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

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor

of Philosophy

Ph.D.

Omega Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative correlational research study evaluated, via self-assessment inventories, middle-class African American’s race-related stress, the perception of injustice, and the relationship between the two. Data were gathered and tested via Person’s r bivariate correlation to determine if a relationship between middle-class African American’s race-related stress, measured by the Index of Race Related Stress – Brief version, and their perception of injustice, measured by the Perceived Injustice Questionnaire, exists. Sixty-two middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN were selected by way of convenience sampling. Thirty participants were required for this study based on G\*Power calculation. Data were collected using online surveys. SPSS was utilized to calculate the composite (mean) scores for the race-related stress and perception of injustice variables. The correlational coefficients were analyzed to determine relationships between the variables. A one-tailed test of significance was used to test the relationship of the variables with a .05 significance level to analyze the results. Data gathered and analyzed from the study provided conclusive evidence about the relationship between middle-class African Americans race-related stress and perception of injustice. Further research on race-related stress and the perception of injustice could offer middle-class African Americans a greater understanding of how to effectively nurture reconciliation practices for self-improvement and the improvement of their communities.

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) is 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 necessitated social researchers to research on the role race-related stress plays in the perception of injustice (Neumann, 2021; Utsey, 1999).

The possible relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice were 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 excluded an important dimension and neglected a vital approach to middle-class African Americans and politics (Neumann, et al., 2021; Utsey, 1999). 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 is rooted in critical race theory. It is thought by many that critical race theory (CRT) is an American phenomenon. However, the ideas of critical race theory were often propagated outside the U.S. for many years. The concepts of critical race theory ere often favored by U.S. racial historians (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). CRT underpins an entire social movement meant to enact social reform through a violent revolution for some individuals. CRT is discussed in social, political, educational, and religious arenas. CRT asserts 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 is 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 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, research on people suffering from pain after traumatic accidents show that people who subjectively perceive their situation as less just felt pain longer and more strongly (Carriere, et al., 2020; Sullivan, 2020; Trost, et al., 2017). 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).

Most evaluations of a sense of justice were conducted in Western cultures. Frequently, the focus was on concepts such as social injustice, fair distribution of goods, or justice sensitivity, or the questionnaire was developed to determine the belief in a just world, a concept that was developed based on Western ideas of justice (Dalbert, et al., 1987; Schmitt, et al., 2010). Most studies in the field developed and used specific questionnaires that only refer to the target group or the conflict concerned (Pham, et al., 2004). In addition, research shows that the perception of injustice likely increased through situations characterized by basic human rights violations (Sullivan, 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 (Aymer, 2016; Daftary, 2018; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2017). With CRT guiding the research conceptualizations of race-related stress and the perception of injustice, systemic racism was 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 is 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 indicated race-related stress to be associated with physical and psychological well-being, African American activism, and racial identity attitude (Cho, et al., 2013; Hope et al., 2018; Leath & Chavous, 2017; Miller, et al., 2018; Prosper, 2018; Szymanski, 2012; 2016).

The result that individuals with the attitude that things are generally good and all right with the world are 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 are 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 is that it is 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 (Neumann, et al., 2021; Utsey, 1999). Middle-class African American’s race-related stress affects their quality of their life, mental health, and perception of injustice (Utsey, 1999). There is a need to understanding 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 (Neumann, et al., 2021; Utsey, 1999). Though research on CRT abounds, a gap in the literature was 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 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 analyzed, 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 fills 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 was 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 Perceived Injustice Questionnaire (PIQ), exists and to what extent. The study can contribute to an understanding of the interaction of the 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 are not applying their intelligence and insight 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, et al., 2023). The quantitative correlational study can provide middle-class African Americans with the necessary evidence to promote political understanding and growth on the socio-political level. The acquired information was shared with the study's participants and scholars and can provide helpful knowledge for personal and social development.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to closing the gap in research on race-related stress and the perception of injustice. The research can 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 expands 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 (Neumann, et al., 2021; Utsey, 1999).

Research Question and Hypotheses

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 guided 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 emerged from the purpose statement. The hypotheses aligned with the research question to support the purpose of the study. The hypotheses aligned with the research question to support 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 framed 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 is used to study the possible correlation of two concepts. Race-related stress and the perception of injustice were examined to conduct the study. A greater understanding of race-related stress and the perception of injustice can make middle-class African American political involvement more transformational (Neumann, et al., 2021; Utsey, 1999).

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, et al., 2021). Gramsci also indicated 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, et al., 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 stated 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. It appeared that Marxist sociology is 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 is also concerned with how police forces are 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). It may be possible 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 is hidden requires the control of others' agendas. This action is necessary so that the controllers can narrow the scope of vision of the controlled. Marx stated that this process is 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). CRT has affected much of American life beyond the academy, specifically in areas branded as identity politics. People of the same race, sex, or sexual orientation work together to gain power for their respective groups to restructure what is known as the hegemony (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Since the 1990s, CRT has emphasized whiteness and coined the term white privilege. CRT draws from European philosophers and social theorists like Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Jaques Derrida. The American tradition rests 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).

CRT was meant to advocate for meaningful change that addresses systemic racial inequality (Dixson & Anderson, 2018).

Lawrence, et al. (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 guided 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 (Carriere, et al., 2020; Sullivan, 2020; Trost, et al., 2017). To better understand the impact of injustice experiences on mental health, it is necessary to assess experiences of injustice with appropriate instruments. However, all the common inventories to survey the perception of injustice were developed in Western societies (Dalbert, et al., 1987; Schmitt, et al., 2010). Furthermore, most evaluations of a sense of justice were conducted in Western cultures. Frequently, the focus is on concepts such as social injustice, fair distribution of goods, or justice sensitivity (Schmitt, et al., 2010), or the questionnaire was developed to determine the belief in a just world (Dalbert, et al., 1987) a concept that was developed based on Western ideas of justice.

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

Comprehensive studies on the relationship between all six tenants of CRT, race-related stress, and the perception of injustice is limited in the extant literature. The research question and hypotheses of the present study are 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 provided further evidence of race-related stress and the possible relationship between the perception of injustice. Chapter 2 also includes précis of extant research within the study’s conceptual framework.

