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Ionie Banner Date

“Like, Share, Relive”
Exploring the effects of viewing racial violence on social media for young Black adults

By

Ionie Virginia Banner
Master of Public Health

Behavioral, Social, and Health Educational Sciences

_____
Elizabeth Walker, Ph.D., MPH
Committee Chair

_____
Sandra Goulding, Ph.D., MA, MPH
Committee Member

_____
Don Operario, PhD
Department Chair

“Like, Share, Relive”: Exploring the mental health effects of viewing racial violence on social media for young Black adults

By

Ionie V. Banner, A.B., University of Chicago, 2021

Thesis Committee Chair: Elizabeth Walker, Ph.D., MPH

An abstract of
A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Rollins School of Public Health of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Public Health
in the Behavioral, Social, and Health Educational Sciences Department
2023

Abstract

"Like, Share, Relive": Exploring the mental health effects of viewing racial violence on social media for young Black adults

By Ionie Banner

Background. Social media has become a vital tool to spread awareness about racial violence toward Black people. However, studies have demonstrated the negative mental health effects exposure to police brutality has on the Black community, highlighting that Black people experience 0.14 more poor mental health days per police killing. Because of this, there is growing concern regarding the long-term impact of exposure to racial violence through social media.

Methodology. In-depth interviews with Black-identifying participants aged 18-29 in Atlanta, GA were conducted. Participants discussed how exposure to racial violence through social media impacted their social media use, mental health, and life outlook. Participants also discussed how their personal experiences altered the effects of exposure.

Results. 70% of participants (N=10) were exposed to racial violence 1-2 times a week on social media. Participants reported feeling desensitized, destabilized, terrified, and hopeless after viewing racial violence on social media. Participants' shared identity with victims increased the videos' impact on their mental health, increasing their concern that a negative encounter with police or civilians would make them the subject of another viral video. These effects led to decreased utilization of social media sites.

Conclusion. Results aligned with and built on current literature, showing the negative mental health effects of being exposed to racial violence on social media. This study calls for more research on the impact of vicarious racial trauma through social media and interventions to mitigate negative health effects. Social media policy solutions should be explored to reduce exposure to traumatizing content.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction and Rationale

With the growth of social media, there has also been an increase in posts displaying racial violence for the purpose of spreading awareness. Prior research shows that experiences with racism and the killing of unarmed Black individuals are associated with adverse mental health among Black young adults. This negative impact was present regardless of whether the individual affected had a personal relationship with the victim or the incident was experienced vicariously (Bor et al., 2018).

According to Critical Race Theory, documenting the narrative of Black Americans is necessary to better understand their mental health burden (L. Graham, 2011; Hawkins, 2022). By doing so, we can highlight the nuances and complexities of their experiences. The existence of these narratives challenge "dominant" beliefs and customs, bringing light to how racism affects the "daily realities in communities of color" (Garcia, 2015, L. Graham, 2011). However, there is currently a lack of research that documents Black Americans' experiences viewing depictions of racial violence. Those studies that do exist rely on quantitative data, which fails to capture the nuances of the issue due to an inability to take intangible and non-measurable human factors into consideration. As a result, there is a need for qualitative research to accurately capture the scope and impacts of viewing racial violence.

Problem Statement

Context

The United States (U.S.) has a long history of violence against Black people. During enslavement, Jim Crow, and the Civil Right Movement, psychological, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse was inflicted on Black people (Aymer, 2016, Crenshaw, 1993). According to records maintained by the National Alliance for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP),

these violent acts were carried out by civilians, law enforcement, and political officials and one of the most common forms of violence committed in the 19th and. 20th centuries was lynching, i.e., the public execution of Black individuals. In fact, over 4,500 lynchings occurred from 1882 to 1968, with about 72% of them being Black people (History of Lynching in America, n.d.; Gilbert and Ray, 2016). Committing these acts in public allowed white civilians to terrorize and control black people while reminding them of their social position (Aymer, 2016; Graham et al., 2020; Noble, 2018). Some researchers have suggested there may be a link between lynching and modern acts of police brutality (Aymer, 2016; Das et al., 2021; Graham et al., 2020; Maxie-Moreman & Tynes, 2022; Noble, 2018; Wyatt et al., 2021). These normalized public executions, often labeled as "justifiable homicides" (Gilbert and Ray, 2016), by both the state and civilians are patterns of oppression used to remind Black people of their social position and the power of white supremacy.

From January 2022 to March 2023, 357 Black people have been killed by police (Mapping Police Violence, n.d.) and "official, reliable and verifiable data related to individuals killed by law enforcement are virtually nonexistent" (Hawkins, 2022). An analysis of 4 major police mapping database sites (i.e., Fatal Encounters, Mapping Police Violence, The Counted, and National Vital Statistics System) revealed inconsistencies as largely due to a lack of requirement to report to a central database, bias, and differing data collection methods (Sharara et al., 2021). More specifically, each site has been shown to have a different definition of police brutality, failed to include race or ethnicity for all cases, and lacks thorough data collection methods that typically function to limit bias. So, while these sites exist, it is important to recognize that the information contained in them might not provide the full scope of information required to understand the magnitude of the problem. In addition to acts of violence perpetrated

by law enforcement, incidents like the killing of Ahmaud Arbery (Singer, 2021) and the Buffalo Supermarket shooting (Press, 2022) call for a need for the recognition and inclusion of racial violence committed by civilians; another facet of violence that Black Americans are subjected to.

In the context of social issues, social media has been thought of as a "mechanism for knowing" (Noble 2018). With the intent to help spread awareness of police brutality and state violence, videos and posts often go viral as a form of 'evidence' (Noble 2018). In fact, awareness of the killings of Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, and, more recently, George Floyd spread widely, in part due to video recordings of their deaths being shared on social media (Bor, 2018). However, sharing these videos could potentially lead to the traumatization of Black people consuming this content. For example, such videos are thought to reinforce the low social positioning of Black Americans and act as a form of exposure to traumatic events (Bor et al., 2018; Maxie-Moreman & Tynes, 2022; Noble, 2018; Tynes et al., 2019).

Exploring the impact of viewing police brutality and Black death on social media is especially important due to the historical significance of Black death (Salahu-Din, 2017). In fact, Black death has historically been a spectacle (History of Lynching in America, n.d.; Salahu-Din, 2017). For example, during the antebellum and Jim Crow periods, lynchings were cause for celebration for white Americans. They gathered in crowds to watch them while having picnics, and when they were over, they would take home body parts and pieces of rope as souvenirs in addition to taking pictures in front of the dead bodies (History of Lynching in America, n.d.; Salahu-Din, 2017). This historical context is extremely important to consider when examining the potential impact of viewing videos of racialized trauma and Black death on social media.

Why It Matters?

Black Americans are three times more likely to be killed by police and five times more likely to be killed unarmed, compared to white Americans (Bor, 2018). The killing of unarmed Black individuals has also been associated with adverse mental health among Black American adults— a spillover effect on the population regardless of whether the individual affected had a personal relationship with the victim or if the incident was experienced vicariously (Bor, 2018, Hawkins 2022, Wyatt, 2021). Furthermore, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may be more severe and go underdiagnosed and underreported in Black youth and Black young adults compared to their white peers, and constant exposure to racial violence can exacerbate these disparities (Maxie-Moreman & Tynes, 2022; Tynes et al., 2019).

While social media use has historically not been linked with adverse mental health outcomes. (Boer, 2021; Berryman 2018), a closer look into what is being consumed tells a different story. Viewing race-related traumatic events online has been found to be related to increased symptoms of depression and PTSD (Tynes, 2019), supporting the notion that the impacts of trauma can be experienced vicariously (Bor, 2018). Furthermore, social media exacerbates the spectacle of death through virality and hyper-circulation (Noble 2018) and have deleterious impacts on Black adults. For example, while killings of unarmed Black men contribute to 1.7 additional poor mental health days per person per year among Black adults (Bor 2018), media exposure has been noted to keep acute stressors active (Tynes 2019). In fact, studies involving college-aged Black women have shown that constant exposure to racialized violence on social media has had detrimental effects on their social and emotional well-being (Bor 2019).

Although existing studies paint a broad picture of the relationship between viewing trauma, social media, and mental health, they fail to address the relationship between viewing traumatic events on social media and mental health status in Black adults. Current research examines social media use as a predictor of mental health concerns rather than investigating specific exposures (Boer, 2021, Berryman 2018). With the increasing virality of Black death, we must also examine how exposure to racialized violence through social media impacts mental health. While some studies discuss viewing race-related trauma online, many fail to document the experience of young Black adults. Therefore, there is a clear research gap in understanding the experience and impacts of viewing race-related trauma from the perspective of young Black adults.

Purpose Statement

This current study aims to explore and understand the perceptions and experiences of young Black adults viewing videos of racialized violence on social media. Black adults are an important population to learn more about because they are more likely to have negative interactions with police and interact with social media as a primary form of communication (Watson, 2022). Also, the growing controversy about the necessity of posting these videos presents another angle and perception to be explored. As a result, this study explores both how young Black adults think and feel about viewing racialized violence on social media and how it impacts them.

Aims and Objectives

Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Intersectionality as a framework, this study explores how viewing racial violence on social media has affected Black young adults in their lives. Drawing on previous work demonstrating that trauma can be experienced vicariously, how

constant exposure to racial violence via social media impacts the mental health and life outlook of young Black adults will be explored.

Research Questions

- What are young Black adults' experiences viewing racial violence on social media?
- How do young Black adults perceive the impact of these videos on their mental health and social media use?
- What socio-environmental factors do Black adults identify as influencing this impact?

Theoretical Framework

This study will use CRT and Intersectionality as theoretical frameworks. CRT emphasizes the importance of utilizing storytelling and centering participants' experiences when discussing race and racism (Graham, 2011). By using CRT, race and racism were considered during every aspect of the research process. The mental health impact of psychosocial factors, such as social climate and racial history, are examined throughout the literature review and within the interviews with participants. Historical context and police brutality statistics are also used to situate the context in which this study is conducted. In addition, reflexivity is practiced throughout the study to be forthcoming about my feelings and thoughts about the topics discussed.

Intersectionality, created by Kimberly Crenshaw, analyzes identity and its relationship to power (Abrams 2020). It emphasizes that each of an individual's multiple personalities is accompanied by its dimension of power and/or oppression. By applying it to aspects of this study, specifically in asking participants to discuss the influences and changes to their identities, we aim to create a holistic representation of marginalized experiences and illuminate those parts

of society that contribute to the creation of these experiences. Through the lens of intersectionality, research questions are framed to explore the ways that participants' identities impact their perceptions of racial violence, their social position, and their mental health.

Significance Statement

Through the documentation of young Black adults' experiences, the influence of media depicting racial violence on the mental health of Black young adults will be examined. This research will highlight potential factors that may mediate or moderate the relationship between violence in the media and mental health. In this regard, it will provide more awareness and understanding of how mental health is impacted by constant exposure to violence through social media.

In addition, results from this research may inform advocacy efforts for new policies and programs to better protect the mental health of social media users. More broadly, it will highlight the impact of constant exposure to violence and vicarious trauma, potentially leading to a more in-depth analysis of the issue.

Definition of Terms

Complex trauma – exposure to multiple traumatic events that are often invasive an interpersonal in nature; the long-term, wide-ranging effects of this exposure (Peterson, 2018)

Racial Violence- violent behavior targeted toward marginalized groups via, but not limited to, verbal, physical, and psychological methods Police brutality – unwarranted and/or excessive force and death by legal intervention

Death by legal intervention - the killing of a person by a law enforcement officer or another officer with specific legal authority to use deadly force acting in the line of duty, excluding legal executions

White supremacy – the belief that white people constitute a superior race and should therefore dominate society, typically to the exclusion or detriment of other racial and ethnic groups

Race – racial group that one self-identifies with

Ethnicity – an ethnic group that one self-identifies with

Vicarious trauma – the emotional spillover of exposure to traumatic stories and experiences of others through various methods (Vicarious Trauma, n.d.)

Civilian violence - violence/harassment by civilians (i.e., “Karens”, Ahmaud Arbery)

Violence – the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

Trauma – an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, crime, or natural disaster (Trauma, n.d.)

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Police violence against Black people has an enormous impact on population health. Considering the historical pattern of violence against Black people within the U.S., the persistent, multi-generational exposure to violence contributes to the revictimization of Black people across generations. While there is a dearth of literature examining the implication of civilian executed violence, the current literature linking police violence to negative mental health outcomes paints a picture of how all forms of violence impact mental health within the Black community. To bring awareness to this issue, social media has become a vital tool to spread awareness about racial violence toward Black people. However, there is a lack of research exploring the implications of increasing the already intense amount of exposure to racial violence one experiences. This study aims to address these limitations.

In particular, it will explore how constant exposure to racial violence via social media impacts young Black adults' mental health and life outlook. More specifically, it has the potential to explain how young Black adults feel about viewing racialized violence on social media and the role that it plays in their lives.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Intersectionality will be utilized as theoretical frameworks. CRT emphasizes the importance of utilizing storytelling and centering participants' experiences when discussing race and racism (Graham 2011), which are the main goals of this research. As mentioned, there are notable differences in how stories are shared on traditional news sites and social media sites. In short, there is a history of biased storytelling in reports on drug use, crime, and violence to justify the inhumane treatment of Black people. By centering on storytelling in this study, the lived experiences of participants are more accurately captured and shared. CRT

also emphasizes the importance of considering context when looking at social issues. To align with this, social climate and racial history are examined throughout the discussion of the literature provided. Historical context and police brutality statistics are used to situate the environment in which this study is conducted. In addition, reflexivity is practiced throughout the study to be forthcoming about my feelings/opinions about the topics discussed.

