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LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF AMERICA:
A DESCRIPTIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF BLACK AMERICAN
RACIAL CONSCIENTIZATION

By

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BSSW, Spalding University, 2016
MSW, Spalding University, 2018

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Raymond A. Kent School of Social Work and Family Science of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

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In Social Work

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University of Louisville
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May 2022

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A Dissertation Approved on

April 1, 2022

by the following Dissertation Committee:

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Dr. Armon Perry

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedication to my ancestors
Known and unknown
I pray I am your wildest dreams manifest

And

To my husband
James Eric Young
Whose love and support helped me realize my own wildest dreams

And

To my children
IsaiYah and Ifé
Who I charge to go confidently in the direction of their own wildest dreams

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I would like to take the time to thank Dr. Shawnise Martin Miller for being the chair of my dissertation committee. Your support throughout my doctoral process kept me going when I wanted to give up. I would also like to thank Drs. Lesley Harris and Arian Archuleta for providing invaluable methodological and conceptual support—not only as part of the dissertation, but also as part of my entire doctoral learning process. Thank you, Dr. Armon Perry, for coming to my aid without question, and thank you Dr. Mary Shelly Thomas for helping me to establish myself in the foundation of conscientization.

To my co-creators. Thank you so much for sharing your stories. Your vulnerability was not taken lightly by me. Your expressions of pain, fear, heartbreak, and crushing defeat as well as hope, joy, and triumph were indispensable to my work as a researcher and have contributed greatly to my growth as a person. Thank you for opening your heart and for providing your candor.

ABSTRACT
LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF AMERICA:
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RACIAL CONSCIENTIZATION

Kyee Altranice Young

April 1, 2022

This transcendental phenomenological dissertation is an examination of the lived experience of Black American Racial Conscientization (RCZ). Worded differently, this descriptive phenomenological study investigated how Black Americans learn to perceive racial oppression and the various means by which they resist it. Fourteen in-depth interviews from within the epoché were conducted. The sample was heterogeneous with respect to age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, career path, marital and parental status, sex, home and current state, and religious affiliation. The sample was homogeneous regarding citizenship status and gender identity. Data explication manifested 97 different codes that were then grouped into five situated narratives: Impactful Learning, Descriptions of Racism, Consequences, Critical Consciousness, and Resisting. In addition to detailing these situated narratives, a composite textural description and various composite structural descriptions are presented. Implications of key findings, connections to prior research, and recommendations for practice and future research are discussed.

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AUTHOR NOTE

LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF AMERICA: A DESCRIPTIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF BLACK AMERICAN RACIAL CONSCIENTIZATION

“America knows no other language, but violence”

The title of my dissertation is based on a quote from Bakari, a co-creator in my study. I

believe his sentiments encapsulate the experience and understanding of most co-creators and his complex critique on the language of America, which you will read in chapter 4, was particularly impactful to me. Violence can be physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, or cultural. This dissertation is an exploration of how Black Americans learn to comprehend and resist the language of America

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Racism is complex. Volumes have been written explicating and synthesizing the intricate webs of systematic and interpersonal privileges its existence grants to White Americans and the barriers it creates for Black Americans. Therefore, it cannot be denied that Black Americans do suffer in every area of life due to racism (Kendi, 2019).

Economically, the median income of Black Americans is \$35,398, which is \$18,259 less than the general population. The poverty rate for Black Americans is 26.2%, which is 11.4% above the national average. The unemployment rate for Black Americans is 5.9%, which is 2.4% higher than White Americans (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

Individually, Black Americans have experienced the psychological and physiological effects of living under perpetual racism since the beginning of chattel slavery. Such effects include the loss of loved ones, displacement, being parented by distressed adults, loss of culture, lack of education, poor physical environment, and being socialized to violence (Joshi & O'Donnell, 2003).

These events describe a war-torn country, yet they are the same events Black American children encounter disproportionately in modern times. A secondary analysis found Black American children had 44% higher odds of foster care placement when compared to White children with the same risk factors, and proposed that Black American racial identity is a significant predictor of foster care services (Knott & Donovan, 2010). Many Black American children become permanent fixtures within the system and experience disconnection from their biological families, communities, cultural beliefs, values and practices (Dove & Powers, 2018); this causes significant

stress to the children. Note, abuse has strong effects on the mind and body of children and adolescents, though the psychological effects of such on social functioning can indeed be buffered through a strong social network of support (Lamis et al., 2014).

The Black community is sicker, has less quality of life, and dies faster than their White counterparts (Xu et al., 2018). The substantial amount of stress experienced by Black Americans literally shortens their life by wearing out the body. This leads to heart disease, diabetes, and nervous system disorders, as well as encouraging them to adopt unhealthy coping mechanisms (Weitz, 2017). The burden of chronic stress often forces many changes in personal behaviors such as tobacco use, overeating, alcohol dependence, and difficulty sleeping; these changes result from the brain trying to defend itself against a depressive reality (McEwen, 2008). It is not clear whether prolonged stress for many months or years may have irreversible effects on the brain's ability to regulate its morphology and chemistry (McEwen, 2008). Therefore, consideration should be taken for the *Cumulative Stress Burden* on the brain and body (Thoits, 2010 as cited by Weitz, 2017). When the cumulative stresses of all historical and present burdens are summed, one can begin to understand the perpetual feeling of hopelessness that has become integrated into the DNA of individual Black Americans (Thomson-Miller & Fegan, 2007).

In corollary, consider that bystanders to repeated violence in childhood and adolescence may be just as impacted as those who actually experienced the violence (Janson et al., 2009). Therefore, if children are being socialized to violence, and acting upon that socialization, the mere witnessing of their violent acts upsets the peace of the community. Additionally, Utsey and Constantine (2008) found that racism-related stress

did increase the strength of poverty-related risk factors and subjective well-being within a Black American community. Also, Carrera and Flowers (2018) explicated how colorblind policies overlain explicitly racist foundations resulted in a majority of Lowndes County, Alabama residents living without a properly functioning legal, basic sanitation infrastructure.

Sharkey and Friedson (2019) found that the recent drop in homicide rates among Black Americans decreased the life expectancy gap (between White and Black males) by 17% and had a reduction of potential life lost by 1,156 years for every 100,000 Black men. These numbers demonstrate how our country is diminished by the squashing of potential and the quelling of intellect, passion, and savvy Black Americans can offer. Businesses lose qualified candidates to hire, families suffer from a lack of income, prisons are overrun and become drains on American tax dollars. The dominant in an unjust, hierarchical system of societal racism also face White empathy, guilt, and fear (Todd et al., 2011). However, these undesirable feelings held by the dominant do not end racism; they merely serve as justification to further separate from the reminders of such unearned benefit—Black people (Reeves, 2017). Therefore, while it may seem that some gain in a racist society, in reality everyone loses (Tatum, 2017).

In this chapter, I will briefly define racism and discuss how conscientization (CZ), a theory that seeks to help oppressed people conceptualize their oppression and effectively fight against it, can and should be an intervention against racism. However, I will also discuss how gaps in the understanding of CZ relate to gaps in the understanding of racial conscientization (RCZ), which slows the progress of effective interventions to assuage racism in modern times. I will discuss how a phenomenological study can

alleviate these issues in conceptualization and the impact that alleviation can have on future race work. I will then discuss the purpose of my study and provide the aims of my research before concluding this chapter with a conscience summary.

Problem Statement

In this section, I will briefly define the dominant problem of racism based upon a review of the current empirical literature on race. I will then discuss the magnitude and scope of racism from the purviews of housing, education, police brutality, medical care, and conceptualization or measurement. After that, I will discuss the affected population and the recent push of anti-racism campaigns in schools of social work. Next, I will discuss the main gaps in the literature. Last, I will detail how a Husserlian phenomenological study can begin to alleviate the dominant problem by providing a definition of racial conscientization (RCZ) rooted in data.

Dominant Problem

There is no simple answer to “solving” the social problem of racism. However, through conscientization, we can begin to have a comprehensive understanding of the means by which it manifests and perseveres. As will be further discussed in chapter 2, racism is the conscious, *unconscious*, or *tacit* belief that one’s own race is superior predicated upon a system of socialization and power that *cannot* be avoided and which all are affected by, which results in the privileges of wealth, anonymity, racial comfort, and universality for one group of citizens (White Americans) and prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against another group of citizens (Black Americans).

The first portion of the definition pertains to the notion of intent. As DiAngelo (2018) noted, White individuals have a collection of assumptions that make up their

racial frame. Two of those assumptions are that they (the White person) is *free from race* and *racism must be intentional*. However, all people in the United States, or who come in contact with U.S. culture, are socialized into a racist society (DiAngelo, 2012). Therefore, none are free from the burden of race or racism. For White Americans, this means they are all socialized to be racists, because they have all been socialized into a society that values Whiteness above all else, and this value is deeply internalized whether one cares for it to be or not. The constant overt and subliminal messaging is inescapable and creates the very assumptions many White people have that serve to justify racism, or racist behavior, in their minds. White people can never not be racist in the same way an addict can never not be an addict. Just as the addict will be in recovery for the remainder of their lives, constantly battling the urge to use, an anti-racist White person will be in recovery from the system of socialization for the remainder of their days, constantly battling relapse into common racist patterns of existing. One might then ask, “Why not study White people?” The answer is simple: because they lie (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; DiAngelo, 2011; Hill, 2017).

White people live within a White racial frame of reference where they believe they are *good people*, and good people are not racist, so they are not racist (DiAngelo, 2012). Setting aside the difference between being not-racist and anti-racist, most White people do exhibit racist behaviors and hold racist beliefs (Kendi, 2019; Tatum, 2017). However, they actively oppose the *backtalk* of the racially subjugated groups they oppress to maintain this delusion of themselves and loved ones as good and moral people (DiAngelo, 2018; Wing Sue, 2016). Additionally, studies have shown that if White people are asked if they have Black friends, they will overwhelmingly say they do

(Bonilla-Silva, 2018). However, if they are first asked to list their 5–10 closest friends, and then were asked how many of those people are of color, the answer will almost always be zero (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Likewise, if they are asked about the last 10 books read, sermons they listened to, or mentors in their education or career and then asked if any of these people are of color, the answer will almost always be an emphatic zero (Hill, 2017). White people lie to themselves and each other about their levels of racism and are therefore not a reliable source of understanding the incidence or manifestations of racism, let alone how to redistribute power more equitably. What would be more effective would be to empower the racially oppressed populations who have a clearer understanding of White people than White people themselves (Sue, 2015).

This does not mean people of color, specifically Black Americans, do not have a lifelong battle against their own internalized racism. Just as anti-racist White people must intentionally and carefully consider their thinking around race matters, Black Americans must constantly antagonize the internalization of these myths. Black Americans must battle daily to be anti-colorists, anti-featurists, and anti-texturists to recognize privileges where they exist, to deflect exceptionalism in success, and to critically consider the macro and micro contributors to the predicament of their communities.

Once one moves past the denial of being influenced by racist socialization, they can then begin to understand how every system in society is set up to benefit White people while disadvantaging people of color, as well as how these systems work together to create a matrix of oppression that effectively stratifies society. Conscientization (CZ), also known as consciousness rising, is a critical educational theory developed by Brazilian language and education philosopher, Paulo Freire (1970), that explicates this

exact process. This theory describes how one begins to become aware of, learns to identify, and gains the tools to examine oppression to such an extent that they become moved to act against it. CZ can be applied to any system of oppression, but is especially useful in describing the process one undergoes as they learn of racism and its implications. Since CZ is a general theory that seeks to explain hegemony, its direct application to racism can be titled *racial conscientization* (RCZ).

In theory, RCZ can be understood as the process of becoming aware and learning to identify the intricacies of institutionalized and interpersonal racism as a whole, or a specific facet thereof, and the subsequent action to assuage or obliterate racism and its effects on Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color (BIPOC). Through the RCZ process, one can begin to understand that racial stratification is not by chance or merit, but by choice—the choice to preference one race over another, to offer opportunities to one race while denying them to another, or to offer the same opportunities to one race at a higher cost than to another. Once one realizes they are either benefiting from or being disadvantaged by the system of racism, whether they want to participate in that system or not, they can begin to act against the system in meaningful and impactful ways (Harro, 2013).

However, the dominant problem within conscientization (CZ) research is a lack of clear operational definition. Though CZ is represented in the academic literature via extensive research utilizing various qualitative and quantitative approaches, there currently does not exist a clear and widely accepted operationalization of CZ. Factually, conceptualization of CZ has been a source of great debate since it was first introduced into the English academic literature in 1970 (Freire, 1970). There are scholars who

conceptualize individuals as having a general critical consciousness (Shin et al., 2016; Shin et al., 2018) or believe that CZ in one domain of oppression (i.e., racism) can be *added* to CZ in another domain of oppression (i.e., sexism) to calculate a total critical consciousness (Diemer et al., 2017). There are some who conceptualize and measure CZ as a purely intellectual pursuit (Jemal, 2017; Shin et al., 2016; Shin et al., 2018), and there are others who conceptualize and measure CZ as both intellectual and action oriented (Diemer et al., 2017; McWhirter and McWhirter, 2016; Thomas et al., 2014). Some conceptualize CZ as being one and the same as critical consciousness and praxis (Diemer et al., 2017; McWhirter and McWhirter, 2016), while others recognize distinctions between the various concepts (Roberts, 2007). Some view CZ as occurring through a set pattern of stages (Alschuler, 1980; Smith, 1976) while some reject the notion that CZ is a stage theory at all (Roberts, 1996).

These desperate conceptualizations of conscientization undermine construct validity within critical consciousness (CC) measures. This undermining perpetuates mis-conceptualization and promulgates confusion amongst scholars. As MacKenzie et al. (2011) stated,

First, a poor construct definition leads to (1) confusion about what the construct does and does not refer to, and the similarities and differences between it and other constructs that already exist in the field; (2) indicators that may either be deficient because the definition of the focal construct is not adequately fleshed out, or contaminated because the definition overlaps with other constructs that already exist in the field; and (3) invalid conclusions about relationships with

other constructs that later have to be rejected because the indicators of the focal construct are not really capturing what they are intended to capture. (p. 295)

MacKenzie et al. (2011) opined that the lack of clear construct domain definitions is due to the inability of most researchers to fully organize conceptualization of the latent variable. This then leads to the construction of *formative* measure being presented as *reflective* ones. A formative measure is one in which the items inadvertently form the construct being measured (Bollen & Lennox, 1991). Conversely, a reflective measure is one in which the items being measured are reflective of a succinctly defined latent construct (MacKenzie et al., 2011). As the majority of scale development procedures assume that indicators are reflective of latent constructs, they are also applied to latent constructs with formative indicators, which can undermine construct validity in the exact ways previously mentioned (MacKenzie et al., 2011). Due to the lack of clear construct definitions by the scholars who have validated critical consciousness measures, the field of conscientization had been unable to unify and progress toward a common goal. This problem necessitates a return to qualitative inquiry, as there cannot be appropriate quantitative inquiry without first building a basis of understanding.

The lack of clear definition for CZ becomes exacerbated when applied to race work. Not having a clear operationalization of racial conscientization (RCZ) creates major obstacles in understanding how racism is experienced, how it is perpetuated, how it changes over time, and effective interventions to obliterate it. How can we fight against something we don't even understand? "What is the essence of racial conscientization?" is a question we still do not have the answer to.

Affected Population

According to a 2015 report by the Census Bureau (release number CB15-113), as of July 1, 2014 there were 45.7 million Black Americans in the United States, with a projected growth to 74.5 million by 2060. The Census Bureau reported Millennials, defined as those born between 1982 and 2000, now number 83.1 million, exceeding the 75.4 million number of Baby Boomers. Therefore, Millennials are now a full one quarter of the nation's population and 44.2 percent of them, roughly 37 million Americans, identify as belonging to a minority group. The Census Bureau also reported that for the first time in history, children under the age of five (now age ten) are more than 50% minority. The issue of racism affects every single person in American society and globally. However, with numbers as widespread as the ones provided above, it is clear to see that in the U.S., more than half of the country is directly affected. Most affected, however, is the 14% of the country identified as Black American.

However, just because Black Americans are most affected by racism doesn't mean every Black person has an understanding of race and racism. Cross's (1978; 1979; 1994) Nigrescence describes the process Black Americans must go through to don a positive Black identity within a racist society. Many Black people never complete the transition from internalization of racism and self-loathing to positive self-affirmation and intersectional Black identity. Thus, Black people fall upon a spectrum of racial understanding that is contingent upon their intersections in identity and the experiences those identities garner.

In corollary, DiAngelo (2018) argued that most White people live in a state of racial comfort that blinds them to the realities of race. As if in agreement with DiAngelo,

Helms's (1984; 1995) White Racial Identity Theory states that White people must choose to accept their Whiteness and its implications in a racist society. This is known as the *Disintegration Stage* and describes the struggle White people have with conforming to White social norms that expect them to dehumanize Black peoples. If they choose not to move past the fear and anger of their privilege, they could be overtly and/or covertly hostile toward Black peoples indefinitely (Helms, 1984). Therefore, racism is not a Black issue in the same manner that domestic and sexual violence against women is not a women's issue. Just as men have to be taught to value and respect women, White people must be taught to value and respect Black people.

This is supposed to be part of the call of social workers, and its dedication is certainly evident in the many anti-racism campaigns found in schools of social work as of late. Even the 2020 and 2021 Council of Social Work Education conferences were aimed at anti-racism. However, how can we as social workers get past catchy slogans and talk to the action of dismantling systems of oppression? How can we educate our students about racism and racial issues in a manner that catalyzes their activism? What can we do in the classroom that will bring substantive change in the real world? Unfortunately, the literature doesn't provide much guidance.

Phenomenological Study

A phenomenological study into the lifeworld of CZ would be a significant contribution to the literature. A qualitative approach is more suited for the extrapolation of the complex concepts presently within and associated with CZ. As Giorgi (2009) stated,

One can measure the fact that one is intensely happy or intensely anxious, but the intensity dimension tells us very little about the difference between happiness and anxiety. Usually psychologist let an everyday level of understanding or personal experience fill in where more precise and systematic understanding and relationship should be considered. This is the gap that qualitative research tries to satisfy. (p. 79)

Thusly, when trying to describe the minute differences between the constructs that CZ has been entangled with, qualitative research is better suited. Giorgi (2009) also stated, “Of course ultimately the quantitative approach will have to be integrated, but that can hardly happen where qualitative approaches do not exist” (p. 79). A descriptive phenomenological study of CZ could consolidate the disparate conceptualizations prevalent in the literature by providing a unified definition rooted in data. However, due to the specificity of hegemonic systems when studying CZ, only one system can be examined at a time.

Racism is a suitable starting point because its experience is divergent from all the other oppressed experiences (Altranice & Mitchell, n.d.), and because most measures of CZ and Critical Consciousness (CC) have a racism scale or deal with a specific racial group (Diemer et al., 2015; Diemer et al., 2017; McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016; Shin et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2014). However, as aforementioned, there exists even less support for a definition and articulation of RCZ in the literature than general CZ. Only one study that examined the RCZ process from the initial awareness of racial oppression to the point of concerted action was found, and the CZ and CC conceptualizations were murky at best. Therefore, another investigation into the phenomenon of RCZ could

significantly progress the building and evaluation of CC measures by providing reflective questions extrapolated from data.

It is important to note, since the focus of CZ is toward the oppressed group, that it is most appropriate to commence RCZ studies in the United States with Black Americans, as they are the antithesis to the dominant White group (DiAngelo, 2018). A study of the RCZ process for Black Americans has a significant impact on the general study of CZ. A study of this focus would provide a stable comparison foundation from which to study the dominant racial population. Comparisons between racial populations within the investigation of RCZ could provide a more comprehensive composite definition for the construct, which would progress the reflective measurement of CZ stemming from more accurate conceptualizations and applications of CZ qualitatively.

Study Impact

There are significant gaps in the literature at the intersection of CZ and Black populations. As will be detailed in chapter 2, an analysis of the scant publications on the matter reveal that CZ was only applied in three ways: application of the overarching theory of conscientization (CZ) or concept of critical consciousness (CC), imbedding a cherry-picked aspect of CZ or CC into another theory or research procedure, and applying problem posing education (PPE) to an intervention. Though more of the articles found were qualitative than any other approach, only one had a phenomenological *component* (Lewandowski et al., 2011). There then exists in the literature a lack of clear conceptual or operational definition related to RCZ, let alone one grounded in data. This lack of consensus on what RCZ actually is is the main gap in the literature and presents a significant problem for future research.

In addition to addressing gaps in the literature, a study investigating the racial conscientization (RCZ) process for Black Americans has significant import to the highly charged social and political environment of today's America. As previously explained, racism is a system of privileges for one group and the denial of those privileges for another. There is difficulty in measuring the incidence and prevalence of racism due to the lack of concrete or indisputable methods for quantifiably recording racism. However, the prevalence can be gleaned through the recorded effects of racism on Black Americans through their given narratives, statistics, and other proxy empirical evidence. When taking all this into account, it is clear that the incidence and prevalence of racism is still quite high in the United States of America. Though there are many studies on racism in the empirical literature, understanding racism as the landscape of racial aggression shifts from overt to covert, and back again, is still needed and important.

Racism manifests itself differently depending upon time, location, and context. For example, the election of President Barack Obama saw many claiming America was now *post-racial*. However, the pendulum swung the other way with the election of Donald Trump. All of a sudden, men were marching with tiki torches against the removal of a confederate general's statue, a counter-protester was murdered by a man who drove his car into a crowd, and the president was insisting that there were "very fine people on both sides" of the protest and that Robert E. Lee was "a great general" (Kessler, 2020). One could and should wonder how racism might appear next, now that President Joseph Biden is in office and there is a vaccine for COVID-19 being distributed.

Black Americans endure systemic and interpersonal racism that has implications across every aspect of their lives (Kendi, 2019). A comprehensive investigation into the

experiences that either catalyze or halt the RCZ process is invaluable. The précis of my argument is this: it seems with the increase in national protest and unrest around the country, Black people are either becoming more aware of their oppression or are less able to tolerate it—both of which are characteristic of the CZ process and in need of investigation.

Descriptive phenomenology can elucidate what mechanisms are currently operating, because it is oriented toward describing and defining a phenomenon, of which racial conscientization is. Completion of this study could provide important data that can contribute to the development and validation of reflective measures. In the next section, I will further elaborate on the rationale and importance of this study. I will also provide the research aims and questions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this Husserlian Phenomenological study is to explore, define, and describe the phenomenon of racial conscientization (RCZ) among Black Americans. By phenomenologically interviewing Black Americans who have experienced resisting racism, the phenomenon of racial conscientization can be illuminated and holistically clarified. Portions of the knowledge gained in this study could be reasonably extrapolated and transferred to the RCZ process of other ethnic and racial minorities. Additionally, this study can act to re-establish a starting point for future inquiry into the applications of CZ toward Black populations and racial issues. With clear conceptualization of RCZ, educators and practitioners alike can begin to operationalize the concept constructively. Operationalization can lead to development, testing, and eventual integration of best practices into social work classrooms and community programs. These best practices can

initiate a lifelong RCZ process for students, professors, clients, and practitioners. This study commences bridging the gap in knowledge and experience between teachers and learners, or practitioners and clients. The focus of this study is on defining the concept of Black American RCZ, exploring its invariant structures and themes, and exploring why Black Americans have a continuous catalyst to racial conscientization.

Research Aims

The aims of this study are as follows:

1. To discover the invariant noematic and noetic properties of Black American racial conscientization with particular emphasis on elucidating its catalysts.
2. To provide a textural-structural synthesis of meanings and essences related to Black American racial conscientization that act to define the phenomena.

OR

To uncover the intra-structural and inter-structural variabilities of Black American racial conscientization that serve to define the phenomena.

