perpetuating the division based on skin color (Henriques, 1968). Similar to in the U.S., social status and political power in Jamaica were made on the basis of skin color (Bell, 2011; Kelly & Bailey, 2018). The intersectionality of race, skin tone, and class bred increased division (Bell, 2011). Therefore, those with European lineage were allowed greater access to education, wealth, occupational opportunities, legal protections, and upward social mobility (Bell, 2011). The result was and continues to be, a social hierarchy in which white individuals possess the most social power despite being the minority demographic in terms of population, followed by those of Afro-European heritage, and those with the least social power but the largest population being Black Jamaicans (Henriques, 1968; Kelly & Bailey, 2018). In other words, the more European an individual appears, the more social capital they are granted, illustrating the intersectionality of race and class (Kelly & Bailey, 2018).

As a result, European values were adopted instead of African values upon the emancipation of enslaved Jamaicans, perpetuating racism and white privilege (Henriques, 1968). After Jamaica's independence from Britain, the absence of a self-governing strategy resulted in political patronage, in which politicians provided party-supporters with guns and weapons (Henriques, 1968). These armed individuals became Jamaica's law enforcement, resulting in the

deployment of aggressive power, oppression, and violence against Black Jamaicans of lower socioeconomic status (Henriques, 1968). Over time, middle-class Jamaicans distanced themselves from Jamaicans of lower socioeconomic status due to increases in crime and violence (Henriques, 1968; Kelly & Bailey, 2018). The rise in crime rates and violence among poor Jamaicans was and continues to be the result of a lack of resources, as the government and those in power continue to deprive them of opportunities and support (Henriques, 1968).

Colorism Across the Black Diaspora

Colorism is a phenomenon of skin stratification in which those of lighter skin tone are afforded privileges denied to those of darker skin tone, including social capital, income, education, and housing, for example (Britto, 2018; Hunter, 2007). Research demonstrates the detriments to one's psychosocial and economic outcomes resulting from colorism (Abrams et al., 2020). Colorism's history in the U.S. and Jamaica spans from colonization and slavery to modern-day (Charles, 2011; Dupree-Wilson, 2021). Fostered by the continued prevalence of white supremacy, and the belief that proximity to whiteness increases one's likelihood of upward mobility, colorism results in intraracial discrimination (Dupree-Wilson, 2021). Rape of enslaved Black women by their white, male captors resulted in children of African and European ancestry (Dupree-Wilson, 2021). Although these children were classified as Black, they were afforded some privileges due to their proximity to whiteness and their resulting lighter complexion, including the occasional inheritance of money or property from their European fathers (Dupree-Wilson, 2021). As a result, colorism has resided at the intersection of class and race (Britto, 2019). The differing treatment of enslaved Black individuals based on their skin color bred divisiveness and the development of an intraracial hierarchy based on skin complexion (Dupree-

Wilson, 2021). Black individuals internalized the belief that privilege, both economic and social, was granted to those with greater proximity to whiteness (Dupree-Wilson, 2021).

Although Black Jamaicans compose the majority of Jamaican citizens, racism, mostly in the form of colorism, persists (Kelly & Bailey, 2018; Madu et al., 2021; Thame, 2021). Colorism in Jamaica is demonstrated through the prevalence of narratives that poise darker complexioned individuals as being of lesser value than their lighter complexioned peers, being “trouble,” criminals, or posing a threat (Semaj-Hall, 2018; Thame, 2021). Due to the prevalence of colorism in Jamaican society, skin bleaching has persisted (Charles, 2011). During colonialism, white British individuals bleached their skin to minimize the perceived “impurities” of darker skin resulting from interracial lineage and tans from the tropical climate (Charles, 2011, p. 375). Black Jamaicans followed suit, bleaching their skin, as well. This grew in popularity as newspaper ads in the 1950s encouraged skin bleaching to enhance one’s beauty (Charles, 2011). The practice has prevailed as a means to not only enhance one’s perceived attractiveness but to enhance one’s perceived power, as well (Wallace, 2009). Studies have demonstrated a relationship between individuals’ years of schooling and access to household amenities, with individuals of lighter complexions having increased access to both (Kelly, 2020). A 2017 government report found that 300,000 of Jamaica’s 2.8 million citizens engaged in skin bleaching (Madu et al., 2021). Colorism and racism have prevailed, despite Jamaica’s ethnic composition now being composed of mostly Black individuals, making up 92.1% of the nation’s population (Britannica, 2021).

Colorism’s prevalence among Black individuals in the United States remains a source of racial divisiveness (Abrams et al., 2020; Britto, 2019; Dupree-Wilson, 2021). This discrimination within Black communities in the U.S. sustains white supremacy while making racial solidarity

more difficult to attain (Dupree-Wilson, 2021). During the earlier half of the 20th century, Black individuals who were racially ambiguous, lacking more overt and identifiable African physical features, passed as white to gain economic and social advancement (Dupree-Wilson, 2021). This reinforced the internalized narrative that proximity to whiteness was more favorable and desirable than proximity to Blackness. During the 1940s and 1950s, white Americans became increasingly aware of the phenomenon of Black individuals passing as white, so they enlisted Black individuals to help identify those attempting to pass for social and economic benefit (Dupree-Wilson, 2021). Throughout the 20th century, social mobility was determined by a Black person's ability to pass the "Brown Paper Bag" test, in which one was admitted to social organizations only if their skin tone was lighter than the shade of a brown paper bag (Russell-Cole et al., 2013). As colorism continues to persist, popular media and Black celebrities, such as Spike Lee, have tackled this nuanced phenomenon, explaining that engaging in colorism is ultimately one's struggle with their self (Dupree-Wilson, 2021).

Resilience Factors

Literature illuminates the various resiliency factors and mechanisms employed by Black individuals (Mushonga et al., 2021). Oral communication has been well documented as a resiliency factor used within Black communities, and more recently, has been engaged in via social media (Lu & Steele, 2019). Through expressions of Black joy via social media outlets such as Twitter, Black individuals engage in counter-storytelling to foster resilience (Lu & Steele, 2019). Family relationships, specifically those between parents and their children, have also been identified as a source of resilience in Black families (Anderson, 2018). Similarly, research has demonstrated that for many Black women, motherhood serves as a resilience mechanism (Aniefuna et al., 2020). Just as trauma is transmitted intergenerationally, resilience factors are,

too (Aniefuna et al., 2020). Research demonstrates that the resilience of Black women through motherhood are passed down generationally (Aniefuna et al., 2020). Additionally, religion/spirituality, engagement in the arts, and education are also mechanisms employed by Black individuals to develop and maintain resilience in a racialized society (Aniefuna et al., 2020).

Current Study

Minorities comprise approximately 23.4% of the United States population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Prior literature illuminates the impact of racism and resulting race-based trauma on Black individuals. Research is lacking, however, regarding the lived experiences of race-based trauma in Black individuals in the U.S. and those in Jamaica. The current study aims to explore the following research questions:

1. What are the ways in which Black individuals experience race-based trauma?
2. How does majority versus minoritized racial group status impact the experience of race-based trauma by Black individuals?
3. How do class distinctions influence or impact experiences of race-based trauma?
4. What resiliency factors are used by Black individuals to aid in coping with experiences of race-based trauma?
5. How does the experience of race-based trauma impact how Black individuals interact with society?

Through the exploration of these research questions, I aim to provide an illustration of the experiences of Black individuals in America and Jamaica. Through these illustrations, I hope to add to the literature to better prepare counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors to work with Black individuals from a trauma-informed perspective.

This area of research is important in that it emphasizes the voices of underrepresented populations, namely Black individuals, as is the goal of research rooted in critical race theory and the phenomenological tradition (Harris, 2012; Hays & Singh, 2012). This research also investigates the impacts of race-based trauma and historical and intergenerational trauma, as depicted in the literature (Phillips, 2020; Stenson et al., 2020; Willimans, 2015; Williams-Washington & Mills, 2017). It is important that we as counseling professionals are able to understand the conceptualization of trauma in the Black community in order to better serve this disenfranchised population (Ratts et al., 2016).

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the literature relevant in providing a basis for this study examining Black individuals in the U.S. and Jamaica's experiences with race-based trauma, the impacts of such experiences, and resilience factors used for coping with such experiences. The next chapter will present the methodology for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will outline the methodology used to explore race based-trauma experienced by Black individuals cross-culturally. To do so, this research examined the experiences of Black individuals living in the United States where they are the ethnic minority, as well as individuals who have lived in Jamaica where they were the ethnic majority in terms of population. The study explored how belonging to either the majority or minority racial group in one's country may influence their experiences of race-based trauma. The chapter begins with an explanation of the purpose of this study and the research questions guiding this research. The research design, phenomenology through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens, will then be detailed, followed by a description of data collection and data analysis procedures. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants included in this study will be explained, as will the potential limitations of the current study. This chapter will conclude with an overview of strategies for trustworthiness.

Purpose of Research and Research Questions

The current study aimed to explore the differences in Black individuals' experiences of race-based trauma living in post-colonial nations in which Black individuals comprise the majority racial group versus nations in which Black individuals are the minoritized racial group.

Research Questions

R1: What are the ways in which Black individuals experience race-based trauma?

R2: What are the similarities and differences in experiences of race-based trauma cross-culturally based on majority versus minoritized racial group status?

R3: What role do class distinctions play in experiences of race-based trauma?

R4: How does the experience of race-based trauma influence how Black individuals interact with society?

R5: What resiliency factors are used by Black individuals to aid in coping with experiences of race-based trauma?

Research Design

This qualitative study will be completed using the phenomenological methodology conducted from a Critical Race Theory (CRT) perspective. In alignment with CRT, context greatly influences the experiences of individuals and, therefore, their perspective and perception, phenomenological research aims to examine the experiences of individuals in a given context ((Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Giorgi, 2009). Research conducted through phenomenological methodology elevates the experience of the participants, also called co-researchers, by illustrating co-researchers' conscious perceptions of their reality (Giorgi, 2009).

Phenomenological research is emic in ontology, meaning that it aims to explore the contextual truth of participants (Hays & Singh, 2012). This research methodology is also participant-centered in rhetoric, thereby emphasizing the underrepresented and oppressed voices and experiences of participants, another key element of research conducted through the lens of CRT (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012).

CRT will guide this research. CRT emerged in the legal arena in the 1980s as a result of rising concerns regarding the slow and minimal gains of BIPOC in the legal battle for equality and integration (Ansley, 1989; Crenshaw, 1988; Brown & Jackson, 2013). Later, in the mid-1990s, CRT became a lens through which race was examined as a cause and a context for social and educational inequities (Dixson & Lynn, 2013). One of the preeminent themes of critical race theory is the concept that marginalized racial groups possess knowledge that privileged racial

groups lack. Therefore, scholars should look to these marginalized groups for insight and evidence of their lived experiences (Harris, 2012). Based on this tenet of critical race theory, CRT scholars use the narratives of participants to emphasize their experiences, as will be done in this study through the use of phenomenology (Brown & Jackson, 2013). CRT posits that chronicles, storytelling, and counter-narratives are critical to illustrate the differences in racial and ethnic phenomena as determined by the positionality of individuals (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Therefore, this study will use the counter-narratives and stories of participants to illustrate their unique experiences of race-based trauma.

Phenomenological methodology was chosen for this study for a number of reasons. Phenomenology recognizes the subjective nature of individuals' experiences and aims to capture and illustrate the richness, ambiguity, and complexity of those experiences (Finlay, 2009). By taking the position of relative truth, phenomenology allows researchers to uplift and emphasize the experiences of oppressed groups, as is the goal of this study grounded in CRT. While the phenomenon of race-based trauma in Black communities could be investigated using the heuristic tradition, the goal of illuminating the voices of Black students while minimizing the focus on the researcher's experiences can be better achieved via phenomenology (Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). More specifically, heuristic research aims to discover the underlying meanings of human experiences while engaging the researcher in self-exploration, while this study aims to examine and illuminate the experiences of the participants to enlighten others of these experiences through the exploration of the "lifeworld," or subjective, lived experiences of participants (Finlay, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). To ensure that race-based trauma is defined and depicted as participants themselves experience it, I will be intentional in inviting open dialogue with and between participants regarding what constitutes a race-based traumatic experience. This

definition or experience described by participants will then guide coding to ensure an accurate depiction of their subjective experiences.

While the grounded theory research methodology could be used to unravel and deepen one's understanding of the experiences of race-based trauma, this methodology would not be optimal in addressing the research questions posed in this study, as grounded theory research aims to develop theoretical explanations for experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The aim of this study, however, is to gain insight into the lived experiences of participants, not to develop a theory to explain said experiences. Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) was ruled out as a methodology for this study, as CQR attempts to form generalizable findings, which does not align with the goals of the present study (Hill et al., 2005). Furthermore, CQR utilizes a research team, consisting of 4 to 12 researchers, including an auditor (Hill et al., 2005). This study, however, will employ member checking to triangulate data, as this better centers the voices of the oppressed participants, as is the goal of research conducted through a CRT lens (Hannon et al., 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012).

Research conducted using phenomenology emphasizes the participants' unique experiences and perceptions within the subjective context of their world (Hays & Singh, 2012). In phenomenological research, the researcher aims to minimize their subjectivity (Hays & Singh, 2012; Wertz et al., 2011). While it is impossible for me, a Black female, to remain completely objective, reflexive journaling and debriefing will be employed to minimize the likelihood of my experiences impacting the interpretation of participants' experiences (Hoover & Morrow, 2015). In debriefing, I will discuss and process my experiences and reactions related to the data with members of my committee (Hoover & Morrow, 2015). Furthermore, I will use my knowledge of the Black community, as I am a member of this community, to help me connect to participants

and gain entre. This insider knowledge will also allow me to be increasingly sensitive to the experiences of participants. Additionally, I will allow participants' collective definition of race-based trauma to guide me in coding data. I will then be intentional in reviewing the findings with participants (i.e., member checking) to ensure the experiences of the participants are illustrated, as research states that member checking ensures a more accurate portrayal of participant experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012; Madil & Sullivan, 2017).

Data Collection

Recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited via social media. More specifically, I posted a recruitment flyer on my personal Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts. This post contained my email address, and perspective participants were instructed to email me, the researcher, if they were interested in participating. All potential participants to who emailed me were provided a link to the Qualtrics website where they completed the informed consent document and demographic survey.

Exploratory Focus Group

To ensure the cultural relevance of the questions used in the semi-structured interviews, two focus groups were conducted first. One focus group contained individuals who live or have previously lived in Jamaica, while the other focus group contained Black Americans. Some participants were unable to attend the focus groups, so I gathered their feedback on the interview questions via email. I employed the use of focus groups, to allow me the opportunity to observe the underlying opinions, thoughts, and feelings of participants in a group setting (Hays & Singh, 2012). By observing these group interactions in an artificial environment, I was better able to observe participants' expression, exploration, and amplifications of their ideas as they shared

their experiences with fellow group members and reacted to my questions (Payne & Payne, 2004). I was also able to gather rich and enlightening information regarding the experiences of participants to better inform the development of interview questions. Furthermore, the use of a focus group offered rich data by allowing participants who share similar experiences to expand upon the disclosures made by one another (Hays & Singh, 2012). This form of data collection also accentuated the similarities in experiences, the variations in experiences, and the prevalence of experiences among participants (Hays & Singh, 2012). As the richness and depth of information is important in phenomenological research, this form of data collection is ideal and supported by the literature (Masadeh, 2012). Furthermore, as CRT aims to elevate and illuminate the voices of underrepresented participants, it is vital that questions used to elicit information regarding participants' experiences are clear and easily understood. This also allowed for richer storytelling and the exploration of racism and race-based trauma as existing at numerous societal levels, including institutional, unconscious, and cultural levels of racism that may result in race-based trauma (Brown & Jackson, 2013). The use of focus groups during the exploratory phase of the study ensured the clarity and cultural relevance of questions posed to participants.

Prior to the collection of data via the exploratory focus group, a blueprint was developed to ensure that a balanced number of questions were asked to explore each aspect of the research questions being posed (Hays & Singh, 2012). I developed a blueprint based on CRT's tenet of racism as a normal aspect of society and previous research by Sonnet, Johnson, and Dolan (2015). This was guided by Bryant-Davis's (2007) definition of race-based trauma as including:

- (a) an emotional injury that is motivated by hate or fear of a person or group of people as a result of their race;
- (b) a racially motivated stressor that overwhelms a person's capacity to cope;
- (c) a racially motivated, interpersonal severe stressor that causes bodily harm or

threatens one's life integrity; or (d) a severe interpersonal or institutional stressor motivated by racism that causes fear, helplessness, or horror. (p. 135-136).

To ensure that participants had a clear understanding of the sort of experiences they are being asked to recount, a simplified definition of race-based trauma was provided in the informed consent process. More specifically, I defined race-based trauma to participants as being:

Anything that you might have experienced or may still be experiencing because of your race and because of racism that has caused you to feel hated, fearful, horror, helpless, or overwhelmed. These experiences may also have caused harm to your body, fear for your life, or left you feeling bad about yourself or who you are.

More specifically, questions were aimed to explore (a) ways in which Black individuals have experienced race-based trauma as previously defined; (b) the impact of majority versus minoritized ethnic group status on the experience of race-based trauma; (c) resiliency factors employed by Black individuals to cope with race-based trauma; and (d) if and how race-based trauma impacts the daily functioning and behaviors of individuals self-identifying as Black. From the blueprint, the following initial focus group questions were developed:

- What experiences have you had or continue to have due to being Black that you find troubling?
- How have these experiences shaped how you behave?
- Do you think that the history of Black/Jamaican (depending on nationality) people in this country contributes to these experiences? If so, how?
- How did/do you cope with these experiences?

The time and date of the focus groups were determined based on the availability of participants. It was conducted via video conferencing to allow for ease of access for participants. Furthermore, the use of video conferencing allowed me to observe the reactions that participants had to the questions posed. The focus group was video and audio recorded to allow for the transcription of data. Having recordings also allowed me to ensure that any changes to questions that are suggested by participants were done accurately. As the Center for Disease Control (CDC) had social distancing guidelines in effect due to the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of data collection, video conferencing was also safer than in-person options for the participants and researcher (CDC, 2020). This also allowed for the inclusion of participants from a broader geographical area.

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured, individual interviews with all participants from the focus groups, as well as those who were unable to attend the focus groups, and instead provided feedback via email. This allowed me to apply any necessary changes to the interview questions used in the focus group, thereby enhancing my ability to present a rich illustration of participants' experiences, keeping in line with CRT (Brown & Jackson, 2013). The individual interviews were also conducted via video conferencing, for the aforementioned reasons.

Questions posed during the individual interviews were:

1. What troubling experiences have you had or continue to have that occur because you are Black?
2. How have these negative experiences changed you or how I respond to situations?
3. Do you think that the history of Black people in Jamaica (or America) contributes to your experiences? If so, how?

4. How did/do you cope with these experiences?

Member Checking Focus Group

A final focus group was conducted following the transcription, coding, and analysis of the information obtained in the individual interviews. All participants who took part in the individual interviews were invited to partake in the member-checking focus group. This allowed the second focus group to serve as a form of member checking to ensure that participants were provided the opportunity to offer input regarding the presentation of research findings and to ensure that they believed that their experiences are accurately depicted (Hays & Singh, 2012). The literature supports the use of member checking for enhancing the trustworthiness of phenomenological research, as it ensures that the voices and experiences of participants are illuminated in the research findings (Hays & Singh, 2012). It also served as a way to ensure my experiences are not over-projected into the findings (Hays & Singh, 2012).

More specifically, after I analyzed the data and constructed the results section of this manuscript, I provided participants with a copy of the results via email. Participants were instructed to review the results and provide feedback. Participants who were unable to attend the focus group were also invited to share their feedback via email. This ensured that all participants were provided the opportunity to provide feedback, regardless of their availability to attend the focus group. One participant slightly edited their quotes that were used in this manuscript. Those changes were applied to ensure that the participant's experiences are illustrated accurately.

Ethics

The participants in the focus groups and individual interviews signed Informed Consent Forms, informing them of measures taken to protect their privacy and anonymity. The researcher confirmed electronically that all informed consent documents were completed prior to the start of

data collection. The Informed Consent also explained that Institutional Review Board approval was obtained for this study. I provided a copy of said Informed Consent to participants to keep so that they had my contact information and information regarding the study. I also explained the limits to confidentiality when working with groups to the participants of the focus groups. To obtain informed consent virtually, the Informed Consent form was made available via the Qualtrics website. By choosing to continue to the demographics questionnaire on the website, participants consented to participate. The demographics form, also completed online via Qualtrics, was used to ensure that participants met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria included being 18 years of age or older and self-identification as Black. Individuals identifying as white or non-Black or who were under 18 years of age were excluded from this study. I then emailed them a questionnaire regarding availability for the focus group and interviews.