Intersectionality, created by Kimberly Crenshaw, analyzes identity and its relationship to power. (Abrams 2020). It emphasizes that each of an individual's multiple identities is accompanied by a dimension of power and/or oppression. By applying the consideration of intersecting systems of oppression and power to this study, specifically in asking participants to discuss the influences on and changes to their identities, we aim to create a holistic representation of marginalized experiences and illuminate those parts of society that contribute to the creation of these experiences. Through the lens of intersectionality, research questions are framed to explore the ways that participants' identities impact their perceptions of racial violence, their social position, and their mental health.

History of Racial and State Violence

The U.S. has a long history of violence against Black people. During enslavement, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement psychological, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse was inflicted on Black people (Aymer, 2016, Crenshaw, 1993). Historically, Black death has been a spectacle (Salahu-Din, 2017). For example, during enslavement and Jim Crow periods, lynching was a cause for celebration for white Americans. They gathered in crowds to watch and have picnics. Then, when it was done, they would take body parts and rope as souvenirs in addition to taking pictures in front of the dead bodies (Salahu-Din, 2017). According to records maintained by the NAACP, over 4,500 lynchings occurred from 1882 to 1968, with about 72% being Black

(Gilbert & Ray, 2016; *History of Lynching in America*, n.d.). These public executions allowed white people to terrorize and control Black people by reminding them of their social position (Aymer, 2016, Wyatt, 2021, Noble, 2016).

The murders of Black people were not only justified by stereotypes but also by laws. Citizen's arrest laws allowed a civilian to detain offenders by any means necessary. While these laws were created to keep peace in the colonies prior to the founding of the U.S., their meaning and purpose changed drastically over time (Valentine, 2021). Originally a part of the "slave codes", first established in the U.S. in 1691, these laws allowed civilians to detain enslaved Africans who ran away from plantations ("African American History Timeline" n.d.; "Racial Violence in the United States Since 1526," n.d.; Coard, 2021; Lamm, 2006; Visram, 2020). Citizens were told that they were allowed to use whatever amount of force they deemed necessary and that any action from beating to shooting to killing runaways was protected by this common law. Even as formal slave patrols were formed (which later became structured police forces) and lessened the need for citizen's arrests, states continued to either officially codify citizen's arrests laws or rely on common law precedents. Regardless of which, results were the same: white citizens were allowed to beat, harass, and even kill Black people without penalty. Rather than stop these killings, police often also contributed to the violence. Their failure to stop and their tendency to even participate in lynchings and the enforcement of Jim Crow laws served to remind Black people of their social position.

One of the most notorious acts of civilian violence is the murder of Emmett Till (Cobbins-Modica, 2007). Emmett, a 14-year-old boy, was tortured and killed in 1955 after he was accused of insulting a white woman. The husband and bother of the woman kidnapped Emmet then tortured, beat, and strangled him with barbed wire before shooting him and throwing his body into the river. When the men who killed Emmett were put on trial, within 67 minutes, the white-male jury decided that they weren't guilty. Such extreme violence and an overall lack of accountability were made possible because of the standards set by the citizen's arrest laws and slave codes in the 1600s. Unfortunately, this is just one of many examples of how past laws and social norms protected white citizens while demonizing Black people, setting the stage for present-day racial violence.

Despite the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the dismantling of Black Codes and Jim Crow, Black people still aren't protected against both civil and state acts of racial violence. Instead, they have been met with state-sanctioned violence by law enforcement (Aymer, 2016). After decades of slave patrol and enforcement of the Black Codes, police were conditioned to maintain racial hierarchies (Cooper, 2015; *The Origins of Modern Day Policing*, n.d.). Furthermore, researchers have suggested there may be a link between lynching and modern acts of police brutality (Aymer, 2016; Das et al., 2021; Graham et al., 2020; Noble, 2018; Wyatt et al., 2021). For example, the killing of Black people, such as Breonna Taylor and Michael Brown, are extremely like 19th and 20th-century lynching practices. While the historical maintenance of racial hierarchies and acts of brutality by law enforcement instill terror into and social control over Black people, social perceptions, and stereotypes of Black people (e.g.,

especially men) contribute to the dehumanization and disparity of these killings; thereby upholding white supremacy. These normalized public executions, often labeled as "justifiable homicides", are patterns of oppression used to remind Black people of their social position and the power of white supremacy (Gilbert & Ray, 2016).

Current State of Racial Violence

While police brutality affects all races, Black people are especially impacted by this violence. As of January 2022, 355 Black people were murdered by police, representing 25% of police-related murders despite only accounting for 12% of the population (Jones et al., n.d.; *Mapping Police Violence*, n.d.). U.S. law enforcement practices have been denounced by over 100 nations at the United Nations Human Rights Council (DeVylder et al., 2017). Negative police encounters are disproportionately experienced by African American or Latino individuals, male or transgender, younger, or less educated, and by those with lower incomes (Aymer, 2016; DeVylder et al., 2018). In the U.S., Black people are also more likely to die during police encounters, with statistics revealing that Black Americans are three times more likely to be killed and five times more likely to be killed unarmed than white Americans (Bor, 2018). More broadly, 1 per 1000 Black men are killed by police compared to 1 per 2000 all men (Kyriopoulos et al., 2022). Furthermore, a study examining police violence from 2003 to 2017 found that almost 70% of Black men who were killed by police were younger than age 35 years, and 25% of them were younger than age 22 years (Arsenyev-Koehler, 2021; Mapping Police Violence, 2023). Another study showed that 96% of major city (over 300,000 residents) police departments have an anti-Black disparity, killing Black people at higher rates than white people (Mapping

Police Violence, 2023). In Minneapolis and Boston Black people were killed at a rate 28 times more often than white people (Mapping Police Violence, 2023).

Due to stereotypes perpetuated by white supremacy, officers often operate under the assumption that Black individuals are threatening and wrong (Hakim, 2016). Further, the treatment of Black victims is linked to the era of lynching. In fact, Black victims are often left dead in the streets; like how victims of lynching were left hanging on trees (Aymer, 2016). For example, Michael Brown, an 18-year-old killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, was left in the street for four hours after he was murdered in his neighborhood (Bosman & Goldstein, 2014). The scene was not blocked off, nor was the body immediately covered, forcing community members to see their neighbor lying dead with blood coming from his head. Then only feeble attempts were made to cover his body: a white sheet placed over him with his feet and blood still exposed to the public. Not only did this scene traumatize the local and larger Black community, but it also served as a message from law enforcement that they can do this "any day, any time, in broad daylight, and there's nothing that you [Black people] can do about it" (Bosman & Goldstein, 2014). Michael Brown is one of many Black people who have become victims of police tactics, surveillance, and interventions that have led to their death. The inhumane treatment of Black people in life and death evokes echoes of the patterns of treatment during the lynching era, especially due to the lack of accountability for unlawful and inhumane police practices.

In sum, the absence of consistent and reliable data related to state-sanctioned violence reflects how the humanity and life of Black people continue to be undervalued in American society. First, the national monitoring systems fail to accurately capture the number and details

of police brutality cases. Second, the non-existence of a central reporting system and comprehensive reporting complicates one's ability to truly understand the extent of the issue. (Hakim, 2016, Hawkins,2022). Third, there is no requirement to report all instances of police violence, not just death-related, and data collection bias (Sharara et al., 2021). Finally, there is a dearth of accountability after such events occur.

Civilian Violence

In addition to facing violence from state agents, there have been numerous instances of civilians carrying out acts of racial violence; specifically white civilians. In fact, the citizen's arrest laws during the days of slave patrols are still practiced today. Despite some states ratifying the laws to only give power to citizens for lesser crimes, citizens still go beyond the parameters of their authority and the judicial system does little to correct them or hold them accountable for their actions. In fact, Georgia's citizen's arrest laws were in place from 1863 to May 10, 2021, when legislators revised the language of the law; removing the allowance for people to arrest someone they 'witnessed' committing a crime (Fausset, 2021). However, the motivation for this repeal was not out of kindness or to remove racist laws from society. Instead, it was the murder of Ahmaud Arbery, who was chased down and murdered by three white men in 2020, that prompted legislators to act (Fausset, 2021; "The Ahmaud Arbery Shooting Trial," 2022). His murderers believed he was the perpetrator behind several property crimes in their neighborhood and decided to detain him while he was out for an exercise run. Since Georgia's citizen's arrest law was not revised until after Arbery's murder, the men were able to use the laws to justify their actions and plead not guilty (Singer, 2021). While they were convicted, this case demonstrates how racist laws and social norms can be used to support and fuel present-day racial violence.

That said, it should be noted that Arbery's murder is not the first to be protected by racist law. In fact, stand-your-ground laws have played a role in numerous unlawful, racially motivated killings (Knowles & Felton, 2022). In 2012, George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch member, followed and murdered Trayvon Martin, a Black 17-year-old. Despite the overwhelming evidence that Zimmerman was the aggressor, he was acquitted through arguments that utilized self-defense and hints of stand-your-ground laws as the backbone of his case (Knowles & Felton, 2022). After Zimmerman's acquittal, racial tensions sparked concerns that stand-your-ground would be particularly dangerous for Black people. Almost 10 years later, Arbery's murderers attempted to utilize those same precedents while attempting to be acquitted. Taken together, these two cases highlight how civilian violence is another facet of violence that Black people must look out for. They also demonstrate how racist laws support the dehumanization of Black people and protects those who exercise these "rights."

Beyond the citizen's arrest and stand-your-ground laws, there are also more general expressions of hatred and violence that civilians carry out daily. For example, a Black El Paso County rancher was arrested after reporting harassment, stalking, and vandalism of property by white neighbors (Earls, 2023). Additionally, in November 2022 a neighbor called the police on a 9-year-old Black girl who was doing a science project outside, describing her as a "woman" who "scare[d]" him to police dispatchers even though the man knew the girl's family for years (Brown & Moger-Gerbi, 2022). Furthermore, in the 2022 Boston Supermarket and the 2015 Charleston Church shootings, white assailants targeted predominately Black establishments; murdering 10 and nine people, respectively. For the latter, police also bought the assailant a Burger King meal following his arrest, which starkly contrasts the treatment that Black people have experienced (*A Hamburger and A Bad Day*, 2021; Boroff, 2020). Noting the disparity in

treatment during police encounters, Sunny Hostin from *The View* explained that it goes from zero to execution very, very, quickly" when a Black person is involved in comparison to their white peers (*A Hamburger and A Bad Day*, 2021).

Racial Socialization

Due to negative race relations and threats of fatal police violence, generations of Black children have been socialized to adjust to the negative relationships between the Black community and law enforcement (Graham, 2020). This racial socialization is a form of intergenerational trauma. Based on the experiences of their elders, Black children are taught how to anticipate harassment (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017). To avoid negative police encounters and increase their child's chance of surviving them with little to no physical trauma, Black parents often have The Talk with their children. This conversation between parents and their children covers U.S. race relations, navigating police encounters, and how to avoid the police.

Overall, The Talk is intended to act as a form of protection from violent encounters with police. Children are taught to respect and comply with orders and to distrust the police. These discussions provide instruction on how to proactively avoid police attention, how to engage with officers, and when to seek assistance if they are abused (Hakim, 2016; Graham, 2020). Due to an emphasis on distancing oneself from the stereotypes of Black people and aligning as closely as possible with "law-abiding" [white] citizens in these discussions, children tend to change their appearance, their friend groups, the way they speak, and even how they walk (Staggers-Hakim, 2016). Despite these efforts, children have begun to understand that there is still a chance that they will be profiled and experience police harassment (Staggers-Hakim, 2016). For example,

cases of mistaken identity and the fear of being profiled and/or pursued, factors that caused the death of Trayvon Martin, chip away at children's faith in their parent's teachings.

By providing advice, setting expectations, and explaining the state of the relationship between police and the Black community, parents influence and educate their children's perception of the police. Often focused on their own actions and accountability/agency to prevent negative police encounters, The Talk aligns with the broader theme/pattern of the media blaming the victim, which puts the emphasis on questioning what they did to "deserve" being targeted and killed.

The Role of Media and Social Media

Media as Justification

The media has often cycled distorted pictures of Black people to reinforce and justify racial violence, painting them as hypersexual, savage, and primal beings. In the early 1800s, minstrel shows created the "Jim Crow" character using blackface. The characters imitated and mimicked enslaved Africans, characterizing them as lazy, stupid, hypersexual, and prone to commit crimes (*Blackface*, n.d.) In opposition to Black people's demands for citizenship and voting rights, these shows were broadcasted on radios, stages, televisions, and theaters following Emancipation. While minstrel shows were one of many ways the media was used to justify and perpetuate racial violence, the film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) added fuel to the fire. Overall, this movie reinforced the justification for prejudice, racism, and violence against Black people while glorifying the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and martyring white men (*"The Birth of A Nation" Opens, Glorifying the KKK*, n.d.). The film contained historical inaccuracies, which white people

used as propaganda, to incite more violence against non-white people. The film states that giving Black people rights was a mistake and would allow them the opportunity to commit horrible and vengeful acts with this newfound freedom. It also capitalized on white fear of "vengeful violence" and interracial relationships (Brook, 2015) by depicting scenes of freed Black men assaulting white women. Such scenes leveraged the stereotype that Black men are violent and that the KKK would bring order to society; reviving the KKK, which had been essentially inactive since 1871 (*KKK Founded*, n.d.). Notably, such use of media to justify the dehumanization of Black people was a tactic to supplement white people's desire to treat Black people inhumanely.

Stereotypes portrayed in *The Birth of a Nation* and minstrel shows continued to be perpetuated through the 1960s and still exist today (Brook, 2015; Jan, 2017). Many of the negative stereotypes were leveraged in the "War on Drugs" or crack epidemic in the 1970s and 80s. While drug use for medical and recreational purposes has been documented as happing since the 1800s, in 1971 President Nixon declared drug abuse as "public enemy number one" and shifted federal funds toward drug-control efforts; such as the creation of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) (*War on Drugs - Timeline in America, Definition & Facts*, 2019). In the 80s, President Regan continued this legacy while also disinvesting in social safety nets and defunding schools. One of the most notable attributes of the War on Drugs, was the racialization of crack and powder cocaine (DeBiasio, n.d.). Crack cocaine was associated with the Black community, while powder cocaine was associated with rich, white citizens and the drugs became codes for the two populations (Spencer-Blume, 2019). The substitution of racial identity with

race-neutral terms, also known as coded language, could be seen throughout the media and the law (*Coded Language*, 2017).