Summary

In this chapter, I briefly discussed how Black people are affected by racism, the comprehension issues around race work, and how conscientization can attenuate the lack of racial understanding that slows effective racial intervention. I discussed the issues in racial conscientization conceptualization that justify returning to qualitative study in both the domains of racism and conscientization. I also discussed the appropriateness of the phenomenological approach in clarifying and defining how racism manifests and persists in modern times. In the next chapter, I will further detail how racism affects Black people

and I will discuss the existing literature at intersection of Black peoples and conscientization.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will begin by reviewing recent literature pertaining to racism and racial disparities within the context of the United States. Housed within this discussion will be a comprehensive definition of racism, followed by brief examples of racism in housing, education, policing, and medicine. I will then move to a review of all the conscientization literature focused on Black populations in the United States and abroad. Particularly, I will focus on how conscientization was applied and the results of these studies. Last, I will discuss gaps in the literature that support the necessity for the study at hand.

Racism

In this section, I will be defining and discussing racism. I will be providing and problematizing the prevalent definition of racism. I will then recapitulate the better, more nuanced, definition produced in chapter 1. Last, I will discuss systemic racism from the purviews of hyper-segregation, education, police brutality, and medical care.

Interpersonal Racism

According to the online version of the *New Oxford American Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2015), racism is defined as “prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one’s own race is

superior.” Most Americans do think of racism as the belief that one’s own race is superior to others and the consequent *intentional* action of prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism that results from this belief. However, this definition is incomplete, as it ignores the presence of power—or the imbalance of it—between interpersonal interactions of people from dominant and subordinate groups. This definition assumes people of color have the same power and resources to legalize—or mass socialize—their prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism as White people in this country do; this is obviously not true. While it is true that every person has their own preferences and biases, the individual power each person has to force others to comply with their preferences varies widely. In corollary, even if some members of a subordinate group do have a modicum of power, their combined power pales in comparison to the combined power of members of the dominant group.

Also, this definition’s use of “directed against someone,” with *someone* being the key word, also implies that racism is an individual action that affects one individual per occurrence. That implication effectively denies the existence of intricately woven systems of racism that create barriers to success for Black Americans and other people of color. A few of these systems include the criminal justice system, the housing market, the job market, banking systems, the political system, and the education system. While these systems advantage most White Americans, most Black Americans are precluded from enjoying the same benefits of them.

A more wholistic definition of racism is: the conscious, unconscious, or tacit belief that one’s own race is superior, predicated upon a system of socialization and power that cannot be avoided and which all are affected by, which results in the

privileges of wealth, anonymity, racial comfort and universality for one group of citizens (White Americans) and prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against another group of citizens (Black Americans). This definition is constructed based on the writings of Robin DiAngelo (2011) and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2015).

Robin DiAngelo (2011) posited that racism is not a solitary event that occurs on occasion by “bad” or “immoral” people *on purpose*. DiAngelo (2018) stated, “When a racial group’s collective prejudice is backed by the power of legal authority and institutional control, it is transformed into racism, a far-reaching system that functions independently from the intentions or self-images of individual actors” (p. 20). She went on to explain that racism is a system of socialization based upon a deferential power structure where White people are given privileges and Black people are denied them.

In corollary, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2015) explicated racism as a system of social organization, which produces and reproduces race-based advantages for the dominant class (White Americans) while denying those advantages in continuum to subordinate classes (with Black Americans being the most disadvantaged). Bonilla-Silva (2015) stated, “...racism is above anything, about practices and behaviors that produce a racial structure—a network of social relations at social, political, economic, and ideological levels that shapes the life chances of the various races” (p. 1360).

Systemic Racism

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2018), in the fifth edition of his popular textbook, *Racism without racist: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America*, discussed how a color-blind social paradigm has prevented the true progression of social policy in eradicating racism. It is true that Black Americans were restrained into

subordinate social and economic positions through blatantly racist policies and overt acts of racial violence during slavery, the period of reconstruction, and Jim Crow. However, the passing of these eras did not eradicate racism. Instead, as once socially accepted overt acts of racism became taboo, more covert techniques of speaking and acting became the new norm or mechanism of racial oppression (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). An example of this can be found in the way many large cities in the United States are still segregated by race (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

Hyper-Segregation

Most White Americans still live insulated in communities and have little cross-racial interaction until college. However, their communities have become more integrated for four straight decades (2010 Census data as cited by Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Conversely, Black Americans are still the most segregated race in the United States, at every income level, and have suffered from hyper-segregation longer than any other racial group (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Until the late 1960s, the federal government encouraged racial segregation and housing discrimination with redlining policies. However, the federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974 outlawed racial discrimination in mortgage lending and related credit transactions. Still yet, a 1997 study found that Black applicants with the same exact qualifications as White ones were denied at a rate 60% higher than their White counterparts (Chai & Kleiner, 2003). A 2012 article found that even among the poor in New York City, The NYPD targeted the Black Americans living in a housing development, arresting them at more than two times the rate of surrounding neighborhoods with the same crime rates (Fagan et al., 2012). A recent randomized experiment found that Black Americans, along with Arab males,

Muslims, and single parents are all discriminated against in rental housing markets (Murchie & Pang, 2018).

Segregation is detrimental to Black Americans in a myriad of ways including paying higher portions of their incomes to inhabit lower-quality housing, living in neighborhoods with small job-markets, and lessened ability to purchase homes in their communities due to the continuation of redline-type banking practices. With home ownership being the primary inter-generational wealth builder for American families, it has hurt Black Americans significantly in the past, present, and future to be locked out of that opportunity. Most significantly, in the U.S., property taxes are the primary means of paying for public education. Areas with higher rates of homeownership have increased home values. Increased home values mean increased property taxes, which in turn means more funding for schools.

Education

Because Black Americans are relegated to inner-city rentership, their schools have less financial resources than the schools of White Americans. One's housing dictates where they go to school, their social network and social resources, their safety, and even their ability to access nutritious food. One's education also determines social network and resources, the jobs they are able to hold, and their income. The underachievement and underfunding of Black students and Black schools, means Black people have less opportunities to lift themselves out of poverty. This in effect relegates Black Americans to an insidious form of second-class citizenship in perpetuity.

White children in the U.S. tend to enroll in schools that are 21% minority while Black and Latino children attend schools that are 45% and 41% minority, respectively

(Clotfelter, 2004 as cited by Goldsmith, 2011). It is important to note that these numbers are averages. There are overwhelming numbers of schools that are either entirely White or entirely minority (Goldsmith, 2011). Race also has an impact on how severely one will be punished for minor infractions in school, which is a factor in the school to prison pipeline (Alexander, 2012; Morris, 2016). For example, darker hued Black girls were almost twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension as their White female peers (Blake et al., 2017). When they are in school, there is a discrepancy in the quality of their education compared to their White counterparts (Farley & Allen, 1989 as cited by Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Therefore, though there are more Black people graduating with high school diplomas, the quality of the education they receive is still subpar and they leave public schools not sufficiently prepared for the workplace or college. This may explain why as of 2016, 40% more Whites have a bachelor's degree than Blacks (Nam, 2020).

Once they reach college, they are two times more likely than their White counterparts to have substantial student loan indebtedness (Grinstein-Weiss et al., 2016). Additionally, low-and- middle-class Black students have been estimated to incur \$7,721 more in education debt than their White counterparts and the disparities tend to persist after graduation (Grinstein-Weiss et al., 2016). If both races had the same chance of receiving parental assistance, racial disparity in obtaining a college degree would drop by 30%, and racial disparity in obtaining a post-college advanced degrees would drop by 62% (Nam, 2020).

Police Brutality

Wu (2020) found that rates of fatal shootings by officers are almost five times higher in cities with police forces led by White police chiefs than in cities with Black

police chiefs, even when controlled for city characteristics like crime rates. Wu (2020) stated, “Leaders in the highest position of authority may have a powerful effect on the culture of a police department and its resulting behavior” (p. 1). This is a clear indication that representation matters because racism is decreased when White officers consider that they are accountable to Black authority figures. A 2017 analysis found that unarmed Black people were two times more likely to be fatally shot by police than their White counterparts (Nix et al., 2017). They also found that these deaths were the result of a threat perception failure (i.e., perceiving an *attack* when there was none), which occurred for racial and ethnic minorities at more than two times the rate than for their White counterparts (Nix et al., 2017).

Recently, the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, and Daniel Prude have sparked national outrage and protests (Raymond, 2020; Ortiz, 2020). These senseless acts of violence have called people to action in much the same way as the killings of Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, and Sandra Bland sparked and propelled the Black Lives Matter movement (Bradley & Katz, 2020; Lebron, 2017; Khan-Cullors et al., 2018; Lebron, 2017). Though protest has been a part of the Black community since before the Civil Rights Era, there was a decline in national protests since then. Even events like the Rodney King beating and subsequent riots, or the police shooting death of Amadou Diallo, were confined to one city—Los Angeles and New York, respectively (Meminger, 2019; Swendsen & Norman, 1998). There seems to be something qualitatively different about the time we are in now, especially since these recent protests have occurred against the backdrop of a global pandemic.

Medical Racism

In regard to health, perceived or actual racism and discrimination, as well as patient-provider race discordance, is cited as being the two most common barriers to healthy living (Cuevas, 2013). Black Americans are twice or more likely to have almost every disease than their White counterparts (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, 2018). From 1980–1995, the suicide rate among Black Americans ages 10 to 14 increased 233% compared to 120% for their White counterparts (Randall, 2009). Also, suicide is currently the third leading cause of death for Black males ages 10–24 (CDC, 2017). Swift et al. (2019) found that Black patients were almost 20% more likely than White ones to report discrimination in medical settings. Benjamins and Middleton (2019) found that while 3% of White patients reported receiving inferior care, over 43% of Black patients reported this type of discrimination. These instances of racism have deadly consequences for Black people.

A National Vital Statistics Report from 2018 data shows that the life expectancies for Black men and women are 4.9 years and 3.1 years lower than their White counterparts respectively (Arias & Xu, 2020). Another National Vital Statistics Report shows that Black women have a mortality rate more than 2.5 times higher than White women and more than 3.1 times greater rate than Hispanic women (Hoyert & Miniño, 2020). Also, Black women deliver more than double the number of low and very low birthweight infants than White women, are more than 2.5 times more likely to receive late or no prenatal care than White women, and are more than 1.5 times more likely than White women to deliver a preterm baby (Martin et al., 2019).

A study with similar results found that these adverse birth outcomes were likely due to racism (Nuru-Jeter et al., 2008). The authors stated, “These adverse birth outcomes predict infant mortality, as well as numerous other adverse outcomes across the life course, including child developmental deficits such as lower cognitive and educational achievement, and adult cardiovascular disease and diabetes” (Nuru-Jeter et al., 2008, p. 30). Additionally, Arena et al. (2020) specifically cited racism as a factor affecting the level of care minorities have received during the COVID-19 pandemic. This novel virus disproportionately affects minorities in contraction rates, critical care hospitalizations, and deaths (Khunti et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2020).

Conscientization

Conscientization (CZ), the process of becoming aware of oppression and taking subsequent action to resist it, has been applied to a variety of studies and analyses since its English debut circa 1970 (Freire, 1970). It is empirically represented in the literature via qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method investigations. It has been utilized in the analysis of people, systems, literature, events, religion, and combinations of those previously mentioned. In addition to research, CZ has been applied to conceptual frameworks and metacognition practices that elevate one’s thinking and understanding pertaining to racial, gender, political, LGBTQ, and class-based oppression.

While the CZ literature base is vast, finding articles pertaining to the CZ process for racism, specifically how Black people become conscientized to race and racial issues, presents a challenge. It is particularly important to illuminate the disparate CZ literature pertaining to race, specifically Black racial conscientization (RCZ) and critical consciousness (CC) development, as Black people are the most affected by racism. Black

RCZ is being conceptualized as the process of becoming aware of racial oppression for Black people; as well as the various methods they employ to resist that racism.

Application and Results

Twenty-four articles were found at the intersection of conscientization and Black populations. Through analysis, Freire's concepts were found to be applied in three different ways. The first was an application of the overarching theory of conscientization (CZ) or concept of critical consciousness (CC). The second was taking an aspect of CZ or CC and imbedding it into another theory or research procedure. The third was to apply problem posing education (PPE) to an intervention. Of the 24 articles found, 11 had a CZ application, four had an *Imbedded* application, and nine had a PPE application. I will first discuss CZ applications, then the *Imbedded* applications, and finally the PPE applications. The results of the studies will also be discussed.

CZ Applications

Of the 11 articles in this section, one is a literature review (Marchand et al., 2019), two are monographs (Hadfield, 2017; Jacob, 2018), two are theoretical models (Burch, 2016; Chism, 2013), one is mixed method (Mwangi et al., 2019), two are qualitative (Kohli, 2012; Mosley et al., 2020), and three are quantitative (Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Hope et al., 2020; Kelso, 2014). I will begin with the qualitative and quantitative studies, move on to mixed-methods, then the monographs, literature reviews, and theoretical models.

Qualitative Applications

Kohli (2012) utilized several qualitative methodologies to study African American, Asian, and Latina female teachers. She incorporated Critical Race Theory

(CRT) and Freirian concepts into her research design. Problem-posing questions were asked of participants and inter-dialogue was encouraged. Participants were also asked of their reactions and reflections to the experience. Research participants communicated an increase in CC specifically stemming from the research methodology. Particularly, they reported an enhancement of cross-cultural understandings pertaining to racial oppression and the ability to think differently about race in the classroom. In regard to cross-cultural understanding, participants were able to connect and share experiences that bonded them: names and ethnic pride, accents, and knowledge of self. This article discussed both the results of the study and the research methodology and is probably the first article I have ever seen that explicitly built the CZ processes (problem-posing questions and inter-group communication) into the research design.

Mosley et al. (2020) sought to qualitatively investigate the development of CC amongst Black Lives Matter (BLM) activists. The primary research question was “how do individuals fighting ABR [anti-Black racism] and Black racial trauma in an intersectional manner describe their critical consciousness development?” (p. 2). They utilized qualitative interviews and analyzed using Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) to build a model that prevents and resists racial trauma through activism. Their findings indicate that critical consciousness of anti-Black racism (CCABR) is comprised of witnessing racism, processing what was witnessed, and responding to racism via nine different avenues. They suggested that “Racial trauma is a function of cumulative incidents of anti-Black racism. As such, cumulative interventions are needed to undo the trauma and facilitate Black liberation” (p. 14). They recommend further study on the mechanisms by which the symptoms of racial trauma are alleviated by activism.

Quantitative Applications

Kelso et al. (2014) conducted a quantitative study of Black women with HIV. The authors hypothesized that participants with higher CC would be associated with having better HIV outcomes than participants with lower CC. The results supported this hypothesis in that “when perceiving high levels of racial and gender discrimination, African American HIV infected women with high CC were less likely to demonstrate HIV disease progression compared to women with low CC” (Kelso et al., 2014, p. 1243). The women with higher CC were less likely to have a detectable viral load and more likely to have a CD4 count higher than 350. Also, they had a significantly greater increase in their CD4 cell count from their nadir CD4 count.

Diemer and Rapa (2016) performed a quantitative study on a secondary data set to assess the mediating relationships within CZ and CC. CC was conceptualized as composing of critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action. Critical reflection was comprised of perceived inequality and egalitarianism. Political efficacy also had two components, internal and external. Critical action was considered to be protest or other collective action. Results indicated that *critical reflection: perceived inequality* predicted *critical action: protest* for Latinx and African American youth. Conversely, *critical reflection: egalitarianism* did not predict *expected conventional political action* for either group. *Critical reflection: perceived inequality* significantly predicted *expected conventional political action* for African American youth only. *Critical reflection: egalitarianism* had a differential relation to *critical action: protest* for both groups but was not significant for African Americans. Lastly, *Critical reflection: perceived inequality* had a nonsignificant yet positive relation for African Americans. They

suggested their model indicates that while *critical reflection: perceived inequality* was predictive of social action for both groups, the action elicited in African Americans was more disparate than that of Latinx youth.

Last in this section, Hope et al. (2020) performed a quantitative investigation on the relationship between racial stress (individual, institutional, and cultural) and their three conceptualized components of CC (critical agency, critical reflection, and critical action). Individual racial stress was related to perceptions of inequality and personal agency to affect change. Institutional racial stress was positively related to perceptions of inequality and negatively related to egalitarian beliefs. However, institutional and cultural racism was positively related to egalitarianism, which in turn had a positive relation to critical agency. Lastly, egalitarianism was found to be a mediating factor within the tri-dimensional model of CC development in that it was always positively related to critical action through critical agency.

Mixed-Method

There was only one mixed-method article found. The qualitative data from this paper comes from larger mixed-method study of Black immigrant college students utilizing a sequential explanatory approach. Mwangi et al. (2019) applied Watts et al.'s (1999) five stage model of political CC development to the analysis of mixed-method data to conceptualize a process model of Black immigrant college students' racial CZ. They found four themes related to how Black immigrants process U.S. racial issues and decide to become involved in change efforts: remaining racially removed, questioning whether it is their fight, educating themselves about issues related to race and racism in the U.S., and getting involved where they can. They found that most of the students in the

study experienced a shift in attitude based on their experiences of being a student at a predominantly White institution (PWI).

Monographs

Hadfield (2017) analyzed the influence of Freire’s writings on activists within the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He asserted that “Freire’s methodologies improved the way [B]lack consciousness activists understood and worked with their communities. They planned better, knew the communities better, and worked in dialogue with them about their problems and possible solutions” (pp. 96–97). She continued on to say “They learned that in many cases they occupied an outsider position as student and non-community member. Freire’s work helped them adjust their methods to work more effectively with these communities” (p. 97). She concluded in discussing how the Global South (South America) united with South Africa over the cause to resist racial and class-based oppression.

Jacob (2018) applied CC to an analysis of the *Bandido* and *Organic Intellectual* archetypes of Black male youth-hood present within Ferréz’s novel depicting the lives and challenges of poor Afro-Brazilians youth entitled, *Manual Prático do Ódio*. Jacob explained how Ferréz’s novel is a codification for the social, political, and economic oppression faced by Afro-Brazilian youth. This web of oppression often forces them to choose between the false appeal of becoming gangsters (Bandidos) or organic intellectuals (OI). The OI are self-taught representations of critically conscious youth. They are able to see beyond their circumstance and resist oppression—even if only on the micro level—by putting off the myths of the oppressing classes and finding pride in their

African roots. Jacob (2018) juxtaposed the two characters almost as a juxtaposition between naive-transitive and critically-transitive consciousness.

Literature Review

Marchand et al. (2019) has the only literature review found. They applied critical race theory (CRT) and CC to an analysis of Black parental school involvement to problematize the perceived lack thereof. They used CRT to describe the sociological aspects of differing engagement and CC to assess the issue from a psychological stance. They provided an excellent literature review of Black parental engagement that “advanced a conceptual frame that connects parents’ critical reflection of racial inequalities with the perceptions of and motivations for their own involvement” (p. 380).

Theoretical Models

Chism (2013) applied CZ and CC to an analysis of Church of God in Christ (COGIC) leaders’ Civil Rights involvement. He specifically discussed C.H. Mason, James Oglethorpe Patterson Sr., Arenia Mallory, Mary McCloud Bethune, Mamie Till-Mobley, and Jesus Christ. Chism (2013) asserted that “COGIC’s theological emphasis on spiritual power and deliverance is not antithetical to members’ capacity for critical consciousness formation and praxis” (p. 442). He also stated, “By combining spiritual quest with critical reflection upon social realities, some Black Pentecostals formed a Pentecostal critical consciousness and subsequently engaged in civil rights struggles” (p. 443).

Burch (2016) applied CZ and Plato’s *periagoge* to an analysis of W.E.B Dubois’s *Of the Coming of John*. He also compared and contrasted CZ with *periagoge*. By using CZ and *periagoge* to inform a critical reading of *Of the Coming of John*, Burch argued

that his students are able to interact with the text in both an intellectual, abstract sense and an emotional, visceral sense. This text acts as a codification for “the dilemmas of enlightenment, racial oppression, and unequal power relations” (p. 49) that the students can decode to explore dialectics between the possibility of human potential and the structures that dehumanize them. Burch raised the question of action, stating, “It is of course a difficult philosophical problem to define what constitutes an action much less an ethically right kind of action taken against a perceived oppression” (p. 41). I find this to be imperative as most actions are constrained to the political sphere by CZ researchers (see the writings of Matthew Diemer and Rodrick Watts). However, looking at what all could constitute an action is really important to the true study of CZ. For example, outside of the political sphere, what cultural and economic actions are taken?

Imbedded Applications

Of the four articles in the Imbedded category, two are theoretical models (Bryant, 2018; Reddie, 2018) and two are qualitative program evaluations (Campbell & MacPhil, 2002; Harper et al., 2019). To be included in this section, studies had to have clearly imbedded CZ or CC into another theory. The program evaluations will be discussed first, then the theoretical models.

Qualitative Program Evaluations

Campbell and MacPhil (2002) applied CC, among other theories, to a peer education program targeting HIV prevention among South African youth. They analyzed eight focus groups held over eight months. It was the goal of the program to catalyze CC development among participants to the social factors that contribute to HIV transmission. Specifically, the gender norms that saw women as sexually passive and men as sexually

aggressive. They found that peer-educators often reverted to the banking model of education instead of embracing dialogue as a means of heuristically learning—even though they were trained in peer education techniques. They also found that without specific training in the social determinants of HIV transmission, peer-educators lacked the critical thinking necessary to catalyze the CZ process in students. Their study implies that students' CC development is contingent upon teachers CC attainment.

Harper et al. (2019) combined CC with Psychological Empowerment Theory in the design of a community program targeting Black, HIV positive youth. They utilized the Freirean concepts of thematic investigation and problem-posing dialogue. Most of the design for this program came from Watts' Young Warriors Program, but it was adapted for their target population and program goals. They found that CC bolstered Psychological Empowerment Theory by addressing shortcomings in individual focus on behaviors.

The program helped to address issues related to self-esteem and understandings of inequality that contribute to HIV transmission and low adherence to medical treatment. They stated, "Over the course of the intervention, the young men create their own definitions for what it means to be a [B]lack gay/bisexual male youth, learn to be aware of and deconstruct damaging societal representations of their various identities, and begin to understand pro-social and health promoting behaviors as a form of resistance" (p. 14). I find it interesting that the authors consider pro-social and health promoting behaviors as a form of resistance against a society that does not see the value in gay/bisexual Black boys and men. It is as if their daring to live healthily in their own truth is a form of critical action against racism, homophobia, and patriarchy.

Theoretical Models

Bryant (2018) used the combination of CZ, a womanist outlook of ontology, and the religious conception of *confession* to create the new notion of *consciousness-raising confession* (CRC). CRC is defined as “a practice that encourages the collaboration of the mind, heart, and body and the disclosure of an emancipation from hidden things” (p. 355) and is described as “a ritual of CZ” (p. 352) in that it helps Black women to name the world as they experience it, in their own words, without being subjected to the opinions or interpretations of others. CRC can take the form of speaking, journaling, or resisting racial and gender oppression through collaborative sister-circles.

CRC is proposed to be useful in helping Black women shed themselves of the seemingly positive false narrative of the Strong Black Woman. Bryant (2018) argued that while the trope immortalizes Black women to a superior moral status, it creates a culture that forces them to suffer in silence and ties their worth to their ability to do so. Bryant applied the CZ concepts of *co-creation* and *naming the world through praxis* to the trope of the *Strong Black Woman* in order to mitigate its deleterious effects on the silent suffering of Black women. She eloquently described the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual effects of the Strong Black Woman trope on Black women writ large. She also discussed examples of CRC from some of Audre Lorde’s writings on cancer and Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*.