The focus groups and individual interviews were approximately one hour each. I used the previously stated list of predetermined questions as the exploratory focus group and interview protocols. These protocols were based on a blueprint that was developed based on CRT, the theoretical framework for this study. Furthermore, the protocol for the member checking focus group was based on the coded data from the interviews to ensure the accurate representation of participants' experiences. The exploratory focus group and interview protocols were used to prompt group and interview discussions and to ensure that disclosures by participants remained centralized to the research questions (Payne & Payne, 2004). Both interview formats were semi-structured to allow for follow-up questions as necessary, thereby allowing for richer data and counter-narratives (Brown & Jackson, 2013).

I developed field notes during and immediately following the focus group and individual interviews and composed a reflexive journal throughout the data collection and analysis processes. In doing so, I increased the quality of the study by helping me to attend to the effects of my experiences and characteristics on my perception of the data (Berger, 2015). Through reflexive journaling, I also acknowledge that this study cannot be free from bias, as I am a member of the community being studied and therefore cannot separate myself and my identity from the study but can acknowledge and explore the impacts of said bias (Berger, 2015). Transcripts and research journal entries were stored on a password-protected computer and only contained pseudonyms, no identifying information, to protect participant confidentiality and anonymity. This also ensured the legibility of notes to increase the accuracy of research conclusions (Payne & Payne, 2004). Throughout the exploration of the literature, data collection, and data analysis processes, I participated in debriefing meetings to ensure my emotional wellness, as well as the acknowledgment of my experiences and biases.

Participants

All participants met the criterion of self-identification as Black or Jamaican and were at least 18 years of age. One individual completed the informed consent and demographics questionnaire, and later decided to withdraw from the study prior to the exploratory focus group. Five of the participants identified as Black Americans, while the other five participants identified as Jamaican. Individuals identifying as Jamaican either still reside in Jamaica or reside elsewhere but have lived in Jamaica. Those identifying ethnically/racially as non-Black or white Jamaican were excluded from this study. This allowed the study to present the experiences of trauma from those in Black/Jamaican communities cross-culturally. I also required that participants be 18 years of age or older due to the sensitive nature of the topic and experiences being explored.

Sampling

Through purposive sampling, I selected individuals based on the depth of information they could offer about the phenomenon being studied (Hays & Singh, 2012). More specifically, purposive sampling was attained by recruiting participants through the use of social media mediums (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) and snowball sampling. Social media recruitment included a flyer shared across my personal and professional social media platforms. The flyer explained that the study was conducted to fulfill the dissertation requirement for my Ph.D. It also explained that the study aimed to explore how race-based trauma is experienced by Black individuals. I ensured that the language used in the flyer could be easily understood by individuals from a variety of educational backgrounds by asking for feedback regarding the language used in the flyer from individuals with various educational backgrounds. This recruitment method was chosen to capture the experiences of Black individuals from an extensive array of backgrounds and experiences, including those of various geographical regions, religious and spiritual affiliations, socioeconomic statuses, affectional, sexual and gender identities, ability status, and ages. As phenomenology aims to explore the experiences of a subset of individuals and does not aim for generalizability, the literature suggests a sample size of fewer than 10 participants (Hays & Singh, 2012). Furthermore, CRT recognizes that people of color (POC) may identify within multiple oppressed groups, including minoritized race, gender, class, and affectional/sexual identity groups (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). Through purposive and snowball sampling in which participants were recruited via social media and encouraged to share the flyer with other Black peers, I was able to recruit participants who have experienced and continue to experience different levels of racial oppression and race-based trauma, as well as individuals with varying degrees of intersectionality.

Data Analysis

The data collection and analysis for this research were conducted concurrently, allowing for follow-up questioning from the exploratory focus group to the individual interviews. This allowed me to gather more complete information regarding participants' experiences (Payne & Payne, 2004). Moustakas's guidelines for phenomenological data analysis, outlined below, guided the coding and data analysis in this study but were modified to better fit within the aims of CRT (Hays & Singh, 2012). To begin the analysis of the data, I first acknowledge my biases and previously held assumptions that are based on my experiences as a Black person in America through the use of reflexive journaling and peer debriefing, as suggested in the literature (Hays & Singh, 2012; Wertz et al., 2011). This reflexivity also allowed me to better connect with the data and use my experiences as a member of the community being studied to understand the experiences and perceptions of participants.

Data collected from Black Americans were coded with data collected from Jamaican participants to allow for the illustrations of cross-cultural connections. I began by completing horizontalization, a multi-step process in which I reviewed my field notes taken during data collections and listed expressions or occurrences (codes) that are relevant to the research question (Moustakas, 1994). More specifically, I examined my field notes completed during and after data collections and highlighted words or phrases that encapsulated or summarized my observations. I then completed the same process of horizontalization with the transcripts from the interviews by highlighting and noting words or phrases that summarized participants' experiences. Moustakas (1994) suggests the elimination or collapsing of repetitive phrases to relevant, non-repetitive, abstract expressions that appear to accurately encapsulate multiple initial words and phrases. I did not do this, as it demonstrates the commonality and prevalence of

experiences. In eliminating this step, data analysis better aligned with the tenets of CRT, as I highlighted the experiential knowledge of participants (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998).

As suggested by the third step in Moustakas's phenomenological data analysis, I then clustered the remaining expressions into thematic labels, supported by the collected data and guided by the literature and tenets of CRT (Harris, 2012; Hays & Singh, 2012; Sonnett et al., 2015). To provide a cross-cultural comparison, the themes derived from the data received from Black Americans were compared to the data retrieved from Jamaican participants. I then checked the themes against the data and field notes to ensure that participants' experiences were adequately expressed and were relevant. I selected participants' quotes to illustrate the themes. Quoting participants is vital in providing their counterstory or illustrating their experiences that contradict those of the dominant racial group (Martinez, 2020). These counterstories are critical in providing research that illuminates instead of distorts or pathologizes the epistemologies of Black individuals (Martinez, 2020). The "meanings and essences" of the observed and reported occurrences and views are also explained, per Moustakas's data analysis procedures (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Trustworthiness

Triangulation, or the use of multiple data sets collected from different participants or through different data collection methods, was also employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study (Hugh-Jones & Gibson, 2012). I triangulated data by using multiple data collection strategies (i.e., focus groups and interviews). I also used two groups of co-researchers, one group for the exploratory focus group, and another group for the individual interviews. Members of both groups participated in the member checking focus group after the analysis was completed.

Furthermore, I ensured the credibility of this research by authentically illustrating the lived experiences of participants through member-checking focus groups. Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed for follow-up questions, ensuring thick descriptions of participants' experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Transferability refers to the utility and relevance of research findings (Sundler et al., 2019). The transferability of research findings is demonstrated through the literature's acknowledgment of the lack of in-depth studies exploring the cross-cultural experiences of race-based trauma (Evans et al., 2016). Furthermore, this study elevates the voices and experiences of individuals who are currently experiencing the phenomenon of race-based trauma, allowing them to provide the necessary knowledge and context that is essential in counselors' abilities to assist clients experiencing race-based trauma.

Additionally, through a transparent explanation of the research methodology used in this study, I am ensuring the credibility of the study. The dependability, or reliability, of this study's findings were attended to through the use of procedures that have already been established in past literature (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the purpose of the present study. This was followed by a detailed description of the research design, as well as data collection and analysis procedures. Concluding this chapter was a description of strategies for trustworthiness.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This phenomenological study conducted through a CRT lens examined Black individuals' experiences of race-based trauma in post-colonial nations. The goal of this study was to fill a gap in current literature by providing counselors and counselor educators with information regarding the experiences of Black clients to better inform multicultural, trauma-informed counseling practices and counselor education pedagogy. This study was guided by five research questions:

R1: What are the ways in which Black individuals experience race-based trauma?

R2: What are the similarities and differences in experiences of race-based trauma cross-culturally based on majority versus minoritized racial group status?

R3: What role do class distinctions play in experiences of race-based trauma?

R4: How does the experience of race-based trauma influence how Black individuals interact with society?

R5: What resiliency factors are used by Black individuals to aid in coping with experiences of race-based trauma?

Participant Profiles

This study included the experiences of 10 participants. This included three male-identifying individuals and seven female-identifying individuals. Of the three male-identifying participants, two were Jamaican and one was American. Four of the seven female-identifying participants were American, while three were Jamaican. Of the five Jamaican participants, two had lived in both Jamaica and the U.S. at different stages in their lives. Additionally, one

Jamaican participant reported that they travel to the U.S. frequently. Participants' ages ranged from 21 - 59 years of age. Figure 1 details participant demographics.

Figure 1

Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Nationality	Age	Gender
Dora	Jamaican	30 – 39	Female
Victoria	American	50 – 59	Female
Ainsley	Jamaican	21 – 29	Male
Kayla	Jamaican	30 – 39	Female
Nick	Jamaican	21 – 29	Male
Josie	American	21 – 29	Female
Kiara	American	40 – 49	Female
Fred	American	40 – 49	Male
Felicia	American	21 – 29	Female
Jane	Jamaican	50 – 59	Female

Review of Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted individual interviews with 10 individuals over the age of 18 who identify as Black. More specifically, 5 participants identified as Black Americans, and 5 participants identified as Black Jamaicans. Interviews were audio and video recorded and were conducted using a secure online video conferencing platform. Following the conclusion of the interviews, I,

a doctoral candidate in counselor education and supervision, coded the interviews, as well as field notes that I wrote throughout the data collection process. Themes and subthemes were identified from the codes deducted from the transcripts and field notes. More specifically, I asked participants the following questions, along with follow-up questions based on their responses:

1. What troubling experiences have you had or continue to have that occur because you are Black?
2. How have these negative experiences changed you or how you respond to situations?
3. Do you think that the history of Black people in Jamaica (or the U.S.) contributes to your experiences? If so, how?
4. How did/do you cope with these experiences?
5. Is there anything else you'd like me to know?

To code the interview transcripts and field notes, I highlighted keywords throughout both. I also noted keywords that summarized statements in the margins of the transcripts and field notes. They keywords were then listed as codes in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Codes were grouped together based on similarity. These codes were then collapsed into words or phrases that best captured all related codes. The resulting words or phrases became the themes presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

List of Themes

Similarities in Experiences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Colonialism ● Hierarchy ● Maintaining white supremacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Systemic oppression ● Assumptions ● Impacts
Differences in Experiences	

U.S.	Jamaica
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● White comfort ● Minimizing Black experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group membership ● Colorism
Influence of Class Distinctions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Colonialism ● Access ● Injustice through capitalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assumptions regarding one's socioeconomic status ● Intersectionality
Impact on Societal Interactions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acceptance of racism as the norm ● Avoidant behaviors ● Exacerbation of fears ● Distrust ● Hypervigilance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Absence of belongingness ● Seeking acceptance ● Emotional labor ● Self-perceptions
Resiliency Factors	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rejection of pain ● Personal evolution ● Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Producing change ● Liberation ● Cultivating intergenerational resilience

Themes are presented categorically based on the research question about which they pertain. Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, I participated in debriefing members with a non-Black peer, as not to subject a Black individual to potential vicarious race-based trauma. Lastly, all participants were emailed copies of the results of the study. They then scheduled a time for the member-checking focus group via an online scheduling platform. Following the conclusion of the member-checking focus group, all feedback provided by participants was applied. This ensured that the results accurately illustrate participants' experiences with minimal illustration of my experiences as the researcher.

Themes

Themes were established in relation to each of the five research questions (Figure 1). For Research Question 1, ten themes emerged. To illuminate Black individuals' experiences of race-based trauma, the following themes were developed: *impacts, colonialism, maintaining white supremacy, systemic oppression, assumptions, white comfort, minimizing black experiences, hierarchy, group membership, and colorism*. To illustrate the similarities and differences in how Black individuals experience racism in Jamaica versus the United States of America, the themes from Research Question 1 were separated based on similar versus differing experiences. Themes that encapsulate the similarities in experience include: *colonialism and resulting hierarchy, maintaining white supremacy, systemic oppression, assumptions, and impacts*. Two themes that capture experiences of race-based trauma in the U.S. but did not appear as primary themes for experiences occurring in Jamaica were: *white comfort* and *minimizing Black experiences*. There were also two themes that illustrated prevalent experiences in Jamaica but were less prevalent in the U.S.: *group membership* and *colorism*. Five themes emerged regarding the impacts of class distinctions on race-based trauma: *colonialism, access, injustice through capitalism, assumptions regarding one's socioeconomic status, and intersectionality*. The following six themes illustrate the resiliency factors used by Black individuals in coping with race-based trauma: *rejection of pain, personal evolution, community, producing change, liberation, and cultivating intergenerational resilience*. Nine themes were developed to illustrate the ways in which race-based trauma influences Black individuals' interactions with society: *acceptance of racism as the norm, avoidant behaviors, exacerbation of fear, distrust, hypervigilance, absence of belongingness, seeking acceptance, emotional labor, and self-perception*.

Similarities in Ways Black Individuals Experience Race-based Trauma

Both, Black American's and Black Jamaican's experiences of race-based trauma are illustrated in the themes: *colonialism and resulting hierarchy, maintaining white supremacy, systemic oppression, assumptions, and impacts.*

Colonialism and Resulting Hierarchy. Participants across both cultural groups spoke to the impact of colonialism and slavery on present-day experiences of race-based trauma. Because of the power differentials created through colonialism and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, participants explained that this set the foundation for current societal roles and the treatment of Black individuals. Kayla, a Jamaican participant who has lived in Jamaica and the U.S. at different points in her life, explained, "...Because there is a history of racism there (in Jamaica), there's a history of slavery there. That's what the foundation of the culture is." In describing the historical impacts of colonization and slavery in the U.S. and Jamaica, Kayla went on to explain:

...the burden of slavery and the pain from slavery, I think, continues to plague the Black people in the U.S., regardless of whether or not you identify as Black American or African American or Caribbean American. If you have any skin tone or melanin, then you bear that burden. I think it's almost as though the ghosts of our ancestors are just, they're constantly present... I can walk into a situation and see how Black people are treated differently than white people... and just health burdens because of not trusting health care and not accessing primary care. And so it's this snowball effect from slavery that even though the physical shackles are gone, the emotional and psychological shackles are still very much in place.

Because of colonialism, social hierarchies were developed with white individuals holding the most power and using that power to oppress Black individuals. Kayla explained:

... allowance for Black individuals to be treated differently stems from the fact that Black individuals weren't seen as people, but they were seen as property. And therefore, there is this mindset that exists in society and the institutional structural racism that allows there to be different expectations or different levels of treatment that are okay.... that type of mindset that that views Black people as though they are not equal to any other race or ethnic group, and that all stems from being treated as an object, as a thing, versus being valued as a human being.

Dora, a Black Jamaican participant, as well as other participants, explained that “the history of Black people has always been one of inferiority” resulting in microaggressions, unfair treatment, and systemic oppression imposed upon Black individuals. Kiara, a Black American, described being looked upon by white individuals as though, “I am less than.” In describing how she believes Black individuals are perceived by white society, Victoria, a Black American, stated, “White people feel that they are more, [and] that we’re less than them...the attitude is still there. They actually feel this in their heart. In their mind they really feel that we're not equal.” Jane, a Jamaican participant who has lived in the United States and Jamaica, described this hierarchy and society’s resulting role expectations, stating, “... society was organized in a particular way that Blacks had certain roles and functions, and whites had particular roles and functions, and everything was fine as long as that equilibrium was not upset.”

Maintaining white supremacy. Participants explained that much of the unfair and oppressive treatment endured by Black individuals are the results of white society’s attempts to maintain white superiority and supremacy and resulting imbalances in power. Referring to this power differential and white society’s fights to maintain it, Victoria stated, “they don't want to be

in the minority.” She described the way in which white individuals value their whiteness like a possession they are fearful of losing:

The older generation is afraid of, you know, that they're losing their racial identity or something. I was in a group on Facebook - a high school group. It's my classmates, and one of them complained because ancestry.com indicated that she was European, and she said, “Whatever happened to being white? I want to be white.” And I'm like, “oh.” it just made me not want to be in the group anymore. Just that one person, and I got out. A lot of people were saying, “Yeah, whatever happened [to being white]?”

Because of this value of white identity, white individuals maintain their sense of superiority and supremacy through the dehumanization and objectification of Black individuals, what Josie referred to as “strategies to keep other people down.” This dehumanization of Black individuals is demonstrated through the minimization of Black individuals. Kayla explained, “white Jamaicans... they will look down their nose, I guess, at other individuals even in their same social groups.” Fred, a Black American, explained his perception of white individuals viewing him as though he is “an animal.” He went on to explain, “You'd have to look at the person on the inside, because when you see me, you will see a big, strong black man... on the inside I'm gentle as a giant.” Symbolism, including through the use of oppressive language, demonstrates society's lack of value for and minimization of Black individuals. Oppressive language is embedded in systems, such as through the classification of Black individuals as “minorities.” Referring to this categorization, Jane stated, “I hate that terminology.” Participants described instances in which they are verbally attacked through the use of racist insults, such as an incident recounted by Nick, a Jamaican participant:

In Myrtle Beach, one evening, my friends and I went to the beach, & we walked back to the house. When we got to the house and were at the front door opening it, there was a car passing, and I heard someone shout, “n*****.” So when I turned around, there was a group of four white guys in a car driving past, and they'd shouted “n*****,” and they thought it was funny.

Nick also recounted being told to go “back to work on the plantation” on social media. In addition to these blatant uses of derogatory language, displaying the confederate flag was also described as another example of symbolism as a tool for the maintenance of white supremacy.

These behaviors also evidence white society's lack of regard for Black feelings and an underlying lack of cultural sensitivity and awareness. In discussing this lack of sensitivity or awareness, Victoria detailed a recent Facebook post made by a white peer:

I know that she posted this thinking that she was posting something good, but I see where she's not educated about it. She posted that she does not support the KKK, and that she does not support BLM, because they're racist groups. That she just wants love for everyone. And I think that she meant something well with that... but she's totally ignorant about it.

Josie described the ways in which white individuals' lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity contributes to acts of cultural appropriation. She explained:

Yeah, and a lot of the art they enjoy, a lot of the food or like ways... a lot of things that white people enjoy came from them abusing Black people, but now...now denying that they [Black people] had anything to do with it, and that “no, we did this.” It's just you know, basic, [frustrated laughter] it's not funny but, it's funny if you just pretend it's not real life.

As described by participants, ignorance and lack of awareness leads to white individuals committing microaggressions that inflict emotional pain on the Black individuals around them. Microaggressions include slights, biased language, invalidation, and insults expressed towards individuals of minoritized racial identities within commonplace interpersonal interactions, differing from overt, hostile, and hate-motivated interactions (Kanter et al., 2020). It also contributes to the spreading of misinformation that perpetuates and fuels white supremacy. When Black individuals attempt to educate white individuals regarding the lived experiences of Black people, they are often met with resistance and minimizations of their experiences, as described by Felicia:

I've had the hard conversations about my experience because that's something I guess we never talked about, like upfront, and I brought it up and it's just like not empathizing, or not even trying to at all. It's just changed. Like, "it's not because you're Black. It's [that] people work hard for what they want."

White supremacy is also maintained through systemic and political policies and movements. Through politicians' attempts to constrict voting rights in elections, they are attempting to silence the voices of Black voters, consequently elevating the voices of white voters and maintaining white supremacy. American participants also cited the campaign, election, and presidency of Donald Trump. Describing how the Trump presidency has impacted experiences of race-based trauma through the maintenance of white supremacy, Victoria explained, "...[It] took one person to come in office and empower so many others. Look at the cruel things that are going on! Just horrible." She went on to explain, "They feel more powerful. [It's] like they got empowered. They feel right now is the time for them to really come out and say how they feel, because, you know, they're empowered right now. And it has made a

difference in some of my friendships.” Participants went on to explain that the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capital further illustrates white society’s value of white supremacy and fights to maintain it, leading to participants’ feelings of being “unsafe.”

Participants across cultures also described how the lack of change and action by those in power further perpetuates white supremacy. Kayla described the lack of action of her institution following the murder of George Floyd:

When I approached leadership about whether or not they were going to take a very anti-racist stance, they initially said no, and I completely lost it. And I was just like, that's not okay! Not saying something is saying something.