By being described as convicts, drug offenders, criminals, or "Superpredators", Black people were exposed to unfair treatment and judgment as their identities, individuality, and humanity were stripped away (Boghani, 2017). This coded language was used to sensationalize Black individuals and further promoted discrimination against and criminalization of Black people (Spencer-Blume, 2019). John Ehrlichman, Nixon's policy chief, confirmed these connections in a 1994 interview. He explained that, by associating Black people with heavily criminalized drugs, they were able to vilify them to justify the disruption and incarceration of the communities. The media criminalization of Black people supported the expansion of the War on Drugs because it confirmed preexisting feelings of fear and hatred toward Black people. Consequently, parties associated with crack cocaine, mainly Black people, were incarcerated at extremely high rates and continue to contribute to present-day issues of mass incarceration. All that aside, the sheer fact that this period is known as the War on Drugs, rather than the crack/cocaine epidemic is interesting when you consider how the 2010s opioid epidemic, which impacted white people the most, is referred to as such: further demonstrating the influence of the media on race relations and bias production.

Even now in the 2020s, the media continues to warp portrayals of the Black community. Continuing the language and media practices from the War on Drugs, the media conveys the same stereotypes of laziness, instability, and predisposition to criminality (Jan, 2017). Coded language and labels pathologize the Black community, blaming it for the hardships it faces. For example, "Black on Black" crime is a common narrative used to vilify the Black community and

argues that Black people are more violent towards each other than any other race (Taylor, 2020). This narrative is not only misleading but also violent. First, nearly every race is likely to be killed by their own due to proximity. Second, the circulation of this narrative is violent because it is used to discredit statements that police brutality is an issue (Lichfield, 2015). Third, it is one of many narratives used to justify the removal of social safety net programs, mass incarceration, disinvestment, and economic inequity by feeding into the narrative that Black people are primal and undeserving of humane treatment. The circulation of these false narratives through media is another method to justify the inhumane treatment of Black people.

Social Media

While traditional media has been used to discredit and overshadow social issues, social media has been thought of as a mechanism for knowledge and activism (Noble 2018). In helping spread awareness of police brutality and state violence, videos and posts often go viral as a form of evidence and as a call to action (Noble 2018). Awareness of the killings of Michael Brown, Philando Castile, Ahmaud Arbery, and, more recently, George Floyd, spread quickly and widely through video recordings of their deaths being shared on social media (Bor, 2018).

In 2013, the BlackLivesMatter hashtag (#BLM) first gained traction after George Zimmerman was acquitted of the murder of Trayvon Martin. #BLM continued to gain use and influence after the murder of Michael Brown in 2014. Over a period of 10 days during and after the murders of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, #BLM was mentioned in about 500 thousand tweets per day (Pew Research, 2020; Blake, 2020). These trends, which only include one of the three major social media apps, demonstrate how social media became a mechanism for

knowledge and activism. These videos also challenge false narratives and racist responses to police violence. Many critics revert to victim-blaming, using a victim's (potential) criminal history and resistance or the officer's fear, as a justification for the use of excessive and lethal force (*Helpful Rebuttals for Racist Talking Points*, 2020). While these arguments inherently dismiss the humanity of victims and forget that the nature of an officer's job puts them in danger, the videos still provide pushback. These videos, often from a bystander's or victim's point of view, highlight the flaws in these criticisms, often showing that the victim is compliant and poses no threat to the officer. However, we must acknowledge that even if a victim isn't compliant and poses a threat, that is still not a justification for police to use lethal force, especially considering the drastic racial disparities.

Philando Castile's girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, documented their encounter with police on Facebook Live, a feature that live-streams and automatically shares and saves videos to Facebook (McClatchy, 2018). Reynolds began the Live shortly after Officer Jeronimo Yanez pulled a gun on Castile, with herself and her 4-year-old daughter in the car. Within seconds, the officer shoots and kills Castile. Reynolds keeps recording, as Castile is bleeding out in the driver's seat. Within 24 hours, the videos received over 4.2 million views (Stelter, 2016). When asked why she recorded the video, she explained that the world needed to know that "police are not here to protect and serve [Black people]". She further explains that they are here to "assassinate us…because we are Black" (Kennedy, 2016). This is one of many examples of how Black people have begun to use social media to spread awareness of police brutality, while simultaneously challenging the bias and false narratives that have existed for decades. These videos work to challenge rebuttals that Black victims "didn't comply" or "follow the law" (Kennedy, 2016). The sharing of racial violence has also been used as leverage to demand action

from law enforcement. In the case of Ahmaud Arbery, the videos were used to address a delay of action. The GBI did not take over Arbery's case and arrest the perpetrators until the video of his murder video was posted online (Singer, 2021).

Another example of how social media is used to spread awareness and combat false narratives, can be seen in the case of George Floyd. A closer look at the differences in media and social media reporting in the weeks following George Floyd's murder demonstrates the growing importance of social media's role in reporting and activism. The video of his murder was initially posted on Facebook. Three days after, almost 9 million tweets were tagged with #BLM on Twitter. After a week, videos related to #BLM and George Floyd were shared on Twitter over 1.4 billion times (Blake, 2020). In the three months following his death, about 7750 protests occurred in 2440 locations across the U.S. Posts on social media often showed the experiences of protestors and provided unbiased and accurate information, which contrasted greatly with the narratives shared on traditional news sites. For example, while in the two weeks following his murder, George Floyd was named in almost 2 million traditional news items, only 54% of them linked his death to racism and/or police brutality (Moore, 2020). More specific to Fox News, about 60% of their coverage linked George Floyd's death to rioting and looting and they were more likely to link protests to Antifa (anti-fascists), a far-left movement to resist white supremacists, than MSNBC (4.9 times) and CNN (6.6 times) (Moore, 2020; Tucker, 2020).

Black Mental Health

Current State

According to the SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2018), 16% of Black people reported having a mental illness, and 22.4% reported having a serious mental illness. Of those who reported having a serious mental illness, 58% of young adults and 50.1% of adults aged 26-49 did not receive treatment. Compared to their white peers, Black people are also more likely to report feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and worthlessness, with those below the poverty line being twice as likely to report psychological distress (*Black and African American Communities and Mental Health*, n.d.). Overall, suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts are rising in young adults (SAMHSA, 2020). While, across all ages, Black people are not more likely to die from suicide compared to their white peers, Black teens are more likely to attempt it (*Black and African American Communities and Mental Health*, n.d.). Although lower than the overall population, rates of suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts have risen by about 50%, 33%, and 100% respectively in Black teens from 2008 to 2018.

Structural and civilian racism has a negative impact on one's ability to address and manage their mental health. Accessing care is even more difficult due to the over-policing and sentencing of Black people (APA, n.d.). Black people with mental health conditions, especially psychosis, are more likely to be in jail or prison than those of other races; drastically decreasing their access to proper treatment (APA, n.d.; *Black and African American Communities and Mental Health*, n.d.)

Race-Related Stress and Trauma

Historians note that there has never been a moment of "peace between Black people and the police" (Graham, 2020). Intergenerational trauma refers to how descendants in families or cultural groups continue to suffer the consequences of the severe traumas experienced by their ancestors. This collective trauma leads to psychological distress that can be experienced across generations. Historically, Black people have experienced state-sanctioned violence through slavery, sexual assault, family separation, lack of rights and resources, and mass incarceration (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017). Complex trauma describes constant exposure to multiple severe and pervasive traumatic events, that can cause various psychological outcomes (Peterson, 2018). More importantly, complex trauma involves repeated revictimization (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017). When examining police brutality, racism, and discrimination through this lens, one can see that these events contribute to complex trauma for Black people. The constant threat of violence, verbal, physical, and systemic, has been demonstrated to be associated with an increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression in the Black community (Graham, 2020, DeVylder, 2017, Bor, 2017, Staggers-Hakim, 2016). Included in these forms of violence are microaggressions which are verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, de- rogatory, or negative racial slights and insults, often experienced daily (Sue et. al, 2007). Health disparities literature has established associations between discrimination and adverse mental health outcomes and Black men and Black boys were shown to specifically be impacted mentally by the constant threat of violence from racial profiling (Staggers-Hakim, 2016; Gilbert, 2014).

There are also studies suggesting links between psychosis experiences and police violence (DeVylder et al., 2022). Studies show that racism, like trauma, can be experienced

vicariously (Bor, 2018, Hawkin, 2022, Campbell, 2020, DeVylder et al., 2017), with spillover effects resulting from racial violence, especially police killings (Bor, 2018, Campbell, 2020, Hawkins, 2022). Regardless of its form, violence is thought to create trauma and stress within the affected community. For example, some have found that Black people experienced 0.14 more poor mental health days per police killing regardless of the participant's socioeconomic status (Bor, 2018). Studies have also shown that there is a large association between suicide attempts and police violence (DeVylder et al., 2022). In fact, Hawkins (2022) conducted a qualitative study on the mental health impact of police brutality. Results from that study indicated that hearing about police brutality resulted in a constant state of sadness and/or anger and interfered with their ability to complete daily tasks. Participants explained that being in a constant state of helplessness and hyperawareness was due to a 'lack of protection, no sign of change, and a fear of death by cops'. Furthermore, another study showed that over 3 years there was an 11% increase in emergency department visits for depression, which were associated with police killings of unarmed Black people (DeVylder et al., 2022). Taken together, study results indicate that exposure to racial violence leaves members of the Black community with worsened mental health, even if they do not experience the violence firsthand.

Impact of Viewing Racial Violence on Social Media

While social media has been a vital tool in bringing awareness to the plight of Black people at the hands of civilian and state violence, scholars worry about the long-term effects of the virality of Black death (Maxie-Moreman & Tynes, 2022; Bor 2018, Noble 2018, Tynes 2019). Some studies suggest that these videos may unintentionally reinforce the low social positioning of Black Americans and function as another form of exposure to traumatic events (Noble 2018; Tynes 2019). When considering studies that demonstrated the spillover effects of

hearing about instances of police brutality, one can only wonder how seeing the deaths on social media impact the mental health of the Black community (Bor 2018, Noble 2018, Hawkins, 2022). For example, Campbell and colleagues (2020) explored college students' perceptions of police violence toward Black people on social media and more than half of the Black (60%) sample reported feeling frustrated, sad, grief, and fearful after watching the videos. While about 80% of participants said the videos were hard to watch, a majority (78%) of them believed that their availability to the public made circulating them necessary.

The Present Study

While the results of Bor (2018), Campbell et al. (2020), and Hawkins (2022) provide initial insights into how viewing police brutality on social media may impact the mental health of the Black community, these studies used quantitative data and/or did not focus on exposure through social media. Because racial violence, mental health, and social media have a complex relationship with nuances that cannot be fully captured through quantitative data, studies utilizing qualitative approaches are necessary and important. While the Hawkins study (2020) uses qualitative data, it does not explicitly focus on exposure through social media. Also, all studies discussed only focus on one facet of racial violence, police brutality, when there are numerous forms of racial violence that Black people are exposed to through social media. This current study aims to address all of these limitations.

Chapter Three: Methods

Enrollment Methods

Recruitment

This qualitative study was purposed to capture the experiences of participants using in-depth interviews. Targeted participants included individuals between the ages of 18 and 29 years that currently lived in Atlanta, identified as Black, and used at least one of the major social media sites (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter). Recruitment strategies included the disbursement of flyers, electronically and physically, to colleges and universities across the metro-Atlanta area. Local businesses, community organizations, student organizations, and non-Panhellenic Greek organizations were also contacted to circulate physical and digital flyers to their customers and members (Appendix A). These organizations may have also posted interactive recruitment materials in their Facebook groups or social media profiles, as well. Snowball sampling was also implemented as a recruitment method. After the interview, participants were sent an email thanking them for their participation. That email included the recruitment flyer and asked participants to consider passing the study information on to others that they thought would be interested in participating.

Ten people were recruited, screened, and enrolled in the study. Participants were assigned an ID number to ensure the confidentiality of their data throughout the study. While the study team had access to study data, the principal investigator only had access to the codes that linked identifiers to the participants and was responsible for the maintenance and security of the data.

Eligibility

Eligibility and data were collected using Qualtrics, an online survey platform. Eligibility for the study was assessed using an initial set of questions purposed to determine if the participant matched the inclusion or exclusion criteria (Appendix B). These questions also inquired about the participant's age, racial identity, social media use, and city of residence. Participants were excluded if they had a prior diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or dementia, as well as any other diagnosis that might hinder one's ability to provide consent. Participants also were excluded if they had been diagnosed with PTSD, to avoid unnecessary harm through unintended exacerbation or re-activation of symptoms. If participants did not meet inclusion criteria or did meet exclusion criteria, they were deemed ineligible for the study.

Consent

After confirming eligibility, potential participants were provided with the consent form within the Qualtrics survey (Appendix B). Participants were asked to read the consent form, then provided consent by marking "I consent" or "I do not consent". If they elected to not provide consent, they were not invited to participate in the study. Due to the nature of the content involved, there was a potential for study participants to experience psychological distress when being interviewed and the potential for that to occur was included in the consent forms. A list of mental health resources was made available to all study participants at the time of the interview and there was a clinical psychologist involved in the project in case there was an instance in which psychological distress required professional assistance.

Measures

Demographic Data

Demographic data was collected through Qualtrics (Appendix B). Participants were asked to provide their zip code, race, ethnicity, nationality, and gender identity. All questions, except gender identity and race, were open-ended, allowing participants to enter their exact demographic data. For gender and race participants were able to select multiple pre-written answers. If none of the listed items applied, they were given the option to select "Not Listed", giving them the opportunity to write in their gender. There was also an option for participants to not respond with the "Prefer not to say" option.