Operational Definitions of Terms

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

***Hegemony.*** Hegemony denotes 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 is 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 was 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 is 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) relates 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, et al., 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 are statements accepted as true (Gubanov, et al., 2018). Two critical assumptions and one non-critical assumption underlie this study. The first assumption is that study participants answered the inventories truthfully and completely. Because the inventories are self-assessment measures, participants could be susceptible to responding in a socially acceptable manner. Participants were 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 was taken to differentiate between the concepts and contexts to ensure participants can appropriately reference the terms *stress* and *injustice* in the study. *Stress* is 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* is the lack of fairness or justice, an unjust act or occurrence (Heinze, 2012). Third, the one non-critical assumption is that I am not interested in is sociopolitical ideology in that I did not promote or reject any particular ideology or worldview for the purposes of this study.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was 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 were utilized to gather empirical research from middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN, to ascertain the magnitude of the relationship. The study was delimited to allow the use of web-based surveys. Data collected via web-based surveys is more cost-effective (Ebert, et al., 2018).

Limitations

This study was limited due to the sampling technique and study design. Convenience sampling may not be representative of the entire population; therefore, generalizability is limited. A larger sample size could have yielded more generalizable findings and statistical significance. The study limited 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 was the inability to properly infer causation because one variable preceding another is insufficient to conjecture causation (Aliabadi & Dorestani, 2017; Rohrer, 2018).

Chapter Summary

The relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice was investigated to provide insight into political engagement and activism. Research on race-related stress and the perception of injustice addressed the problem middle-class African Americans face concerning political engagement, individual and communal well-being, and social engagement (Neumann, et al., 2021; Utsey, 1999). Insufficient research incorporating middle-class African Americans’ race-related stress and perception of injustice exists. This quantitative correlational research study evaluated via self-assessment inventories, middle-class African Americans race-related stress, perception of injustice, and the relationship between the two. Chapter 2 restate the problem and purpose of the study and provides a brief synopsis of the literature to establish the relevance and currency of the problem. The literature search strategy for the study was discussed listing accessed library databases, search engines, and key search terms used. The theoretical framework describes major theoretical propositions, including delineations of any assumptions appropriate to the application of the theories. The research literature review provides a thorough review of the research literature, which is conceptually and methodologically relevant and builds a case for the study. A summary section concludes 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 react differently to injustice experiences. This subjective perception of injustice could determine their actions and their mental health - race-related stress (Fetchenhauer & Huang, 2004). As an example, 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 (Carriere, et al., 2020; Trost, et al., 2017; Sullivan, 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 (Aymer, 2016; Daftary, 2018; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2017). With CRT guiding the research conceptualizations of race-related stress and the perception of injustice, the relationship between the two variables was 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 (Neumann, et al., 2021; Utsey, 1999). 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; et al., 2021; Thiele, 2021).

Literature Research Strategy

Locating, retrieving, and utilizing relevant theoretical and empirical research is imperative in the literature development and expansion process (Hempel, 2020). Relevant database sources were identified and accessed via internet searches and the American College of Education's library databases, a subscription-based service. The keywords and phrases searched were *Marxism*, *Socialism*, *hegemony*, *intersectionality*, *political correctness*, and *critical race theory (CRT)*. Peer-reviewed sources were evaluated and analyzed for topic relevance. An iterative approach was used, and research strategies were adjusted as necessary. Online journals, Google Scholar, Google Books, SpringerLink, and Directory of Open Access Journals were some of the search engines used for the literature review. The library database used in part were, 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 consisted of two theories. The two theories involved were Marxism and conflict, and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Each of the theories were 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 established 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 limits 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 posited 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 seems to be about different values embraced by different people – incompatible values. It is helpful to understand the elements of conflict. Conflict is 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 is a permanent feature of social and political life. Ideology will continuously shape and reshape society. Ideology leads to group identification and, consequently, conflicting preferences and choices (Ghous, 2020). Individuals and groups enter the political arena with different expectations and preferences. Sometimes, these differing preferences result in sharp divisions. Heterogeneous (diverse) societies suffer more from differences and divisions than homogeneous (same) societies and are 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 are also 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 have been writhed with conflicting ideologies. The roots of much of the conflict are found in material disputes. One cannot underestimate the importance of other factors as potential sources of conflict. While a considerable portion of social and political conflict is 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 are significant conflict bases (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Therefore, the intention of this rationale is not to undermine the significance of economic determinism, nor does it give more weight to other factors. The rationale gives significance to the notion that beliefs, ideas, and values guide the actions of many in the social and political worlds (Ghous, 2020). Ideology is a powerful factor. Ideology could lead to violent conflict in society. Ideological conflicts 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, et al. (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, et al., 2017; Harris, 2022).

Unlike conventional civil rights, CRT scrutinizes more closely from broader perspectives such as economics, history, interest groups, individual interests, and emotions. CRT questions the foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, rationalism, enlightenment, and constitutional law. Many communities have their perspective regarding CRT and social justice (Delgado, et al., 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 drive the contemporary, popular notion of critical race theory. The 20th and 21st centuries are replete with conflicting ideologies. The roots of much of the conflict is found in material disputes (Ghous, 2020). While a considerable portion of social and political conflict are 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 is not to undermine the significance of economic determinism, nor is it to give more weight to other factors. The rationale is to give significance to the notion that beliefs, ideas, and values guide the actions of many in the social and political worlds. Ideology is a powerful factor (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014).

Opponents of CRT in the United States publicly, politically, and legally challenge CRT's rhetoric and goals. Much debate emerged about how, when, and whether CRT should be taught in academic curricula, particularly at the K-12 levels. Nine Republican-majority states instituted 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 is couched in whether people believe CRT is a framework for understanding how racism molded American institutions and culture. Alternatively, for others, CRT is instead a divisive narrative that permanently sets people of color against caucasian people (Sawchuk, 2021). It is vital to note that the differences in thought do not represent a perfect split between Democrat and Republican ideologies. There are 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 is 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 American’s 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). Salami also used the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) (Beck, et al., 1996) and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) (Beck, et al., 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, et al., 2003; Kendler, et al., 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 were found to be associated with psychological distress for African Americans (Broman, et al., 2000; Carter, 2007; Clark et al., 2004; Klonoff, et al., 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 this study could provide insight and assist middle-class African Americans in addressing their possible relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice (Ghous, 2020).

Research Literature Review

The research literature review consists of 6 sections. The six sections are CRT, Marxism and conflict, socialism, hegemony, intersectionality, political correctness, and gap in the literature. Each of the topics are 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, et al., 2017). Derrick Bell is considered the father figure of neoliberal CRT because he wrote many of the underlying principles. There are, 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, et al., 2017).

