**CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Racism is multi-faceted in its nature, presentation, effects, and constituent components (discrimination, power, dominance) rooted in its expression and its total influence on the lives of African Americans. Racism is a difficult concept to operationalize for many (Harrell, 2020). The problem is that middle-class African Americans experience race-related stress due to the influence of political ideologies that inform their perceptions of injustice (Kivikangas et al., 2021; Leong et al., 2020). However, the sociological relationship between race-related stress and perceptions of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN is unknown.

Utsey (1999) proposed using the concept of race-related stress to represent the physical, emotional, psychological, and mental toll exerted on African Americans due to chronic exposure to racism, racial prejudice, racial discrimination, and racial stereotypes. People perceive different actions as unjust and will react differently to injustice experiences. This subjective perception of injustice could determine their actions and their mental health - race-related stress (Fetchenhauer, Huang, 2004). For example, current research on people suffering from pain after traumatic accidents has shown that people who subjectively perceived their situation as less just felt pain longer and more strongly (Trost, Scott, Buelow, Nowlin, Turan, Boals, Monder, 2017; Sullivan, 2020; Carriere, Pimentel, Yakobov, Edwards, 2020).

A deeper examination, using CRT as the framework, revealed additional considerations such as historical racism, the oppression of African Americans in the current socio-political context, unique knowledge and experiences of the African American population, multidisciplinary influences, and actions for social justice (Daftary, 2018; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2017; Aymer, 2016). With CRT guiding the research conceptualizations of race-related stress and the perception of injustice, the relationship between the two variables will be examined to offer insight into their possible relationship. Research has not examined the relationship between one’s race-related stress and perception of injustice. Emerging social trends indicate the need to understand any possible relationship between race-related stress and one’s perception of injustice (Utsey, 1999; Neumann, Berger, & Kizilhan, 2021). Research on middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN excludes the possible relationship race-related stress could have on the perception of injustice. Further research should include social theories such as Marxism and the concepts that stem from it (Ghous, 2020; Holman, Salway, Bell, Beach, Adebajo, Ali, & Butt, 2021; Thiele, 2021). The problem statement, purpose of the study, literature search strategies, theoretical framework, research literature review, gap in the literature, and a summary will be discussed.

**Literature Research Strategy**

Locating, retrieving, and utilizing relevant theoretical and empirical research will be imperative in the literature development and expansion process (Hempel, 2020). Relevant database sources will be identified and accessed via Internet searches and the American College of Education's library databases, a subscription-based service. A needs assessment will be performed to obtain keywords and phrases pertinent to the study. The keywords and phrases searched will be *Marxism*, *Socialism*, *hegemony*, *intersectionality*, *political correctness*, and *critical race theory (CRT)*. Peer-reviewed sources will be evaluated and analyzed for topic relevance. An iterative approach will be used, and research strategies will be adjusted as necessary. Online journals, Google Scholar, Google Books, SpringerLink, and Directory of Open Access Journals will be some of the search engines used for the literature review. The library databases to be used in part will be, JSTOR, Open Dissertations, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, ProQuest Education Database, ProQuest ERIC, SAGE Journal, Sage Research Methods, Elsevier Science Direct, Emerald Insight, and EBSCOHost.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework will consist of two theories. The two theories involved will be Marxism and conflict, and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Each of the theories will be discussed as follows.

**Marxism and Conflict**

Much had been written about Marxism and conflict. Ghous (2020) wrote that drawing on different schools of Marxist thought establishes the case of ideology as one of the many potential sources of social conflict. Economic determinism cannot solely cause social conflict. Ideology has a part. Insistence upon mere economic vernacular and eliminating consciousness and moral elements will limit the scope of the social conflict theory. Middle-class African Americans can affect constructive social change by understanding the relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice (Ghous, 2020).

Conflict arose many times when different people embraced different values. Some believed humans believed that if one selected one's values, one could not select the values of others - one had to prefer one over the other. One could not subscribe to democracy and authoritarianism simultaneously (Ghous, 2020). Conflict in modern times seemed to be about different values embraced by different people – incompatible values. It will be helpful to understand the elements of conflict. Conflict will be understood as a disagreement through which the parties perceive danger from others to their needs, interests, or way of life (Ghous, 2020). Conflict could take different forms, from overt (seen) to covert (unseen) conflicts. Furthermore, conflict also operates on different levels - person to person, country to country. Clashes (micro or macro) could be over economic, political, or social gain differences. Conflict might occur between interest groups, corporations, and political parties. African Americans need to know and understand the ramifications Marxism could have on their level of race-related stress and perception of injustice and how these two variables might affect their behavior (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014).

Ideology will be a permanent feature of social and political life. Ideology will continuously shape and reshape society. Ideology will lead to group identification and, consequently, conflicting preferences and choices (Ghous, 2020). Individuals and groups will enter the political arena with different expectations and preferences. Sometimes, these differing preferences will result in sharp divisions. Heterogeneous (diverse) societies suffer more from differences and divisions than homogeneous (same) societies and will be less likely to exhibit political stability (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Ideological conflicts differ from personal and other conflicts in that all other conflicts might occur due to non-moral actions, whereas ideological conflicts could be purely value-based (Ghous, 2020). However, factors such as economic determinism will also be responsible for social conflict.

Marx introduced the theory of economic determinism as a reaction to the industrial revolution (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). The 20th and 21st centuries will be writhed with conflicting ideologies. The roots of much of the conflict will be found in material disputes. One will not underestimate the importance of other factors as potential sources of conflict. While a considerable portion of social and political conflict will be rooted in different ideologies followed by different people and groups, one must not neglect other factors such as psychological needs, religion, ethnicity, culture, nationalism, regionalism - all will be significant conflict bases (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Therefore, the intention of this rationale will not be to undermine the significance of economic determinism, nor will it give more weight to other factors. The rationale will give significance to the notion that beliefs, ideas, and values will guide the actions of many in the social and political worlds (Ghous, 2020). Ideology will be a powerful factor. Ideology could lead to violent conflict in society. Ideological conflicts will result from different ideological choices based on espoused values. Ghous (2020) Espoused the notion that values could affect how middle-class African Americans experience race-related stress and their perception of injustice.

**Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

Delgado, Stefanic, & Harris (2017) defined the critical race theory movement clearly and succinctly, writing that the critical race theory (CRT) movement was a collection of scholars and activists working to transform and study the relationships between race (culture), racism (justice/injustice), and power (hegemony). The CRT movement considered many issues, such as conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses, but placed them in a wider perspective (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017; Harris, 2022).

Unlike conventional civil rights, CRT will scrutinize more closely from broader perspectives such as economics, history, interest groups, individual interests, and emotions. CRT will question the foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, rationalism, enlightenment, and constitutional law. Many "communities" will have their lane regarding CRT and social justice (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017). By increasing understanding of CRT, middle-class African Americans could have more insight into how Marxism could increase their race-related stress and affect their perception of injustice.

**Relating Marxism and Conflict and Critical Race Theory**

Marxism and conflict will drive the contemporary, popular notion of critical race theory. The 20th and 21st centuries will be replete with conflicting ideologies. The roots of much of the conflict will be found in material disputes (Ghous, 2020). While a considerable portion of social and political conflict will be rooted in differing ideologies, different people, and groups, one must not neglect other factors such as psychological needs, ethnicity, religion, culture, nationalism, and regionalism. Ghous (2020) said the intention will not be to undermine the significance of economic determinism, nor will it give more weight to other factors. The rationale will be to give significance to the notion that beliefs, ideas, and values will guide the actions of many in the social and political worlds. Ideology will be a powerful factor (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014).

Opponents of CRT in the United States will publicly, politically, and legally challenge CRT's rhetoric and goals. Much debate will emerge about how, when, and whether CRT should be taught in academic curricula, particularly at the K-12 levels. Nine Republican-majority states will institute laws or other stipulations banning the teaching of CRT, with some lawmakers referring to the concept as “toxic,” “divisive,” and responsible for making some students feel “guilt and anguish” based on their race (Dutton, 2021; Zurcher, 2021). For many, this controversy will be couched in whether people believe CRT will be a framework for understanding how racism will mold American institutions and culture. Alternatively, for others, CRT will instead be a divisive narrative that permanently sets people of color against caucasian people (Sawchuk, 2021). It will be vital to note that the differences in thought will not represent a perfect split between Democrat and Republican ideologies. There will be liberal public figures who criticize CRT as "illiberal" (Zurcher, 2021).

There appeared to be a fundamental misunderstanding of the meaning and underpinnings of CRT, with it often being conflated with other related topics of discontent in the US (anti-racism, social justice, discrimination) or presented as an "elitist" "academic" concept (Sawchuk, 2021; Zurcher, 2021). Regardless of the reasons for disagreement (insufficient knowledge/grasp of the theory, sensationalism), it will be vitally necessary to further scholarly work that will demonstrate and elucidate the tenants of CRT and how the perception of injustice might affect middle-class African Americans' level of race-related stress.

Salami (2015) conducted a quantitative study on 245 African-American adults between 18 and 60 years old from low-income communities in the US Southeast. The study used the Index of Race-Related Stress, the IRRS-B (Utsey, 1999). The study also used the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) (Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996) and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) (Beck, Epstein, Brown, & Steer, 1988). In addition, participants were asked comprehensive demographic questions about their age, marital status, education, and employment status (Salami, 2015). The IRRS-Brief is multidimensional and provides a global racism measure along with the following three subscales: cultural racism ("*You seldom hear or read anything positive about Black people on radio, TV, in newspapers or history books*”), institutional racism (“*You were passed over for an important assignment at work*”), and individual racism (“*You have been threatened with physical violence*”) subscales. Results demonstrated that stressful life events are associated with the onset of symptoms of depression and anxiety (Hammen, 2005; Kendler, Hettema, Butera, Gardner, & Prescott, 2003; Kendler, Karkowski, & Prescott, 1998; Paykel, 2003). For African Americans, examining culturally relevant stressors such as race-related stress might be particularly important to understand and predict the onset of depression and anxiety. Racial stressors such as the experience of racism and discrimination will be found to be associated with psychological distress for African Americans (Broman, Mavaddat, & Hsu, 2000; Carter, 2007; Clark et al., 2004; Klonoff, Landrine, & Ullman, 1999; Thoits, 1991; Utsey et al., 2000). However, the experience of racism may not be a unitary experience. Different experiences of race-related stressors may differentially influence the development of psychological distress. Data from the study could provide insight and assist middle-class African Americans in addressing their possible relationship between race-related stress and perception of injustice (Ghous, 2020).

**Research Literature Review**

The research literature review will consist of 6 sections. The six sections will be CRT, Marxism and conflict, socialism, hegemony, intersectionality, political correctness, and gap in the literature. Each of the topics will be discussed as follows.

**Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

The late Derrick Bell, formerly of Harvard Law School, serving as a distinguished professor of law at New York University when he died in 2011, became the CRT movement’s intellectual father figure (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017, p. 6). Derrick Bell was considered the father figure of neoliberal CRT because he wrote many of the underlying principles. There were, of course, many others that could be said to be integral to CRT as ideology leaders and movement leaders. For example, Alan Freedman wrote about how the Supreme Court made rulings under the philosophy of law (specifically racial jurisprudence) that were seemingly liberal in directional push yet legitimized racism (Harris, 2020). Many scholars believe Kimberle’ Crenshaw based her work on the writings of Bell and Freedman. Asian scholars, American Indian scholars, and Latino scholars were also integral to the CRT movement (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017).

**CRT and Academia**

Academia will see many changes in perspective and shifts in focus due to social justice issues. In the aftermath of the BLM protests of 2020, the growth of the equity and diversity initiatives in the academy will give a means of making the argument that the liberal arts have usefulness in questioning the structures of white supremacy and receiving history and values (Mondschein, 2020).