Reddie (2018) combined CZ and Black theological practices to create a Christian educational experience, complete with interactive exercises, that act as a transformative practice in teaching and learning. He stated, “I have attempted to combine the radical intent of transformative education arising from Freirean tradition with Black liberation

theology in order to develop a more participative and interactive mode of pedagogical engagement that moves intellectual discourse beyond mere theorizing into more praxis based forms of practice” (p. 2). Reddie (2018) described his practice as *ortho-praxis* and *existential pragmatism* in an effort to juxtapose his theology with White Christianity. He stated that the practical challenges of his theology are on “resisting racism and trying to fight for Black self determination” as opposed to “historical arguments and what constitutes correct understandings of God” (p. 3).

Problem-Posing Education (PPE) Applications

In this section, there are nine articles. One is a monograph (Jones, 2001) and the rest are qualitative. Of the qualitative articles, one was described as being both a content analysis and phenomenological (Lewandowski et al., 2011), one was a course evaluation (Case & Lewis, 2012), one was a case study (Westfield, 2004), one was participatory action research (PAR: Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998), three were program evaluations (Hatcher et al., 2011; Nguyen & Quinn, 2016; Watts et al., 2002), and one was a theoretical model (Watts et al., 1999). For ease of reporting, the monograph and theoretical model will be grouped together, all the course and program evaluations will be grouped together, and everything else will be grouped together. Thus, there will be three headings for this section. I will begin with the theoretical model and monograph, move to the course and program evaluations, and end with the rest of the qualitative studies.

Theoretical Model and Monograph

Watts et al. (1999) applied PPE techniques—dialogue, codification (music videos and movie clips), and de-codification—to African American high school sophomores in eight, 45-minute sessions. They translated the five stages of sociopolitical development

(SPD) into the following questions: what you see (perception based on stimulus), what does it mean (interpretation and meaning), why do you think that (defense of interpretation), how do you feel about it (emotional and intuitive responses to stimulus), what can you do about it (action strategies— constructive actions to improve the situation). These PPE questions were meant to catalyze CC in participants.

By the end of the program, they found an increase in critical thinking and willingness to participate in dialogue. However, there was still no movement in the actual action sphere, though they note it as being integral to CZ. Watts et al.'s (1999) discussion of White Supremacy and definition of oppression as a process and outcome are quite intriguing. They also incorporated intersectionality into their discussion of SPD to conceptualize CC in a more holistic way, bringing in the concept of twoness and dueling consciousness.

Jones (2001) applied Freire's critique of the *banking model of education* to Dubois's concept of the talented tenth to provide pedagogical best-practices for educating the next generation of Black academics. Jones argued that the "real problem" (p. 8) with the talented tenth is not its existence, but its socialization into American Society. He opines that the talented tenth are subjected to individualism and selfishness without the counter balance of CZ and CC to orient them toward using their education for change work within the Black community. He provided six best practices: engaging culture as a political structure and making the study of it central to liberatory philosophy, re-educating educators to acknowledge institutional racism in education, attacking institutional trends that hamper the humanization project, recognizing continued marginalization in the form of co-optation, shoring partnerships between liberatory

intellectuals and activist, and developing liberatory classrooms by deconstructing the hierarchy and inviting the community in.

Course and Program Evaluations

Case and Lewis (2012) fused CZ and critical pedagogy with critical theory and feminist pedagogy to create a “critical liberatory feminist pedagogy” (p. 261). From CZ, they applied PPE techniques (codification, decodification, dialogue, cultural circle techniques) to two courses focusing on LGBTQ psychology at an Historically Black College or University (HBCU) and Hispanic Serving institution. They found an increase in CC among students by virtue of taking the course. They also gave specific examples of assignments that increased CC. For example, an essay by a gay Asian man allowed one Black male gay student to examine and understand himself better. They stressed the importance of dialogue, meeting the students where they are intellectually, and making the material digestible.

Watts et al. (2002) reported on an intervention for adolescents called The Young Warriors Program: Fighting Fire with Fire. They applied PPE techniques (codification, decodification, dialogue, dialectics) to rap music, music videos, and movie clips to combat the effects of media violence on young Black males. Participants showed an increase in CC and intellectual confidence. Watts et al. (2002) provided recommendations and best practices for CC work with rap and hip-hop culture. They also discussed challenges to working with that specific content.

Hatcher et al. (2011) applied PPE techniques (codification through role play and dialogue through probing questions) to the Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity (IMAGE). The program aimed to foster CC in participants as a buffer

against HIV/AIDS transmission, sexual violence, and domestic violence. They reported increases in critical consciousness for facilitators and participants.

Positive outcomes included cutting the incidence of domestic violence in half, reducing the incidence of unprotected sex by participants, and improving communication between participants and their children in relation to sex. IMAGE found that intensive training and mentorship opportunities for facilitators (teacher-learners) was successful in building critical thinking and reflection, as well as a sense of collegiality. This helped the facilitators ask probing questions of participants that helped to start their own CZ processes related to culture and sexual health.

Lastly, Nguyen and Quinn (2016) applied PPE techniques to a summer program for Vietnamese youth focused on alleviating interracial tension between them and the Black community. The program goal was to increase CC in relation to the roots—and current proximal and distal factors—of Vietnamese-Black interracial tension. They found CC was increased throughout the 1.5-month, 20 hour per week, program. Participants entered the program believing Black people hated Asians and left with a better understanding of how individual and societal issues pit the two communities against one another. By the end of the program, participants were able to provide strategies on the micro and macro planes to ease the interracial tension.

Qualitative Studies

Watts and Abdul-Adil (1998) applied PPE via dialogue, codification (rap music videos, television shows, and films), and de-codification (surface and deep structure) techniques to a sample of African American freshmen and sophomore high school students. Students were reported as having “management problems” and being “at risk.”

They used eight, 40-minute sessions. They also applied content analysis procedures and coded using a “classification tree.” They found an increase in dialogue and responses that evidenced an elevated CC (a sentiment echoed in their later research. See Watts et al., 2002) and stressed the focus on the cognitive process of CC for measurement.

Westfield (2004) applied PPE techniques to theological education to help form a global consciousness. She incorporated a cross-cultural course into a Masters of Divinity (MDIV) program and took students to Ghana. She found that the cross-cultural course led to a racial awakening in White students. For a case in point, she used the example of Jody experiencing an epiphanic catalyst to racial CZ. Jody broke down upon realizing she was White while being surrounded by Black Americans and Africans on their trip to Ghana. Westfield suggested that her experiences were one of shame at not realizing herself to be a racial being before. This is a passionately written essay that has a salient discussion on the complexities faced by Black women professors who teach White students. She also touched on the ability of liberatory pedagogy to alter world views and bolster identity across race.

Lastly, Lewandowski et al. (2011) conducted a descriptive phenomenological study of Black women with HIV to assess their perceptions of HIV trends and risk factors. They used the C Code Manual (Smith & Alschuler, 1976) interpretation of CZ consciousness stages to rate comments made by participants. Participants seemed to have a critically-transitive understanding of the problem, but a semi-intransitive perception of their ability to act in challenging it or changing it on a micro-, mezzo-, or macro-level. They found that while the majority of participants seemed to have a great deal of knowledge relating to prevention behaviors (i.e., condom use and getting tested) they

believed their locus of control to be external and thus did not believe they had the power to control their own health. They also did not espouse many “tangible benefits” (p. 281) to engaging in preventative behaviors. Lewandowski et al. (2011) brought in elements of dueling consciousness in their discussion and listed the philosophical underpinnings of CZ, of which phenomenology and existentialism were listed, as well as Marxism (which is an underpinning of Frankfurt school critical theory), personalism, and Christianity.

Gaps in the Literature

Based upon this review of the literature at the intersection of Black populations and conscientization (CZ), it is evident there are many gaps. For example, only 24 articles were found after conducting a total of 16 searches—that is preposterous. Also, the oldest article is from 1998—almost 30 years after Freire started publishing in English. This is an indication that scholars are far behind in the application of CZ to Black populations. For reference, there were 11 other articles included in my previous study of CZ (Altranice & Thomas, n.d.) that fell between 1970 and 1998 and the inclusion criteria was stricter.

Also, though more of the articles were qualitative than any other approach, only one had a phenomenological component (Lewandowski et al., 2011) and only one was based in Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT: Mosley et al., 2020). Phenomenology is meant to describe and define a phenomenon, so there really cannot be any further study without the basic operationalization of a concept or experience. CGT can then flush out a theory rooted in data based upon the conceptualization provided in the phenomenological study. However, because neither of these two studies are linked at all (i.e., the CGT study does not include the phenomenological study as reference), they do not build upon one

another. There then exists in the literature a lack of clear conceptual or operational definition related to CZ, let alone one grounded in data.

This lack of consensus on what CZ actually is is the main gap in the literature and presents a significant problem for future research. While Mwangi et al. (2019) provided some insight into this process for Black immigrants, their sample mostly consisted of Continental African immigrants, which is only one population of Black people. Also, the themes they discussed were not the intent of the research, they just happened to develop after analyzing the qualitative data separate from their quantitative data. The field of racial CZ would benefit from explicitly phenomenologically investigating this process among a variety of Black populations.

Also, there are no explicitly CZ studies that trace the CZ process from commencement to fulfillment. Though Mosley et al. (2020) included some elements of the process, their Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) study wasn't actually sensitized by CZ. Therefore, the focus was more on the means by which Black people heal themselves through activism, instead of the actual CZ process. Their study did not discuss what makes someone turn to activism opposed to maladaptive behaviors like drugs or alcohol. Also, they used a homogeneous group (BLM activists), instead of a heterogeneous group of activists from different organizations and regions which significantly limits the transferability of their results. This leaves a gap in the knowledge base as to how one CZ process relates to another CZ process. In other words, while Mosley et al. (2020) elaborated on parts of the Black racial CC development process, there was no exploration as to how one's Black racial CZ process contributed to any other CZ process (e.g., LGBTQ CZ) or vice versa. Therefore, more studies should be

conducted with the specific intent of explicating the intersectional CZ process for various Black populations.

Last, in any field of inquiry, the qualitative investigations should lead to strong quantitative investigations. Only three of the articles in the sample represented a quantitative study. While two of the studies somewhat build on one another (Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Hope et al., 2020), none of the studies were an extension of qualitative research. There is no connection between the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the field. Having only one mixed-method study out of 25 is dismal at best. In speaking of the interaction between qualitative and quantitative research, Giorgi (2009) stated, “the quantitative approach will have to be integrated, but that can hardly happen where qualitative approaches do not exist” (p. 79). Therefore, the field will soon be primed and ready to begin quantitatively exploring the CZ process of Black people, though their conceptualizations and applications must be rooted in qualitative data. As the various qualitative methods by which CZ is studied in regard to Black populations increases, so too must the quantitative studies. As of now, there are no measures or surveys of any sort specifically related to the CZ process of Black people.

CHAPTER 3: THEORY

In this chapter, I will be detailing the theories, philosophies, and methodologies of phenomenology and conscientization. It is important to note that phenomenology is the grounding methodological philosophy as is required for a Husserlian dissertation. Normally, transcendental phenomenological philosophy would be the only theory discussed in a dissertation with a descriptive phenomenology focus. However, due to the fact this study is an investigation of a theory without an operationalization, I found it prudent to also discuss said theory. However, thought conscientization was instrumental in the conceptualization of this study, it was not used to analyze the data obtained.

Grounding Methodological Philosophy: Phenomenology

Though many view phenomenology as a qualitative approach to inquiry, it is first a philosophical movement that stabilized into a branch of philosophy. To understand phenomenology at the methodological level, one must first understand its philosophical roots. Phenomenology, in its modern sense, was conceptualized and published upon by Edmund Husserl in 1900, in direct opposition of the Cartesian philosophy that had become prevalent during that time (Vagle, 2018). While Edmund Husserl is often considered the father of modern phenomenology, René Descartes is considered the father of modern Western philosophy (Peoples, 2021; Vagle, 2018). Descartes believed that

consciousness existed separate from everything outside of the mind, meaning he believed our consciousness to be an entity of its own creation, one that has no direct relation to the world it encounters through living. This line of thinking that separated consciousness from reality lead to positivism as a philosophical movement as well as the ideas of a universal truth, meta-narratives, objective thinking, right or wrong, and logical thinking that results in absolutes (Vagle, 2018).

Husserl rejected the proposed dichotomous relationship between the mind and the world. He insisted the conscious was always in direct relation with the “object” of our knowing. For example, we all consciously know *Black people* and thus have an idea of what it means to be *Black*. In other words, we can close our eyes and see a Black person in our mind. When we see them in our mind, we have an idea as to their vernacular, or as to how they will be dressed, or even their mannerisms and idiosyncrasies, their socioeconomic status, and their educational attainment. We can do this because we have seen them (perhaps in person, perhaps in movies or books), touched them (either in our mind or in the physical world), talked to them and about them, and as a result of all of our experiences, we have remembered them.

Therefore, our consciousness of Black people and Blackness is directly tied to our experiences of them. In corollary, if a phenomenologist wanted to study Blackness as a phenomenon, they would be interested in describing the shared experience of being Black for the purpose of finding the *essence* or *invariant structure* (i.e., what is the same in regard to how people understand Black people and use Blackness regardless of time and location), instead of for the simply describing the physical features of Black people. In Husserlian phenomenological investigations, the researcher would seek to define the

essence of Blackness taken from the *natural attitude* (i.e., the assumptions people make about Blackness and the unspoken rules revolving around what constitutes being a Black person) as if the researcher themselves had never seen, or even heard of, a Black person. This approach aims to uncover and describe the *obvious* by investigating the *known*. In other words, phenomenology explores the taken for granted assumptions of our everyday interactions.

Intentionality

Intentionality is arguably the most, if not one of the most, important and integral concepts of Husserlian phenomenology (Peoples, 2021). It refers to the act of being conscious of something or the *consciousness of knowing* (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl believed that every time we as people think, we are actually thinking *of something* (Giorgi, 2009; Peoples, 2021), meaning the act of thinking or being conscious of something and the object of our consciousness are intertwined (Moustakas, 1994). The act of thinking is, by definition, purposefully using one's mind to focus on a something. Therefore, *intentionality* represents the inextricable relationship between a person (i.e., their consciousness, experiences, and thinking) and the object of their knowing or consciousness (i.e., an idea, a place, a person, or an object) (Vagle, 2018). This is again in direct opposition of Cartesian thinking. With the concept of *intentionality*, Husserl argued that consciousness is always *of something else*, it does not exist *in and of itself* separated from the world (Vagle, 2018), meaning consciousness is not *directed* inward upon itself; rather, it is *directed* outward toward the world we are conscious of, while also informed by that world (Giorgi, 2009). Therefore, consciousness cannot exist without the *things* of which we are conscious.

Coincidentally, and also in opposition to popular Cartesian concepts of the time, the object of our knowing (i.e., the things which of we are conscious) could be unbeknownst to us. Descartes believed that humans possessed an ever-present awareness of themselves and their ideas (Vagle, 2018). Phenomenologists however, believe that intentionality exists whether we are aware of it or not (Vagle, 2018). In fact, *directness*, which is a feature of *intentionality*, describes how the consciousness, or thinking, is oriented toward an object, whether that object is real or imagined (Moustakas, 1994). As a result, the vast majority of actions are directed toward an object in the world, and not toward one's internal processing of that object (Giorgi, 2009). So, it then makes sense that we are oblivious to most of the *things* we are conscious of, and therefore act upon. However, because the act has to come from a process of consciousness, "the object of an intentional act always transcends the act in which it appears" (Giorgi, 2009, p. 184). Meaning, when one acts in the lifeworld, it is because they first acted in the realm of the consciousness (i.e., they thought about it).

Intentionality is what binds humans to the world, regardless of that binding being wanted, acknowledged, tangible, assumed, or believed. Intentionality does not exist within the person, or within the world, but simply describes the relationship, or mediating presence, between the two (Vagle, 2018). The term *intentionality* could be substituted with the words *interconnectedness*, *entanglement*, or *relationship* for ease of understanding in the lexicon of modern American English. Thus, the term *intentionality* does not denote one's *intentions* in the modern colloquial connotation (Vagle, 2018). It has very little, if anything, to do with what one intends, chooses, or plans to execute. Rather, the term refers to how we as humans are connected physically, emotionally,

spiritually, and symbolically to all other humans, to all other animal life, to all of nature or plant life, and to all of the inanimate objects and ideals of the planet. Consequently, within phenomenology when one is investigating a phenomenon, they are exploring the “thing” (i.e., the object or experience of their investigation) in relation to other “things” (i.e., experiences with objects, people, places, ideas, etc.) (Vagle, 2018).

Phenomenon

A very simplistic approach to defining a *phenomenon* within the purview of phenomenology is an experience *as it is lived*, omitting opinions, perceptions, perspectives, or reflections about said experience (Giorgi, 2009; Peoples, 2021). Meaning, within phenomenology, a phenomenon is any experience *in and of itself* without approximation, generalization, or reasoning (Vagle, 2018). Phenomenologists are very interested in studying the experience of their investigation removed from the biases we all have regarding that experience. These biases can come from what we take for granted in knowing about the experience, such as what we were overtly and tacitly taught. Phenomenologists study phenomena (i.e., experiences) just as they *appear* in the world (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2018). This leads to a more complicated definition of a phenomena as any experience that *appears or manifests*, which explains how one finds themselves in, of, and in relation to all that is in, of, and in relation to the world (Vagle, 2018).

We now have the understanding that *intentionality* refers to how we as humans are connected to other humans, past, present, and future. We are also connected to all of the experiences of those humans with all the other forms of life (animal and plant), ecosystems (of nature or culture), and inanimate objects (natural or created) of the world.

This connectedness is what it means to be *in, of, and in relation to the world*. Just as I am in, of, and in relation to my world, everyone else is in, of, and in relation to their own worlds. Phenomena is thus what connects the *things* of someone else's world to the *things* of my world and vice versa (Vagle, 2018). However, those connections can only be formed by interacting in the world. Phenomena (i.e., experiences) cannot be reasoned or psychologically constructed, they must be lived (Vagle, 2018).

Therefore, phenomena *appear* or *manifest* as “we find-ourselves-being-in-relation with others...and other things” (Vagle, 2018, p. 20). The word phenomena actually comes from the Greek and means “to bring to light, to place in brightness, to show itself in itself, the totality of what lies before us in the light of day” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). Thus, phenomena appear and provide the catalysts for experiences, which are the building blocks for connectedness or *intentionality* (Moustakas, 1994). The use of the term *appearing* signifies the relationship between the mind and the world (Vagle, 2018). In other words, the appearance of a phenomena relates just as much to one's psychological processing as it does to their ontological positionality. What we think, has direct relation to who we believe ourselves to be, and thus to who we portray ourselves to be in the world. Phenomenology is a study of those portrayals and “the various ways things manifest and appear in and through our being in the world” (Vagle, 2018, p. 23).

Manifestation is an important phenomenological concept because it ties the psychological and ontological realms together (Vagle, 2018). Because phenomena *manifest* in the world, they are not built within the confines of one's mind (Vagle, 2018). As we move about in the world, collecting experiences and growing our consciousness, we *find* ourselves *in phenomena* (Vagle, 2018). To elaborate, we are ontologically *in*

phenomena (i.e., experience) just by virtue of physically interacting with the world. This physical interaction provides the stimulus for new pathways in the brain to develop, which deepens our consciousness, effectively redirecting and expanding our intentionality. Therefore, within phenomenology, interest lies less with the qualitative properties of phenomena and more with how one finds themselves in relation to (i.e., experiences) that phenomena (Vagle, 2018).

The Lifeworld and Natural Attitude

When phenomenologists speak of the *lifeworld*, they are referring to the world of human interaction in which all experience lies (Vagle, 2018). This is different than the *natural world*. The natural world is where we act and encounter objects, but is separate from our experiences of those objects (Vagle, 2018). That is to say, our experience of the objective world (natural world) is subjective. Put simply, the lifeworld is one's subjective experience of the natural world (Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

The natural world is mostly unaffected by our perceptions or consciousness until we act. The natural attitude is the knowledge *taken for granted* in our everyday life (Vagle, 2018). It can be described as what is assumed to be obvious and thus not in need of explaining. However, what is obvious to one person may not be obvious to another. Logically, then, the *natural attitude* is separated from the *natural world* and resides with our experience of objects in the *lifeworld*.

In corollary, the lifeworld is fluid and can change instantaneously based upon our perceptions of the natural world. This is why the lifeworld cannot be studied in a completely objective manner as Descartes believed, because no-one in the world can be completely objective (Vagle, 2018). However, Husserl would likely not assert those in

the lifeworld live a completely subjective life either (Vagle, 2018). Thus, the lifeworld does not exist in the mind, or completely in the objects we as humans interact with. Instead, one's living and thus their experiences (i.e., phenomena) take place in the intermediary space between the consciousness and the object of consciousness. Understanding this intermediary space, and the *obvious* that contributes to it, is of extreme import in the study of phenomenon.

Noema and Noesis

Intentionality is the key principle of phenomenology. However, within intentionality there are psychological (noetic) and sensory, or physical (noematic) aspects (Moustakas, 1994). The noema and noesis are a means of describing the internal mechanisms of intentionality. They also describe the layers of description. Thus, intentionality cannot exist without the noema-noesis relationship, nor can our description of phenomena (Moustakas, 1994).

Put simply, the act of our consciousness (i.e., thinking) is *noesis*, and the *thing* we are thinking about is *noema* (Peoples, 2021). However, Husserl makes clear distinctions between the actual object of our knowing, how the object appears in our consciousness, and our thinking of or toward that object (Moustakas, 1994). Within this distinction, noema is not the *thing* itself in the natural world, unaffected by our meaning making (Moustakas, 1994). Instead, it is the phenomena of our *experience with the thing* in the lifeworld.

Noema, which resides in the lifeworld, fluctuates with the lifeworld in a way the actual object cannot. Moustakas (1994) stated, "the object that appears in perception varies in terms of when it is received, from what angle, with what background of

experience, with what orientation of wishing, willing, or judging, always from the vantage point of a perceiving individual” (p. 29).

For every noema, there is an accompanying noesis (Moustakas, 1994). The two concepts are inextricably tied to one another within the phenomenological conceptualization of *intentionality*. According to Moustakas (1994), “noesis refers to the act of perceiving, feeling, thinking, remembering, or judging—all of which are embedded with meanings that are concealed and hidden from consciousness” (p. 69). Thus, while noema is the experience of the object, noesis is *the way in which* the object is experienced, whether we are aware of the mechanisms at play or not. Phrased differently, the noema is the label given to *what* our experience of a phenomenon is, while the noesis is the label given to *how* that experience affects our thinking of the phenomenon.

Noesis flows naturally from noema, as it is the noesis that brings the object into consciousness for experience to occur (Moustakas, 1994). Through our thinking of an object (noetic process), we make that object real, whether it is actually real or imagined while we think. Skyscrapers, jet planes, and cellphones existed in someone’s mind before they manifested in the natural world. It is the process of noesis that facilitates this materialization of ideas. Thus, as our noesis—or thinking—expands, so too does our understanding of the object of our knowing (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, there is no noema that is not in direct relation to a noesis.

Meaning-Making

Both noesis and noema refer to the process of meaning-making (Moustakas, 1994). Noema represents the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). It is not the object itself, but the appearance of the object (real or imagined) in my consciousness. The appearance

of the object in my consciousness is based upon my experiences with the object in the lifeworld, which is also based upon my natural assumptions of the object. Since phenomenology is primarily concerned with this experience of objects, and not the actual object itself, it is the noema we actually study and ultimately seek to describe. However, it is the noesis that allows us to uncover the layers of meaning that comprise the noema.