Exposure to Racial Violence

Another set of questions inquired about their social media use and exposure to racial violence. Participants were asked to self-report their average daily social media use, in hours, and rank Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook from least to most used. They were also asked how often they were exposed to racial violence, over the last month, using a Likert scale. The scale went from "never" to "5+ times a week."

Effects of Exposure

There also were 4 questions inquiring about feelings of loneliness, hyperawareness, recurring nightmares, and avoidance from the Primary Care PTSD Screen (PCPS) section of the New York PTSD Risk Assessment Score (Boscarino et. al. 2012). While the New York PTSD Risk Assessment combined multiple screening tools, (demographics, trauma exposure, etc.,) to assess the risk of PTSD, the PCPS specifically focused on symptoms of PTSD. The questions, pulled from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), are designed to

identify people with probable PTSD. The questions within the New York PTSD Risk Score originally did not mention a specific exposure or trigger and were also measured over the past 12 months. To better align them with the research topic - racial violence and social media – the questions were altered to be more specific (Appendix C). For example, the question:

> "You had repeated bad dreams or nightmares or had disturbing or unpleasant memories, thoughts, or images that kept coming into your mind whether you wanted to think of them or not."

Was updated to:

> "In the last month, how often have you had repeated bad dreams or nightmares or had disturbing or unpleasant memories, thoughts, or images that kept coming into your mind whether you wanted to think of them or not?"

For these questions, participants were asked to respond using a Likert scale, ranging from "never" to "5+ times a week." These questions were not meant to diagnose participants, but to gain some insight into how exposure to racial violence may have impacted participants.

Race/Ethnicity Definitions

Race was defined as a social construct where participants self-identify their racial category. However, Black people are not a monolith; and it was necessary to further distinguish between participants within this demographic. As a result, participants were also asked to self-identify their ethnicity and nationality, which may also be a variable that can explain differences in experiences and perceptions detected between participants. When discussing the data, casual inferences were not made.

Data Collection

Collection

Data was produced from the Qualtrics survey and in-depth interviews. Demographic data was collected using the Qualtrics survey after participants consented to be in the study and that information was kept in a password-protected Excel file, on a password-protected computer. In-depth interviews were conducted on Zoom, an online conferencing platform (Appendix D) . Before the interview began, participants were read a scripted reminder of the study topic, procedures, and risks/benefits to study participation. Participants were then asked if they consented to be audio recorded. During the interview, detailed notes were taken to highlight important quotes and the interviewer's thoughts during the interviews. After the interview, notes were organized in a memo book that included transcript numbers and timestamps.

Recordings were initially transcribed using AI software, then double-checked through review with the audio. Participants' names and other identifiable information were erased from the interview transcript and, when the de-identified transcript was completed the audio recording was deleted and the transcript was uploaded to MAXQDA to be analyzed.

Contextual Data

Throughout data collection, ongoing national police violence toward Black people was tracked using the Mapping Police Violence database. Viral media posts depicting Black death

were also tracked by monitoring hashtags through the social media platforms most used by the population of studied (i.e., Tik Tok, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). While users of these posts were not documented, the posts' virality at the time each survey was completed and the conversations surrounding them provided context for this study. Data was kept in a Microsoft Word document, which included screenshots and links to social media posts, a summary of events, and reflexive notes from the interviewer.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics of study participants were analyzed using percentages, frequencies, and means. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis was used to analyze the interviews and identify themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Mihas, 2023). Both a deductive and inductive approach to analysis were taken, in that the codebook for the study was created using the interview guide and the transcripts. To follow the deductive approach, a foundation of codes based on the questions in the interview guide was created. The main questions served as the primary codes and the sub-codes were derived from the probes. For example, the main question "How do you think viewing these videos has impacted your life?" was labeled as the primary code "Impact of Videos", while the probe "What about your mental health?" was labeled as the sub-code "Impact of Videos/Mental Health".

Following an inductive approach, the list of codes was further developed to best fit the data as interviews were analyzed. Segments of the interviews were coded based on existence rather than frequency. For example, participants often acknowledged their lack of capacity for consuming violence. This was associated with the parent code "Self-Awareness" to demonstrate participants' awareness of their capacity and mental health. To limit bias, transcripts were coded

twice with at least two days in between sessions. The codebook expanded as interviews were conducted and transcripts were coded.

Twenty-seven codes were initially created, and 54 codes were included in the final code book (Appendix E). Overall, the data determined the themes. While conducting, transcribing, and coding the interviews, a list of memos and notes was kept. Detailed notes were taken during the interviews. After the interview, a summary of the notes and memos were recorded in a memo book. Within this book, common themes and ideas were detailed, along with which participants aligned with them. There were also notes regarding potential codes that could be created based off the information given in the interviews. This process helped with the identification and development of themes. When the coding process was completed, codes were placed into categories associated with the research questions (Appendix F). This process was iterative and occurred throughout data analysis.

MAXQDA's Questions- Themes- Theories (QTT) and Summary Grids and Tables functions assisted in the analysis process. Using the Summary Grids and Tables, summaries were written about participants' responses that were associated with a specific code. The blue dots in the columns indicate that there was a segment within the transcript for that code. The green-filled square indicates that a summary was written for that code and participant.

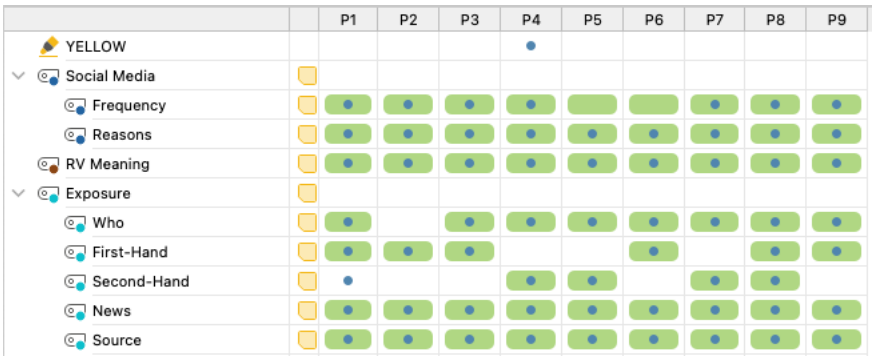


Figure 1: Summary Grid

From here, a summary table for each category that included summaries from the coded segments. This table compiled all participant responses within a specific group of codes into one place, making it easier to pinpoint participants' thoughts. These categories and codes were then used to create themes that would answer the research questions.

Documents and variables	Engagement	General Sharing	Direct	Seeing TL (+)
P1 Document name: P1 Coded Segments: 73	Monitoring to see who was posting what on social media during 2020. After realizing the mental health impact, they decided to relax with the soical media use. "I would watch it and then feel sad after I watch it. "	Sharing used to be meaningful before 2020, but after 2020 they dont make a difference. Feels useless		Its unfortunate but they need to know what is going on. Doesn't have an emotional reaction to the videos
P2 Document name: P2 Coded Segments: 96	Used to engage with the videos but they don't anymore.	Double-edge sword Some people need to be aware of what's going on so they it should be shared, as it relates to more harmful forms of violence. However videos of Karens dont need to see those videos all of time. Seeing the videos everyday isnt necessary because of the level of violence.	Is okay if its a close friend	desensitized, no emotional reaction to the videos. P

Figure 2: Summary Table

QTT sheets were used to organize coded segments, summary tables, and memos associated with each theme. Each theme had its own QTT sheet, allowing the themes to become more refined since all of the data was easily accessible and organized. Themes were created based on the existence of opinions, not their frequency. All opinions were included in the results and analysis process, regardless of the number of participants who shared similar opinions.

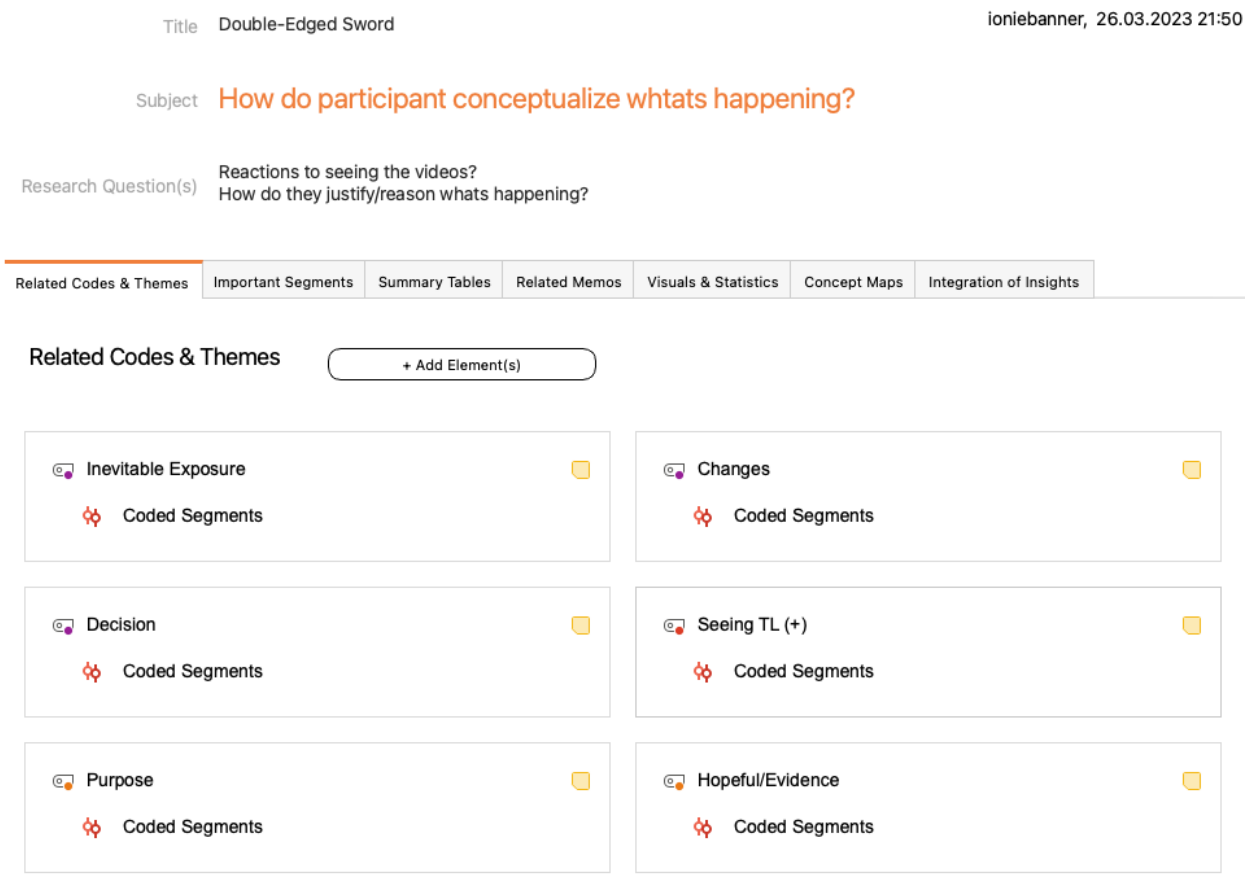


Figure 3: QTT Sheet

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

Ten participants were screened and interviewed for this study. Their experiences were analyzed using thematic analysis and presented as themes. Over the course of the study, several codes and themes were created to account for the many experiences shared. Participants' experiences were treated as fact, to align with the tenet of CRT, which highlights the importance of storytelling and centering participants' experiences.

Survey Results

Sample Demographics

The mean age of the sample was 23.89 years old (Table 1). Three cis-men and seven-cis women participated in the interviews. Participants self-identified as Black American, African American, Nigerian American, Afro-Cubana American, Sudanese, and Ghanaian-American. When asked about their racial identity, none identified as multi-racial. On average, participants used social media 3.22 hours per day. Instagram and Twitter were tied as the most frequently used sites, with TikTok as the second-most used (Table 2).

Table 1: Demographics

	n	%
Gender		
Cis-Male	3	30%
Cis-Woman	7	70%
Age		
23	3	30%
24	4	50%
25	2	20%
Mean	23.9	
Race		
Black	10	100%
Ethnicity/Nationality		

Black-American	4	33%
African American	2	22%
Nigerian American	1	11%
Afro-Cubana/American	1	11%
Sudanese	1	11%
Ghanaian American	1	11%
Social Media Use		
Mean (Range)	3.22 (1.5-5)	

Table 2: Social Media Rankings

Social Media Rankings	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Never Used
Instagram	4	2	2	2	0
Twitter	3	2	4	1	0
TikTok	1	5	3	1	0
Facebook	2	1	1	6	0

Exposure and Effects

During the month of their interview, each participant reported having some level of exposure to racial violence on social media. A majority (n=7) of participants reported being exposed to racial violence on social media 1-2 times a week (Table 3).

Table 3: Exposure to Racial Violence

Exposure to Racial Violence on Social Media	n (%)
5+ times/week	0 (0%)
3-4 times/week	0 (0%)
1-2 times/week	7 (70%)
Less than once a week	3 (30%)
Never	0 (0%)

Quantitative data on the effect of exposure to racial violence were collected using the New York PTSD Risk Score for Assessment of Psychological Trauma. This scale measured the frequency with which a participant experienced unpleasant memories, avoided social media, was on guard while on social media, and felt less emotion than normal. A majority (n=7) of participants reported having some unpleasant memories, thoughts, or images in their heads

during the month of their interview (Table 4). A majority (n=7) of participants also reported some level of avoidance of social media. Six participants reported some instances of being on guard and 5 reported some instances of feeling less emotional than usual. These results are meant to provide some insight into how symptoms of PTSD might be present in participants. While they are not indicative of diagnostic status for participants, they do provide a way to quantify self-perceived distress in relation to social media use prior to interview.