Mondschein (2020) will discuss critical theory, students, racism, curricula, education, and power from the perspective of liberal arts academia from the context of cognitive dissonance brought about by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in an article entitled *Liberal Arts for Social Change* (2020). However, the overarching topic of the article will be how the BLM movement brought new vitality to the discussion about how important a liberal arts education was to social justice issues. These perspectives will impact neoliberal thought and university governance – in short, the author believed traditional liberal arts programs were inherently elitist and excluded much of society, thus conflicting with the goals of "diversity," "inclusion," and "equity" that modern liberal arts academia claimed to champion (Mondschein, 2020).

In the aftermath of Brown vs The Board of Education, schools could no longer segregate based on race. The Brown ruling rendered such separation unconstitutional. With the resulting integration, many black teachers (specifically black men teachers) who once made up a sizeable percentage of the teacher workforce faced ejection from their profession (Sandles, 2020). Sandles will assert that the favorable ruling of Brown vs. The Board of Education will hurt black educators' numbers in the teaching profession. Separate but equal will be outlawed, with black males exiting the teaching profession as a net result (Sandles, 2020).

**CRT and Other Areas of Influence**

CRT will affect much of American life beyond the academy, specifically in areas branded as “identity politics.” People of the same race, sex, or sexual orientation will work together to gain power for their respective groups to restructure what was known as the hegemony (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Since the 1990s, CRT has emphasized "whiteness" and coined "white privilege." CRT drew from European philosophers and social theorists like Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Jaques Derrida. The American tradition rested in W.E.B. Du Bois (a sociologist and a transcendentalist). Cesar Chavez partnered with the Black Panther Party and Chicano movements from the '60s and '70s (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Dr. Thomas Sowell (an economist) and Dr. Ibram X. Kendi (African American Studies professor) will be prominent, influential contemporary writers on CRT. Kendi will be a leading author on what will become known as “anti-racism” and how to become an anti-racist (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017). CRT will significantly affect contemporary fields such as economics, sociology, psychology, African-American Studies, American History, and many other fields of study (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020).

Critical race theory will be, at its root, an American phenomenon. So thoroughly will this be the case that although its ideas will be used outside the United States for some time, the phenomenon will often be highly favored by US racial historians (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020, p. 113). Critical race theory will underpin an entire social movement meant to enact social reform through a violent revolution for some - if need be (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017). Whether or not one will believe there will be credibility to critical race theory and its concepts or that the tenets of critical race theory will be proven beyond theoretical confines, one could not deny its effect on modern Western society.

Critical race theory will be discussed in social, political, educational, and religious arenas (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Many churches will struggle to reconcile what they will see as historical, systemic, racial injustice. For many, it will be difficult to wholly subscribe to the way of thinking that constitutes critical race theory. This theory will assert that race will be nothing more than a social construct created to perpetuate white privilege through white supremacy (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Critical race theory will have flaws like many other theories constructed to address highly complex issues. In some cases, many will believe the theory uses simplistic reasoning to substantiate and bring credibility to vast social topics that have grown to influence many fields of study and disciplines (Harris, 2020). Marxism is salient to the perpetual problem of American racism in several ways (Young, 2011). Some aspects of Marxism and conflict will be covered in the next section.

**Marxism and Conflict**

Karl Marx was known to be a secular humanist. However, Marx often indicated that religion was a complex topic, a paradigm of conflicting propensities and impulses. Marx believed religious suffering was the expression of actual suffering and a protest against real suffering (Wittrock, 2020). Marx described religion as the sigh of the oppressed creature and the heart of a heartless world, the spirit of spiritless conditions. It will appear that Marx understood and greatly respected religion and faith. He said religion was the opium of the people (Wittrock, 2020). The implication was that people will prefer the dulling effect religion will give them to life's issues. That is to say that the forgiveness of religion (Christianity) will give people delusional happiness. It will be the price people will have to pay for their faux happiness (Wittrock, 2020). Marx believed one would do well not to require a rigid understanding of "religion" based solely on Christian or Jewish customs and practices. He felt that rather than attempting to find some essential core that defined "religion," it would be more realistic to treat religion as an ambiguous concept (Wittrock, 2020).

Marx will imply that it will be difficult to draw the boundaries of religion or to make a clear distinction between the religious and the secular in many regards. Marx believed there was a relativeness to religion and capitalist hegemony that should never be adhered to too firmly (Wittrock, 2020). Also, people should reduce religion to hierarchical institutions with rigid doctrines that will legitimize existing social structures, which will project the illusion of compensation onto the proletariat in exchange for exploitation by the bourgeoisie (Wittrock, 2020).

Was there a non-capitalist alternative to capitalist globalism from the standpoint of hegemony? The question will elucidate that hegemony will greatly interest sociology, sociologists, and economists (Sowell, 1960). Some might say some alternatives will be democratic socialism, communism, or even totalitarianism. Some will disagree. There will be a saying with Western economists and sociologists: 'It is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism' (Sklair, 2019).

Specific historical figures and institutions that will establish well-known theories of capitalist hegemony (Marx, Gramsci, Althusser, Marcuse, The Frankfurt School) would aid in helping to explain why it might be easier to imagine the end of the world than an end to capitalism' depending on one's historic opinion (Sowell, 1960). It might be wise to attempt to understand what will be imagined as democratic socialism (to a certain degree) and what it might look like in the 21st century. It will seem that Marxist ideology will have gained steam in recent times. It will appear that Marxist sociology will be interested in, but not limited to, the relationship between society and economics – possibly even more specifically, key concepts in sub-fields like modes of production, historical materialism, and the capitalist-laborer relation (Sowell, 1960).

