**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RACE RELATED STRESS AND THE PERCEPTION OF INJUSTICE IN MIDDLE CLASS AFRICAN AMERICANS: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY**

Gerald L. Ware

Chair, Dissertation Committee

Member, Dissertation Committee

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor

of Philosophy

Omega Graduate School

Graduation Date

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September 2024

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. David Ward, Chair

Dr. Brenda Davis

Dr. Sean Taladay

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**ABSTRACT**

Mental health concerns of middle-class African Americans are important due to their challenges in various environments. Compared to social groups of other ethnicities, African Americans in the United States have historically reported less than ideal outcomes with higher risk for depression and anxiety than their non-Black counterparts. The African American activism work done by Black college students became increasingly influential after the creation of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a framework, this study investigated racial attitudes and sociopolitical attitudes on the relationships between race-related stress and the perception of injustice among middle-class African Americans in the U.S., specifically in Hamilton, CO, Chattanooga, TN. The results of this study indicated that increased race-related stress had a positive correlational relationship with the perception of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN. The discussion addresses implications for future sociological research and political and practitioner practices.

In chapter three, the research methodology for the research project was presented. The research design and procedure were presented along with the study participants and demographics. The IRRS-B and the PIQ were discussed as instrumentation along with the data collection process. I discussed data collection, data preparation, data analysis, reliability, and validity. I promulgated the ethical procedure for the research project. In Chapter Four, the results of the statistical analysis of the data were performed. Analysis data for demographics, race-related stress, and the perception of injustice were presented. I discussed the results of the positive, correlational relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice. I presented my thoughts and reactions to this research project in Chapter Five. I discussed the limitations and delimitations, aspects where the data agreed and disagreed with the literature review, discussed a synthesis of the two perspectives concerning the data, and discussed implications for future study possibilities. Finally, I made recommendations to benefit the study population in light of the study results.

**DEDICATION**

To humanity

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you Le Andrea: my wife, my Queen, my motivation, my inspiration. Thank you Delante’, Amari, and Soriyah for giving me purpose. Thank you Kim, Paula, and Eddie for being my roots. Thank you Linda (mom) for giving me life. Thank you to all that contributed to my success in this endeavor in any way. Though the road was long, narrow, and arduous the journey was necessary. Finally, thank you to my God for the assignment, for the charge of seeking out truth and sharing it with the world.

**EPIGRAPH**

It is absolutely vital that blacks distinguish between the fault that may be attributed to racism as a cause of the black condition, and the responsibility for relieving the condition. For no one can be genuinely free so long as they look to others for their deliverance. The pride and self-respect valued by aspiring peoples throughout the world cannot be the gift of outsiders – they must derive from the thoughts and deeds of the peoples themselves. Neither the guilt nor the pity of one’s oppressor is sufficient basis to construct a sense of self-worth. When faced with the ravages of black crime against blacks, the depressing nature of social life in many low-income black communities, the alarming incidence of pregnancy among unwed black teenagers, or the growing dependency of blacks on transfers from an increasingly hostile polity, it is simply insufficient to respond by saying “This is the fault of racist America. These problems will be solved when America finally does right by its black folk,”. Such a response dodges the issue of responsibility.

Glenn Loury

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**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Critical race theory (CRT) will be at the center of debate in Western society (Cabrera, 2018). The need for courage, the lack of valid and germane leadership regarding African Americans, and the void of extant literature on the possible relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice will necessitate social researchers to begin research on the role race-related stress might play in the perception of injustice (Utsey, 1999; Neumann, Berger, & Kizilhan, 2021).

The possible relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice should be examined to offer insight into the opinions and dispositions of middle-class African Americans. A gap in research on middle-class African American’s race-related stress and their perception of injustice excludes an important dimension and neglects a vital approach to middle-class African Americans and politics (Utsey, 1999; Neumann, Berger, & Kizilhan, 2021). Further research should include the possible impacts of ideologies and political movements, specifically ideologies and socio-political movements aimed at African Americans.

## **Background of the Problem**

The background of the problem will be rooted in critical race theory. It will be thought by many that critical race theory (CRT) shall be an American phenomenon. However, the ideas of critical race theory will have been propagated outside the U.S. for many years. The concepts of critical race theory will often be favored by U.S. 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 will be a social construct created to perpetuate white privilege through white supremacy (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020).

Racism will be 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) will propose 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) will define 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 will be 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 not only their actions but also their mental health - race-related stress (Fetchenhauer, Huang, 2004). For example, current research on people suffering from pain after traumatic accidents will show 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). 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. Frequently, the focus will be on concepts such as social injustice, fair distribution of goods, or 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 that only 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 research 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, African American activism, and racial identity attitude (Hope et al., 2018; Leath & Chavous, 2017; Prosper, 2018; Szymanski, 2012; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; 2016; Miller, Keum, Thai, Lu, Truong, Huh, Ahn, 2018).

The result that individuals with the attitude that things are generally good and all right with the world will be more inclined to take up activism work for social change seems 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.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The problem will be that it was not known if there is a relationship between middle-class African American’s level of race-related stress and their perception of injustice. Whether a significant relationship exists between middle-class African American’s race-related stress and perception of injustice is unknown (Utsey, 1999; Neumann, Berger, & Kizilhan, 2021). Middle-class African American’s race-related stress will affect their quality of their life, mental health, and perception of injustice (Utsey, 1999). The hope will be to lead others to demonstrate an understanding of how race-related stress affects middle-class African American’s perception of injustice and how these two variables affect how middle-class African Americans engage in the political environment (Utsey, 1999; Neumann, Berger, & Kizilhan, 2021). Even though research on CRT abounds, a gap in the literature will be that quantitative research has not explicitly investigated the relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study will be to examine the potential relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN. The quantitative correlational research study will evaluate, via self-assessment inventories, middle-class African American’s race-related stress, perception of injustice, and the potential relationship between the two. This quantitative study will fill a gap in the literature and extend research by investigating the relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice of middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN. A Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation will be used to determine if a positive relationship between middle-class African Americans race-related stress, measured by the Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS-B), and perception of injustice, measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (PIQ), exists and to what extent. The study will be necessary due to dynamic social, socio-political, cultural, economic, and political changes impacting African Americans, demanding more understanding of how the two variables possibly interact (Abuelela, 2022).

Many middle-class African Americans possess intelligence and insight. However, they are not applying the traits to enhance leadership practices for self-improvement, improvement of others, cultural self-awareness, encouragement toward higher self-awareness, and well-being in their communities (Palmer, Rogers, & Wilkins, 2023). The quantitative correlational study will provide middle-class African Americans with the necessary evidence to promote political understanding and growth on the socio-political level. The acquired information will be shared with the study's participants and scholars and will provide helpful knowledge for personal and social development.

## **Significance of the Study**

This study will contribute to the gap in research on race-related stress and the perception of injustice. The significance of this study will be to expand the knowledge and understanding of the possible relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice in the study population. A better understanding of any possible relationship between these two variables might aid the study population in affecting authentic racial reconciliation in a way that CRT possibly does not. The study will expand knowledge on race-related stress and the perception of injustice, empowering middle-class African Americans to better lead in the face of certain ideologies. Research on CRT and injustice has increased (Milner IV, 2017; Sandles Jr, 2020; Siegel, 2020; Zurcher, 2021). Research has excluded middle-class African American’s perception of injustice in relation to race-related stress.

To advance cultural and individual political self-awareness, the study's results might help promote empirical research on the relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice. When middle-class African Americans are more informed, others can be influenced by helping colleagues, organizations, and society at large (Coleman, 1994). If the study results demonstrate a strong relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice, the possibility of more directly linking social action to self-improvement, community improvement, transformational reconciliation, and social well-being could be realized (Utsey, 1999; Neumann, Berger, & Kizilhan, 2021).

## **Research Question and Hypotheses**

The research question and hypotheses will be researchable and quantifiable. The research question was written to ascertain the relationship between the variables being measured to achieve the purpose of the study. The following research question will guide the study:

Research Question: What relationship, if any, exists between a middle-class African American's self-assessed level of race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice?

#### Hypotheses

The research question will emerge from the purpose statement. The hypotheses will align with the research question to support the purpose of the study. The following hypotheses will be tested for the quantitative correlational study to achieve the purpose of the study:

Ho: No significant relationship exists between a middle-class African American’s self-assessed level of race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice.

Ha: A significant relationship exists between a middle-class African American’s self-assessed level of race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Marxism will frame this study with critical race theory as its actuator. It can be established that much contemporary social conflict can be attributed to Marxism through critical race theory (Ghous, 2020). The theoretical framework will be to study the possible correlation of two concepts. Race-related stress and the perception of injustice will be examined to conduct the study. A greater understanding of race-related stress and the perception of injustice might make middle-class African American political involvement more transformational (Utsey, 1999; Neumann, Berger, & Kizilhan, 2021).

Karl Marx introduced the theory of economic determinism as a reaction to the industrial revolution (Ghous, 2020). Antonio 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 (Sugita, Setini & Anshori, 2021). Gramsci also believed Marxism could have replaced religion - only if it had met the spiritual needs of the people. People would have had to think of Marxism as an expression of their experience (Sugita, Setini & Anshori, 2021). 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 (Wittrock, 2020). Marxist ideology has gained momentum in recent times. It appeared that Marxist sociology was 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 (Sklair, 2019). Marxist ideology was also concerned with how police forces were used to control indigenous peoples and enslave populations and poor laborers in the name of capitalism – all aspects of establishing and maintaining hegemony (Sklair, 2019). In brief, it will be extremely hard to draw a neat difference between coercive power strategies and consensual exercise of authority, as the analysis of the concept of hegemonic Marxism may confirm (Ruggiero, 2021). The “discriminating” procedure by which coercion was hidden required the control of others' agendas. This action was necessary so that the controllers could 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) concerning the controlled (Ruggiero, 2021).

Critical race theory emerged in the 1970s through the critical study of law as it pertains to issues of race (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020, p. 111). CRT will have affected 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 will be known as the hegemony (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Since the 1990s, CRT has emphasized "whiteness" and coined "white privilege." CRT will draw from European philosophers and social theorists like Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Jaques Derrida. The American tradition will rest in W.E.B. Du Bois (a sociologist and a transcendentalist). Cesar Chavez will partner with the Black Panther Party and Chicano movements from the '60s and '70s (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020).

CRT will be meant to advocate for meaningful change that will address systemic racial inequality (Dixson & Anderson, 2018).

Lawrence, Matsuda, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993) assembled six domains or tenets of CRT:

1. CRT recognizes that racism is endemic to American life; (2) CRT expresses skepticism about the dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy; (3) CRT challenges a-historism and insists on a contextual historical analysis of the law; (4) CRT insists on the recognizing of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society; (5) CRT is interdisciplinary and eclectic; and (6) CRT works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of eliminating oppression in general

(Aymer, 2016, p. 368).

These domains will guide the conceptualization of this study of how African Americans could be studied and understood through the lenses of the sociopolitical structures and climate in American society and the cultural identity and race-related experiences of African Americans – yet not exclusively.

Perception of injustice could not only determine middle-class African American’s actions but also their mental health. For example, research on people suffering from pain after traumatic accidents might show that people who subjectively perceive their situation as less just 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 assess experiences of injustice with appropriate instruments. However, all the common inventories to survey the perception of injustice will be developed in Western societies (Dalbert, Montada, Schmitt, 1987; Schmitt, Baumert, Gollwitzer, Maes, 2010). Furthermore, most evaluations of a sense of justice will be conducted in Western cultures. Frequently, the focus will be on concepts such as social injustice, fair distribution of goods, or justice sensitivity (Schmitt, Baumert, Gollwitzer, Maes, 2010), or the questionnaire will be developed to determine the belief in a just world (Dalbert, Montada, Schmitt, 1987); a concept that will be developed based on Western ideas of justice.

The research will show that the perception of injustice will be likely to increase through situations characterized by basic human rights violations (Sullivan, 2020). For these reasons, it seemed necessary to have an inventory that could have been broadly used to approach people's perception of injustice following experiences of severe human rights violations. This will be particularly relevant as it will be assumed that one’s perception of injustice will have an impact on various mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, somatoform disorder, and PTSD (Sullivan, M. L. 2020; Carriere, Pimentel, Yakobov, Edwards, 2020; Pham, Weinstein, Longman, 2004).

Extant literature on the relationship between all six tenants of CRT, race-related stress, and the perception of injustice is void of comprehensive studies. The research question and hypotheses of the present study will be based on a conceptual framework in which race-related stress and the perception of injustice are independent variables upon which stress levels may or may not influence the perception of injustice. Chapter 2 will provide further evidence of race-related stress and the possible relationship between the perception of injustice. Chapter 2 will also include précis of extant research within the study’s conceptual framework.

## **Operational Definitions of Terms**

Definitions will be provided for the study’s variables. Additionally, terms with multifarious meanings will be included. The following key terms will be referred to throughout the manuscript.

***Hegemony.*** Hegemony will denote the concentration of comparative capabilities of a single state that seeks national and international leadership and general consent in society regarding subordination to a central order or a combination of these phenomena(Schenoni, 2019).

***Marxism.*** The *“*Manifesto of the Communist Party" was written jointly by Marx and Engels and was published in 1848. The “Manifesto of the Communist Party” was written for the Communist League of 1848. Marxism will be difficult to define. It is not straightforward and can be defined by its core doctrines, methods, or commitments (Sayers, S. (2021).

***Critical Race Theory.*** Critical race theory (CRT) initially will be a theory born out of critical theory that focused on traditional civil rights and ethics but looked at these from broader perspectives like economics, history, group interests, and consciousness (Delgado, R., & Stefancic, 2023).

***Intersectionality.*** Intersectionality will be an idea that describes the interactions between systems of perceived oppression. The concept grew out of efforts of black feminism to specify how race and gender relations shaped social and political life specifically for black women(McBride & Mazur, 2008).

***Political Correctness.*** Political Correctness (PC) will relate to the direct or indirect promotion of one position as the only acceptable, legitimate, or possible position. This promotion occurs primarily through promulgating correct or incorrect language and behaviors (Roberts, 1997).

***Justice.*** Just behavior or treatment, the quality of being fair and reasonable, the administration of the law or authority (Kelsen, 2022).

Injustice. Lack of fairness or justice, an unjust act or occurrence (Heinze, 2012).

***Racism.*** Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people based on their belonging to a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized; the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, especially to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another (Grosfoguel, 2016).

***Discrimination.*** The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, age, sex, or disability (Kite, Jr, Wigley, & Wagner, 2022).

***African American.*** A black American of African descent (Painter, 2006).

Non-white(s). Denoting or relating to a person whose origin is not predominantly European; a person whose origin is not predominantly European (Foner, Fredrickson, 2004).

***Activism.*** The policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change (Yeatman, 2021).

Stress. A state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances; something that causes mental strain; physiological disturbance or damage caused to an organism by adverse circumstances (Foster, 2023).

***Perception.*** The neurophysiological processes, including memory, by which an organism becomes aware of and interprets external stimuli; a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something, a mental impression (Rogers, 2017).

## **Assumptions**

Assumptions will be statements accepted as true (Gubanov, Gubanov, & Rokotyanskaya, 2018). Two critical assumptions and one non-critical assumption will underlie the study. The first assumption will be that study participants will answer the inventories truthfully and completely. Because the inventories will be self-assessment measures, participants will be susceptible to responding in a socially acceptable manner. Participants will be informed that all responses will be kept confidential. Second, the term *stress* is sometimes erroneously defined generally and not defined specifically as *race-related*. Or, justice is more ubiquitously referred to as opposed to injustice. Care will be taken to differentiate between the concepts and contexts to ensure participants will appropriately reference the terms *stress* and *injustice* in the study. *Stress* will be defined as a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances, something that causes mental strain, physiological disturbance, or damage caused to an organism by adverse circumstances (Foster, 2023). *Injustice* will be the lack of fairness or justice, an unjust act or occurrence (Heinze, 2012). Third, the one non-critical assumption is that I will not be interested in sociopolitical ideology in that I will not promote or reject any particular ideology or worldview for the purposes of this study.

## **Scope and Delimitations**

This study will be conducted to determine if a relationship exists between middle-class African American’s self-assessed level of race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice. Quantitative methods will be utilized to gather empirical research from middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN, to ascertain the magnitude of the relationship. The study will be delimited to allow the use of web-based surveys. Data collected via web-based surveys will be more cost-effective (Ebert, Huibers, Christensen, & Christensen, 2018).

**Limitations**

This study will be limited due to the sampling technique and study design. Convenience sampling may not be representative of the entire population; therefore, generalizability will be limited. A larger sample size could have yielded more generalizable findings and statistical significance.

The study will limit the ability to measure middle-class African Americans’ level of race-related stress and perception of injustice to one method each. Another limitation of this study will be the inability to properly infer causation because one variable preceding another is insufficient to conjecture causation (Dorestani & Aliabadi, 2017; Rohrer, 2018).

## **Chapter Summary**

The relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice will be investigated to provide insight into political engagement and activism. Research on race-related stress and the perception of injustice will address the problem middle-class African Americans face concerning political engagement, individual and communal well-being, and social engagement (Utsey, 1999; Neumann, Berger, & Kizilhan, 2021). Insufficient research incorporating middle-class African Americans’ race-related stress and perception of injustice exists. This quantitative correlational research study will evaluate, via self-assessment inventories, middle-class African Americans race-related stress, perception of injustice, and the relationship between the two. Chapter 2 will restate the problem and purpose of the study and provide a brief synopsis of the literature to establish the relevance and currency of the problem. The literature search strategy for the study will be discussed listing accessed library databases, search engines, and key search terms used. The theoretical framework will describe major theoretical propositions, including delineations of any assumptions appropriate to the application of the theories. The research literature review will provide a thorough review of the research literature, which is conceptually and methodologically relevant and builds a case for the study. A summary section will conclude the chapter.

**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 I 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 me 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 research 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.

**CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Middle-class African Americans will experience race-related stress due to the influence of political ideologies which inform their perceptions of injustice (Kivikangas, Fernández-Castilla, Järvelä, Ravaja, & Lönnqvist, 2021; Leong, Chen, Willer, & Zaki, 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 a 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). The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study will be to examine the potential relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN.

The research question will emerge from the purpose statement. The hypotheses will align with the research question to support the purpose of the study. The results of the study will answer the research hypotheses.

Research Question: What relationship, if any, exists between an African American’s self-assessed race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice?

Ho: No statistically significant relationship exists between levels of race-related stress and perceptions of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN.

Ha: A statistically significant relationship exists between levels of race-related stress and perceptions of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN.

Research design elements and rationale will be addressed in detail. Research procedures and the data analysis process will be sequenced in the appropriate order. Investigative procedures, population and sample selection, instrumentation, data collection, data preparation, data analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical procedures will conclude the research approach.

**Research Design**

This quantitative study will utilize a correlational design to examine the relationship between race-related stress and perception of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN.

Quantitative research methods will be used to gather and test data via Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation. The Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation will be used to determine if a relationship exists between middle-class African Americans’ level of race-related stress, measured by the IRRB-Short Form, and their perception of injustice, measured by the PIQ. The two inventories will be accessed via a secure and anonymous on-line survey. Data from the inventories will be provided in Excel spreadsheet format to easily transfer into SPSS.

A Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation measures the association between two continuous variables in the context of a linear relationship (Kent State University, 2019a). Correlated data will measure the magnitude of change in one variable in association with the magnitude of change in another variable, and the associations of the variables will be either in the same direction or in opposite directions (Schber, Boer, & Schwarte, 2018). The Pearson’s *r* bivariate coefficient will measure the covariance of two continuous variables with a scale ranging from -1 to +1. A general limitation of correlational research will be that causation cannot be properly inferred (Rohrer, 2018). The tendency to assume relationships merit causation is not sound because one variable preceding another is not sufficient to assume causation (Dorestani & Aliabadi, 2017).

Choosing the appropriate methodology will be essential to accurately analyze the findings of the study (Ong & Puteh, 2017). A qualitative methodological approach will not be appropriate for this correlational study because qualitative methods are subjective and do not provide consistent and reliable data (Eyisi, 2016). A quantitative ex post facto research design will not be appropriate for this study because a review of archival data will be required, and this study will focus on the need for current data to answer the research question.

**Research Procedure**

Recruitment will be by email campaign in Chattanooga, TN. Potential participants will receive a recruitment letter via e-mail (see Appendix B) requesting participation in the research study. The target will be middle-class African Americans from Chattanooga, TN, recruited between December 2023 and January 2023. Potential participants will receive an overview of the study and a consent form. Upon consent, participants will be administered a survey via a confidential code and link to the on-line survey. The confidential code and link will take participants to surveymonkey.com. The specific battery will include items from the Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief (IRRS-B), the Perception of Injustice Questionnaire (PIQ), and demographic questions about race, gender, education, and annual income. Participants will be informed that participation in the study can be ceased at any time. The survey will include items to assess eligibility for study participants. Participants who do not meet the study criteria will not be included. Criteria for exclusion as a study participant will be identifying as other than African American and falling outside of what is considered socio-economically defined as middle-class as promulgated by the US Census Bureau (US Census, 2018). Each participant will be informed that they will be administered an electronic survey that will include questions about her/his experience of race-related stress and perception of injustice.