CRT and Academia

Academia has seen 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 gave 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) discussed critical theory, students, racism, curricula, education, and power from the perspective of liberal arts academia and 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 was how the BLM movement brought new vitality to the discussion about how important a liberal arts education was to social justice issues. These perspectives impact neoliberal thought and university governance – in short, Mondschein posited that 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 claims 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 male teachers) who once made up a sizeable percentage of the teacher workforce faced ejection from their profession (Sandles, 2020). Sandles asserted that the favorable ruling of Brown vs. The Board of Education hurt black educator numbers in the teaching profession. Separate but equal was outlawed, with black males exiting the teaching profession as a net result (Sandles, 2020).

CRT and Other Areas of Influence

CRT affected much of American life beyond the academy, specifically in areas branded as identity politics. People of the same race, sex, or sexual orientation work together to gain power for their respective groups to restructure what is 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) are prominent, influential contemporary writers on CRT. Kendi is a leading author on what has become known as anti-racism and how to become an anti-racist (Delgado, et al., 2017). CRT has significantly affected contemporary fields such as economics, sociology, psychology, African American Studies, American History, and many other fields of study (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020).

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

Critical race theory is discussed in social, political, educational, and religious arenas (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Many churches struggle to reconcile what they see as historical, systemic, racial injustice. For many, it is difficult to wholly subscribe to the way of thinking that constitutes critical race theory. This theory asserts that race is nothing more than a social construct created to perpetuate white privilege through white supremacy (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Critical race theory has flaws like many other theories constructed to address highly complex issues. In some cases, many posit 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 are 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 suggested that 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 appears 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 prefer the dulling effect religion gives them to life's issues. That is to say that the forgiveness of religion (Christianity) gives people delusional happiness. It is the price people have to pay for their faux happiness (Wittrock, 2020). Marx posited one would do well not to require a rigid understanding of religion based solely on Christian or Jewish customs and practices. He suggested 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 implied that it is difficult to draw the boundaries of religion or to make a clear distinction between the religious and the secular in many regards. Marx suggested 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 legitimize existing social structures, which 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? Hegemony is of greater interest to sociology, sociologists, and economists (Sowell, 1960). Some might say some alternatives are democratic socialism, communism, or even totalitarianism. Some disagree. There is 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 established well-known theories of capitalist hegemony (Marx, Gramsci, Althusser, Marcuse, The Frankfurt School) that aid in explaining 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 is imagined as democratic socialism (to a certain degree) and what it might look like in the 21st century. It seems that Marxist ideology has gained steam. It appears that Marxist sociology is 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 do the means (or money) control workers? How does a method (way of production) influence the social classes? What is the relationship between laborers, wealth, the government (or state), and culture? How do economic factors influence inequalities (Sklair, 2019)? One might explore various critical theories or intersectionalism regarding gender and race. Marxist sociology is concerned with how police forces are 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 is as nefarious as some accuse it has not been definitively established. This dynamic might be the case if one lived in other societies in addition to capitalist cultures. At the same time, a robust democracy has aspects of many social and economic types, including socialism – all employed by the hegemon to “run” the society (Sowell, 1960).

Sociopolitical attitudes 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 under-take, adherence to various social norms that 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, et al., 2016). Sociopolitical attitudes are often 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 are also factors (Campbell & Horowitz, 2016; Furnham, 1985; Haidt, 2012; Proch, et al., 2019; Tansey & Kindsvatter, 2020).

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

There was and remains 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 posit 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 could have a significant, detrimental effect on the mental health of the children - symptoms included 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 exhibited more symptoms of PTSD, fear, and feelings of abandonment compared to children who were not separated from their families (Long, et al., 2019). The breaking up of families is seen as a form of violence against the less fortunate. The theoretical marriage of capitalism and democracy of the West represents 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 is 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 seems to be a longing for a better life than capitalism already permits for most. Socialist 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 enables one to avoid presenting one’s interpretation as if it was the entirety of either socio-economic system (Sowell, 1960).

Yearnings for better lives, as some posit socialism proposes, are not new. In slave societies like the early United States, enslaved people dreamed of less harsh and brutal lives, and for fewer circumstances out of their control. The enslaved people desired freedom. Ultimately, they sought change that would make 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 be 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 is 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 discusses various aspects of hegemony and its ramifications.

Hegemony

Hegemony is 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 is not always necessarily established by force (Ruggiero, 2021). The definition implies the notion of hegemony as possessing overwhelming power while simultaneously implying that this power invariably needs the ability of the hegemon to exercise leverage to control others. This way, hegemony involves a relationship between participants, whether people or states. This leadership could be of a consensual or dominating nature. The relational aspect of hegemony is vital for those who see hegemony as exercising a form of leadership. However, a critical point is that hegemony entails 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 is 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, et al., 2021). Gramsci greatly expanded this concept, developing a sharp analysis of how (the bourgeoisie) the ruling capitalist class instituted and maintained control. Gramsci suggested bourgeois values were tied to folklore, popular culture, and religion. Thus, much of his analysis of hegemonic culture was aimed at these elements (Sugita, et al., 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 posited Marxism could have replaced religion - only if it had met the spiritual needs of the people. People think of Marxism as expressing their experience (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Gramsci's theory of hegemony is tied to his concept of the capitalist state, but only in the narrow sense of government. He divided his theory 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) were commonly seen as the private or non-state sphere (Sugita, et al., 2021). Civil society mediates between the state and the economy. However, Gramsci stressed that division is purely conceptual and that political and civil often overlap. Gramsci asserted that the capitalist state rules through force in addition to consent: political society is the domain of force, and civil society is the domain of consent (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014).

Hegemony, Power, and Coercion

That the three components of power, coercion, and hegemony are 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) seems 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) represents patriarchal, authoritative, or royal power. It appears that the assumption is that it is incumbent upon the proletariat to obey regardless of personal merit, ability, or interests.

As Weber suggested, domination by a constellation of interests often becomes domination by authority. Material possessions are converted into one's duty to obey on the part of the proletariat (Ruggiero, 2021). Ruggiero asserted that coercion as a category is central in right-wing thinking concerning power. Inspired by a dualist juxtaposition, this analysis distinguishes 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 is not definitively settled. This unqualified distinction seems 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 was a left-wing revolution that led to communism and armed conflict in Russia.

Coercion and Consent

It 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 is hidden requires the control of others' agendas. This action is 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, et al., 2021). Whatever the method, coercion leads to an authoritative power of order that demands obedience manifested through accepting the norms coercion imposes. Systems of dominance are established through norms that obtain hegemony due to perceived customary social practices. One’s thoughts arrive unconsciously, usually without referencing correct beliefs or consideration of being controlled or coerced (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014).