According to Husserl, the noema brings with it certain questions relating to what it is and what phases it contains (Moustakas, 1994). This is because when we encounter an object, what we perceive that object to be is contingent upon our meaning-making of it. However, that meaning-making is intuitive and therefore tacit, or part of our unconscious mind (Moustakas, 1994).

To further complicate matters, we know and make meaning in part, then synthesize the parts to have a complete experience. Husserl referred to this way of partial meaning-making to constitute a whole *the noematic phases* (Moustakas, 1994). We see an object in the natural world and immediately ascribe meaning to it based upon our lifeworld experiences. As we compile lifeworld experiences, we layer meanings to objects. Thusly, the items we encounter become more and more complex because the meanings we ascribe to them become more and more complex. Put simply, the object of our knowing becomes *more* as it advances from one experience of meaning to another. Each of these phases of understanding build upon one another, complement one another, are separate from one another, but unite to make a universal understanding of the *whole* object (Moustakas, 1994).

In corollary, meaning making is derived from a conflation of integral and varied experiences (Moustakas, 1994). There is first the events that happened. Then there are the

thoughts and feelings about the events at the time. Then there are the thoughts and feelings of the events over time as one gains new knowledge and language to comprehend, critically analyze, and reckon with their actions and the feelings that drove them. All of these facets are amalgamated into one's *whole* experience of those specific memories now. Once the layers are added, they can never be taken away, only added to. To describe a phenomenon (noema) necessitates the deconstruction and examination of all existing layers (noesis).

Description

It is the goal of the phenomenologist to bring the unconscious meaning-making of noematic phases to the forefront for description, as description is the primary means of presenting phenomenological work.

Since the noema is the object of our knowing "perceived as such" in our consciousness, it represents the textural element of phenomenological description (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 30). The ***textural description*** is a full accounting of one's conscious experience of the phenomena (i.e., the noema) and includes their thoughts, feelings, and ideas (Moustakas, 1994). It also includes examples of situations that portray what elements comprise the experience and examples of the experience itself (Moustakas, 1994). Nothing is left out of the textual description as it describes the "what" of the phenomenon. Within the textural description, the phenomenologists provide answers for *what* the phenomenon is, *what* the qualities of the phenomenon are, *what* appears within the phenomenon at differing points in time and local, and *what* happens to the phenomenon under various conditions (Moustakas, 1994).

Conversely, the noesis is the structural element of description; as it represents our systematic thinking of the noema, which inevitably uncovers what was hidden about the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). The *structural description* is an accounting of *how* the phenomena was experienced, which can only be understood through deep consideration and reflection (Moustakas, 1994). To create a structural description, one must focus their attention on the antecedents of the textual elements within the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Instead of describing what happened, one would be describing the thoughts and feelings that led up to what happened. This is extremely important, as there is no way of fully knowing what happened without knowing how and why it happened. Consequently, Keen (1974 as cited by Moustakas, 1994) argued that it is not possible to describe the texture of a phenomenon without at least an implicit knowledge of the structural elements that underlie it.

The noema and noesis combine to create a full understanding of the phenomena under investigation. The textual (noematic) and structural (noetic) description allow the phenomenologist to present the what, how, and why of the phenomenon. Thusly, both the noema and the noesis are equally important in the presentation of findings, though it is not uncommon to focus solely on one aspect of the phenomenon at a time. One can iteratively direct their thinking inwardly and outwardly, or suspend their own thought altogether to receive the phenomena “as given” (Moustakas, 1994). Such is often the case for the purpose of phenomenological reduction (Giorgi, 2009).

Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction

Application of transcendental phenomenological reduction (TPR) is one of the methodological specificities that separate *transcendental* phenomenology from other

branches of the qualitative approach. According to Moustakas (1994) “Husserl’s approach is called ‘phenomenology’ because it utilizes *only* the data available to consciousness—the *appearance* of objects. It is considered ‘transcendental’ because it adheres to what can be discovered through reflection on subjective acts and their objective correlates” (p. 45). Thus, a transcendental phenomenology is one that utilizes reflection upon what is present in data to study how one experiences the natural world. This reflection is often carried out via employment of a series of processes called *phenomenological reduction*.

Put simply, TPR represents the conscious process of suspending one’s beliefs to analyze the phenomena as given (epoché or bracketing; Peoples, 2021). However, it also and firstly assumes donning the phenomenological attitude (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). TPR diminishes the researcher’s noematic phases relating to a phenomenon to “what is texturally meaningful and essential in its phenomenal and experiential components” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 93). The purposes of these processes are to enter a mind space where *the things themselves* can be studied and described texturally without outside influence (Moustakas, 1994). The result of the TPR is the textural description of the phenomena.

Phenomenological Attitude

Transcendental phenomenologists are primarily concerned with describing the phenomenon “as given” (Moustakas, 1994), meaning, they are only interested in studying the phenomena as it is experienced in the lifeworld, whether or not the *experience* is what actually happened, or is happening, in the natural world. Positionality thus becomes part

of the *perception-belief matrix*, or the relationship between how one's assumptions, viewpoints, thoughts, and beliefs affect their experience of a phenomenon (Giorgi, 2009).

Describing this matrix requires analyzing *only* what is present in the data without speculation, assumption, generalization, quantification, or approximation (Vagle, 2018). This requires a movement from the *natural attitude* into the *phenomenological attitude* (Giorgi, 2009; Vagle, 2018). The phenomenological attitude can be considered the first process of TPR (Moustakas, 1994) and represents a transition toward questioning the obvious (Vagle, 2018). As Giorgi (2009) stated, “to assume the phenomenological attitude means to regard everything from the perspective of consciousness, that is, to look at all objects from the perspective of how they are experienced regardless of whether or not they actually are the way they are being experienced” (p. 88). Accordingly, to assume the phenomenological attitude is to view phenomenon unaffected by the judgements and a priori knowledge of the natural attitude. It is to seek the truth of the lifeworld by questioning preconceived notions, assumptions, and beliefs about what the phenomenon entails.

Bracketing or Epoché

The second process of TPR is entering the epoché. Often, this term is used interchangeably with bracketing. While I do understand *bracketing* and *epoché* to be synonymous, through Moustakas's (1994) meditations on the matter, I have come to understand the epoché as a process within TPR. Epoché comes from a Greek word that means to *stay away from* or *abstain* (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Thus, within the epoché, we set aside (or bracket) our natural attitude—the habitual and accustomed means by which we have perceived the world (Moustakas, 1994). This is because within the natural

attitude, we believe our knowledge to be factual and correct; we believe our perceptions to be exact replicas of reality (Moustakas, 1994). This form of thinking hinders us from seeing phenomena as they are experienced by the person giving account, in favor of how we *already know* them to be. Epoché requires us to only *see* what is presented to us, in the exact manner it has been given (Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher would bracket (i.e., suspend) their knowledge of the phenomenon. This would allow them to approach the interview freshly and naively. If they approach the phenomenon as someone who already knows about it, they may discount a detail given by a co-creator and miss an opportunity for the explication of textual components.

Epoché then becomes extremely important to TPR. Within TPR, each experience is considered in a void (Moustakas, 1994). This is possible because within the epoché, phenomenologists reject all thoughts and engagements that refer to previous knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). In TPR, if it is not expressly stated in data, it does not exist. However, it is important to note that the epoché does not expel all precursory epistemology, it does not deny the reality of antecedents, it not even doubt anything, save the natural attitude. “What is doubted are the scientific ‘facts,’ the knowing of things in advance, from an external base rather than from internal reflection and meaning” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Thus, each phenomenon is approached as if the researcher is oblivious to its existence. The approach is carried out in the study conceptualization (assuming the phenomenological attitude), data collection (interviewing within the epoché), and especially the data analysis and reporting of results (within the epoché as a function of TPR). The entire phenomenological study takes place within an aspect of TPR.

Horizon

I would be remiss not to mention that there are a couple of things that cannot be bracketed within TPR. The first is one's current experience (i.e., this exact moment in time; Peoples, 2021). Husserl believed that one could completely bracket, or separate from context, their previous consciousness of a phenomenon to see it clearly and without judgment (Giorgi, 2009). However, what one cannot avoid is the present moment. Thus, the present moment is referred to as the *horizon* and represents our current understanding of the phenomenon (Peoples, 2021). This only elucidates that everything, including our research conditions and environment, contributes to our horizon of understanding. It also exemplifies the continuous and ever-changing nature of our horizons in the search for the essence (i.e., what makes the thing itself) of a phenomenon. As Moustakas (1994) stated, "Horizons are unlimited. We can never exhaust completely our experience of things no matter how many times we reconsider them or view them" (p. 95). A new horizon manifests each time the one before it fades away (Moustakas, 1994).

The second thing that cannot be bracketed would be an experience that was so impactful in one's life they cannot avoid the intrusiveness of memories, thoughts, or feelings (Moustakas, 1994). There may also be some beliefs that are so embedded within an individual it becomes virtually impossible to see a phenomenon associated with it from a new and fresh perspective. However, Moustakas (1994) suggested that "with intensive work, prejudices and unhealthy attachments that create false notions of truth and reality can be bracketed and put out of action" (p. 90). Thus, just because a certain experience or belief currently exerts un-bracketable influence, doesn't mean it must

always hold such sway. Such beliefs can be set aside with intensive emotional and psychological labor.

Imaginative Variation

The researcher, through transitioning from the natural attitude to the phenomenological one in the conceiving of research, then entering the epoché for data collection, is able to construct the textural elements of the phenomenon during data analysis. However, as previously discussed, there is more to phenomenological description than texture. Insert *imaginative variation*—a process that functions to describe the structural essences of a phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). Imaginative variation flows from the epoché in the same manner noema flows from noesis. Just as noema and epoché are responsible for the textural descriptions of phenomena, noesis and imaginative variation provide the structural essence of experience (Moustakas, 1994). Combined, the structure of imaginative variation and the texture of the TPR, create “a textual-structural synthesis of meanings and essences” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 36).

Yet, what exactly is *imaginative variation*? This, even for me, is a somewhat difficult question to answer clearly and simply. My best attempt is to explain it as an opening of one’s mind to freely fantasize the connective tissues of experience based upon elements found within the textural descriptions. Within this indulgence of fancy, or musing, one visualizes how the textural elements (i.e., the what) of the phenomenon would be affected by changes in “temporality, spaciality, bodyhood, materiality, causality, [and differentiations within one’s] relation to self and others” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 60). Thus, imaginative variation presents yet another opportunity to set aside the

presumptions of the natural attitude and explore a phenomenon within a realm of infinite possibility.

For example, what does racism look like in a realm that mirrors the setting of *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993) where the society is so heavily moderated that people do not have control of their life path, do not have sex to produce their children, do not see in color, have no memories of wars or past atrocities, and even the weather is strictly controlled? Would racism exist in such a realm? Or, what about the Marvel Universe after the Blip (Russo & Russo, 2018)? Half the world's population vanishes in an instant, and to keep the world from devolving into chaos, all countries opened their borders. If there are no countries, are you still an American? If the human race is on the brink of extinction, do you care about the skin tone of the people who survive? How does racism function in that instance? Or, if all the people in the world beside Black people vanish, are Black people still Black...or are they just people? Would they create a new society or carry on the internalized racism of the previous society? Does racism exist if there are suddenly no White people to be the antithesis of Blackness?

All these musings and thought experiments of boundless worlds can make one's head spin. However, within these realms one still does have to account for yesterday and today, for being themselves or someone else while experiencing the phenomena, for the phenomena taking place in China or Antarctica, and for the phenomena to appear out of thin air or after a specific set of circumstances. In short, one engages in thought experiments—housed within a realm of boundless probabilities—to heuristically discover the ubiquitous antecedents of the phenomenon, by exhausting all the causal possibilities of its appearance and manifestation. Of course, no one can entirely exhaust

all possibilities or the realm in which the thought experiments are carried out would not be infinite. These musings therefore only need to continue until the researcher is satisfied (Moustakas, 1994).

According to Moustakas (1994, p. 99), imaginative variation has four steps. In the first step, the researcher varies the possible meanings of textural elements to expand their perspective of the phenomena. In the second step, the researcher begins “recognizing the underlying themes or contacts that account for the emergence of the phenomenon” (p. 99). This is accomplished by developing a list of the structural characteristics of the phenomenon. Items within the list are then collapsed into themes. The third step is to contemplate “the universal structures that precipitate feelings and thoughts with reference to the phenomenon” (p. 99). This is done by applying time, space, relationship to self, relationship to others, bodily concerns, and causal or intentional structures as *theme filters* (i.e., lenses by which to view the themes). Lastly, the researcher searches for “exemplifications that vividly illustrate the invariant structural themes and facilitate the development of a structural description of the phenomenon” (p. 99). This is a lengthy step that first involves integrating the structural qualities and themes for each participant into individual structural descriptions, then, combining “all of the individual structural descriptions into a group or universal structural description of the phenomenon” (p. 181).

In sum, imaginative variation is the four-step, reflective phase of transcendental phenomenology. This phase follows TPR and is preparatory for the textual-structural synthesis of meanings and essences (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher uses imaginative variation to contemplate aspects of the textual descriptions to find the underlining *invariant how* of the phenomenon. In this phase, the phenomenologist seeks to move

beyond an understanding of *what* the phenomenon is to an understanding of the motifs and characteristics that account for *how* specific thoughts and feelings connected to the phenomena are triggered (i.e., what conditions summon the phenomena; Moustakas, 1994).

Essence or Invariant Structure

Within the discussion of *imaginative variation*, one also has to discuss the difference between *essence* and *invariant structure*. According to Vagle (2018) and Giorgi (2009), the term *essence* comes with an undesirable amount of philosophical baggage, which is why Giorgi (2009) switched to the term *invariant structure*. Discussion of this particular baggage is beyond my purview and understanding. However, it is important to note that both terms *basically* mean the same thing. Husserl believed there was a distinct difference between the *facts* of a matter (i.e., phenomenon) and the *essence* of it (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, he used the term *essence* to denote the requisite nature of the real (i.e., natural world) in conjunction with the requisite nature of the irreal (i.e., lifeworld) (Moustakas, 1994). Meaning, the term *essence* is representative of the actual events that take place and the way those events are experienced or perceived. In short, the term represents both the *noema* and the *noesis*, both the *texture* and the *structure*, both the *what* and the *how*.

Essence is what makes the *thing* itself. According to Giorgi (2009), since mental phenomena are indistinct and approximate, the essences of them are “morphological,” which represents their inexactness (p.78). This is why essences cannot be interpreted, induced, or deduced; they must be “seen” and then described (Giorgi, 2009, p. 77). Giorgi (2009) also argued that essences are “eidetic discoveries” that *appear* through

utilization of imaginative variation (p. 84). He stressed that phenomenologists, being armed with the knowledge that phenomena contain many related and unrelated junctures and antecedents, are primarily concerned with finding which contingencies continuously occur over a multitude of variations in experience.

Giorgi (2009) adopted the term *invariant structure* to describe the constituent elements of the phenomenon that “hold” across time and context (Vagle, 2018). However, in much of his 2009 work, Giorgi still used the term essence, often using the two terms interchangeably or in the same sentence. Thus, both terms describe what must necessarily be present or *given* for the experience to be classified as such. However, Giorgi (2009) critiqued the typical description of essences as being too detached from their context or structures. He argues that philosophers seek the most universal essence, which often surpasses the psychological (i.e., real world) usefulness of the description (Giorgi, 2009). Thus, Giorgi (2009) differentiated the terms a bit in proposing that his method seeks a *psychological* essence rather than a *philosophical* one, although, he reinforced the point that he and his associates “prefer not to call them essences” (Giorgi, 2009, p.101).

A psychological essence, according to Giorgi (2009), can never ascend to the grand theory level of universal essences because they are *translated* from experience instead of being generalized from them. Meaning, the circumstances of the lived experience as well as the specificities of the general phenomena being studied (i.e., the experience of a headache as opposed to the experience of a stomachache, while both are bodily aches they may be treated differently by medical professionals based upon age, gender, race, etc.) place contextual constraints on the generalizability of the final description. Thus, psychological essences are contingent upon “context and horizontal

factors,” whereas universal essences “transcend the situation in which they were obtained” (p. 103).

Additionally, there is a focus on the psychological essence being a *constituent* piece of the whole, while the philosophical essence focuses on *elements* of the whole (Giorgi, 2009). An element is an independent part of the whole that can function with or without the whole, whereas a constituent is a part of the whole that only functions in relation to the whole (Giorgi, 2009). Therefore, within the comprehension of constituents, there is an understanding that each one is interrelated.

It is important to note that since Giorgi (2009) allowed the combination of singular eidetic description into a high-level structural description (more on this in the next section), there is still the ability to universalize or generalize to some extent. Thusly, the differentiation of the terms is process and goal oriented, as opposed to definition related. Both terms connote the imaginative variation process. However, while Moustakas (1994) sought to exhaust all possible contingencies of the phenomenon to find the universal essence, Giorgi (2009) sought to discover the invariant structures of phenomenon by comparing descriptions from participants across context. In my opinion, Giorgi’s approach seemed to be more rooted in data since it maintains the original context in the final textual-structural description. This is the reason his translation method was combined with Moustakas (1994) horizontalization (more on this in the next section). In this way, the final result is comprehensive, yet more closely related to the data it derives from.

Synthesis and Transformation

While Moustakas (1994) synthesized textual and structural descriptions for essential meaning, Giorgi (2009) transformed descriptions of phenomena into psychological expressions that help clarify the experience. That is the crux of the difference between the two methodologies. Although, as will be discussed, there are several other differences. Each method has its pro et contras, which is why I unitized a fusion of the techniques for analysis. Let's first discuss Moustakas's (1994) method, then juxtapose Giorgi's (2009) method. Hopefully, this will clarify the data analysis section.

Synthesis

Moustakas's (1994) methodology is actually a modification of Van Kaam's method of phenomenological analysis. This method has eight steps and starts with horizontalization—the process of listing every expression relevant to the phenomena of study, regardless of perceived import. In this step, every assertion has equal value. The second step is to reduce or eliminate expressions based upon two criteria: a) if it contains a necessary portion of the experience that explains an aspect of the phenomena and b) its ability to be labeled (Moustakas, 1994). Expressions that overlap, are repetitive, or are too vague to be clearly categorized are also eliminated or collapsed. The expressions that remain after this process are considered to be *invariant constituents* of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994).

The third step is to cluster and label similar invariant constituents. These clusters are considered to be the core motifs or themes of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). The fourth step is to identify and validate the final invariant constituents. This is done by checking each invariant constituent and its overarching theme for two criteria: 1) explicit

expression in the transcript and 2) if not explicitly stated, compatibility with what the co-researcher did state. Invariant constituents that are not explicit, or at very least compatible, are deleted (Moustakas, 1994).

The fifth step is to construct the individual textual description for each co-researcher. Verbatim examples and expressions from the transcribed interview are included (Moustakas, 1994). The sixth step is to construct the individual structural description of the experience for each co-researcher via imaginative variation. The seventh step is to construct the textural-structural description of the experience for each co-researcher by combining the products of steps five and six. Lastly, from the individual textual-structural descriptions, a composite description that is representative of the group is constructed.

Transformation

Giorgi's (2009) method was similar to Moustakas's (1994) method, but only involves four steps. The first step is to read the entire transcript for a sense of the whole context (Giorgi, 2009). This is done to understand the antecedents and consequences of the phenomenon and to ensure one captures the entire phenomena for transformation. The second step is to delineate *meaning units* by breaking the transcript into parts that exemplify a specific portion of the phenomena. This is done by re-reading the transcript and parceling out specific sentences, phrases, or paragraphs that pertain to the phenomena of study. These parcels are not necessarily indexed as they are with Moustakas's (1994) method, but rather left in place and delineated by markings. For example, while re-reading, one could highlight each meaning unit in a different color. Unlike Moustakas

(1994), these meaning units hold no value or theoretical weight, they only serve to break the transcript down into manageable sections.

The third, and most lengthy, step is mostly what separates Giorgi from Moustakas. In this step, the researcher re-reads the delineated transcript (for a third time) while transforming the meaning units into psychologically sensitized lifeworld descriptions. This is done by contemplating each meaning unit until the researcher is able to express it in a more universal, yet psychologically comprehensible, manner (Giorgi, 2009). This is a very long process and calls for many drafts of the individual meaning units. However, eventually the experience is translated from the natural attitude into the phenomenological one via detection, delineation, and elaboration (Giorgi, 2009). This process involves imaginative variation, but not to the point of universality (Giorgi, 2009). Giorgi (2009) stated, “the actually given data are imagined to be different from what they are in order to ascertain higher-level categories that retain the same psychological meaning but are not embedded within the same contingent facts” (p. 132). He argued that even if the facts of an experience differs from one context to another, it can still have the same psychological meaning or implication (Giorgi, 2009). Thus, the use of imaginative variation in the third step is for the purpose of generalizing the data to an extent that allows for the integration of multiple data point into a singular structure, if possible (Giorgi, 2009). However, it does not continue at length the way Moustakas’s (1994) method calls for and is described in the previous section.

The fourth step is to write the structure (Giorgi, 2009). However, unlike Moustakas (1994), Giorgi (2009) did not focus on a singular textural-structural composite. That could be a possibility, but it is totally contingent upon the data. If all the

multiple data points go together, a singular structure could be described (Giorgi, 2009). However, if the data is dissimilar, then instead of a singular composite structure being written, one could stop at writing one for each participant. Thus, even if the phenomena had a single theme or label (i.e., experience of racism), the experience of the phenomena would be highly diversified (i.e., experiences of racism as a man, as a woman, as a queer man, as a trans woman, as a differently abled person, etc., Giorgi, 2009). In my opinion, it would be more valuable to the literature base to discuss the inability of the data to congeal into a singular structure than to force the constituents into a singular description and Giorgi (2009) agreed. If by chance the researcher is able to have a singular description, then they would discuss the *intra-structural variability* of the phenomenon. However, if they must have two or more structures, then in addition to the intra-structural variability, they would also have to discuss the *inter-structural variability*. In my approach to this study, I have integrated both methodologies into a singular approach (See chapter 3).

Rooting Conceptual Theory: Conscientization

“In the struggle to recreate a society, the reconquest by the people of their own word becomes a fundamental factor” (Freire, 2016a, p. 151)

With the introduction of *Education for Critical Consciousness* (2013), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2018), and *Cultural Action for Freedom* (1970; 1998)—all of which made their English debuts in 1970—Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire, took the academy by storm. As an education and language philosopher, Freire believed in teaching the masses not only to read the word, but also how to read the world. Freire was very interested in how the words we use interpret the world we live in (Freire & Macedo,

1987). One of Freire's most notable critiques (and there were many) was against the assumption that education is politically neutral (Freire, 2018). He argued that education always has an agenda that is either left leaning or right leaning. That is, education either socializes youth into fighting for their liberation or into accepting their bondage. Freire (2018) also famously coined the term "banking model of education" as another noteworthy critique (Freire, 2018).

Freire argued that teachers "deposit" knowledge into students through long and mundane lectures as if they are empty vessels, when in fact their minds are full of experiences that underpin their thoughts and actions. Children, and adults especially, are not empty vessels, and whether or not what is being taught finds room among the limited space in one's mind is predicated upon its usefulness in that person's struggle for autonomy. Freire (2018) argued the banking model of education, leaving very little room for critical thought, critical questioning of authority, or critical reflection, groomed children into positions as subordinate laborers for the bourgeoisie.

Freire's (2018) rejection of the banking model of education and assertion that education is "always political" upended traditional beliefs of the time; and continue to perplex academics today (Freire, 1993, p. 22). Freire believed we are all "unfinished beings" and being in a perpetual state of incompleteness was "essential for the human condition" (2001, p. 52). Identification of unfinishedness thus propels us to a perpetual search of wholeness (Freire, 2016b). In the search for fulfillment, we become aware that while our circumstances could remain consistent or deteriorate, they could also improve by virtue of our actions upon the unfinished world (Freire, 2001). Being unfinished without the knowledge thereof results in domestication by our situation (Freire, 2016b).