The process of data collection will be standardized throughout the collection time period through monitoring by the researcher and the research dissertation team. Study volunteers will be invited to participate in a survey. Approximately 20 minutes will be required to complete the on-line survey. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval will be obtained for the study.

**Participants**

The target population for this study will be middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN. The total population represented in the study is 60 middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN. Convenience Sampling (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018) will be used to ensure representation of the sample population utilized to ensure eligible participants meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria until a minimum sample size of at least 60 participants is attained. Sample size will be calculated using G\*Power software (see Appendix A; Kent State University, 2019b). Participants will be secured from an email campaign (see Appendix B).

**Demographics**

Participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire containing items regarding their gender identity, age, racial and ethnic self-identification, socio-economic status, academic level, and professional status (business owner, job position, place in job hierarchy).

**Instrumentation**

The quantitative correlational research study will explore whether a significant relationship between an African American's self-assessed level of race-related stress, measured by the IRRB-S and an African American's perception of injustice, measured by the PIQ, exists. Surveys will be utilized to evaluate African American's self-assessed level of race-related stress and African American’s self-assessed perception of injustice and the relationship between the two.

This study will utilize the Index of Race Related Stress – Brief (IRRS-B) (Utsey, 1999) instrument, which measures race-related stress using three subscales: racism based on Jones’s tripartite model of racism (Jones, 1971), Essed’s collective racism (Essed, 1990), and Lazarus and Folkman’s life stress theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Scoring of the IRRS-B will be based on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*This never happened to me*) to 4 (*This happened, and I was extremely upset*). See Appendix C for the permission letter.

This study will utilize the Perceived Injustice Questionnaire (PIQ) (Neumann, Berge, & Kizilhan, 2021) instrument, which measures the perception of injustice using five subscales: emotional and cognitive consequences, injustice perception, injustice experience, revenge, and forgiveness (Neumann, Berger, and Kizilhan, 2021). The scoring of the PIQ will be based on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly agree*), 2 (*agree*), 3 (*neither agree nor disagree*), 4 (*disagree*), and 5 (*strongly disagree*). See Appendix D for the permission letter.

In total, the survey to which participants respond will consist of a) The Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version (IRRS-B; Utsey, 1999; Appendix E), b) The Perceived Injustice Questionnaire (Neumann, Berger, & Kizilhan, 2021; Appendix F).

**IRRS-B.** The Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version (IRRS-B; Utsey, 1999) is a multidimensional self-report measure designed to assess the stress (perceived and encountered) experienced by Black individuals when they face racism. It is a shortened form of the Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS; Utsey & Ponterotto, 1999) and contains 22 items. The IRRS-B has three subscales: Cultural Racism (where one’s culture is vilified or degraded; 10 items), Institutional Racism (due to systemic racism inherent in institutional policies or customs; 6 items), and Individual Racism (interpersonal experience of racism; 6 items; Utsey, 1999). The total score represents a measure of Global Racism.

Sample items include, “*You notice that when Black people are killed by the police, the media informs the public of the victim’s criminal record or negative information in their background, suggesting they got what they deserved*” (cultural racism); “*You have been subjected to racist jokes by Whites/non-Blacks in positions of authority and you did not protest for fear they might have held it against you*” (institutional racism); and “*White people or other non-Blacks have treated you as if you were unintelligent and needed things explained to you slowly or numerous times*” (individual racism).

Items were scored on a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*This never happened to me*) to 4 (*This event happened and I was extremely upset*). Mean scores are calculated, and higher scores are indicative of more experiences of cultural, institutional, individual race-related stress as well as global racism (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). Utsey (1999) reported Cronbach’s alphas for IRRS-B subscales as .78 (Cultural Racism subscale), .69 (Institutional Racism subscale), and .78 (Individual Racism subscale; Utsey, 1999). Convergent validity was found with other similar measures of racism and psychological distress for African Americans. The measure has also been found to discriminate between the racism-related experiences of Black Americans and White Americans (Utsey, 1999).

Only the total score, Global Racism, was used in these analyses, with internal consistency, Cronbach’s alpha of .89 in the current study. This was due to two reasons. First, reliability analyses of the subscales revealed low Cronbach’s alpha for the Institutional Racism subscale (.57). And second, the Institutional Racism and Individual Racism subscales presented with high multicollinearity (.66). As further support for this decision, in a study examining the item functioning and structural performance of the IRRS-B through item response and confirmatory factor analyses, Chapman-Hilliard and colleagues (2020) indicated that the Institutional Racism subscales has often been found in the "questionable" (that is, Cronbach's alpha of .60 to .69; p. 556) range of internal consistency in numerous studies. They also reported that the three-factor structure did provide a good model fit, and a one-factor solution was the "most parsimonious" fit.

Respondents are asked to indicate which racism events they or a family member has experienced over their lifetime and then indicate the impact that each racism event had on them using a 5-point Likert scale (0 = *this has never happened to me*. 1 = *event happened but did not bother me*. 2 = *event happened and I was slightly upset*. 3 = *event happened and I was upset.* 4 = *event happened and I was extremely upset*). Summing the items for each IRRS-Brief subscale produces a total score for each race-related stress category.

Higher scores on the IRRS-Brief subscales are indicative of higher levels of race-related stress in each perceived racism domain. The IRRS-Brief has been found to have adequate construct and convergent validity with another measure of stress due to racism (Racism and Life Experience Scale-Revised) (Utsey, 1999). Internal consistency for the IRRS-Brief has been reported to be adequate, with Cronbach's alpha for the IRRS-Brief subscales ranging from .64 to .81 for college samples and community samples (Utsey, 1999; Utsey, Chae, Brown, & Kelly, 2002). Internal consistency for the IRRS-Brief total score in the current sample was .93. The internal consistency for the cultural racism scale was .89, it was .76 for the individual racism subscale, and .73 for the institutional racism subscale.

The Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS; Utsey and Ponterotto 1996) and its brief counterpart (IRRS-B; Utsey 1999) were designed to capture and measure stress associated with day-to-day racial struggles experienced by Black Americans while emphasizing the ubiquity of racism in the United States. The IRRS and IRRS-B are the most extensively used instruments to assess race-related stress among Black Americans. Since the publications introducing the IRRS and IRRS-B to the research literature in 1996 and 1999, the instruments have been used in dissertations (Cruz, 2015; Franklin, 2002; Mullins, 2012; White, 2013) and empirical studies published in academic journals (Driscoll, Reynolds, Todman, 2015; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). Scholars have also used the IRRS and IRRS-B to assess race-related stress within the African Diaspora (Joseph & Kuo, 2009) as well as Black immigrants in the United States (Case & Hunter, 2014; Hunter, Case, Joseph, Mekawi, & Bokhari, 2017).

**PIQ.** Perception of injustice will be measured using Neumann, Berger, and Kizilhan's (2021) Perceived Injustice Questionnaire. The developers aimed to develop an instrument that could be applied to assess the individual perceptions of injustice experiences and their emotional and cognitive consequences (Neumann, Berger, and Kizilhan, 2021). Studies have indicated a moderate to strong correlation between perceived injustice and depression (Lynch, Fox, D’Alton, Gaynor, 2021). According to the PIQ developers, until now, the questionnaires previously used frequently specifically referenced one event, a specific study, or assessed not only man-made injustice but also non-man-made disasters: natural catastrophes or unintentional disasters - accidents, for example. However, the perception of injustice is not merely a mental construct (Sullivan, 2020). It is most often based on a number of justice violations, especially in the case of human rights violations (Neumann, Berger, Kililhan, 2021).

The developers aimed to develop a new inventory that collects information on how individuals categorized potentially unjust experiences, whether those affect their perception of justice in general, or how they cope with that perception. These aspects are particularly relevant to one's experiences as it is assumed that one's perception of injustice (from experience) has an impact on various mental health conditions: depression, anxiety, and PTSD (Sullivan, 2020; Carriere, Pimentel, Yakobov, Edwards, 2020; Pham, Weinstein, Longman, 2004). Trauma increases the likelihood of developing PTSD and or depression. However, according to research, the increased perception of injustice is likely an additional contributor (Pham, et al., 2004; Tay, Rees, Tam, Savio, Da Costa, Silove, 2017). One explanation for this dynamic might be the transgression of the belief in a just world, the notion that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get (Lerner, 1965; Lerner, 1980). In order to maintain this belief despite the experiences of injustice, depressive thinking patterns such as self-blame could develop (Grove, 2019).

Quantitative and qualitative research methods and studies were triangulated in developing the PIQ (Neumann, Berger, and Kizilhan, 2021). Between May 2019 and October 2019, interviews and focus groups were used to ascertain feelings of injustice, an understanding of justice, and coping mechanisms. In addition, several iterative psychometric progressions were conducted on the PIQ, focusing on consistent internal reliability and validity (Neumann, Berger, Kililhan, 2021).

Internal reliability pertains to the degree of measurement error an instrument possesses, causing a differentiation in scores unrelated to participant responses. The lower the number of errors an instrument contains, the more reliable the instrument. The scoring of the PIQ will be based on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly agree*), 2 (*agree*), 3 (*neither agree nor disagree*), 4 (*disagree*), and 5 (*strongly disagree*). The PIQ can be used by students at accredited institutions of higher learning for empirical research studies. However, psychometric properties such as reliability depend on the population and sample size and cannot be treated as fixed characteristics (Neumann, Berger, Kililhan, 2021).

**Data Collection**

Informational letters and follow-up letters will be composed in compliance with the American College of Education's Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures. Once consent is obtained and approval granted, a summary of the purpose and participation requirements of the study and consent forms will be provided participants (see Appendix G for the consent form and Appendix H for the permission letter). Data will be collected from 60 participants over four weeks using on-line surveys. A confidential code and link will take participants to surveymonkey.com. On-line surveys help maintain data collection validity and reliability and are ecologically friendly (Dewaele, 2018).

The data collection method, surveys, will provide information for correlational examination with minimal risk to participants. Participants will not complete the surveys anonymously to ensure that data from each survey will be properly correlated. During the study, participants will remain confidential. Participants' names will not be revealed. Instruments used in the study will be submitted to the IRB for review and approval.

After consent forms to participate in the study are received, an e-mail will be sent to thank participants for agreeing to take part in the study. Data will be collected using on-line surveys; the e-mail will contain directions on how to access the surveys on-line. Completed survey data will be stored on a flash drive for three years. The information will be retrieved and exported to SPSS for analysis. SPSS is a software package used for statistical analysis. Survey responses of participants will be kept confidential.

**IRRS-B data collection.** Participants will receive a link to access the IRRS-B. The participants will access and complete the survey via the link. An e-mail notification will be generated to indicate that data are ready for collection.

**PIQ data collection.** Participants will receive a link to access the PIQ. The participants will access and complete the survey via the link. An e-mail notification will be generated to indicate that data are ready for collection.

**Data Preparation**

All participants will answer every question on the IRRS-BI and PIQ surveys. The IRRS-B and PIQ will be downloaded into SPSS for preparation of analysis. Survey data will be input into SPSS for analysis. Examining data will allow researchers to rectify the common issue of missing data. Preceding statistical analysis, handling of missing values, and data exclusion will be executed. Frequency distributions for the variables will be created and examined for typing errors, outliers, and missing data. The variables will be assessed for distribution normality.

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistical computations will be performed for the IRRS-B and PIQ to include the means, standard deviations, and frequencies, as done by R. A. Johnson and Bhattacharyya (2019). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the IRRS-B and PIQ will be evaluated. These processes will support the reliability of the study.

The Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation will be used to determine if a significant relationship between an African American’s self-assessed level of race-related stress, measured by the IRRS-B, and self-assessed perception of injustice, measured by the PIQ, exists (Kent State University, 2019). SPSS will be utilized to calculate the composite (mean) scores for the race-related stress variable and the perception of injustice variable. The coefficients will be analyzed to investigate if a significant relationship exists between the variables. The goal of the study will be to discover if a relationship exists between the variables. A one-tailed test of significance will be used to test the relationship between the variables (Stockburger, 2016). A .05 significance level will be utilized to analyze the results.

**Reliability and Validity**

The sample for the study will consist of 60 middle-class African Americans representative of Chattanooga, TN. A larger sample size could yield more generalizable findings and statistical significance. Convenience sampling of the total population of middle-class African Americans will yield a representative sample.

Construct validity from a systematic approach will maintain the validity of the study using appropriate methods for quantitative research (Mislevy, 2007). 60 participants were selected based on the sample size calculation for a Pearson's *r* in G\*Power. A convenience sample will be used to select the first 60 participants to return a signed consent form.

Cronbach’s alpha will be used to measure internal consistency and scale reliability.

Cronbach’s alpha for the study will exhibit an expected alpha value between .70 and .90 (UCLA Institute for Digital Research & Education, 2019). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the IRRS-B and PIQ will demonstrate evidence of strong internal consistency. Internal reliability coefficients for the IRRS-B were above the expected alpha value of .70, ranging between .75 and .87 (Utsey, 1999). The PIQ demonstrated internal reliability coefficients above the expected alpha value with a first order scale mean of .87, ranging between .75 and .90 (Neumann, Berger, & Kizilhan, 2021).

**Ethical Procedure**

To protect research participants, the National Institutes of Health (n.d.) established ethical guidelines. The research will be conducted responsibly, adhering to ethical principles of respect for participants, autonomy, protection of vulnerable populations, beneficence, and justice (Ross, Iguchi, & Panicker, 2018). Professional integrity will be paramount when conducting the research (Walton, Andrews, & Osman, 2019). The research will conform with applicable federal, state, and local laws concerning the protection of human subjects. To prevent perceptions of bias while conducting research, epistemic objectivity will be maintained throughout the process.

Correlational research has ethical advantages. The study of relationships between independent and dependent variables, or correlational research, has an ethical advantage because participants do not have to be subjected to potentially harmful treatment (Grand Canyon University, Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, n.d.). The data collection method, surveys, will provide information for correlational examination with minimal risk to participants. Participants will not complete the surveys anonymously to ensure that data from each survey will be properly correlated. During the study, participants will remain confidential. Participants’ names will not be revealed. Instruments used in the study will be submitted to the IRB for review and approval.

Once approval to conduct the study is granted, potential participants will receive a recruitment letter (see Appendix B). Consent forms will include a summary of the purpose and participation requirements of the study and will be distributed via e-mail. The informed consent form will acknowledge participant rights and the research process. The research will be founded on evidence and unbiased methods of inquiry to best satisfy standards of verification (Urquhart, Lehmann, & Myers, 2010).

The feasible correlational research study will have reasonable time limits and a budget with minimal ethical issues. Participants’ test results will remain confidential. Study participants will receive individualized survey results upon completion of the inventories. Data will be stored on a flash drive used only for the study and secured in a safe at the researcher's home when not in use. Data will be maintained on a flash drive for a minimum of three years and then deleted.

**Chapter Summary**

A framework for the quantitative study on race-related stress and the perception of injustice will be included. Research design elements and rationale were detailed. Research and data analysis will be sequenced. Research procedures, population and sample selection, instrumentation, data collection, data preparation, data analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical procedures will conclude the research approach. The instruments for the study were selected carefully to ensure alignment with the research question. The instruments were also selected to ensure the validity and reliability of the quantitative research (Heale & Twycross, 2015). The next chapter illustrates and explains the research findings based on data analysis.

**CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND RESULTS**

The The purpose of the study was to examine the potential relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN. The quantitative correlational research study evaluated, via self-assessment inventories, middle-class African Americans’ race-related stress, perception of injustice, and the potential relationship between the two. A total of *N* = 62 respondents participated in this study.

The following research question guided the study:

What relationship, if any, exists between a middle-class African American's self-assessed race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice?

The following hypothesis was tested:

Ha: A statistically significant relationship exists between a middle-class African American’s self-assessed race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice.

The following null hypothesis was tested:

Ho: No statistically significant relationship exists between a middle-class African American’s self-assessed race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice.

**Data Collection**

Informational letters and follow-up letters were composed in compliance with the American College of Education's Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures. Once consent was obtained and approval, a summary of the purpose and participation requirements of the study and consent forms were provided to the participants (see Appendix G for the consent form and Appendix H for the permission letter). Data was collected from 62 participants over six weeks, January 2024 through March 2024, using on-line surveys. Each participant received a confidential link by email to access the only survey. On-line surveys helped maintain data collection validity and reliability and were ecologically friendly (Dewaele, 2018).

The data collection method, surveys, provided information for correlational examination with minimal risk to participants. Participants did not complete the surveys anonymously to ensure that data from each survey was properly correlated. During the study, participants remained confidential. Participants' names were not revealed. Instruments used in the study were submitted to the IRB for review and approval.

After consent forms from participates were received, an e-mail was sent to thank participants for agreeing to take part in the study. Data was collected using on-line surveys; the e-mail contained directions on how to access the surveys on-line. Completed survey data was stored on a flash drive to be kept for three years. The information was retrieved and exported to SPSS for analysis. SPSS is a software package used for statistical analysis (Fiandini, et al., 2024; Field, 2024). Participants’ survey responses were kept confidential.

**IRRS-B data collection.** Participants received a link to access the IRRS-B. The participants accessed and completed the survey via the link. An e-mail notification was generated to indicate that data was ready for collection.

**PIQ data collection.** Participants received a link to access the PIQ. The participants accessed and completed the survey via the link. An e-mail notification was generated to indicate that data was ready for collection.

**Data Preparation**

All participants answered every question on the IRRS-BI and PIQ surveys. The IRRS-B and PIQ data was downloaded into SPSS for preparation of analysis from survey monkey. Survey data was input into SPSS for analysis. Examining data provided an opportunity to rectify the common issue of missing data. Preceding statistical analysis, handling of missing values, and data exclusion were executed. Frequency distributions for the variables were created and examined for typing errors, outliers, and missing data. The variables were assessed for distribution normality.

**Descriptions of the Sample**

Table 1 displays the frequency counts for the demographic variables. All participants were either Black/African American or Black/African American with an additional racial/ethnic designation. Ages of the respondents ranged from 30-40 years (11.3%) to 61+ years (30.6%) with the median age of *Mdn* = 55.50 years. There were more men (53.2%) than women (46.8%) in the sample. Sixty-one percent had an income of over $93,000/year. Job titles ranged from laborer/staffer (21.0%) to business owner (9.7%). Seventy-four percent had earned at least a master’s degree (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Frequency Counts for the Demographic Variables*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Variable** **Category**  ***N***  **%**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Race |  |  |  |
|  | Black/African American | 60 | 96.8 |
|  | Black/African American plus Other Race/Ethnicity | 2 | 3.2 |
| Age Category a |  |  |  |
|  | 30-40 years | 7 | 11.3 |
|  | 41-60 years | 16 | 25.8 |
|  | 51-60 years | 20 | 32.3 |
|  | 61+ years | 19 | 30.6 |
| Gender |  |  |  |
|  | Male | 33 | 53.2 |
|  | Female | 29 | 46.8 |
| Income Category |  |  |  |
|  | Under $66,000 | 5 | 8.1 |
|  | Between $66,000 to $93,000 | 19 | 30.6 |
|  | Over $93,000 | 38 | 61.3 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Job Title |  |  |  |
|  | Laborer/Staffer | 13 | 21.0 |
|  | Supervisor | 12 | 19.4 |
|  | Management | 17 | 27.4 |
|  | Executive | 14 | 22.6 |
|  | Business owner | 6 | 9.7 |
| Highest Education |  |  |  |
|  | College/College Graduate | 16 | 25.8 |
|  | Master’s Degree | 30 | 48.4 |
|  | Doctoral Degree | 16 | 25.8 |

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Note*. *N* = 62.

a Age: *Mdn* = 55.50 years.

# **IRRS-B Online System Analyses**

Data collected via the IRRS-B online survey were used to create an Excel spreadsheet containing scores for each of the three IRRS-B domains: individual racism, institutional racism, and cultural racism. The domain scores were imported into SPSS. The composite (mean) scores were calculated for the race related stress variable. Descriptive statistical computations were performed for the IRRS-B to include the mean and standard deviation (see Table 2).

# **PIQ Online System Analyses**

Data collected via the PIQ online survey were utilized to produce an Excel spreadsheet containing scores for each of the four PIQ domains: injustice experience, injustice perception, emotional and cognitive consequences, and revenge and forgiveness. The composite (mean) scores were computed for the perception of injustice variable. Descriptive statistics were computed for the PIQ to include the mean and standard deviation (see Table 2).