Antonio Gramsci suggested 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 is about power, power aimed at subjugation, even if liquidation of rival groups is deemed necessary for subjugation. Yet, leadership wields power as moral and intellectual values widely spread and are eventually internalized by the masses (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). This dynamic often happens before power is exercised. Conflict between social groups results 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, adopted an understanding of the world that was not theirs but was acquired from another group (former “masters”). African Americans do not fall into the category of capitulators due to having been the descendants of enslaved people. People of European descent in America are not inherently inclined to be dominators due to being descendants of slave owners (Ruggiero, 2021).

Wittrock (2020) wrote that all things 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 is a space in which many ideologies are 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, et al, 2021). Some posit that masculinity theorizes gender as an independent structure of dominance. Others believe hegemonic masculinity theorizes and treats femininity as passively compliant. Intersectionality was about African American feminism in its inception. Contemporary intersectionality has now come to encompass racism, classism, and gender issues (Hamilton, et al., 2019). The background and implications of intersectionality is 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 is debate about the meaning of intersectionality. It seems that there is no official definition of intersectionality. The above quote is as close as I came to intersectionality's core tenets. Intersectionality asserts that power relations of race, class, gender, and sexuality are all related and will never be exclusively mutual. All these aspects work together and build upon each other, affecting every aspect of an individual's life (Collins & Bilge, 2020). Intersectionality is the term used by most stakeholders that apply their understanding of the concept to various uses. The differences in the broad description denote a consensus concerning how individuals 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 believe Crenshaw's work is based on the writings of Bell and Freedman (Delgado, et al., 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 was 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, et al., 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, et al., 2017). In the 1960s and 1970s, African American women activists confronted how their needs concerning jobs, education, employment, and healthcare fell through the cracks of anti-racist social movements, feminism, and unions organizing for workers' rights. Each social movement elevated 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 was that African American women were underrepresented because they were Black, female, and workers. None of those above distinctions were considered separately adequately addressing the complex social issues African American women faced. Collins and Bilge (2020) asserted that the plight of Black women was not only be subordinate but overlooked within each movement. Intersectionality was used as an analysis to address these issues.

Crenshaw criticized 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 was not enough to insert anti-racist ideals into the inclusion framework. The goal of the intersectional approach was to cross-examine the principles attached to the social categories that exist in the world and how those principles promote and generate social hierarchies (Muller, 2021). Intersectionality also looked beneath the prevailing notions of discrimination and challenge the laxity that accompanies the belief in the effectiveness of this paradigm.

Contemporary Intersectionality

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

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

Intersectionality and Healthcare

The concept of intersectionality is increasingly employed within public health arenas, particularly in North America (Holman, et al., 2021). Many African Americans do not trust the government, less the healthcare system. The theoretical framework of intersectionality posits that several social categories form a nexus at the most micro level of all individuals’ experiences. At the nexus point are an interlocking system (or systems) of privilege for some and oppression for others (Holman, et al., 2021). For many, personal privilege or oppression manifests at the macro or social level through racism, sexism, and classism. What is the connection between intersectionality and healthcare? Public health is committed to social justice.

There appears 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 are rare (Holman, et al., 2021). More research is needed in healthcare through the lens of intersectionality – not to discredit intersectionality but to ascertain how this lens might aid or hinder equitable change in healthcare.

Intersectionality and COVID-19

The two presidential administrations response to COVID-19 unnecessarily compounded the pain and suffering for many. The pain and suffering were not borne equally. COVID-19, in many cases, revealed 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) were offered meager wages. People were employed at some of the most peripheral intersections, such as racial or ethnic minorities, women (sex trafficking), and undocumented workers (Bowleg, 2020). There is no doubt these intersections 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) worked in during the COVID-19 era (Bowleg, 2020).

There is undoubtedly 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 are inherently evil but because humans are flawed. Moreover, it is human instinct to look out for oneself and one’s kind (Collins & Bilge, 2020). When the COVID-19 shutdown ended, and in the present, policymakers, public health officials, and society at large have what the author called a moral imperative to address issues of inequality in health care and the economy (Bowleg, 2020). The author suggests 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 spread more easily among the more vulnerable populations. The relationship between COVID-19 and the so-called inequality structure transpired along two ranges – first, how existing inequality structures affected the spread of the infection, and second, how its containment measures affected the existing systems of said inequality (Maestripieri, 2021). There has long been debate about the social determinants of health by sociologists and public health officials. Much of the focus is on how education, socio-economic conditions, and the environment in which people live affect their health (Maestripieri, 2021). COVID-19 undeniably was a social disease. Some socio-economic inequalities could influence one's likelihood of being infected. The virus propagated 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 captures 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 is extremely limited (Cate, et al., 2021).

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

Many particulars constitute an individual. However, it seems intersectionality attempts to reduce an individual’s identity to their 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 is an individual. One's characteristics makes each unique (Cate, et al., 2021). Nevertheless, all have universal similarities constituting a shared sense of humanity and universal connection. Intersectionality desires society to acknowledge that aspects of society tend to act upon specific individuals in particular ways (Collins & Bilge, 2020). Intersectionality yearns for society to acknowledge there are aspects concerning society that affect large portions of society in specific ways through the systems society creates (Cate, et al, 2021). Political correctness is a concept frequently invoked to influence debates to establish greater equality but also to control speech. Though political correctness has some merit, it is also met with 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 discusses political correctness and how the concept impacts society.

Political Correctness

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

PC and its Influence

The world has experienced very rapid, sweeping societal change. A new postmodern ideology emerged after all the social conflict the West has experienced, particularly in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Stoica, 2021). This ideology is inspired by older ones - Marxism and the theories of the Frankfurt school, more precisely, cultural Marxism or neo-Marxism. These ideologies lead to what had been coined, in modern times, as political correctness (Stoica, 2021). Political correctness (or PC) is used to describe policies and measures to avoid offenses or highlight the apparent disadvantages of certain groups or individuals (Thiele, 2021). Political correctness is usually be employed pejoratively in the public sphere of discourse and the media. As recently as the late 1980s, PC referred to a preference for inclusive language. PC also means 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 is usually on so-called identity groups.

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

PC, Multiculturalism and DEI

Multiculturalism and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusivity) initiatives were pursued equally with political correctness. However, multiculturalism is not a direct descendant of Marxism. PC seems to result from globalization (Thiele, 2021). Such trends are enthusiastically advanced and championed by followers of other components or complementary elements of cultural Marxism. Some believe multiculturalism is the final state of a natural or synthetic process exhibited nationally or within communities (Stoica, 2021). Supporters of political correctness assert that many conservatives 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 is 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 discusses aspects of the gap in literature.