Additionally, participants explained that many Black individuals fear speaking up against racism due to fear of retaliation from white counterparts, as described by Nick: “They have the power. They have the voice and the influence, but they wouldn't dare say anything because they don't want to offend the minority. Sadly, [it's] the minority who are controlling everything.” This perceived inability to speak up, coupled with lacking white allies and the presence of performative, or inauthentic, allyship also maintains white supremacy and the resulting power differential. Performative allyship was described by Felicia as instances in which, “I'm being helped, but in reality, it's to benefit them.” The absence of support from white peers results in feelings of invalidation and the perception of white individuals as being compliant and complicit in racism on individual and systemic levels. Felicia described the toll of having no allies in her workplace as resulting in her “shut[ting] down because I feel like I have no ally.”

The societal normalization of racism also ensures that racism, and thereby white supremacy, persists. Participants explained that racism has become such a naturally ingrained aspect of society, that white individuals often fail to recognize or acknowledge the depth of their

actions. Kiara, an American participant, works as a paraprofessional within the special education system in the Southern U.S. public school system. Describing an incident at work in which white coworkers made racially insensitive comments in front of students, Kiara noted, “The fact that they were so comfortable to speak like that in front of these kids surely scares me.” According to participants, racism and the resulting emotional injuries have become such a part of daily life, that it sometimes goes unnoticed by Black individuals in the moment. Participants also described microaggressions as almost an expected part of daily life because “stuff like that happens on the daily,” according to Nick, a Black Jamaican participant. Josie, a Black American, described white supremacy as “ideals that are passed down.” She and other participants described how the passing down of racism from one generation to the next perpetuates this normalization of racism and results in the protection and maintenance of white supremacy.

Systemic oppression. White supremacy is also maintained through systemic oppression. Through systemic policies and practices, Black individuals continue to be oppressed while their white counterparts are afforded privileges. Participants described this as the “continued enslavement” of Black people. Participants identified systemic oppression as occurring in many realms of society. This includes through oppressive policies and laws, policing, unfair legal consequences, educational systems, workplaces, and healthcare.

One of the most prevalent forms of systemic racism reported by participants pertains to what participants described as “colonial” and “outdated” laws and policies. Examples provided by participants include Eurocentric grooming policies in educational, social, and vocational realms were also cited. Participants described the prevalence of grooming policies that effect Black individuals more than they do their white counterparts. For instance, Nick described being harassed by an instructor in his nursing program due to having locs, a hairstyle popular in Black

communities. He was only allowed to keep his locs after presenting a letter from a religious leader. Participants also described hair policies that limit the length of male-identifying individuals' hair. These policies are written in terms of "height" of hair, as to limit the length of Black males' afros. Nick explained that he was not allowed to grow his hair "taller" than one-quarter of an inch. His white and lighter-complexioned peers who had straighter hair, however, were allowed to grow it out as long as they pleased, including long enough to wear in a ponytail, which many did. Ainsley, a Jamaican male-identifying participant, describes differences in how his hair was policed in comparison to white peers and Black peers of lighter skin complexion:

If I want to grow out my hair in school - into an afro - I cannot. But if some light skinned guy with probably straighter hair wants to do that and grow it out as long as possible, yeah, that's allowed, because that's more kept...For me, my hair would be too unkempt.

They would send you home from school, because your hair is too tall.

Furthermore, Nick detailed a recent case in which a young girl was banned from attending school because of her locs, a common hairstyle worn in Black communities that involves twisting the hair into rope-like strands and can vary in thickness. The case went before the Jamaican Supreme Court who dismissed the case, stating that there was not enough evidence of discrimination. These policies, according to participants, favor whiteness and punish Blackness.

Participants also cited oppressive and discriminatory laws and political policies, stating that these laws are "forms of enslavement." This includes policies such as the U.S.'s War on Drugs, a Regan-era campaign in which the presence of federal and local drug control agencies was drastically increased, disproportionately impacting communities of color. This aspect of systemic racism was more prevalent in the data collected from American participants than in the data from Jamaican participants. Participants explained that through the War on Drugs, the U.S.

legal system was and continues to be able to incarcerate Black individuals at higher rates than white individuals to supply prison labor. Participants highlighted the fact that this policy unfairly targets drugs that are more prevalent in Black communities, such as crack cocaine and marijuana. Furthermore, participants detailed the ways in which law enforcement uses arbitrary laws that most individuals are unaware of as probable cause to profile, stop, and search Black individuals. Additionally, Fred commented on states' right to hire laws, explaining that businesses can use this as a loophole for firing on the basis on racism, as can simply refuse to give an official reasoning for the termination of the employee.

Additionally, police brutality as a form of race-based trauma was prevalent in the data, specifically in data retrieved from Black Americans and from Black Jamaican participants who have lived in or traveled to the U.S. Participants explained that instances of police brutality, such as the murder of George Floyd, lead to communal vicarious trauma. This communal trauma was described by Felicia as "when someone's hurt, like we all hurt." Participants also described the pain and increased fear they experience after watching videos of police brutality, especially those resulting in the murder of a Black individual, such as the case with the video of George Floyd. Participants explained that these increasing instances of police brutality result in fear, distrust, and avoidance of law enforcement. Such is the case, according to Kayla, when witnessing that "they [white individuals] can shoot into a crowd with an assault rifle, and they are taken peacefully into the police station, but you [Black individuals] cannot walk down the street without being assaulted or killed by a police officer." She also explained that the result of these injustices as the hands of law enforcement are illustrated in "situations where like I'll see several police officers who have stopped an individual, and I will slow down to see if that person is Black and just be paying more attention to what's going on. And I probably don't slow down if

that person is white. I just I feel like they're probably going to be fine, whereas a Black individual is more likely to have an issue.”

Participants also detailed their own negative encounters with law enforcement. Multiple participants described feeling disrespected by law enforcement officers. Fred described a situation in which he was profiled and subsequently stopped by law enforcement. He explained that he was driving a Dodge Charger with “blacked out tinted windows.” When the officer arrived at his window, Fred readily handed the officer his license, insurance cards, and vehicle registration. In recounting this incident, Fred stated that the officer aggressively and accusingly commented that Fred had handed the documents over quickly. Fred, confused, said that he asked the officer if that’s not what he was supposed or expected to do. At this point, Fred recounts that the officer accused him of “having an attitude.” When Fred asked why he had been stopped, the officer said that the frame around Fred’s license plate was obstructing the view of the vehicle registration sticker. The officer then told Fred that the frame around his license plate was “illegal.” This evidences, according to Fred and other participants, the use of unknown and arbitrary laws to profile and stop Black drivers. He reports that the officer then ran Fred’s license and plates to ensure that Fred had no outstanding warrants, which he did not. In describing the incident, Fred explained how differently this may have played out if he had become irritated with the officer for having profiled him. He said, “I probably woulda been on the ground instead of standing up.” Because of the inherent racism that participants described in law enforcement, many noted that hiring practices for law enforcement needed to be changed. This includes participants’ suggestion that the backgrounds, biases, and beliefs of perspective officers be investigated prior to hiring.

In addition to being targeted, harassed, and traumatized by police, participants detailed the unfair practices within the legal system as it pertains to consequences. Participants explained the vicarious trauma they experience when Black individuals are murdered by police following nonviolent crimes (i.e., using counterfeit money as was the case for George Floyd), compared to white offenders of violent crimes, such as “shooting up a church,” being peacefully apprehended by law enforcement. Kayla explained that systemic oppression and racism within the legal system was evidenced when white individuals “storm[ed] the Capitol” and there “not being enough or severe enough consequences.” Additionally, multiple participants discussed the unfair sentencing of Black individuals where “there are different sentencing for the same types of crimes, or more severe crimes committed by white individuals have a lesser sentence than minor charges that Black individuals are facing.” Concerns regarding the incarceration of innocent Black individuals due to racial biases was also reported by participants. In addition to sentencing, Black individuals are also treated unfairly in terms of the amount at which their bail is set, according to multiple participants, including Fred who owns a bails-bonds business. Fred explained, “Most laws are not made for people of color, you know. Because a white person could kill somebody...they get out that night. But the black person, don't get out at all, or don't even have a bond set.” Felicia reported that the lack of representation in those developing laws and policies and those serving as judges within the U.S. legal system perpetuates these injustices.

Participants within both cultural groups also cited vocational inequalities as a form of systemic racism. The disproportionate number of Black individuals in positions of leadership was highlighted by participants. Felicia explained that she believes she “would never climb the ladder as long as I'm working under them,” referencing working for white supervisors. Kayla

stated that she is the only Black individual in leadership in her current organization. In describing how she is treated as a Black individual in leadership, Kayla explained:

There are situations where I know that I'm being held to a higher standard than somebody who is my counterpart... and I feel very strongly that it's because I'm Black, because it's not that I'm not qualified or don't have the right experience. But I'm being doubted, and that comes across with the questioning and the almost like the third degree, you know.

You have to explain why we're doing this process and that type of thing.

Kiara, who is a special education paraprofessional in the American K-12 educational system, described white individuals as being uncomfortable when working under Black leadership: "I've always felt like most whites hate having a person of color above them." She went on to describe the differences in expectations by white individuals for their Black principals compared to when they had a white principal: "My boss now is Black. All the stuff that he puts up with now! I was here before there was a Black boss. When I had a white boss, he got away with a lot more." Also evidencing the unfair treatment experiences by Black individuals in positions of authority, Kayla recounted the ways in which her white subordinates would undermine her authority by going to her white supervisor instead of correctly proceeding through the chain of command:

...They're [white subordinates] not being held accountable or excuses are allowed for why work isn't done- not done at all or not done correctly. Or there's an expectation and an era of entitlements that I should just be able to do whatever I want. The majority of the individuals who directly report to me are white, and there are a couple who don't do their job. But when they're being held accountable by me, they go around my back to the person I report to, who is also white, to say 'Oh you know, she's being mean, and she's, you know, making me feel like I don't want to come into work,' and I mean I remember

those words were repeated to me, and I said, ‘What they don't want to come in because I'm expecting them to do their job? So we can have a conversation about whether or not the hospital wants to pay people to not work, which I'm fine either way.’

Similarly, participants from both countries stated that they had heard white coworkers speaking poorly of Black clients that they served. Specifically, Jane, who works in the counseling field, reported having heard her fellow “counselors, talk about their experience with Black clients in a very derogatory way.” Having to work harder than white counterparts to gain respect within the workplace was also cited as a form of workplace oppression by participants. Furthermore, participants stated that work duties were often unfairly distributed, with Black employees being assigned harder or less desirable tasks. For instance, Kiara explained that she and other Black paraprofessionals are assigned the more students who have more demanding needs. Kiara also stated that the Black paraprofessionals are instructed to change diapers far more frequently than her white co-workers, who she reports rarely have to perform this duty. Additionally, participants reported being undervalued in the workplace and being unfairly denied opportunities for advancement. Jane, who has a doctoral degree and was expected to act in a role within a former organization without the title or compensation for the role, recounted the following:

... every time I applied to the senior account, the senior position of the senior, I would be passed over I didn't have enough experience...I need to learn more about the system... it was always a reason. Yet the head of the organization didn't have a master's degree. She was working on her master's, and nobody else in the organization had a master's degree. Yet every time I came up [for the promotion], they were happy for me to act up in the role, you know... I just never gave them another opportunity to tell me I would not

qualify for that position. So, I stopped acting up [acting in that position] and said, 'You're not going to use my skills and not acknowledge my worthiness.'

Systemic Oppression in Education. Systemic inequities and oppression are also perpetuated through education, according to participants. Black American participants, as well as participants who have lived in the U.S. and are familiar with the U.S. educational system, explained that the whitewashed narratives taught in U.S. history curriculums perpetuate white supremacy. Participants also explained that minimal Black history is taught in U.S. schools, as explained by Kiara who said, "I lived most of my childhood without knowing a lot of Black history...What was sad is that most of my Black history, I learned after I got out of school. It just wasn't taught." Kayla explained the differences in U.S. and Jamaican history education:

I think the education system and how we teach the history of our country is different...Kindergarten starts at like three, so we infuse our children with this knowledge of how we're growing as a community down there and celebrating all individuals regardless of race - all Jamaican national heroes and all the individuals that are doing things to make our country great. In the U.S., it's a version of history that's taught, and it's not a complete version, and it doesn't speak to everybody's truth. And as a result, you know, the kids are indoctrinated with one thing. And when you're from a household that's racist, that's exacerbated and permitted. And when you're from a household that's not, you almost have to do a separate history lesson - an additional history lesson. This is what you need to learn to pass the test, and this is what you need to learn to survive in life. And I think the approach and just how we educate our children to the history of the countries are different.

In further describing the whitewashed narratives perpetuated in U.S. history education, Kayla added that “there are history books that will gloss over how horrific, slavery was.”

Additionally, participants of both cultural groups explained that systemic oppression is also evident in the ways that students are taught within educational systems. Participants explained that because predominantly white schools “are more funded or get more attention,” there is an educational gap that disadvantages Black learners. Furthermore, this puts Black students at a disadvantage when pursuing careers. That is to say, participants reported that Black students are provided a lower quality education than their peers, making them less desirable to employers. This, according to participants, leads to an earning gap in which Black individuals are paid less than their white counterparts.

According to participants, Black students are also stereotyped negatively compared to their white peers. For instance, Josie described her experiences with her son’s elementary school teachers:

The little white kids are talking or kids that just aren't Black are talking in class and they're just like” oh they're just so chatty” or they get the “you need to go to the doctor and get ADHD meds” thing. My child always just got in more and more trouble, and when I showed up for the parent-teacher conferences you could tell, all of the teachers, all- even the black teacher, the one black teacher he’s had- were expecting something very different, and I could see it in their faces when I would start talking. And I have to basically reassure the teachers that I'm there to be an ally and work on it... and I have to like bring in the you know, “this is what I do for a living. I have a behavior analysis degree.” ...basically, having to like reassure them that I'm not gonna do whatever it is that they assume I'm going to do when I ask for a conference.

This perception of Black children leads to Black students being negatively labeled by teachers. According to Kiara and other participants, this negative label follows students from one grade to the next, as teachers share their negative perceptions of the student with each other.

Within the U.S. education system, participants also stated that unfair grading practices, as well as teachers expecting less from Black students hinders Black scholastic excellence. Kiara, who has two children, described a teacher as having graded her daughter unfairly on all subjective assignments. Kiara explained that in order to combat this, her daughter had to study far harder on exams to maintain desirable grades. Kiara also described an encounter with one of her daughter's teachers that evidences the differing expectations that teachers hold for Black students:

Well, I have white teachers who downplay my kid having not failing grades, but not, not doing [their best] let's say my child ends up with a C, which is not bad, but when you know your child and you know their capabilities, when your child ends up with a C... I am a parent. I go check it out. Well one [teacher said]: "Oh Mom it's okay. She's passing. She's doing good. She got a C." But when you look at my face, because my face is like [unhappy facial expression], you know, [the teacher said] "Well she's not failing mom." [Kiara replies,] "No, I know that, but could your child? Could you accept a C from your child?" She couldn't answer me. But it was automatically okay for my child to get it.

Victoria, who has two adult children and two grandchildren in grade school, is not retired, but previously worked at the school that her grandchildren currently attend. Therefore, she is friends on social media with her former coworkers, some of whom are now her grandchildren's teachers. When racist posts are made by these friends on social media, Victoria feels as though she cannot

... speak up out of fear that “if I speak out against it, you know, is she gonna get a C instead of a B or something?”

Systemic Oppression in Healthcare. Healthcare was another area in which participants of both cultural groups cited systemic oppression and subsequent traumatization. Participants described what Kaya termed the “health burden” faced by Black individuals. Kayla explained that Black individuals (in the U.S. and Jamaica) continue to suffer this intergenerational “health burden because of not trusting health care and not accessing primary care.” This, coupled with systemic racism within healthcare systems, contribute to the unfavorable and disproportionately high health risks suffered by Black patients. As described by Kayla, systemic racism is “there when you walk into the hospital and you're reporting pain as a Black person, but the health care practitioner doesn't believe you, or they don't believe it's as severe as you're telling them it's there in the infant mortality rates in African American women.”

Participants also discussed how systemic oppression in healthcare applies to both, physical and mental healthcare. Josie described that through limiting Black individuals' knowledge regarding mental healthcare, white society ensures that Black individuals do not receive the benefits of mental healthcare services:

... but a lot of it, too, is Black people... it's just like the same thing with the medical field where people think Black people's pain tolerance is different. Like they really think Black people, because they've been through so much as a people, they.... don't need therapy. Like they're good. So I guess, keeping the fact that mental health can be changed and that it's good to work on that has like kept us holding each other down like within families and groups and just culturally, in some ways.

Additionally, this lack of accessible information and education perpetuates the stigma of mental health in Black communities, according to participants. Participants explained that this, coupled with barriers to access for mental healthcare, leads to disproportionately negative mental health outcomes within Black communities.

Systemic Oppression in Social Arenas. Lastly, systemic oppression was also described as permeating social arenas. Josie described a situation resulting from systemic underrepresentation of Black students in the dance classes she attending as a child:

.... I keep thinking about it. In dancing, I was the only Black person in my dance class for like a year, and part of the finale was that everyone - the theme was summer. So we started off in like school uniforms, hair pulled back, and....part of the transition of the thing was, so you're supposed to pull out your ponytail holder thing and like, throw like you know have your hair back. But everybody else was white, so they could do that.... I felt like I couldn't say anything about that. It was just such an awkward thing, and it was so stressful for me because I was like, "Oh, I'm gonna have to go get chemicals in my hair like right before to make sure it's gonna do that and so it doesn't look crazy." ...it's so crazy, but...It still stands out...like this is very obvious that this person made this routine for white people, right. Planned this around white people. Didn't even consider the fact that other people are different.

Jane also detailed a situation in which systemic racism was present within a social context or system:

An organization that I'm a part of, we need to put our children through classes...the person who do formation [class], usually do it at a particular time... We also have some really affluent persons in this school - lighter skinned- and they contracted someone to

have a special class for their children so it could be that a more convenient time, “because the weekend is not convenient because we go away on the weekend, and we fly to Florida and Washington. I'm not really available. So what we've tried to do is to find someone to offer a course and pay them at a time when it's more convenient...” So of course I never take that very nicely at all, because number one, it's not a paid service, and we should not be facilitating that kind of engagement. Then here's the problem...So, there was a major challenge with the teacher, and ...there was an issue between the teacher and the parents of the student, because the teacher touched on a sensitive issue, and the parents didn't like how the issue was addressed - a very sensitive issue around sexuality.... the parents complained to a higher level, and the teacher was no longer teaching that course to those students. Those two gentlemen matriculated, and they did what they needed to do. They graduate... But the same teacher was still teaching the other members of the organization. She was not dismissed from our function. But let me be frank, for the Black children in the organization, she was still quite fine to teach them. For the more white skinned, affluent ones, she was not allowed to teach anymore, and she was paid. So, of course, I raised hell. I raised hell. I raised hell and more and said that cannot work because she's no longer qualified and capable to deliver to the more affluent, fair skinned person, and she should not be allowed to deliver content to the other members of that community.

Assumptions. Participants across both cultural groups detailed their experiences of being stereotyped and having negative assumptions made about them because they are Black. These assumptions included others' perceptions and treatment of participants as though they are inferior to their white counterparts. Participants stated that they and their experience, expertise,

and abilities are often discounted, minimized, or questioned. Josie, and other participants, stated that white counterparts often “discredit things I’m saying” and discredit her accomplishments by stating that she “just got lucky.” Victoria explained that one of the most frequent occurrences that she endures due to being Black is “being underestimated. I feel that I have always had to, like in the job where I worked, I’ve always felt that I’ve had to explain myself, you know. I feel that I’ve been underestimated, especially in meetings.” Victoria’s experience was shared by other participants, including Kayla who explained:

There seems to be a lack of value and respect for my expertise. Like when I say something, it’s consistently questioned or challenged or you’re expected to have multiple examples and references in order for my white colleagues and counterparts to believe me or even levels of leadership to believe me even though I have 16 years of experience in my current role.... There are situations where I know that I’m being held to a higher standard than somebody who is my counterpart ... And I feel very strongly that it’s because I’m Black, because it’s not that I’m not qualified or don’t have the right experience, but I’m being doubted. And that comes across with the questioning and the almost like the third degree, you know. You have to explain why we’re doing this process and that type of thing.

This assumption that Black individuals are somehow inferior to their white peers also results in the infantilization of these Black individuals, based on reports by participants. This infantilization is illustrated in instances in which white individuals make assumptions regarding Black individuals’ presumed inabilities or lack of intelligence. Participants explained that this is often evidenced in white peers speaking on their behalf or feeling the need to further explain

something that has already been stated by a Black person. Victoria recounted a situation in which she was infantilized at work:

I really just feel that they actually believed that they had to maybe speak for me. And if you want the truth, there were only three of us there with a master's degree for years. Three of us, and all three of us were Black, and yet they still felt in meetings and everything that they maybe had to answer for me.... That happened in many, many professional meetings with parents and other professionals like psychologists, the teachers, the principal. Even the principal spoke up one time and gave some erroneous information, and I had to, without being ugly, go back and fix what she said concerning a student...I'm the speech pathologist, but yet when the questions were directed to me the others always felt to jump in.