Table 2 displays the psychometric characteristics for the two scale scores. For race-related stress, the mean score was *M* = 3.32 on a five-point scale and for perceived injustice, the mean score was *M* = 2.67 on a five-point scale. The Cronbach alpha coefficients were both acceptable (Cronbach, 1951) (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Psychometric Characteristics for the Scale Scores*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Scale Score *M SD* Skewness Kurtosis Min Max α**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Race-Related Stress | 3.32 | 0.75 | -0.03 | -0.95 | 1.68 | 4.68 | .90 |
| Perceived Injustice Total Score | 2.67 | 0.44 | 0.61 | 0.22 | 1.79 | 3.92 | .85 |

*Note*. *N* = 62.

**Assumption Testing**

According to the Laerd Statistics website (Laerd, 2024), there are five assumptions needed for Pearson correlations:

1. Continuous variables
2. Paired variables
3. Linear relationship between the variables
4. No significant outliers
5. Normality

Assumption 1 (continuous variables) was met with both scale scores having Cronbach alpha scores greater than .70 (see Table 1). Assumption 2 (paired variables) was met by the study’s design with the respondent’s stress score being paired with the respondent’s injustice score. Assumptions 3 (linear relationship) and 4 (no significant outliers) were met after inspection of Figure 1. Figure 1 indicates a positive strong linear relationship was found between the variables. In addition, no significant outliers were observed (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Scatterplot to Test the Hypothesis*

A graph with blue dots

Description automatically generated

*Note*. *N* = 62.

*Note*. Pearson correlation between the two variables: *r* (60) = .40, *p* = .001.

Assumption 5 (normality) was addressed two ways: Skewness and kurtosis statistics (see Table 2) as well as normality statistics (See Table 3). The skewness and kurtosis statistics were within normal limits (± 1.0, Cronbach, 1951).

The Shapiro–Wilk test was performed on IRRS-B and PIQ composite scores. The Shapiro–Wilk test for normality distribution on the IRRS-B composite scores indicated an alpha value greater than .05 (*p* > .05) and signified the distribution was normally distributed (see Table 3). The Shapiro–Wilk test for normality distribution on the PIQ composite scores indicated an alpha value greater than .05 (*p* > .05) and signified the distribution was normally distributed (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Normality Statistics for the Scale Scores*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Shapiro-Wilk**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Scale Score** Statistic *df p*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Race-Related Stress | 0.97 | 62 | .18 |
| Perceived Injustice Total Score | 0.97 | 62 | .09 |

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Note*. *N* = 62.

**Tests of the Research Question and Hypotheses**

Research Question:

What relationship, if any, exists between a middle-class African American's self-assessed level of race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice?

The following hypothesis was tested:

Ha: A statistically significant relationship exists between a middle-class African American’s self-assessed race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice.

The related null hypothesis was:

Ho: No statistically significant relationship exists between a middle-class African Americans’ self-assessed race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice.

The Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation was used to determine if a relationship exists between middle-class African American’s race-related stress, measured by the IRRB-Short Form, and their perception of injustice, measured by the PIQ. A Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation measures the association between two continuous variables in the context of a linear relationship (Kent State University, 2019). Correlated data measured the magnitude of change in one variable in association with the magnitude of change in another variable, and the associations of the variables are either in the same direction or in opposite directions (Schber et al., 2018). The Pearson’s *r* bivariate coefficient measured the covariance of two continuous variables with a scale ranging from -1 to +1.

The footnote of Figure 1 contains the relevant Pearson correlation. For the research question, data revealed a statistically significant positive correlation was found between stress and injustice for the Pearson correlation (*r* [60] = .40, *p* = .001). Therefore, there was sufficient statistical evidence the correlation between race related stress and the perception of injustice was significant. These findings supported rejecting the null hypothesis (see Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Correlation for Perceived Injustice with Race-Related Stress. Pearson Correlation*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Type of Correlation  *r* *p*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Pearson .40 .001

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Note*. *N* = 62.

**Reliability and Validity**

The sample for the study consisted of 62 middle-class African Americans representative of Chattanooga, TN. A larger sample size could have yielded more generalizable findings and statistical significance. Convenience sampling from the total population of middle-class African Americans yielded a representative sample.

Construct validity from a systematic approach maintained the validity of the study by using appropriate methods for quantitative research (Mislevy, 2007). Sixty participants were selected based on the sample size calculation for a Pearson's *r* in G\*Power. A convenience sample was used to select the first sixty participants to return a signed consent form. Sixty-two participant consented to participate in the research study.

Cronbach’s alpha was used to measure internal consistency and scale reliability. An acceptable Cronbach’s alpha value is between .70 and .90 (UCLA Institute for Digital Research & Education, 2019). The Cronbach’s alpha value for the IRRS-B when validated was above the expected alpha value of .70, ranging between .75 and .87 (Utsey, 1999). The alpha value for the IRRS-B for this study was .90 (see table 2). The PIQ when validated demonstrated internal reliability coefficients above the expected alpha value with a first order scale mean of .87, ranging between .75 and .90 (Neumann et al., 2021). The alpha value for the PIQ for this study was .85 (see table 2).

**Summary**

This quantitative correlational study used survey data from 62 respondents to evaluate the potential relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN. The primary hypothesis (stress related to injustice) was supported (see Figure 1). In the final chapter, these findings will be compared to the literature, conclusions and implications will be drawn, and a series of recommendations will be delineated.

**CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, the study results were compared and contrasted with the literature, conclusions were drawn, and recommendations were made. Using Critical Race Theory (CRT; Bell, 1995) and various socio-political concepts as the framework for conceptualizing the attitudes and perceptions of middle-class African Americans, the current study investigated the relationships between race-related stress and my study population’s perception of injustice among 63 participants. This chapter presents the findings and interpretations of the primary analyses. The limitations of the study were discussed. Implications for sociopolitical understanding and racial reconciliation were also discussed.

**Purpose and Research Questions Review**

The purpose of the study was to examine the potential relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN. The problem was that middle-class African Americans experienced race-related stress due to the influence of political ideologies, which informed their perceptions of injustice (Kivikangas et al., 2021; Leong et al., 2020). However, the sociological relationship between race-related stress and the perceptions of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN, was unknown. This problem was of particular concern in the American Southeast, where there is a dynamic of historical racism (Anderson, Span, 2016). Therefore, Chattanooga, TN, was 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). The research question emerged from the purpose statement. The hypotheses aligned with the research question to support the purpose of the study. The results of the study answered the research hypotheses.

Research Question:

What relationship, if any, exists between an African American’s self-assessed race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice?

Ho: No statistically significant relationship exists between levels of race-related stress and perceptions of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN.

Ha: A statistically significant relationship exists between levels of race-related stress and perceptions of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN.

**Review of Key Results From Chapter 4**

The quantitative correlational research study evaluated, via self-assessment inventories, middle-class African American race-related stress, perception of injustice, and the potential relationship between the two. A total of *N* = 62 respondents participated in this study. Using the procedures described in Chapter 3, Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation analyses were used to address the hypotheses. The sample's IRRS-B composite (mean) score was compared to the PIQ composite (mean) score.

The following null hypothesis was tested:

Ho: No significant relationship exists between a middle-class African American's self-assessed level of race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice.

Table 1 displays the frequency counts for the demographic variables. All were either Black/African American or Black/African American with an additional racial/ethnic designation. The respondents’ ages ranged from 30-40 years to 61+ years, with a median age of *Mdn* = 55.50 years. There were more men (53.2%) than women (46.8%) in the sample. Sixty-one percent had an income of over $93,000/year. Job titles ranged from laborer/staffer to business owner, with a median job title being management. Seventy-four percent had earned at least a master’s degree (see Table 1). Table 2 displays the psychometric characteristics of the two scale scores. For race-related stress, the mean score was *M* = 3.32 on a five-point scale; for perceived injustice, the mean score was *M* = 2.67 on a five-point scale. Both Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were acceptable measures (Cronbach, 1951) (see Table 2).

According to the Laerd Statistics website (Laerd, 2024), five assumptions are needed for Pearson correlations. Assumption 1 (continuous variables) was met with both scale scores having Cronbach alpha scores greater than .70 (see Table 1). Assumption 2 (paired variables) was met by the study's design, with the respondents’ stress score being paired with the respondents’ injustice score. Assumptions 3 (linear relationship) and 4 (no significant outliers) were met after inspection of Figure 1. Figure 1 shows a clear, linear, positive relationship between the two variables. In addition, no significant outliers were observed (see Figure 1). Assumption 5 (normality) was addressed in two ways: Skewness and kurtosis statistics (see Table 2) as well as normality statistics (See Table 3). The skewness and kurtosis statistics were within normal limits (± 1.0, Cronbach, 1951).

The Research Question was, What relationship, if any, exists between a middle-class African American's self-assessed level of race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice? The related null hypothesis was Ho: No significant relationship exists between a middle-class African American's self-assessed level of race-related stress and self-assessed perception of injustice. To answer this, the footnote of Figure 1 contains the relevant Pearson correlation. Specifically, a significant positive correlation was found between stress and injustice for the Pearson correlation (*r* [60] = .40, *p* = .001). These findings supported rejecting the null hypothesis (see Figure 1). The primary hypothesis (stress related to injustice) was supported (see Figure 1). In this chapter, the researcher compared these findings to the literature. Conclusions and implications are delineated with a series of recommendations.

**Comparison of Results to Chapter 2 Literature Review**

**Literature that was Additive to Chapter 4 Findings**

The results of this study were consistent with Cruz & Palmer, 2015; Driscoll, Reynolds, & Todman, 2015; Hunter, Case, Joseph, Mekawi & Bokhari, 2017; Utsey, Chae, Brown, & Kelly, 2002 who found that not only do middle-class African Americans, specifically in Chattanooga, TN for this study, experience race-related stress due to actual or perceived racism. However, middle-class African Americans reacted to racism in a variety of ways: for example, by participating in political activism or by excelling in American society (see Table 1). The study found that there was a positive correlation between race-related stress and the perception of injustice in middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN (see Table 4). Emerging social trends indicated the need to understand any possible relationship between race-related stress and one's perception of injustice. This result was consistent with Utsey, 1999; Neumann, Berger, & Kizilhan, 2021. In light of these findings, it was not surprising that many middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN, found an explanation for their perceived oppression by the white hegemon in the rationale of CRT or that they embraced Marxist ideologies as potential remedies to society’s sociopolitical afflictions concerning race, employment opportunities, educational disparities, DEI, or conflict over shared national history. People perceived different actions as unjust and reacted differently to injustice experiences. This subjective perception of injustice could determine their actions, mental health, or race-related stress (Fetchenhauer, Huang, 2004). Current research on people suffering after traumatic accidents showed that people who subjectively perceived their situation as less just felt pain longer and more strongly (Trost et al., 2017; Sullivan, 2020; Carriere et al., 2020). To better understand the impact of injustice experiences on mental health, it was necessary to validly assess experiences of injustice with appropriate instruments (Fetchenhauer, Huang, 2004). The data was precise in its demonstration of the self-reported experiences of the study population concerning lived experiences regarding racism due to the questions the items asked in the surveys. The study results presented many possibilities for future studies concerning the specific coping strategies of the study participants.

**Variant Literature Compared to Chapter 4 Findings**

To argue that racism does not exist, has not existed, or does not play a part in U.S. shared history is not only an exercise in futility but also disingenuous (Kendi, 2019). While this study found that middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN, did experience race-related stress and that race-related stress did affect their perception of injustice, Thomas Sowell would disagree that a single variable like race-related stress would serve to derail an entire population (Sowell, 2019; Sowell, 1960). Sowell would argue that many variables come together to result in an individual or population succeeding or not in the face of racism. According to Sowell, no equal distribution exists in any permutation, manufactured or naturally occurring. Again, this is not to say there have not been considerable abuses by the hegemon (Sowell, 1960). However, writers like Glenn Loury would also agree and disagree with the study results: that a single factor could have been responsible for so much causation (Glenn Loury, 2021). One possible way that race and ethnicity might have introduced themselves into the matter is by contrasting behavior in contractual relationships with minority groups by others. This introduction might have hindered the ability of minorities to convert their assets into social mobility results. This notion was referred to as the discrimination paradigm in the study of *Social Mobility* (Loury et al., 2005). The result that individuals with the attitude that “things will generally be all right with the world” are more inclined to take up activism activities for social change seemed counterintuitive based on the body of literature (Leath & Chavous, 2017). On the contrary, the literature implied that those suffering from race-related stress favored social activism and did not believe that everything would be all right with the world. Therefore, the two goals of the current study were to add to the literature on socio-political attitudes and better understand how the variables were related concerning race-related stress and the perception of injustice in the study population.

**Synthesis of Literature**

Based on the literature, there were many reasons why some studies agreed and some disagreed. There was no dispute concerning the existence of racism. Scholars and societies have reached a consensus in this regard (Stone, 2012). Two prevalent areas where scholars disagreed were the magnitude of the existing effects of racism and egalitarian subjects. Scholars had wide-ranging opinions concerning the impact of historic and institutional racism. Some believed the effects of racism were as prevalent today as they were during the Jim Crow era (Kendi, 2019), yet not as overt (Dyson, 2020). There were those scholars who believed the effects of systemic and institutional racism were not as prevalent in that the ability to achieve or access wealth was no longer the barrier it used to be for people of color (Sowell, 2019). Institutional and systemic equality had been “leveled” on the societal playing field.

Much has been written about Marxism and conflict. Ghous (2020) wrote that drawing on different schools of Marxist thought established the case of ideology as one of the many potential sources of social conflict. There were economic scholars (Glenn Loury, 2021; Thomas Sowell, 2019) who believed economic determinism could not solely cause social conflict. Ideology had a part. Insistence upon mere economic vernacular and eliminating consciousness and moral elements will limit the scope of the social conflict theory. Ideology was a permanent feature of social and political life. Ideology shaped and reshaped society. Ideology led to group identification and conflicting preferences and choices (Ghous, 2020). Individuals and groups entered the political arena with different expectations and preferences. Sometimes, these differing preferences resulted in sharp divisions. Heterogeneous societies suffer more from differences and divisions than homogeneous societies (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). With all the benefits diversity brought, it also presented many specific conflicts. 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, it was evident that economic determinism was also responsible for social conflict.

Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, Harvard African American Studies professor, is an influential contemporary writer on CRT. Kendi is a leading author on what became known as anti-racism and how to become an anti-racist (Delgado et al., 2017). CRT significantly affected contemporary fields such as economics, sociology, psychology, African American Studies, American History, and many other fields of study (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Ibram X. Kendi observed that racism was not the only social factor determining an individual's life. Kendi agreed with Sowell concerning single factors derailing an entire population. Kendi wrote that, for better or worse, we all see ourselves in a particular way. For better or worse, others see us the way they see us. However, how I see myself might not be reality. How others see me might not be reality. My environment and experiences (nature and nurture) significantly influenced my perception, how I see others, and how others see me (Kendi, 2019, p. 37). I must own myself. I must feel free and be free to be - imperfections and all. I am my representative and expression of freedom (Kendi, 2019, p. 205).

**New Contributions to Literature**

A new contribution to the literature was Deborah Stone’s book *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making* (Stone, 2012). In chapter two, she covered the topic of equity and its complex challenges. She wrote that it was necessary to remember from the outset that equity was the objective for all factions in a distributive dispute. The strife often arose over how the parties envisioned the distribution of whatever “it” was. Stone elaborated on the challenges of equity by using the slices of a cake to demonstrate complexity: “equal slices but unequal invitations, unequal slices for unequal ranks but equal slices for equal ranks, unequal slices but equal blocs, unequal slices but equal meals, unequal slices but equal value to recipients, unequal slices but equal starting resources, unequal slices but equal statistical chances, unequal slices but equal votes” (Stone, 2012, pp. 40-41). The paradox in distributive problems was made clear by Stone’s illustration: Equality may mean inequality, equal treatment could require unequal treatment and equal distribution might be seen as equitable or inequitable depending on one’s point of view. This meant that any policy argument must have offered a moral, supported reason why it was proper or improper to categorize situations or cases alike or different (Stone, 2012).

**Alignment with Theoretical Framework**

Marxism framed this study with critical race theory as its actuator. It could be established that much contemporary social conflict can be attributed to Marxism through critical race theory (Ghous, 2020). The statistical results of this study aligned with the theoretical framework of critical race theory in that the study population believed they were actively experiencing racism or had experienced racism, which motivated them to believe sociopolitical activism was a worthy cause. However, a statistical majority of the study participants did not think violent revolution was the remedy. Several other theoretical frameworks might have explained the study participant’s lack of motivation to engage in violent revolution. These theoretical frameworks might have been religious or spiritual practices, counseling and therapy relationships, self-actualization, or a greater capacity to forgive (Wittrock, 2020). The exploration of these delimitations might offer different results and explanations concerning the study population’s lack of motivation for violent revolution in light of their reported experiences with racism and race-related stress (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014).

Sociopolitical attitudes of the study population suggested emotions regarding facts or the perceived state of the unique combination of social and political factors in a sociopolitical environment (Chaiklin, 2011). Sociopolitical could have included beliefs about gender equality, government responsibilities, adherence to social norms that affected the citizenry, support for civil liberties, inclination to participate in political activity or activism, and perspectives about maintaining order (Campbell & Horowitz, 2016; Nugent et al., 2016). Sociopolitical attitudes were often affected by political orientation and ideology (Campbell & Horowitz, 2016; Furnham, 1985; Haidt, 2012; Proch et al., 2019; Tansey & Kindsvatter, 2020).

Political ideologies like conservatism or liberalism were fundamental contributors to individual attitudes concerning their sociopolitical environment (Kivikangas et al., 2021; Leong et al., 2020). However, it is vital to note that there were cultural and subcultural differences in how political ideology, moral foundations, and sociopolitical attitudes related. In a cross-cultural meta-analysis, Kivikangas and colleagues (2021) found that research on political ideology, moral values, and attitudes results were smaller in samples that did not consist of individuals who were white, American, or had political interests. Further research on the African American population's political ideologies and sociopolitical attitudes is needed.

**Implications**

Based on the literature, material differences (economic, political, legal) sometimes affected groups designated as racial minorities – a designation based mainly on census statistics. However, many of the material differences were not racial at all. One could empirically demonstrate that many of the issues ascribed to systemic racism were indeed classism matters, not actual racism, as the term was understood just a short time ago (Holman, et al., 2021). The definition of racism has evolved substantially in the last four to five years. Theorists of postmodernism have been attentive to social systems, focusing on detecting implicit biases, points of view, and even subconscious racial assumptions. These positions are counter-liberal in sentiment. Traditional liberalism was more concerned with equality at the different levels of society and stressed progress incrementally (Neuwirth, 2023). Critical race theory in the hands of the novice is a potentially destructive revolution as it seems to be fueled by emotional fervor instead of sound reasoning. While there is no such state as color-blindness regarding race (a form of racism), many traditional liberals and conservatives believe there is. How can one both celebrate and ignore the outward racial and cultural traits of others and celebrate them simultaneously (Glenn Loury, 2021)?

Racism will never be irradicated entirely from the human experience. The research revealed that participants wished to be left alone to live as they saw fit. However, the understanding of what racism is has been diluted. Everything that goes against the mainstream, neoliberal opinion is considered racist (Holman, et al., 2021). People tend to have preferences, likes, dislikes and wants. Society sees those as intractable who do not prefer the company of someone on specific or general grounds: they are labeled a bigot or intolerant. One can no longer love someone and simultaneously disapprove of their life or behavior. Not only does everyone have to accept everything about other's lives and behaviors, but everyone has to celebrate every idiosyncrasy of every other. Perhaps one does not dislike another person, one does not prefer their company; one must still comply or be cast out as an ignorant bigot. Critical analysis, cultural sensitivity, educating oneself to different cultural norms, and living a life rich with diverse perspectives are essential to Western civilization (Glenn Loury, 2021). However, forcing individuals to accept, condone, celebrate, and prefer everything about another is not enlightenment. It is undoubtedly not wiping out the blight of racism - societal or systemic. The notions of identifying implicit bias and making someone's lack of agreement or acceptance with every aspect of others should not have been commingled. Actual racism will never be eradicated by society if everything is racist. The "war" against racism was the new Gotterdammerung. All must be sacrificed to win the struggle. However, there can be no "winners" if all is sacrificed to win (Thiele, 2021).

For scholars and practitioners of social sciences and social research, the focus is not to attempt to align social sciences (social studies) with the natural sciences. Social science is just that – social, hence, dynamic (Merton, 1949). Unlike research in the natural sciences, the social sciences are based on dynamic social research. Social research is not static. A did not always equal B. B did not always equal A. Sociologist Robert Merton wrote extensively on what it was to be functional or dysfunctional concerning society and the perspective of whom one engaged within a research or social context (Merton, 1949). One theory did not fit everyone everywhere. Even with the best intentions, societal systems and policies inherently have consequences for all involved. Merton wrote of manifest and latent functions. Manifest functions were outcomes that were intended and expected. Latent functions were those outcomes that were not intended. However, all latent functions did not always mean adverse effects or results (Merton, 1957). Social scientists should avoid mega theoretical constructs influencing one's worldview: politics and ideology. Social science should have replaced these influences with what Merton coined Middle Range Theories (Merton, 1949). It is not social science's responsibility to solve all of society's ails. Instead, social science should systematically integrate social theory and empirical research, using plain, nibble language rather than dense, cumbersome scientific jargon. Race-related stress and the perception of injustice are complex topics together and individually because society is complex in its ever-changing and shifting social dynamics. Social scientists should concentrate on the delimiting aspects of social phenomena (Merton, 1949).