During the qualitative interviews, participants were asked about their exposure to racial violence. Understanding how they are exposed to racial violence gives more context to the impact the content has on them. All participants were informed about instances of racial violence through social media, mainly through Twitter and Instagram. Several participants noted that they are also informed about these instances through word-of-mouth or through posts being directly shared with them. Seventy percent of participants shared that they were exposed to posts showing racial violence at least 1-2 times per week on social media.

Table 4: PTSD Scales

Scales	n (%)
Had unpleasant memories, thoughts, or images	
5+ times/week	0
3-4 times/week	0
1-2 times/week	4 (40%)
Less than once a week	4 (40%)
Never	2 (20%)
Avoid certain media sites or activities that might remind you of something that happened	
5+ times/week	1 (10%)
3-4 times/week	2(20%)
1-2 times/week	2 (20%)
Less than once a week	3 (30%)
Never	2 (20%)
Felt you had to stay on guard much of the time on social media	
5+ times/week	0
3-4 times/week	3 (30%)
1-2 times/week	1 (10%)
Less than once a week	3 (30%)
Never	3 (30%)
Felt you had much less emotion than you used to	
5+ times/week	0
3-4 times/week	0
1-2 times/week	1 (10%)
Less than once a week	5 (50%)
Never	4 (40%)

In-Depth Interviews

Qualitative interviews were used to better understand the processes participants go through when encountering videos of racial violence on social media. These interviews highlighted the relationship between exposure to racial violence, mental health, life experiences, and social media use. Table 5 summarizes the themes that were developed from the interviews.

Table 5: Themes

Themes	Description	Example Quote
Making Sense of the Videos	An understanding of how participants process seeing videos of racial violence on social media	"I think maybe the contrast and like, post, like someone would post something, like, related to racial violence and death. And then you tap to the next story. Maybe someone's having brunch. Or like, it could be the same person posting racial violence and death, and then they post something like fun. And oh, I don't know if I have the words to describe how I feel about that. Yeah. It's just a weird sensation."
Selective Engagement	Implementation of guidelines one follows when encountering videos of racial violence	"The bigger it gets…Or if I continue to hear about it, I'm like, 'Okay, let me see what it is.' But I asked him to take me like two weeks to prepare for."
Self vs The Movement	Struggles with prioritizing one's mental health	"I feel guilty because it feels like I don't care enough. And don't know if I don't care enough. I feel like if I don't, I don't know what's going on"
It Could Be Me	Participants identity, upbringing, and awareness of social issues influenced the effects the videos had on them and vise vera.	"My identity as a, as a black male has always been, like, persistent, but like, seeing myself get older I can, I can relate more and more and more to the victims"

Skewed Normalcy	Adjusting to altered social media use practices and approach to future planning	"I would say it just makes me think twice about even bringing children into a world like this where I know that at any moment, any situation could take away like someone's life."
Double-Edged Sword	There are positive and negative implications for sharing videos of racial violence on social media.	"I've also seen people share videos just to, you know, because they think it's a joke, or because they think it's funny. Just for likes, and views and comments."

Making Sense of the Videos

To understand participants' process of making sense of the videos, we must first understand how they conceptualize racial violence. By understanding the framework by which they operate, one can better understand how, when, and why exposure to racial violence through social media impacts participants. Collectively, participants defined racial violence as any form of physical, verbal, psychological, or systematic abuse, assault, and/or harassment toward Black people. They also agreed that acts can be committed by any non-Black person, including non-Black people of color. In addition, they highlighted that people in positions of power, such as police officers and civilians, can commit acts of racial violence. Furthermore, participants noted that forms of discrimination and microaggressions were also forms of racial violence. Scholars define microaggressions as "verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities", which align with the explanations and experiences provided by the participants (Sue et al., 2007). One participant described being called a gorilla in middle school, while another was told by a teacher that they would grow up to work as a janitor. This expansive definition of racial violence shows that videos depicting violence beyond police brutality are impacting participants. Therefore, there is an increased susceptibility to exposure, due to its many forms and the increased likelihood that one will encounter a video.

While attempting to make sense of the videos, participants identified notable events and victims that played a role in their processing of them. Participants referenced specific victims: George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Philando Castile, Eric Garner, and Trayvon Martin. The murder of Trayvon Martin was cited as the first, most significant news story related to racial violence (Figures 1 and 2). Participants also referenced the "2020", "Summer 2020", Black Lives Matter movement" "COVID", and "2020 protests" in their interviews. These events were often points of great stress or changes in social media engagement. During this time, participants also noted that the number of videos of RV being released and shared was also increasing.

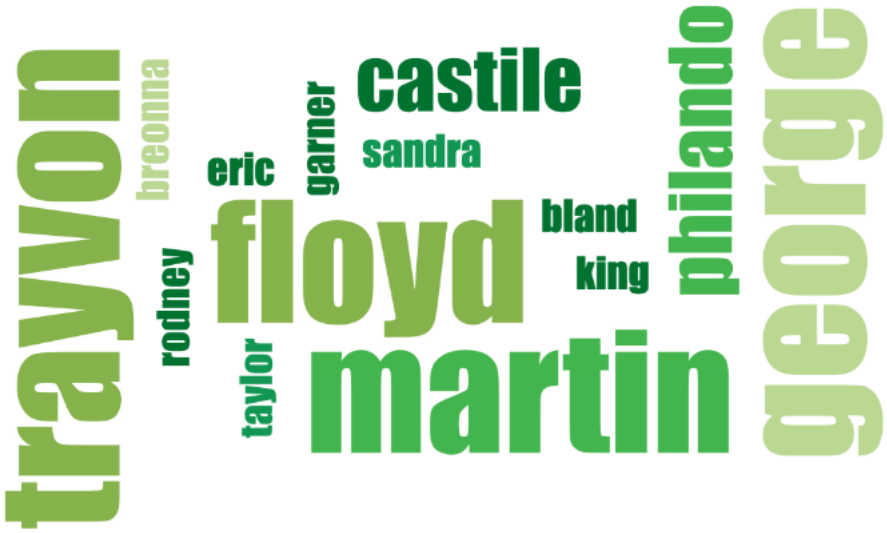
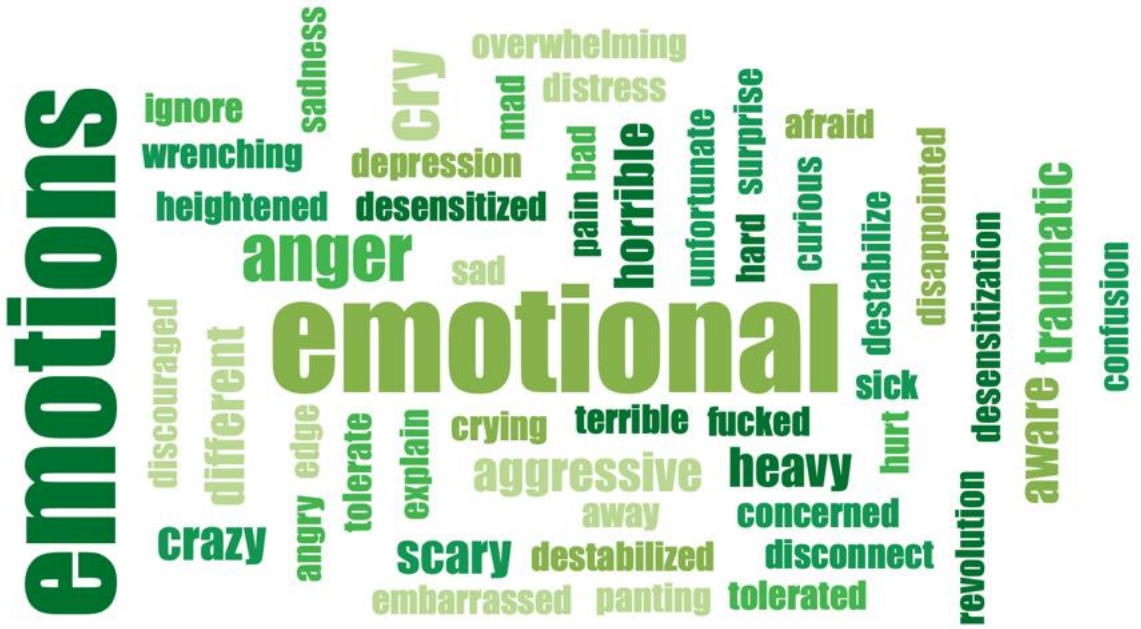


Figure 4: Names of Victims

Figure 5: Details of Events

As participants continued to describe their process of understanding the videos, they detailed their feelings and thought processes after seeing a post showing racial violence on social media. They reported having feelings of disappointment, sadness, anger, hopelessness, and pain (Figure 3). Participants stated they were desensitized because they were no longer surprised by the presence of the videos or acts of violence, regardless of if they watched them or not. Some further explained that they believed their desensitization stemmed from the number of videos they were exposed to. Others explained that desensitization was due to the understanding that they already had of the prevalence of racial violence and that they view social media as a tool for awareness and activism.

Figure 6: Feelings



Participants also discussed being destabilized after being exposed to the videos on social media. They discussed the stark contrast between the content they were consuming before and after the post of racial violence. Specifically, how jarring it is to be on social media to see a video or post about racial violence, go through the steps to process what they've just seen, and then see a more "normal" post (such as a family photo) right after. Participants 1 and 6 discussed struggling with this during the height of the BLM protests in the summer of 2020.

"I think maybe the contrast and like, post, like someone would post something, like, related to racial violence and death. And then you tap to the next story. Maybe someone's having brunch. Or like, it could be the same person posting racial violence and death, and then they post something like fun. And oh, I don't know if I have the words to describe how I feel about that. Yeah. It's just a weird sensation." Participant 1

Selective Engagement

All participants noted a change in their engagement with videos of racial violence. While they used to watch and engage with almost every post of racial violence they encountered, by the time of their interview they no longer did so, citing the summer of 2020 as the main turning point. One participant simply stated that they "just stopped watching it" (Participant 2), when they encountered videos of racial violence on social media. Several participants explained that with their disengagement with traumatizing content, they sought out comforting content. One explained that they changed their social media patterns to "gravitate towards lighter content now (Participant 3) rather than engage with content showing racial violence.

For participants who completely stopped watching the videos, they stated that they still kept up with instances of racial violence by reading articles. For those who still rarely watched the videos (n=4), they had a set of guidelines they followed before they engaged with one and all stated that they check in on their current mental state before deciding to interact with them.

"I've I think about like the day I'm having a see if like maybe if I'm going to bed soon, I won't watch it. And if I do see like I need to watch it. Maybe I'll watch it the next day. Or maybe if I have work, I probably won't watch it. Just to make sure that if I do watch it, um, I need to make sure I have like time to take care of myself." Participant 1

One participant explained that as a video becomes more viral, they will decide to watch it. However, they still go through a process to mentally prepare themselves for viewing the video.

"The bigger it gets…Or if I continue to hear about it, I'm like, 'Okay, let me see what it is.' But I asked him to take me like two weeks to prepare for." Participant 9

Self vs The Movement

Participants stated that they often stopped engaging with videos of racial violence on social media as a way to prioritize their mental health. However, by prioritizing their mental health, participants felt that their disengagement was taking away from the BLM movement which created a lot of guilt for participants.

"I feel guilty because it feels like I don't care enough. And don't know if I don't care enough. I feel like if I don't, I don't know what's going on. I'm in therapy. I've been in therapy since November 2020. But I think I maybe I feel like maybe I don't know what would happen. If I were to engage with that content to the same level, I was in 2020. "Participant 1

While some participants felt pressured to continue to watch the videos because they did not want to be left out of the news or the movement, others felt a need to put their mental health aside to stay engaged and up to date on issues related to racial violence. One participant stated:

"[It's like] FOMO if you don't watch it …because everybody watched it. It's like if a brand-new movie just came out and the whole world watched it but you. So, it's like…I'm missing out" Participant 4

Participant 4 also explained a paradox they often experience. They described that they feel like when racial violence occurs, the expectation is then put on the traumatized victim and community to protest and advocate for change. Despite being hurt and emotional by seeing acts of racial violence, they still felt pressured to "be on the frontlines" of advocacy efforts.

"You know, the whole expectation that a lot of times you see the victims or the communities or the victims being the ones doing the heavy lifting as far as the healing process. So, you see, a Black person get killed on video, right? That may be if you're gonna see, you know, spamming with all the posts… the riots, and the protests and marches are gonna be Black people. You

know, I'm saying so, say that I'm protecting my peace and a lot of times what that means is, you know, distancing myself from images, anything that will remind me that violence means that also would be distancing myself in one way or another from the work being involved to as far as advocacy and healing, you know. So yeah, it does create guilt because it's like, you know, yeah, I'm hurt. But shouldn't I, you know, sometimes be like, 'hey, like, I need to be on the frontlines.'. You know, like, despite, despite being hurt, despite being tired of seeing the others, you know, the hurt people just like me, and they, they don't want to fight." Participant 4

Participant 4 details the struggles that many of the participants faced when deciding whether to engage with posts of racial violence. The prioritization of one's mental health was tied to feeling neglectful and guilty.

It Could Be Me

Participants' identity, upbringing, and social consciousness simultaneously influenced how they perceived the videos and were impacted by the videos. All participants discussed having prior knowledge of racial violence and police brutality. They discussed having "The Talk" and other race-related talks with their parents and families. The purpose of these talks was to explain the current race relations within the U.S. and how to avoid victimization. These talks also contributed to a strong sense of self and identity as a Black person. Despite this, participants noted that prior knowledge of race-relations within the U.S. did not prepare them adequately for either witnessing or experiencing racial violence. One participant even discussed that the presence of the videos made them and their parents less confident in the effectiveness and accuracy of the race-related conversations.