This results in white individuals limiting Black individuals' sense of autonomy and reinforces Black individuals' perception of being viewed as inferior to white individuals.

Participants explained that these negative assumptions regarding their abilities and intelligence results in them feeling as though they must work harder to prove themselves. This overcompensation takes the form of aiming to "be the best" so that others are less likely to make these negative assumptions. As Josie explained, "I think I learned from a really early age that the goal is to avoid giving white people a reason to like discount you." Jane went on to explain that in order to prove her worthiness and decrease the frequency of being discounted by white counterparts, she obtained a doctoral degree. Similarly, Dora explained that "if you say I can't do something because of, or I sense that you think that because of my race, color, creed, whatever gender, that I am not good enough or I can't do something, I am going to do it." This compensation, however, requires increased emotional labor for Black individuals. Felicia

explained, “I feel like I have to work like twice as hard as like, my nonminority friends to accomplish like goals that I want or to be seen or to be heard. Like it takes like twice as much effort.

While striving to be the best and prove oneself is a defense mechanism that many participants cited using, Josie explained that it often led to further harassment for her, stating that she was “told by Black people I wasn't Black, really, because of how I talked or whatever, and also white people were like, ‘Yeah, you're not really like those other Black people, so you're not Black.’” This and similar comments by white individuals further evidences that white individuals make assumptions regarding what they expect of Black people and respond with aggression when those negative expectations are not met.

These negative assumptions made about Black individuals leads to negative stereotyping by white society. As pointed out by Josie, these microaggressive stereotypes may come in the form of comments such as “you black people _____.” According to Josie, white individuals also:

Say racist things and be like, ‘It's okay, though. You're not really Black,’ like it's okay.

I'm like, ‘well yeah actually I am. I mean, last I checked.’ “But you know what I mean.

You're not like THOSE Black people.

Josie and other participants also reported being stereotyped as “loud, or being scary, or annoying, or being pushy, or being ghetto” or it’s assumed that because an individual is Black, they “ don't want to do anything with their lives.”

The majority of participants also recounted times in which they and their Black peers were stereotyped as being of lower socioeconomic status. Fred explained that white individuals often “don't think that our pockets are just as deep as their pockets.” For instance, Kayla

explained, “When I go out to eat and it's a really nice restaurant, they point out the price or suggest more economical alternatives on the menu.” Victoria had a similar experience:

We were shopping for eyeglasses. And, I mean, I was completely overlooked. The lady, when we walked in, I needed help because I had never bought glasses before, and I was looking and looking and I was asking questions, but she completely overlooked me and went to help the other people who came in after me. So I left and I wrote them a letter and explained, you know, how I felt and what happened.

Victoria also described another situation in which a store employee stopped helping her when a white customer came in. The store employee stopped assisting Victoria and began assisting the white customer, despite Victoria’s intention to “really make a big purchase.” Victoria said that she then placed all the items she had on the counter and left. She later called and spoke to the store employee, who said that she “didn't think [she was] going to buy anything,” despite Victoria having several items in her hands. Victoria, Kayla, and other participants with similar experiences explained that they believe that the employees treated them in this manner because they stereotyped them as being unable to afford the goods and services offered due to being Black. Additionally, Jane stated that she has received comments such as “You can’t afford to purchase things in this shop, or are you sure you're in the right kind of hotel?” Multiple participants also reported that upon entering stores, white store employees have also assumed that they are stealing due to them being Black. These participants explained that they are “followed in stores” or “have been watched when I go into stores.” Even when she opts not to carry a purse while shopping and uses a wristlet instead, Felicia explained that she is still suspected of stealing and is therefore followed around while shopping. Another common stereotype regarding assumed socioeconomic status mentioned by participants is the assumption

that Black individuals received government assistance in the form of “food stamps.” Josie explained that she believes that white people cling to these negative stereotypes of Black individuals “because if it's not true, then that means you're not special [as a white person].”

Participants also detailed the pain inflicted upon them when white individuals assume that they pose a threat due to their Blackness. Victoria explained that “as long as you are black, you're considered a threat.” Fred, like many participants, echoed this sentiment, stating that white individuals “just automatically assume that we gone jump out and lash out at them.” Because of the assumption that Black individuals pose a threat to white society, participants explained that they are often fearful of how they will be perceived. Kayla shared an experience she had that illustrated a fear reported by many participants:

There is always the perception that when I'm speaking passionately about something, that I'm angry or aggressive. I have been accused of verbally attacking individuals in meetings when really all I'm doing is pointing out that they're not holding their teams accountable.

Multiple participants expressed their fear of their passion being misconstrued as aggression, as was the case for Kayla. Josie also explained that because she as a Black female-identifying individual is assumed to be a threat, she often has to reassure white individuals that she is “not a threat, or that I'm not there to blame them for everything, or that I'm not there to bring or cause more problems for them.”

Impacts. Both, American and Jamaican participants, explained the lasting impacts of these forms of race-based trauma. Participants explained that being continuously immersed in racism has sometimes resulted in internalized racism. Josie explained that “the internalized racism is indoctrinated, and you're indoctrinated with that very young. And you don't even really

know why you are doing it that way or whatever.” She went on to disclose a situation involving her son in which she recognized her internalized “anti-Blackness,” as she called it, as being the result of fear:

... with hairstyles, like wanting his hair to grow - having twists in his hair or braiding his hair or like doing crazy hairstyles - super freaks me out, because it's like, it's so fucked up. And I feel like part of it was like my own internalized like anti-blackness. Then it became I wish I felt okay with you doing it, but I'm scared that for you to do that, like just to wear your hair weird, because, you know, the more Black you look or the more stereotypes you like fit into, the more degrees, you know,I guess the less Black you look, the less stereotypical you look or act, the more degrees between you and something terrible happening to you.

Racism and the resulting race-based trauma often has intergeneration implications, according to participants. Most participants in this study revealed that they are parents. As such, many spoke to the impacts of race-based trauma on their children and grandchildren. Victoria recalled a situation that occurred when her daughter was a child:

One of her friends was having a birthday party, and said that, you know, that she was inviting everybody, you know, all her little classmates and friends, and my daughter happened to be with those friends. I mean she was in that little group, but the daughter said, ‘Well my mom says that I can't invite you because you're not the right color.’ And, you know, at first my daughter - she was a little hurt by it, and I felt terrible.

Multiple participants also commented on their concern for their children’s safety as a result of their own race-based traumas. Victoria explained, “It's scared me, because I know that my children are more outspoken than I am. And they have a right to. They have a right to express

how they feel. But as a mother, it worries me.” She expressed her fear coupled with frustration, specifically as it pertains to her fear of her children interacting with law enforcement:

We shouldn't have to feel like, ‘you know what, I can't raise my voice a little bit, or I need to make sure my hands are visible,’ but I worry about that for my kids. I don't, you know, I don't want anything to happen to them.

Kayla echoed similar concerns for her children in interacting with police. Jane also expressed her concern for her children, stating that she intentionally moved back to Jamaica so that her children would not grow up with the internalized racism imposed on Black individuals living in predominantly white societies. She went on to say, “It's too much of a struggle for a child...to have to live that experience, day in, day out, day in day out.” Fred, too, expressed concern for his children, as well as future generations of Black people:

This is just scary how people come at you. And I worry about my kids' future... I worry about them and their kids and, you know, the Black people after us, and it's just so sad that, you know, people always looking at the color of our skin.

Furthermore, Victoria conveyed her fears for the future and concerns for her granddaughters due to them experiencing race-based trauma at an earlier age than she did:

We're going down the wrong road. This is scary. I worry about my granddaughters, you know, and I don't want them to grow up thinking this is how it is, because if you listen to them talking, they're gonna be 11...If you listen to them talk, it's like their conversation is so different, you know, than when I was 11 years old. They're I mean, they're feeling more racial things

The intergenerational impacts of race-based trauma that contribute to this fear for future generations was described by Kayla as:

I think we just, you know, as we continue to have this journey where we're talking about how Black individuals are treated differently, it's the domino effect. It is something that we just always need to be mindful of. I think it's been a domino effect to lead us to this point where we're being treated unfairly or differently, but also how it's gonna affect like future generations or how it's gonna affect like me as an individual ten, fifteen, twenty years from now. It's a cumulative effect that is detrimental if it doesn't get addressed.

Participants explained that because of their experiences of race-based trauma, they often feel a lack of belonging. Victoria explained that this feeling as though she does not belong increased during the campaign, election, and presidency of Donald Trump. She stated that white peers would say “hello,” but would not engage in conversation with her and she often felt as though they were signaling that they wanted her to “stay away.” She also disclosed that her 11-year-old granddaughters are also experiencing this lack of belonging. According to Victoria, her granddaughters have explained that they want to play basketball for their city’s league, which is predominantly Black, opposed to playing on their school’s predominantly white team. Felicia indicated that her perceived lack of belonging spans across different arenas of her life. Within her career, she reports that she has questioned whether she belongs within her current organization or whether she “got hired just because I am Black, because they need like people to look nice... to make the place look diverse.”

These frequent occurrences also result in an exacerbation of fear and feelings of being unsafe for Black individuals. Ainsley disclosed, “I have a fear of white people. I don't like saying it, but I have a genuine fear because...for the most part they look down at me, and they feel threatened because of my skin color.” Not only did participants report feeling fearful of how they

might be perceived by their white counterparts, but they also reported fear of retaliation if they speak out against the racism they endure. Furthermore, Kiara explained that white counterparts' comfort in perpetuating race-based trauma scares her. Felicia revealed that her fear for her safety has become so overwhelming, that she has questioned whether she should purchase a gun for personal protection. Furthermore, participants indicated that these intense feelings of fear have physical impacts, including the inability to sleep.

Other undesirable emotions, including sadness, anger, frustration, intimidation, and feeling discouraged, stagnant, and helpless were identified by participants. Victoria expressed her disappointment that racism has "become [her grandchildren's] norm." She, like many participants, also described her experiences as being "discouraging." Felicia explained that she feels as though she is stagnant within her career due to her racial identity, exacerbating feelings of disappointment. Participants also explained that their self-perceptions are often negatively impacted by these experiences. Multiple participants disclosed questioning their own emotions and whether they were "just too paranoid" regarding their race. A consequence of their experiences of race-based trauma often includes having to expend additional emotional labor. Felicia described this emotional labor as being "exhausting," and she went on to explain, "I actually had to go to counseling because, like, especially within the last year with everything like rising up, like I had to go to counseling for being Black." She went on to explain that it is draining and tiring because, "it's just constantly like a fight like every day."

Cross-Cultural Differences in Experiences of Race-Based Trauma

Data retrieved from Jamaican participants yielded two unique themes that were not prevalent in data from American participants: *colorism* and *group membership*. It is important to note that while colorism exists in America, American participants did not discuss this phenomenon

(Monk, 2021). American participants also described experiences that did not appear as prevalent themes in data collected from their Jamaican counterparts: *white comfort* and *minimizing Black experiences*.

Colorism. Colorism was described by Jamaican participants as being an offspring of the aforementioned social hierarchy resulting from colonialism. Jane explained how colorism began during colonization and the enslavement of Black individuals:

We have a history of the slave owners breeding or having sexual intercourse with slaves, and therefore, having a child of mixed race. So the lighter colored slaves would have roles and functions within the house of the master. And so for me that already sets up a demarcation within the race that the lighter colored slaves, they didn't have to work in the field. They were in the house. they were taking care of the children of the slave master, and I think all of this has kind of passed down.

These privileges afforded Black individuals of lighter skin tones continued post-Emancipation through current day, as lighter skinned individuals are considered more socially desirable, according to Jamaican participants. Jane explained that she endures minimal race-based trauma in Jamaica due to her skin tone:

In Jamaica, it's a very different situation. It really is more about status, and it really is more about shades of darkness, and I am the 'right' shade.... Someone my complexion in Jamaica would not experience the kind of racism or any kind of stigma, discrimination, as a result of my color. So in Jamaica I am 'browning,' and browning is what is ideal - you're not too dark. You would probably get a very different feedback from somebody who had a darker skin complexion.

Dora explained that because of her biracial, Black and Indian lineage, her brighter complexion coupled with her curly opposed to coily hair, grants her social privileges. She gave the example, “If I'm with a friend, I am probably the one greeted first.” She also explained that she is stereotyped as being a source of authority or having greater intelligence due to her lighter complexion, “I will be expected to probably speak first or have the answers, so I'm expected to be bright or to know or I'm seen first...you are looked upon as a leader.” That is to say, individuals of brighter complexion are treated more favorably. For example, Dora explained that, “I might be served or greeted differently, I've noticed. I've seen that... Or you're given that reverence and that respect more...that attention or that smile more than the other person.” When dating, Dora explained that she is typically readily accepted by the family of potential mates due to her biracial heritage and consequently lighter complexion. Similarly, Nick stated:

They always place a value on the Brown people, and everybody wants a brown skin girl or Brown girl or boyfriend or something. And it's something I've grown up hearing, so when I'm around lighter-skinned people, even some of them who are my very close friends, I'm hyper vigilant because I listen to hear if they talk about these things, like, you know, valuing Brown skin over darker skin.

Ainsley and Nick spoke to their experiences as darker-complexioned Jamaicans. Ainsley explained that he and other individuals with darker skin may not be invited to engage in social activities such as parties due to their darker complexion. Nick added that he often chooses not to attend advertised events because he will feel as though he does not belong. This is due to events being promoted to lighter complexioned individuals. To illustrate additional experiences of colorism, Ainsley also detailed an incident, in which he and friends went to a store, and

unbeknownst to them, the store had changed their hours and were preparing to close. Ainsely and his friends asked if they could quickly go into the store to purchase an item. They were refused service, while an individual of a lighter skin tone was allowed to enter the store to make a purchase.

Participants explained that this proximity to whiteness has created a power structure in which white individuals possess the most power, followed by lighter complexioned Black individuals, and with darker complexioned Black individuals possessing the least power. Therefore, individuals with lighter complexions were described as having a “skin tone that allows you access” because it is more “digestible” or “palatable.” That is to say that Black individuals of lighter skin tones are given favorable opportunities in comparison to their counterparts of darker complexions. This is especially true, according to many participants, in careers. Jane explained:

...the lightest skin complex and they're the ones who work in the bank, and work at the front desk at the hotel, and work on the airlines. And the darker-skinned girls or ladies would not get those kinds of opportunities. But I haven't, I have not experienced that because of my skin tone.

Dora explained, “in the banking sector, in customer service, or reception areas or so, if there are two people, they're going to pick the lighter skinned person versus the darker, even if intelligence is there, and all of that.” This further evidences the increased access to opportunities granted to those who are associated with closer proximity to whiteness. Ainsley explained that individuals of lighter complexion are also selected for commercials and other forms of media advertisement, as companies’ “target audience” is those of lighter skin tone. As a result of this societal preference for proximity to whiteness, Ainsely explained that he often does not apply for jobs

that he believes are more likely to be given to someone of a lighter complexion. Nick, also of darker complexion, echoed these sentiments, stating:

...whenever I think like if I'm to apply for a job, I am always worrying about my locs and how dark I am, because I know that if in that pool of persons who applied for the job, if there is someone there who looks better, that person will get the position even if I'm more qualified. So, it's just caused me to develop that distrust for this system, that distrust for white people, and it's that constant paranoia.

Educational opportunities are also unfairly granted based on colorism. For example, Ainsley explained that there are schools that specifically cater to “children of the rich or lighter-skinned children.” This also demonstrates the intersectionality of skin tone and socioeconomic class.

Ainsley also highlighted the intersectionality of skin tone and language, explaining that darker complexioned individuals must speak English to have a chance at desired opportunities.

Individuals of lighter skin tones, however, can speak the local dialect and are still granted access to opportunities due to their apparent proximity to white lineage.

Because of the access and privileges granted to those with lighter skin complexions, internalized colorism is experienced by some individuals of darker complexions. Ainsely detailed an occurrence of internalized colorism within his family:

There are people who are darker skinned, and they get treated completely different from people like with my skin tone and from people with as dark skin tone.... For example, as I said, my best friend is my ex. I brought her home one time and my cousin, his entire family, our family, [are] Black people. His entire family is darker skin than I am, dark skinned, darker than you. He's dark skinned. He said to me...He was like, “Where ya go wit dat Black gal, eh?” as in, “Where are you going with a girl of such dark skin?” I was

like, bro, your skin is dark, your mom is dark. Like, I don't get it. He had a son the other day and was so excited when the son was just born because sometimes they look a bit lighter when they're just, you know, when they just get popped out. But now his son is of darker skin like him, and I haven't asked him, but sometimes I wonder how he feels about that... if his mindset has changed a bit, or anything. But it was really crazy to ask that because he ensured that he procreated with a lighter skinned girl.

Jane explained that individuals of darker complexion may choose to bleach their skin to appear more socially desirable:

I know some people bleach. We have a big issue in Jamaica with bleaching. So people will bleach their skin, and I guess I see that issue very differently. Whereas I think most people will look at this as an issue of something's wrong with persons, I think something's wrong with society, because my view is if people had a sense of equality and equal access - equity -then they probably wouldn't feel the need to bleach. Because for me, abrasion is a way of trying to gain acceptance or entry to a class that you don't feel that you belong in or people don't allow you to have access to. So my view is the issue is the society. We need to fix the society, and then people will have a need to do it.

Jane went on to explain how she responds to colorism through “more education- empowerment of others who might be darker skinned, as well as identifying if I see it playing out in front of me. And also about looking at systems and how they function.” As an individual granted the privileges of having a lighter complexion, Dora explained, “I am conscious about when I'm with people, around people, to ensure that the respect carries that way.” In other words, she remains conscientious of her privilege and ensures that her darker complexioned peers receive the same respect she does when they are together.

Group membership. Jamaican participants, especially those who have lived in both the U.S. and Jamaica or who have traveled to the U.S., explained the ways in which minority ethnic group membership versus majority ethnic group membership shapes their experiences of race-based trauma. Dora explained that because Black individuals compose the majority ethnic group in Jamaica, instances of racism are less prevalent:

...in Jamaica, we don't really face those issues, or it's not in our face. Even if it's there, we probably do face it, but we don't even know that it's there because it's not so startling because it's a predominantly Black society that we live in.

Dora's experience was echoed by Kayla, who explained that while she lived in Jamaica during her childhood, she cannot recount any instances of experiencing racism. Jane, who attended college in the U.S., explained the stark contrast and adjustment she faced when transitioning from living in a country where she was part of the ethnic majority to living in a country where she was the ethnic minority. She went on to explain that while living in the U.S., she had to be more mindful of the ways in which her Blackness posed a threat, thereby threatening her personal safety. She recounted:

When I was living in the United States, I was younger, number one, okay. So when I lived in the United States, I was in my early career from 18 to 24. So that was an eye opener for me because I've always lived in a country where I was the majority. So just, just the term 'minority' got the best of me. 'Who the hell is the minority? I'm not a minority!' So that alone was an issue for me about how do you fill out these forms. And I don't know if they're still that way now in the United States. I remember when I was in university, I always had to be telling people who the hell I was. And there was little boxes that you had to check, and sometimes I thought, 'well I don't want to be in one of

these boxes,' but you have to fill these boxes in or else you couldn't access whatever service that you were looking for... And so I think a lot of it just kind of caught me off guard. I mean, for example, I remember living in Florida in an area called Davy, and being told about rednecks, and thinking "Huh? What? Who the hell is a redneck?" ... people were telling me be careful of how you walk in this area.... and then it's so interesting because it's so new when you come from a society where those aren't issues for you, because my teachers were Black, my doctor is Black. When I'd go down to the row [in Florida], to the supermarket, I went to a Black community. For me to go into an area and be told, be careful how you walk down the street because of your color, religion, it's an eye-opener... also feeling that now you have to think about your safety as a result of being a Black person. That was a really new concept for me at 18.

Nick, who travels to the U.S. frequently, expressed that he feels exceedingly uncomfortable while in U.S. He explained:

The other main difference's just the discomfort I feel because I'm always around the white people. I hate it... I just don't know when we're going to be around someone who is like a typical Karen. Yeah. So I like to stay on the side of caution and just stick to myself.

That is to say that Nick feels uncomfortable while in the U.S. because there, he is in the minoritized ethnic group. This change in group membership exacerbates fear, similar to the experiences described by Jane.