**The Sample and The Population**

This study will benefit the study population, the study demographic, and the field of social research. The population consisted of 62 African American, middle-class respondents. Middle class was defined socioeconomically using U.S. Census Bureau data (U.S. Census, 2018). The study data showed that though all respondents reported having been victims of racism currently or in the past, they were still able to achieve personal and professional milestones in their lives, specifically in their education and professional careers (see Table 1). The data demonstrated the resilience of the demographic in attaining what is anecdotally referred to as the American Dream (education, land ownership, business ownership, senior management, retirement plans, wealth to pass on to descendants) through hard work, determination, and initiative despite the institutional and systemic confinements of the hegemony. This study will benefit the field of social research because it provides a quantitative study that demonstrates that the study population and demographic might not be as oppressed as society at large might purport or that racism might not be as monumental an obstacle as once believed. This study opened new directions of inquiry: race and class.

**The Study and Society At Large**

Individuals tend to make choices based on perceived group averages. Group averages extend across a wide range of social contexts. The choices one makes can range from the annoying and trivial to the significant. Though significant, they could be virtually undetectable by the study population that reported having experienced racism. What is significant concerning the point of view regarding social mobility is an outsider’s estimation of group averages, and their claim that those averages projected onto individuals may have considerable consequences concerning acquiring job experience, education, or material assets (Loury, 2002). For example, suppose someone was to use the ethnic or racial makeup of a neighborhood as a representation of quality. In that case, it may have served to suppress property values in neighborhoods some might consider having the “wrong mix." This dynamic could have affected some lenders’ willingness to lend in said neighborhoods. In addition, if employers were to evaluate Asian applicants based on perceived group averages (Asians are good with technology), many applicants whose fundamental qualities fall below the group average might have obtained an unearned advantage in the labor market. One possible advantage Asians might have had was getting on-the-job experience. As a consequence, this dynamic may, in the end, have fulfilled the implicit group stereotype some attribute to Asians and technology or other minorities in their respective neighborhoods (Loury, 2002). This study's results offset the inference that African Americans have an implicit, insurmountable hurdle blocking their path to the "American Dream." This study also served to demonstrate the resilience of African Americans in the face of actual or perceived racism.

**Recommendations**

What is known, suggested by the research results, is that institutional and systemic racism might not be the defining, negative influence that some were putting forward as the bane of modern civilization. Racism is real. However, the research results demonstrated that despite particular social challenges, African Americans achieved middle-class status and more. A moderate effort of study of American history will reveal this. What we do not know is how or why many African Americans fail to achieve middle-class status socioeconomically and why some succeed. It is not entirely understood how complex the notion of social mobility is for particular populations. There are many variables available to consider (Sowell, 2019). The results of this study introduced many new areas of inquiry - not only concerning race-related stress and its implications for one's perception of injustice. Some possible future study opportunities are conducting this study with lower-class African Americans, lower and middle-class Latin and Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and even lower-class Caucasians. Gaps could be addressed or filled by conducting the study with different populations, using a different research design, for example, adding a qualitative component, using a different data collection instrument(s), conducting pre and post-longitudinal studies, or holding topical training.

There were limitations in this study related to sampling, research design, measurement, and analysis. Participants with certain characteristics concerning the primary variables might have elected to participate in the study. For example, participants with fewer real or perceived experiences of race-related stress or more favorable attitudes toward CRT and the sociopolitical environment may not have felt it necessary to participate or share their experiences. Conversely, individuals with negative experiences or perceptions desiring an outlet for their voices may have more eagerly participated in this research. The study was limited in its ability to generalize to all middle-class African Americans in Tennessee or the U.S. since the participants were from a single city in a single county. Also, while racism is made more or less explicit by its complexity across the nation, certain regions/states might have better or worse tenor for people of color. Considering these concerns related to sampling techniques and location, future studies should attempt to recruit participants through random sampling or by gathering data from individuals whose demographics and location, for example, are diverse and representative.

Although power analyses revealed that my sample size was adequate to attain

acceptable power for my proposed models, the results found with the IRRS-B and PIQ analyses might have been sample-specific. Therefore, to assess the generalizability of my proposed model to other subgroups, cross-validation analyses need to be conducted by future investigators. All of this research project's participants were middle-class socioeconomically. This relatively homogenous sample further limited the generalizability of my findings to African Americans from upper-class and lower-class communities. Future researchers examining socioeconomic variables that influence the pattern of results need to provide more accurate information about the structure of race-related stress and the perception of injustice in a heterogeneous sample of African Americans.

This study employed a cross-sectional design. While appropriate for correlational

research, there are associated concerns with the internal validity and caveats concerning interpreting the results. For example, confounding variables could have systematically affected independent or dependent variables, and ambiguous temporal precedence prevents isolation of cause versus effect. In this study, race-related stress and sociopolitical attitudes were conceptualized as predictors of the perception of injustice and its impact. The researcher interpreted the study results as such. However, it was reasonable that bi-directional relationships may have existed among the variables. As an example, it may have been possible to interpret the relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice in a way that assumed participants who engaged in activities related to Black activism were more likely to have experienced, perceived, and reported increased race-related stress. To empirically establish causal relationships among the study variables and mitigate the effects of confounding variables, future researchers should consider using longitudinal and experimental methodologies.

Measurement and data collection may have contributed to the limitations in interpreting the study results. The use of self-report questionnaires to collect data could have created challenges related to participant’s race-related stress. For example, some items on the IRRS-B that addressed Anti-White attitudes had strongly worded expressions of negative feelings. This dynamic may have caused increased participation or initiated social and ideological biases for participants who did or did not want to appear vengeful or angry. This consideration needed to be taken seriously for this and other measures administered. The self-report nature of the measures may also have introduced the possibility that participants’ general answers regarding sensitive subjects, such as racism, might not have been accurate due to stigma or social perception biases.

As part of the data cleaning process, I removed the possibility of either measure not being completed. Most attrition occurred immediately after the informed consent or during the first measure due to the online survey not permitting participants to advance after not responding to an item. All items had to be answered in order to participate in the study. Any case where all items were unanswered would not allow for meaningful analysis of the study variables. Nevertheless, this premature dropout may have been related to concepts and variables crucial to the study, such as racial identity attitudes or sociopolitical attitudes. For example, those individuals who support racial identity attitudes, have low critical consciousness, or possess positive sociopolitical attitudes might have interpreted the study description and the initial questions as superfluous, complaining, and then terminated their participation in the survey. Similarly, individuals experiencing emotional fatigue or depressive episodes might have withdrawn due to the subject matter or the time and energy required to complete the survey. Acknowledging the inherent difficulty of the subject matter and the valuable time of participants necessary for data collection, future researchers might need to be more strategic in data collection techniques to lessen potential participant dropout.

**Best Practices To Improve Outcomes**

There were many potential solutions put forward to remedy the causes of race-related stress in the literature. None applied to this study population, as indicated by their responses. There could be many causes for this study population’s disposition concerning race-related stress and its potential causes and effects. The data from the study did not demonstrate a desire for violent revolution by the participants due to racial oppression. However, the points below posed some potential solutions in the form of best practices to improve outcomes:

* Re-establish the stable family as the stabilizing element of the societal structure.
* Include representation of all communal factions at the policy-making table by providing incentives for viable social solutions.
* Establish the understanding that education is primarily a family responsibility regarding culture and cultural identity.

**Lessons Learned**

The above points are not exhaustive in their recommendations. The study topic is vast and requires further investigation. A lesson that was learned from this research is that the relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice is a complex issue. A study conducted with a mixed methodology design would have produced more nuanced data. This study was conducted with a quantitative methodological design. There were time constraints to this study. If I had five years and unlimited funds, I could have performed more extensive research, including several more variables. Some examples of other variables that I could have included could have been more demographic background information about participants, religious affiliations, community involvement, therapy or counseling relationships, and past and current family makeup. Given unlimited time and resources, I could have done more to mitigate the study limitations. An example of limitation mitigation could have been to conduct the study with the demographic in different locations. An assumption was that the same demographic located somewhere else could have experienced or perceived life differently than the study population that participated. Other races with similar socioeconomic status in different locations could have also addressed this study's limitations.

This study presented notable suggestions for research on the experiences

of middle-class African Americans. Concerning contributions to contemporary research, this study added to the literature that explores the experiences of middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN, using Marxism and Critical Race Theory as frameworks. The study investigated new relationships among variables previously studied in a dynamic, sociopolitical context to provide a more nuanced understanding of middle-class African American race-related stress and perception of injustice. This study extended the knowledge of the effects of the political era in which it was conducted and captured the unique experiences and feelings about that sociopolitical climate. Future studies utilizing mixed-methods or qualitative analysis to explore the experiences of middle-class African Americans could also provide a richer understanding and narrative of this sociopolitical era. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable insight into the long-term effects race-related stress might have on the psychosocial outcomes of middle-class African Americans. Future studies comparing these participants to participants who have or have not experienced significant social circumstances in their lifetimes may also be of value to the social research literature.

**Policy and Practitioner Recommendations**

Given what was discovered from this study and the literature, some recommendations addressing race-related stress and the perception of injustice in middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN were proffered at the policy (national) and practitioner (local) levels. Given the study results, the study population will benefit from these recommendations. In some regards, the policy (or national) recommendations are theoretical because operationalizing benefits for individuals with national policy is often challenging. Policy is about the big picture.

**Policy Recommendations (National, System, Institutional, Legislative, Long Term)**

* Enforcement of Federal and State Anti-Discrimination Laws, keeping in mind that no one approach is the "solution."
* Social Science is a teaching field. Realize that not all social problems are fixed by laws and policies. However, laws can help redirect negative social trends. Taylor laws to neither follow nor lead society.
* People only have those rights they can defend. Offense is not one of those rights. Do not allow legislation to control speech based on offense. National and state policy can be theoretical but should be as practical in purpose as possible.

The practitioner (or local) recommendations are practical. They focus on local communities and individuals through hands-on approaches. Practitioner is about the little picture.

**Practitioner Recommendations (City, County, Neighborhood, Focused, Applied, Therapy)**

* Conduct training to strengthen the family and community through community centers, churches, and non-profits.
* Train others to combat the "victim mentality" by educating them about reality through community centers, churches, and non-profits.
* Encourage people to seek counseling for anger, anxiety, and any other mental health issues. Connect/collaborate with community organizations like churches and non-profits to facilitate support groups and offer pertinent information.
* No propaganda! Train individuals and communities to avoid the rhetoric and ideology of national and local "race hustlers" looking to capitalize off of racial strife while offering no real-world solutions to real-world problems.
* Do not waste time looking for a handout. Get to work. Ignore those who always "cry wolf" or try to convince you that you are a victim.
* Teach people to take personal responsibility for their lives and families by encouraging them to believe that changing their socioeconomic position is within their influence.

These policy and practitioner recommendations are viable options to assist the study population with its race-related stress and perception of injustice on a personal level.

**Conclusion**

This study examined the relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN. The racial attitudes and sociopolitical attitudes were examined as potential moderators of the relationships between race-related stress and perception outcomes concerning the perception of injustice. The results indicated that due to increased experiences or perceptions of racism, race-related stress was associated with worsened perceptions of injustice among middle-class African Americans. Negative sociopolitical attitudes were related to perceiving more injustice.

This study has implications for research and clinical practice with African Americans. The findings of this study will add to the literature on race-related stress and the perception of injustice and fill gaps related to the effects of the contemporary sociopolitical context. Social researchers are encouraged to provide research for processing current events, normalizing and validating feelings about these events, facilitating understanding and engagement with African American perceptions concerning injustice, and exploring racial conflict while suggesting culturally appropriate interventions to promote racial reconciliation.

In Chapter One, I laid out the particulars of the research project. I stated the problem, the background of the problem, and the purpose and significance of the study. I proposed research questions and a study hypothesis to address the particulars of the research project. I posed a theoretical framework and operational definitions of terms. I made assumptions, and the scope of delimitations was set. Finally, the limitations of the study were discussed. Chapter Two resulted from an extensive literature review of several sociological concepts. A literature review strategy was presented and explained, and the study's theoretical framework was promulgated. I identified a gap in the literature, and a plan to address the gap was discussed. I then reiterated the need for this research. In chapter three, the research methodology for the research project is presented. The research design and procedure were presented along with the study participants and demographics. The IRRS-B and the PIQ were discussed as instrumentation along with the data collection process. I discussed data collection, preparation, data analysis, reliability, and validity. I promulgated the ethical procedure for the research project. In Chapter Four, the results of the statistical analysis of the data were performed. Analysis data for demographics, race-related stress, and the perception of injustice were presented. I discussed the results of the correlational relationship in terms of positive, negative, or no relationship. I presented my thoughts, reactions, and recommendations to this research project in Chapter Five. I discussed the limitations and delimitations, aspects where the data agreed and disagreed with the literature review, discussed a synthesis of the two perspectives concerning the data, and discussed implications for future study possibilities. Finally, I made recommendations to benefit the study population in light of the results.

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# **Appendices**

# **Appendix A: G\*Power Calculation**

*[16] -- Monday, November 06, 2023 -- 13:35:31*

**Exact** - Correlation: Bivariate normal model

**Options:** exact distribution

**Analysis:** A priori: Compute required sample size

**Input:** Tail(s) = Two

Correlation ρ H1 = 0.60

α err prob = 0.05

Power (1-β err prob) = 0.95

Correlation ρ H0 = 0

**Output:** Lower critical r = -0.3610069

Upper critical r = 0.3610069

Total sample size = 30

Actual power = 0.9554783

# **Appendix B: Participation Recruitment Letter**

November 26, 2023

Dear potential study participant,

I am Gerald Ware, a doctoral student at Omega Graduate School (OGS). I am writing to inform you about an opportunity to participate in a dissertation study on the relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice in middle-class African Americans. Quantitative research methods will be used to gather and test data via Pearson’s r bivariate correlation to determine if a significant relationship between middle-class African Americans’ race-related stress, measured by the Index of Race Related Stress – Brief (IRRS-B), and the perception of injustice measured by the Perception of Injustice Questionnaire (PIQ) exists. The study will be conducted within Hamilton County Tennessee. The total population represented in the study is 60 participants. Thirty participants will be selected. A sample of convenience will be used to select the first 30 participants to return a signed consent form.

The purpose of this correlational research study is to determine if and to what extent middle-class African Americans’ race-related stress relates to their perception of injustice. You have been identified as a possible participant for this study. Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time.

Results of the research study may be published; however, your name or any information you provided will **not** be disclosed. Your information will remain confidential. If you would like

additional information about the study, please feel free to contact me via email at gware7619@gmail.com or by phone at 423-280-6772.

Thank you for considering participating in this dissertation study.

Gerald Ware

Doctoral Student

Omega Graduate School

# **Appendix C: IRRS-B Permission**

From: Shawn Utsey <soutsey@vcu.edu>

Subject: Re: IRRS Brief Version

Date: December 5, 2022 at 4:05:01 PM EST

To: Gerald Ware <gware7619@gmail.com>

Gerald,

Greetings. You have my permission to use the IRRS-B. Please find the measures attached.

Shawn Utsey

On Mon, Dec 5, 2022 at 3:30 PM Gerald Ware <[gware7619@gmail.com](mailto:gware7619@gmail.com)> wrote:

Hello Dr. Utsey,

My name is Gerald Ware. I am a graduate student at Omega Graduate School in Dayton, TN. I am in dissertation for my Ph.D. I am contacting you to gain permission to use your research instrument, Index of Race related Stress - Brief Version (IRRS- Brief Version). I am more than prepared to purchase this research instrument.

Please let me know what you require of me. I am happy to accommodate you in any way you require. Thank you very much for your time and consideration! I look forward to hearing from you.

Gerald Ware

[gware7619@gmail.com](mailto:gware7619@gmail.com)

423-280-6772

--

Shawn O. Utsey, Ph.D.

Professor, Department of Psychology

Virginia Commonwealth University

*"Your silence will not protect you."*

- Audre Lorde

# **Appendix D: PIQ Permission**

From: Neumann Johanna <Johanna.Neumann@dhbw-vs.de>

Subject: AW: Perceived Injustice Questionnaire

Date: December 6, 2022 at 7:57:16 AM EST

To: "gware7619@gmail.com" <gware7619@gmail.com>

Dear Mr. Ware,   you’re very welcome to use the questionnaire for your research. Thank you for asking, also in the name of Mr. Kizilhan.

Please reach out if you have any further questions. Good luck!  Best regards Johanna Neumann

**Von:** Kizilhan Jan  **Gesendet:** Montag, 5. Dezember 2022 22:16 **An:** Neumann Johanna <Johanna.Neumann@dhbw-vs.de> **Betreff:** Fwd: Perceived Injustice Questionnaire

Von meinem iPhone gesendet

 Anfang der weitergeleiteten Nachricht:

**Von:** Gerald Ware <[gware7619@gmail.com](mailto:gware7619@gmail.com)> **Datum:** 5. Dezember 2022 um 21:53:51 MEZ **An:** Kizilhan Jan <[Jan.Kizilhan@dhbw-vs.de](mailto:Jan.Kizilhan@dhbw-vs.de)> **Betreff:** **Perceived Injustice Questionnaire**

﻿ Hello Dr. Kizilhan,  My name is Gerald Ware. I am a graduate student at Omega Graduate School in Dayton, TN. USA. I am in dissertation for my Ph.D. I am contacting you to obtain permission to use your research instrument, Perceived Injustice Questionnaire (PIQ). I am prepared to purchase this research instrument if necessary.   Please let me know what you require of me. I am happy to accommodate you in any way you require. Thank you very much for your time and consideration! I look forward to hearing from you.  Gerald Ware [gware7619@gmail.com](mailto:gware7619@gmail.com) 423-280-6772

# **Appendix E: IRRS-B Survey**

**Instructions**

This survey questionnaire is intended to sample some of the experiences that Black people have in this country because of their "blackness." There are many experiences that a Black person can have in this country because of his/her race. Some events happen just once, some more often, while others may happen frequently. Below you will find listed some of these experiences; for which you are to indicate those that have happened to you or someone very close to you (i.e. a family member or loved one). It is important to note that a person can be affected by those events that happen to people close to them; this is why you are asked to consider such events as applying to your experiences when you complete this questionnaire. **Please circle the number on the scale (0 to 4) that indicates the reaction you had to the event at the time it happened. Do not leave any items blank**. If an event has happened more than once refer to the first time it happened. **If an event did not happen circle 0 and go on to the next item.**

**0 = This never happened to me.**

**1 = This event happened, but did not bother me.**

**2 = This event happened & I was slightly upset.**

**3 = This event happened & I was upset.**

**4 = This event happened & I was extremely upset.**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. You notice that crimes committed by White people tend to be romanticized, whereas the 0 1 2 3 4

same crime committed by a Black person is portrayed as savagery, and the Black person

who committed it, as an animal.

2. Sales people/clerks did not say thank you or show other forms of courtesy and respect (i.e. put 0 1 2 3 4

your things in a bag) when you shopped at some White/non-Black owned businesses.

3. You notice that when Black people are killed by the police the media informs the public of the 0 1 2 3 4

Victim’s criminal record or negative information in their background, suggesting they got

what they deserved.

4. You have been threatened with physical violence by an individual or group of White/non-Blacks 0 1 2 3 4

5. You have observed that White kids who commit violent crimes are portrayed as "boys being 0 1 2 3 4

boys", while Black kids who commit similar crimes are wild animals.

6. You seldom hear or read anything positive about Black people on radio, T.V., newspapers or 0 1 2 3 4

in history books.

7. While shopping at a store the sales clerk assumed that you couldn't afford certain items 0 1 2 3 4

(i.e. you were directed toward the items on sale).

8. You were the victim of a crime and the police treated you as if you should just accept it as 0 1 2 3 4

part of being Black.

9. You were treated with less respect and courtesy than Whites and other non-Blacks while in a 0 1 2 3 4

store, restaurant, or other business establishment.

10. You were passed over for an important project although you were more qualified and 0 1 2 3 4

competent than the White/non-Black person given the task.

11. Whites/non-Blacks have stared at you as if you didn't belong in the same place with them; 0 1 2 3 4

whether it was a restaurant, theater, or other place of business.

12. You have observed the police treat White/non-Blacks with more respect and dignity than 0 1 2 3 4

they do Blacks.

**0 = This never happened to me.**

**1 = This event happened, but did not bother me.**

**2 = This event happened & I was slightly upset.**

**3 = This event happened & I was upset.**

**4 = This event happened & I was extremely upset.**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

13. You have been subjected to racist jokes by Whites/non-Blacks in positions of authority and 0 1 2 3 4

you did not protest for fear they might have held it against you.