“Most people, they have their parents have like, the sex talk with them. And then I feel like for Black people, we have an additional talk about like the race talk, especially our men and with police officers. And there's just talk about like, I mean, my parents did talk to me about like, how to respond when if you do get pulled over just to keep your hands on the wheel and comply and do not get defensive or like any extreme emotion just beat remain calm and do what they ask… I think my parents and I were even talking about that because my dad used to be one of those people that thought if you can comply, then you're good, but obviously, that's not the case.” Participant 1

Participants described how their self-conception of identity played a role in how they processed the videos as well as how the videos impacted their feelings about their identity. These changes often happened simultaneously. Participants described a bi-directional relationship between their identity and the videos’ impact. A majority of participants already had strong ties to their identity as a Black person. Due to these strong ties, participants often saw themselves when viewing the videos.

“My identity as a, as a black male has always been, like, persistent, but like, seeing myself get older I can, I can relate more and more and more to the victims” Participant 4

The videos served as a reminder of the threats that they can and most likely will face because of their identity, not their identity itself. Due to their upbringing and social awareness, participants understood that there is a high chance that they will be profiled or victimized. These beliefs were affirmed and strengthened with the presence of the videos.

“That person doesn't look no much different than me, I could be walking down the street and just be, you know, categorized as someone being violent or being like a bad person, “Participant 8

“[As a] black man probably just scared probably just like, Damn, it could be me any, any time. You know, like, when I was a kid, Trayvon Martin was like, the same age at the time. So like, I remember feeling that like, damn, they killing kids. I know, they killed my kids my age.” Participant 9

They further explained that they were extremely worried about becoming another statistic or hashtag. While these fears were present prior to the circulation of the videos, their existence reinforced those thoughts.

“And then in instances where I have been, like, pulled over by the police, it's like, I can't help but like, think like, damn am I gon end up on news next, you know…like, it's like, it's so much scarier.” Participant

Participant 4 stated that when they see a video of racial violence, especially police brutality, they “already know how it goes”. They further explained that their prior knowledge of anti-Black legacy of policing in the U.S. led them to believe that police are the aggressors in several videos they encountered. These belief systems and understandings of the legacy of inhumane treatment often left participants with feelings of frustration and hopelessness. These frustrations with society were amplified every time they viewed a video on social media.

“Just throughout school learning more about my, you know, Black history and valuing, you know, what I come from, you know, over time, I think it makes you even more angry and more disappointed that these things are still happening, and it seems to be only getting worse.” Participant 5

Participants (n=3) who also identified as ‘privileged’ felt that they had to engage with the videos. They believed that the videos serve as a reminder that their privileges would not save them from

becoming a victim of racial violence. These participants recognized that their privilege was not a shield against racial violence and deemed it necessary to engage with the videos to stay grounded and aware that they too could become a victim.

> *"I guess it just reminds me like, while yes, I am here, there are people who are still out there experiencing these things. And I can't afford like being lax or just get comfortable and my degrees and my, you know where I'm at, I need to reach back out and help just to change the system for them. And then also like, it could still happen to me as well. Like, regardless of my position, I'm still a Black woman."* ***Participant 7***

These interactions between the videos and participants' identities contributed to the negative mental health outcomes experienced by participants.

"I think it… they definitely, like negatively impact my mental health. Because then it's something I had to think about, you know... And when I think about it, you know, I see myself in it and all of that…" Participant 4

Participants' understanding of the prevalence of racial violence, coupled with the lack of protections, and strong connections to their identity, created a mindset in which participants were not only hyperaware but also extremely fearful. As Participant 1 described, there is seemingly no clear method to ensure one will survive a police encounter. The circulation of the videos has demonstrated that participants are at the mercy of their abusers. One participant summarized the feelings of coming to terms with this reality.

“Like, that put so much fear in my heart, because it's like, you use like, you have first-hand evidence that you could do everything right, and still end up being wrong.” Participant 4

Skewed Normalcy

Participants described needing to adjust to altered social media practices and norms, as well as new approaches for future planning. They mentioned feeling hopeless about the future because of the lack of change that has come from the circulation of the videos. Some stated that they have revisited the idea of having kids, after seeing the videos.

“I kind of realized after 2020 I've had like a huge shift and like, if, as of whether or not I want to have kids, and I feel like I feel like this is a scary place to bring children into. And so, I don't know, if I want to do that. And I don't know if that is just like this the growing pains of adulthood or if it's just some of the trauma we've been exposed to in the past few years.” Participant 1

Participants’ fears and understandings of racial violence were affirmed through the videos. The presence of the videos served as a reminder that one’s life is at the mercy of police officers and civilians. As discussed in the It Could Be Me theme, participants know that there is no way to ensure one’s safety during an encounter with a police officer or even a racist civilian. Methods such as “The Talk”, are no longer deemed effective because even if one complies, they still have a chance to be injured or killed. For participants, these facts have made them consider what their future would look like.

“I would say it just makes me think twice about even bringing children into a world like this where I know that at any moment, any situation could take away like someone's life.” Participant 6

“It makes me think about having kids through bringing kids into this world. Just because I know like that's more than likely that is something that they're going to face” Participant 8

Participants explained the negative mental health effects of seeing videos of racial violence on social media. As detailed in the Self Vs. The Movement and Changes in Engagement themes, participants felt the need to withdraw from the content, in an effort to focus on their other responsibilities. Consuming such content often impacted participants' mindset and therefore ability to complete work and school-related tasks. Participants further explained how hard it was to be so negatively impacted by the videos and then have to maintain their responsibilities, something their white peers did not have to do.

One participant explicitly discussed dealing with these feelings in 2020, during the height of the BLM protests. They said:

“I just remember being angry because I just thought how unfair is it that I still have to go to class and work with these things on my mind, when, you know, they get to go to class and just be oblivious that you know about these things that are going on? And how unfair is it that this is happening to my people yet, I'm still expected to attend class every day and submit assignments every day and write papers and so and they don't have to, you know, do that.” Participant 6

Unlike their white peers, they felt an expectation to handle their responsibilities without fail, while still processing traumatizing events. They went further to explain how their white professors especially had little to no empathy for their struggles. In a one-on-one meeting, they

explained that their professor discussed Black-on-Black crime and stated that racial violence and BLM were “all just some façade and none of its real” (Participant 6).

Despite efforts to preserve their mental health, participants explained that the mental toll of knowing what is going on impacted their ability to do day-to-day tasks and responsibilities. Participant 4 detailed how the expectation is put on the traumatized victims to solve systemic issues and do the “heavy lifting as far as the healing process”. They described little to no support from other races to address or alleviate the mental health burden placed on Black people, which felt unfair.

Participants also described changes in how they view and use social media, as a result of the presence of videos of racial violence. Participants also expressed frustration with being on social media for comfort or humor, which was interrupted by being exposed to racial violence. In short, they felt that there was nothing they could do to protect themselves from exposure. The pervasiveness of the videos made participants’ efforts to take precautionary measures (i.e., muting certain words, blocking pages, changing privacy settings, etc.) futile. Due to this, in an effort to minimize the likelihood of exposure, some (n=2) participants stated that they distanced themselves from social media altogether.

“But I'm not on TikTok to hear about something, you know, that I already know about [racial violence]. I'm really on TikTok to kind of just, I don't know, like, not be more uncomfortable than social media already is.” Participant 2

The presence of the videos caused participants to feel uncomfortable on social media. Social media was used as a news source and for entertainment. Due to the virality of videos of racial violence, participants often struggled to use social media for entertainment.

"Because like, I don't want to like...I don't want it to seem like I don't care. I'm just trying to like, protect myself a little bit. Yeah. And also, I use like social media for information, but I also use it for entertainment. Because like, the real world is stressful, like. So I didn't have to, like have like a high volume of those kinds of things. It's just a lot." Participant 3

Since social media was their main source of communication with some friends and family members, especially during the pandemic, this caused them to experience even more distress. The increased likelihood of exposure incentivized participants to lower their use of social media, lessening their ability to keep in touch with some social circles.

Double-Edged Sword

When asked about their general feelings toward the circulation of the videos, almost all participants described the existence and sharing of the videos as a "double-edged sword." All participants discussed various cons to sharing the videos. These ranged from global desensitization and downplaying of racial violence to the traumatization of those within the Black community. Some participants believed that there are a number of social media users who share videos with malicious intent:

"I've also seen people share videos just to, you know, because they think it's a joke, or because they think it's funny. Just for likes, and views and comments." Participant 5

Many of them also thought that the videos were potentially triggering and traumatizing to those within the Black community. One participant described:

“I think sometimes they just share them to say like, ‘Yo, this is messed up’, not realizing that has an effect on people's mental health, like that type of content. So, they pretty much point out the obvious without realizing the like, impact that it does have like on someone's like psyche.” Participant 6

Despite participants recognizing the negative effects of circulating the videos, they still believe that the videos are necessary to share. Specifically, they believe that sharing the videos increases awareness of the racial violence that Black people experience.

“That it's important that other people know what's going on, and the severity of it, and not even just people of color, but you know, white people or just nonethnic people in general. Just so that they also are aware.” Participant 2

Participants felt that many people didn’t fully believe or understand how ubiquitous racial violence is to the Black community. Due to this, they felt that it is important to continue to circulate the videos to educate those who aren’t aware of how pressing the issue is. Participants specifically identified white and non-Black people as the intended target audience of the videos.

“Because a lot of people don't understand that, like, this is shit that happens every day, like violence against Black people, or I guess people of color, but that's like, it's like happens every day. So like, some people need to know that” Participant 3

“I mean, I think like, at least for the past, you know, decade, the videos have been a phenomenal way to do it, you know, I'm saying because you look at what populations use social media, most people were Internet access and a smartphone. And within, you know, certain age groups are using social media.” Participant 4

Despite acknowledging the negative mental health effects of seeing these videos, participants still felt that it is necessary to share the videos as a form of awareness. One participant explained that "it's never a good feeling, but you want people to be aware of what is going on in this world" (Participant 5).

Participants further explained that these social media sites, specifically Instagram and Twitter, serve as their source of information on all current events and news; especially when it comes to social justice issues, due to the differences and biases in reporting. Participant 3 highlighted the difference in reporting and accuracy between traditional news sites (i.e., CNN, FOX) compared to social media. They found that social media sites have a more holistic overview of issues:

"I think especially like, in 2020. Twitter was like a great source to like, hear about, like, people's, like, first-person experiences, like on-the-ground protests and stuff. Because one thing I was like noticing was like, what was being recorded in the news and like, what people who were like on the ground, like what they were saying, was different. Um, so during that period of time, I felt like I was like, on Twitter a lot like trying to find out like, what's going on, like, like, in like, both in like my community because I was living in Chicago at the time. And just like, what was going on, like, in different like communities that were being like affected and where protests were happening? But that also made me so we're doing less of that now. Participant 3

By using these sites, they explained, they are able to see local and national instances of racial violence and the stories are more authentic; signaling that social media is an emerging news site.

They explained that one of the reasons the videos were shared was to have evidence and hold perpetrators of racial violence accountable. Participants cited that some perpetrators of civilian violence, most often harassment and verbal abuse, faced consequences because of the virality of

the videos. However, they also cited the lack of police indictments and convictions after murdering a Black person, acknowledging that the intended purpose of the videos hasn't been fully realized. In fact, some explained that the amount of racial violence hasn't decreased and there have been minimal efforts to address police brutality and racial violence systematically.

"[The videos] will touch somebody, maybe the wrong or the right way and they might, you know… [they'll] be more inspired to go out and try to change… that's kind of how I feel about it." Participant 5

Despite the growing number of videos circulating on social media, participants felt that there was a lack of sustainable, systemic efforts to address racial violence. Participants also discussed that, despite the negative effects of the videos and lack of change, they held onto the hope that the videos would spark change.

"There may be the right person or people to see the video, and then something actually [is] done. So, it's kind of like me being hopeful, but at the same time, not putting too much weight into that hope." Participant 2

Because of the numerous perceived benefits of sharing videos on social media, participants believed the potential benefits of the videos outweighed the cons.

Conclusion

Participants defined racial violence as any form of physical, verbal, psychological, or systematic abuse, assault, and/or harassment toward Black people. In their efforts to make sense of and process the videos, they described how exposure to videos of racial violence through social media has negatively impacted their mental health. They reported having feelings of disappointment, sadness, anger, hopelessness, and pain. Due to these feelings, they either

stopped engaging with the videos or created specific guidelines for when they would engage. These changes often made participants feel guilty for prioritizing their mental health. They felt that they were going against the #BLM movement by not engaging in activism and protests. Despite being hurt and emotional by seeing acts of racial violence, they still felt immense pressure to be on the front lines. Participants' understanding of the prevalence of racial violence, coupled with the lack of protections, and strong connections to their identity, created a mindset in which participants were not only hyperaware but also extremely fearful. These factors led to changes in how participants planned for the future. Despite participants identifying the negative effects of being exposed to the videos, they still believe that the videos are necessary to share for awareness and accountability.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

This study builds on current literature regarding the impact of being exposed to racial violence. Currently, studies show that there is an association between exposure to police brutality and the prevalence of anxiety and depression within the Black community (Bor et al., 2018; DeVylder et al., 2018; Hawkins, 2022; Noble, 2018; Staggers-Hakim, 2016). However, very few studies focus on all forms of racial violence and social media as a means of exposure (Campbell & Valera, 2020; Maxie-Moreman & Tynes, 2022). This study was designed to address these gaps within the literature. Through qualitative interviews, it aims to answer the following research questions:

- What are young Black adults' experiences viewing racial violence on social media?
- How do young Black adults perceive the impact of these videos on their mental health and social media use?
- What socio-environmental factors do they identify as influencing this impact?