Some critical questions asked by Marxist sociologists: How will the means (or money) control workers? How will a method (way of production) influence the social classes? What is the relationship between laborers, wealth, the government (or state), and culture? How will economic factors influence inequalities (Sklair, 2019)? One might explore various critical theories or intersectionalism regarding gender and race. Marxist sociology will also be concerned with how police forces will be used to control indigenous peoples, enslaved populations, and poor laborers in the name of capitalism – all possible aspects of establishing and maintaining hegemony (Sklair, 2019). Ensuring that capitalism will be as nefarious as some will accuse it of will not be definitively established. This dynamic might be the case if one could live in other societies in addition to capitalist cultures. At the same time, a robust democracy will have aspects of many social and economic types, including socialism – all employed by the hegemon to “run” the society (Sowell, 1960).

Sociopolitical attitudes will connote emotions or feelings regarding facts or the state of the unique combination of social and political factors in a social or political environment (Chaiklin, 2011). Sociopolitical could include beliefs about gender equality issues, what responsibilities governments might have undertaken, adherence to various social norms that will affect the citizenry, support for various civil liberties, inclination to participate in political activity or political activism, and perspectives about maintaining order (Campbell & Horowitz, 2016; Nugent, Switek, & Wu, 2016). Sociopolitical attitudes will often be affected by political orientation, ideology, knowledge of politics, generational and other demographic factors, and the structure of political parties. Moral preferences, beliefs, and the nature of tertiary education will also be factors (Campbell & Horowitz, 2016; Furnham, 1985; Haidt, 2012; Proch, Elad-Strenger, & Kessler, 2019; Tansey & Kindsvatter, 2020).

Political ideology, conservatism, or liberalism will be fundamental contributors to the attitudes individuals will hold about their sociopolitical environment (Kivikangas, Fernández-Castilla, Järvelä, Ravaja, & Lönnqvist, 2021; Leong, Chen, Willer, & Zaki, 2020). However, it will be crucial to note that there will be cultural and subcultural differences in how political ideology, moral foundations, and sociopolitical attitudes relate. In a cross-cultural meta-analysis, Kivikangas and colleagues (2021) will find that research on political ideology, moral values, and attitudes results will be smaller in samples that will not consist of individuals who are white, American, or had political interests. Further research on African American populations' political ideology and sociopolitical attitudes will be needed.

There was and will remain significant pre- and post-election anxiety due to then Presidential candidate (now former President) Donald Trump’s political campaign and the subsequent sociopolitical environment. Some believed certain groups “targeted” by Trump during his campaign may have experienced his election and presidency traumatically (Panning, 2017; Teng, 2017). The Trump administration’s ostensible intolerance, isolationism, and discrimination were believed to have harmed the mental health of certain minority groups (minorities and immigrants) due to stigma and are likely to have long-term implications (Bialer & McIntosh, 2017).

To many, the so-called zero-tolerance policy enacted by the Trump administration in 2018 to separate minors from adults at the U.S.-Mexico border will have a significant, detrimental effect on the mental health of the children - symptoms will include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychological distress, depression, and anxiety, and withdrawal (American Psychological Association [APA], 2018a; APA, 2018b; APA, 2018c; Stringer, 2018). According to a report from the Department of Health and Human Services, children separated at the border will exhibit more symptoms of PTSD, fear, and feelings of abandonment compared to children who will not be separated from their families (Long, Mendoza, & Burke, 2019). The breaking up of families is seen as a form of violence against the less fortunate by many. The theoretical marriage of capitalism and democracy of the West will represent an oxymoronic existence routed in the private accumulation of “socialized” productivity. American industry is a dynamic dominated by participation, consultation, and collective will (Carlos, 2022). Socialism will be briefly discussed in the next section as the subject is germane to the topic of this dissertation.

**Socialism**

Any serious discussion of socialism must begin by acknowledging socialism’s rich diversity (Wolff, 2019, p. 1). For many, socialism seemed to be a longing for a better life than capitalism already permitted for most. Socialists' desires are as old as capitalism because of capitalist products or results. Whatever aspect(s) of socialism (or capitalism) one chooses to analyze, the particulars must be located within each system's complexities. This approach will enable one to avoid presenting one’s interpretation as if it will be the entirety of either socio-economic system (Sowell, 1960).

Yearnings for better lives (as many believed socialism proposes) are not new. In slave societies like the early United States, enslaved people dreamed of less harsh and brutal lives and fewer circumstances out of their control. The enslaved people desired freedom. Ultimately, they sought change that would have made it impossible for one person to be the property of another (Wolff, 2019). In feudal societies, surfs were "free" because no one "owned" them. Nevertheless, surfs yearned for better lives, too. Their subordination to lords included labor and other social burdens. They possibly hoped and dreamed of a society without being bound to the land, the lord of the land, and feudal duties of subservience (Wolff, 2019).

The French and American revolutions denoted pivotal moments in the social transformation of two major pre-capitalist systems into capitalist systems (Wolff, 2019). Any transition from capitalism to any form of socialism did not guarantee that all socialist goals would be achieved or that no one would have been abused, just as with capitalism. The abolition of slavery did not mean freedom was never subsequently abused or that no segment of society was not marginalized (Wolff, 2019). Gramsci’s theory of hegemony will be rooted in the research of a society's route to socialism and the complexities of the development of that civil society and state, specifically industrialized countries (Mouffe, 1979). The following section will discuss various aspects of hegemony and its ramifications.

**Hegemony**

Hegemony will be defined as the dominance or leadership, specifically by one country or social group over others. Dominance might be social, cultural, ideological, economic, or military. However, dominance will not always necessarily be established by force (Ruggiero, 2021). The definition will imply the notion of hegemony as possessing overwhelming power while simultaneously implying that this power invariably will need the ability of the hegemon to exercise leverage to control others. This way, hegemony will involve a relationship between participants, whether people or states. This leadership could be of a consensual or dominating nature. The relational aspect of hegemony will be vital for those who will see hegemony as exercising a form of leadership. However, a critical point will be that hegemony will entail a relationship between a predominant state, social group, and others (Ruggiero, 2021).