The authentic realization of one's circumstance, and that it can be improved, is *critical consciousness*. The process by which one acquires this critical consciousness is called *conscientization*.

Defining Conscientization

Conscientization is a multifaceted critical educational theory that focuses on liberatory pedagogy. This theory has vast applicability in all social sciences as its main function is to analyze and challenge socially, culturally, politically, and economically oppressive systems in society. The most widely used definition of conscientization refers to “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 2018, p. 35). Therefore, conscientization is a two-part process—to *perceive contradiction* and then to *take action*. To *perceive* is to become aware or conscious of the oppressive systems affecting personal and collective autonomy and a *contradiction* is any combination of statements, ideas, or circumstances that are contrary or opposed to one another. To *take action* is to put forth concerted, and usually collective, effort into dismantling the oppressive system of one's consideration. Thus, conscientization processes expose the contradictions between the ideals and realities within a society, effectively presenting them to the populous for examination, challenge, and change through the use of extensively researched, meticulously designed, and flawlessly implemented acts of freedom.

The previously explained definition is the most commonly used because it is from one of Freire's most popular books, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. However, in an interview with long-time friend and colleague, Donaldo Macedo, Freire referred to this book and others as his “early writings” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 399), lamenting the

fact that his 40 plus years of scholarship and conscientization development had been limited by the populus to some of his first thoughts on the subject. Freire only published *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in English due to the success of his *Harvard Education Review* article series entitled *Cultural Action for Freedom* (1998). He actually preferred for academics to study his more recent works such as *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* (1987), *The Politics of Education* (1985), and *Pedagogy of Hope* (2014), which showed his growth in conscientization conceptualization and application over time (Freire & Macedo, 1995). Freire stated, “The problem with some of these individuals is that they have read my work fragmentally...they continually refer to my book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which I published over 20 years ago, without making any reference to my later works” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 386). Frustration with the misreading and mis-conceptualization of his work is why Freire abandoned conscientization for almost a decade (Roberts, 2007).

However, Freire’s abandonment only increased the mis-conceptualizations of conscientization and over time has contributed to the fiercely debated purpose, outcomes, methodology, and applicability of the theory. In chapter 2, the Literature Review, we will discuss the ways in which conscientization conceptualization and application has evolved from 1970 to present. Antecedently, in the following subsections I will be explaining the key concepts of conscientization from the purview of Freire’s writings. Thus, we can juxtapose the academic literature with the actual intent of the progenitor. In that vein, before we move on, I would like to provide a conceptually different definition of conscientization as a process by which one becomes a subject of their own life as opposed to an object of another’s (Freire, 1970). This process is initiated by someone

questioning their ontological, epistemological, and axiological positioning in relation to their socio-cultural, economic, and political orientations.

Subject vs. Object

In the Freirian sense of the word, a *subject* is an active participant in life, whereas an *object* is a passive recipient of the choices others make for them. *Subjects* are aware of themselves and the circumstances that comprise their existence. They make their own choices and change their environments to suit themselves. Conversely, *objects* simply exist, they do not truly live because they have no agency over their own minds or bodies. Freire (2018) likened people living in the objective to animals because they adapt to the environment they are placed in instead of forging their own path to self-actualization. This sounds harsh and elitist, but it is rooted in humanism, which is one of the philosophical underpinnings of conscientization. To edify the distinction between the object vs. subject, it is necessary to examine the positions from an ontological, epistemological, and axiological lens. From these purviews, one can see that the objective vs. subjective positions of each are quite different.

Ontologically, one living in the objective never questions their state of being and existing in the world. They simply accept the world as presented and try their best to survive within the confines of the status quo. People in the objective have internalized the oppressive myths or stereotypes promulgated by dominant groups in society. Conversely, one living in the subjective is constantly questioning who they are, how they came to be who they are, who they want to be, and how they will come to be. They question the legitimacy of the stereotypes about their being and existence in the world. This questioning extends beyond intellect, as they act in the pursuit of becoming.

Epistemologically, the objective do not concern themselves with what is considered knowledge, who produces that knowledge, and for what purpose the knowledge is produced. They unquestionably accept the dominant discourse as law and comply even in the face of incongruence or competing truths. Diametrically, one living in the subjective questions what they have been taught and for what reason. More importantly, they question what they have not been taught, and why, or if what they've been taught is actually true. In their questioning, they open their ideals to falsification, seeking divergent perspectives of knowledge and truth.

Lastly, in the axiological sense, the objective often ignores concerns relating to notions of value or worth. More specifically, the objective affirm the dominant discourse of what or who is considered valuable or worthy. Contrarily, the subjective question their own value and worth in respect to other people. They also reevaluate the value and worth of things they once devalued or held in high esteem. Thus, they form their own conclusions about the worth and value of people, places, and all other objects of knowing.

Levels of Consciousness

The initiation of questioning self and society occurs as one progresses from a semi-intransitive consciousness, through a naive-transitive and transitive consciousness, to a critical consciousness. Put simply, conscientization represents the process of developing or awakening a critical consciousness. In this subsection, I'll be explaining the three levels of consciousness proposed by Freire (2013; 2014; 2018), as well as dispelling the notion that conscientization is a stage model.

Semi-Intransitive Consciousness

According to Freire (2013), semi-intransitive consciousness results from living within self-contained or restricted-access communities. That means the communities are isolated and have very little interaction with other communities. Thus, new ideas are few and far between, while misunderstandings and superstitions of the world are repeated like one's voice in an echo chamber. This consciousness represents a near disengagement between people and the actual life they live. For this reason, Freire (2013) described the semi-intransitive consciousness as having a "magical quality" where those in this state of comprehension are "predominantly illogical" (p. 16). He proposed that discernment for people in this consciousness is difficult as they tend to "confuse their perceptions of the objects and challenges of the environment, and fall prey to magical explanations because they cannot apprehend true causality" (Freire, 2013, p. 14). What he meant by this is that people in this state of consciousness seem to think of their problems and living situations as something they have no control over.

They contribute their circumstance to God, luck, a secret society, or a system so large and corrupt it will never change. That is if they even think of their circumstances at all—many don't even question why things are the way they are. They don't know why something is, they only know that it is. So, they adapt to survive within what is. Therefore, those with this consciousness cannot, or do not, acknowledge problems separated from their biological needs (food, shelter, clothing, sex) as the extent of their existence is preoccupied with surviving (Freire, 2013).

Also, since in this state of consciousness people explain their problems *magically*, if they are even able to acknowledge them at all (Freire, 2013). Their explanations of

problems are symbolic of the ways in which they feel utterly oppressed and defeated and exemplify their lack of understanding pertaining to causality. Lastly, since they perceive their problems as resulting from a force beyond their control, they are likely not to act to change their situation (Alschuler, 1980) or, if they do act, it will be to appease whatever magical force they deem responsible for the problem. For example, if you believe the political system will never change, then you will never vote or run for office or if you believe Oshun caused a flood in your village, you will do sacrifices to appease her. So, people in this consciousness pray and go to church on Sunday or they throw salt over their shoulder and avoid splitting the pole. However, what they do not do is vote or get a higher education, or vocational training, or take any action to improve themselves or their circumstance beyond their basic needs. The problem with this state of consciousness is not religion or superstition per se, it is the lack of personal effort placed in improving their lives rooted in the belief that their lives cannot be improved. Or, the belief that if their life was to be improved, it would have to be the result of an extraterrestrial miracle.

Critique of this consciousness often comes from religious people who feel offended Freire associates their God with “magic,” even though this is not really what he means. By magical, Freire really means grandiose. This is another nod to the philosophical perspective of humanism, which takes issue, much like the apostle Paul, in faith without works. Basically, because people perceive their problems as originating from a source beyond their control, they do not act to change their circumstances. This relegates them to the objective of people who do act—a position conscientization is staunchly against. However, it is worth noting that it is very rare to find someone—especially in an urban setting—who is truly this obtuse or oblivious to oppression. Most

people know at least a little about what is happening around them. I want to reiterate that this consciousness was observed in a population of people who lived in closed-off communities, such as the illiterate peasants in the Brazilian country sides Freire taught to read and developed this theory from in the 50s and 60s. They were literally like serfs who belonged to a lord. Most people are somewhere between a semi-intransitive consciousness and a transitive consciousness.

An example of this is the Hebrew Israelite or Black Israelite religion. I can offer my anecdotal experience as a case in point because I was a member of this religion for over 10 years. Israelites believe American decedents of slavery are actually decedents of the biblical Israelites that came to be enslaved in America as punishment for breaking the commandments of God. They believe God will send a messiah to free them from Babylon the Great, destroying this place and making White people slaves to Blacks in the kingdom as retribution for the centuries of mistreatment of God's chosen people. Black Israelites recognize there is racial oppression, but because they believe the oppression is caused by God, they do absolutely nothing to challenge it. Israelites often don't vote, don't get higher education to become lawyers or judges, don't join police departments, or really do anything to help themselves out of poverty or lessen their burden of racial discrimination. Therefore, Black Israelites are a perfect case of the mid-point between the semi-intransitive and transitive consciousness.

They acknowledge racism and classism, but believe God causes their suffering. Since God is beyond them, they do not believe their situation can be changed, therefore they do not act to change it. In summation, those with a semi-intransitive consciousness

are relegated to the objective. They do not question the status quo and therefore do not act to change the oppressive elements of their personal or societal circumstance.

Critically-Transitive Consciousness

Opposite a semi-intransitive consciousness, a critically-transitive consciousness is characterized by ability to problematize self and society in depth, by problematization rooted in fact and placed within a historical context, by understanding problems are not caused by “magical” forces beyond the control of oneself, by acknowledging the part one plays in society instead of transferring responsibility, by the effort to avoid distorted perceptions and preconceived notions when recognizing and analyzing problems, by action upon one’s reflecting and subjecting one’s assumptions to authentic falsification, by rejecting passive objectivity in favor of active subjectivity, and by engagement in dialogue with self and others selves (Freire, 2013). Freire (2013) also stated a critical conscious can be characterized “by receptivity of the new beyond mere novelty and by the good sense not to reject the old just because it is old—by accepting what is valid in both old and new” (p. 15).

Therefore, one with a critically-transitive conscious has progressed passed the magical explanations of their situation in life in favor of explanations tested with scientific methodology. They are the embodiment of the scientific method, having both knowledge and the wisdom to use it for the betterment of the Earth and all manner of creatures that reside upon it. A person with a critical consciousness has realized the myths of dominant groups, and with all due diligence, has expelled them for holding precious space in their minds. They have reconciled their twoness (Jones, 2001) having realized they were at once the oppressed and also housing the oppressor within

themselves (Freire, 2018). They aspire to freedom for all, not to unification with the oppressor (Freire, 2018), meaning they do not seek a better position within the societal hierarchy; rather, they seek to dismantle the hierarchy completely.

Lastly, because they have reached self-actualization, they can and do act to change society in a manner consistent with macro intervention (protest, voting, strikes, awareness campaigns, lobbying) (Alschuler, 1980). A person with a critical consciousness has studied the facet of oppression they are becoming conscientized to. They know what it is, how it came to be what it is, and present elements or systems that support its continuation. They therefore take all that information, examine it from every angle, and then develop a plan of action that targets the core of the matter, after which they enter into a state of praxis. In short, one with a critical consciousness is able to examine their cultural, political, economic, and social circumstances within a historical context and can therefore formulate appropriate actions that change oppressive elements of society.

Naïve-Transitive and Transitive Consciousness

Between semi-intransitive and critically-transitive consciousness lies naïve-transitive and transitive consciousness. Freire (2013) described a person with a transitive consciousness as one whose interests and concerns have progressed passed biological necessity but have yet to understand the complexities associated with interlocking systems of oppression. They still have a lot of the magical explanations of the semi-intransitive consciousness, but have also started becoming aware of a facet of oppression in their lives they can do something about. This is why Freire (2013) referred to the transitive consciousness as “permeable” because the myths and priorities of the former

magical consciousness, along with the awakening and possibilities of the critical consciousness, are simultaneously flowing in and out of them (p. 14). In other words, they have not yet completely overcome their foci on survival, or the internalization of oppressive myths, characteristic of the former conscious, even though they have thrown themselves into the world and know themselves as actors upon it. Therefore, the issue which hinders this consciousness from full self-actualization is not inaction. Rather, it is inappropriate action based upon a still budding understanding of causality.

The misdirection of action is seeded in the naïve-transitive consciousness, which is characterized first and foremost by an over-simplification of problems (Freire, 2013). In this consciousness, explanations of problems are fragile and unstable due to their rootedness in emotions and nostalgia, or romanticizing of past epochs. This is what Freire (2013) meant when he spoke of their explanations for problems as being almost mythical, or still containing magical qualities. Their reasoning is still budding and therefore very brittle, but they throw themselves into action against their oppression anyway. However, these actions, not being based in full comprehension of the causal relationship and constituent parts that contribute to the oppression, become actions that maintain the status quo instead of opposing it.

The over-simplification of problems is what causes those with this consciousness to act in restoration of the modus operandi (Alschuler, 1980). They simply do not comprehend the system is the culprit of their oppression. Instead, they identify a person acting within the system, an actor they feel corrupts it to place their blame (corrupt police, bad teachers, politicians that take bribes, immigrants) (Alschuler, 1980). They do not blame the system because they still identify with and want to be the oppressor. They

like the system of oppression, they just wish they were higher up on the totem pole.

Freire (2018) once said in relation to the Brazilian peasants¹ he helped learn to read, and I am paraphrasing, *people do not want land reform to be free, they want it to be the bosses of other people.*

In corollary, because this is where the transitive and especially the naive-transitive consciousness finds itself, still internalizing oppression, identifying with the oppressors, and therefore acting to maintain the status quo. Those with this consciousness underestimate the power of those who share the brunt of their bondage. Ironically, Freire (2013) asserted that while they often find themselves superior to those who share their station in life, they are still always in the company of their peers engaging in false dialogue. False dialogue is *I-It* compared to *I-Though*. In I-it interactions, the person views themselves in the subjective and the other person as the objective extension of themselves. Whereas in authentic dialogue, the person views themselves as a person or soul among other souls. One engaging in I-It dialogue is likely to pursue action that further elevates themselves, instead of elevating everyone who shares in their oppression. This is also why Freire (2013) cautions that violence—especially domestic violence—can be characteristic of this consciousness. Often, people in naive-transitive consciousness will step on the necks of those they deem inferior to their already disenfranchised status in effort to rise to a more desirable status.

In the literature, naive-transitivity and transitivity are often conflated as one, or Naive-transitivity is often not mentioned and the characteristics of the consciousness are

¹ Freire worked with literal peasants in the agrarian Brazilian country sides in the 1940 and 50s. These people were illiterate farmers who worked the land for a lord or other sort of Brazilian nobility-like person.

melded with the transitive consciousness. In some respects, the two consciousnesses are part of the same whole. However, a more accurate description would be that naive-transitivity is entangled with transitivity, appearing more in the beginning of the transitive consciousness than in the later stages when the person is transitioning into a more critically-transitive consciousness. Put simply, naive-transitivity is a beginning stage of transitive consciousness. In summary, naive -transitive consciousness is the beginning stage of transitive consciousness. These consciousnesses are characteristic of one who knows themselves as an actor on the world but lacks a true understanding of causality. This consciousness still suffers from twoness, or what W.E.B. Du Bois (2003/1903) referred to as *double mindedness* and Kendi (2019) referred to as *dueling consciousness*. This results in action that maintains the status quo as opposed to challenging it.

Fluidity of Consciousness

Contrary to popular belief, the levels of consciousness proposed by Freire are not set linear stages (Roberts, 2007). Critical consciousness is not a permanent state. The process of conscientization is fluid, dynamic, and “involves a constant clarification of what remains hidden within us while we move about in the world...” (Freire, 1985, p. 107). In the same manner, Freire (1985) spoke about naming and renaming the world as it rotates, bearing a new landscape with each dawn, he also spoke of critical consciousness. Freire (1985) stated, “conscientization, which occurs as a process at any given moment, should continue whenever and wherever the transformed reality assumes a new face” (p. 107). Critical consciousness is built and rebuilt from the constantly fluctuating process of conscientization. One is never critically conscious in all matters at all times. We are humans with emotions and dialectical goals and beliefs. However, we change and evolve

through praxis within ourselves, against the world, with the world, and with other selves. Just because we have become conscientized to a facet of gender inequality doesn't mean we fully understand the intersection of gender and race. Likewise, just because we understand obesity is an issue, doesn't mean we fully understand how poverty contributes to that issue; or how racism contributes to poverty which then contributes to the overrepresentation of obesity in the Black community.

These levels of consciousness are not stages or static places of being. They are more like modes of operation in a sense. Sometimes, in some circumstances, people can revert to lower levels of thinking and relating to the world. Conversely, sometimes, in some circumstances, people can have surprising moments of clarity. That is to say that conscientization is a constant choice we make. It has no end goal, save the alleviation of oppression. There is no end point of transcendence, save possibly the praxis process. However, as we will discuss in the next subsection, praxis is in itself a constant choice.

Praxis

Praxis is a term that has been used interchangeably with conscientization—and even critical consciousness—in the academic literature. Many academics confuse or conflate the processes of praxis and developing critical consciousness, or critical consciousness itself (see chapter 2). However, as previously discussed, conscientization is the developmental process of critical consciousness and, if conscientization is the means by which we develop a critical conscious, then praxis is not. If praxis then is not how one develops a critical consciousness, then what is it? In this section I hope to explain that praxis is actually a process of a critically conscious mind. Let's begin by revisiting the definition of conscientization previously discussed.

We now know that conscientization is a three stage (*Semi-Intransitive, Naive-Transitive* and *Transitive*, and *Critical*) process that “refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 2018, p. 35). This means that in addition to conscientization consisting of three stages, it also consists of two phases. It is first coming to know about the oppressive realities of the world and second, taking action against those oppressive elements one has learned about. This initial learning takes place in the first stage, semi-intransitive consciousness, and continues to build through the other two stages, while the action component begins in the second stage, naive-transitive consciousness and transitive consciousness, and continues into the third, critical consciousness. It is important to note that each learning experience builds upon the one previous until one is called to action. Once they act and likely fail, only being armed with their incomplete and budding knowledge, they send themselves again into a learning frenzy. Again and again they act, armed with more and more knowledge and wisdom, until the action is effective. The outcome of this entangled two phased, three stage process is *praxis*.

Praxis is the iterative process of “reflection and action directed at the structure to be transformed” (Freire, 2018, p. 126). Meaning, it is the full understanding of a specific facet of a complex system of oppression rooted in research and contemplation and the concerted organized action, based upon that understanding, to dismantle that system. Freire considered praxis one word with two dimensions (Freire, 2018). Praxis is meant to mitigate the sacrifice of action, which he called *verbalism*, or the sacrifice of reflection, which he called *activism* (Freire, 2018). In other words, one cannot just talk, nor can they act without thinking. The two constituents of praxis must work together in tandem to free

one's mind from the domesticating internalized clichés of oppression and to have effective action that actually opposes the status quo.

While the praxis process may sound very similar to what is qualitatively happening within the stages of conscientization, it is actually quite different. Freire (2018) described the term *praxis* as the juxtaposition of reflection and action upon the world to name it, and thereby change it. Therefore, if the action is not challenging the oppressive systems limiting one's full self-actualization, then it is not a part of a praxis process; it is instead a part of the initial learning process. Freire (2018) stated, "There is no true word which is not at the same time praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world" (p. 87). In order to speak a true word (i.e., expose the contradiction) against a system of oppression—or facet thereof—one has to have progressed into a critical consciousness.

As previously mentioned, those in a naive-transitive or fully transitive consciousness can and often do take action upon the world. However, their action is not a true action as it is not meant for revolution, but to maintain the status quo. They may think they are in alignment with revolutionary thought and ideals; however, because they do not fully understand the issue they are purportedly acting against, they usually only direct their efforts against pawns within the system. Returning to the definition of praxis as an exposure of contradiction (speaking a true word) that results in a transformation of an oppressive system (transforms the world), it becomes clear that praxis is a natural process of a critical conscious. This is because only then is the person aware and studied enough to direct their action against the system of their oppression and not the actors within said system.

Problem-Posing Education

Problem-posing education exploits and repurposes the dissonances of an oppressed person's *thematic universe* into abstract vignettes. This process of abstraction is called *codification*. Freire (1970) believed codification “mediates between the concrete and theoretical contexts of reality” (p. 487), meaning people are better able to see a situation clearly when they have no emotional involvement or investment. Thus, the person, through the course of dialogue about the coded situation—not initially realizing it applies directly to them—is able to gradually apply the same level of analysis to their personal life as they had to the coded situation. Problem-posing education begins with a *cultural circle*, or learning group of people who share similar cultural, economic, or political circumstance. To form an example, let's imagine our cultural circle is a group of Black and Brown teenage girls participating in an inner-city after-school program. The teacher-learner could have the girls view a video showing a reproduction of the doll test (Clark & Clark, 1939; Madge, 1976). The girls would first provide descriptions of the video (i.e., “The video shows children picking the dolls they like best”). With guidance, they could then begin to problematize the video (i.e., “The children give all the bad characteristics to the Black dolls and the good characteristics to the White dolls”). This is the first stage of *decodification* (deconstructing the abstract vignette) and its purpose is for the girls to gain sufficient distance from the object (colorism) and their emotion (personal experiences) to what it symbolizes.

In this process, the teacher-learner also has opportunity to “gain distance from the knowable object...so that educators and learners together can reflect critically on the knowable object that mediates between them” (Freire, 1970, p. 488). This is often very

difficult for the teacher-learner because they have to combat their own assumptions and relation to the images and really strive to understand the girls so they know the best way to guide them. That way, everyone is learning, everyone is teaching, and everyone is growing together. As the group problematizes the video, its *surface structures*, or what is physically seen, becomes apparent and leads them to the second stage of decodification where the *deep structures*, or the meaning behind what is seen, are unearthed.

Understanding the dialectic nature of the surface structure elements and how those elements relate to the deep structures results in a “critical level of knowing, beginning with the learner’s experience of the situation in the ‘real context’” (Freire, 1970, p. 488). Therefore, decodification dissolves the coded object (in this case, colorism) into its constituent parts (i.e., resentment, pain, privilege, assimilation, internalization of racism and sexism, perpetuation of racism and sexism, etc.) so the girls can heuristically discover the relationships between the parts and other parts or systems they may not have previously noticed. Problem-posing education is rooted in the process of praxis previously described. The teacher-learner is in praxis with themselves and the student-learners simultaneously. The student-learners are not empty vessels to be filled by the teacher-learner but subjects and contributors to reality (Freire, 2014). Though this methodology was originally created for use with Brazilian peasants suffering from illiteracy, it has been adapted and applied in a myriad of ways since its conception.

Thematic Investigation

Problem-posing education methodology begins with a type of needs assessment called *thematic investigation*. Thematic investigation occurs during the design process of a problem-posing education intervention to ensure the educational experience will be

relevant to the oppression of the group to be conscientized. Thematic investigation is conducted by the teacher-learner into the *epochal unit* of the learner-teachers. An *epochal unit* is “a complex of ideas, concepts, hopes, doubts, values, and challenges in dialectic interaction with their opposites” (Freire, 2018, p. 101). Freire (2018) believed humans flow from epochal unit to interrelated epochal unit continuously because we possess a *tri-dimensionality* of time. That is to say, we are not ahistorical (Freire, 1970). Everything we *are* today comes from everything we ever *were*. In the same manner, everything that ever *will be* is because of everything that *is* now.