Gap in Literature

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. This problem is of particular concern in the American Southeast, where there is an assumed 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). Because there are many factors that impact middle-class African American’s 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 is a driving force behind the need for this research.

The Need for This Research

The background of the problem is rooted in Marxism through critical race theory. Many consider critical race theory (CRT) an American ideology. However, the ideas of critical race theory have been propagated outside the US for many years. The concepts of critical race theory are often favored by US racial historians (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). CRT underpins an entire social movement meant to enact social reform through a violent revolution for some individuals. CRT is discussed in social, political, educational, and religious arenas. CRT asserts 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 is 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 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 shows that people who subjectively perceived their situation as less just will feel pain longer and more strongly (Carriere, et al., 2020; Sullivan, 2020; Trost, et al., 2017 ). To better understand the impact of injustice experiences on mental health, it is necessary to validly assess experiences of injustice with appropriate instruments (Fetchenhauer, Huang, 2004).

Most evaluations of a sense of justice have been conducted in Western cultures. Frequently, the focus was on concepts such as social justice, fair distribution of goods, and justice sensitivity, or the questionnaire was developed to determine the belief in a just world, a concept that was developed based on Western ideas of justice (Dalbert, et al., 1987; Schmitt, et al., 2010). Most studies in the field develop and use specific questionnaires which refer to the target group or the conflict concerned (Pham, et al., 2004). In addition, research shows that the perception of injustice is likely increased through situations characterized by basic human rights violations (Sullivan, 2020).

A deeper examination using CRT as the framework reveals 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 ( Aymer, 2016; Daftary, 2018; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2017). With CRT guiding the research conceptualizations of race-related stress and the perception of injustice, systemic racism was 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 is 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 indicated race-related stress to be associated with physical and psychological well-being and middle-class African American activism (Cho, et al., 2013; Hope et al., 2018; Leath & Chavous, 2017; Miller, et al., 2018; Prosper, 2018; Szymanski, 2012;; 2016).

Instrumentation

The quantitative correlational research study explored 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 were 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 utilized 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 was 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.

On the basis of the conceptual framework of Jones's (1972) tripartite model of racism and the related work of Essed (1990), several instruments have been developed to empirically assess the multidimensional impact of race­ related stress on the psychological well-being of African Americans. A review of the literature uncovered three such measures. The Perceived Racism Scale (Armstead, et al., 1996), the Racism and Life Experience Scales-Revised (Harrell, 1997) and the Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS-B; Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996) represent the current technology available for assessing the 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 are unidimensional or lack empirical support; these measures were not desirable for use in this present study.

Despite evidence linking racism to an assortment of indicators of psychological and physical distress, the counseling profession has not responded decisively with specific interventions to rectify its negative effects on the psychological well-being of African Americans (Utsey, 1999). To develop effective interventions meant to assuage the stressful effects of racism experienced by African Americans, one must give adequate attention to both the conceptualization and assessment of race-related stress. Efforts to assess psychological distress associated with racism should consider the multidimensional nature of this stressor. To this end, a tripartite model proposed by Jones (1972) best represents the multidimensional nature of racism as a stressor in the lives of African Americans. According to this model, racism is observed as potentially occurring in three domains of African American life. The first is individual racism. This domain is based on the belief and behavior that one's own racial group is superior to others. The second is institutional racism. This domain is manifested in the policies and practices of institutions that operate (unintentionally or intentionally) to restrict the rights, mobility, access, or privileges of members of a given racial group or groups. The third domain is cultural racism. This domain is the individual and institutional expression of the belief that a given culture is superior to others.

In comparing the IRRS-B and the original IRRS, several improvements were 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 (Utsey, 1999). 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 IRRS-B study. Moreover, Walsh and Betz's (1995) group-differences approach produced a larger effect for the IRRS-B than was evident in the original IRRS measure. 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 than the IRRS, but it is theoretically and psychometrically more robust than other similar measures, including. Utesy’s IRRS-B was chosen for this study because it addressed the socio-psychological metrics essential to how African Americans experience and process racism.

This study utilized the Perceived Injustice Questionnaire (PIQ) (Neumann, et al., 2021) instrument, which measures the perception of injustice using five subscales: emotional and cognitive consequences, injustice perception, injustice experience, revenge, and forgiveness (Neumann, et al., 2021). The scoring of the PIQ was 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.

To better understand the impact of injustice experiences on mental health, it was necessary to validly assess experiences of injustice with suitable instruments. Many of the common inventories to survey the perception of injustice were developed in Western societies (Neumann, et al., 2021). 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 or the questionnaire was developed to determine the belief in a just world, a concept that was also 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 (Neumann, et al., 2021).

Neumann, et al., (2021) aimed to develop a new inventory that collected information on how individuals categorize potentially unjust experiences, whether those affected their perception of justice in general, and how they coped with that perception. This was particularly relevant as it was assumed that one’s perception of injustice has an impact on various mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, somatoform disorder, PTSD and race-related stress. Trauma increases the likelihood of developing race-related stress conditions like PTSD and depression. But, the increased perception of injustice is most likely an additional contributor, according to research. One explanation for this would be the violation of the belief that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get (Neumann, et al., 2021). In addition to maintaining this belief with the experiences of injustice, depressive thinking patterns such as self-blame can develop. Furthermore, studies with torture survivors showed that the loss of the previously existing just world view could lead to distrust and sensitivity towards justice in general and can manifest itself in depressive symptoms.

Research shows that the perception of injustice is likely to increase through situations that are characterized by basic human rights violations. For these reasons, it seemed necessary to have an inventory that was widely used to approach people’s perception of injustice after experiencing 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 (Neumann, et al., 2021).

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. Moreover, I see policy, practitioner, clinical and research benefits in an instrument that explored injustice perceptions and their relevance for psychotherapy and social change. Neumann, et al., (2021) 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 a vulnerable group. A better planning and organization of psychotherapeutic treatment necessitated an inventory that explored 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 (Neumann, et al., 2021).

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, the PIQ developers aimed to sufficiently encompass the concept of perceived injustice in order to adapt it to a chosen target group accordingly. The existing justice and injustice inventories were reviewed (Neumann, et al., 2021).

Between May 2019 and October 2019, the PIQ developers conducted several focus groups and interviews with refugees and survivors of war and prosecution in Germany and Iraq. The PIQ developers aimed to identify feelings of injustice, an understanding of justice, and coping mechanisms. The topic was discussed with experts in psycho-traumatology, legal practice and reparations, and social work. Experts in Germany, Turkey, Israel, and Iraq were contacted (Neumann, et al., 2021).