**Hegemony and Antonio Gramsci**

Antonio Gramsci (January 22, 1891 – April 27, 1937) was not the first to use the term “Hegemony.” Hegemony was a term used previously by Vladimir Lenin (a Russian Marxist) to denote the political leadership of the working class (the proletariat) in a democratic revolution (Sugita, Setini & Anshori, 2021). Gramsci greatly expanded this concept, developing a sharp analysis of how (the bourgeoisie) the ruling capitalist class instituted and maintained control. Gramsci believed bourgeois values were tied to folklore, popular culture, and religion. Thus, much of his analysis of hegemonic culture will be aimed at these elements (Sugita, Setini & Anshori, 2021).

Gramsci was impressed with Roman Catholicism's influence and the care the Church took to prevent any gap between the religion of the educated and that of the less educated. Gramsci viewed Marxism as a union of the purely intellectual analysis of religion found in Renaissance humanism and elements of the Reformation that appealed to the masses. Gramsci also believed Marxism could have replaced religion - only if it had met the spiritual needs of the people. People will have to think of Marxism as expressing their experience (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Gramsci's theory of hegemony will be tied to his concept of the capitalist state, but only in the narrow sense of government. He will divide it between political society (the police, the army, the legal system), the arena of political institutions, and legal, constitutional control. Civil society (the family, the education system, and trade unions) will be commonly seen as the private or non-state sphere (Sugita, Setini & Anshori, 2021). Civil society will mediate between the state and the economy. However, Gramsci will stress that division will be purely conceptual and that political and civil will often overlap. Gramsci will assert that the capitalist state will rule through force in addition to consent: political society will be the domain of force, and civil society will be the domain of consent (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014).

**Hegemony, Power, and Coercion**

That the three components of power, coercion, and hegemony will be intimately connected is clear in Max Weber’s 1978 argument. He stated that domination may be established by "a constellation of interests" and under "authority” (Ruggiero, 2021). The former (coercion) will seem to fall into the economic realm and originate from the ownership or custody of resources and goods. This control might be said to determine the actions of those without "possessions" yet remain nominally free and motivated simply by the pursuit of their reproduction or dominance of the marketplace (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Monopolies could be understood as an extreme form of this type of domination. The latter (hegemony) will represent patriarchal, authoritative, or royal power. It will appear that the assumption will be that it was incumbent upon the proletariat to obey regardless of personal merit, ability, or interests.

As Weber will suggest, domination by a constellation of interests often becomes domination by authority. Material possessions will be converted into one's duty to obey on the part of the proletariat (Ruggiero, 2021). Ruggiero will assert that coercion as a category will be central in right-wing thinking concerning power. Inspired by a dualist juxtaposition, this analysis will distinguish between good and evil in the moral realm, profitable and un-profitable in economics, or friend and enemy in politics (Ruggiero, 2021). The distinction of coercion being only a right-wing power characteristic will not be definitively settled. This unqualified distinction will seem to separate the political from the ethical in favor of liberals (or the left), isolating power as a distinct matter to be couched in right-wing (or conservative) terms or ideology. However, Marxism will be a left-wing revolution that will lead to communism and armed conflict in Russia.

**Coercion and Consent**

It will be extremely hard to draw a neat difference between coercive power strategies with the consensual exercise of authority, as the analysis of the concept of hegemony may confirm (Ruggiero, 2021). The "discriminating" procedure by which coercion will be hidden will require the control of others' agendas. This action will be necessary so that the controllers might narrow the scope of “vision” of the controlled. Marx stated that this process was accompanied by the development of what is identified as a “false consciousness” (methods said to mislead the proletariat) (Sugita, Setini & Anshori, 2021). Whatever the method, coercion will lead to an authoritative power of order that will demand obedience manifested through accepting the norms coercion will impose. Systems of dominance will be established through norms that will obtain hegemony due to perceived customary social practices. One’s thoughts will arrive unconsciously, usually without referencing correct beliefs or consideration of being controlled or coerced (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014).

Antonio Gramsci believed that consensus and hegemony were so closely related that they almost overlapped and that the supremacy of a social group manifested in two ways - domination and intellectual and moral leadership (Ruggiero, 2021). Domination will be about power, power aimed at subjugation, even if liquidation of rival groups is deemed necessary for subjugation. Yet, leadership will wield power as moral and intellectual values widely spread and eventually be internalized by the masses (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). This dynamic often will happen before power is exercised. Conflict between social groups will result in the party's victory, capturing the masses' minds and political hearts, consequently assimilating them into a hegemonic culture (Ruggiero, 2021). Some groups (African Americans as formerly enslaved people, for example), for reasons of capitulation, submission, or intellectual subordination, will adopt an understanding of the world that is not theirs but was acquired from another group (former “masters”). African Americans will not fall into the category of capitulators due to having been the descendants of enslaved people. People of European descent in America will not inherently be inclined to be dominators due to having been descendants of slave owners (Ruggiero, 2021).

Wittrock (2020) wrote that all things will change, all that is holy will be profaned, and man is encouraged to face his life conditions and interactions with his “people” with restrained senses. This notion did not entail that everything religious would disappear with the emergence of global capitalism. Indeed, capitalism itself could be perceived in terms of a religion, perhaps as bringing with it a religion of the goodness of everyday life (Wittrock, 2020).

The media will be a space in which many ideologies will be represented. The media could be a tool to establish a dominant cultural ideology for the interests of the dominant class (hegemon) or a means of struggle for the oppressed to build opposition and ideology against the hegemon. The rapid proliferation of digital information and communication technology accompanies modern entertainment arts: music, films, online games, and other digital-based entertainment facilities (Sugita, Setini, & Anshori, 2021). Some believe that masculinity theorizes gender as an independent structure of dominance. Others believe hegemonic masculinity theorizes and treats femininity as passively compliant. Intersectionality will be about African-American feminism in its inception. Contemporary intersectionality has now come to encompass racism, classism, and gender issues (Hamilton, Armstrong, Seeley, & Armstrong, 2019). The background and implications of intersectionality will be discussed concerning the dissertation topic in the next section.