Summary of Study

Racial violence is defined racial violence as any form of physical, verbal, psychological, or systematic abuse, assault, and/or harassment toward Black people. While anyone can be a perpetrator of racial violence, participants specifically stated that white people and those in positions of power engaged in acts of racial violence. While the existence of racial violence already impacted participants, the hyper-exposure via social media exacerbated the effects of exposure to racial violence. Current literature explores the spillover effects of police brutality within Black communities, demonstrating that there are negative mental health implications (Bor

et al., 2018; Bryant-Davis et al., 2017; DeVylder et al., 2022; Hawkins, 2022; Staggers-Hakim, 2016). Through qualitative interviews, several nuances in the impact of viewing racial violence on social media for young Black adults. While participants identified several negative mental health implications of exposure to racial violence, they still felt the need to spread awareness outweighed the effects of exposure. Furthermore, a bi-directional relationship between the effects of exposure and participants' upbringing, social awareness, and identity. While the videos impacted these aspects within the participants, these aspects also played a role in how the participant processed and were impacted by the videos.

Overview of Findings

RQ1: What are young Black adults' experiences viewing racialized violence on social media?

RQ1 aims to better understand the processes participants go through when encountering videos of racial violence on social media. All participants stated that social media was the primary exposure to racial violence, specifically Twitter and Instagram. A majority were exposed 1 to 2 times per week through social media. The murder of Trayvon Martin was cited as the first, most significant news story related to violence for participants. The summer of 2020 and the BLM movement were references as points of great stress and social media engagement for participants.

Previous studies demonstrated to be associated with an increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression in the Black community (Graham, 2020, DeVylder, 2017, Bor, 2017, Staggers-Hakim, 2016). While those studies only focused on exposure to police brutality, participants

described similar effects due to exposure to all forms of racial violence. Participants specifically detailed feelings of disappointment, sadness, anger, hopelessness, and pain. They also stated they were desensitized because they were no longer surprised by the presence of the videos or acts of violence, regardless of if they watched them or not. Such reflections align with literature suggesting that trauma and racism can be experienced vicariously (Bor, 2018, Hawkin, 2022, Campbell, 2020, DeVylder et al., 2017).

RQ2a: How do young Black adults perceive the impact of these videos on their mental health & social media use?
RQ2b: What socio-environmental factors do they identify as influencing this impact?

RQ2a aims to understand how exposure to videos of racial violence impacted participants' mental health and social media use. RQ2b aims to understand how participants' experiences have influenced their relationship with videos of racial violence. These questions were analyzed together because of the fluid relationship between participants' experiences, mental health, and identity. Participants described not only how their self-conception of identity might be influenced by the videos, but also how their perception of videos was simultaneously influenced by their identity. Due to the heightened exposure to racial violence on social media, particularly in 2020, participants altered their engagement practices with videos of racial violence. Most participants were no longer engaged with videos depicting racial violence and instead sought out more positive content in hopes of protecting their mental health. This created a lot of guilt for participants because they felt that they were taking away from the BLM movement. For those who did watch the videos, they still needed time to mentally prepare themselves to watch them. They felt pressured, both internally and externally, to continue to engage with the videos. This pressure derived from feelings that they needed to engage in advocacy efforts. Current literature has demonstrated that exposure to racial violence and experiencing forms of racism contribute to

the mental decline of Black people (Bor, 2018, Campbell, 2020, Hawkins, 2022; APA, n.d.). While participants' mental health was already suffering due to knowing about the rampant instances of racial violence, the increased exposure due to the circulation of the videos further contributed to the worsening mental health of participants. This builds on current literature since current studies don't examine how and why participants engaged with posts of racial violence.

Participants' identity, upbringing, and social consciousness simultaneously influenced how they perceived the videos and were impacted by the videos. Consistent with the literature, participants' parents had "The Talk" with them to teach about race relations within the U.S. and how to avoid victimization (Hawkins, 2022; Bryant-Davis et al., 2017; Staggers-Hakim, 2016). However, participants explained that this prior knowledge didn't prepare them for witnessing or experiencing racial violence. "The Talk", which was born out of intergenerational trauma and racial socialization, was no longer deemed effective by participants, due to the mounting evidence that complying with police doesn't guarantee safety. While participants had prior knowledge of racial violence and police brutality, the circulation of the videos demonstrated that, if ever in that situation, participants would be at the mercy of their abusers.

Furthermore, there was a bi-directional relationship between participants' identities and the videos' impact. Participants described how their self-conception of identity played a role in how they processed the videos as well as how the videos impacted their feelings about their identity, which often happened simultaneously. They described how their identity often made them feel

more connected to the victim and saw themselves in that victim when watching the videos. Those who identified as privileged felt the need to watch the videos, as a reminder that their privilege didn't save them from becoming a victim of racial violence. These interactions between the videos and participants' identities contributed to the negative mental health outcomes experienced by participants. They became hyperaware of their surroundings and extremely terrified about becoming a victim. While these fears were present prior to the circulation of the videos, their existence reinforced those thoughts. This aligned with literature describing complex trauma, which involved constant exposure to pervasive traumatic events and leads to negative psychological outcomes ((Bryant-Davis et al., 2017; Maxie-Moreman & Tynes, 2022; Staggers-Hakim, 2016).

Altogether, participants' understanding of the prevalence of racial violence, coupled with the lack of protections, and strong connections to their identity, created a mindset in which participants were not only hyperaware but also extremely fearful of being a victim of racial violence. This led participants to adjust and create a different set of norms. As mentioned, participants disengaged with videos of racial violence to preserve their mental health. However, participants explained that because of the pervasiveness of the videos, they would often be exposed to them regardless of any precautions they took. Due to this, participants were uncomfortable on social media and often on edge because they knew they would eventually be exposed to racial violence. They explained that they had to adjust to this new reality, by either continuing to be cautious on social media or avoiding the apps entirely. Furthermore, participants often revisited the idea of having children in the future. Participants explained that they don't want to have children because they understand they would most likely be victims of racial violence and don't want to expose them to that. Understanding the realities of racial violence,

participants had to adjust how they thought about their future. Such findings are consistent with literature discussing intergenerational trauma and revictimization, and the roles they play in the racial socialization of children (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017; DeVylder et al., 2022). The results demonstrate participants' efforts to protect future generations from the trauma they have experienced.

Despite these negative experiences, participants still felt that circulating the videos was necessary. Specifically, they believe that sharing the videos increases awareness of the racial violence that Black people experience. Literature showed that social media is used to challenge false narratives surrounding racial violence (Pew Research, 2020; Blake, 2020 Noble, 2018; Kennedy, 2016). Participants recognized this and felt that by show; ng others how prevalent racial violence is against the Black community, more demand for social change would come. While some acknowledged the lack of accountability, specifically regarding police brutality, they still felt that the videos needed to be shared.

Strengths and Limitations

This study had some limitations. One was the sample size. While the purpose of the study was to document participant experiences, including more participants in this study could have uncovered a larger variety of opinions. Since the Black experience is monolithic, more participants could have provided a multitude of perspectives and experiences related to racial violence. For example, many of the participants were graduate students. Experiences from people who are in the workforce or had different educational backgrounds could potentially differ from those captured. In addition, many participants were not native to Atlanta but currently

lived here. Black people from different regions of the U.S. have differing cultures and experiences. Exploring how regional differences impact participants' views could be beneficial.

Another limitation was a lack of gender diversity. Most of the participants were women, and all the participants were cis-gendered. While the inclusion of more than one gender identity allows for an exploration of intersectional experiences, the findings do not capture the experiences of transgender and non-binary individuals. Future work should focus on engaging participants who are transgender to further explore intersectionality of gender identities.

The positionality of the researcher is a strength of this study. As a Black woman, I ensured that a safe space was created for participants. By showing up as my true self and affirming participants' experiences, I believe I was able to collect richer data and better document their experiences. While some would identify my positionality as a limitation and source of bias, the purpose of this study was to document participants' experiences and feelings in the most accurate way possible. My identity allowed participants to feel comfortable with being vulnerable in our sessions. It also gave me better insight into when to probe participants to explain nuances unique to the Black community. For example, The Talk hinted at, but not thoroughly explained by one participant. After probing them, they provided a more in-depth explanation of The Talk, its implications, and current opinions regarding its effectiveness.

Implications and Future Directions

As part of this study, participants were asked their opinions on how to address the negative mental health effects of exposure to racial violence. Participants mentioned more trigger warnings, editing the videos to blur graphic scenes, and education about how to curate one's timeline to lessen chances of exposure. One participant even mentioned creating a separate app

for seeing those videos, or an app that is a safe space for Black people. The latter would ensure that users would never be exposed to traumatizing content. Separate apps, such as BLK, have been created to provide Black people with safe spaces for other activities like dating (BLK, n.d.). Similar models could be used to create a social media site that restricts the sharing of traumatizing content. However, this should be done with caution, as social media has been used to keep track of activists.

Increasing social media regulations and ensuring that any videos depicting traumatizing content are removed from social media sites is a potential policy solution. However, as mentioned, this could open the door to even more social media surveillance of activists. Following the 2014 Ferguson protests, because of the murder of Michael Brown and the grand jury's denial of charging the officer, six activists were found murdered (NBC News, 2019). These activists were directly tied to the protests, one even went viral for returning a tear gas canister fired by police (Figure 7). While the increased regulations could assist the Black community, those same policies could be used to subject the community to more violence. Instead, social media sites could be revised to increase individual control over their social media algorithms, without increasing the chances of surveillance.

Figure 7: Edward Crawford Jr. at Ferguson Protests, (Salter, 2019)

Future research should continue to examine the implication of consuming traumatizing content on social media. This research should emphasize understanding the perspectives of those from a diverse set of gender identities. It should also examine the treatment of Black people, specifically Black women, after traumatizing and lethal encounters with police. As seen in the case of George Floyd, negative narratives, such as his committing a crime or being on drugs, were used to justify his murder (Forliti et al., 2021). These practices were used in cases such as Sandra Bland and Breonna Taylor (Calvin & Helsel, 2015). Furthermore, most of the current research only focuses on Black cis-male victims. In an article focused on Diamond Reynolds's testimony, she was mentioned as "Philando Castile's girlfriend (Bailey, 2017). Despite the article being about her testimony and her also being a victim of violence, her name was only mentioned 9 times, almost half that of Castile's. This is an example of differential treatment concerning victims who identify as Black women. Intersectionality highlights the importance of considering the experiences of those with multiple identities, therefore research needs to explore the

differences in treatment, as well as the mental health effects of seeing differential treatment for other, non-cis-male identities.

Conclusion

This study contributes to current literature, demonstrating the effects of being exposed to racial violence, and highlighting the importance of one's identity and experiences. This study further contributes to the limited literature and considers the nuances of social media as an exposure. Overall, exposure to racial violence through social media negatively impacted participants' mental health, social media use, and life outlook. While participants were already negatively impacted by the existence of racial violence, the hyper-exposure through social media affirmed their fears about potentially being a victim. Furthermore, the videos confirmed that there are very few protections against racial violence for Black people. These many factors led many participants to rethink their future plans and want to have kids. With this, being exposed to racial violence should be considered a public health issue. Steps, both on the community and policy levels, should be taken to lessen the negative effects of exposure to racial violence. However, it is important to note that there will always be negative spillover effects of racial violence. The results of this study are the byproduct of greater issues: racism and a society that disregards Black life. These effects won't be eradicated until racial violence itself is eradicated. Society and politicians must commit to addressing the root causes of racial violence and disregard for Black life.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Email

My name is Ionie Banner, and I am a Graduate Student at the Emory Rollins School of Public Health. I am reaching out to ask for your help in recruiting participants for my Master's Thesis. I am conducting a qualitative research study focusing on the impact of social media on the mental health of young Black adults.

In this project, I will conduct interviews with young adults to understand their perceptions and experiences while viewing videos of racial violence on social media. In addition, this study will also explore the impacts this type of content has on participants' mental health and social media. I am conducting this study to fulfill a requirement within my school's curriculum.
As a popular, Black-owned coffee shop, if you could advertise my flyer enclosed in your shop, that would be greatly appreciated. The flyer includes the study description, eligibility criteria, and instructions on how to enroll in the study. I have also included fliers that you can post on social media.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if any of your colleagues might be of assistance and I will reach out to them separately. I appreciate your help and any suggestions that you may have.
Thank you,
Ionie Banner

Appendix B: Qualtrics Survey

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in participating in this qualitative study.
This study aims to explore and understand the perceptions and experiences of young Black adults as they view videos of racialized violence on social media. In addition, this study will also explore the impacts that viewing this type of content has on the mental health and social media use of participants and any social-environmental factors that might influence one's experience.
This study is being completed to fulfill the Integrated Learning Experience requirement of the curriculum at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University.
This survey is to determine if you are eligible to participate, obtain consent, and collect some demographic information. The completion of the entire survey is expected to take no more than 30 minutes.
If you have any questions, please contact Ionie Banner, the co-investigator at **ionie.banner@emory.edu**.

Eligibility

The following questions are to assess if you meet the eligibility criteria for the study. If you are eligible for the study, you will be directed to the consent form and survey. If you are not eligible, you will be unable to participate in this study and will be directed to exit the survey.
How old are you?

- Less than 18 *If selected, then deemed ineligible.*
- 18-24
- -25-29
- 30+ *If selected, then deemed ineligible.*

What race(s) do you consider yourself to be? (Select all that apply)

- Black *If NOT selected, then deemed ineligible.*
- White
- Native American/Indigenous
- Native Hawaiian
- Asian
- Other, please specify
- Prefer not to say *If selected, then deemed ineligible.*

What social media sites do you use? (Select all that apply)

- TikTok
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Facebook
- None *If selected, then deemed ineligible.*

Have you ever been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder by a doctor?

- Yes *If selected, then deemed ineligible.*
- No

Do you fluently speak English?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

IF ELIGIBLE: Thank you for filling out the eligibility survey. You are eligible to participate in the study. Please continue to the consent portion of the survey to begin your enrollment.
IF INELIGIBLE: Thank you so much for your interest. Unfortunately, we cannot enroll you in the study. We appreciate your interest and willingness to participate in the study despite it not working out.