Based on the interviews with affected individuals and experts, focus groups, literature research, and existing questionnaires, the PIQ developers developed a first preliminary item pool. Repetitive items were then deleted and the wording was adjusted. All these steps were taken in consultation with an expert in psycho-traumatology. This process resulted in 27 items for the questionnaire and further questions on each person (Neumann, et al., 2021).

Further questions inquired about demographics and whether injustice was experienced and what kind of injustice it was: injustice experiences based on gender, religion, ethnicity, political, sexual orientation, social injustice experiences, and experiences of physical, sexual, or psychological. 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 were also examined, as their emotional and possibly traumatic consequences can be passed on through generations. These questions were essential for both therapy and research. Persistent experiences of violence and injustice can affect the outcome of therapy (Neumann, et al., 2021). In addition, knowledge of past experiences provided clues that were used to find the right interventions for recommendations in this study.

For the first validation phase, the preliminary items were 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. This area is 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, ISIS troops conquered areas of Northern Iraq, using brutality against religious minorities such as the Yazidis. Around the city of Dohuk, there were 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 were still arriving. Although the PIQ developers’ sample were all students at the university, they were born and raised in the conflicted area of Northern Iraq. They lived through the Iraq war and part of them were members of the Yazidi or Christian minority. They were survivors of an ongoing crisis, although they were not diagnosed with PTSD (Neumann, et al., 2021).

A total of 38 students (42.69%) completed the questionnaire online. At that time, all participants were students at the *Institute for Psychotherapy and Psycho-traumatology* 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 personal experiences. Yet, it was 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) differed (Neumann, et al., 2021).

The PIQ was developed to improve the understanding of the perception of injustice and its impact on people’s health. No effort can be made to help people regain a sense of justice or shift their focus, unless it is known to what extent they perceive their own situation as wrong or unjust. The PIQ was intended to help trauma therapists in areas of war and crisis. It was meant to enable interventionists to conduct a differentiated analysis of the problem and to determine the focus of the psycho-therapeutic work to be done (Neumann, et al., 2021). Based on the PIQ, this research developed a focus on the perception of injustice, understanding injustice, and approaches to feelings of injustice. The PIQ was used as an introduction to the topic and as an assessment of its relevance.

Based on the literature research, it was assumed that people who had experienced more physical violence, people with severe physical trauma, were 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 gave the PIQ developer first indications that there were large differences in the perception of justice depending on the experiences one had in life. 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 were not normally distributed (Neumann, et al., 2021).

The PIQ was formulated in the English language so that it could be used as extensively as possible in a globally. 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 (Neumann, et al., 2021). This aspect was not a consideration for this study as it was conducted with African Americans in English. The sample population for PIQ validation knew English well and had been studying in English since their bachelor’s degrees and were used to working with English textbooks, questionnaires, and literature because there was not much material in Arabic and even less in Kurdish. Furthermore, English was the only common language of the sample, as Arabic and Kurdish, as well as various Kurdish dialects, were spoken in the region, which were not understood and spoken by all (Neumann, et al., 2021).

With the PIQ, the developers developed an inventory to determine both the relevance and perceptions of injustice among people in conflict areas or people in other parts of the world that have experienced injustice. Principal component analysis yielded a four-component solution with eigenvalues being the greater one. Cronbach's alpha for each scale was acceptable to satisfactory. Significant results of the Mann-Whitney U tests supported the developers’ assumptions of between-group differences on each of the subscales (emotional and cognitive consequences, injustice perception, injustice experience, revenge, and forgiveness). The PIQ was selected for this correlational study because of the researcher was interested in how race-related stress affected ones’ perception of injustice. The PIQ afforded the opportunity to correlate emotional and cognitive consequences, injustice perception, injustice experiences, ones; desire for revenge, and ones’ capacity to forgive.

The surveys to which participants responded consisted of a) The Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version (IRRS-B; Utsey, 1999; Appendix E), b) The Perceived Injustice Questionnaire (Neumann, et al., 2021; Appendix H).

Chapter Summary

The result that individuals with the attitude that things will generally be good and all right with the world are 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 were 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 explains the quantitative methodology to be employed to correlate the two variables of race-related stress and the perception of injustice. The correlational study can aid in determining if there is a possible relationship between the two study variables.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Middle-class African Americans experience race-related stress due to the influence of political ideologies which 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 is 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 purpose of this quantitative, correlational study will examine the potential relationship between race-related stress and the perception of injustice among middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN.

The research question emerged from the purpose statement. The hypotheses are 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.

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

Research Design

This quantitative study utilized 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 were used to gather and test data via Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation. The Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation was 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 were accessed via a secure and anonymous on-line survey. Data from the inventories were 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, 2019). Correlated data measures 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, et al., 2018). The Pearson’s *r* bivariate coefficient measured the covariance of two continuous variables with a scale ranging from -1 to +1. A general limitation of correlational research is 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 was essential to accurately analyze the findings of the study (Ong & Puteh, 2017). A qualitative methodological approach was not 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 was appropriate for this study because a review of archival data would be required, and this study focused on the need for current data to answer the research question.

Research Procedure

Recruitment was by email campaign in Chattanooga, TN. Potential participants received a recruitment letter via e-mail (see Appendix B) requesting participation in the research study. The target was middle-class African Americans from Chattanooga, TN, recruited between December 2023 and January 2024. Potential participants received an overview of the study and a consent form. Upon consent, participants were administered a survey via a confidential code and link to the on-line survey. The confidential code and link took participants to surveymonkey.com. The specific battery included 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 were informed that participation in the study could be ceased at any time. The survey included items to assess eligibility for study participants. Participants who did not meet the study criteria were not included. Criteria for exclusion as a study participant were 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 was informed that they would be administered an electronic survey that included questions about her/his experience of race-related stress and perception of injustice.

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

Participants

The target population for this study was middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN. The total population represented in the study was 60 middle-class African Americans in Chattanooga, TN. Convenience Sampling (Bell, et al., 2018) was 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 30 participants was attained. Sample size was calculated using G\*Power software (see Appendix A; Kent State University, 2019). Participants were secured from an email campaign (see Appendix B).

Demographics

Participants were 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 explored 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 were 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 utilized 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 was 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 utilized the Perceived Injustice Questionnaire (PIQ) (Neumann, et al., 2021) instrument, which measures the perception of injustice using five subscales: emotional and cognitive consequences, injustice perception, injustice experience, revenge, and forgiveness (Neumann, et al., 2021). The scoring of the PIQ was 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 responded consisted of a) The Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version (IRRS-B; Utsey, 1999; Appendix E), b) The Perceived Injustice Questionnaire (Neumann, et al., 2021; Appendix H).

