

# Living with Fear: A Qualitative Inquiry with Childbearing Black Women

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## Background and Purpose

Health disparities in childbearing black women in the United States continue despite overall improvements in pregnancy-related outcomes globally, regardless of socioeconomic factors such as education and income <sup>1-5</sup>.

While racism, poverty, barriers to health care access, and lifestyle choices are commonly identified stressors <sup>5,6</sup>, these alone are inadequate to explain the problem.

Pregnancy-related outcomes for black women have significantly lagged compared to other racial groups <sup>7</sup>.

**Study Purpose:** Explore the lived experiences of stress described by black mothers.

## Methods

**Design:** Phenomenological design with hermeneutic interpretation was after human subjects approval.

**Setting:** A Texas county was selected based on high maternal mortality <sup>8</sup> and infant mortality <sup>9</sup> rates within the black community.

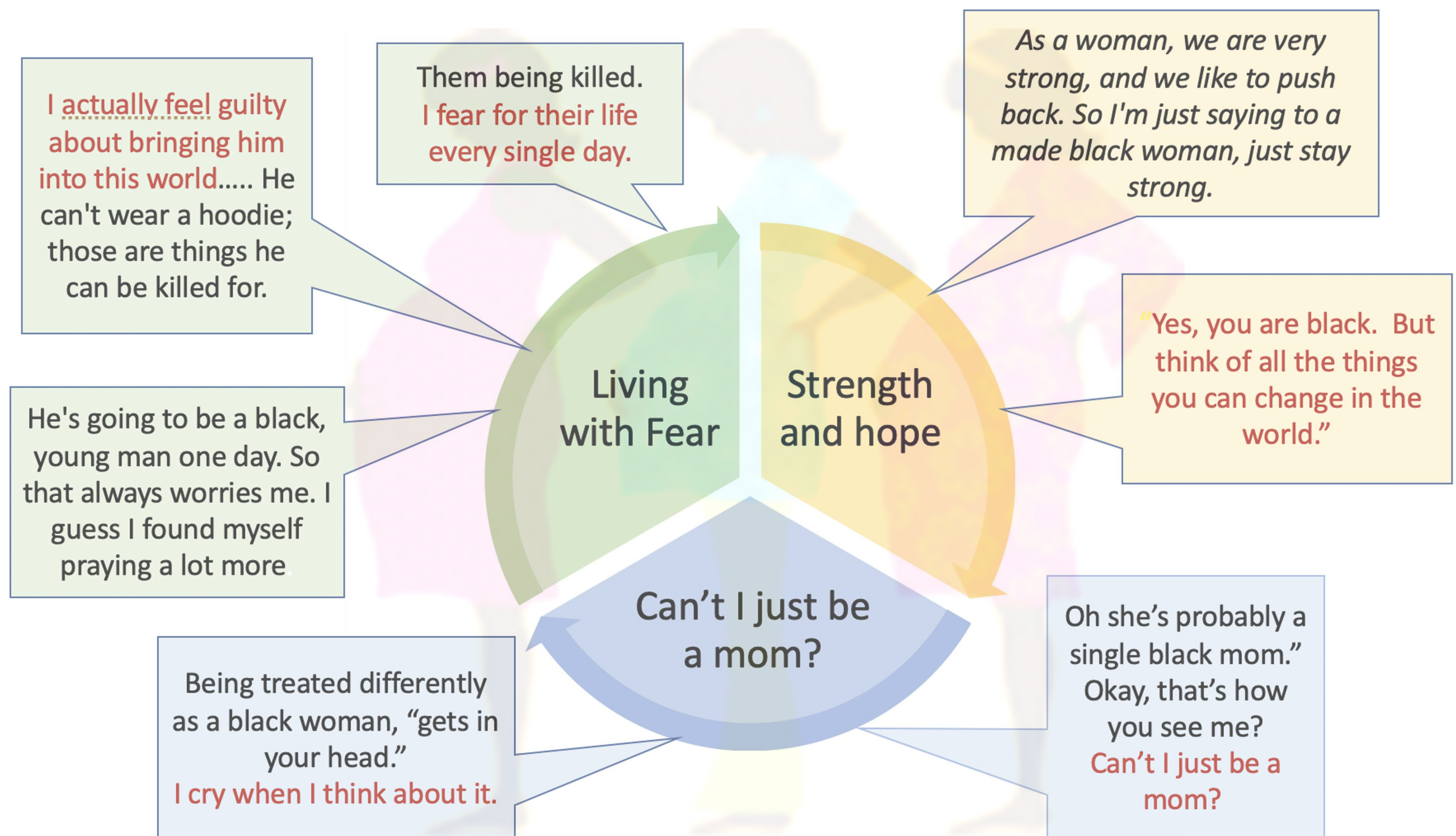
**Population:** Pregnant, English speaking black women or who delivered within the past 24 months.

**Data Collection:** Semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and data were analyzed independently, and then by the team.



**Our research team and co-authors**

Jamil Norman  
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## Results

Eight women voiced concerns with multiple themes emerging related to caution in developing trusting relationships and awareness of health care bias.

Most striking was a concern for the safety of their children in society with particular fear regarding raising a black son voiced in all of interviews.

## Limitations

Caution is needed in interpreting these results since the data represent the perspectives of eight women all from the same community. Further study is needed to validate these findings.

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## Discussion and Implications

- If the pattern of this disparity persists, over the next 10 years we can anticipate
  - 5,136 maternal deaths
  - 3.19 million low birth weight deliveries
  - 3.8 million preterm deliveries
  - 71,660 infant deaths
- Given this projection there is an urgent need to identify factors related to these birth outcomes.
- This innovative study is one of the first to explore the cumulative effects of stressors uniquely identified by black women.
- An internet based qualitative study is under development to verify and extend our understanding of Living with Fear.