Jamaican participants also explained that the lack of representation of Black individuals in the U.S. is also a stark contrast to Jamaica. Jane described the differences in representation, stating:

... because once we got our freedom and slavery was abolished in Jamaica, we became the majority here, and we set up our system on our rules, and we are led by a government of our peers, and our judges are our peers, and our doctors...And so I don't think that we had this feeling about an expectation of a role that was smaller, or lesser or that there certain things you couldn't ascribe to or there was any kind of glass ceiling.... I don't think some of the limitations exist as much here from a color perspective... And I say, that was some kind of hesitation because remember I talked about a class, right, here and it's still impacted but I just don't think it's to the extent of the experience in the United States.

Jane explained that her parents immigrated to London before she was born. She was born in London, and her parents chose to return to Jamaica to raise Jane and her siblings. She stated, My father decided that he wanted to raise his children in a country where they were not a minority... And so he moved back to Jamaica with four children at a time when it was very difficult to live in Jamaica, and to survive in Jamaica. And he did. My father did very very well. He built a business for himself... He said to me, 'I don't want my son and my girls growing up ever feeling like second class citizens.' And I never appreciated the value of what he did for us until I went to live in the United States and when I went to live in London and saw the experience of how Black persons are treated and how they can internalize messages. And that's why my children are here, as well...I respect my father so much for making that decision... It wasn't an easy decision for him to make up, and he did that because it was important to him for us to have a self-concept and a self-identity that did not see ourselves as being any less than because of our color. I have appreciated that when I realized just how difficult it could have been if I had had that

experience, and I think that's probably [why] when I went away I was very strong and rooted in who I was, you know. I didn't have any issues about [being] Black or inferior. I mean I would just raise my hand in the middle of a classroom and say what I had to say because what I had to say was important.

By growing up in a country where she was a part of the ethnic majority, Jane explained that her self-concept was stronger, evidencing the impact of ethnic group membership on racialized experiences.

Jamaican participants explained that the sense of community and unity present in Jamaica as a predominantly Black nation is a contributing factor in the differences noted in being Black in the U.S. compared to being Black in Jamaica. Kayla illustrated this, stating:

I think there is a larger extent to which Jamaicans truly embrace the 'out of many, one people,' national motto, where we understand and value differences, and the rainbow of skin tones that make up the foundation of the Jamaican culture... In the U.S., it's not the same... In Jamaica, we're a smaller community. We're all working together as a third world culture to build up our culture. We have amazing talent, and there's more national pride, collectively. I think in the U.S., the national pride comes in like if we're winning Olympic gold medals- that we value Black people when they're entertainers and in sports.

Through this illustration, Kayla demonstrated that by Black individuals comprising the majority of the Jamaican population, Black individuals feel a sense of belonging. This belongingness is fostered by a collective sense of national pride. In the U.S., however, there is a less unified perspective. According to Kayla, Black Americans are only celebrated in the U.S. when they are

demonstrating their value by entertaining white society. This, however, is not the case in Jamaica.

The ways in which Jamaica and the U.S. teach their nation's history was also cited by Jamaican participants as a reason for the differing experiences. Participants explained that in Jamaica, students are provided with a more exhaustive history education that includes the uncomfortable aspects of history, such as the horrors of colonialism. In the U.S., however, the narratives provided in history education are, as Kayla explained, "a version of history that is taught, and it's not a complete version, and it doesn't speak to everybody's truth. And as a result, you know, kids are indoctrinated with one thing." This speaks to the whitewashed narratives that are conveyed through U.S. history lessons, making it nearly impossible for the nation to recognize and begin to heal from its colonial past.

White comfort. A theme that emerged from the data retrieved from American participants but was not dominant in data from Jamaican participants was the prioritization of white comfort. As Felicia stated, the prioritization of white comfort involves "a lot of me going out the way to make nonminorities feel more comfortable." Moreover, Kayla explained, "I don't want to always make it be about race and I wanted to avoid other people being uncomfortable," describing the ways in which she previously censored herself for the sake of white individuals' comfort. In further detailing the ways in which she must censor her expressions, Kayla explained that she feels as though she is "not allowed to speak passionately and potentially hurt feelings or make them feel defensive... when I say 'they' I mean any white individual who doesn't know me." This illustrates that Black individuals, such as Kayla, may prioritize white comfort over their self-expression, perhaps to increase their sense of safety.

Minimizing Black experiences. The minimization of the experiences of Black individuals was also a prevalent experience amongst American participants. As Victoria stated, Black individuals often have to prove that their race-based trauma actually occurred. She presented the example of police brutality being captured on camera, explaining that although the murder of George Floyd was captured on video and widely distributed, many white individuals still attempted to minimize the horror of that ordeal. Fred also explained that following communal and vicarious traumas experienced by Black communities, such as when a Black person is murdered by police, society quickly “forgets” and discussions about that tragedy and its impacts soon cease. Fred explained:

When Mr. Floyd got killed, you know, the NFL, NBA everybody they stood up, but nobody's standing up today. I don't see anybody talking about, you know, let's pray at half court... We don't have Breanna shirts on. We don't have the young man that was jogging shirts on, you know.

Participants explained that when confronted about racist comments or actions they have committed, white individuals may attempt to minimize their offenses. An example provided by Josie involved a peer stereotyping Black individuals negatively, then stating, “It’s okay, though you're not really Black...you’re not like THOSE Black people.” This, according to participants, results in Black individuals feeling unseen, unheard, unsupported, and invalidated.

Participants explained that not only are experiences of race-based traumas minimized by white individuals, but they also minimize the accomplishments of Black individuals. Josie stated that her achievements have been “discredit[ed]” by white peers. Additionally, Kiara expressed her frustration regarding teachers’ lack of notice when a Black child’s behavior improves. She explained that when an active Black child is finally able to remain seated and on task for a longer

period of time, “none of that is celebrated.” On a societal scale, Fred noted that Black individuals who are currently making history through representation of Black excellence are not given the recognition they deserve.

The Role of Class Distinctions

Five dominant themes emerged regarding the impact of class distinctions on participants’ experiences of race-based trauma. These themes include: *colonialism, access, injustice through capitalism, assumptions regarding one’s SES, and intersectionality.*

Colonialism. Class distinction was reported by participants of both cultures as intersecting with their identities as Black individuals due to colonialism. Dora explained that classism in Jamaica is a result of colonialism. More specifically, she explained that indentured servants from non-Black countries, such as India and China, were provided opportunities to own land more frequently and at an earlier point in history than Black individuals. Therefore, there continues to be a class distinction based on land ownership in which the small number of white people present in Jamaica own the majority of the land and resources, followed by other non-Black ethnicities, and with Black Jamaicans generally possessing less land and resources. She stated:

...when indentured laborers came on, there were more opportunities for them than Blacks of African descent. So you start here, you know, lack of ownership of property and things that have to work hard, fight to build communities- fight for education and healthcare. So the inequalities are always there in comparison to the upper white class... actually Jamaica is owned by just a few people in terms of a majority of the lands, which are from colonialism. A lot of Black African descendants and communities had to go farm in

formal communities to get on. So land ownership is a major challenge for Jamaicans, so that's where the informal communities come about, or the people have to go into squatter communities for that kind of thing.

This inequity in land and resource ownership contributed to Black individuals forming their own communities with scarce resources. As Black Jamaicans owned less land and resources, they had nothing to pass down to future generations. Dora explained, "Before the 1970s, a lot of Jamaicans were not able to own anything or to inherit anything, or to get anything because of this past." This was echoed by other participants, including Ainsley who explained, "all those families - they hold a lot of the wealth in Jamaica, and these are very not-Black people. They are not Black." He went on to explain that these families obtained their wealth through colonialism, and that wealth has been inherited intergenerationally. Therefore, Black individuals have not historically had access to the land, resources, and wealth accessed by their white counterparts.

Dora went on to describe the negative impact that "Bastard Laws," influenced by colonialism, had on Black Jamaican communities. She explained that until the 1970s, "When children are born out of wedlock, basically had no rights or you weren't recognized." This meant that these children were also unable to inherit any property that their father may have owned. According to Dora, "a lot of people didn't have marriages." This was especially true in Black communities. This resulted in the continuation of these class distinctions, according to participants. To this end, Dora stated, "majority of the people [who] are poor are Black people."

These inequitable class distinctions and disparities have also been perpetuated by a lack of value for workers, according to Dora. She explained that political movements for unionization were an important aspect of Jamaican history. She stated that this unionization "tells you that the people had to fight for rights within the workplace." She went on to explain that the Jamaican

workforce was predominantly Black, and as a result of colonialism and slavery, Black labor was not fairly compensated and valued. Similarly, Josie explained that colonialism has influenced the lack of value for Black labor, stating “...people of color, almost like have way less wealth than white people.... it's like literally the same thing. Capitalism today is I mean basically modern slavery, so many people are working for free.”

Access. Individuals from both cultures explained that one’s socioeconomic class distinction, coupled with their Blackness, often influences their access to resources and opportunities. Josie, for instance, explained the prevalence of the “bootstrap” fallacy. She explained that white individuals often perpetuate the idea that someone can “pull yourself up by the bootstrap” to achieve anything that they wish. Josie explained that this is problematic in that it ignores the economic constraints and other factors that may inhibit an individual from attaining certain aspirations. Moreover, it ignores the impact of systemic racism in presenting unique challenges for Black individuals. Through the bootstrap fallacy, white individuals invalidate and discount Black individuals’ experiences of racism, discrimination, and race-based trauma.

Black individuals also have limited access to knowledge pertaining to financial literacy. Josie explained:

... a lot of people have parents to teach them about financial health and all those things or financial wholeness, whatever you want to call it. A lot of Black people don't have that, because there's never been any wealth to hold on to, or to teach your kids how to hold on to or build upon. So that seems like something the education system would handle, and they don't, you know.

Due to the historical lack of intergenerational wealth in Black communities and families, participants explained, later generations of Black individuals are at a disadvantage compared to

their white counterparts who are historically more likely to have some amount of intergenerational wealth. This wealth also grants access to opportunities, such as education and careers. Ainsley explained, “They have better resources by virtue of the fact that they do have more money, but they also get a foot in terms of opportunities.” He also noted that some schools in Jamaica only grant enrollment to students with lighter skin tones and those who possess wealth. This lack of wealth, therefore, closes doors for educational and occupational opportunities, thereby increasing Black individuals’ likelihood of experiencing race-based trauma in the form of poverty.

Injustice through capitalism. Black individuals are further constrained by capitalism due to their intersecting identities. Josie commented that “people of color, almost like have way less wealth than white people.” She explained that “capitalism today is basically modern slavery.” In explaining how colonialism and slavery continue to be reflected in today’s capitalism, Josie stated:

... many people are working for free based on like the value of their work. If you assume that some amount of labor should give you access to all of the things you need to survive and some of the things you would like to have, if you believe that, there are still a lot of slaves and most of them are people of color. A lot of them are disabled people. A lot of them are brown people that speak another language as their first language. I mean it's literally like the same... It's just now, people get something in return that's concrete so they're at least getting something... and they're kept in the dark enough that they don't realize that they're still working for free, I guess essentially.

That is to say, that capitalism fosters a system in which a monetary value is placed on individuals’ labor. For many Black individuals, however, the monetary value associated with

their labor is not enough to meet their basic needs, let alone allow them to afford other goods or services that they desire. In this way, Black labor is undercompensated, and Black people are forced to work despite this unfair compensation. This cycle of exploitation is traumatic in that it contributes to experiences of poverty. Exploitation through capitalism also fosters feelings of being undervalued, less than their white counterparts, and is often discouraging.

Assumptions regarding one's SES. Assumptions are frequently made regarding Black individuals' socioeconomic status (SES). The ways in which participants have been regarded and perceived by white individuals were influenced by these assumptions. For instance, as reported in earlier sections, many participants have been provided subpar service, ignored, or advised to seek more "economical" options because of the SES that white individuals assume Black individuals are a part of. For instance, Jane detailed a situation in which she trying to enroll one of her children in prep school:

I was chastised by the administrator because I did not register my child early enough.... I was just dropping my children off at school, and I was probably in jeans and t-shirt... she probably looked at me and thought I may have been a woman from a lower socioeconomic status and said that she could do that to me.

This recollection by Jane illustrates the mistreatment faced by and lack of respect given to Black individuals when they are assumed to be of a lower socioeconomic class. Kiara also explained that Black families are often assumed to receive public assistance, specifically in the form of "food stamps." She recalled an instance in which a teacher made negative comments about the snacks that a student's mother purchased for the class. She said that the teacher, who was white, implied to other white teachers that the snacks were purchased using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, commonly referred to as food stamps.

Furthermore, participants stated that because white individuals assume that they are of lower SES, they are also presumed to steal. This results in Black individuals being followed through stores. Therefore, because Black individuals are frequently stereotyped as belonging to a lower SES, they are treated negatively by white counterparts. As reported by participants, this increases feelings of fear and causes concern regarding how Black individuals are being perceived by their white counterparts. This fear, according to participants, causes them to feel “on guard” as they operate and exist within society.

Intersectionality. Participants’ identities as Black individuals intersect with their SES, skin tone, and in some cases, specifically in Jamaica, their hair texture. Many participants, specifically those from Jamaica, detailed the prevalence of classism, or the differing treatment of individuals based on their presumed SES. Dora explained, “So Jamaica, what we have is classism, versus racism.” This sentiment of classism being more prevalent in Jamaica than racism was echoed by other participants, as well. Kayla stated, “in Jamaica, it's more of a melting pot, and you definitely see more of a social class elitism in Jamaica versus a racial issue.” She went on to explain:

... I think the social class is more predominant first, and then within your social class, that's where, you know, you have that brief breakdown where you have more of where the racism I guess or the colorism is more pronounced.

Participants explained that because of the historical factors contributing to classism, race and class often intersect.

...if it's a race issue, it's a class issue as well, because it is really the Black people who are poor in Jamaica. For the most part, good opportunities are not there, we don't have the wealth to carry, we don't have the generational wealth to carry.

In discussing classism, participants, especially those from Jamaica, described the intersectionality of colorism and classism. This colorism is often reflected in hair texture and resulting distinctions. For instance, Ainsley explained that hair policies disproportionately impact individuals with darker complexions because coily or coarse hair is more common in individuals with darker complexions, whereas straight, wavy, and looser curls are more common among those with lighter complexions. Because individuals with darker skin are often within a lower SES, hair policies impact poorer individuals more often than wealthier individuals who tend to be of lighter complexions. Ainsley gave the following example:

... it speaks to a lot of other issues, because the reason why a lot of people their hair is uncut is not because they want an afro. It's because my parents aren't able to afford cutting my hair this Sunday for me going to school in the morning.

Therefore, policies and laws that are classist in nature are also inherently racist.

Impacts on Societal Interactions

Black individuals' interactions with society are shaped and influenced by their experiences with race-based trauma. Across both cultures, nine themes emerged regarding how these interactions are influenced: *acceptance of racism as the norm; avoidant behaviors; exacerbation of fears; distrust; hypervigilance; absence of belongingness; seeking acceptance; emotional labor; and self-perceptions.*

Acceptance of racism as the norm. Participants explained that because racism is so deeply interwoven into post-colonial societies, they often expect to encounter racism. In

describing how racism is a routine aspect of post-colonial life for Black individuals, Josie stated “it's like the present mirrors the past, just not in the same way.” In further recounting normality of racism, Josie described racism and systemic oppression as being the “default” for Black individuals. Dora expressed similar sentiments. In referring to racism, she stated “[it] is a real thing that is normalized, that I don't even see it.”

Exacerbation of fears. Black individuals’ fears for the emotional, psychological, and physical safety are exacerbated by their continuous experiences of race-based traumas. Fred disclosed, “I stay up all night, all day. I don't sleep because, you know, I'm constantly worried because you never know when that next person could be shooting up your house,” illustrating the impact of his fears on daily functioning. Similarly, Josie explained how her fears have impacted aspects of her parenting:

... there's a lot of pre-emptive stuff. Like there were a few years where my kid, yeah, he always wears hoodies... He would put the hood on like after we got out of the car going places. And it was just like an immediate like, ‘Take that hood off your head.’ And for a while, I had no idea why [that] bothered me so much, but it did. And then, then, one day it hit me like, it's because Black kids with hoodies can get shot for being Black. Isn't that nice.

This illustrates Josie’s fear for her son’s physical safety as a Black, male-presenting individual in America. This was also demonstrated in Josie’s earlier quote regarding censorship of her son’s hairstyles due to her fears of how this would impact white society’s perceptions of him, thereby potentially threatening his physical safety. Victoria, too, described feeling “scared” for her children’s safety due to them being outspoken and white society’s conceptualization of their outspokenness as a threat. She also detailed her fears for her granddaughters and future

generations, stating “we're going down the wrong road.” This fear for one’s Black children was also echoed by Kayla. Kayla also expressed fear of “retaliation” and “the change in interaction, and just the general approach with me,” demonstrating that Black individuals feel the need to be careful as not to upset their white counterparts. These feelings of exacerbated fear are also illustrated in Black individuals’ perceived need to “be on guard,” as described by Victoria.

Participants also detailed Black individuals’ fears of losing legal rights. More specifically, Victoria explained that due to race-based trauma rooted in systemic racism, she fears that the rights of Black individuals are in jeopardy. She explained:

If we're not careful, I feel that they will try to, you know, bring back a lot like the voting rights and all this stuff. I feel they'll try to bring some of these things that try to take away some of our rights, because the attitude is still there. They actually feel this in their heart. In their mind, they really feel that we're not equal.

Avoidant behaviors. Participants across cultures explained that due to the emotional toll that racism and thereby race-based trauma takes on their mental and emotional health, they often expend additional emotional labor attempting to avoid interactions, places, or environments in which they may be confronted with such experiences. As stated by Nick, “there are certain spaces I don't, won't enter.” He went on to state that because of his fear of how white individuals may react to him, he avoids predominantly white spaces, stating “I like to stay on the side of caution and just stick to myself.” Josie noted that she has begun to “put space between myself and people like that,” referring to white individuals who lack cultural awareness and sensitivity. She went on to explain:

For lack of better words, like I just don't fuck with most white people right now unless I feel like it's not going to be harmful to me in any like physically, mentally, emotionally, any of that, because nine out of ten, especially in Texas, chance is that it will be the case.

Similarly, Black individuals may censor or restrict their behaviors, appearance, or verbal expressions to avoid potentially negative or dangerous encounters. Nick, for instance, recalled the following:

I kind develop like a shell. So for most recent time, I was on the airplane. And I was sitting between two white ladies, and it was so uncomfortable. I didn't want to move, like fidget. I didn't want to like say anything because you don't want to scare them and have them like scream and run or anything like that because of something... I have heard of experiences that where white people just feel threatened or they think that you're being aggressive when you're just being you. And I didn't want to be taken off the airplane or tased or anything because man my actions were misinterpreted.

Nick's experience illustrates Black individuals' needs to predict potential negative or dangerous reactions by their white counterparts and therefore censor their own behaviors. To this end, Dora explained that she "wear[s] a lot of masks," illustrating her perceived need to behave in a certain way due to Eurocentric expectations. Kayla, on the other hand, explained that she was previously very intentional to "avoid conflicts or situations where I needed to be very vocal about racism or about feeling like I'm treated differently because of my skin color," demonstrating the avoidance of spaces for the sake of one's mental and emotional safety. Similarly, Victoria explained, "I hold back quite a bit," demonstrating the silencing of Black voices through this phenomenon. In describing this censorship, Josie explained:

It's like trying to catch water with like a basket, you know. It's like if you catch some...if you catch most of it, even though you know you're never gonna catch it all - and you could be doing it for nothing- but it makes you at least feel slightly better.

This illustrates Black individuals' attempts at censorship as preventative measures, despite the knowledge and fear that their censorship may not provide adequate protection from race-based trauma.

Distrust. Because of traumatic experiences, participants reported distrusting systems, especially law enforcement, and being wary of white individuals' intentions and authenticity. For instance, Nick explained that due to his negative interactions with white individuals, he questions their authenticity when he has seemingly positive interactions, stating, "No matter what response I get, my mind just pulls back and says that that's a fake response and they really don't want to talk to you." This distrust and wariness of white individuals were also depicted in the following disclosure by Victoria:

... maybe five, six years ago, I would have just walked into someone's home, a white person's home, a coworker, someone that I knew and felt comfortable, but I think now I, you know, it's like before I'll go in or something, and I'm like, 'I wonder if I'm welcome here'.... And I wonder how, you know, if their smiles are genuine. And I always wonder [whether they're a] Trump supporter. Now I always wonder that, you know, because I know if you support what he, you know, what he's all about then you're, you know, what do you feel about me.