Within tri-dimensionality, individuals recount their history which, in turn, manifests into their own identity. In corollary, they act based upon their expectations for the future, informed by their present and what present situations meant in past epochal units. Everyone—all humans with cognitive ability—is living in the past, present, and future simultaneously. Freire (1970) argued that “there is no *here* relative to a *there* which is not connected to a *now*, a *before*, and an *after*” (p. 456). Therefore, every level of interaction is intimately linked to another level of interaction. Freire believed it is the conscious of humans that allows us to be not only be affected by the world but also have an influence on the world. Thus, as Freire believed, once individuals realize, individually and collectively, they are situated in a present resulting from their and others’ past actions, they can then begin to comprehend the future will result from their and others’ current actions. In this sense, conscientization describes the process by which one moves from an alienated, dominated, and dependent consciousness resulting in no action on the physical world to name and change it to a critical consciousness that can comprehend and problematize their situation within a historical context and thereby understands that

action can be taken to name a problem and change it. We are all simultaneously living in the past, present, and future. We exist in one epochal unit at a time, just as pieces of ourselves (if only as memories or dreams) exist in every epochal unit at the same time.

The teacher-learner investigates the themes of an epochal unit. The themes consist of the concrete representations of the aforementioned dialectics, as well as the obstacles that impede full humanization (or the ability to make decisions as a free agent in society). These themes imply others, which are in conjunction with or in opposition to the themes. Therefore, themes are never independent of one another or static. They are always changing and evolving as we encounter new information. That is why we call the themes *generative themes*. Freire (2018) stated, “(however they are comprehended and whatever action they may evoke) they contain the possibility of unfolding into again as many themes, which in their turn call for new tasks to be fulfilled” (p .102). Meaning, every time you encounter a generative theme, or facet, of oppression and think you have it figured out, you act in opposition to it. However, once you do, you will find it was much more complicated than you originally thought, which will send you back to reflection on the best way to attack the oppression.

In short, *epochal units* are comprised of various *generative themes* consisting of the multifaceted struggle for humanization and the obstacles that impede the realization thereof (Freire, 2018). The complex of interacting themes is called the *thematic universe* and the methodology of *problem-posing education* begins with an investigation of said universe. The purpose of this investigation is the discovery of *generative words*, or words in common use and with specific meaning to the learner-teachers. *Codification* of generative words, or presenting learner-teachers with visual representations of the word

for them to describe and eventually problematize, heuristically explicates the facets of oppression experienced by the students. This codification allows students sufficient emotional distance from the generative word to objectify it. In so doing, they objectify themselves and their reality, coming to know both more wholly (Freire, 1970).

The group becomes confronted with a facet, or *generative theme*, of their reality previously unexplored, so the process of questioning the facet's role in their oppression, or *limit-situation*, can commence. Upon reflection, individually and collectively, a person can choose to act, thereby changing the effect of the facet on their life. These acts, called *limit-acts*, are ones in which the person is working to overcome their limit-situation opposed to simply accepting it. This is a nod to the object-subject dialectic of which Freire was so fond. While completing the limit-action, the person may encounter another generative theme of their thematic universe. This would again lead the person to reflection on the best limit-action to take. Returning to action, the person is confronted again with a different generative theme. The person will always encounter an adjacent generative theme because these themes are interacting and intersecting constituents. This leads to the iterative, or continually reciprocating movement between reflection informed by theory and action informed by reflection. This iterative movement is *praxis*, which we know from the previous section is the objective of the conscientization process and is a byproduct of a critically consciousness mode of thinking.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Conscientization

Phenomenology

Phenomenology was a radical movement away from *positivism*—the ideas that an absolute truth existed, that one could engage in completely objective thinking, that there

was a right or wrong, and either/or logic (Vagle, 2018). The ways in which Freire (1970; 2018) described consciousness' relation to the life world (as if the world is an object of the subjective mind), the fact that the semi-intransitive consciousness is modeled after what phenomenologist would label the *general attitude* (i.e., taken for granted assumptions and beliefs), the focus on language and the importance of naming oneself and environment, and that thematic investigation and problem-posing education occur from within the epoché or *phenomenological reduction*, all suggest he was heavily influenced by phenomenological thinking, specifically Husserl. In corollary, the praxis process in and of itself is an exercise in metacognition, or thinking about one's own thinking, which is a fundamental proposition of transcendental (i.e., Husserlian) phenomenology.

Humanism

In chapter 1 of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2018) asserted that the vocation of man is to become more fully human through the means of freedom and justice. This is a nod to Humanism, which rejects the notion that man is inherently evil and believes man is responsible for his own actions (Pinn, 2016). Humanism suggests that we look to ourselves to solve the world's ills instead of waiting on an all powerful deity to save us (Pinn, 2016). By proposing that we can, in fact, become more fully human (i.e., more just and more free), Freire is calling us to action beyond prayer or contemplation.

Existentialism

Also in chapter 1 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2018) discussed the difference between animals and men. Animals have to adapt to their environments while

men are able to change their environments through the will of their consciousness. Freire (2018) asserted that unlike animals who have no free will, by virtue of the conscious, humans have the power to bend the environment to suit themselves and thus remake the world in their own image. This ability to define self and environment is a nod to existentialism, or the belief in humans as free agents who must find their fullest purpose or self-actualization through acts of free will (Gravil, 2007). Also, the *limit-situations vs. limit-action* and *subject vs. object* dialectic reflects this theoretical perspective in that we all have the choice to enact our will in the naming and claiming of our own reality and, if we don't make a choice, one will be made for us.

Post-Modernism and Post-Structuralism

Post-modernism and post-structuralism, in part, are the beliefs that *everything* is up for debate. At their core, these philosophical orientations espouse a general distrust of grand theories and ideologies that explain human behavior as if they are universal and as if the Western (i.e., White) perspective is the correct one (Ritzer & Stephnisky, 2018). They also generally call for a reordering of status-quo thought and societal structures and hierarchies (Ritzer & Stephnisky, 2018). This is reflected throughout conscientization, from questions related to classroom structures (i.e., the banking model of education), to questioning ourselves in relation to how we are oppressed or uphold systems of oppression, to questioning the politics of education as in what we are learning and why. Post-modernism and post-structuralism are also represented in the ultimate goal of conscientization to free or liberate the masses from the internalized myths of oppressors who told us we have nothing because we are nothing from exploitation in body, mind,

and spirit from injustice in and outside of our court systems and mostly from the systemic and physical violence of our oppressors.

Critical Theory

Theory seeks to explain or predict a set of circumstances (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010). However, critical theories are ones that not only explain or predict the world but seek to change it (Cody & Lehmann, 2016). They focus mainly on power dynamics and seek human emancipation from oppression or outright slavery (Robbins et al., 2019). They view acts as a liberating influence on the world as opposed to the inaction of passively accepting whatever happens to be (Ritzer & Stephnisky, 2018). Lastly, critical theories propose a world that satisfies the needs and powers of all human beings, not just a few (Cody & Lehmann, 2016). For all of these reasons, conscientization is also a critical theory.

During Freire's time, the Frankfort School, a consortium of critical theorists developed in the late 20s and early 30s in the Western Marxist tradition, had become very popular. Being in the Western Marxist tradition meant that theorists within the Frankfort School focused on power dynamics between subordinate and dominant groups but weren't very concerned with advancing the Leninist Marxism of the Soviet Union (i.e., Communism). Western Marxists were mostly concerned with Marx's early writings, which underpinned his philosophical and sociological perspectives. Marx was initially heavily influenced by Hegel, who described three separate stages of dialectic reasoning. Freire too was influenced by Hegel and based his levels of consciousness on his work, as well as the consistent focus on opposing or dialectical forces.

In addition to Marx and Hegel, Freire was also heavily influenced by Erich Fromm. Fromm was a psychologist, psychoanalyst, and social philosopher in the Humanist tradition, which is why Freire so heavily believed in Humanism. Fromm also influenced Freire's general understanding of oppressors and those they oppress. More specifically, Freire took Fromm's notion of twoness, or housing the oppressor within the oppressed. Freire spoke of oppressed people as seeking to be the men they are denied to be. However, for the oppressed, men are oppressors. So, the oppressed seek to be oppressors as well, often oppressing those they can in the same way they themselves are oppressed. Freire also spoke of the tendency of oppressors to objectify or inanimate the oppressed. This concept, rooted in the Marxist concept of *fetishism of commodities* (FOC), comes directly from Fromm. However, Freire was also influenced by Georg Lukás's adaptation of FOC, called *reification*.

In summation, conscientization derives its infrastructure from phenomenology's focus on consciousness and being, mediating between the mind and the body and how the mind-body relates to the physical world (i.e., the object vs. the subject), Humanism's belief that man must fix injustice and inequality because he is the sole progenitor and propagator of it, not God and manifest destiny, existentialism's struggle for self-actualization and liberation, and the Frankfurt School critical theory including Western Marxism's focus on hegemonic systems, postmodernism's critical questioning of epistemology, and poststructuralism's critique of how society functions.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

As discussed in chapter 1, the overall purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of racial conscientization (RCZ) among Black Americans. This exploration is being conducted with specific emphasis on detailing the various mechanisms by which RCZ is catalyzed. In this chapter, I will be detailing the methodology of this Husserlian phenomenological study. I will begin by presenting the design, purpose statement, and rationale for the study, followed by my research aims. I will then specify the analytic strategy utilized for this study with particular emphasis placed on data collection and analysis. The research design, sample and recruitment, consent procedures, data collection, data management, data analysis, and means by which rigor was ensured will be reviewed.

Rationale

While conscientization (CZ) has been published upon in the academic literature for over 50 years, research into its applications on matters of race and racism did not start until the 1990s. Though the academic community seems to be in agreement on the suitability of CZ to study racial matters, there is a strong lack of consensus on the definition, structure and operationalization of racial conscientization (RCZ). There is no current description of the various mechanisms by which Black people resist racism that

can be utilized to assess their level of critical consciousness as it pertains to race. By phenomenologically interviewing Black Americans who have experience resisting racism, the phenomenon of RCZ can be illuminated and holistically clarified.

Suitability of Phenomenology

The field of conscientization (CZ) has significant import to the study of how oppressed populations perceive and resist their oppression. While CZ has been used to study many different hegemonic systems, its application to racial oppression is scant. There are measures of CZ that have scales purporting to assess racial conscientization (RCZ), or scales measuring the critical consciousness (CC) level of participants as it pertains to race (Deimer et al., 2016; Shin et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 2014). However, the underlying constructs for these scales are incomplete in that they only measure macro or politically-oriented behaviors. Furthermore, the conceptualization of the underlying construct for these scales are so muddled by misunderstandings of CZ theory or conflation of CZ with other theories that they hardly measure racial CZ at all (Altranice & Immakus, n.d.). Since there are issues in the conceptualization of CZ, especially RCZ, and the research literature as it pertains to RCZ is limited (i.e., as per chapter 2), a return to qualitative inquiry is needed to build consensus in the field and catalyze new interest and growth (Altranice & Thomas, n.d.).

Phenomenology is particularly suited for this task as the purpose of this qualitative approach is to define and richly describe an experience as it is lived. After there is a clear definition and invariant structure of RCZ, other qualitative approaches can then be utilized to further explicate the theory. For example, Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT), whose purpose is to build a new theory, expand an existing theory, or

explicate a process model, could be instrumental in continuing the empirical conversation of RCZ. However, since CGT requires a solid operational definition and the field of RCZ does not yet have one, it would be inappropriate to start with that approach.

Additionally, Case Study (CS), whose purpose is the analysis and detailed portrayal of a bonded case, could be utilized to study RCZ. However, as the bonded case must be clearly delineated and the current RCZ literature does not provide an invariant structure, this approach would also be inappropriate. By utilizing phenomenology, not only will the invariant structure of RCZ be described and defined in detail, it will also serve as an operational definition by which other approaches can be utilized.

Design

This study utilized a phenomenological approach as it is one of the infrastructural philosophical underpinnings of conscientization itself. Specifically, Husserlerlian (transcendental) phenomenology was utilized because of its emphasis on the natural attitude and bracketing and because of its rejection of assumptions, hypothesis, or theory in data analysis (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2018). Furthermore, to capture the experience of racial conscientization from the co-creators' natural attitude in the lifeworld (Vagle, 2018), Giorgi's (2009) descriptive phenomenological modification of Husserl is being utilized.

Sampling

The proposed sample for this study consisted of Black American adults of any ethnicity, who are between the ages of 18 and 65, and who have had at least one experience resisting racism on a micro, mezzo, or macro level. I sought a sampling of co-creators who represented various parts of the country, socioeconomic statuses, ethnicities,

education levels, religions, marriage statuses, and parental statuses. To accomplish this, I utilized a combination of sampling techniques including convenient, purposive, and snowball.

Initially, I began sampling by creating a flyer (see Appendix C). This flyer was posted to my social media accounts including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. I also sent the flyer to academic contacts at several universities—two in Texas and two in Kentucky. Last, I encouraged co-creators to send my flyer to their contact lists at the end of each interview in an effort to quickly move into snowball sampling. The first person to participate, Aniyah, was purposively sampled from a university. She recruited two others, Bakari and Davu. Bakari then recruited Etana. Chioma responded to my flyer posted by an academic contact. Folami and Mudada were conveniently sampled from LinkedIn. Folami then recruited both Hakim and Gasira. Jamila, Kenayah, and Naeemah were all conveniently sampled from Facebook. Lesedi and Imari were recruited from people who could not participate in the study but still passed the information along.

Sample size recommendations vary wildly depending upon the source. I've seen recommendations for as few as two (Giorgi, 2009) and as many as 30 (Cresswell & Poth, 2016). I aimed for a sample between 12 and 20 but that range was admittedly arbitrary. I settled on 14 as I had such rich interviews that I was well beyond saturation at that point.

Consent

Co-creators gave active consent to participation in the study through the use of an unsigned consent form (see Appendix D). The reading of the consent form took approximately 10 minutes. Co-creators interviewed via video conferencing software had the consent form read to them. I ensured they verbally agreed to each section. After I read

the form to the co-creators, I attained permission to print their name on the signature line. Co-creators interviewed in person were given the form to read themselves. I answered any questions the co-researchers had before turning on the tape recorder.

Data Collection and Management

I conducted 14 in-depth phenomenological interviews from within the epoché as the primary means of data collection (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Twelve of these interviews were conducted via video conferencing software and the other two were conducted together in person. The longest interview was two hours and 19 minutes (Bakari), the shortest was 55 minutes (Mudada), the average time was one hour and 22.5 minutes. Tape-recorded interviews were uploaded to a password-protected computer; then sent to a third-party vendor for transcription. Interviews conducted via video conferencing software were saved to a password-protected computer while the audio was separated from the video. Like the tape-recorded interviews, these audio files were then sent to a third-party vendor for transcription.

I utilized an interview guide that heavily emphasized open-ended questions (see appendix E). The guide was developed according to phenomenological methods for interviewing and slightly evolved according to the emerging data (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). The guide included questions such as “In what ways do you resist racism on a micro, mezzo, and macro level?” and “Have there been any impactful moments in your learning of race and racism?” Co-creators were asked to describe how they define and describe racism, the process of learning attached to their meaning making in relation to the process of Black racial conscientization, and what role race played and plays in their lived experiences. Demographic data was also collected from respondents

to assess how age, sex, gender identity, religion, socioeconomic status, marital status, parental status, education level, nationality, and ethnicity impacted the phenomenological experience of one's process of racial conscientization.

Explication

Coding

After interviews were transcribed, I cleaned and de-identified them. I then donned the phenomenological attitude and entered into the transcendental phenomenological reduction. My preconceptions and prior knowledge were bracketed away from the current and present horizon of data explication. Once my prior knowledge and personal experiences were bracketed away, I was in the proper mindset to focus on explicating the data as given and, as such, began coding.

The first two interviews were coded by hand to establish a *broad meaning unit (MU) codebook*. This was done utilizing the first two steps of Giorgi's (2009) method. This necessitated reading the transcripts in their entirety. I then read them again while delineating meaning units, or units that explain a facet of the phenomena. For me, meaning-unit delineations occurred where clear shifts in topic, thought, or mood could be observed. Those meaning-units were then named; however, those names changed often during the explication process. After coding the first two interviews, they were then uploaded to Dedoose—a qualitative coding application—for re-coding utilizing the MU codebook. Interviews 3–8 were uploaded directly to Dedoose for coding utilizing the MU codebook. However, slight adjustments were made to the codebook with the addition of each interview.

After coding the eighth interview, I *deep coded* by deconstructing the *broad meaning units* into their constituent parts. This was done by reviewing each excerpt in a meaning unit (parent code) and labeling it (child code) according to its action or description. This resulted in a total of 97 separate codes. I then grouped the child codes back together into 30 meaning-units under six parent codes. This created several layers of codes that formed a sort of code tree. This was an inductive process, at times collapsing themes, expanding themes, and consolidating themes. The end result of this process was a fully explicated *deep codebook*, or code tree, of the co-creators' experiences with range and dimension including 97 codes across five themes, 23 meaning units, 42 constituents, 41 facets, and 18 elements.

Saturation

It is important to note that I continued conducting interviews through the deep coding process but did not clean or code them until I finished. I then coded the ninth interview, which was conducted before the deep coding process began, as a saturation test against my *code tree* to see if anything could be further explicated. When nothing was, I knew I had reached saturation. To confirm this, I coded the four interviews conducted while I deep coded. Still nothing could be further exemplified. However, just to triple check, I conducted a final interview and coded it against my codebook. Still, nothing further manifested. In total, six interviews were coded post saturation.

Situated Narratives and the Composite Textural Description

After the codebook was finalized, I began working on the situated narratives, also known as textural descriptions. These are explanations of the themes and their meaning-units, constituents, facets, and elements. For this, I pulled exemplar quotes representing

each situated narrative and presented them as part of the thematic analysis. Once this was finished, I prepared the general narrative, also known as the composite textural description (CTD). The CTD is what the phenomenon is as experienced by the co-creators. It is created, still from within the transcendental phenomenological reeducation, by combining the individual experiences of the co-creators into one cohesive narrative that represents them all. This narrative serves to explain how the phenomena is experienced so as to effectively explain what it is.

Composite Structural Descriptions

After the CTD was created, I began crafting composite structural descriptions for key findings in need of further explication. To do this, exemplar quotations were transformed into psychologically sensitive expressions using Giorgi's (2009) method of transformation. Psychologically sensitive expressions are universalized expressions of the co-creator's experience. To create them necessitated a small degree of imaginative variation. This allowed me to form a more cohesive description of why the phenomena is experienced as it is. Imaginative variation aids in the deconstruction of meaning-layers discussed in the *meaning-making* section of chapter 1.

However, to be fair, for me, crafting composite structural descriptions is mostly a matter of generalizing the data out of the individual experiences of the co-creators. I simply separated the data from the person experiencing the phenomena. For example, instead of saying *Folami and Mudada cope by praying while Imari does Tai Chi and meditates*, I generalized the experience of coping into *Co-creators displayed an array of coping strategies including many spiritual practices like praying and meditating*. This was done for reporting purposes only.

For other meaning units, such translation was not necessary as the *child codes* themselves served as description. This can be observed most easily in the *Resisting* theme. By reading the many elements of the *Corporate* and *Urban* facets attached to the *Embracing the Black Aesthetic* constituent of the *Developing Positive Black Identity* meaning-unit, one can clearly see the elements are just a list of featured offered by co-creators. This is all presented in chapter 4 with greater depth and clarity.

Role of Researcher

Within phenomenology, the researcher plays an integral and very specific role. In this study, I had a unique role as the researcher because I knew most of the co-creators in one capacity or another. However, though many of the co-creators are acquaintances, the use of the epoché during the interview processes helped me to approach situations with fresh eyes, even if I was aware of them before the interview began. For example, I knew Mudada's wife was White before the interview. However, if he did not introduce that detail of his life into the conversation, I wouldn't have. Even when he did, I approached the subject as if I had never spoken to him about it, allowing him to steer the conversation. Thus, if the co-creator did not bring it up, it did not exist.

Additionally, bracketing helped me to maintain an inductive and data-driven analysis process. If it wasn't in the transcript, it did not exist. This was very important as I am well studied in conscientization. I have done two in depth literature reviews on the subject and taken a course where I tussled with the axiological, ontological, and epistemological features of the theory. This is also my third study on conscientization and critical consciousness. Thus, bracketing helped to ensure an inductive data explication process. In summation, the use of the transcendental phenomenological process enabled

me to fully bracket my previous experiences with co-creators and maintain an inductive and data-driven analysis process.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

Credibility and Confirmability

To ensure credible research findings, I utilized multiple methods of rigor. The first was an inductive research design that exclusively relied on emerging co-creator data. To ensure this design was upheld, researcher journaling that explicated biases was utilized during the design phase, interviews were conducted from within the epoché, and the use of bracketing was utilized during data analysis. The second method was a form a negative case analysis that investigated divergent co-creator opinions. The third was a form of member checking in which I conversed with multiple co-creators during the analysis and reporting processes to gauge their agreement with emerging themes. Five of the 14 co-creators participated in the member-checking conversations. Finally, with the addition of the member-checking conversations, the use of prolonged exposure was utilized to ensure an accurate understanding of data during analysis and reporting.

Generalizability and Transferability

Phenomenological results are rarely broad enough to be generalized. However, some of these experiences can reasonably be generalized to other groups, both subjugated and oppressing. For example, all humans live with various intersections in their identity. Very few of us have all facets of our selfhood belonging exclusively with either oppressed or oppressing groups. Therefore, some of the means by which Black Americans navigate these intersections could likely be generalized to the broader American public. However, more research would be needed to be sure. Additionally, the

explications of tacit resisting revealed in the data may be transferable to other people of the global majority. Of course, careful attention to nationality, language, and culture should be carefully examined before imprinting the specifics of these findings onto other subjugated groups.

Dependability

I utilized the exact methods outlined in chapters 3 on two previous studies with different populations and yielded similar results. Therefore, the specifics of this methodology in studying conscientization and its various facets is highly effective and dependable across time, race, gender, and socio-economic class. However, this method has not been utilized to study those of different cultures. Therefore, one would need to run a small replica study to ensure viability and dependability of methods.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the rationale of the study and explained the suitability of phenomenology to investigate the lived experience of Black American Racial Conscientization. I then detailed the methods of this study including the design, sampling, consent, data collection and management, explication, and role of the researcher. I also presented co-creator demographics and discussed their physical and emotional horizons. Last, I discussed the trustworthiness and rigor of the study including credibility and confirmability, transferability and generalizability, and dependability.

As it pertains to explication, I paid particular attention to detailing explication procedures for situated narratives, composite textural description, and composite structural descriptions. In total, 1,032,773 words spread across approximately 27 hours of formal co-creator interviews were analyzed for this study. Explication was conducted

utilizing Giorgi's (2009) method of delineating meaning-units and translation.

Explication produced 97 codes across five themes, 23 meaning units, 42 constituents, 41 facets, and 18 elements.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

In chapter 5, I will present co-creator information and the research findings of the study. As it pertains to co-creators, the demographics, physical horizons, and emotional horizons will be discussed. The findings include the general narrative (composite textural description), general descriptions (composite structural description), and situated narratives (themes). I will first present a general narrative of Black American racial conscientization (RCZ). I will then present general descriptions of Black American *RCZ*, Black American *critical consciousness* (CC), *negative consequences* of the RCZ process for Black Americans, and Black American *resisting*. Last, I will present a detailed thematic analysis of the five situated narratives.