**Intersectionality**

There has been some debate concerning the definition of intersectionality. Collins & Bilge (2020) defined it in the following way:

Intersectionality investigates how intersecting power relations influence social relations across diverse societies and individual experiences in everyday life. As an analytic tool, intersectionality views categories of race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, ability, ethnicity, and age – among others – as interrelated and mutually shaping one another. Intersectionality was a way of understanding and explaining complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences.

(Collins & Bilge, 2020).

There will be debate about the meaning of intersectionality. It will seem that there will be no official definition of intersectionality. The above quote will be as close as the researcher will come to intersectionality's core tenets. Intersectionality will assert that power relations of race, class, gender, and sexuality will all be related and will never be exclusively mutual. All these aspects will work together and build upon each other, affecting every aspect of an individual's life (Collins & Bilge, 2020). Intersectionality will be the term used by most stakeholders that will apply their understanding of the concept to various uses. The differences in the broad description will denote a consensus concerning how individuals will comprehend intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2020).

**Intersectionality and Kimberle’ Crenshaw**

Law professor Kimberle’ Crenshaw wrote a thesis for her law degree in the 1980s, leading to what would be coined as intersectionality. Many scholars will believe Crenshaw's work will be based on the writings of Bell and Freedman (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017). Crenshaw introduced the intersectionality theory in 1989, "*Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Anti-racist Politics*." The paper was influenced by black feminist criticism. The central reasoning of the paper will be that the experience of being a black woman could not be understood in terms of merely being black and being a woman considered independently (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017). Nevertheless, both must include the interactions between the two, each reinforcing the other. According to Crenshaw, the concept of intersectionality predated her work. She felt her work and thinking were congruous with the ideas of African American women who articulated it before her, such as Anna Julia Cooper, Maria Steward, Angela Davis, and Deborah King.

Crenshaw’s inspiration for the theory began during her college studies. She realized the gender aspect of race was extremely under-explored (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017). In the 1960s and 1970s, African-American women activists will confront how their needs concerning jobs, education, employment, and healthcare will fall through the cracks of anti-racist social movements, feminism, and unions organizing for workers' rights. Each social movement will elevate one category of analysis and action above others - for example, race within the civil rights movement, gender within the feminist movement, or class within the class movement (Collins & Bilge, 2020).

The implication will be that African-American women will be underrepresented because they were black, female, and workers. The thinking will be that none of those above distinctions will be considered separately adequately addressing the complex social issues African American women will face. Collins and Bilge (2020) asserted that the plight of black women will not only be subordinate but overlooked within each movement. Intersectionality will be used as an analysis to address these issues.

Crenshaw criticizes that the anti-racist interventions tend to think “about discrimination which structures politics so that struggles are categorized as singular issues [, thus importing] a descriptive and normative view of society that reinforces their status quo (Muller, 2021). For Kimberle’ Crenshaw, it will not be enough to insert anti-racist ideals into the inclusion framework. The goal of the intersectional approach will be to cross-examine the principles attached to the social categories that exist in the world and how those principles will promote and generate social hierarchies (Muller, 2021). Intersectionality will also look beneath the prevailing notions of discrimination and challenge the laxity that accompanies the belief in the effectiveness of this paradigm.

**Contemporary Intersectionality**

There will be a popular sense of intersectionality that will be politicized for partisan purposes. Crenshaw will have some conflict concerning how intersectionality will be used for purely partisan purposes. These purposes will be what Crenshaw opposes regarding the narrow lenses of particular civil rights activism thrusts. In her opinion, there will be very little focus on the respective rights of black women in most civil rights movements (Muller, 2021).

The initial intents of what will be known as critical race theory and intersectionality will have merit, as the aim will be to identify and lay bare real problems with the intent of aiding social and political change (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Positive change will be affected by a critical examination of the status quo. However, many changes will be seen as flawed or imperfect, as are many legal, social, and political solutions. Redress meant to prevent racial discrimination will be no exception. The difficulty with many racial issues will be that the effect of discrimination will not always be clearly demonstrable. One will not always be able to empirically make the case of injustice concerning an entire segment of a population - not to say inequity will not exist. It will simply be that human relations will often be muddled from issue to issue, person to person, and opinion to opinion (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020).

**Intersectionality and Healthcare**

The concept of “intersectionality” will be increasingly employed within public health arenas, particularly in North America (Holman, Salway, Bell, Beach, Adebajo, Ali & Butt, 2021). Many African Americans will not trust the government, less the healthcare system. The theoretical framework of intersectionality will posit that several social categories will form a nexus at the most micro level of all individual experiences. At the nexus point will be an interlocking system (or systems) of privilege for some and oppression for others (Holman, Salway, Bell, Beach, Adebajo, Ali & Butt, 2021). For many, personal privilege or oppression will manifest at the macro or social level through racism, sexism, and classism. What will be the connection between intersectionality and healthcare? Public health will commit to social justice.

There will appear to be a natural fit between the two, with intersectionality focused on historically oppressed segments of society. However, despite abundant research focused on the oppressed in healthcare, studies that demonstrate intersectionality within this framework of interpretation will be rare (Holman, Salway, Bell, Beach, Adebajo, Ali & Butt, 2021). More research is needed in healthcare through the "lens" of intersectionality – not to discredit intersectionality but to ascertain how this lens might have aided or hindered equitable change in healthcare.

**Intersectionality and COVID-19**

The two presidential administrations' response to COVID-19 will unnecessarily compound the pain and suffering for many. The pain and suffering will not be borne equally. COVID-19 will, in many cases, reveal disproportionate risk and impact based on some systemic inequality, but not just at intersections of racial/ethnic minority status and class or occupation (Bowleg, 2020). Many of the most stressful and high-risk jobs deemed essential (not just frontline like ERs or first responders) will offer meager wages. People will employ them at some of the most peripheral intersections, such as racial or ethnic minorities, women (sex trafficking), and undocumented workers (Bowleg, 2020). There will be no doubt these intersections will differ sharply from those of middle-class and affluent people (white, black, Hispanic, Asian) who hire, legislate, and direct/manage the conditions under which the so-called “essential” (or expendable, depending on one's point of view) will work in during the COVID-19 era (Bowleg, 2020).