14. While shopping at a store, or when attempting to make a purchase you were ignored as if 0 1 2 3 4

you were not a serious customer or didn't have any money.

15. You have observed situations where other Blacks were treated harshly or unfairly by 0 1 2 3 4

Whites/non-Blacks due to their race.

16. You have heard reports of White people/non-Blacks who have committed crimes, and in an 0 1 2 3 4

effort to cover up their deeds falsely reported that a Black man was responsible for the crime.

17. You notice that the media plays up those stories that cast Blacks in negative ways (child 0 1 2 3 4

abusers, rapists, muggers, etc. [or as savages] Wild Man of 96th St., Wolf Pack, etc.),

usually accompanied by a large picture of a Black person looking angry or disturbed.

18. You have heard racist remarks or comments about Black people spoken with impunity by 0 1 2 3 4

White public officials or other influential White people.

19. You have been given more work, or the most undesirable jobs at your place of employment 0 1 2 3 4

while the White/non-Black of equal or less seniority and credentials is given less work,

and more desirable tasks.

20. You have heard or seen other Black people express the desire to be White or to have 0 1 2 3 4

White physical characteristics because they disliked being Black or thought it was ugly.

21. White people or other non-Blacks have treated you as if you were unintelligent and 0 1 2 3 4

needed things explained to you slowly or numerous times.

22. You were refused an apartment or other housing; you suspect it was because you are Black. 0 1 2 3 4

# **Appendix F: Purpose and Participation Requirements**

This quantitative study will utilize a correlational design to examine the relationship between race-related stress and perception of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN. Quantitative research methods will be used to gather and test data via Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation. The Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation will be used to determine if a relationship exists between middle-class African Americans’ level of race-related stress, measured by the IRRB-Short Form, and their perception of injustice, measured by the PIQ. The two inventories will be accessed via a secure and anonymous on-line survey. Data from the inventories will be provided in Excel spreadsheet format to easily transfer into SPSS.

The target population for this study will be middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN, Hamilton County. The total population represented in the study is 60 middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN, Hamilton County. Convenience Sampling (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018) will be used to ensure representation of the sample population utilized to ensure eligible participants meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria until a minimum sample size of at least 60 participants is attained. Sample size will be calculated using G\*Power software (see Appendix A; Kent State University, 2019b). Participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire containing items regarding their gender identity, age, racial and ethnic self-identification, socio-economic status, academic level, and professional status (business owner, job position, place in job hierarchy).

Participants who do not meet the study criteria will not be included. Criteria for exclusion as a study participant will be identifying as other than African American and falling outside of what is considered socio-economically defined as middle-class as promulgated by the US Census Bureau (US Census, 2018).

# **Appendix G: Consent Form**

**Prospective Research Participant:** Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

#### Project Information

**Project Title:** The Relationship Between Race-Related Stress and the Perception of Injustice In Middle-Class African Americans: A Quantitative Study

**Researcher:** Gerald L. Ware

**Organization:** Omega Graduate School (OGS)

**Email:** gware7619@gmail.com **Telephone:** +1(423) 280-6772

#### Introduction

I am Gerald Ware, a doctoral candidate at Omega Graduate School. Research will be conducted under the guidance and supervision of Dr. David Ward.

#### Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this correlational research study is to determine if and to what extent middle-class African Americans’ race-related stress relates to their perception of injustice.

#### Research Design and Procedures

Quantitative research methods will be used to gather and test data via Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation to determine if a positive relationship between middle-class African Americans’ race-related stress, measured by the Index of Race Related Stress - Brief (IRRS-B), and perception of injustice measured by the Perception of Injustice Questionnaire (PIQ) exists and to what extent. The study will be conducted within Hamilton County Tennessee.

#### Participant selection

A request to participate will be disseminated to HCDE employees. Thirty participants will be selected. A sample of convenience will be used to select the first 30 participants to return a signed consent form.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this research is voluntary.

#### Procedures

Participants will complete a short demographic questionnaire, and two online inventories, the IRRS-B and the PIQ. Participants will be sent an e-mail containing directions on how to access the surveys.

**Duration**

The inventories will take approximately 10 to 20 minutes each to complete.

**Risks**

There are no anticipated risks for the study.

#### Benefits

Your participation is likely to assist in determining if race-related stress influences a middle-class African Americans’ perception of injustice.

#### Confidentiality

Completed survey data will be stored on a flash drive used only for this study and secured in a safe at the researcher’s home when not in use.

#### Sharing the Results

Each participant will receive feedback immediately following completion of the inventories explaining personal magnitude of race-related stress and their perception of injustice. Results of the study will be provided to participants. Results of the research study will be published.

#### Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Participation is voluntary. At any time, if you wish to end your participation in the research study, you will be free to do so.

#### Questions About the Study

If you have any question you will contact Gerald Ware. This research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Omega Graduate School. This is a committee whose role is to make sure research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to ask questions of this group, email IRB@ogs.edu.

#### Certificate of Consent

I have read the information about this study, or the information has been read to me. I acknowledge why I have been asked to be a participant in the research study. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I certify I am at least 18 years of age. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

#### Demographic Information

What is your job title? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been in a leadership role? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is your highest level of education completed? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Is your income range $62,0385 - $86,149 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_s

What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is you race? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Participant** (Print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Participant**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I confirm the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered to the best of my ability. I confirm the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

**Lead Researcher** (Print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of lead researcher**:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# **Appendix H: PIQ Survey**

Perceived Injustice Questionnaire **(PIQ)**

Injustice questionnaire for survivors of mass violence and atrocities in war and conflict areas

Please choose for each statement to what extent you agree with it.

A survey form with many squares

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

A checklist with black squares

Description automatically generated

A checklist with black squares

Description automatically generated

A questionnaire with a question mark

Description automatically generated

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**Development and Validation of a Short Form of the Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS)—Brief Version**

**Shawn O. Utsey**

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Development and Validation of a Short Form of the Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS)-Brief Version

SHAWN 0. UTSEY

This article describes the development and validation of a short version of the Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version (IRRS-B). The IRRS-B is a 22-item, multidimensional measure of the race-related stress experienced by African Americans as a result of their encounters with racism.

Chronic exposure to invidious forms of racism and discrimination has been implicated in the development of several stress-related diseases prevalent in the African American community. For example, Krieger and Sidney (1996) found that frequent encounters with racism were related to higher levels of blood pressure among African Americans. Jackson, Williams, and Torres (1995) found an inverse relationship between African Americans' life satisfaction and gen­ eral happiness and the stress associated with racism. Researchers have also demonstrated that chronic exposure to racism resulted in reduced levels of self-esteem for African Americans (Fernando, 1984; Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, in press). Utsey and Ponterotto (1996) found a positive relation­ ship between experiences with racism and perceptions oflife stress. Despite a plethora of evidence linking racism to an assortment of indicators of psycho­ logical and physical distress, the counseling profession has not responded adequately with specific interventions to ameliorate its deleterious effects on the psychological and somatic well-being of African Americans.

To develop effective counseling interventions aimed at curtailing the stressful effects of the everyday racism experienced by African Americans, one must give adequate attention to the conceptualization and assessment of race-related stress. Efforts to assess the psychological distress associated with racism should con­ sider the multidimensionality and ubiquitous nature of this chronic stressor. To this end, a tripartite model proposed by Jones (1972) best represents the multidimensional nature of racism as an omnipresent stressor in the lives of African Americans. According to this model, racism is envisioned as potentially occurring in three domains of African American life. The first is individual rac­ ism, which is based on the belief (and corresponding behavior) that one's own racial group is superior to others. The second is institutional racism, which is manifest in the policies and practices of institutions that operate (intentionally or unintentionally) to restrict the rights, mobility, access, or privileges of mem­ bers in a given racial group. The third, cultural racism, is the individual and institutional expression of the belief that a given culture is superior to others. A collective racism domain was later proposed by Essed (1990) as an extension

*Shawn* 0. *Utsey is an assistant professor* in *the Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy, Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey. Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to Shawn* 0. *Utsey, 312 Kozlowski Hall, 400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, NJ* 07079 *(e-mail: utseysha@shu.edu).*

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of Jones's tripartite model of racism. According to Essed, collective racism occurs when members of the majority group collaborate in an effort to restrict or deny members of a minority group the rights and privileges due them.

On the basis of the conceptual framework of Jones's (1972) tripartite model ofracism and the related work ofEssed (1990), several instruments have been developed to date that empirically assess the multidimensional impact ofrace­ related stress on the psychological well-being of African Americans. A review of the literature uncovered three such measures. The Perceived Racism Scale (PRS; McNeilly, Anderson, Armstead, et al., 1996), the Racism and Life Experience Scales-Revised (RaLES-R; Harrell, 1997). and the Index of Race-Related Stress 0RRS; Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996) represent the current technology available for assessing the pernicious effects of racism on the psychological and emotional well-being of African Americans. It should be noted that other measures of racism do exist but either are unidimensional or lack empirical support; these measures were not desirable for use in the present study (see Utsey, 1998, for a complete review of instrumentation).

Utsey (1998) conducted a comprehensive review of the existing measures of race-related stress in which he delineated the strengths and limitations of each instrument. Although each measure had a number of unique features, strengths, or a specific utility, a careful reading of the empirical research re­ vealed that the instruments were limited in a number of situations. First, none of the measures would be practical in clinical settings in which the time con­ straints of the intake interview allow for only cursory assessment of the client's race-related stress. Second, where research efforts include the simultaneous administration of multiple survey questionnaires, even the relatively brief 51- item PRS and the 46-item IRRS can impose an undue burden on the param­ eters of data collection. Hence, the current technology for assessing race-re­ lated stress would be enhanced by a measure that is as reliable and valid as the longer instruments but can be administered in half the time.

Given the promise of the existing measures of race-related stress (e.g., PRS, RaLES, and IRRS), efforts to develop a brief instrument could simply build on their theoretical and psychometric foundation. Selection of the most appropri­ ate measure from among the available choices requires a careful examination of their development, theoretical framework, psychometric properties, as well as other practical considerations (e.g., current number of items and target population intended for use). To these ends, each measure is reviewed and critically examined here regarding the aforementioned parameters.

The PRS (McNeilly, Anderson, Armstead, et al., 1996) is a 51-item factor analytically derived measure of the perceptions of racism experienced over one's lifetime as well as during the past year. The PRS measures the frequency of exposure to perceived racism **in** the following domains: (a) individual, (b) institutional, (c) cultural, (d) behavioral, and (el attitudinal. The PRS also measures dimensions of emotions, coping, and cognitive appraisals related to racism encounters. In addition, respondents are assessed with respect to their exposure to racism in several areas of their lives: (a) on the job, (b) in academic settings, (cl in the public realm, and (d) exposure to racist statements.

In completing the PRS, participants respond to items in three separate sec­ tions of the scale. The first section, which is divided into four domains (e.g., on the job, in an academic setting, in the public realm, or racist statements). re­ quires respondents to indicate the frequency with which they have experienced a racism event in their lifetime as well as within the last year. Respondents choose the response that best describes the frequency of their experiences with

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racism using a 7-point Likert scale (0 = *not appUcable,* l = *almost never.* to 7 = *several times a day).* In the second section, respondents indicate how they felt during an encounter with racism (e.g., "When I experienced racism from Whites on the job I felt ... "). The choices given are angry, frustrated, sad, powerless, or hopeless. Using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely).* respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they ex­ perienced a particular emotion during their encounter with racism. The third section requires respondents to indicate the coping strategies they used during the racism encounter. The options available are (a) speaking up, (b) accepting it, (c) ignoring it, (d) trying to change things, (e) keeping to myself, (f) working harder to prove them wrong, (g) praying, (h) avoiding it, (i) getting violent, 0) forgetting it, or (k) other.

Psychometrically, the PRS demonstrated high indexes of internal consistency for frequency of exposure and emotional/ coping responses across racism do­ mains. The Cronbach alpha coefficient values for the two PRS subscales were

.96 and .92, respectively. In addition, construct validity for the PRS was evi­ denced in that the factor structure produced by the principal-components fac­ tor analysis was consistent with what the authors had hypothesized. The prin­ cipal-components factor analysis produced a five-factor model for the frequency of exposure to racist events and a nine-factor model for the emotional/ coping responses to racist events. Furthermore, the PRS seems to be stable over time, as demonstrated by its indexes of test-retest reliability. For example, the fre­ quency of exposure to racist events had test-retest coefficients ranging from

.70 to .80, whereas the emotional/coping response produced coefficients that ranged from .50 to .78 (McNeilly, Anderson, Robinson, et al., 1996).

Although the PRS offers some promise as a psychometrically sound measure of the psychological experience of racism for African Americans, some limita­ tions are evident A major concern regarding the instrument's limitations is that it attempts to measure a wide range of behaviors (perceived racism, emo­ tional reaction, and behavioral coping) associated with the experience of rac­ ism. Moreover, the PRS attempts to sample these behaviors across several do­ mains (work, school, public places, and racist statements) of African Ameri­ can life. Because the PRS attempts to capture the totality of the African American experience with racism, its ability to effectively measure any one aspect may be compromised. Second, the authors conducted several factor­ analytic procedures with a marginal sample size of 214. Even by the most liberal standards, the minimum criterion for conducting a factor analysis is 5 participants for every item comprising the instrument.

TheRaLES (Harrell, 1994) was developed, and later revised (Harrell, 1997), as

a measure of racism-related stress and coping behaviors in minority popula­ tions. The RaLES-R Is a comprehensive instrument representing a multidimen­ sional conceptualization of racism: Its theoretical framework posits that racism is not only experienced individually and directly but can also be experienced collectively and vicariously. Three types of racism experiences that parallel common conceptualizations of sources of stress are operationalized by the RaLES-R (e.g., life event/episodic stress, daily hassles, and chronic/contextual stress). The instrument is divided into five primary racism-related stress scales and six supplemental scales. The primary racism-related stress scales represent the following dimensions of racism experiences: Perceived Influences of Race (PER); Racism Experiences (EXP); Daily Life Experiences (DLE); Group Impact (GRP); and Life Experiences and Stress (STR). The supplemental racism-related stress scales are composed of the following dimensions of racism experiences: Mul-

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tiple Dimensions of Identity and Oppression (MUL); Racial Socialization Influ­ ences (SOC); Responses to Race-Related Experiences (RRE); Racism-Related Coping Styles (COP); Racism-Encounter Emotions and Coping (EC); and Ra­ cial Attitudes (RA).

The primary subscales of the RaLES-R are geared toward assessing the per­ ceived impact of racism in the lives of minority group members. Of the five primary subscales, the PER is intended to assess the degree to which race is perceived to influence personal experiences in 20 areas of life (e.g., employ­ ment, contact with police, education, and intimate relationships). The EXP subscale consists of 27 items and assesses experiences with racism in terms of frequency and stressfulness of event. Items on the EXP subscale include direct, chronic, vicarious, and collective experiences with racism. The OLE subscale assesses 18 microaggressions relating to racism experiences (e.g., being followed, ignored, or overlooked). The GRP subscale consists of 16 items and is intended to assess the collective experiences of racism (i.e., the degree to which racism is perceived as affecting one's racial group, regardless of the individual's experiences). The STR subscale assesses perceptions and stressfulness for 128 specific racism-related life events and experiences within nine general areas (e.g., employment, law enforcement, and money).

The supplemental subscales of the RaLES-R are intended to measure atti­ tudes and reactions related to racism experiences. For example, the MUL subscale assesses salience of racial identity, influence of race on self-concept, and prejudice and discrimination experiences for 10 dimensions of diversity, including race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, social class, and religion. The SOC subscale assesses racial socialization experiences, including the frequency and content of racism-related messages from family members and other important adults (e.g., teachers and clergy), as well as the racial composition of current and past environments and personal associations (e.g., neighborhoods, schools, and close friendships). RRE assesses cognitive, behavioral, and affective reac­ tions to race-related experiences. Cognitive items tap perceptions and thoughts relating to racism experiences. Behavioral items include confronting someone or taking other action. Affective items are composed of reactions such as an­ ger, fear, and powerlessness. The COP subscale measures the extent to which a person judges 40 race-related behaviors, reflecting 10 styles of coping (e.g., activism, assimilation, and vigilance), that apply to them. The EC subscale assesses 60 emotional reactions (e.g., sad, shocked, and enraged) and 35 spe­ cific coping behaviors (e.g., prayed or got into verbal conflict) related to a racism experience. Finally, the RA assesses awareness and consciousness of racism through ratings of agreement with 24 statements (e.g., "Encountering racism is an inevitable reality for people of color").

Depending on the specific purpose (e.g., clinical assessment and research)

for which the RaLES-R is being used, it can be administered individually or in a group setting. The instrument's subscales can be used independently of each other or collectively as a whole. Each subscale uses either a Likert-type scale scoring format or a yes/no option (see Harrell, 1997, for information on scor­ ing the RaLES-R). Respondents are asked to respond to each item based on their experiences with racism over their lifetime as well as during the past year. Items are summed across each of the measure's racism domains to de­ rive RaLES subscale scores.

The psychometric properties of the RaLES-R suggest that the instrument is promising as a measure of minority group members' experiences with racism. The development study produced internal consistency, split-half, and test-

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retest reliability coefficients ranging from .69 to .96 (Harrell, 1994). In a sec­ ond study (Harrell, 1997), Cronbach's alphas for the RaLES-R ranged from .49 to .94. It should be noted that the PER and GRP subscales produced Cronbach alpha coefficients of .91 and .92, respectively. The construct validity of the RaLES scales was assessed by conducting correlational studies with a mea­ sure of social desirability (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960), collective self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), cultural mistrust (Terrell & Terrell, 1981), and salience of racial identity (i.e., "How important is race to your self-concept and identity?"). The authors note that very few scales were significantly correlated with social desirability, and those that were had a negative correlation. More­ over, cultural mistrust (suspicion toward Whites) and racial identity salience were significantly correlated with all of the RaLES-R primary scales.

It should be noted that the original version of the RaLES, developed in 1994,

was a precursor to the current measures of the psychological distress associ­ ated with racism-related experiences. Although the RaLES has not been sub­ jected to extensive psychometric scrutiny, early research evidence (Harrell, 1994, 1997) suggests that the instrument does have promise as a reliable and valid measure of the behavioral, psychological, and health outcomes related to per­ ceptions of racism. However, a limitation of the RaLES-R is that it attempts to sample multiple dimensions (e.g., direct impact, vicarious impact, and collec­ tive impact) of racism experiences and racism-related coping behaviors across numerous domains (e.g., person, environmental, social, family, and culture) of the individual's life. Moreover, the theoretical framework driving the develop­ ment of the RaLES-R used divergent stress paradigms (e. g., life event/episodic stress, daily hassles, and chronic/contextual stress) in delineating the concept of racism-related stress. It should also be noted that the measure's subscales were not derived from factor-analytic techniques or other related psychometric procedures (e.g., Q-Sort procedure or item analysis). Given the limitations of the RaLES-R regarding its theoretical underpinnings, it is advisable to use the instrument's subscales independent of each other.

The IRRS (Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996) is a 46-item factor analytically derived measure of the stress experienced by African Americans as a result of their encounters with racism. The IRRS is a multidimensional measure of racism and consists of four subscales (Cultural, Institutional, Individual, and Collec­ tive) and a Global Racism measure. The Cultural Racism subscale consists of 16 items and measures the experience of racism when one's culture is deni­ grated or maligned. The Institutional Racism subscale consists of 11 items and assesses experiences of racism embedded in the policies and practices of a given institution. The Individual Racism subscale consists of 11 items and assesses racism experienced on an interpersonal level. The Collective Racism subscale consists of 8 items and assesses racism experienced as a result of the organized efforts of Whites and others who are not African American aimed at restricting the rights of African Americans.

The IRRS requires respondents to identify which racism events they or a family member have experienced over their lifetime and then indicate the im­ pact that each racism event had on them. Individuals record their reactions to racism events using a 5-point Likert-type scale (0 = *this has never happened to me,* 1 = *event happened but did not bother me,* 2 = *event happened and I was*

*sUghtly upset,* 3 = *event happened and I was upset,* and 4 = *event happened*

*and! was extremely upset).* Items from each of the four subscales are summed to score the IRRS. A global racism score is derived by weighting (converting to *z* scores) each of the subscale scores and then summing them. Converting the

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subscales to *z* scores before summing them for a global racism score is neces­ sary because the IRRS is composed of unequal numbers of items across its subscales. Weighting the IRRS subscales ensures an equal contribution of the four racism types to the global measure of racism.