Co-Creator Informatics

Demographics

All co-creators were cis-gendered, American Descendent of Slavery (ADOS), citizens of the United States, and attended college. Most co-creators graduated from college (N=11); some with a bachelors (N=4) and more with an advanced degree (N=8). Only three were either still in

Table 5.1
Co-Creator Demographics

Co-Creators	Name	Age	Sex	Gender Identity	Religion	Marital Status	Parental Status	Education Level	Socio-economic Status	Nationality	Ethnicity	Home State	Current State
P1	Aniyah	28	F	Cis	Spiritual	Engaged	Yes	Doctorate	Middle	U.S. Citizen	ADOS	MS	KY
P2	Bakari	29	M	Cis	Spiritual	Engaged	Yes	Some College	Middle	U.S. Citizen	ADOS	FL	KY
P3	Chioma	21	F	Cis	Spiritual	Single	No	Some College	Middle	U.S. Citizen	ADOS	MS	TX
P4	Davu	30	M	Cis	Christian	Married	Yes	Master's Degree	Middle	U.S. Citizen	ADOS	MS	MS
P5	Etana	30	F	Cis	Spiritual	Engaged	Yes	Advanced Graduate	Working	U.S. Citizen	ADOS	FL	FL
P6	Folami	41	M	Cis	Christian	Married	Yes	Bachelor's Degree	Upper-Middle	U.S. Citizen	ADOS	TX	TX
P7	Gasira	30	F	Cis	Spiritual	Married	No	Master's Degree	Middle	U.S. Citizen	ADOS, Italian & Latina	CA	TX
P8	Hakim	38	M	Cis	Spiritual	Married	No	Bachelor's Degree	Middle	U.S. Citizen	ADOS	MS	TX
P9	Imari	46	M	Cis	Spiritual	Single	Yes	Master's Degree	Middle	U.S. Citizen	ADOS	KY	KY
P10	Jamilah	48	F	Cis	Christian	Single	Yes	Bachelor's Degree	Middle	U.S. Citizen	ADOS	MO	MO
P11	Kinaya	36	F	Cis	Spiritual	Single	No	Master's Degree	Working	U.S. Citizen	ADOS	MO	MO
P12	Lesedi	49	F	Cis	Christian	Engaged	Yes	Master's Degree	Upper-Middle	U.S. Citizen	ADOS	IN	TX
P13	Mudada	45	M	Cis	Christian	Married	Yes	Some College	Middle	U.S. Citizen	ADOS	KY	KY
P14	Naemah	32	F	Cis	Christian	Married	No	Bachelor's Degree	Middle	U.S. Citizen	ADOS, Irish, & Indigenous	MO	GA

college (N=1) or did not finish (N=2). A little more than half of the co-creators live in the South (N=8) while the rest live in the Midwest (N=6). An equal split of co-creators hailed from the South and Midwest. Most co-creators were in the middle class (N=10) while few were in the upper-middle class (N=2) or working class (N=2). The average age of co-creators was 36, with most co-creators falling in their 30s and 40s. Only one co-creator was under the age of 28 and none were over 50. **Table 5.1** provides a summary of all co-creator demographics.

Setting

Setting refers to the co-creator's physical and emotional horizons, or circumstances and experiences that cannot be bracketed out, that can affect the interview and data received. First, I will discuss physical horizons, then I will move to emotional ones.

Physical Horizons

Most participants were interviewed via video conferencing software. I presented in my office in front of my computer. However, participants were often on their phone

and walking around or completing other tasks during the interview. Gasira and Hakim were the only ones to interview in person and I interviewed them together, though I analyzed their responses separately. The interview location became very hot. Hakim said he was fine but was sweating. I paused the interview briefly to get water.

Other physical distractions included audio malfunctions and bodily needs. For example, Davu stepped outside to smoke a cigarette in his car after his headphones died. It took him about 3–4 minutes to walk from his room, past his family and friends, outside, and into his car. I stayed on the line at this time but did not speak. During Jamilah's interview, I asked to take a brief bathroom break. When I came back to the computer, she had moved rooms and was smoking a joint. As with Davu, I did not acknowledge the smoking. I also had to take a bathroom break with Kinaya as she had audio difficulty that persisted for about 15 minutes before the interview started. In Mudada's interview, my daughter burst into my office proclaiming her hunger and demanding I get off the computer to feed her. My children were not normally in the home for interviews but his interview occurred late in the evening. Mudada was gracious about it and jokingly told her to eat a Pop Tart. Other participants received phone calls, managed children, or spoke to adult family members or friends during their interviews. Personality wise, both Chioma and Jamilah laughed through the entire interview, often making me laugh hard alongside them and forget my train of thought.

Emotional Horizons

Almost all participants had an emotional horizon as I knew many of them since they were recruited from my social media and from each other. In addition to association, most co-creators had emotional horizons that clearly impacted their interview. For

example, Aniyah was in the process of entering the academic job market. Bakari had been fired from his job the day of his interview. Chioma was in the process of scouting graduate schools and programs. Etana is currently obtaining a Masters in Social Work (MSW) and was interviewing for a supervisor position at a different company—a position she got. Imari was in the process of looking for a new job in another state, was freshly dumped by his girlfriend of seven months, and moved into his house that is being occupied by his ex-wife. Jamilah had just received a promotion, but is also looking to move to a new state since her son is a senior and about to go to college. Kinaya's unemployment was ending and she is trying to decide if she should continue building her business, finish that one class to complete her master's, or re-enter the corporate world. Lesedi was finishing her second master's and looking for positions in private practice. Mudada's wife was White and has mixed children who now identify as Black. Naeemah was quitting her job but leaving on a high note, having negotiated a severance package that includes compensation, matured stocks, and health insurance. Therefore, almost all co-creators had an identifiable emotional horizon.

General Narrative

The General Narrative, also known as the *composite textual description*, is a combination of all co-creators' experiences of the phenomenon. Textural descriptions are direct reflections of the data as given and thusly may include specific experiences by co-creators, as well as how many co-creators experienced said aspect of the phenomena.

Black American Racial Conscientization

All co-creators experienced racial conscientization as a lifelong conflation of formal and informal learning experiences. Learning experiences are events or

occurrences that add to the racial knowledge base of co-creators. Formal experiences take place in institutions of learning such as the planned curriculum of K–12 schools or specific courses at colleges and universities. Formal education can also include the intangible or implied knowledge gained through observation, as well as positive or negative interactions with students and teachers. Informal experiences take place anywhere outside of institutions of learning such as within the home via conversations with familial adults, in the community, or in the workplace.

More than half of co-creators, eight of 14, had an impactful formal experience of learning within higher education, including positive or negative interactions with students or professors and positive or negative reactions to curriculum that exposed them to the breadth and depth of racial oppression. Most co-creators, 11 of 14, had an impactful learning experience in a K–12 setting, including being called a nigger by peers or educators, being unfairly discriminated against or disciplined by educators, and being exposed to Black historical figures and diluted versions of Black history.

All co-creators offered multiple descriptions of racial oppression. Most descriptions occurred in the workplace, educational setting, with police or the criminal justice system, and within the Black community. Workplace occurrences included not being hired for qualified positions, being denied promotions or raises, being fired for minor infractions, being forced out of the company due to culture and environment, being bullied by White co-workers or superiors, and being micro-aggressed. Descriptions of racial oppression that involve the police or criminal justice system included racial profiling, being micro-aggressed, being falsely imprisoned, and not being able to seek justice. Incidents in educational settings included being verbally abused by White

teachers and students, being physically abused by White teachers and students, having career options limited, being taught incomplete or “watered down” versions of history, and being micro-aggressed. Intra-group bias, or displays of internalized racism perpetuated by Black people against other Black people, mostly consisted of colorism, bias at the intersection of race and class, bias at the intersection of race and gender, a clear indication of co-creator’s preference to associate with other Black people who are similar to themselves, and descriptions of co-creators being silenced or discriminated against by other Black people for being different. A little less than half, five of 14, of the co-creators experienced physical violence, while only a little more than half, eight of 14, of the co-creators were directly and overtly accosted with hate speech. By far, the most prevalent descriptions of bias were in the form of micro-aggressions, micro-insults, and micro-invalidations. These micros took place in every area of the co-creators’ lives, from work, to conversations with friends, to interactions with romantic partners, to institutions of higher education.

All co-creators experienced both positive and negative consequences as a result of the racial conscientization process. Positive consequences included the ability to perceive racial situations, assess them for the most optimal outcome, and maneuver through them relatively unscathed or around them completely (ability to play the game), the ability to contextualize racial events and apply the lessons gleaned to other circumstances—either racial or not—and the ability to concretely understand abstract racial concepts through experience (i.e., concretization and contextualization), the ability to create distance between one's self and the trauma of racial discrimination (i.e., emotional and intellectual buffer), the development of a positive intersectional Black identity (i.e., intersectional

identity development), learning language to adequately express one's experiences and feelings (i.e., learning to verbalize), the ability to persist in the face of injustice and utilize negativity as fuel for success (i.e., resilience), and the ability to have a positive self-esteem despite constant bombardment of negative portraits of one's self and community.

The most prolific of the negative consequences was psychological fatigue. Psychological fatigue results from tiring efforts to challenge racism and its consequences (i.e., battle fatigue), the compounding stress of consistent exposure to racial discrimination and racial violence perpetrated against the self or other Black people (i.e., cumulative stress), the necessary devotion of emotional and psychological energy to the processing of historical and current traumatic racial events (i.e., emotional processing), the consistent feeling of being unprotected from racial micro-aggressions or racial violence from police or White community members due to subordinate citizenship delegation and White solidarity (i.e., feeling unprotected), the necessity for success in all areas of life due to ancestors being blocked from the ability to do so and feeling like a failure if one is not a married and educated homeowner and making a decent salary and not contributing back to one's family and community in a meaningful way (i.e., intergenerational pressure); feeling isolated from other Black people due to one's chosen career path, one's level of financial success, or one's hobbies and extra-curricular activities (i.e., isolation); feeling despair when thinking of the unfairness of being a member of a racially oppressed group and believing there is no hope this subjugation will ever end for yourself or posterity (i.e., nihilism and pessimism), the requirement to be high performing and the inability to be mediocre as a Black person and feeling as if one

is a representation of their whole race and being denied the autonomy of individuality (i.e., performativity fatigue); questioning if one was not hired or did not get a raise or promotion due to not being qualified or being Black, having to ask oneself if the clearly racist incident one experienced was in fact racist, and second guessing oneself due to a society invested in oppressing one's racial group while gaslighting them about the oppression (i.e., questioning self), and feeling as if one is always being watched and critiqued and judged by members of the dominant racial group (i.e., the White gaze).

All co-creators displayed various means by which they resist racism and its effects. Nine of the 14 co-creators described directly challenging people who make racist assertions or tell racist jokes. Coping was described as a form of resistance by the vast majority, 13 of 14, of co-creators. Coping included spending time in established safe spaces, praying or meditating, partaking in pleasurable activities, going to therapy, letting go of circumstances beyond one's control, setting physical and emotional boundaries, and having hope for the future. Effective coping was not only deemed necessary by co-creators, but was also considered a form of radical self-care. The notion that a Black person is caring for themselves is radical in that Black people are expected to bear the weight of the racist systems they are forced to encounter until they are crushed by them.

Most co-creators, 10 of 14, also discussed the development of a positive Black identity as an act of resistance. Co-creators found that embracing the Black aesthetic and declining to assimilate, celebrating any advancement or achievements by Black people and taking pride in Black history, and accepting that Black people are not a monolith helped them to find pride in themselves and their communities, even in the face of consistent negative imagery. Over half of the co-creators, nine of 14, discussed finding

and creating safe spaces as a means of resistance. The ability to detach, however momentarily, from the dominant society provides much needed respite and the opportunity for co-creators to present their true and authentic self to other true and authentic selves. This act of holding oneself close and only sharing one's vulnerability with those who one can trust effectively denies White people access to the Black body to which they feel entitled.

Last, the overwhelming majority of co-creators, 13 of 14, discussed putting their educational, positional, visible, and financial status to work for the Black community. Some co-creators, four of 14, took the time to build rapport and gain White allies. Half of the co-creators discussed using their increased visibility to dispel negative stereotypes while a small majority, nine of 14, looked out for other Black people by teaching them how to navigate White corporate culture, helping them to establish their finances, diversify their portfolios, and provide opportunities for Black men and women to heal and reconcile.

General Descriptions

General descriptions, also known as *Composite Structural Descriptions*, are generalized amalgamations of co-creators' experiences of the phenomena, or various aspects thereof. Structural descriptions differ from textural descriptions in that they are generally written in plain language and do not include quotes or specific experiences of co-creators. The structural description is farther removed from the data and thus, the direct lived experiences of specific co-creators. Instead, it is generalized in a fashion that any one of the co-creators could read and find aspects of their experience represented. I will be presenting Structural Descriptions for Black American Racial Conscientization,

Black American Racial Critical Consciousness, Negative Consequences of the Racial Conscientization Process for Black Americans, and Resisting. These specific topics were chosen for description as they are the main focus of the study and directly address aims 1 and 2 discussed in chapter 1.

Black American Racial Conscientization

For Black Americans, racial conscientization (RCZ) is a cyclical process of learning and acting that begins in very early childhood. Learning can be structured or unstructured and occurs via formal or informal means. Learning firstly manifests via conversations with familial adults and continues to transpire as Black Americans progress through K–12 schools and matriculate through institutions of higher education. However, the most impactful learning occurs via visceral experience with racist people or systems, or the effects thereof. Visceral learning does not catalyze the RCZ process; rather, it concretizes abstract racial knowledge and launches Black Americans further into their development of a critical consciousness. Acting occurs as Black Americans move through a racist society seeking opportunity, success, and autonomy or freedom. Acting is the engineer of experience for Black Americans by virtue of their mere will to exist peacefully, equitably, and integrate successfully into a racist society that both needs and rejects their actuality. Therefore, acting to fulfill one’s will is indistinguishable from their experience and learning. In general, Black American RCZ occurs as formal and informal learning collide with real-world experience orchestrated by acting; the three (learning, acting, and experience) are inextricably bound and difficult to distinguish between.

Black American Racial Critical Consciousness

Black Americans who have undergone the racial conscientization process are able to:

1. Acknowledge contradictions between one's perception of reality and its manifestation;
2. Problematize or critique a hegemonic system—or facet thereof—utilizing an integration of complex analysis from multiple sources across time and venue;
3. Perceive and assess racial situations; and maneuver through or around them successfully;
4. Contextualize personal experiences or abstract knowledge (of historical events, language, and culture), understanding the significance thereof, for concretization and application;
5. Objectify or distance their experience as a member of a subjugated group to prevent being consumed by nihilism, pessimism, and despair;
6. Conceptualize themselves as intersectional beings, understanding they have portions of their identity belonging to both privileged and oppressed groups;
7. Astutely articulate their complex experience as a member of a subjugated group utilizing academic jargon, metaphors, or by any other intellectually complementary means;
8. Effectively channel the pain of living as a second-class citizen into a drive for success, desire for a better life, and hope of a better future for posterity;
9. Maintain a high self-esteem and self-efficacy despite the persistent onslaught of messaging meant to reinforce ones' inferiority; and

10. Challenge racism on a micro, mezzo, and macro level of intervention by whichever explicit or implicit mechanism they choose.

Negative Consequences of the Racial Conscientization Process

The racial conscientization (RCZ) process for Black Americans is not without consequence. There are positive consequences that contribute to the critical consciousness of Black Americans and negative consequences that must be overcome in the striving for a complete and holistic understanding of society and self. The negative consequences of Black RCZ include dual consciousness and psychological fatigue. A dichotomous consciousness is one in which the values of a just and free society for one's race are at odds with one's individual interests and goals. The person swings between wanting to abolish the systems that oppress them and wanting a better position within the current systems. They hate oppression, while admittedly enjoying some of its privileges and benefits. In some respects, they only hate the oppression they face and find other domains of oppression, ones which benefit them, as inevitable and requisite.

Psychological fatigue is the most concomitant of the two negative consequences and describes the psychological and emotional burden Black Americans shoulder as a result of coming to understand race and racism more fully. Black Americans experience *battle fatigue* from directly challenging racism and its consequences. They must also contend with an exacerbated cumulative tension strain from the compounding stress of consistent exposure to racial discrimination and racial violence perpetrated against the self or other Black people. They necessarily devote a significant portion of emotional and psychological energy to the processing of historical and current traumatic racial events, leaving very little for themselves and loved ones. Additionally, they grapple with the

consistent feeling of being unprotected from racial micro-aggressions or racial violence from police or White community members due to subordinate citizenship delegation and White solidarity.

Black Americans progressing through the RCZ process struggle to self-actualize under the burden of intergenerational pressure mandating their success in all areas of life due to historical prohibition of their ancestors' autonomy and opportunity; the more successful they become, or the more they diverge from what is culturally pervasive, the more isolated they feel from society and other Black people, leading to nihilism and pessimism. Additionally, Black Americans are exhausted by the requirement to be high performing and the inability to be mediocre. They are hyper-aware they are considered a representation of their whole race—effectively being denied the autonomy of individuality. In the face of discrimination, they must ask themselves if the clearly racist incident was in fact racist, unnecessarily diverting more psychological energy toward processing before they can heal and move forward. Last, there is an ever-present awareness of being watched, critiqued, and judged by members of the dominant racial group that contributes to the psychological and emotional weariness of Black Americans undergoing the RCZ process.

Resisting Racism

Black Americans who have undergone the racial conscientization process resist racism and its effects via a plethora of overt and tacit liberatory actions. Overt actions such as engaging in politics (i.e., voting, phone banking, volunteering at voting sites, participating in voter registration drives, and donating to campaigns) and directly challenging those who make racist assertions or tell racist jokes are easily identifiable.

However, Black Americans also tacitly resist by coping, developing a positive Black identity, finding or creating safe spaces, and using their positions of power. A Black person caring for themselves is a form of resistance in that Black people are expected to bear the weight of the racist systems they are forced to encounter until they are crushed by them. Therefore, coping in a racist society is an extremely important form of resisting, as it is resistance by subsistence.

Additionally, developing a positive Black identity, amongst the bombardment of negative self and communal imagery, is an act of resistance against racist socialization that seeks for them to deem themselves inferior in historical achievement, aesthetics, intelligence, and culture. Embracing the Black aesthetic and culture by declining to assimilate, celebrating any advancement or achievements by Black people, taking pride in Black history, and accepting that Black people are not a monolith are in direct retaliation to prevalent myths of Black inferiority. In corollary, American Blacks find and create safe spaces as another means of resistance. The ability to detach, however momentarily, from the dominant society provides much needed respite and the opportunity for co-creators to present their true and authentic self to other true and authentic selves. This act of holding oneself close and only sharing one's vulnerability with those who one can trust, effectively denies the dominant society access to the intimate Black body to which they feel entitled.

Consequently, Black Americans resist the ever-present glare of the White gaze by only making visible the parts of themselves that advance the cause of Black people. They utilize their educational, positional, visible, and financial status to work for the Black community by fostering relationships with White allies and increasing their positive

visibility to dispel negative stereotypes. They also assist other Black people by teaching them how to navigate White corporate culture, helping them to establish their finances, diversify their portfolios, and provide opportunities for Black men and women to heal and reconcile with one another. This assistance and mutual aid is a form of resistance that combats White solidarity's ability to maintain the status quo.

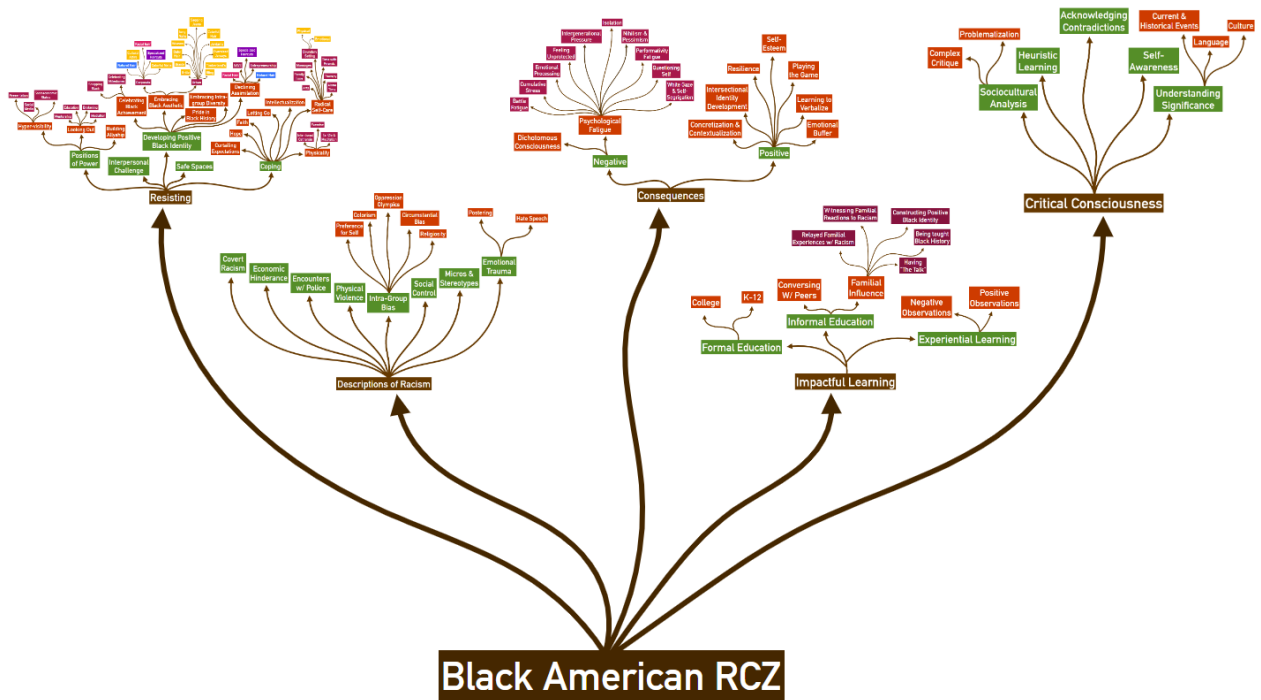
Situated Narratives

Analysis of the data revealed five situated narratives, otherwise known as themes, concerning the lived experience of Black American Racial Conscientization: Impactful Learning, Descriptions of Racism, Consequences, Critical Consciousness, and Resisting. I will present the findings in a loose form of chronological order that represents the process co-creators undergo. A strict linear model is not possible due to the heavy overlapping of various themes and constituents. This overlapping will be noted as it manifests. It is important to note that themes are comprised of meaning-units, some meaning-units are comprised of constituents, some constituents are comprised of facets and, in rare instances, facets can be broken into elements. Together, these elements, facets, constituents, meaning-units, and themes create the complete code tree that comprises the wholistic lived experience of the racial conscientization process for Black Americans. The complete situated narrative code tree is provided in **Figure 5.1**. The themes are shown in brown, the meaning-units in green, constituents in orange, facets is maroon, and most elements in yellow. Moving forward, only the portion of the tree

pertaining to specific themes will be shown.

Figure 5.1

Black American Racial Conscientization Code Tree



Impactful Learning

Impactful learning consists of all of the formal, informal, and experiential learning encounters described and was experienced by all co-creators. This theme is visually represented with its meaning-units (green), constituents (orange), and facets (maroon) in **Figure 5.2**.