Consent

On the next slide is the consent form. Please read through it carefully before making a decision. If you do not consent to participate, you will be deemed ineligible and asked to exit the survey. If you choose to participate, you will be directed to the demographic questionnaire.

Emory University Online Consent Form for a Research Study

Paste consent form here.

Demographic Questions

Thank you for your interest and consent to participate in this study. Next, you will be asked to take a survey. The survey includes demographic questions and questions related to your social media use. All of your answers will be kept confidential. This survey should take you approximately 10 minutes.
If you would like to contact the Principal Investigator in the study to discuss this research, please e-mail Ionie Banner at **ionie.banner@emory.edu.**

Name *Fill In*
Age *Fill In*
Email *Fill In*
Zip code *Fill In*
What is your gender? (Choose all that apply to you)

- ☐ Cis-woman
- ☐ Cis-man
- ☐ Trans women
- ☐ Trans man
- ☐ Non-binary / Genderqueer
- ☐ Not listed – please share: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What race(s) do you consider yourself to be? (Select All that apply)

- Black or African American
- White
- Native American/Indigenous/Native Hawaiian
- Asian
- Not listed, please share
- Prefer not to say

What is your ethnicity and/or nationality? *Fill In*

Rank the social media sites you use (1= Highest, 4= Lowest, 0= Do not use)

- TikTok
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Facebook

On average, how much time do you spend on social media per day? *Fill In*

In the last month, how often did you see images or videos of Black people experiencing racialized violence (e.g., harassment, police brutality)?

- Never
- Less than once a week
- 1-2 times a week
- 3 – 4 times a week
- 5+ Times a week

In the last month, how often have you had repeated bad dreams or nightmares or had disturbing or unpleasant memories, thoughts, or images that kept coming into your mind whether you wanted to think of them or not?

- Never
- Less than once a week
- 1-2 times a week
- 3 – 4 times a week
- 5+ Times a week

In the last month, how often have you deliberately tried hard not to think about a post you were exposed to or went out of your way to avoid certain media sites or activities that might remind you of something that happened in the past?

- Never
- Less than once a week
- 1-2 times a week
- 3 – 4 times a week
- 5+ Times a week

In the last month, how often have you felt you had to stay on guard much of the time on social media, or that being on social media startled you more than usual?

- Never
- Less than once a week
- 1-2 times a week

- 3 – 4 times a week
- 5+ Times a week

In the last month, how often have you felt cut off from other people, found it difficult to feel close to other people, or could not feel things anymore or you had much less emotion than you used to?

- Never
- Less than once a week
- 1-2 times a week
- 3 – 4 times a week
- 5+ Times a week

Thank you for completing the survey. Please list three (3) dates and times that you are available for a 60-minute interview on Zoom. *Fill In*

Thank you for filling out this survey. Our research team will be in touch to schedule your interview. If you have any questions, need to change your availability, or would like to withdraw from the study, please email Ionie Banner at **ionie.banner@emory.edu**.

End of Study

Appendix C: Altered NY PTSD Questions

PTSD Questions

1. You had repeated bad dreams or nightmares or had disturbing or unpleasant memories, thoughts, or images that kept coming into your mind whether you wanted to think of them or not.
2. You deliberately tried hard not to think about something that happened to you or went out of your way to avoid certain places or activities that might remind you of something that happened in the past.
3. You felt you had to stay on guard much of the time or unexpected noises startled you more than usual.
4. You felt cut off from other people, found it difficult to feel close to other people, or you could not feel things anymore or you had much less emotion than you used to have.

Updated Questions

1. In the last month, how often have you had repeated bad dreams or nightmares or had disturbing or unpleasant memories, thoughts, or images that kept coming into your mind whether you wanted to think of them or not?
2. In the last month, how often have you deliberately tried hard not to think about a post you were exposed to or went out of your way to avoid certain media sites or activities that might remind you of something that happened in the past?
3. In the last month, how often have you felt you had to stay on guard much of the time on social media, or that being on social media startled you more than usual?
4. In the last month, how often have you felt cut off from other people, found it difficult to feel close to other people, or could not feel things anymore or you had much less emotion than you used to?

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Participant ID:

Date:

Interview Start Time __: __ Interview End Time __: __

Location:

Briefing Script

Thank you again for participating in this discussion. My name is Ionie Banner. Before we start, I want to remind you of the study topic. This study explores young Black adults' experiences while viewing racial violence and the death of Black people. I want to gain more insight into people's experiences of viewing trauma online and the perceived impact this type of media has. This study is being completed to fulfill the Integrated Learning Experience requirement for the Master of Public Health curriculum at Emory University. IRB approval was obtained for this study.
The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. I will ask you questions related to your experiences with racial violence, social media, and viewing racial violence on social media. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have the right to take a break or stop participating at any time, without penalty. You also may refuse to answer questions that you don't feel comfortable with or don't wish to answer. The risks to you are minimal, however, because this topic is potentially triggering to some, I would like to note that we can provide a list of mental health resources, should you need them. I would also like to record the interview, to ensure that what you share is accurately captured.
Your confidentiality and privacy are of the utmost importance, so several precautions will be taken to ensure you are protected. Your name and other identifiable information will be erased from the interview transcript and the recording will be deleted upon completion of the transcript. All research-related material will be kept on a password-protected computer. Besides myself, my research team, which consists of my thesis advisor and one committee member, might see your de-identified transcript. You will not receive compensation for your participation in this study. Are you okay with being audio recorded?
[If yes, start recording. If not, take detailed notes.]

Social Media Use

1) How often do you use social media?
    - What are the main reasons why you use social media? (Social, networking, business, political, news)

Experiences with Racialized Violence

2) What does racial violence mean to you? /How would you describe it?
3) What is the first incident of racial violence that you remember?
    - Have you ever experienced racialized violence firsthand?
    - Have you witnessed violence towards a friend/family member? Or in the news?
4) How do you typically find out about incidents of racial violence?
5) What was an experience seeing posts or videos of violence against Black people or Black death on social media that stuck out to you?
    - How would you describe this experience? What was your reaction?

Exposure & Engagement with Videos of Racialized Violence

6) When you are on social media, how often do you see posts of videos that show violence toward Black people?
    - Has anyone ever directly shared these types of posts or videos with you? How did that feel?
7) How would you describe your engagement with this type of content?
    - Do you like, comment on, and/or repost them? Why or why not?
    - If so, how do you pick which post you engage with?
8) How has your engagement with this type of content changed over time, if at all?
    - Do you always engage with this type of content?

Feeling About Seeing Videos of Racial Violence

9) Overall, how do you feel about posts and videos showing violence against Black people being shared on social media?
10) Why do you think people share them?
    - Would you want to be exposed to these videos in a different way?
    - Who should/shouldn't see them?
11) What kinds of conversations do these videos spark in your social circle?
    - What do your friends/family think about how these posts and videos are shared on social media?
    - How/when do these conversations come up?
    - Do these conversations cause any conflict? How do you handle it?

Impact of Seeing Videos

12) Can you describe how these videos have influenced your social media use?
    - Have you become avoidant? More of an activist? *Address possible coping mechanisms if avoidant.*
13) How do you think viewing these videos has impacted your life?
    - Mental health/overall wellbeing?
    - Social life/relationships?
    - What are some ways you've coped or adjusted to the presence of these videos?
    - How do you think these videos shaped your identity?

14) How do you think your personal experiences with racialized violence might have impacted your perception of these videos?
    - Do you think there is anything that has affected the way you perceive this type of content? (Upbringing, personal philosophy, education, etc.)
    - What if anything has affected the way you perceived this type of content?
    - How do you think your identity has influenced the way you think about this type of content?

Interventions/Suggestions

15) If we wanted to lessen the impact of these videos, how should we go about it?
    - What other strategies could be used to spread awareness about racialized violence? *Ask if participant doesn't agree with sharing of videos.*

Closing

Thank you so much for your participation. I don't have any more questions, but is there anything you would like to share or discuss more before we finish?

Appendix E: Codebook

Code	**Memo**
Social Media	Anything related to social media
Social Media > Frequency	How often the participant uses social media
Social Media > Reasons	The main reasons the participant uses social media
RV Meaning	How the participant defines racial violence
Exposure	Anything related to the participant being exposed to racial violence
Exposure > First-Hand	If the participant has experienced racial violence first hand
Exposure > Second-Hand	If the participant witnessed racial violence second-hand
Exposure > Source	How the participant becomes aware of instances of racial violence
Exposure > News	The first instance of racial violence the participant saw in the media
Exposure > Who	Participant's opinion on who should/shouldn't see the videos
Event	Specific events of racial violence mentioned by participant
Names	Names of victims of racial violence mentioned by participants
Social Media Exposure	Exposure to racial violence on social media
Social Media Exposure > Inevitable Exposure	Participant mentions that they will be exposed to videos of RV at some point
Social Media Exposure > Shared	If the participant has had posts > videos of racial violence sent to them
Social Media Exposure > Frequency	How of then the participant is exposed to racial violence on social media
Suggestions	Solutions to sharing/seeing RV on social media
Engagement	How the participant engages with posts showing of racial violence on social media
Engagement > Changes	Changes in the participants engagement
Engagement > Decision	If the participant reports the post
Feelings	Parent code
Feelings > General Sharing	Feelings about the sharing of videos on social media
Feelings > Direct	How the participant feels about people directly sharing videos > posts with them
Feelings > Seeing TL	Feelings when seeing posts of racial violence on timeline
Purpose	Participant's thoughts on the purpose of sharing the videos
Purpose > Hopeful/Evidence	sharing of videos as a form of evidence or hopeful that change will come
Purpose > Importance	If/when the participant thinks sharing the videos is important
Cons of Sharing	If the participant thinks there are any cons to sharing the videos
Perceived Impact	How the participant thinks being exposed to racial violence impacts people
Good Quote	Quotes that are interesting
Suggestions	Solutions to sharing/seeing RV on social media

Impact of Videos	How the videos have impacted the participant
Impact of Videos > Social Media Use	How the videos have impacted the participant's social media use
Impact of Videos > Mental health	How the videos have impacted the participant's mental health
Impact of Videos > Relationships	How the videos have impacted the participant's relationships
Impact of Videos > Societal Views	How the videos have impacted the participant's societal views
Impact of Videos > Life outlook	How the videos have impact the participant's outlook on life
Impact of Videos > Identity	How the videos have impacted the participant's identity
Self-Awareness	Participant identifies that they do/don't have the bandwidth to deal with videos
Coping	How the participant has coped or adjusted to the presence of the videos
Coping > Activism	Participant notes that the videos "inspire" them to try to change the system and do better
Coping > Self-Care	Participant focuses on self-care and mental health
Coping > Preparedness	Steps the participant takes to prepare themselves for a possible encounter with racialized violence on social media and in general
Coping > Community	Participant finds community and connects with others
Coping > Search for Positivity	Participant attempt to look for or spread positive content on social media
Coping > Avoidance	If the participant avoids posts related to racial violence
Impact of Experiences	How life experiences influenced perception of videos/posts
Impact of Experiences > Upbringing	How life experiences influenced perception of videos > posts
Impact of Experiences > Identity	How the participant's identity has impacted their perception of the videos
Impact of Experiences > With RV	The way the participant's personal experiences with racial violence impacts their perception of videos of RV
Social Group	Parent code for participant's interactions/conversations with their friends/family
Social Group > Conversation	If participant has any conversations about the sharing of RV videos
Social Group > Thoughts	Thoughts participant's social group has on sharing of videos
Social Group > Conflict	If sharing of videos has caused any conflict

Appendix F: RQ, Codes, and Categories

RQ/Topic	Category	Code
What are young Black adults' experiences viewing racialized violence on social media?	Exposure	Exposure/Second-Hand
		Exposure/Media
		Exposure/Source
		Social Media Exposure
		Social Media Exposure > Shared
		Social Media Exposure > Frequency
		Event
		Names
		Social Media
		Social Media > Frequency
		Social Media > Reasons
	Engagement with the Content	Engagement
	Feelings about Sharing/Seeing	Feelings
		Feelings > Seeing TL
		Feelings > Direct
		Feelings > General Sharing
	Perception of Purpose and Impact	Purpose
		Purpose > Hopeful/Evidence
		Purpose > Importance
		Perceived Impact
		Cons of Sharing
	Perceptions of RV	RV Meaning
How do young Black adults perceive the impact of these videos on their mental health & social media use?	Impact of Social Circle	Social Group
		Engagement
	Engagement Changes	
		Engagement/Changes
		Engagement/Decisions
		Social Media Exposure > Inevitable Exposure
	Video Impact	Coping
		Coping > Activism

		Coping > Self-Care
		Coping > Preparedness
		Coping > Community
		Coping > Search for Positivity
		Coping > Avoidance
		Impact of Videos
		Impact of Videos > Social Media Use
		Impact of Videos > Mental health
		Impact of Videos > Relationships
		Impact of Videos > Societal Views
		Impact of Videos > Life outlook
		Impact of Videos > Identity
		Self-Awareness
	Impact of Social Circle	Social Group
		Social Group > Conversation
		Social Group > Thoughts
		Social Group > Conflict
What socio-environmental factors do they identify as influencing this impact?	Impact of Experiences	Impact of Experiences
		Impact of Experiences > Upbringing
		Impact of Experiences > Identity
		Impact of Experiences > With RV
		Exposure > First-Hand
	Perception of Purpose and Impact	Purpose
		Purpose > Hopeful/Evidence
		Purpose > Importance
		Perceived Impact
		Cons of Sharing
	Impact of Social Circle	Social Group
		Social Group > Conversation
		Social Group > Thoughts
		Social Group > Conflict
Implications	Solutions	Suggestions
	Who should be exposed	Exposure > Who
	Pros/Cons	Cons of Sharing
		Purpose > Importance
		Purpose > Hopeful/Evidence