In the development study, indexes of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for the IRRS subscales were as follows: Cultural Racism, .87; Institutional Racism, .85; Individual Racism, .84; and Collective Racism, .79 (Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996). A second study (Utsey et al., in press) produced similar indexes of internal consistency: Cultural Racism, .87; Institutional Racism,

.80; Individual Racism, .83; and Collective Racism, .77. Utsey and Ponterotto (1996) reported test-retest reliability coefficients for the IRRS subscales for a college sample (3-week interval) as follows: Cultural Racism, .77; Institutional Racism, .69; Individual Racism, .61; and Collective Racism, .79. In the same study, test-retest reliability estimates are reported for a second sample (stu­ dents from an adult education program) for a 2-week interval. The test-retest reliability coefficients for this sample were as follows: Cultural Racism, .58; Institutional Racism, .71; Individual Racism, .54, and Collective Racism, .75. The factor structure of the IRRS was established by conducting both explor­ atory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis (see Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996). The initial results of an unrotated principal-components factor analysis yielded 15 factors. However, a scree test suggested that as many as four factors were interpretable. Consequently, one-, two-, three-, and four-component ex­ tractions were forced using both an orthogonal and oblique rotation method. The most interpretable of the four extractions and consistent with the literature was the four-component orthogonal solution, which accounted for 38% of the common variance. Based on a component loading criterion of .40 and the elimi­ nation of items with double loadings, this procedure resulted in a 46-item pro­ totype for the final version of the original IRRS (Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996).

As part of the development study for the original IRRS, a confirmatory factor

analysis (CFA) was conducted on the 46-item prototype using the LISREL 7 computer program (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1989). Comparisons were made be­ tween the identified four-component orthogonal model and the other compet­ ing models (i.e., the null model and the one-, two-, three-, and four-component oblique model). A significant chi-square statistic was found for all competing models, suggesting an unsatisfactory fit It was noted that an unsatisfactory chi-square statistic is not uncommon with large data sets, in which case other fit indexes are examined (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). Based on an examination of other fit indexes, the four-component oblique model was found to have the best fit because it had the lowest chi-square value (1865.24), the highest goodness­ of-fit index (GFI = .78) and adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI = .76), the low­

est x2/ *dfvalue* (1.89), the lowest root-mean-square residual (RMSR = .080), and

the highest relative noncentrality index (RNI = .80). It is not surprising that the four-component oblique model had the best fit given the moderate subscale intercorrelations of the IRRS.

Furthermore, as evidence of the IRRS's concurrent validity, its Cultural Rac­ ism and Individual Racism subscales, as well as the Global Racism measure, were found to be significantly and positively correlated with the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen, Karmarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The PSS was correlated

.31 with the Cultural Racism subscale, .24 with the Individual Racism subscale, and .24 with the Global Racism measure (p < .05). In addition, several of the IRRS subscales were positively and significantly correlated with Self and Group subscales of the RaLES-B (Harrell, 1995). For example, the Self subscale of the

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RaLES-B correlated .39 (p < .01) with the IRRS Institutional Racism subscale,

.23 (p < .05) with Individual Racism, .25 (p < .05) with Collective Racism, and

.30 (p < .05) with the IRRS Global racism measure. The Group subscale of the RaLES-B correlated .46 (p < .01) with the IRRS Cultural Racism subscale, .36 (p < .01) with Institutional Racism, .31 (p < .01) with Individual Racism, and

.38 (p < .01) with the IRRS Global Racism measure. The Global Racism mea­ sure of the RaLES-B correlated .29 (p < .05) with the IRRS Cultural Racism subscale, .44 (p < .01) with Institutional Racism, .31 (p < .01) with Individual Racism, and .39 (p < .01) with the IRRS Global Racism measure. In the same development study, the IRRS was found to possess adequate criterion-related validity whereby it effectively discriminated between Blacks and Whites in a group-comparison study at *p* < .001.

Despite the adequate psychometric properties of the IRRS as a measure of race-related stress in African American adults, it has several limitations. First, the measure is composed of 46 items and takes approximately 20 minutes to complete for the average reader. Slower readers or participants with slower response styles have required up to 35 minutes to complete the IRRS. In the past, research participants have complained about the length of the IRRS when administered along with other measures of psychological constructs. Asecond limitation of the IRRS is the inclusion of items that are geographically specific or that involve extreme racism-related events. The focus group used in the IRRS development study was composed of individuals from an urban environ­ ment (New York City). This restriction resulted in the inclusion of racism expe­ riences that are more likely to occur in urban settings (e.g., "You have at­ tempted to hail a cab, but they refused to stop; you suspect it was because you are Black"). Moreover, the extreme items (e.g., "You were physically attacked because of your race") had a low rate of response and were therefore not good discriminators of race-related stress levels.

Given the previously mentioned unique features, strengths, and limitations of the three racism measures, they were compared and contrasted according to the following parameters: (a) theoretical framework, (bl psychometric proper­ ties, and (c) ease of administration. First, regarding underlying theoretical mod­ els, each measure was constructed according to a multidimensional conceptualization of racism. Furthermore, empirical support for the conceptual design of the PRS and IRRSwas derived from factor-analytic studies (see McNeilly, Anderson, Armstead, et al., 1996, and Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996, respectively). In contrast, only the COP subscale of the RaLES-R was subjected to factor analysis (Harrell, 1997). Although research supports racism as a multidimensional con­ struct, a major limitation of the PRS and the RaLES-R is their measurement of racism across numerous domains and several dimensions. For example, the PRS attempts to assess racism experienced in employment, academic, and public contexts in addition to eliciting reactions to racist statements, not only in the past year but over the course of the respondent's lifetime. Similarly, the RaLES-R views racism as comprising three types of stressor (life event/epi­ sodic, daily hassles, and chronic/contextual) that are experienced in multiple dimensions (direct, vicarious, and collective). The RaLES-R then attempts to explore the coping behaviors individuals use in response to their encounters with racism. In contradistinction, the IRRS measures race-related stress in four domains (individually, institutionally, culturally, and collectively) consistent with Jones's (1972) model as modified by Essed (1990). Therefore, of these instru­ ments, the IRRS represents the most straightforward, conceptually sound mea­ sure by which to assess the race-related stress in African American adults.

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The three measures of racism were also evaluated in terms of their psycho­ metric properties. A key strength of the RaLES-R is the comprehensive evalu­ ation of its criterion-related and construct validity. As previously noted, the RaLES-R was found to be correlated, in the hypothesized direction, with urban stress, collective self-esteem, salience of racial identity, cultural mistrust, perceived stress, positive well-being, psychological symptomatology, and trauma­ related symptoms. It should also be noted that the RaLES-R subscales were found to be free from social desirability contamination. Likewise, both the PRS and IRRS were found to have adequate psychometric properties. The PRS was found to be positively and significantly correlated with a measure of cultural mistrust, a measure of depression, as well as a similar racism measure. Simi­ larly, the IRRS was significantly and positively correlated with a measure of perceived stress and a similar measure of race-related stress. In addition, as evidence of its criterion-related validity, the IRRS successfully discriminated between Blacks and Whites. More important, recall that both the PRS and the IRRS were factor analytically derived, but that the IRRS was subjected to the rigorous confirmatory factor analysis procedure. That the factor struc­ ture of the RaLES-R has not been empirically examined or tested places the instrument at a psychometric disadvantage in relation to the other mea­ sures. Finally, regarding the stability of the instruments' subscale scores over time, the IRRS had higher indexes of test-retest reliability than the PRS (.61 to .79 vs.. 50 to .78). Test-retest reliability coefficients were not available for the RaLES-R subscales. Overall, the IRRS seems to have a clear advantage over the other racism measures regarding psychometric integrity.

Because ease of administration was a major rationale for this study, it makes

intuitive sense that some mention be given to the measures' current level of efficiency. Regarding ease of administration, including clarity of directions and simplicity of response keys, several distinctions are evident among the RaLES­ R, PRS, and IRRS. For one, both the RaLES-R and the PRS require respon­ dents to indicate their experiences with racism in their lifetime as well as within the past year. Respondents are also required to indicate their emotional reac­ tion and how they coped with the racism experience. In contrast, the IRRS only requires individuals to indicate whether a given racism event occurred and, if so, what impact it had on them. It is the simplicity of the IRRS that makes it the most suitable candidate for developing a briefer measure of race­ related stress for use when time constraint is an issue.

Given the empirical support for the IRRS regarding its conceptual frame­

work, psychometric properties, and ease of administration, it follows that of the three instruments representing the current technology available for as­ sessing racism's impact on African Americans, the development of a short version of the IRRS is indicated. Therefore, the primary goal of the present study is to develop and validate an abbreviated form of the IRRS. In addition, limitations of the original measure are addressed in this investigation to further enhance the clinical and research utility of the IRRS. That is, several items in the origi­ nal version were geographically specific or represented extreme examples of racism. The extreme examples of racism, such as being physically attacked for being Black, had a low rate of response and were therefore poor indicators of race-related stress in African Americans. These items are reevaluated for their appropriateness and subsequent inclusion in the IRRS-B. A readability index is also calculated to determine the required reading level for completing the instrument.

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# METHOD

To develop a short version of the IRRS, I reanalyzed a data set (N = 310) from the original study using exploratory factor-analytic techniques. This sample consisted of 207 female and 92 male African American adults from various colleges and universities in an urban center of the northeastern United States, as well as the community-at-large (there were 11 missing values for gender). Their ages ranged from 17 to 76 years, with a mean age of 23.38 years (SD = 7.74). On the basis of the results of the exploratory factor analysis and the elimination of items found to be geographically specific or extreme examples of racism, a 22-item prototype of a short version of the IRRS was generated. Confirmatory factor analytic procedures were then used to test whether the conceptual model of racism proposed by Jones (1972) and measured by the original IRRS (Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996) fit the data in the present study for the short version of the IRRS (i.e., IRRS-B). In addition, the IRRS-B was exam­ ined for its convergent and criterion validity, internal consistency reliability, and the reading grade level required for completion of the instrument.

### Participants

Participants for this study were solicited from a private Catholic university in the Northeast, a substance abuse program in an urban center, and the com­ munity-at-large. The total sample size for the entire study was 264 partici­ pants, including a subsample of 25 European Americans used for a group comparison validity procedure. The European American subsample was not included in any data analysis other than the group comparison study. A total of 239 African Americans participated in the present study. Of the 239 partici­ pants, 138 were women (58%) and 78 were men (32%). There were 23 missing values (10%) for gender. The participants in this study ranged in age from 16 to 91 years (Mage= 31.18 years, *SD=* 13.72). The average number of years of education for partcipants in the study was 13.78 (SD= 2.36). The mean an­ nual income for the current sample was $23,000 (SD= $14,501).

### Instruments

Items for the IRRS-B were selected on the basis of psychometric and logical considerations. With the results from a principal-components factor analysis of a data set from the IRRS development study (Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996), items were retained if they had a factor loading greater than .57, loaded on only one factor, and exceeded the next highest loading by a margin of .15. Iterns loading on more than one factor or failing to meet the .15 difference from the next highest loading were eliminated. This procedure resulted in the elimi­ nation of 22 items. A decision was then made to eliminate 2 additional items from the prototype because they represented geographically specific encoun­ ters with racism (e.g., "You have had trouble getting a cab to go certain places or even stop for you") and were redundant (e.g.. "You have attempted to hail a cab, but they refused to stop..."). It should be noted that these two items were the only remaining items representing the Collective Racism subscale. This decision therefore resulted in the elimination of the Collective Racism subscale from the IRRS-B. A content review of the remaining factors and their items revealed that the racism domains were almost identical to the original IRRS (see Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996). The final IRRS-B prototype was composed of

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22 items representing three of the original lRRS factors: Cultural Racism (10 items), Institutional Racism (6 items), and Individual Racism (6 items).

The RaLES-R (Harrell, 1997) is a comprehensive set of scales intended to measure multiple dimensions of racism as it affects the lives of minority group members. Although the RaLES comprises five primary and six secondary racism-related stress scales, only two subscales were used in the present study. The PER subscale of the RaLES consists of 10 items and has a score range of 0-40. The items in this subscale attempt to assess the degree to which individuals feel racism has affected them personally. The GRP subscale of the RaLES consists of 16 items with a range of 0-48. The items in this subscale assess the degree to which individuals feel that racism has negatively affected their racial group as a whole.

In completing the RaLES-R PER and GRP subscales, participants are required to indicate, using a 4-point Likert-type scale (0 = *not at all* to 4 = *entirely},* the extent to which the statements reflect their experience.

The RaLES-R, in a validation study with a sample of 441 African Americans (Harrell, 1997), was reported to have Cronbach's alpha of .91 for the PER subscale and .92 for the GRP subscale. Moreover, Harrell (1997) found that the PER

subscale was positively and significantly correlated (r = .31, *p* < .001) with the

Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) and with perceptions of racial identity salience (r= .31, *p<* .001). In the same study, the GRP subscale was also found to be positively and significantly correlated with the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (r= .16, *p<* .05) and perceptions of racial identity salience, as assessed by the question "How important is your race to you?" (r= .18, *p* < .05). The RaLES-R PER and GRP subscales were selected for use in this study for several reasons. Although the instrument as a whole has not undergone the same rigorous psychometric development procedures as the IRRS, the PER and GRP subscales possess adequate indexes of validity and reliability. More important, the PER. GRP. and the Global Racism measure (created by sum­ ming the PER and GRP subscales) of the RaLES-R more closely approximated the IRRS-B subscales (i.e., Individual Racism, Cultural Racism, Institutional Racism, and Global Racism). The similarity of these constructs, as represented by the instruments' subscales, was crucial with regard to testing the conver­ gent validity of the IRRS-B. Finally, the brief nature of the RaLES-R PER and GRP subscales gave it more of a practical utility as a research instrument for the present study in which efficiency of administration was a consideration.

# Procedure

Survey packets were administered to participants in large group settings such as college and university classrooms and an educational seminar in a drug

treatment program. In addition to the IRRS-8, the RaLES-R PER and GRP subscales were administered to a subsample of participants *(n* = 44). Each

questionnaire packet included an informed-consent cover letter and a brief demographic data questionnaire. The survey questionnaires were counterbal­ anced to control for instrumentation effects. Participants were debriefed indi­ vidually or in a group.

# RESULTS

The Cronbach's alphas for the IRRS-8 were.78 for the Cultural Racism subscale,

.69 for the Institutional Racism subscale, and .78 for the Individual Racism subscale. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to

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determine the subscale intercorrelations of the IRRS-B (see Table 1). The Cul­ tural Racism subscale correlated .64 with the Individual Racism subscale, .56 with the Institutional Racism subscale, and .84 with the Global Racism mea­ sure *(p* < .01). The Individual Racism subscale correlated .74 with the Institu­ tional Racism subscale and .90 with the Global Racism measure *(p* < .01). The Institutional Racism subscale correlated .88 with the Global Racism measure of the IRRS-B *(p* < .01). The moderate IRRS-B subscale intercorrelations and the high correlations between the IRRS-B's subscales and the total scale (Glo­ bal Racism measure) suggest that the instrument's subscales are measuring related yet distinct aspects of the same construct: African Americans' experi­ ences with racism.

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

With regard to examining the construct validity of a measure, researchers agree that CFA is a powerful tool for such endeavors (Dawis, 1987). As such, a CFA was conducted on the three-factor 22-item IRRS-B using the LISREL 7 com­ puter program (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1989). Comparisons were made between a three-factor orthogonal model, a three-factor oblique model, a global factor model, and a null model. Several indexes assessing the degree to which the model fits the data were computed for all four competing models. First, a chi­ square statistic was computed for each of the models, including the null.

Table 2 provides a complete summary of the CFA results for this study. In referring to the table, it can be observed that the chi-square statistics for all four competing models were significant. Taken alone, these results suggest an unsatisfactory fit to the data for all competing models. More significantly, however, other CFA fit indexes indicated that the three-factor oblique model had the greatest degree of flt when compared with the null, global, and three­ factor orthogonal models. The three-factor oblique had the best fit because it had the lowest chi-square value (447.72), the highest GFI (.84) and AGFI (.80),

the lowest x2/ dfvalue (2.2) and RMSR (.08), and the highest RNI (.90). Note

that the RNI, unlike the chi-square statistic, is independent of sample size and, according to Gerbing and Anderson (1993), is the best measure avail­ able for determining the fit of structural equation models. Although the GFI and AGFI of the target model failed to obtain a more desirable fit to the data (i.e., .90 or greater; Bentler & Bonett, 1980), the RNI, reportedly a better measure of fit, did achieve a desirable index value for the three-factor ob­ lique model.

## TABLE 1

### Subscale lntercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version (IRRS-B)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **IRRS-B Subscale** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | ***M*** | ***SD*** |
| 1. Cultural Racism |  | .56\*\* | .64\*\* | .84\*\* | 28.96 | 7.18 |
| 2. Institutional Racism |  |  | .74\*\* | .88\*\* | 10.22 | 5.89 |
| 3. Individual Racism |  |  |  | .90\*\* | 13.10 | 6.47 |
| 4. Global Racism |  |  |  |  | 0.00 | 2.62 |
| \*\*p<.01. |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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## TABLE 2

### Goodness-of-Fit Indicators for the Null Model and Competing Hypothesized Models for the 46-ltem Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Model *'X2*** | ***df*** | ***p*** | **GFI** | **AGFI** | **X2/df** | **RMSR** | **RNI** |
| Null model 2,589.77 | 231 | .00 | - 26-- | .19 | 11.2 | .35 |  |
| Global component 996.84 Three-factor  orthogonal 794.67 | 209  209 | .00  .00 | .69  .77 | .62  .72 | 4.7  3.8 | .09  .22 | .67  .75 |
| Three-factor |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| oblique 447.72 | 206 | .00 | .84 | .80 | 2.2 | .08 | .90 |

*Note.* GFI = goodness-of-fit index; AFGI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; RNI = relative noncentrality index; RMSR = root-mean-square residual. *N* = 239.

The GFI and AGFI, ff taken alone, suggest an unsatisfactory flt of the proposed model. More desirable fits have GFI and AGFI indexes In the high .80s and .90s. According to Bagozzi and Heatherton (1994). it is not uncommon for measure­ ment models to have an unsatisfactory flt when four or more items represent each component and the sample size is fairly large. In such cases, a poor flt is likely to be related to one or more of the following factors: (a) the complexity of the models,

(b) high levels ofrandom error to be found In a scale with many items, and (c) the many parameters to be estimated. The method used In the original IRRS develop­ ment study (see Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996) to address this problem, and recom­ mended by Bagozzi and Heatherton, is to sum items within each component, thus creating aggregate variables that represent parallel indicators of the construct being measured by the items. Items with the highest component loadings are paired with items having the lowest component loading in sequential order in which the first, second, and third highest loadings were paired with their corre­ sponding lowest loadings. Mer the items are aggregated to form new and fewer indicators of the same construct, they are reentered into the LISREL 7 program and subjected to a second confirmatory factor analysis.

### Aggregate-Item Confirmatory Factor Analytic Procedure

On the basis of the method recommended by Bagozzi and Heatherton (1994) and used In the original IRRS development study (Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996), new aggregate variables were created and reanalyzed using the LISREL 7 program. The first factor included the following aggregate items: Cultural Racism 1, Items 1 and 15; Cultural Racism 2, Items 12 and 17; Cultural Racism 3, Items 6 and 19;

Cultural Racism 4, Items 5 and 20; and Cultural Racism 5, Items 3 and 16. For the second factor, the following aggregate items were created: Institutional Rac­ ism 1, Items 9 and 10; Institutional Racism 2, Items 13 and 22; and Institutional Racism 3, Items 4 and 18. For the third factor, the following aggregate items were created: Individual Racism 1, Items 2 and 14; Individual Racism 2, Items 7 and

21; and Individual Racism 3, Items 8 and 11. Because these aggregated variables represented new items of the same components, Cronbach's alphas were again calculated. For Cultural Racism, Institutional Racism, and Individual Racism, the Cronbach's alphas were .78, .69, and .78, respectively.

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By reviewing the aggregate-item confirmatory factor analysis results presented in Table 3, it can be observed that all of the flt indexes for the competing factor models improved. The GFls and AGFis for both the orthogonal and the oblique models now range from .77 to .92 and .66 to .88, respectively. The RNls for the orthogonal and oblique models ranged from .68 to .94, respectively. Moreover, the three-factor oblique model again demonstrated the best overall flt among the competing models. Given a GFI of .92 and an RNI of .94, the three-factor oblique model demonstrated a satisfactory flt to the data for the IRRS-B. Note that similar contradictory findings occurred in the IRRS development study whereby the principal-components factor analysis indicated that the orthogo­ nal rotation solution best explained the data, but the oblique model was found to have the best model flt in the confirmatory factor analysis. It is not surpris­ ing that the four-component oblique model is the best flt given the moderate correlations found between the subscales of the IRRS-B.

### Convergent Validity

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated between the IRRS subscales, the PER and GRP subscales, and global racism measure of the RaLES-Revised (Harrell, 1997) to establish the convergent validity ofIRRS-B. Table 4 reports the correlation coefficients between the IRRS-B subscales and Global Racism measure, the RaLES-R PER and GRP subscales, as well as its global rac­ ism measure. Positive and significant correlations were found between all subscales of the IRRS-B, including the Global Racism measure, and the PER and GRP subscales (and Global Racism measure) of the RaLES-R. These results suggest that the subscales and global measure of the IRRS-B and the RaLES-R PER and GRP subscales and its global measure are related measures of the psychological dis­ tress experienced by African American as a result of their encounters with racism.