There will undoubtedly be inequality and racism at all levels of society and in all areas (white to black, black to white, black to Hispanic, Hispanic to black, white to Hispanic, Hispanic to white, Asian to...., and so on). Not solely because people will be inherently evil but because humans will be flawed. Moreover, it will be human instinct to look out for oneself and one’s “kind” (Collins & Bilge, 2020). When the COVID-19 shutdown ends, and in the present, policymakers, public health officials, and society at large will have what the author will call a "moral imperative" to address issues of inequality in health care and the economy (Bowleg, 2020). The author believes this action could bring society closer to being “in this together.”

Maestripieri (2021) wrote that COVID-19 was not a great equalizer. Unlike other more recent pandemics, the Spanish flu in 1918, HIV in the '80s, COVID-19 will spread more easily among the more vulnerable populations. The relationship between COVID-19 and the so-called inequality structure will transpire along two ranges – first, how existing inequality structures will affect the spread of the infection, and second, how its containment measures will affect the existing systems of said inequality (Maestripieri, 2021). There will long be debate about the social determinants of health by sociologists and public health officials. Much of the focus will be on how education, socio-economic conditions, and the environment in which people live will affect their health (Maestripieri, 2021). COVID-19 undeniably will be a social disease. Some socio-economic inequalities could influence one's likelihood of being infected. The virus will likely propagate more readily among those with a concurrent illness or pre-existing condition, who live in overcrowded housing, and those without regular health services (Maestripieri, 2021).

**Intersectionality and Broader Implications**

Intersectionality as a concept is growing, and literature will capture the discussion of intersectionality theory as a catalyst for social change and activism. However, the evaluation of intersectionality strategies or those strategies using an intersectional lens to transform organizational behavior and culture will be extremely limited (Cate, MacMillan, McKinnon, Torabi, & Osmond-McLeod, 2021).

Crenshaw will introduce the concept of intersectionality as it will be understood by most in the 1980s. Crenshaw's objective will be to disturb the prevailing ideologies concerning how inequalities present as distinct systems and processes of an individual's race or gender rather than contemplating how various inequalities intersect, multiply, and are reciprocally mutual components rather than mutually exclusive (Cate, MacMillan, McKinnon, Torabi, & Osmond-McLeod, 2021). Crenshaw will initially base intersectionality within the framework of feminism and critical race theory. Her concepts will now be applied more widely at individuals and socio-structural and political levels across multiple disciplines (Collins & Bilge, 2020).

Many particulars will constitute an individual. However, it will seem intersectionality will attempt to reduce an individual’s identity to its’ “social components” of identity: race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and socio-economic status on a micro level of experience to demonstrate isms such as racism, sexism, classism, and even sexual orientation-ism. Every human will be an individual. One's characteristics will make each unique (Cate, et al., 2021). Nevertheless, all will have universal similarities constituting a shared sense of humanity and universal connection. Intersectionality will desire society to acknowledge that aspects of society tend to act upon specific individuals in particular ways (Collins & Bilge, 2020). Intersectionality will yearn for society to acknowledge there will be aspects concerning society that will affect large portions of society in specific ways through the systems society will create (Cate, et al, 2021). Political correctness will be a concept frequently invoked to influence debates to establish greater equality but also to control speech. Though political correctness will have some merit, it is also met with some criticism. The language change can indicate a broader cognitive change based on wider trends. The term political correctness has become an oxymoronic term and a paradox for many (Neuwirth, 2023). Political correctness appears to cause discriminatory acts and violations of equality principles when examined in isolation. The next section will discuss political correctness and how the concept impacts society.

**Political Correctness**

Political correctness (PC) will be an interesting topic of discussion. It will be a powerful force for change unique from other social change initiatives. The ideology of political correctness will have no economic basis for its change goals. Political correctness will have a sociocultural basis, wanting to standardize cultures and ethnicities by eliminating individual differences (Stoica, 2021).

**PC and its Influence**

The world will undergo very rapid, sweeping societal change. A new postmodern ideology will emerge after all the social conflict the West will experience, particularly in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Stoica, 2021). This ideology will be inspired by older ones - Marxism and the theories of the Frankfurt school, more precisely, cultural Marxism or neo-Marxism. These ideologies will lead to what will be coined, in modern times, as political correctness (Stoica, 2021). Political correctness (or PC) will be used to describe policies and measures to avoid offenses or highlight the apparent disadvantages of certain groups or individuals (Thiele, 2021). Political correctness will usually be employed pejoratively in the public sphere of discourse and the media. As recently as the late 1980s, PC will refer to a preference for inclusive language. PC will also mean to avoid language or behavior interpreted as excluding, insulting, or marginalizing groups considered discriminated against or disadvantaged (Stoica, 2021). Groups might be race, gender, or gender-defined (trans, gender fluidity) based. The emphasis will usually be on so-called identity groups.

Ostensibly, the initial intentions of political correctness will be hailed as laudable or righteous, as it will be used to eliminate discrimination of marginalized people on ethnic, sexual, or religious grounds. PC will be viewed as a struggle for social progress (Thiele, 2021). However, some would say political correctness will develop extremist tendencies over time. Proponents of political correctness will seem to have come to practice what they desired to abolish – the discrimination against those they presumed were attempting to discriminate against others or them (Stoica, 2021). Political correctness will come to possess legal status in some Western societies - France, Canada, Sweden, and others. Political correctness, through cultural Marxism, will seek to apply critical theory to many societal segments, such as gender, race, family, culture, and identity in Western society. The Marxist ideals will be the same as they have always been. However, the techniques will be less physically violent. They will be subtler, with effects that take effect over time (Stoica, 2021).