Distrust of law enforcement was illustrated in participant disclosures. Victoria, for instance, described law enforcement as being contaminated by individuals who are "racist behind a badge." Victoria's earlier recounting of the cautions she must take when interacting with law

enforcement also illustrate this distrust. These cautions and preemptive measures include monitoring the tone and volume of her voice due to fear for her physical safety. Similarly, Black individuals' distrust of systems, specifically the legal, health, and education systems, was demonstrated in Victoria's previous explanation of the need for video evidence. She explained that despite having multiple video recordings of the murder of George Floyd, individuals and systems attempted to minimize the guilt and wrongfulness of the law enforcement officer who murdered him. In describing inequities in incarceration rates, Victoria described mass incarceration as a tool of systemic oppression "to hurt the Black people... it's what they're doing, and they can get away with it." Regarding the healthcare system, Kaya explained that Black individuals face greater health barriers "because of not trusting health care and not accessing primary care" due to injustices dating back to slavery. Kiara, on the other hand, described her wariness of the education system. This was illustrated in her earlier detailing of her child being graded unfairly. Because she could not trust the teachers within the educational system to grade her child fairly, Kiara was forced to teach her daughter how to identify loopholes. According to Kiara, her daughter earning high grades on tests so that unfairly graded subjective assignments would not negatively impact her grade was "the loop we had to go around."

Hypervigilance. The intense fears and distrusts that result from Black individuals' race-based traumas contribute to hypervigilance. Multiple participants explained that when in the presence of white individuals, they are "hypervigilant." This was also reported by Jamaican individuals regarding spaces in which they are surrounded by individuals of lighter skin tones. Ainsley explained, "I think I'm a lot more vigilant now. I'll be in spaces with people of other races, and I'm a lot more ... I pay more keen attention to what happens around me." Fred disclosed feeling similarly, stating that his experiences of race-based trauma "just makes me

aware of everything.” Illustrating this hypervigilance, Fred explained how this hypervigilance impacts his behaviors, explaining, “When you go eat at a restaurant- don't have your back to the door, have your face to the door, because if something happened, you got to be the first person and you got to respond to it.”

Absence of belongingness. Participants across cultural groups expressed that they often feel a lack of belongingness, specifically when they are in predominantly white spaces. This lack of belongingness appears in feelings of being excluded, unwelcomed, unwanted, and/or judged. Nick explained that he also experiences this lack of belongingness due to colorism. Referring to events whose advertisements target lighter complexioned individuals, he stated, “I wouldn't want to go to because I knew that they were being advertised for a specific set of people.... I wouldn't fit in.” That is to say that he would feel unwelcomed and therefore uncomfortable in these spaces. Therefore, he is denied social opportunities due to this perception of being unwanted in these spaces.

As a result of this lack of acceptance experienced by Black individuals, they may feel the need to compartmentalize aspects of their life. For example, Josie recounted:

I always kept my life separate. So like I had a school life, and then I had a school social life, and I had a social life. I was dating someone who was Black. They never hung out with my school friends or my white friends or anything. Like those lives never crossed, so it was literally like double consciousness literally two different lives. Two different versions of myself for the most part.

This compartmentalization illustrates the lack of belonging that Black individuals, like Josie, feel within white friendships.

Seeking acceptance. Related to the aforementioned lack of acceptance, Black individuals may engage in specific behaviors to seek acceptance and a sense of belongingness. According to participants, this may take the form of code-switching, self-censorship, overcompensation, or seeking spaces in which they feel accepted. According to participants, self-censorship often involves a balancing act in which a Black individual attempts to stay true to their authentic self, while also avoiding certain behaviors or forms of self-expression that may make white individuals uncomfortable, thereby putting the Black individual at risk emotionally or physically. Ainsley explained, "...When I do enter spaces I try to leave a decent impression while still being true to myself." To attain a sense of safety, as well as acceptance, Felicia explained that there are certain preparations that she must be mindful of prior to entering society. She stated:

... now at this point like before I leave the house, like there are things that I just have to like think about. It's not just about just getting ready and going. Like I have to think about like you know like what I'm packing and, you know, changing like the way I talk, so that you know like other people don't be offended even if I am not talking aggressively.... It is like code switching. Just, you know, just a lot of me going out the way to make nonminorities feel more comfortable, which I shouldn't....

To counteract the effects of living in a racialized society, Black individuals seek acceptance by intentionally seeking predominantly Black spaces. Felicia explained, "I just needed to be like around more like Black people because after not being around them all day at work, it's just like I just need to feel at home, so like things like even changing my church and switching to like a predominantly Black church." Similarly, Jane explained that her experiences of race-based trauma in America influenced where she chose to live and raise her family. She

explained, “I made sure that I returned to my country of origin, and chose not to stay in a country where I am labeled as a minority.... It directed where I chose to settle in my life.” Race-based trauma also influenced Jane’s career decisions. She disclosed that when she was devalued by an organization for which she worked, she, “moved out of that organization and found me another job,” illustrating the importance of feeling as though one belongs in the spaces they occupy. Similarly, Jane explained that while living in the U.S., she intentionally shopped in Black communities to obtain this sense of belonging. She also explained, “I surrounded myself with a Caribbean social network,” illustrating Black individuals’ manufacturing of communities in which they feel accepted. Black children also seek predominantly Black spaces for increased sense of acceptance as demonstrated in Victoria’s granddaughters’ request to play basketball for a predominantly Black team.

Similarly, Black individuals may seek acceptance from white peers. This may be done through overcompensation. In explaining the impact of race-based trauma and how it influenced the strategies she employed to gain acceptance and respect, Jane stated, “it made sure that I got a doctorate degree.” Similarly, Josie explained, “I guess the code switch works pretty well, and having degrees and everything.” Regarding race-based trauma, Josie went on to explain, “I just made sure I kept being the best at everything and then I wouldn't have to deal with it.” Other Black individuals, however, may attempt to obtain the acceptance of white counterparts through self-mutilation. Jane explained:

I know some people bleach. We have a big issue in Jamaica with bleaching. So people will bleach their skin and I, I guess I see that issue very differently. Whereas I think most people will look at this as an issue of something's wrong with persons, I think something's wrong with society, because my view is if people had a sense of equality and

equal access - equity -then they probably wouldn't feel the need to bleach. Because for me abrasion is a way of trying to gain acceptance or entry to a class that you don't feel that you belong in or people don't allow you have access to. So my view is the issue is the society. We need to fix the society, and then people will have a need to do it.

Emotional labor. Black individuals are often put in positions in which they must expend additional emotional labor. This occurs when Black individuals hold non-Black counterparts accountable for racist and oppressive behaviors. Emotional labor is also expended when Black individuals educate others regarding their experiences, racism, or advocacy. When Black individuals possess power in their spheres of influence, they may choose to leverage this power to elevate the voices of individuals possessing less social privilege or power. In doing so, emotional labor is exerted.

In attempting difficult conversations with white peers to enlighten them of the lived experiences of Black individuals, copious amounts of emotional energy is expended. Felicia disclosed, “having like the hard conversations with my friends for the first time, who are not Black, and friendships ending and it's just like a lot.” She explained that more emotional labor is required because of white peers’ “not empathizing.” As explained by Felicia, this emotional toll can sometimes be overwhelming, leading her to “shut down” when her attempts to advocate for Black individuals served by her agency go unheard. She explained:

Sometimes it just makes me like I just shut down, because I feel like I have no ally. So to fight for, you know, for the African American for the Black women that we serve in our community, like sometimes I shut down because I'm not being heard. And then other times I have to go really hard, like you know, so it's just like finding a balance and again it comes with the code-switching and, you know, just making them feel comfortable.

Additional emotional labor is required when Black individuals, like Felicia, have to navigate advocacy while also attempting to preserve white peers' sense of safety. This is also the case when Black individuals have to explain themselves due to being “doubted” or questioned by their peers, as explained by Kayla. Similarly, Jane explained:

Certainly made me have to be stronger. In other words, when somebody is trying to discount what I have to say, I think it's made me come back and just [say], ‘No that's not actually the situation.’ And you know, be a bit more maybe forceful in what it is that I am saying and be sure that you listen. It made me speak up and speak out. I refuse to be silent.

Victoria described this form of emotional labor as “se[ting]t people straight.”

Black individuals also expend emotional labor when attempting to cope with repetitive experiences of race-based trauma. Felicia disclosed:

So I actually had to go to counseling because, like, especially like within the last year with everything like rising up, like I had to go to counseling for like being Black. I'm saying it out loud like this more. So like that helped a lot, and because it was draining, like it was draining me like I just feel tired. And it's just like constantly like a fight like every day.

Self-perceptions. Participants explained that their self-perceptions are often altered as a result of interactions within a racialized society. Feelings of doubt, a diminished self-image, and enhanced self-reflection were reported by participants as a result of societal interactions involving race-based trauma. Jane described these as “internalize[d] messages.” Josie explained, “the internalized racism is indoctrinated, and you’re indoctrinated with that very young. And you don't even really know why you are, you know, you don't know why you're doing it that way or

whatever.” Victoria explained, “it's made me question myself,” illustrating the impacts of race-based trauma and white society’s tendency to gaslight Black individuals.

Ainsley recounted a recent experience in which he was denied service while individuals possessing lighter skin tones were provided service. He explained that following this encounter, he engaged in self-reflection resulting in increased awareness of the experiences of those who have skin tones that are darker than his. He stated, “It allowed me to appreciate a lot more what others go through in instances like that.” Kayla, too, explained that experiences of race-based trauma caused her to look inward, explaining:

I definitely have done also a lot of self reflection to address my own implicit biases, making sure that in my conversations, communications, interactions of not treating anybody differently or approaching them differently because of race, gender, you know, gender identification, sexual orientation. So I'm trying to be more mindful, myself.

Resiliency Factors

Participants explained that their Blackness, and the race-based traumas that accompany it, force them to develop resiliency factors to cope with the inevitable racism they face at the hands of white supremacy. The data collected across cultures yielded six themes regarding the resiliency factors Black individuals employ to cope with race-based trauma: *rejection of pain, personal evolution, community, producing change, liberation, and cultivating intergenerational resilience.*

Rejection of pain. Participants explained that in order to cope with race-based trauma, they engage in behaviors aimed at rejecting pain. This, according to participants, takes the form of numbing, pulling away, and rejecting the realities of racism. Dora, for instance, described race-based trauma as fostering “negative energy.” In describing her rejection of this pain, she

stated, “I don’t pay attention to it. I don’t use that negative energy.” In other instances, participants, such as Victoria, explained the ways in which they attempt to make meaning of experiences of racism, possibly to lessen the pain. For example, Victoria questioned white individuals’ motives behind the infliction of race-based trauma, posing the question, “Is that what the older generation is afraid of, you know, that they’re losing their racial identity or something?” Josie and other participants explained that they withdraw from situations or individuals who inflict race-based trauma to allow themselves the space and time to heal from these experiences. Similarly, Felicia explained:

I just like take a break. I take a break from white people... I just needed to be like around more like black people because after not being around them all day at work, it's just like I just need to feel at home.

Other participants, such as Josie, explained that they sometimes engage in activities for the purpose of “numbing” the pain. In describing these forms of coping, Josie stated, “social media, the numbing, watching TV, all those things. I mean I guess it's bad coping, and, you know, unhelpful normally, but coping.”

Personal evolution. In healing from race-based trauma, participants explained that they may experience a form of personal evolution through increased conscientiousness. Kayla explained that one way in which she increased her consciousness was by increasing her awareness of the prevalence of racism. She did this, she explained, through increased news media consumption. Additionally, Kayla stated that she engages in more self-reflection to identify and address her own biases.

Engagement in self-care, including mindfulness practices, was also cited by participants as a resiliency factor that aids in healing from race-based trauma. Kayla explained the importance of this resilience factor, stating:

You know, because you get to a point where there's only so many situations of microaggression and racist comments or watching the news and dealing with that stuff that you can go through before you need to reset, because otherwise you'll just have a meltdown and break.

In describing self-care as a coping mechanism, Kayla explained:

I used to run. And I had a group of running friends, and we had various backgrounds and experiences. And it was a good sounding board to get different perspectives on anything that was bothering me. I'm where I am now, I don't have that, but I do have a spin bike and so that's what I do to kind of decompress.

Multiple participants expressed that reading is an effective means of coping. Kayla described the benefits of reading for self-care:

I read a lot like but like fiction, very light reading- nothing too heavy or intense. I can just lose myself in the protagonist's story, and her biggest issue is, you know, like which boy she's going out with. Like it's such really like, that's kind of an escape from the reality of my, my actual life and the heaviness of some of the social stuff, that I can lose myself in this very trivial story for, whether it's you know, just a couple of minutes or a couple of hours.

Engaging in acts of creativity was also cited as a form of self-care that facilitates healing. Kayla, for instance, stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, she and peers would sit over 6 feet apart as they completed paint-by-numbers artwork. Josie explained, “doing something

creative, even if it's nonsense or, like, not for the purpose of creating, like, you know, that whatever you create but just to process, I guess.” In other words, participants describe that engaging in different forms of art and creativity allow them to process race-based trauma non-verbally.

To allow themselves the space and time to heal from race-based traumas, it is beneficial, according to participants, to set and maintain healthy boundaries with others. For instance, participants explained that they remove themselves from spaces in which they are subjected to race-based trauma. The setting of boundaries to cultivate resilience was illustrated in Jane resigning from an organization in which she was continuously exposed to race-based trauma and Nick “developing a shell” to allow himself space to heal. Multiple participants stated that verbally processing their experiences of race-based trauma is beneficial in fostering healing. Josie, for instance, stated that “talking to people about it is helpful.” Similarly, Jane, speaking of her time in the U.S., explained, “I spoke a lot with a lot of my Caribbean friends.” Through engagement in coping mechanisms that foster resilience, Black individuals may come to an increased love and knowledge of thyself, according to participants. Felicia explained, “I have to learn, you know, like to love my skin and to love my hair, my natural hair, and, you know, that I'm different and that's okay. Like, just because I look this way doesn't mean that I'm less than.” According to Kayla, increased self-knowledge and resulting confidence is illustrated in her newfound voice. She stated, “I just not afraid to speak my truth anymore.” Similarly, Dora explained that she is no longer “wear[ing] masks,” explaining, “I'm unmasking myself, and coming back to my true identity.”

Community. Community, or safe spaces with individuals who have similar lived experiences, was cited as an important resilience factor. In describing the importance of community, Kayla explained:

I was intentional about engaging with and interacting with people that were like minded and already involved in protests and activist groups, etc. And I think by being a part of other individuals that sees as equally important, it has made me feel like okay I have some support. So I have a I have what I call 'my people.' So I have my people that I can go to and I can talk with, whether it's an individual that has a similar perspective in terms of their life experience or an ally, where I can say, 'Oh, can you tell me if I'm crazy because this is what happened.'

Kayla explained that this group of individuals also serve as her "soundboard" where she can seek guidance and share her experiences. Fred explained that membership in a fraternity within the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) has also been a source of community, support, and brotherhood. Kayla, like many participants, described biological family as an important part of their community, stating that "just being present with family" is a beneficial tool in maintaining her resilience.

While some participants seek community, others create their own. This is especially true for individuals who live away from their biological family. Kayla explained:

I also have my people, my sounding board people, where if I need to talk through a work situation or talk through a social situation with an objective individual that I feel safe, like I feel like that conversation will be a safe space. I do have those resources because where I am now I don't have family near me, and so it can be very isolating.

Similarly, Jane described her construction of her community while living in the U.S. while attending college, stating, “I surrounded myself with a Caribbean social network. So I've always been in a Caribbean Students Association.” In this way, creating a family of choice is an important aspect of strengthening one’s resilience.

Producing change. Participants detailed the ways in which they act as agents of change to foster Black resilience. Through engaging in advocacy, Black individuals increase awareness while fostering the resilience of themselves and other Black peers. Jane described her use of advocacy to foster resilience, stating that she is intentional to “speak up and speak out. I refuse to be silent.” Kayla explained that following the murder of George Floyd, she opted to take a “more verbal stance” against racism. One way in which Kayla advocated for change was through participation in public health forums. She explained:

I have participated in public forums... I've been a part of the diversity, equity and inclusion committees... So I think I just, I got to the point when I turned 40 where I was just like, ‘You know what? I'm tired of it, not talking about it.’ Yeah... so I just I've been very vocal and present in those conversations a lot more recently.

Similarly, Felicia explained that she often advocates for Black communities within the organization in which she works. To advocate for herself after being ignored while shopping, Victoria wrote a letter to the company. In many cases, the advocacy described by participants took the form of holding others accountable. In other words, to advocate for change within their spheres of influence, participants explained that they hold others accountable by pointing out issues of racism and related race-based trauma. Victoria, for instance, stated that she “set[s] people straight a little bit more.” This was also illustrated in Jane reporting an individual who

treated her unfairly due to the intersectionality of her race and assumed socioeconomic status.

Similarly, Kayla explained:

So in the past I think it was always like, 'I don't want to always make it be about race,' and I wanted to avoid other people being uncomfortable. Now, I don't care if you're uncomfortable. Let's talk it through so that we can avoid that happening in the future.

Similarly, Victoria explained that when white peers engage in racism, contributing to her race-based trauma, she makes a point to “call [it] out.” Felicia referred to this as “challenging” her white peers. Josie, expressing similar sentiments, stated, “One way I've been coping with it is just by not letting people get away with dumb stuff or being problematic to me, just personally.” Participants explained that by taking part in specific actions, they develop resilience while sparking lasting change. Victoria described the urgency for change, stating, “We can't just sit back and let this happen when people have died, people have been beaten, you know to to to get these things for us.”

Through increasing the representation of Black individuals in various spaces, glass ceilings are shattered, and resilience is fostered. Kayla illustrated this, stating, “I made sure that in every forum where I have a presence or a voice, that diversity, equity, and inclusion are being addressed.” Victoria also stressed the importance of Black representation, explaining:

Like for example, Lebron James - he's in a position, and I'm so proud of what he's doing... He's in a position where he has some money, he's visible, and [for] a lot of people, he's a role model. I think a lot of people will follow him and do what he's saying, for instance. Okay, but another one is President, former President Obama. I actually got my vaccinations because he did. These people are in positions where they could help us. They could guide us. They could go out there and express their viewpoints and, you

know, and impact - empower us the way Trump empowered many white people, you know... John Legend's another one I've been proud of lately, you know. Yeah, so I feel with the, with the leadership with good leadership, we can actually try to get more involved in politics.

To this end, Jane explained that she and others feel empowered in Jamaica where “we are led by a government of our peers, and our judges are our peers, and our doctors.”

Liberation. Participating in actions that promote the liberation of Black communities allows individuals to feel empowered and hopeful, thereby fostering resilience, according to participants. Resisting racism was cited as a coping mechanism employed by Black individuals. Through empowering and educating others, Black individuals are able to cope with the difficulties of race-based trauma. Many participants echoed Victoria’s sentiments that “people need to be educated.” For example, Kayla detailed the importance of her teaching her daughter accurate Black history, stating, “I want her to just be aware that there's more to the story than what's printed here.” She went on to explain, “I do emphasize the value in appreciating a variety of different cultures.” Kiara explained that to cope with the injustices she witnesses within the educational system, she “runs towards the trouble,” referring to her commitment to helping and empowering students that white teachers label as “trouble.” Fostering values of social justice allows participants to cope with racialized experiences, while also educating others. This was illustrated in Jane’s disclosure that she intentionally “instilled in my children a sense of social justice as well as you have an obligation to be your brother's keeper.” Many participants explained that excelling in various aspects of their life is liberating and is also a form of coping.

Cultivating intergenerational resilience. To enable future generations of Black people to successfully cope with inevitable race-based trauma, Black individuals may cultivate

intergenerational resilience through the teaching of coping mechanisms and other resiliency factors. For instance, Kiara explained the importance of “equip[ing] [her] children” and ensuring that they “knew how to handle themselves” as it relates to the realities of living in a racialized society. Furthermore, participants explained that cultivating Black knowledge and Black pride fosters resiliency. To this end, multiple participants, such as Fred, explained the importance of highlighting examples of Black excellence to uplift and empower younger generations. Fred explained that he does this through mentorship of the athletes he coaches. Jane explained that she empowered her children by “making them realize that not because someone has anything more than you, that doesn't mean that they're better than you.” The honoring of Black ancestors was also cited by participants as a way of cultivating intergenerational resilience. Victoria described her gratitude for the efforts earlier generations made, stating, “I feel grateful. I really do feel grateful, because I see how easily we can lose these rights we have.” Felicia echoed these sentiments, stating, “I am super grateful for like my ancestors and, you know, for their sacrifices and everything.”