### Criterion-Related Validity

In an effort to establish the criterion-related validity of the IRRS-B, we used Walsh and Betz's (1995) group-differences approach with a subsample ofWhites *(n* = 25). Based on the expectation that African Americans would score signifl-

## TABLE 3

### Goodness-of-Fit Indicators for the Null Model and Competing Hypothesized Models for the Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version Based on 11 Aggregate Variables

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Model** | x• | ***df*** | ***p*** | **GFI** | **AGFI** | ***X'ldf*** | **RMSR** | **RNI** |
| Null model | 1215.01 | 55 | .00 | .33 | .20 | 22.1 | .41 |  |
| Global factor  Three-factor | 211.28 | 44 | .00 | .85 | .77 | 4.8 | .07 | .85 |
| orthogonal  Three-factor | 417.17 | 44 | .00 | .77 | .66 | 9.5 | .30 | .68 |
| oblique | 107.09 | 41 | .00 | .92 | .88 | 2.6 | .05 | .94 |

*Note.* See Table 2 *Note. N* = 309.

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## TABLE 4

### Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients for the Index of Race­ Related Stress (IRRS) Subscales and the Racism and Life Experience Scale (RaLES) Form B (N = 44)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **RaLES** |  |  |
| **IRRS Subscale** | **PER** | **GRP** | **Global** |
| Cultural Racism Institutional Racism Individual Racism Global Racism | .51\*\*  .33\*  .49\*\*  .51\*\* | .59\*\*  .46\*\*  .49\*\*  .58\*\* | .51\*\*  .41\*  .40\*  .50\*\* |  |

*Note.* PER = Perceived Influences of Race; GAP= Group Impact.

*\*p* < .05. *\*\*p* < .01.

cantly higher than those who are not African American on the IRRS- B, the instrument was administered to a subsample of Whites during the regular administration. However, those who are not African Americans are instructed to relate to their own ethnic or racial group when completing the survey.

A multivariate analysis of variance was performed to compare the Black subsample with the White subsample. This analysis produced a significant result, Hotelling's *T2* = .445, Fl3, 264) = 39.13, *p* < .001. Subsequent univariate *F* test and mean

examination indicated that Blacks scored significantly higher than Whites on Cultural Racism, Fll, 268) = 108.38, *p* < .001; Institutional Racism, Fll, 268) = 13.14, *p* < .001; Individual Racism, Fll, 268) = 33.32, *p* < .001; and the Global Racism measure, Fll, 268) = 53.88, *p* < .001. See Table 5 for the IRRS-B means and standard deviations for Blacks and Whites. The fact that the IRRS-B effec­

tively discriminated between Blacks and Whites suggests that it is measuring the unique experiences of African Americans relating to their encounters with racism.

### Readability Index

Utsey and Ponterotto (1996) estimated that the IRRS could be used with Afri­ can American adults, although they calculated no formal readability index. In

## TABLES

### Means and Standard Deviations for Blacks and Whites on the Cultural, Institutional, Individual, and Global Racism Measures of the Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version (IRRS-B)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **Whites** |  |  | **Blacks** |  |
| **IRRS-B Subscale** | ***M*** |  | ***SD*** | ***M*** |  | ***SD*** |
| Cultural Racism | 13.35 |  | 10.66 | 28.96 |  | 7.19 |
| Institutional Racism | 6.00 |  | 6.24 | 10.23 |  | 5.90 |
| Individual Racism | 5.87 |  | 5.13 | 13.16 |  | 6.49 |
| Global Racism | -0.32 |  | 2.67 | 0.35 |  | 2.42 |

*Note.* Global Racism is based on a z-score transformation

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this study, the well-known Rix Readability Index (Anderson, 1983) was calcu­ lated by dividing the number of words exceeding seven characters by the num­ ber of sentences in the text. The Rix Readability Index score for the IRRS-B was 4.0, which in Anderson's conversion table translates to a Grade 9 reading level. This index is comparable with Utsey and Ponterotto's (1996) estimate for the original IRRS.

## DISCUSSION

This article reported the results of a study aimed at developing a short version of the IRRS. Using exploratory factor analysis to reanalyze a data set from the IRRS development study, I developed a 22-item prototype. CFA procedures supported a three-factor (cultural. institutional. and individual) oblique model for the IRRS-B as best representing the multidimensional nature ofracism. Fit indexes for the IRRS-B improved significantly when the data were reanalyzed using the aggregate-item confirmatory factor analytic procedure recommended by Bagozzi and Heatherton (1994). Furthermore, the three subscales and the Global Racism measure of the IRRS-B demonstrated adequate internal con­ sistency for both the standard factor structure and the aggregate-item fac­ tor structure. The moderate subscale intercorrelation coefficients produced by the IRRS-B indicated that the subscales were measuring distinct as­ pects of a related construct (i.e., race-related stress).

Additional evidence for the validity of the IRRS-B was demonstrated in a corre­ lational study with a similar measure of race-related stress. Pearson's product­ moment correlations were found to be both positive and statistically significant between the IRRS-B subscales and its Global Racism measure and the RaLES-R PER and GRP subscales (and its global measure). Other evidence of the IRRS-B's validity included Walsh and Betz's (1995) group-differences approach. These re­ sults found that African Americans scored significantly higher than Whites on the subscales and global measure of the IRRS-B. These findings were consistent with those of the original IRRS development study (Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996). An in­ dex of readability was calculated for the IRRS-B, which placed the instrument's required reading level equivalent to Grade 9.

In comparing the IRRS-B with the original IRRS, several improvements are evident. Psychometrically, the IRRS-B demonstrated higher factor loadings, more robust CFA flt indexes, and adequate alpha coefficients. Moreover, the IRRS-B had substantially higher correlations with the RaLES-R PER and GRP subscales and global measure than did the original IRRS. For example, in the original IRRS development study, correlation coefficients with the RaLES subscales ranged from .24 to .31, compared with a range of .33 to .59 in the present study. Moreover, Walsh and Betz's (1995) group-differences approach produced a larger effect for the IRRS-B than was evident in the original mea­ sure. The IRRS-B also provides an index of readability based on grade level equivalent to assist users in assessing its appropriateness for use with a given sample (e.g., high school dropouts with low-level reading ability). Given that geographically specific items, items with low-to-moderate factor loadings, and items with low response rates were eliminated, not only is the IRRS-B a more efficient measure of race-related stress, but it is theoretically and psychometrically more robust than other similar measures, including the original IRRS.

As noted earlier, the original IRRS is composed of 46 items and requires ap­ proximately 20 to 35 minutes for completion, depending on the individual's response style. In contrast, the briefer, 22-item IRRS-B requires between 5

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and 15 minutes for completion. Having reduced the required time for comple­ tion by more than half, the IRRS-B provides a means for assessing levels of race-related stress in both clinical and research situations in which time con­ straint is a factor. The brevity of the IRRS-B represents a major improvement over the original instrument and should enhance its utility as a clinical as­ sessment tool or research apparatus.

The preliminary evidence for the reliability and validity of the IRRS-B is prom­ ising. However, more research will be necessary before the IRRS-B's utility as a reliable, valid, and efficient measure of race-related stress can be fully deter­ mined. Future validation studies should focus on establishing additional crite­ rion-related validity by examining the IRRS-B's relationship with other indexes of psychological stress and well-being among African American populations. Speciflcally, the IRRS-B should be correlated with measures of depression, anxiety, and general psychological wellness. In addition, the use of a multitrait-multimethod procedure is highly recommended as a means of establishing the extent to which the IRRS-B is indeed a valid measure of the psychological stress experienced by African Americans as a result of their encounters with societal racism.

The utility of the IRRS-B as an assessment tool for use in counseling situations needs to be further explored. Counselors and other mental health clinicians are encouraged to use the IRRS-B to assess the degree to which racism has had deleterious effects on the psychological well-being of their African American cli­ ents. The IRRS-B is more efficient than its predecessor, the IRRS, and therefore can be administered within the constraints of a time-limited intake interview. Given that many African Americans seek counseling for issues related to their frequent encounters with racism and discrimination (Abernethy, 1995; Priest, 1991), it is imperative that counselors are equipped to address the concerns of these consumers. It is anticipated that the IRRS-B will provide counselors and other mental health professionals with the means to assess the degree to which racism is affecting the psychological functioning of their African American clients.

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*Article*

Development of a Questionnaire to Measure the Perceived Injustice of People Who Have Experienced Violence in War and Conflict Areas: Perceived Injustice Questionnaire (PIQ)

# Johanna Christina Neumann 1,2,\*, Thomas Berger 3 and Jan Ilhan Kizilhan 1,4,5

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1 Institute of Transcultural Health Science, Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University, 78054 Villingen-Schwenningen, Germany; [Jan.Kizilhan@dhbw-vs.de](mailto:Jan.Kizilhan@dhbw-vs.de)

2 Department of Clinical Psychology, Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, 72074 Tübingen, Germany

3 Department of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy, University of Bern, 3012 Bern, Switzerland; [thomas.berger@psy.unibe.ch](mailto:thomas.berger@psy.unibe.ch)

4 Institute for Psychotherapy and Psychotraumtology, University of Duhok, Duhok 42001, Iraq

5 Transcultural Psychosomatic Department, MediClin, 78166 Donaueschingen, Germany

**\*** Correspondence: [Johanna.Neumann@dhbw-vs.de](mailto:Johanna.Neumann@dhbw-vs.de)

**Abstract:** Objectives: The primary aim of this research was to develop a questionnaire that assesses perceived injustice among survivors of war and trauma in conflict areas and to evaluate its psychome- tric properties. This paper presents the first preliminary validation. Furthermore, the assumption that the general perception of injustice correlates with one’s own experiences of injustice and violence was tested. Methods: The 24-item Perceived Injustice Questionnaire (PIQ) was administered partly online and partly in a paper–pencil version to 89 students of the University of Dohuk in Northern Iraq, an area that has been affected by crisis and war for many years. Principal component analysis was used for factor extraction and internal consistency was determined. The Mann–Whitney-U test was used to calculate the group differences between people with and without experience of physical violence and strong experiences of injustice because Kolmogorov–Smirnov tests showed that the data are not normally distributed. Results: Principal component analysis yielded a four-component solution with eigenvalues being the greater one. Cronbach’s alpha for each scale was acceptable to satisfac- tory. Significant results of the Mann–Whitney U tests supported our assumptions of between-group differences on each of the subscales (emotional and cognitive consequences, injustice perception, injustice experience, revenge, and forgiveness). Discussion: The findings of this study support the construct validity and the reliability of the PIQ. For this reason, it can be seen as a useful addition to the psychological assessment in psychotherapeutic settings of survivors of war and violence. In conclusion, and based on the PIQ, we suggest the development of a new set of therapy modules with worksheets, focusing on the perception, dealing, and understanding of feeling of injustice as an addition to the existing trauma therapy manual for therapy in war and conflict areas.

**Keywords:** injustice; trauma; war; crisis; PTSD; psychotherapy; inventory; diagnostics; justice; violence

# 1. Introduction

People perceive different actions as unjust and react differently to injustice experi- ences [1]. This subjective perception of injustice can determine not only their actions but also their mental health. For example, research on people suffering from pain after traumatic accidents has shown that people who subjectively perceive their situation as less just feel pain for a longer time and more strongly [2–5].

Traumatic war experiences are often followed by psychological consequences such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression [6]. Ten percent of people who had to flee their homeland due to natural disasters or persecution suffer from PTSD. Five

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percent of people who had experienced the same situation suffer from depression [7]. Rates are higher among survivors of rape, military action, captivity, internment for ethnic or political reasons, or genocide [6]. Researchers found a prevalence rate for PTSD of 56% for female survivors of the Rwandan genocide [8] and a prevalence rate for depression of 80% for women affected by sexual violence in former Yugoslavia [9]. For Yazidi women who had survived the ISIS genocide and captivity in 2014, the prevalence rate for PTSD (58%) and depression (55%) was found to be very high even after five years [10]. It has been shown that people who experience direct man-made violence, such as survivors of rape or captivity, have a significantly higher risk of developing mental disorders as a consequence of the traumatic experience than people who experience natural disasters [7]. Additionally, people who were deliberately harmed by others, such as survivors of sexual trauma or of mass conflicts, generally experience situations as more unjust than those who were harmed unintentionally, such as survivors of natural disasters [11].

Studies on survivors of the violent conflicts in Rwanda and Timor-Leste suggest a connection between traumatic experiences, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the subjective perception of injustice [12,13]. However, not all studies which have focused on post-conflict areas could find this connection [14]. To better understand the impact of injustice experiences on mental health, it is necessary to validly assess experiences of injustice with suitable instruments. Yet, all of the common inventories to survey the perception of injustice have been developed in Western societies [15–18]. Furthermore, most evaluations of a sense of justice were conducted in Western cultures up to this point. Frequently, the focus was on concepts such as social injustice, fair distribution of goods, or justice sensitivity (e.g., Justice Sensitivity Inventory; [17]) or the questionnaire was developed to determine the belief in a just world [15], a concept that was developed based on a Western idea of justice. In collaboration with non-Western experts and participants, we wanted to develop an inventory that might capture the perception of justice from a more diverse perspective to be able to be applied across multiple cultures.

This shows that not many scales are measuring the justice perception after traumatiz- ing war experiences. Most studies in that field developed and used specific questionnaires which only referred to the target group or the conflict concerned [14]; Pham et al., 2004b). Research has shown that the perception of injustice is likely to increase through situations that are characterized by basic human rights violations [2]. For these reasons, it seems necessary to have an inventory that can be widely used to approach people’s perception of injustice after experiences of severe human rights violations.

Data collected with such an inventory can later become a support for claims of legal reparations for the survivors of such injustice experiences. Medical doctors and psychologists agree that some form of justice must be achieved to mentally process what has been experienced [19]. “No healing without justice” says Dr. Mukwege, Nobel Peace Prize laureate 2018, about his work with women and children who survived sexual violence in Eastern Congo. Referring to the victims of ISIS in Northern Iraq, psychotraumatologist Professor Kizilhan and Nadia Murad, the other 2018 Peace Prize laureate, emphasize that the psychological wounds of women can only be healed if they are also given legal justice [19]. Yet, legal processes and achievements for reparations are often not given or only hard to achieve after war and human right violations in crises areas. For this reason, it is necessary to address the topic of injustice experiences also in a psychotherapeutic setting. We aimed to develop a new inventory that collects information on how individuals in critical areas categorize potentially unjust experiences, whether those affect their perception of justice in general, and how they cope with that perception. This is particularly relevant as it is assumed that one’s perception of injustice has an impact on various mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, somatoform disorder, and PTSD [4,5,12]. Trauma increases the likelihood of developing PTSD and or depression, but the increased perception of injustice is most likely an additional contributor, according to research [12,13]. One explanation for this would be the violation of the belief in a just world (BJW); the belief that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get [20,21]. In order to maintain this

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belief despite the experiences of injustice, depressive thinking patterns can be developed such as self-blame [22]. Furthermore, studies with torture survivors show that the loss of the previously existing just world view can lead to distrust and sensitivity towards injustice in general being maintained and can manifest itself in depressive symptoms [23].

Moreover, we see clinical and research benefits in an instrument that explores injustice perceptions and their relevance for psychotherapy. We planned an inventory that can clarify the individual needs for trauma therapy and specify our understanding of the correlation between injustice perception and mental health in this vulnerable group. A better planning and organization of psychotherapeutic treatment necessitates an inventory that explores the individual perceptions of justice and the importance for psychotherapy. As we could not find an instrument which meets the necessary criteria, a new instrument was developed and tested.

Studies have shown that people who experience more violence and more potentially traumatic events are more likely to develop psychiatric disorders like depression or PTSD

(6). We developed this questionnaire under the assumption that the same is true for the perception of injustice, meaning that people who experience more violence or other unjust treatment, would report a stronger sense of injustice. Leading to more explicit responses in each scale of the PIQ in comparison with those who report less violence and injustice experiences.

# Methods

* + *Development of the PIQ*

First, an unsystematic, preliminary literature research was used to determine questions for the focus groups. Keywords such as “perceived injustice”, “injustice in psychotherapy”, “trauma and injustice”, “perceived injustice”, “justice and mental health”, “transitional justice”, and “restorative justice” were searched for in various combinations. In connection to a literature review, we aimed to sufficiently encompass the concept of perceived injustice in order to adapt it to the chosen target group accordingly. The existing justice and injustice inventories were reviewed.

Between May 2019 and October 2019, we conducted several focus groups and inter- views with refugees and survivors of war and prosecution in Germany and Iraq. We aimed to identify feelings of injustice, an understanding of justice, and coping mechanisms. The topic was discussed with experts in psychotraumatology, legal practice and reparations, and social work. Experts were contacted in Germany, Turkey, Israel, and Iraq. Detailed information on the people interviewed and the setting can be found in Appendix [A](#bookmark4) and in [24].

Based on the interviews with affected individuals and experts, focus groups, literature research, and existing questionnaires, we developed a first preliminary item pool. Repeti- tive items were then deleted and the wording was adjusted. All these steps were taken in consultation with an expert in psychotraumatology. This process resulted in 27 items for the questionnaire and further questions on each person (Appendix B Figures A1–A3).

The further questions inquire about demographics and whether injustice was experi- enced and what kind of injustice this was, distinguishing between injustice experiences based on gender, religion, ethnicity, political, or sexual orientation, social injustice ex- periences, and experiences of physical, sexual, or psychological violence (Appendix B Figures A1–A3). In addition, it is recorded whether the experiences were made in the past or are still taking place. In addition, the ancestors’ experiences of injustice are also exam- ined, as their emotional and possibly traumatic consequences can be passed on through generations [25]. These questions are essential for both therapy and research. Persistent experiences of violence and injustice can affect the outcome of therapy. In connection with that, knowledge of past experiences can provide clues that can be used to find the right interventions.

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All items were administered in English. As there are not enough clinical questionnaires translated and validated into Kurdish or Arabic, it is not uncommon to use English- language inventories in the planned areas of application.

* + *Study Population*

For the first validation phase, the preliminary items were presented to and completed by 89 students at the University of Dohuk, Northern Iraq. Without a power analysis, the best accessible sample was used for this first preliminary validation. The geographical area of Northern Iraq is part of the Kurdistan region (KRI), an autonomous region recognized by the constitution of Iraq. The population in this region is characterized by its ethnic diversity. Muslims coexist with religious minorities such as the Yazidis and some Christians. In August 2014, troops of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) conquered areas of Northern Iraq, using extreme brutality against religious minorities such as the Yazidis. Around the city of Dohuk, there are currently 20 refugee camps for about 600,000 refugees including 450,000 Yezidi and 50,000 Christians. Due to the ongoing war in the neighboring country of Syria, new people are still arriving ([https://www.igfm.de/so-hilft-die-igfm-fluechtlingen-](https://www.igfm.de/so-hilft-die-igfm-fluechtlingen-im-nordirak/) [im-nordirak/](https://www.igfm.de/so-hilft-die-igfm-fluechtlingen-im-nordirak/), retrieved 29 October 2020). Although our sample are all students at the university, they were born and raised in the conflicted area of Northern Iraq, lived through the Iraq war and part of them are members of the Yazidi or Christian minority. They are survivors of an ongoing crisis, although they are not diagnosed with PTSD.

A total of 38 students (42.69%) completed the questionnaire online. At that time, all participants were students at the *Institute for Psychotherapy and Psychotraumatology* at the University of Dohuk. The other 50 students (57.31%) completed a paper–pencil version of the same questionnaire. At that time, all participants were students at other faculties at the University of Dohuk. Both questionnaire versions allowed participants to write comments after every scale to note difficulties or suggestions for improvement.

A total of 52students (58%) were male and 36 students (42%) were female; the average age was 26 years (SD = 6.24, between 19 and 54). Out of all interviewed students, 67.4% (*n* = 60) strongly agreed or agreed with the item “Some of my experiences were wrong and acts of injustice”.

Almost all of the students (*n* = 51) who completed the paper–pencil version agreed or strongly agreed with either “I think I have experienced injustice because of my religion” and/or to “I think I have experienced injustice because of the community or ethnicity that I belong to”. Furthermore, many (*n* = 49) responded that their ancestors had experienced similar acts of injustice before them. A total of 28.1% (*n* = 51, *n* = 22) of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had experienced physical violence.

Students who completed the online version could not provide the same detailed information about their person. Yet, it can be assumed that most of them would have answered the same way, as all of the participants belong to the Kurdish minority in Iraq, even though their religion (Muslim, Yazidi, and Christian) differs.

* + *Methods of Analysis*

Principal component analysis (PCA) was used for factor extraction and internal con- sistency was determined. Internal consistency is a widely used measure of the reliability for a psychiatric instrument. It refers to the extent to which a scale measures a common un- derlying construct. It can be assessed by Cronbachs’s alpha, a correlation statistic proposed by Cronbach [26]. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin score [27,28] and Barlett’s test of sphericity were used.