**PC, Multiculturalism and DEI**

Multiculturalism and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusivity) initiatives will be pursued equally with political correctness. However, multiculturalism will probably not be a direct descendant of Marxism. PC will seem to result from globalization (Thiele, 2021). Such trends will be enthusiastically advanced and championed by followers of other components or complementary elements of cultural Marxism. Some will believe multiculturalism will be the final state of a natural or synthetic process exhibited nationally or within communities (Stoica, 2021). Supporters of political correctness will assert that many conservatives will use the concept of political correctness to minimize or distract from actual discrimination toward disadvantaged or marginalized groups. Opponents of political correctness, like Jordan Peterson, believe PC is the compelling of speech, particularly when enforced by the government (Ventureyra, 2017).

Nevertheless, cultural Marxism will be increasingly present in Western societies, particularly in education, entertainment, and corporate environments (Thiele, 2021). The research for this dissertation afforded an excellent opportunity for the researcher to identify gaps in the literature concerning the possible relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice. The following section will briefly discuss aspects of the gap in literature.

**Gap in Literature**

The problem is that middle-class African Americans will experience race-related stress due to the influence of political ideologies that inform their perceptions of injustice (Kivikangas et al., 2021; Leong et al., 2020). However, the sociological relationship between race-related stress and perceptions of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN is unknown. This problem will be of particular concern in the American Southeast, where there is an assumed dynamic of historical racism (Anderson, Span, 2016). Therefore, Chattanooga, TN will be selected as the geographical delimitation for this study because Chattanooga, TN is in the heart of the Southeast United States, and Tennessee is the historical, foundational origin of the Ku Klux Klan (Chalmers, 1987). Because there will be many factors that will impact middle-class African Americans' level of race-related stress and their perception of injustice, it was vital to conduct background research on potential contributors to race-related stress. As discussed in the next section, the research on stated topics will be a driving force behind the need for this research.

**The Need for This Research**

The background of the problem will be rooted in Marxism through critical race theory. It will be thought by many that critical race theory (CRT) is an American ideology. However, the ideas of critical race theory will have been propagated outside the US for many years. The concepts of critical race theory will often be favored by US racial historians (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). CRT will underpin an entire social movement meant to enact social reform through a violent revolution for some individuals. CRT will be discussed in social, political, educational, and religious arenas. CRT will assert that race is a social construct created to perpetuate white privilege through white supremacy (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020).

Racism is multi-faceted in its nature, presentation, effects, and constituent components (discrimination, power, dominance) rooted in its expression and its total influence on the lives of African Americans. Racism will be a difficult concept to operationalize for many (Harrell, 2020). Utsey (1999) proposed using the concept of race-related stress to represent the physical, emotional, psychological, and mental toll exerted on African Americans due to chronic exposure to racism, racial prejudice, racial discrimination, and racial stereotypes. Harrell (2000) defined race-related stress as the race-related interactions between groups or individuals and their environments that spring from the dynamics of racism; race-related stress is perceived to strain or exceed collective and individual resources.

People will perceive different actions as unjust and react differently to injustice experiences. This subjective perception of injustice could determine their actions, mental health, and race-related stress (Fetchenhauer, Huang, 2004). Current research on people suffering from pain after traumatic accidents will show that people who subjectively perceived their situation as less just will feel pain longer and more strongly (Trost, Scott, Buelow, Nowlin, Turan, Boals, Monder, 2017; Sullivan, 2020; Carriere, Pimentel, Yakobov, Edwards, 2020). To better understand the impact of injustice experiences on mental health, it will be necessary to validly assess experiences of injustice with appropriate instruments (Fetchenhauer, Huang, 2004).

Most evaluations of a sense of justice will be conducted in Western cultures up to this point. Frequently, the focus will be on concepts such as social justice, fair distribution of goods, and justice sensitivity, or the questionnaire will be developed to determine the belief in a just world, a concept that will be developed based on Western ideas of justice (Dalbert, Montada, Schmitt, 1987; Schmitt, Baumert, Gollwitzer, Maes, 2010). Most studies in the field will develop and use specific questionnaires which will refer to the target group or the conflict concerned (Pham, Weinstein, & Longman, 2004). In addition, research will show that the perception of injustice will likely increase through situations characterized by basic human rights violations (Sullivan, 2020).

A deeper examination using CRT as the framework will reveal additional considerations such as historical racism, the oppression of African Americans in the current socio-political context, unique knowledge and experiences of the African American population, multidisciplinary influences, and actions for social justice (Daftary, 2018; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2017; Aymer, 2016). With CRT guiding the research conceptualizations of race-related stress and the perception of injustice, systemic racism will be considered an important predictor variable (how much direct racism the researcher's population had experienced based on their responses to the instruments versus the professional and socio-economic station they had achieved). Race-related stress will be the psychological distress experienced by African Americans due to sustained exposure to overt or vicarious effects of racism, discrimination, microaggressions, stereotypes, and prejudice (Harrell, 2000; Utsey, 1999). Studies will indicate race-related stress to be associated with physical and psychological well-being and middle-class African-American activism (Hope et al., 2018; Leath & Chavous, 2017; Prosper, 2018; Szymanski, 2012; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; 2016; Miller, Keum, Thai, Lu, Truong, Huh, Ahn, 2018).

**Chapter Summary**

The result that individuals with the attitude that things will generally be good and all right with the world will be more inclined to take up activism work for social change will seem counterintuitive based on the body of literature (Leath & Chavous, 2017). Therefore, the two goals of the current study will be to add to the literature on socio-political attitudes and to understand better how the variables might be related concerning race-related stress and the perception of injustice in the study population. Chapter 3 of this study will explain the quantitative methodology to be employed to correlate the two variables of race-related stress and the perception of injustice. The correlational study will aid in determining if there is a possible relationship between the two study variables.