Summary

Information provided by the ten participants in this study illustrate the various experiences of race-based trauma endured by Black individuals in the U.S. and Jamaica. Six themes were developed to demonstrate the similarities in experiences across the two countries, and four themes were developed to represent differences in experiences of race-based trauma. In examining the role of class distinction on experiences of race-based trauma, five themes emerged. Nine themes were developed to present the ways in which experiences of race-based trauma influence Black individuals' societal interactions. The resiliency factors cultivated by Black individuals to cope with experiences of race-based trauma yielded six themes. These

results provide insight into the lived experiences of Black individuals in the U.S. and Jamaica as it relates to race-based traumas.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Chapter one presented an overview of the current study, including the problem statement, purpose of the study, and definitions of terms. In chapter two, a review of the current literature related to trauma, race-based trauma, intergenerational trauma, experiences of race-based trauma in the U.S. compared to Jamaica, and race-based trauma in the counseling field was provided. Chapter three contained an overview of the methodology of this study including the research design, participant recruitment, data collections, and data analysis. The results of the study, including quotes from participants, were detailed in chapter four. Chapter five will provide a summary of the study, implications of the research findings, limitations, and the relevance of the research findings.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to explore the experiences of race-based trauma in Black individuals in the U.S. and Jamaica using phenomenological methodology grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT). The aim of this study was to provide a cross-cultural examination of the experiences of racism when the individual is in the majority racial group in their nation, compared to when they are not within the majority racial group, thereby providing the counseling profession with a broader illustration of the Black experience. Furthermore, this study aimed to contribute to the understanding of race-based trauma and the imperative resiliency factors used to foster coping in Black individuals, specifically as this relates to the counseling professions.

The study was conducted using the phenomenological methodology and was guided by the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Data was obtained through individual semi-structured

interviews conducted using a video-conferencing platform. The ten participants in the study self-identify as Black and live or have previously lived in the U.S., Jamaica, or both. Data was analyzed using a modification of Moustakas's guidelines for phenomenological data analysis (Hays & Singh, 2012). This modification was made to better fit within the aims of CRT. Throughout this study, I participated in reflexive journaling and peer debriefing, as suggested in the literature (Hays & Singh, 2012; Wertz et al., 2011).

Research Questions One and Two

R1: What are the ways in which Black individuals experience race-based trauma?

R2: What are the similarities and differences in experiences of race-based trauma cross-culturally based on majority versus minoritized racial group status?

Major Findings

Themes that emerged related to research questions one and two include: *colonialism, hierarchy, maintaining white supremacy, systemic oppression, assumptions, impacts, white comfort, minimizing Black experiences, group membership* and *colorism*. Black participants from both, the U.S. and Jamaica, explained that the race-based trauma they currently endure are the remnants of colonialism and the resulting hierarchy based on race. In other words, white individuals continue to reside at the top of the social hierarchy, followed by individuals of both Black and white heritage, and with Black individuals being at the bottom of this hierarchy. This hierarchy and resulting mistreatment of Black individuals is reflected in CRT literature (Crenshaw, 2010; Salter & Haugen, 2017).

Colonialism and hierarchies. Participants of both cultures also described the role that the maintenance of white supremacy and related systemic oppression play in race-based trauma. Participants explained that white society oppresses Black individuals to maintain white society's

dominance. Participants from both, the U.S. and Jamaica, explained that this often occurs through systemic racism, such as inequitable healthcare, education, and career opportunities. These racist systems create barriers to Black success, thereby continuously traumatizing Black individuals. This assertion by participants is supported by CRT literature that explains that white supremacy is rooted in the foundation of post-colonial society and continues to oppress Black communities (Salter & Haugen, 2017). The oppression of Black individuals to preserve white supremacy is also reflected in CRT's tenet of interest convergence (Salter & Haugen, 2017). Interest convergence describes the phenomenon in which white individuals and systems do not aid in the fight for Black civil rights and equality unless it also somehow benefits white individuals (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Salter & Haugen, 2017).

Maintaining white supremacy and systemic oppression. Similarly, participants' descriptions of the ways in which white individuals value and cling to their white identity is supported by this tenet. CRT asserts that white identity affords white privilege and is therefore treated and regarded much like a prized possession (Salter & Haugen, 2017). Participants explained that this is reflected in white individuals minimizing Black accomplishments, undermining Black authority, use of microaggressions (intentional or unintentional), and using racial slurs and offensive language in an attempt to diminish Black integrity, dehumanize Black individuals, and continue to oppress Black people. Participants also described white individuals' lack of cultural and racial awareness and lack of action to support or further Black civil rights and equal treatment. This continuous oppression and dehumanization is traumatizing to Black individuals in that it inflicts psychological and emotional injury (Mosley et al., 2021). The traumatic impacts of these actions are also reflected in participants' reported fear. Participants

across cultures explained that they are often fearful of speaking out against racism, as they are afraid of the possible repercussions.

In discussing systemic racism and its traumatization of Black people, participants specified the impacts of race-based trauma inflicted by law enforcement. Participants detailed their encounters with law enforcement that included racial profiling, disrespect, and fear for their physical and emotional safety. Supported by the literature, participants explained that because of their own negative experiences with law enforcement, as well as the vicarious trauma they have endured witnessing the murders and brutality of Black people at the hands of police, they are hypervigilant and fearful of police (Smith & Robinson, 2019). Many also described their avoidance of police. To a similar end, participants described the unfair treatment of Black individuals within the legal system. They described the psychological and emotional injury caused by unfair bonds and incarceration of Black individuals. The traumatizing impacts of these inequities are supported by the literature, which explains that Black individuals are targets for mass incarceration, thereby leading to psychological, emotional, and sometimes physical trauma (Williams et al., 2021).

Assumptions. Participants detailed their experiences being negatively stereotyped and having other negative assumptions made about them. These assumptions, according to participants, typically consisted of preconceptions of Black individuals as lazy, unintelligent, threatening, and inferior. These experiences were described by participants as being demeaning, thereby contributing to emotional and psychological injury. This is supported by CRT literature that explains the detriments of white-washed narratives that contribute to these assumptions and stereotypes (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017b). More specifically, CRT literature explains that race is a social construct that has no biological or genetic bases (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017b).

Therefore, negative stereotypes pertaining to Black individuals continue to be pervasive and serve as a basis for white society's negative treatment of Black people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017b). This tenet of CRT is referred to as different racialization.

Impacts. Participants from both, the U.S. and Jamaica, detailed the impacts of race-based trauma. They explained that their continual immersion in racism sometimes results in internalized racism. This is supported by literature that details that white supremacy, and Black individuals' constant exposure to it, often results in Black individuals' internalization of these white-washed narratives and negative stereotypes (Tallent et al., 2021). Participants also reported intergenerational impacts of race-based trauma. They explained that because of their experiences of race-based trauma, they often experience increased fear and worry for their children and grandchildren. This worry informs their parenting and attempts to prepare their children for experiences of racism and related race-based trauma. Literature explains that Black parents attempt to prepare their children for experiences of race-based trauma as a healing and resiliency strategy (Condon et al., 2021).

Participants cited a lack of belonging as another impact of race-based trauma. Participants of both cultures explained that they feel as though they do not belong in predominantly white spaces. This was reflected in reports of being treated differently than white peers and questioning their belongingness within the organizations in which they work. Literature supports this experience, as CRT research explains that racism is commonplace and therefore impacts Black individuals' sense of belonging (Harris, 2012; Park et al., 2021; Salter & Haugen, 2017).

Because of their frequent experiences of race-based trauma, participants explained that their fears and perceptions of being unsafe are exacerbated. Participants described having a "fear

of white people” as well as being fearful of all police. These feelings of fear are also accompanied by feelings of sadness, anger, frustration, intimidation, and feeling discouraged, stagnant, and helpless. These emotional responses reported by participants are supported by trauma literature that explains that instances of race-based trauma often result in dissociation, anxiety, and depressed moods (Carter et al., 2019). Furthermore, counseling and trauma literature highlight the increased rates of depression and psychological distress among Black individuals due to the race-based traumas they endure (Hemmings & Evans, 2017).

Colorism. While the research demonstrates that colorism is prevalent in both the U.S. and Jamaica, only participants who live or have previously lived in Jamaica disclosed instances of this phenomenon (Reece, 2019). Jamaican participants detailed the prevalence of colorism in Jamaican society. They explained that dating back to colonialism, Black individuals with lighter skin tones were favored due to their proximity to whiteness. Participants explained how this favoritism persists within systems, allowing individuals with lighter skin tones to receive educational, health care, and career advantages. Furthermore, individuals with lighter complexions are favored socially, receiving less discrimination than their darker complexioned counterparts. These experiences of colorism are supported by the literature that explains that colorism began in colonialism, with those of Afro-European heritage being treated favorably and has persisted due to society favoring individuals with closer proximity to whiteness (Bell, 2011).

Group membership. Participants who live or have lived in Jamaica also described the ways in which majority ethnic group membership versus minority ethnic group membership shapes their experiences of race-based trauma. This was illustrated more acutely by the participants who have lived in both the U.S. and Jamaica. Those participants explained that the transition from living in a predominantly Black society to living in a predominantly white society

was a difficult adjustment. One difference described by participants was the way in which they are perceived in each society. They explained that in Jamaica, they are not perceived as a threat due to their skin tone, while in the U.S., their Blackness was perceived as a threat by white individuals. Furthermore, the increased representation of Black individuals in various spaces also allowed individuals to feel less fearful in Jamaica compared to the fear of lack of belonging they reported experiencing in the U.S. Participants explained that residing in a society in which you are a member of the majority ethnic group enhances one's self-concept, sense of belonging, and confidence. These differences are illustrated in CRT literature's explanations of the negative impacts of white-washed narratives, white supremacy, and the assumed "naturalness" of whiteness on Black individuals (Matias, 2020; Salter & Haugen, 2017).

White comfort and the minimization of Black experiences. The themes *white comfort* and *minimizing Black experiences* were only apparent in the disclosures made by participants living in the U.S. They explained that white comfort is prioritized in American society, resulting in Black individuals feeling as though they are required to accommodate white individuals and behave in ways that do not threaten the comfort of white society. They described the ways in which they self-censor their language and appearance in order to appease white society. These experiences described by participants are supported by the literature (Spikes, 2020). Literature of Black assimilation explains that Black individuals feel pressured to assimilate to Eurocentric standards because of how deeply white supremacy is interwoven into American society (Spikes, 2020). Therefore, in order to be regarded more positively, Black individuals feel required to increase their proximity to whiteness.

Participants from the U.S. also explained that due to the prevalence of racism, their experiences are often discounted and minimized by their white counterparts. American

participants explained that they often must prove that their race-based traumas occurred or prove the seriousness of said experiences. Furthermore, they described society's tendency to quickly "forget" communal and vicarious traumas experienced by Black communities. Moreover, white individuals often minimize offenses of race-based trauma that they inflict on Black individuals. This often takes the form of gaslighting, according to participants. In addition to minimizing Black trauma, white individuals also minimize the accomplishments of Black individuals, attributing their successes to luck.

The literature supports these experiences disclosed by participants. Social science literature explains that racial gaslighting is a common occurrence in America due to the deep interwovenness of white supremacy in our society (Davis & Ernst, 2017). More specifically, white supremacy is normalized and those who speak out against it are pathologized (Davis & Ernst, 2017). CRT's tenet of the normalization and commonplaceness of white supremacy and racism also supports the experiences described by participants (Harris, 2012; Lawrence, 1987; Salter & Haugen, 2017).

Research Question Three

R3: What role do class distinctions play in experiences of race-based trauma?

Major Findings

Regarding the role of class distinctions in Black individuals' experiences of race-based trauma, five themes emerged: *colonialism*, *access*, *injustice through capitalism*, *assumptions regarding one's SES*, and *intersectionality*. These themes were prevalent for participants from both the U.S. and Jamaica.

Colonialism. Participants across cultures cited colonialism as the key contributing factor to class distinction's impact on race-based trauma. They explained that classism is a direct result

of colonialism, as white individuals enslaved Black people and denied them the right to own property. After slavery ended, in both the U.S. and Jamaica, laws and systemic racism made the ownership of property exceedingly difficult for Black individuals. Jamaican participants explained that non-Black indentured servants were provided opportunities to own land more frequently and at an earlier point in history than Black individuals. In the U.S. Jim Crow laws and other forms of systemic oppression hindered Black ownership of land and property, as described by participants. Due to the inequities in land and resource ownership among Black individuals, they often formed their own communities with scarce resources, according to participants. Participants explained that historically and presently, Black workers are undervalued. These assertions reflect CRT's tenet of intersectionality (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991). CRT literature explains that possessing multiple oppressed identities, in this case lower socioeconomic class and being Black, results in greater minoritization and oppression (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Teranishi & Pazich, 2013).

Access and intersectionality. Participants explained that Black individuals' socioeconomic class distinction intersects with their Blackness, thereby limiting their access to resources and opportunities. This is illustrated, according to participants, in the Eurocentric and colonial "bootstrap fallacy." Participants explained that this fallacy is evidence of white society's failure to recognize and acknowledge the economic constraints and other factors that may inhibit individuals' abilities to attain certain goals. Participants also described the ways in which access to resources is a result of systemic racism. Furthermore, Black individuals' lack of access to financial literacy education was cited by participants as a contributor to Black communities' limited access to other resources and opportunities. As a result, participants explained, Black individuals are deprived of resources and are therefore exposed to more race-based trauma. This

is reflected in CRT's tenet of intersectionality which demonstrates that lower socioeconomic status coupled with one's Blackness puts them at higher risk of race-based trauma (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Teranishi & Pazich, 2013).

Injustice through capitalism. Participants explained that Black individuals are oppressed by capitalism, describing capitalism as “modern day slavery.” They explained that capitalism is a form of systemic oppression in which the monetary value placed on Black labor often is not enough to meet one's basic needs. Participants described this exploitation as being traumatic in that it contributes to experiences of poverty. Capitalism thereby fosters Black individuals' feelings of being undervalued, lesser than their white counterparts, and discouraged. Literature supports these assertions, stating that poverty is a social inequality that negatively impacts individuals' mental health (Wahlbeck et al., 2017). Existing literature also illuminates the relationship between poverty and race-based trauma (Garo et al., 2018). In other words, the literature suggests that income inequities through capitalism creates conditions in which Black individuals are at greater risk of race-based trauma (Garo et al., 2018).

Assumptions regarding one's SES. A prevalent form of race-based trauma resulting from class distinctions was negative stereotyping and assumptions made regarding Black individuals' presumed socioeconomic status (SES). Many participants reported that they have received subpar service, have been ignored, or were advised to seek more “economical” options because of the lower SES bracket that white individuals assume Black individuals reside in. Furthermore, participants explained that white individuals often assume that they are of low SES and resultantly treat them with a lack of respect or dignity. Stereotypes, including the stereotype that Black individuals receive public assistance such as “food stamps,” is a common form of race-based trauma endured by Black individuals. Because white individuals assume that Black

people are of lower SES, they also stereotype Black people as thieves. This was illustrated in many participants' disclosures of having been followed around stores. Participants explained that these forms of race-based trauma result in feelings of fear and heightens their concerns and anxiety regarding how they are perceived by their white counterparts. This concern regarding white individuals' perceptions fuels Black individuals' fears of how white individuals will react to them. The literature explains that these exacerbated fears and anxiety are a common response to race-based trauma (Carter et al., 2019).

Research Question Four

R4: How does the experience of race-based trauma influence how Black individuals interact with society?

Major Findings

Black individuals' experiences of race-based trauma influence their interactions with society in a number of ways, according to participants. Based on information provided by participants, the following nine themes regarding the influence of race-based trauma on societal interactions emerged: *acceptance of racism as the norm; avoidant behaviors; exacerbation of fears; distrust; hypervigilance; absence of belongingness; seeking acceptance; emotional labor; and self-perceptions.*

Acceptance of racism as the norm. Participants explained that as a result of the prevalence of racism, they expect to endure experiences of race-based trauma. They described racism as a routine aspect of life for Black individuals. This normalization and acceptance of racism as routine is supported by CRT literature. One of the primary tenets of CRT asserts that racism is deeply embedded in the foundations of post-colonial societies, making racism and white supremacy a commonplace aspect of life (Albold & & Miller-Dyce, 2016; Salter &

Haugen, 2017). The counter-stories presented by participants illustrate CRT's assertion that racism and discrimination are not occasional parts of life but are persistent parts of life for everyone. While white individuals benefit from its existence, Black individuals are negatively impacted and oppressed by racism (Brown & Jackson, 2013; McCoy, 2018).

Exacerbation of fears and avoidant behaviors. Participants explained that they fear for their emotional, psychological, and physical safety as a result of their experiences of race-based trauma. They described that these fears have influenced how they interact with society and with their children. Many participants, for example, explained that they now censor their children's self-expression through physical appearance due to their fears of their children being targeted. Participants also explained that they also fear for their civil rights due to systemic oppression.

These fears lead participants to engage in avoidant behaviors as a protective factor. They explained that this includes expending emotional labor to intentionally avoid interactions, places and environments in which they may be confronted with additional experiences of race-based trauma. Participants explained that due to their fears of how white individuals may react to or treat them, they often avoid predominantly white spaces. Participants also described distancing themselves from white individuals as a form of self-protection. Self-censorship was described as another way of avoiding additional experiences of race-based trauma. Black individuals may change their behaviors, dress, or language used to preserve white individuals' sense of safety, thereby lessening their perceived chances of being targeted through race-based trauma. In other words, Black individuals may attempt to decrease their chances of being targets of race-based trauma by assimilating to Eurocentric norms.

Additional avoidant behaviors that serve as protective factors include attempting to predict the actions and reactions of white counterparts. In doing so, Black individuals attempt to

take preemptive measures to avoid race-based trauma inflicted by white individuals. This may include not carrying a purse while shopping or being mindful of the clothing or hairstyle they wear. While Black individuals are aware that these preemptive measures may be futile, they continue to engage in them. Literature further illustrates these behaviors, stating that because of the prevalence of white supremacy in post-colonial society, Black individuals feel as though they must assimilate to white expectations to preserve their mental, physical, or emotional wellbeing (Spikes, 2020).

Distrust and hypervigilance. As described by participants, Black individuals may distrust systems, specifically police and the legal system, and may be wary of white individuals (Bajaj & Stanford, 2021; Calvert et al., 2020; Liberman, 2021). This is a result of the race-based trauma they have endured at the hands of white supremacy. This distrust and wariness are demonstrated when Black individuals question the authenticity of positive interactions they have with white counterparts. Similarly, questioning whether they, a Black person, is wanted or welcomed in predominantly white spaces is yet another illustration of this wariness. Participants described the prevalence of white supremacy in policing and the legal system. Because of this, Black individuals described avoiding spaces in which police may be present. They also explained that they must be especially mindful of their tone and volume due to fear for their physical safety. Mass incarceration is also viewed as a tool of oppression, further lessening Black individuals' trust of the legal system (Fornili, 2018). Similarly, inequities and mistreatment of Black individuals by healthcare professionals leads to distrust in and decreased use of services provided by healthcare professionals (Bajaj & Stanford, 2021). Black individuals may also be wary of the educational system due to inequities in educational resources and the prevalence of white-washed narratives (Wei et al., 2018).

Related to the aforementioned distrust and wariness, Black individuals may be hypervigilant as a result of race-based traumas. Participants explained that Black individuals may be hypervigilant in the presence of white individuals due to fears for their emotional and physical safety. Literature supports participants' experiences of distrusting individuals and systems following race-based trauma, as trauma literature asserts that one's ability to trust is often negatively impacted by experiences of trauma (Bell et al., 2019).

Absence of belongingness and seeking acceptance. The themes *absence of belongingness* and *seeking acceptance* illustrate Black individuals' experiences as a result of race-based trauma. Participants explained that they feel as though they are unwanted and unwelcome in predominantly white spaces. Darker complexioned Jamaican participants explained that they also feel as though they do not belong in spaces that are composed of predominantly lighter complexioned individuals. Due to this lack of belongingness, Black individuals may feel compelled to compartmentalize aspects of their life. In other words, they may feel as though they must keep the Black individuals in their lives away from the white individuals in their lives.