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 were 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, et al., (2020) indicated that the Institutional Racism subscales have 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 were 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, et al., 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, et al., 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, et al., 2017).

PIQ.Perception of injustice was measured using Neumann, et al. (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, et al., 2021). Studies have indicated a moderate to strong correlation between perceived injustice and depression (Lynch, et al., 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, et al., 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 (Carriere, et al., 2020; Pham, et al., 2004; Sullivan, 2020). 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, et al., 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, et al., 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, et al., 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 was 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, et al., 2021).

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 granted, a summary of the purpose and participation requirements of the study and consent forms were provided to participants (see Appendix H for the consent form and Appendix G for the purpose and participation form). Data was collected from 62 participants over four weeks using on-line surveys. A confidential code and link took 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, provided information for correlational examination with minimal risk to participants. Participants did not complete the surveys anonymously to ensure that data from each survey could be 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 to participate in the study 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 will be stored on a flash drive for three years. The information was 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 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 were 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 were ready for collection.

Data Preparation

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

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical computations were 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 were evaluated. These processes supported the reliability of the study.

The Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation was 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 was utilized to calculate the composite (mean) scores for the race-related stress variable and the perception of injustice variable. The coefficients were analyzed to investigate if a significant relationship existed between the variables. The goal of the study was to discover if a relationship exists between the variables. A one-tailed test of significance was used to test the relationship between the variables (Stockburger, 2016). A .05 significance level was utilized to analyze the results.

Reliability and Validity

The sample for the study consisted of 62 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 yielded a representative sample.

Construct validity from a systematic approach maintained the validity of the study using appropriate methods for quantitative research (Mislevy, 2007). 62 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 60 participants to return a signed consent form.

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

Cronbach’s alpha for the study exhibited 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 demonstrated 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, et al., 2021).

Ethical Procedure

To protect research participants, the National Institutes of Health (n.d.) established ethical guidelines. The research was conducted responsibly, adhering to ethical principles of respect for participants, autonomy, protection of vulnerable populations, beneficence, and justice (Ross, et al., 2018). Professional integrity was paramount when conducting the research (Walton, et al., 2019). The research conformed with applicable federal, state, and local laws concerning the protection of human subjects. To prevent perceptions of bias while conducting research, epistemic objectivity was 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, provided information for correlational examination with minimal risk to participants. Participants did not complete the surveys anonymously to ensure that data from each survey could be 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.

Once approval to conduct the study was granted, potential participants received a recruitment letter (see Appendix B). Consent forms included a summary of the purpose and participation requirements of the study and were distributed via e-mail. The informed consent form acknowledged participant rights and the research process. The research was founded on evidence and unbiased methods of inquiry to best satisfy standards of verification (Urquhart, et al., 2010).

The feasible correlational research study had reasonable time limits and a budget with minimal ethical issues. Participants’ test results will remain confidential. Study participants received individualized survey results upon completion of the inventories. Data are 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 is included. Research design elements and rationale were detailed. Research and data analysis were sequenced. Research procedures, population and sample selection, instrumentation, data collection, data preparation, data analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical procedures 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 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 H for the consent form and Appendix G for the purpose and participation form). 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 |

|  |
| --- |
| Table 1 continued  *Frequency Counts for the Demographic Variables*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **Variable** **Category**  ***N***  **%**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 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.

Table 1 displays the breakdown of demographic variables and the categorization of the demographic variables. Table 1 displays the frequency counts for the demographic variables. The frequency is the number of participants (N = 62) who responded in their manner to the descriptive demographic category items. The percentage is the percentage of the total participants that gave response to the particular descriptive demographic category items.

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.

Table 2 displays the psychometric characteristics for the scale scores. These are the psychological aspects of the scale. **M** is the mean which is the average score for all study participants for that specific scale being 3.32 for Race-Related Stress and 2.67 for Perception of Injustice for this study. **SD** is the standard deviation. This is the standard deviation of spread of the scores around the mean being 0.75 for Race-Related Stress and 0.44 for Perception of Injustice. Both being less than 1 for this study. A small standard deviation indicates that responses are closely typed and close to the mean where a large deviation suggests some variation. **Skewness** is the extent that the curve deviates to the left or to the right. Skewness for this study for both scales were in acceptable range of -1 and +1 at -0.03 for Race-Related Stress and 0.61 for Perception of Injustice. **Kurtosis** has to do with the distribution of data around an average. A kurtosis of 0 would indicate a perfectly flat normal curve. The kurtosis for Race-Related Stress was -0.95. The Kurtosis for Perception of Injustice was 0.22 for this study. These low numbers suggest skinny tails and a distribution closer concentrated towards the average. **Min** is the minimum. This is lowest score any participant scored from the sample population for each scale. The Min for Race-Related Stress was 1.68. The Min for Perception of Injustice was 1.79 for this study. **Max** is the maximum. This is the highest score any participant scored from the sample population for each scale. The Max for Race-Related Stress was 4.68. The Max for Perception of Injustice was 3.92 for this study. ***a*** is the Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient which measures the extent of internal reliability. A Cronbach’s alpha greater than .07 is considered good. The Cronbach’s alpha for Race-Related Stress was .90. The Cronbach’s Alpha for Perception of Injustice was .85 for this study indicating strong internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951).

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).

In Figure 1 the scatter plot demonstrates the connection between the two variables of race-related stress and perceived injustice total score. It shows a moderate correlation (*r* (60) = .40) between the two variables. The R2 is the coefficient of determination. This is the amount of variance that is accounted for by this particular model. This means there could many reasons why someone has more or less race-related stress which affects their perception of injustice. Race-related Stress has 16% (.40 x .40 = .16) of the variation and explaining power. This means that 84% of participants high or low perceived injustice score is due to other factors than race-related stress. The Pearson’s correlation between the two variables in the footnote is .40. .40 denotes a moderate correlation. Figure 1 demonstrates a moderate positive correlation between the two variables which is significant at the .001 level, the *p-*value. The *p-*value is the extent to which the researcher has drawn a correct conclusion in the population. In the research sample of N=62 it was determined that there would be less than a 1 chance in 1000 if it can be said that what was found cannot be true for the entire population.

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.

Table 3 is the normality statistics for the scale scores. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to calculate normality for the two measures. The Shapiro-Wilk *p-*value for Race-related Stress was .18. The Shapiro-Wilk *p-*value for Perception of Injustice was .09 for this study. Both values were above .05 indicating the scales were normally distributed.

