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Concerns and Coping of African-American Mothers After Youth Assault Requiring Emergency Medical Treatment

Lori F. Phelps, MS¹, W. Hobart Davies, PhD^{1,2},
Michael R. McCart, MS¹, Bonita P. Klein-Tasman, PhD¹,
Marlene D. Melzer-Lange, MD² and Wendi Heuermann, MS³

¹ University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, ² Medical College of Wisconsin, and ³ Children's Hospital of Wisconsin

All correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Lori F. Phelps, MS, Psychology Department, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2441 East Hartford Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53211. E-mail: lfphelps@uwm.edu.

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Objective To explore maternal experience following youth assault occurring in the community. **Methods** A semistructured interview was used to elicit concerns and coping strategies among 35 African-American mothers whose children received emergency department (ED) treatment for assault-related injuries. Mothers also completed measures of violence exposure, trauma symptoms, social support, and youth functioning. **Results** The most common concerns involved family safety, maternal mental health, and youth externalizing behavior. Faith and social support were the most common coping strategies. High levels of distress were found, which were directly related to maternal violence exposure, relationships that required mothers to nurture others, and youth functioning. Distress was inversely related to relationships that provided guidance from others. **Conclusion** Distress is common among low-income African-American mothers of youth assault victims. To bolster youth recovery and to reduce the risk of future injury, ED staff should be knowledgeable regarding culturally sensitive resources to address maternal distress.

Key words: ecological–transactional approach; maternal distress; youth violence.

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