Due to the lack of belonging experienced by Black individuals, they may engage in acceptance-seeking behaviors. These behaviors include code-switching, self-censorship, overcompensation, and seeking spaces in which they feel accepted. Code-switching is a form of linguistic assimilation that allows Black individuals to better homogenize in white society (Myers, 2020). Participants described this form of acceptance-seeking as "wearing a mask." Similarly, Black individuals may self-censor to better assimilate into white society. This includes intentionally speaking, dressing, or otherwise presenting in a manner that participants found

more palatable for white individuals. Furthermore, overcompensation was cited by participants as a way of seeking acceptance. Participants explained that to gain respect in post-colonial society and to decrease the likelihood of enduring further race-based traumas, Black individuals may attempt to be the best at all that they do. This is reflected in the attainment of terminal degrees for Black adults and being a “teacher’s pet” for Black children. Furthermore, seeking predominantly Black spaces provides a sense of safety, according to participants. This is illustrated in participants’ attempts to create Black communities and develop friend groups of individuals with similar cultural backgrounds. Literature supports these assertions that assimilation into white society is characteristic of post-colonial societies (Dar, 2019). Furthermore, literature describes the importance of creating community and social support to alleviate the effects of race-based trauma in Black individuals (Odafe et al., 2017).

Emotional labor. The literature defines emotional labor as the process that requires an individual to suppress or express feelings to maintain pleasant emotions and states of mind in others (Hochschild, 1983). Participants explained that they expend uncompensated emotional labor when they hold white counterparts accountable for the race-based traumas that they inflict upon Black individuals, as well as when Black individuals educate others regarding their lived experiences, racism, and/or advocacy. Participants described taking part in these conversations and actions as being “a lot.” Past literature explains that Black individuals often feel pressured to disguise their feelings of fatigue or irritation in the face of racism and race-based trauma in order to maintain white individuals’ feelings of comfort and safety (Williams et al., 2019). In doing Black individuals expend emotional labor, according to the literature (Williams et al., 2019).

Self-perceptions. Participants described experiencing feelings of doubt, a diminished self-image, and enhanced self-reflection as a result of societal interactions involving race-based

trauma. Black individuals may experience the internalization of racist messages received through race-based traumas, leading to these undesired emotional responses, as described by participants. Participants described these experiences as making them question themselves, suggesting decreases in self-assuredness following race-based traumatic experiences. Conversely, participants also explained that instances of race-based trauma have encouraged them to reflect on their own implicit biases to ensure that they do not inflict the pain they experience onto others. The literature explains that internalized racism and one's beliefs about their racial identity influence psychological well-being in Black individuals (Willis et al., 2021). The literature, therefore, supports the experiences disclosed by participants as it relates to their self-perceptions and related emotions being negatively impacted by race-based trauma (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019; Philips, 2020; Sar & Ozturk, 2006; Willis et al., 2021).

Research Question Five

R5: What resiliency factors are used by Black individuals to aid in coping with experiences of race-based trauma?

Major Findings

Black individuals employ a plethora of coping mechanisms to foster their resilience in the wake of race-based trauma. Data analysis yielded the following six themes related to the resiliency factors used by Black individuals to cope with race-based trauma: *rejection of pain, personal evolution, community, producing change, liberation, and cultivating intergenerational resilience.*

Rejection of pain. Participants explained that Black individuals may engage in activities to numb, pull away, or reject the pain of race-based trauma. Based on participant disclosures, Black individuals may turn to social media and television to numb the pain of race-based trauma.

Participants also explained that they, and presumably other Black individuals, may attempt to make-meaning of their experiences of race-based trauma. For example, participants explained that they try to understand why white individuals perpetuate and inflict race-based trauma onto Black individuals. In rejecting the pain of race-based trauma, Black individuals may attempt to ignore race-based traumatic experiences, as described by participants. Literature asserts that Black individuals often engage in reflection and refocusing to foster resilience, supporting the experiences of participants (Teti et al., 2011). Moreover, research supports participants' disclosures that they attempt to ignore experiences of race-based trauma (Mushonga et al., 2021).

Personal evolution. Following incidents of race-based trauma, participants explained that they sometimes experience a form of personal evolution in the form of increased conscientiousness. Through their experiences of race-based trauma, participants explained that their awareness of the prevalence of racism increased. Participants also explained that engagement in self-care is beneficial in fostering the resilience of Black individuals following race-based trauma. This self-care may include mindfulness practices, socialization, reading, and engaging in the arts. Many participants explained that through engaging in forms of creativity, Black individuals foster resiliency while safely processing race-based traumatic experiences. These forms of self-care are supported by the literature that asserts that socialization is a beneficial factor in developing post-traumatic resilience (Bauer et al., 2021; Brown, 2008). Literature supports the use of self-care to foster resilience in those enduring vicarious trauma through their work (Glennon et al., 2019). It can therefore be concluded that self-care would be beneficial in fostering the resilience for individuals experiencing race-based vicarious trauma. Participants also explained that setting boundaries is important in facilitating resilience. They described the importance of Black individuals allowing themselves space away from white

individuals to facilitate post-traumatic growth. This aligns with literature that suggests that individuals may find solitude beneficial in cultivating resilience following trauma (Mushonga et al., 2020).

Community. Black individuals value community in fostering resilience, according to participants. They explained that being surrounded by individuals with similar lived experiences is beneficial in fostering a sense of community, which in turn fosters resilience. Participants stressed the importance of having individuals with whom they can discuss their experiences of race-based trauma. Literature asserts that community is an important source of resilience for Black individuals, especially following traumatic experiences (Brown, 2008; Gómez et al., 2020; Mosley et al., 2021).

Producing change. Cultivating change was cited by participants as a beneficial mechanism for fostering Black resilience following race-based traumatic experiences. Participants explained that engaging in advocacy efforts increases awareness while simultaneously fostering resilience. Black individuals may also produce change through self-advocacy in which they “set people straight” when instances of race-based trauma are committed against them, according to participants. Through the knowledge that they are making a beneficial, lasting impact in Black communities, participants’ resilience is enhanced. Similarly, participants explained that representation of Black individuals in more spaces and spheres of influence also promotes change, thereby increasing resilience in Black individuals. Current literature supports this, stating that helping others is an important component in cultivating resilience (Crann & Barata, 2019). While this literature is not specific to race-based trauma, it can be concluded that these resilience mechanisms would hold true regarding race-based trauma, as well.

Liberation and cultivating intergenerational resilience. Participation in the promotion of Black liberation was cited by participants as cultivating empowerment, hope, and resilience. Participants explained that by empowering and educating others, Black individuals are better able to cope with the difficulties of race-based trauma. Participants explained that educating others, including their own children, about social justice while empowering them to rise above their race-based trauma, allows their own resilience to increase and strengthen. Furthermore, excelling in various areas within one's life was also cited as being liberating and fostering resilience through increased hopefulness. Black individuals may work to instill resiliency factors in later generations of Black people, according to participants. They explained that Black individuals often teach coping mechanisms and cultivate Black knowledge and pride in their children and other individuals of following generations. Literature explains that advocacy and action foster Black liberation, and in turn, Black resilience (McBride, 2019). Furthermore, participants' descriptions of liberation and empowerment fostering resilience is supported by research that delineates the relationship between liberation and resilience (Walsh, 2018).

Implications

Education

Results of the current study suggest considerable implications for the counseling professions. Participants explained that race-based trauma often occurs through microaggressions. Therefore, counselors, counselor educators, and counseling supervisors may unintentionally inflict race-based trauma onto those they serve, as supported by counseling literature (Arredondo et al., 2020). Therefore, further training in multicultural humility, awareness, and sensitivity is needed within counselor education programs (Gonzalez-Voller et al., 2020). This need is supported by past research that highlights the tendency of counseling

professionals to unintentionally perpetuate racism and thereby race-based trauma (Arredondo et al., 2020). Furthermore, multicultural and racial sensitivity should be infused into all counseling courses to ensure that future counselors do not unintentionally inflict race-based trauma onto clients. This recommendation is also supported by current literature (Chang & Rabess, 2020).

Similarly, CRT speaks to the whitewashed narratives perpetuated in our society (Salter & Haugen, 2017). Participants, too, spoke to these narratives. Therefore, to decrease the perpetuation of whitewashed narratives within counselor education, program administrators and instructors may consider deviating from the use of textbooks to teach counseling content, as these books may contain outdated information and often center the works of white counselors and researchers. For example, career counseling courses should be intentional in incorporating content related to trauma-informed career counseling. More specifically, this content should include the impacts of race-based trauma on accessing careers, economic mobility, survival, and intersectionality. Counseling courses related to diagnosis should explore the ways in which trauma is identified within our profession and should critically examine the current diagnosis criteria for PTSD in the DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Regarding counseling theories courses, it may be beneficial for instructors to encourage students to critically examine current theories through a CRT lens. Furthermore, the development of a counseling theory based on CRT should be further explored. Instructors of counseling theories courses should also be mindful of the whiteness of the theorists that are often presented in these courses and the ways in which this perpetuates whitewashed narratives within our field (Arredondo, 2020). Lastly, this study has implications for those counselor educators teaching counseling skills and techniques courses. Within these courses, educators should be intentional in examining and presenting the ways in which Black clients may respond to white counselors,

based on the ways in which participants in this study reported interacting with white society. Furthermore, results of this study regarding belongingness and acceptance-seeking should be presented to students to enhance their understandings of the behaviors Black clients may engage in, as well as to inform the ways in which counselors communicate acceptance of their Black clients.

Furthermore, participants expressed having had to expend emotional labor when educating others about their experiences of race-based trauma. Therefore, institutions should be mindful and provide additional support for Black faculty members tasked with teaching multiculturalism and related courses, as supported by the literature (Gorski & Parekh, 2020). Additionally, white faculty members should be provided sufficient continuing education to decrease their discomfort in facilitating class discussions surrounding race and to ensure that they do not unintentionally cause Black students to perform undue emotional labor (Smith et al., 2017). These recommendations are supported by literature that highlights the emotional labor required and hostility experienced from students faced by Black instructors who teach multicultural courses (Dorn-Medeiros et al., 2019; Gorski & Parekh, 2020). The literature also illuminates the discomfort experienced by white counselor educators when teaching multicultural courses (Dorn-Medeiros et al., 2019). Therefore, continuing education is necessary to minimize these effects.

Participants in this study were from a plethora of backgrounds and had differing intersecting identities. This illustrates the necessity of multicultural counselor education through an intersectionality perspective that considers the ways in which possessing multiple oppressed identities contributes to greater degrees of oppression. The existing literature explains the benefits of teaching multicultural counseling through a framework that incorporates experiences

of power, privilege, oppression, and intersectionality (Pebdani, 2019). Furthermore, to ensure that counseling students and individuals within the counseling professions remain abreast of the ever-changing forms of race-based trauma facing Black individuals, they must remain lifetime learners. This too, is consistent with current literature in counselor education (Pebdani, 2019). To ensure that race-based trauma is taught consistently and effectively within master's and doctoral counseling programs, it is imperative that accrediting bodies, including the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) specifically require that this form of trauma be addressed in counseling courses.

Supervision is an important aspect of counseling education (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Therefore, it is important that supervisors are adequately prepared to address race-based trauma in an aware, humble, and sensitive manner. Because of the varying experiences across the Black diaspora, it is important that supervisors received ongoing education regarding the various experiences of race-based trauma. Furthermore, to ensure that supervisees are prepared to broach race and race-based trauma with clients as well as in supervision, it is important that supervisors are able to model these behaviors (King & Jones, 2018). Counselor education and supervision literature purport that broaching racial differences within the supervision relationship not only strengthen the supervisory alliance, but also fosters supervisor and supervisee growth and development (King & Jones, 2018). Furthermore, broaching race enhances cultural responsiveness, thereby improving client care (King & Jones, 2018).

Representation.

To this end, in order to more closely adhere to the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, it is important that members of the counseling profession are aware of the experiences of Black individuals (Harnett, 2020; Ratts et al., 2016). In order to better

understand these lived experiences, the counter-stories of Black individuals must be elevated. To do this, increased representation of Black individuals is needed in multiple contexts. Counseling students may benefit from learning more about the counterstories of Black individuals. Similarly, having more in-depth insight into the lived experiences of Black individuals may aid counselors in further developing their multicultural sensitivity and awareness.

As illustrated in participants' disclosures and past literature, the presence of other Black individuals is beneficial in creating environments that feel safer for Black individuals through enhancing their sense of belongingness (Odafe et al., 2017). Therefore, the counseling field should work towards increasing the recruitment and retention of Black licensed professional counselors (LPCs). To this end, the counseling field lacks Black supervisors and counselor educators (Branco & Bayne, 2020). In increasing the representation of Black individuals within the profession, specifically in supervision and educational roles, a safer and more accepting environment for counseling students is fostered.

Appreciation for Diverse Experience

It is imperative that licensed professional counselors (LPC) be mindful of the varying experiences of Black individuals. For instance, LPCs should be aware that some Black individuals may experience internalized racism, while others may not. Furthermore, the Black experience is a varied one, which often is not reflected in multicultural counseling courses (Dorn-Medeiros et al., 2019). As evidenced by existing literature, it is important that LPCs familiarize themselves with the various lived experiences of Black individuals to ensure that they do not make assumptions regarding the experiences of Black clients based on stereotypes (Billingsley & Corey, 2018). As existing literature states, counselors' considerations of racial factors as they impact the experiences of clients is a key determinant in counseling outcomes,

evidencing the importance of counselors' abilities to broach racial issues and race-based traumas in an informed, sensitive, and supportive manner (Day-Vines et al., 2018).

Counseling for Counselors

Special considerations should also be taken into account on the part of Black LPCs. As demonstrated in this study, microaggressions as well as vicarious trauma can negatively impact mental health. The literature illuminates that Black counselors received limited preparation regarding experiences of microaggressions from white clients (Branco & Bayne, 2020). Therefore, it may be beneficial for Black counselors to engage in personal counseling. This will allow a space for them to process instances of microaggressions inflicted by white clients or coworkers. Further, by engaging in personal counseling, Black LPCs can process instances of vicarious trauma that they may experience when aiding their Black clients in processing race-based trauma.

Similarly, white counselors may benefit from personal counseling. Literature demonstrates that white counselors may perpetuate racism intentionally or unintentionally through stereotyping (Arredondo et al., 2020; Billingsley & Corey, 2018). Through personal counseling, white counselors can identify, acknowledge, and process their own racial biases. By receiving counseling services, white counselors decrease the likelihood of them inflicting race-based trauma on their clients or co-workers. Furthermore, white counselors can engage in continuing education, formal or informal, to increase their sensitivities regarding race-based trauma. In doing so, they may improve their abilities to advocate for their clients and peers. To this end, by enhancing their awareness of and sensitivity to race-based trauma, white counselors can create a safer environment for their clients and co-workers.

Additionally, my experiences throughout the completion of this study may inform the ways in which Black counselors, counseling students, and researchers engage in self-care. Throughout the course of this research, my own race-based trauma was often triggered by participant disclosures. I found it beneficial to process this continued vicarious race-based trauma with my own counselor. This evidences the benefits of personal counseling for Black counseling professionals and students. Furthermore, throughout the course of this research, I had regularly scheduled peer debriefing meetings with a trusted peer. This illustrates the benefits of peer support for Black counseling professionals and students. Therefore, Black counselors and researchers may benefit from the development of peer support networks. Similarly, counselor educators, administrators, and supervisors should consider the ways in which they can assist their Black students and supervisees in the development of peer support networks. Lastly, I engaged in increased self-care via journaling, pleasant activities, and engagement in creative artworks during the completion of this study. Therefore, these self-care strategies should be encouraged for Black students, counselors, educators, and supervisors.

Recognition of Race-Based Trauma

To enhance counseling professionals' ability to recognize and treat race-based trauma, a formal set of diagnosis criteria within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-fifth Edition (DSM-5) may prove beneficial (Saleem et al., 2020). Literature explains that due to the narrow scope of the DSM-5 diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), clinicians may overlook and under-diagnose race-based trauma (Saleem et al., 2020). Instead, Black clients are often over-diagnosed with other mental health diagnoses, such as schizophrenia and other highly stigmatized mental health diagnoses (Phillips, 2020). Formal diagnoses for race-based

trauma may increase counselors' awareness of its prevalence. Furthermore, diagnosis of Black clients may be more accurate, lessening the overdiagnosis of other mental health conditions.

Resiliency Factors

Findings regarding the various resiliency factors and mechanisms employed by Black individuals substantiates existing literature (Mushonga et al., 2021). As participants explained the importance of a social support network composed of other Black individuals, counselors should assist Black clients in creating and maintaining social support networks. Furthermore, counselor educators and faculty within counseling programs should assist Black students in developing a community of Black supporters. Creativity and engagement in the arts was also identified as a resilience factor by participants. Therefore, counselors may wish to encourage Black clients to partake in creative activities to facilitate coping with race-based trauma. Counselors may also consider incorporating art-based activities into the counseling process to facilitate coping and resilience.

As participants stressed the benefits of advocacy and action, counseling programs should aid students and faculty in engaging in advocacy efforts for Black communities. Similarly, based on findings of this study, counseling professionals should also aid clients, students, and supervisees in fostering intergenerational resiliency mechanisms. Furthermore, as liberation through success and Black knowledge and pride was identified by participants as fostering resilience, counselors, supervisors, and educators should be intentional in fostering Black individuals' success, pride, and the attainment of knowledge to facilitate liberation.

As participants detailed the differing experiences of race-based trauma in Jamaica compared to the U.S., members of the counseling professionals should be increasingly mindful of these differences. Counselors working with Black clients who have recently immigrated to the

U.S. from predominantly Black societies should be mindful of the adjustments these clients may undergo. Similarly, counselor educators and supervisors working with students from predominantly Black societies should also be sensitive to the adjustments and differences in which these clients may experience race-based trauma, as detailed by participants.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Although strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of this study and to provide an accurate account of participants' experiences, some limitations were identified. Although the researcher participated in reflexive journaling and debriefing, it is impossible to completely bracket one's biases when they are a member of the population being studied. When I was aware that I was having a reaction to a disclosure from a participant, I was intentional not speaking to allow the conversation to proceed organically and to ensure that I did not ask leading questions. Researchers wishing to expand on this research may consider using other phenomenological methodologies, such as autoethnography and grounded theory to provide a different perspective that includes the researcher's experiences. Furthermore, as a Black, female-identifying individual possessing educational privilege, my interpretation of participant disclosures in data analysis may differ from the interpretations of a research of differing identities. To minimize the impact of this, however, member checking was employed.

The findings presented in this study are not widely generalizable, as experiences of Black individuals vary across the Black diaspora. Future research may wish to explore the experiences of a larger number of individuals. Furthermore, this study only explored the experiences of Black individuals having resided in two countries. Future research may consider exploring the experiences of individuals from other nations, as context may impact experiences of race-based trauma. Furthermore, all data collected was self-report. Therefore, social desirability should be

considered as a factor potentially influencing participant disclosures. Because the researcher knew some of the participants in various capacities (none were current or past clients, supervisees, or students) prior to the study, social desirability may have been more prevalent. Therefore, future research may wish to limit participants to those that are unfamiliar with the researcher.

Conclusion

This study explored the lived experiences of Black individuals in the U.S. and Jamaica as it relates to race-based trauma. Findings of this study illustrate the various ways in which Black individuals experience race-based trauma. Substantiating existing literature, the findings of this study demonstrate the ways in which the perpetuation of racism and white supremacy, including within the counseling profession, may be traumatizing for Black individuals (Arredondo et al., 2020; Delapp & Williams, 2015; Ogbu, 2004). This traumatization is often overlooked within the counseling professions, contributing to the overdiagnosis of Black individuals with highly stigmatized mental health diagnoses (Harnett, 2020; Phillips, 2020; Ratts et al., 2016). In keeping with the spirit of CRT research, this study elevates the voices of Black individuals to illuminate the varied experiences across the Black diaspora. Furthermore, specialized resilience factors that elevate Black individuals' ability to cope with experiences of race-based trauma were presented, supported by existing literature (Mushonga et al., 2021).

This study demonstrates the need for increased attention to race-based trauma within the various counseling professions. Findings suggest that the counter-stories of Black individuals should be infused into counselor education multiculturalism courses to provide counselors in training with important knowledge pertaining to the experiences of Black individuals. Furthermore, continuing education is necessary to increase the racial awareness and sensitivity of

LPCs and supervisors. To increase feelings of safety and comfort for Black clients and counseling students, increased representation of Black individuals is needed within all the counseling professions. Based on the findings of this study, it is also suggested that counselors receive personal counseling to process vicarious trauma and work through their own unconscious and conscious biases. It is also important, based on research findings, that the DSM-V recognizes race-based trauma as a mental health diagnosis. Lastly, the resiliency factors identified in this study should also be fostered by counselors to aid clients in coping with experiences of race-based trauma.

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PUBLICATIONS

Peer Reviewed Publications

Augustine, B. R., Galscoe, G., & Guest, J. (2020). Racial battle fatigue among counselor education and supervision students. Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Fall 2020 Newsletter.

Gantt, A., **Augustine, B. R.**, & Pearce, J. (2020). Broaching spirituality with survivors of intimate partner violence. Interaction: The Newsletter of the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling.

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