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 moderate positive correlation was found between stress and perceived 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 moderate. 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.

Table 4 displays the Pearson correlation between the two variable of race-related stress and perception of injustice. The correlation is .40 which is significant at the .001 level suggesting there is a positive correlation. Those participants that had higher levels of perceived injustice also had higher levels of race-related stress.

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 were be compared to the literature, conclusions and implications were drawn, and a series of recommendations were delineated.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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 62 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 moderate 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 and Palmer, 2015; Driscoll, et al., 2015; Hunter, et al., 2017; Utsey, et al., 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, et al., 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 (Carriere et al., 2020; Sullivan, 2020; Trost et al., 2017). 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 were precise in the 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 disagreed that a single variable like race-related stress would serve to derail an entire population (Sowell, 2019; Sowell, 1960). Sowell argued 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 Loury would also agree and disagree with the study results: that a single factor could have been responsible for so much causation (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 (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 (Loury, 2021; 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 limited 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

Stone (2012) recognized equity has many new 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 (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. This position 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 be commingled. Actual racism will never be eradicated by society if everything is racist. The war against racism is 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 societies 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 middle-class African Americans, the study demographic, and the field of social research. The study 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 beyond. A moderate effort of study of American history could 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 unlimited time 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. Tailor 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.

Implications For Future Research

The results of this study present noteworthy implications for research on the experiences of middle-class African Americans. First, with regard to contributions to contemporary research, this study added to the literature that explores the experiences of African Americans in Chattanooga, TN, using the Critical Race Theory framework. This study investigated new relationships among variables that have been previously studied, but in the context of a c correlational context, in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of middle-class African American’s perception of injustice when faced with race-related stress. Future researchers may consider a qualitative re-evaluation of the concept of race-related stress given the use of social media by individuals and corporations, institutions, and public versus private forms of engagement.

Second, the Perceived Injustice Questionnaire (PIQ) was developed and validated with participants from the Middle East in a war-torn environment. There were no studies directly examining the influence of the race-related stress on the attitudes, mental health, and activism activities of middle-class the African American populations and their perception of injustice. This study extended the understanding of the effects of racism and capture the unique experiences and feelings about the perception of injustice. While the timing of data collection presented challenges, the study also acquires a unique temporal snapshot in a time of presidential campaigning. Future studies utilizing mixed-methods or qualitative analysis to explore the experiences of middle-class African Americans during the Trump/Harris presidential campaigns could also provide a richer and deeper narrative and understanding of this sociopolitical era and its effect on race-related stress and the perception of injustice.

Third, longitudinal studies may provide valuable insight into the long-term effects national political campaigning and the socio-political environment may have on the psychosocial state of middle-class African Americans during the election cycle. Future studies comparing middle-class African Americans to other ethnic and racial groups who have and have not experienced racism in their lifetimes may also be of value to the counseling psychology, social sciences, and race relations.

There are also key implications for clinical practice and other institutional interactions with African American and other ethnic populations. Coaches, councilors, therapists and policy makers should note the well-established relationships between race-related stress and worsened mental health outcomes, the intuitive relationships between sociopolitical attitudes and mental well-being, and the potential for varying relationships among social attitudes and mental health outcomes. Clinical exploration to facilitate critical consciousness, discussion of sociopolitical events, and empowerment are beneficial to African Americans, as will culturally appropriate interventions, coping, and support, for example, self-care, compassion, and community building to encourage mental well-being and buffer against emotional distress that may result from the sociopolitical environment. It is important to understand individual and collective circumstances, validate their experiences, and provide support aligned with their values. Coaches, councilors, and therapists should explore, with their clients, the ways in which their racial centrality influences their experience of race-related stress and their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses. Coaches, councilors, and therapists should make space for discussions of how their African American clients are affected by and respond to systemic oppression and ongoing social injustice.

The results of this study may advise community leaders directly of the effects of race-related stress and sociopolitical flux on mental well-being for African Americans. This may indicate a need for greater resources and spaces for African Americans (more staff, and mental health clinicians; funding for culturally informed policies and support around organizations and various forms of activism). Coaches, councilors, and therapists, particularly those working with African Americans, should also be aware of and sensitive and responsive to the impact of race-related stress and sociopolitical events on the perception of injustice. Coaches, councilors, therapists and other stakeholders who interact with African Americans should also note that race-related stress does not necessarily impact mental health in any particular direction. Future studies should deepen the exploration of the nuances of racial identity and mental health in Black populations.

Finally, there is 16% expandability for race-related stress being a moderate influence on the study population’s perception of injustice: the coefficient of determination or the percent of variance accounted for. This is the amount of variance that is accounted for by this particular study’s model. This means there could many reasons why someone has more or less race-related stress which affects their perception of injustice. Race-related Stress has 16% (.40 x .40 = .16) of the variation and explaining power. This means that 84% of participants high or low perceived injustice score is due to other factors than race-related stress. Future researchers should use this research as a catalyst to further examine the effect race-related stress has on the perception of injustice.

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

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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: INDEX OF RACE-RELATED STRESS-BRIEF VERSION

**(IRRS-B; UTSEY, 1999)**

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 have 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 select 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 select 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 same crime committed by a Black person is portrayed as savagery, and the Black person who committed it, as an animal.

2. Salespeople/clerks did not say thank you or show other forms of courtesy and respect (e.g., put 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 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.

5. You have observed that White kids who commit violent crimes are portrayed as “boys being boys,” while Black kids who commit similar crimes are wild animals.

6. You seldom hear or read anything positive about Black people on radio, TV, in newspapers, or history books.

7. While shopping at a store the salesclerk assumed that you couldn’t afford certain items (e.g., 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 part of being Black.

9. You were treated with less respect and courtesy that Whites and other non-Blacks while in a store, restaurant, or other business establishment.

10. You were passed over for an important project although you were more qualified and 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 as them; whether it was a restaurant, theater, or other place of business.

12. You have observed the police treat Whites/non-Blacks with more respect and dignity than they do Blacks.

13. 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.

14. While shopping at a store, or when attempting to make a purchase, you were ignored as if 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 Whites/non-Blacks due to their race.

16. You have heard reports of White people/non-Blacks who have committed crimes, and in an 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 abusers, rapists, muggers, 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 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 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 a desire to be White or to have 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 needed things explained to you slowly or numerous times.

22. You were refused an apartment or other housing; you suspect it was because you’re Black.

Appendix F: PERCEIVED INJUSTICE QUESTIONNAIRE

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

Appendix G: 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 H: 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.comTelephone:+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 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_