To get a first simple impression of whether there are differences between two groups, we artificially divided the Likert scale into two groups (“yes” and “no”). We divided the sample according to their demographic responses with regard to their experiences of violence and injustice. We used a Kolmogorov–Smirnov to test whether the data followed a normal distribution. Since this was not shown, Mann–Whitney U tests were used to

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calculate the group differences between people with and without experience of physical violence and strong experiences of injustice.

# Results

* 1. *Principal Component Analysis*

*≥*

We performed a PCA to extract the most important independent factors. A Kaiser– Meyer–Olkin score of 0.78 confirmed the adequacy of the data for this analysis, and Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant (*p* < 0.001), indicating that correlations between items were sufficiently large for performing a PCA. Only factors with eigenvalues 1 were considered [27,29].

Examination of Kaiser’s criteria and the scree plot yielded empirical justification for retaining four factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1, which accounted for 69.78% of the total variance. Among the factor solutions, the Varimax-rotated four-factor solution yielded the most interpretable solution, and most items loaded highly on only one of the four factors. These factors were called “emotional and cognitive consequences” (EEC), “injustice perception” (IP), “injustice experiences” (IE), and “revenge and forgiveness” (RF). Results of the PCA can be found in Table [1](#bookmark0). For content reasons, items IE 3, IP 4, and RF 1 were not assigned to the proposed factors. Instead, they were left in the original assigned subscale. The discriminatory power (rit) for the items in each scale fluctuated between rit *≤* 0.487 and rit *≤* 0.808. According to Fisseni’s [30] guidelines, this can be considered high.

**Table 1.** Factor loads and discriminatory power (rit).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Factor 1** | **Factor 2** | **Factor 3** | **Factor 4** | **rit** |
| Emotional and cognitive |  |  |  |  |  |
| consequences (ECC) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Item ECC 1 | 0.775 | 0.343 |  |  | 0.740 |
| Item ECC 2 | 0.836 | 0.306 |  |  | 0.712 |
| Item ECC 3 | 0.846 |  |  |  | 0.744 |
| Item ECC 4 | 0.731 |  |  |  | 0.740 |
| Item ECC 5 | 0.523 |  | 0.503 |  | 0.633 |
| Item ECC 6 | 0.685 |  | 0.336 |  | 0.607 |
| Injustice perception (IP) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Item IP 1 |  | 0.664 | 0.331 |  | 0.770 |
| Item IP 2 |  | 0.779 |  | 0.341 | 0.808 |
| Item IP 3 |  | 0.796 |  |  | 0.705 |
| Item IP 4 |  | 0.531 | 0.688 |  | 0.666 |
| Item IP 5 |  | 0.761 | 0.381 |  | 0.789 |
| Injustice experience (IE) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Item IE 1 |  |  | 0.668 |  | 0.525 |
| Item IE 2 |  |  | 0.651 |  | 0.560 |
| Item IE 3 | 0.596 |  | 0.381 | 0.350 | 0.529 |
| Revenge and forgiveness |  |  |  |  |  |
| (RF) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Item RF 1 | 0.699 |  | 0.346 | 0.324 | 0.487 |
| Item RF 2 | 0.317 |  |  | 0.654 | 0.649 |
| Item RF 3 |  |  |  | 0.762 | 0.659 |
| Item RF 4 |  |  |  | 0.669 | 0.668 |
| Variance explained | 25.338% | 17.564% | 13.710% | 13.167% |  |

Note: factor loads *≥* 0.30 after Varimax rotation.

* 1. *Reliability*

The reliability of all items was examined with regard to their originally assigned subscale. Items whose reliability in the originally assigned scale was <0.5 were excluded. Table [2](#bookmark1) shows the reliabilities using Cronbach’s alpha, and mean values for each scale, which were acceptable to satisfactory.

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**Table 2.** Cronbach’s alpha and mean values for each subscale.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Total Sample (N = 89)** | **Amount of Items** | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** | **Cronbachs Alpha** |
| Injustice Experience (IE) | 3 | 3.56 | 0.67 | 0.710 |
| Injustice Perception (IP) | 5 | 3.02 | 0.79 | 0.895 |
| Emotional and cognitive  consequences (ECC) | 6 | 2.95 | 0.79 | 0.883 |
| Revenge and Forgiveness (RF) | 4 | 3.32 | 0.78 | 0.800 |

Overall Cronbach’s alpha = 0.929

* 1. *Between-Group Differences (Mann–Whitney U Tests)*

The differences between the groups were calculated with the use of Mann–Whitney U tests because the distributions differed between both groups, Kolmogorov–Smirnov *p* < 0.05. The significance level for all calculations was alpha = 0.05. The groups were divided according to answers to the questions about experiences of physical violence and injustice.

For all scales, ECC, IP, IE, and RF, there were significant differences between people with physical violence experiences and injustice experiences scored significantly higher than people who did not report such experiences. The details are listed in Table [3](#bookmark2).

There were also significant differences in the total score. For the comparison between injustice experiences or no such experiences, Z = 4.38, U = 168, *p* < 0.001, and for the differences between people with and without physical violence, Z = 4.51, U = 70.50, *p* < 0.001.

**Table 3.** Mann–Whitney U test tables for mean values of scales.

(ECC)

*−*

*−*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | ***n*** | **M** | **SD** | **Z** | **U** | ***p* r c** |
|  | Violence | No | 25 | 2.42 | 0.51 |  |  |  |
| Emotional and cognitive | experience | Yes a  Total | 23  48 | 3.46  2.92 | 0.64  0.78 | *−*4.37 | 77 | <0.001 \*\*\* 0.63 |
| consequences | Injustice | No | 29 | 2.64 | 0.80 |  |  |  |
|  | experience | Yes b | 55 | 3.11 | 0.74 | *−*2.77 | 505 | 0.006 \*\* 0.30 |

Injustice perception (IP)

Injustice experience (IE)

Revenge and forgiveness (RF)

Violence experience

Injustice experience

Violence experience

Injustice experience

Violence experience

Total 84 2.95 0.79

No 26 3.11 0.40

Yes 25 3.66 0.50

Total 51 3.38 0.53

No 22 2.58 0.62

Yes 50 3.22 0.78

Total 72 3.02 0.79

No 26 3.27 0.49

Yes 25 4.04 0.49

Total 51 3.65 0.62

No 29 2.87 0.44

Yes 60 3.89 0.49

Total 89 3.56 0.67

No 24 3.17 0.34

Yes 24 4.02 0.48

Total 48 3.59 0.60

*−*4.19 105.5 <0.001 \*\*\* 0.59

*−*3.56 260 0.001 \*\*\* 0.42

*−*4.51 91 <0.001 \*\*\* 0.63

*−*6.91 92.5 <0.001 \*\*\* 0.73

*−*4.95 52.5 <0.001 \*\*\* 0.71

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Injustice

**Table 3.** *Cont.*

***n* M SD Z U *p* r c**

No 28 2.86 0.43

experience

Yes 53 3.57 0.81

Total 81 3.32 0.78

*−*4.78 265 <0.001 \*\*\* 0.53

Note: \*\* *p* 0.01, \*\*\* *p* 0.001. a Violence experience “Yes”: people who answered “1: strongly agree” or “2: agree” to the question: “I have experienced physical violence.”. b Injustice experience “Yes”: people who answered “1: strongly agree” or “2: agree” to the question:

“Some of my experiences were wrong and acts of injustice.” c Effect size measured via Pearson correlation coefficient *r* = *|Z|* : *√N*.

Furthermore, the differences between these two groups with respect to their answers in the additional items were calculated. People who reported experiencing violence and people who reported other injustices scored higher in the items A3 and A4 than the other participants. There were no significant differences in item A1, A2, and A5, however it stands out that all groups on average answered with four or higher to the question “It is worth fighting for justice”. For more details see Table [4](#bookmark3).

**Table 4.** Mann–Whitney U test tables of additional items.

*≤ ≤*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | ***n*** | **M** | **SD** | **Z** | **U** | ***p* r a** |
| Violence | No | 26 | 4.35 | 0.63 |  |  |  |

Item A1: “It is worth fighting for justice.”

Item A2: “If another person treats me in an unjust or wrong way, I can successfully protest against it.”

Item A3: “People need to hear my story.”

Item A4: “Other people’s compassion helps me when dealing with injustice”.

Item A5: “I am hopeful that the people who are responsible for the acts of injustice will be legally held accountable.”

experience

Injustice experience

Violence experience

Injustice experience

Violence experience

Injustice experience

Violence experience

Injustice experience

Violence experience

Injustice experience

Yes 24 4 0.93

Total 50 4.18 0.80

No 29 3.79 0.94

Yes 57 3.93 1.12

Total 86 3.88 1.06

No 26 3.58 0.50

Yes 24 3.25 0.44

Total 50 3.42 0.50

No 29 3.62 0.73

Yes 57 3.42 0.78

Total 88 3.49 0.76

No 26 2.92 0.69

Yes 24 3.83 0.70

Total 50 3.36 0.83

No 29 2.59 0.95

Yes 57 3.51 0.95

Total 86 3.2 1.04

No 26 4.15 0.09

Yes 24 4.58 0.10

Total 50 4.36 0.07

No 29 3.41 0.18

Yes 57 4.09 0.12

Total 86 3.86 0.11

No 26 4.04 0.92

Yes 24 3.83 0.82

Total 50 3.94 0.87

No 28 3.11 1.26

Yes 57 3.42 1.09

Total 85 3.32 0.12

*−*1.33 251.50 0.185 -

*−*1.08 715.5 0.810 -

*−*2.32 210 0.210 -

*−*1.37 688 0.170 -

*−*3.98 120 *≤*0.001 \*\*\* 0.56

*−*4.10 396 *≤*0.001 \*\*\* 0.44

*−*2.89 185 0.004 \*\* 0.41

*−*3.24 499.50 0.001 \*\*\* 0.35

*−*8.08 273 0.419 -

*−*1.28 667.50 0.202 -

*≤ ≤*

Note: \*\* *p* 0.01, \*\*\* *p* 0.001. For the mean values and all further evaluations, value 1 corresponds to the statement “strongly agree” and 5 to “strongly disagree”. a Effect size measured via Pearson correlation coefficient *r* = *|Z|* : *√N*.

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*3.4. Description of the PIQ*

The PIQ consists of 18 Likert scale items (Appendix B Figures A1–A3) in four scales plus five additional items. Excel was used to randomize the order of all these items. The items for the subscales “emotional and cognitive consequences” (EEC), “injustice percep- tion” (IP), “injustice experiences” (IE), “revenge and forgiveness” (RF), and the additional items can be answered on a Likert scale of 1–5, where the value 1 corresponds to the statement “strongly agree” and 5 to “strongly disagree.” For the scoring see Appendix C.

# 4. Discussion

This work aimed to develop an instrument that can be applied to assess the individual perceptions of injustice experiences and their emotional and cognitive consequences in survivors of war and mass violence. Studies have shown a moderate to strong correlation between perceived injustice and depression [31]. Until now, the questionnaires used fre- quently referred specifically to one event or a specific study or assessed not only man-made injustice but also non-man-made disasters such as natural catastrophes or unintentional disasters, e.g., accidents.

However, the perception of justice is not mainly a mental construction [4] but is most often based on a number of justice violations, especially in the case of human rights violations. Therefore, the restoration of justice in post-war and crisis areas has to occur across many disciplines—on a judicial level, through medical support, social and political changes, but also on an individual, psychological level [19]. In order for this to be realized, stabilization and subsequent trauma therapy are necessary. The PIQ is meant to support this psychotherapeutic process.

We generated a first preliminary item pool through interviews and focus groups with refugees from different war and crisis areas. Cutting the items down and exploring them with a PCA we received four scales (emotional and cognitive consequences (ECC), injustice perception (IP), injustice experience (IE), and revenge and forgiveness (RF)). For content reasons, we left five additional items in an additional scale. Subsequently, these were tested with a sample of students in Dohuk, Northern Iraq.

A PCA supported our proposed subscales. Reliabilities for the subscales as well as the overall reliability were satisfactory. In our case, the present sample is very much homogenous and the instrument has been designed specifically for people in war and conflict areas. Northern Iraq can be considered as such a crisis region. The local and regional unrest has continued for many years. Most people come from families that have been affected by war, or other forms of violence for many years.

Convergent and discriminant validity of this novel instrument have yet to be evaluated. For the investigation of the discriminant validity, we propose, among others, to evaluate the correlations between our instrument (PIQ) and the bitterness questionnaire [16]. A correlation between the Injustice Experience Questionnaire [2] and our instrument can be used to examine its convergent validity because convergent validity states that tests having similar constructs should be highly correlated and are supposed to share some general parts of injustice experiences and at least be moderately correlated with each other [32].

For the use of the PIQ in therapy, five items that didn’t fit the analysis were incorpo- rated because they access the coping strategies of people regarding their feelings of injustice. In a long-term perspective, these strategies can be used in psychotherapy to enable those who experienced traumatic and violent events to reduce negative feelings. Likewise, these strategies might help in shifting one’s injustice perception (IP) in a long-term perspective as well.

This inventory has been developed to improve the understanding of the perception of injustice and its impact on people’s health. We cannot help them regain a sense of justice or shift their focus, unless we know to what extent they perceive their own situation as wrong and unjust. This new inventory is intended to help trauma therapists in areas of war and crisis. It is meant to enable them to conduct a differentiated analysis of the problem and to determine the focus of the psychotherapeutic work. Based on this inventory, our research

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group is currently planning to develop a new set of therapy modules with worksheets which focus on the perception of, understanding of, and approach to feelings of injustice. The questionnaire can then be used as an introduction to the topic and as an assessment of its relevance.

*Limitations*

However, psychometric properties such as reliability are dependent on the popu- lation and sample size and cannot be treated as fixed characteristics of the test [33,34]. Additionally, no test–retest validity has been assessed to date. This can be considered a limitation.

For this reason, the characteristics of this instrument can, at this point, neither be easily transferred to other populations nor to specific subgroups within this population. All participants in our example were healthy enough to be able to go to university and had an academic background, although many of them live in refugee camps themselves due to the ongoing crisis situation in this area.

The PIQ was formulated in the English language to be used as extensively as possible in a global context. Yet, the English language might be seen as a limitation because sensitive words such as justice or injustice cannot be translated in other languages as easily without changing their meaning. The sample knows English really well and have been studying in English since their bachelor’s degrees and are used to working with English textbooks, questionnaires, and literature because there isn’t much material in Arabic and even less in Kurdish. Furthermore, English is the only common language of the sample, as Arabic and Kurdish, as well as various Kurdish dialects, are spoken in the region, which are not understood and spoken by all. Once our inventory is further reviewed and somewhat established, the plan is to create and validate further translated versions.

Based on the literature research, it can be assumed that people who have experienced more physical violence, such as people with severe physical trauma (3), are likely to be more sensitive to perceived injustice than people without those experiences. In order to validate the content of the questionnaire, groups with and without experience of violence were therefore compared. Further, the results of the Mann–Whitney U tests give us first indications that there are large differences in the perception of justice depending on the experiences one has had in life.

However, we cannot yet see whether the perception of these events and justice directly affects or moderates mental health or not. For this, it is relevant to retest this inventory with, among others, people who have received a PTSD diagnosis due to their experiences. Therefore, further validation studies should focus on more specific samples. For example, future studies should examine reliabilities for groups of individuals with and without diagnosed depression and PTSD or with both disorders, as these are some of the most common disorders in survivors of genocide, war, and mass violence [6]. Another idea is to perform a split-reliability assessment based on people’s sex, since trauma upon

women is one of our research foci.

It is planned to further validate the PIQ in the outpatient clinic recently founded at the Institute for Psychotherapy and Psychotraumatology (IPP) at the University of Dohuk, Iraq. Thus, the validity of this instrument can be verified again for the intended target group.

# 5. Conclusions

With the PIQ, we have developed an inventory to determine both the relevance and perceptions of injustice among people in conflict areas. Since we have used an aca- demic sample, further validation studies with a larger and more heterogeneous sample are planned.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board of University of Dohuk (Protocol Code: IPP-3-2030, 10 January 2021).

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

# Appendix A.

*Appendix A.1. Detailed Information about Focus Groups and Original Interviews*

Appendix A.1.1. Methods

*•*

Focus groups and interviews. The survey with the questions for the face-to-face interviews were distributed to many different psychosocial institutions in Germany and through some international organizations around the world. Yet, the responses were little.

*•*

*•*

Audio recording was possible only in one interview (14). In all focus groups, there was at least one person who did not wish to be recorded after being asked for permission. The institutions provided the interpreters. In two groups (1 + 4) they were non-sworn and came to Germany as refugees as well. In group 2, the attending psychotherapist and the social worker interpreted.

* The group discussions lasted between 45 to 70 min

(1) Focus group with men from the Gambia, who are diagnosed with PTSD. Focus discussion happened during their official stabilization group (refugio Stuttgart, Germany).

(2) Focus group with patients of the transcultural department of a psychosomatic rehabili- tation clinic, of whom some are diagnosed with PTSD (Donaueschingen, Germany). (3) Focus group with Yazidi women, part of their therapeutic group session, (PBV, Stuttgart, Germany). (4) Focus group with refugees in a German level A2 in Germany (Tuebingen, Germany); 11 students, male and female. (5) Focus group with students of the IPP in Dohuk, Northern Iraq. (6) Focus group/interviews with people in one refugee camp near Dohuk, Northern Iraq. (7) Interview with interpreter from group (1), who also fled from the Gambia. (8) Interview via survey with a Holocaust survivor (self-help home, Chicago, IL, USA). (9) Interview via survey, with a refugee from Syria (refugio VS; Germany). (10) Interview via survey, with a social worker from Burundi (zfd, Burundi). (11) Interview via survey, with a Yazidi woman from northern Iraq (PBV, Stuttgart, Germany). (12) Interview via survey, with a Kurdish woman from Iran (PBV, Stuttgart, Germany). (13) Interview via survey, with a man from Nigeria (PBV, Stuttgart, Germany). (14) Conversation/interview with Kurdish interpreter from group (3), who’s family is in northern Syria.

Appendix A.1.2. Overview of the Results

“What is justice?”: Everyone treated in the same way; everyone gets what they need, doesn’t have to be the exact same; dignity; all about the truth; treat people the way you want to be treated by them; an effort to be a good person; everybody lives in peace and lives well; getting the opportunities one needs; some are fighting for it, but it doesn’t exist; respect (other people(s), family, . . . ); some countries will never get justice, others might [Syria–Germany]; Different kinds of injustice were mentioned: inequality in treatment in Germany or daily treatment (children, gender-based, . . . ); inequality in the world and cruel wrongdoings such as ISIS and Boko Haram.

“Examples of injustice”: Innocent, but got charged by court; deportation; different treatment of refugees in Germany, depending on their origin (e.g., residence status; transla- tors available); racism in Germany because of skin color or accent (at work, in school . . . ); no human rights/torture/abuse . . . ; Boko Haram; Libya: mistreatment, enslavement, tor-

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ture; ISIS captivity, murder, and torture; not being able to see a doctor in Germany, having a translator; persecution of minorities; persecution of LGBT community; no/less rights for women; e.g., in court a men’s testimony counts as much as two women’s; dictatorship; not getting the opportunities one needs (no education, no attention, no love); lost freedom; bullying; no family reunification; broken promises; horrible conditions in the refugee camps; in Germany, mistreated by other refugees; differences in life standards between countries; world is just watching what is happening in Syria; ignorance and egoism in the large population of many countries.

“Emotional reactions”: Angry/aggression; stupor; poor sleep; self-pity; flashbacks; sadness and mourning; affective disorders; behavioral disorders; guilt; exhausted from trying to fight back; wish for (violent) revenge; suicide; cannot trust some people; fear.

“Strategies to deal with injustice”: Talk to each other; finding people you can trust and who support you and are by your side; respect each other; recognizing that there are also good, helpful, and just people; belief/prayer and hop/accepting that God will fix it; remaining a good person, even if it’s hard; accepting some unfair treatment; believing that everything hast to be, just stops one from being okay with one’s life; somehow you get through it; trying to change one’s mentality/taking action through campaigns, etc.; believing that everything happens for a reason and everything must be dealt with patiently; not making comparisons; trying to make a good life in the future; strengthening ones confidence; fighting back; remaining silent; no fear of death, laughing; telling the world what happened; solidarity; trying to ignore bad things; no longer fighting/demonstrating because it is hopeless and costs too much energy.

“Wishes and how the world and others should behave”: Basic human needs have to be fulfilled; being treated like a human being; clarification of the truth; psychosocial and material support; prosecution of perpetrators; political and legal steps; equal treatment in families, communities, and the world; the world has to help!; “We have suffered so much that we are already grateful when someone hands us a glass of water”; everyone can try to teach their children to become good people, so bad people and injustice can be reduced in the world.