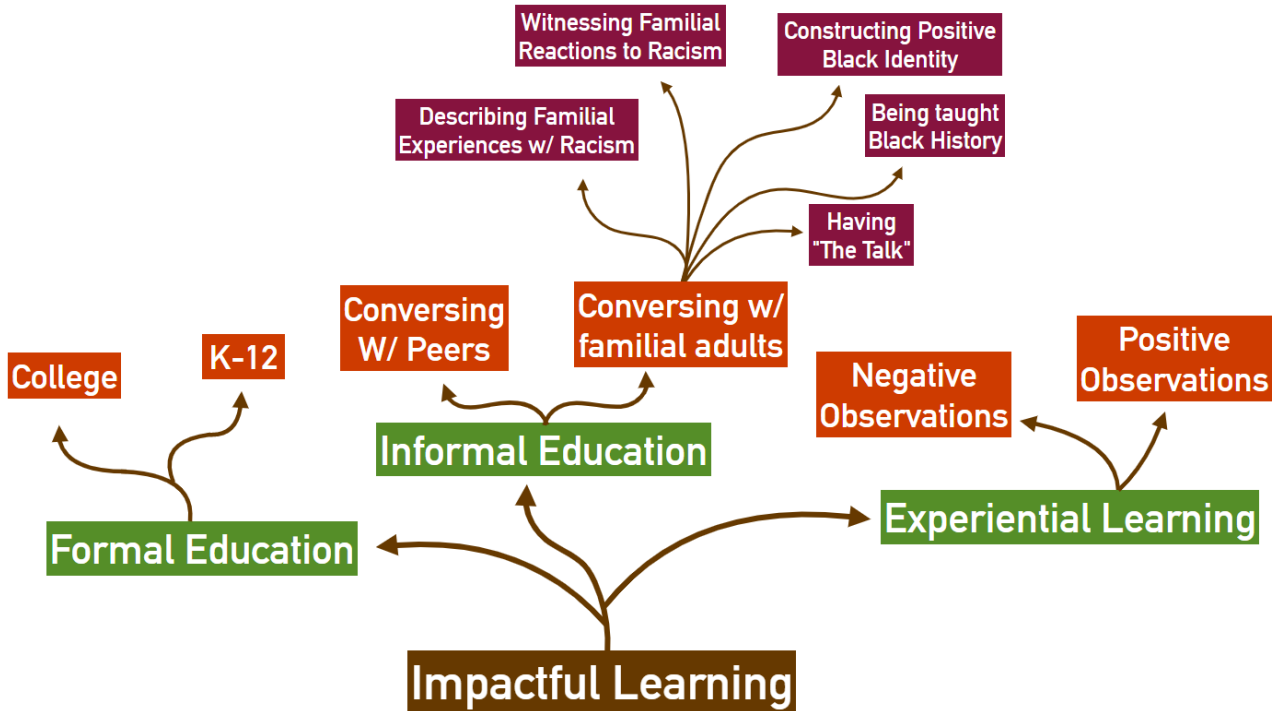
Formal Education

Thirteen of the 14 co-creators described a formal impactful learning experience. Eleven of the 14 co-creators described occurrences in their K–12 education. Some of these experiences overlapped with their experiences of racism, such as Naemah being called a nigger by her kindergarten teacher. However, some experiences are more

positive. For example, Chioma discussed attending many different schools during her K–12 years. However, she primarily attended a Black private school, a Black public school, and summer programs at HBCUs. Chioma described these environments as expository toward a diversity of Black people. This exposure helped buffer her perception of self against media portrayals of Black people and helped her see herself in a more holistic manner.

Figure 5.2

Impactful Learning Code Tree



Conversely, eight of the 14 co-creators discussed higher education experiences. For example, Davu, Etana, and Kinaya all described specific courses they took in college that heightened their knowledge of historical events, gave them language with which to express their experiences, and validated their lived experience as a Black person in America. Davu discussed an African American history course that utilized *Stamped from*

the Beginning (Kendi, 2016) as the primary text. Etana talked about the *Cultural Diversity* course she took as part of her social work education. Like Davu, Kinaya detailed her experience in an African American history course taken in undergrad. She describes the course as “an integration” or concretization of concepts she abstractly understood but did not have adequate language to describe. This course was instrumental for Kinaya and changed her perspective on food, culture, fashion, and literature.

Experiential Learning

Ten of the 14 co-creators described impactful experiential learning occurrences. As with the formal education meaning-unit, this meaning-unit has significant overlap with the *descriptions of racism* theme, so much so, that the *descriptions of racism* theme could be considered a meaning-unit of *experiential learning*. However, they remain separated as many of the experiences in this meaning-unit were described as observations of participants’ environments as opposed to occurrences that happened directly to them, which is the case for the *descriptions of racism* theme. For example, Gisira and Hakim compared and contrasted how the environments they were reared in impacted their perspective on the Black community and life in general. Gisira, hailing from San Francisco, grew up in an economically depressed housing project, mostly comprised of Black and Latinx persons. She described how this environment shaped her view of Black people as those “born in struggle” and makes her a bit jealous of the middle-class Black students in her class who seem not to acknowledge their privileges.

Conversely, Hakim grew up in a predominantly Black neighborhood that boasted diversity in socioeconomic and educational attainment. He described a happily segregated community and lamented changes born of the crack epidemic and resulting

war on drugs. Because of her observations in childhood, Gasira saw Black people that did not struggle the way she did as a bit beneath her as it pertains to success—even if they have the same level of success she does—because she had to work harder for it. Conversely, Hakim had a less monolithic view of Black people and appreciated “the thug” and “the doctor” because he saw the struggle of them all.

Some of the experiences, however, are vastly different as they occurred through positive observations. For example, Aniyah traveled to Ghana in 2017 and was able to compare and contrast various African cultures with urban African American culture. This experience helped her have pride in African American culture, as she found that some of the practices were culturally retained:

I was amazed when we went into some of the villages and saw the village elders with long fingernails with gold rings all from their knuckle to their fingertips. They wore gold shoes. They were heavy. I picked one up and I put it right back down [laughing]. Like when people talk about, especially the South, like, “Oh my gosh, grills are so ratchet. They’re so ghetto. It’s so low class” That’s cultural retention from West Africa. I know for a fact from Ghana specifically only cause I’ve been there and I’ve seen it. We don’t know how much we’ve actually retained and simply renamed it or redone it. It’s mind blowing.

Informal Education

All 14 co-creators described impactful informal educational experiences. Informal educational experiences were mostly comprised of conversations with familial adults, though three of the 14 co-creators did also discuss having conversations with their peers or friends at different points in their life.

Familial influence. All 14 co-creators discussed being heavily influenced by their families. Within the family unit, co-creators were taught Black history, specific familial experiences with racism were relayed, positive Black identity was constructed, they had “the talk” that helped them survive in a racist society, and they witnessed adult reactions to racism.

Being taught Black history. Five of the 14 co-creators described being taught Black history by familial adults. For example, Etana talked in depth with her family about past Black community leaders. She recounted:

I remember them talking about Martin Luther King, and the Black Panther Movement, and how it was the government that killed those Black leaders. It was about really how this country was founded on the backs of slavery, and that the real representation of the flag and its meaning, and the laws were written not to include people that looked like me.

Relaying familial experiences with racism. Eight of 14 co-creators had conversations with familial adults that relayed past experiences with racism. For example, Davu remembers stories being told of his uncle, who worked for a White man, that often shorted him on pay. He recounted, “I had an uncle, and he would work for a White man, and the White man would go without paying him sometimes. Instead of just saying, ‘I can’t pay you’ he’d be like, ‘Well, it’s your job anyway to be working for me anyway. You lucky I pay you in the first place.’”

Another example was offered by Aniyah. She recounted stories told by her father that impacted their current shopping practices:

My dad never bit his tongue or never sugar coated when we go to certain places, we only go to certain stores because those are safe stores for Black people to go to. When I would ask him why, he would tell me about some of his experiences when he was younger, going or trying to go to the only store in his hometown that was owned by a White man; and sometimes being chased out but his money would get taken, but he'd leave out with nothing.

Constructing positive Black identity. Half, seven of 14, of the co-creators discussed conversations with older adults that helped establish a strong, positive Black identity. For example, both Kinaya and Aniyah discussed efforts within their families to trace their lineage back to Africa. Aniyah was able to trace her lineage back to Nigeria and that is a major source of pride for her. Both Davu and Jamilah were specifically told they descended from kings and queens in Africa. These sentiments helped increase their self-esteem and created an emotional buffer between themselves and media depictions of Black Americans. Niemah's mother told her explicitly that her path to success would be much different, and likely more difficult, than her White peers. Likewise, Imari's parents were very honest with him about the struggles he would face in life as a Black man, or even as a Black child, attending a predominantly White school:

My parents were flat out like, "Well you in an all White school" and their reason for sending me there was for a better opportunity. They were like "It's going to be hard" I remember them telling me "You pretty much going to be a trailblazer by going to this school, you're going to be out there. You're going to be learning some things differently from what you would if you would go to one of the local schools, the neighborhood schools, but it's going to be rough. It's going to be

tough, because people are going to pick on you, they going to look at you differently, they going to say things to you.” It was very different, but my parents, they did, they warned me, yeah, “Just be prepared for certain things that happen that be coming your way.”

Having the talk. Eleven of 14 co-creators discussed having *the talk* with familial adults. The talk describes conversations participants had with familial adults in which they are being groomed to survive in a racist society. This can include how to behave in public, how to speak to police and other authority figures, and how they will have to work harder than their White peers to succeed. For example, Mudada discussed how his parents told him about the Ku Klux Klan:

Well, the earliest conversations I had about racism with my parents was about the Ku Klux Klan... So it started with that, my parents explaining what the Klan was and that they weren't too far from where we were, still holding active meetings... and, “Watch yourself when you're out there playing. These guys ride around in trucks and they try to hurt little Black boys, Black girls,” things of that nature. So it was an ongoing thing.

Another example comes from Folami whose parents and grandparents shared their past experiences of racism with him, provided instruction on what to do when stopped by police, told him which towns to avoid due to them being “sundown” towns, and helped prepare him for a racist society. All of these messages were passed even though Folami does not come from a politically active family:

My family was not as vocal about race as much as they were in terms of just going on and on about it. They weren't activists, they were kind of passive, and

just learned how to operate in society the best that they could, but just still aware of what was going on. So I think their approach was to make us aware, my brother and I, aware of what was going on, and again, to just how to survive and make it. And it's funny because I just realized that's kind of how I am. It's like, you can't change it, just keep it moving and, yeah, just be aware and just know how to play the game, like just know the rules of engagement.

Witnessing familial reactions to racism. Nine of the 14 co-creators discussed witnessing familial reactions to racism. For example, Jamilah recalled her mother threatening to protest her graduation and call the media:

I was senior class president, but they did not want me to speak at graduation. Every year prior to that, the senior class president spoke at graduation, but they did not want me to speak. They wanted the student body president, this White girl, to speak. And my mother had to go to the superintendent's office and threaten him that they would be outside picketing causing a disturbance with every TV channel, 2, 4, 5, 11, and 30. Out there watching her clowning if they don't let her baby speak.

Another example comes from Naeemah who, in addition to the incident between her mother and her kindergarten teacher, recalled an incident between her mother and a store clerk:

So, with my mom, we went to the shoe store in Missouri, and we were in a primarily White area. The sales associate followed her around the entire store. We were at a Payless. The shoes were not expensive. And she followed her around the entire store, and I kept on looking back like, "Mommy, is she following us?" And

she was like, "Yeah, that's stupid bitch following us" And the lady was like, "Can I help you with something?" And she was like, "If you wanted to help me, you would have asked if I needed help a long time ago, instead of following me around the store. No, I don't need your help. I've been actively helping myself for 20 minutes" And the lady got mad. She was like, "You can leave this store. I know you're going to steal something, anyway" And my mom was like, "I have money" and pull this wad of cash out of her purse and was like, "but you're not going to get a dime of it" And the lady...she was crimson red. I remember her face being so red. I did not know that people could turn a different color that way. I've seen it on cartoons, but I've never seen it in person. And she was like, "You, you, you nigger!" Like hard... ER.

I've seen my mom turn into something. But the way that her facial expression changed, I was scared for the lady. And she was like, she did something that's absolutely abhorrent to me. She said, she's just like, she snorted and snorted. And she hocked-up a loogie and spit it in her face. And I was like, "Oh, my God" And she was like, "Come on, let's go" And I was so disturbed as to why she would do that because it landed on the lady's glasses, and it dripped down... It was disgusting. We went back home, and my mom was using the bathroom, and we still don't... Even to this day, me and my mom, we still don't have those kinds of boundaries...And so, she was using the bathroom and I came in the bathroom, and I was like, "Mom, why you'd spit on that lady?" And she said, "I just wanted to give her some of the hate that she was giving us when she did not even know us" And she was like, "But I shouldn't have spit on her. Don't

you ever do no nasty shit like that?” She said, “I got too mad, but don’t you do nothing like that” And I was like, “Okay” And the level of shame that she felt, I felt her shame in that moment was like, “I did something that I would never want my kids to do. But I refused to be disrespected”

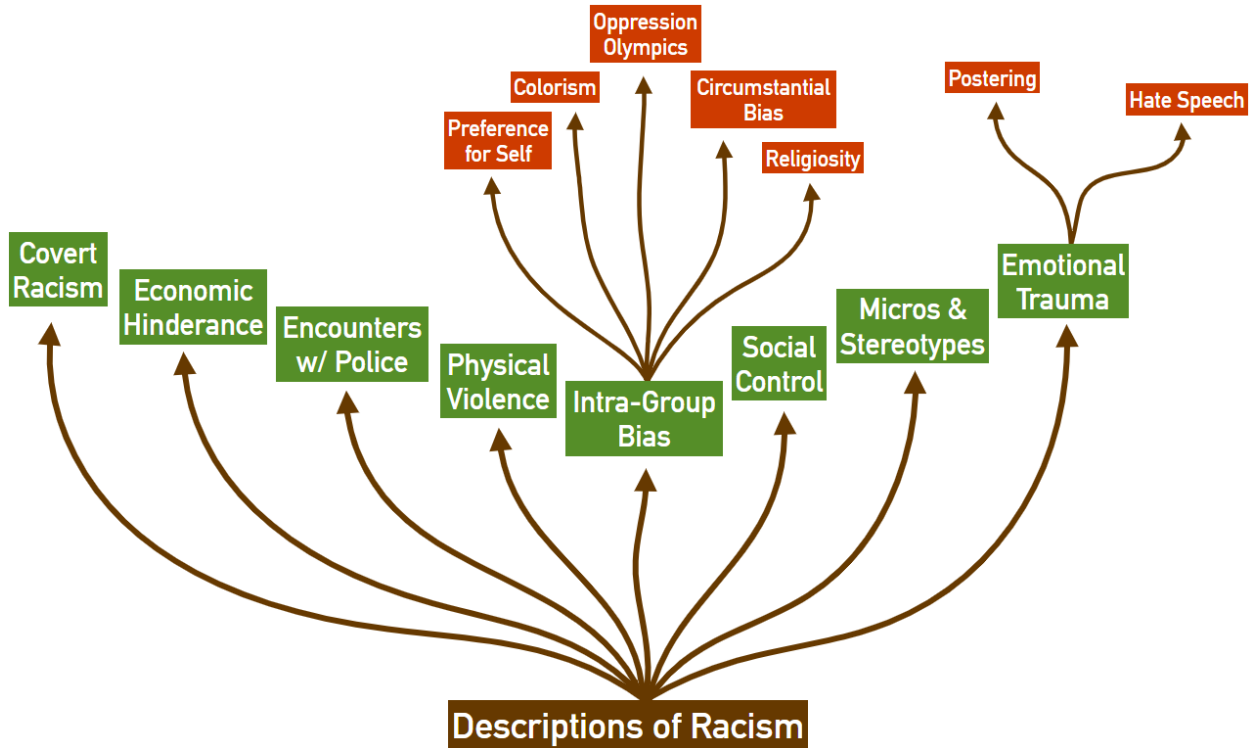
Descriptions of Racism

All co-creators described incidents of racial oppression. These incidents fell into eight meaning-units: economic hinderance, emotional trauma, encounters with police or the judicial system, institutional or covert racism, intra-group bias or displays of internalized racism, micros and stereotypes, physical violence, and social control. Two of the meaning-units, emotional trauma and intra-group bias, had accompanying

constituents. For a visual representation of this theme and its constituents, refer to **Figure 5.3**.

Figure 5.3

Descriptions of Racism Code Tree



Economic Hinderance

Economic Hinderance includes being paid less, not being promoted, not being hired, being fired, or having to pay more for services due to being Black. Ten of the 14 co-creators experienced this. On the topic of not being promoted, Bakari stated:

If you think about it, you look at the demographics of any career field, you know, yes due to the year 2021 that we live in now, we have diversity inclusion and equity flying everywhere. Every company wants to make sure that they, at minimum, have the words posted somewhere. However, you look at the

demographics of it, and you break it down into tiers what you'll see is, lower level, bottom tier, ground floor is where you will see your diversity. You look at middle level, you will see a bit of diversity. Diversity sprinkled in, mainly composed of women. At the top tier, you may see 1–3% sprinkled in, but then if you start looking at the age ranges, you start looking at the time with the company, where these 1–3% that are at the top have been working for these companies twice as long as these CEOs, these presidents, these GMs. It's to the point where they've already gone through their lashings in a sense, to where they know "One wrong move we can get you out of here. We just need you to make yourself look good, make us look good, allow the world to see like, hey, we got colored people up here, you can't call us racist" While the whole time that 1 or the 2% of colored people are the puppets at the top, and they're going to use them to control the diversity that's at ground level.

Folami described a similar experience working in sales. He stated:

I used to sell cars for a living, and the majority of the salesforce was minority, at each dealership that I worked at, but the owner, the general manager and all the sales managers were White males, with the exception of two Hispanics. And the Hispanics that were sales managers, one was male, one is female, I felt had to more or less assimilate in order to get that role. So I just found it odd that... I worked at (omitted: well known Chevrolet dealer) before they closed down during the recession, and they had the most sales people on the sales floor than any other dealership in (omitted: top 5 US city) at that time. They boasted about it, it had 90-plus salespeople, with 20 million used cars. And again,

you could easily say 90% of the salesforce was minority, and specifically when I say minority, just specifically African American and Hispanic or Latino, and not one Black manager. Not one. Not in new cars or used, not in any department within that entire company. And they were the largest-selling Chevrolet dealer in North America. Not the US, but North America. It had two locations here in (omitted: top 5 US city) at that time, and not one. So, did they give me a hard time selling a car, they being the White male sales manager? No, they loved me. They called me Gross King, but were they going to let you be a sales manager? No

As Etana explained, economic hinderance isn't only perpetrated by employers, it can also be perpetrated by clients:

I've had clients try to get me fired. I've had clients look in to my personal life and try to report that to my leadership, they had to take me off of one of my cases as a result of that. I've had clients lie and say that I wanted to have sex with their husbands. I've had clients look in to my old jobs to see why I did not work there anymore. They violated my privacy because they felt like they could, and then when the case switched over to somebody that was White, because I told my supervisor, I was like, "Put somebody White on the case," she was like, "You think so?" I was like, "Yeah" She was like, "Guess what?" I was like, "What?" She was like, "There's been no problem since" I was like, "Yeah, I know. I know, that's what I'm trying to tell you"

Naeemah seconded this notion. She stated:

I was working at a company, I just started and I was super excited about this company. And my numbers were consistently very low. I was working

Customer Service at that time, like tech support. And my lead, who was also a Black woman was like, “You’re doing something wrong” And I’m like, “You shadow my stuff. My cases are being QA’d by an entire team, and you guys can’t find anything wrong. And the only thing that I can come up with is that I have a Black sounding name” And she was like, “I don’t think that that’s the case” And I kept on going through disciplinary action “Your numbers are not moving. So, we have to put you on a performance improvement plan, we have to put you on a final” And my Hail Mary from my final, I was like, “Just let me use an alias” And she was like, “Why would I let you use an alias?” I was like, “Other people use aliases, why can’t I?” And she’s like, “Okay, good point. So, I’m going to give you 30 days to use this alias. And if the alias doesn’t work, then we’re just going to have to move forward with the termination”

And I used an alias, Melissa. And nothing about my phone calls or the level of service that I was providing changed except for the fact that I would introduce myself as Melissa, and my customer satisfaction scores went from being in the high 70s to me having the second highest satisfaction score in the entire company. And so, at the end of the 30 days, my lead was absolutely astonished like, “What did you do? You did not you change something?” I was like, “I did not change anything but my name. Go listen back to my calls. The early ones and listen to the ones now, nothing has changed” And it caused the company to actually run a test to see if people who were presenting as Black sounding or having Black sounding names got lower C sats, and they did. It made like a 20% to 30% difference in their satisfaction scores. So, with me knowing like, just how

people will treat you based on what they see on your resume or how your name sounds, I was like, “Let me just try something different”

Emotional Trauma

Nine of the 14 co-creators described incidents of racism that resulted in emotional trauma. These incidents include hate speech (N=8) and posturing (N=4). Race-based hate speech could include being called a nigger, a spook, a porch monkey, darkey, or other hurtful names and posturing describes the use of non-verbal, non-physical racial intimidation such as the following incident described by Jamliah:

I was voted president of my senior class and I was smart. I’m in the top 10% of my class. And one day I came to my locker and they had put tissue in the pages between my books, and in the locker, and had peed in my locker, and had wrote KKK on the door of the locker—clearly saying we don't care how smart you are. You still a nigger. And the school did not really do anything. All they did was move me to a new locker and gave me some new books. So it was never addressed. [There was] No, we gone to look into this and find out, or we, sorry this happened. No.

Another example of this was experienced by Gasira on a trip to Mississippi in high school. She recalled:

The first time I felt uncomfortable was in Mississippi. Because I was on a Black college tour and we only stopped in Mississippi. We did not even stay there. We had a bus and it was full of Black students with suits on and we had just come from a college campus and we were like, I don’t know. We were somewhere, we just made a stop. And there was this big truck with a Confederate flag. And boys

who ride outside the truck, making it be known, they had a Confederate flag. I'm like, "This is real. I heard stories about Mississippi" so I was nervous about it. But then seeing it, I was like "People are really serious about this"

Incidents of hate speech were more prevalent at double the amount of posturing incidents. Kinaya described an incident of a child calling her a nigger as follows:

I did not get called a nigger for the first time until I was at (omitted: small, private Presbyterian university in the Mid-West) and I was like 25, 26, and someone was riding past in their truck and they did not go to the school, that I know of but we were standing outside, a friend of mine, and they yelled it out. I think it was a child but they were clearly with a grown person because somebody was driving. I don't know what that was about.

Hakim also recalled being called a nigger by a minor:

Yeah. We were just outside of a gas station and I think it was Fort Worth and we were just standing outside laughing and he had to have been no more than maybe 16 and that came right out of his mouth. He mumbled it, but I was close enough to hear. I just heard him say "Niggers" and he walked off and it stunned me.

Because I'm like, I'm from Mississippi, never heard that. Never heard that.

However, Aniyah was a child the first time she was called a nigger. She recounted the traumatic event as follows:

I can remember the first time that I was called the N-word with the hard R, I was 11 year old. As an 11 year old, I thought that the White woman who called me an N-word was being racist. Although her attitude was racist, she had no power in that specific instance to do anything to me other than to call me what she called

me which did cause some type of trauma, but it wasn't physical, it was an emotional trauma.

Imari reported being fired due to defending himself after being called a nigger by a co-worker:

I can say there was instances as far as on jobs being called boy, being called nigger, being called monkey, being called spook, what else? I've been called anything under the sun. "Go swing from a tree" I've heard different things coming up and it's a one that I did not get, been a couple times where I almost got in trouble, but I remembered getting into it with the guy at work, doing construction, and it was all over him owing me some money back. I asked, when would I get my money back. He said, "Don't worry about it nigger, you'll get your money when I get it to you" I remember us getting into an argument and he had said something about pistol whipping me outside of work and everything. Yeah. It was just really, really bad. Then what happened? I ended up getting fired because I spoke back and said something to him. Did not put my hands on him or nothing, but I got fired for speaking back, and eventually he did too, but they were going to let him stay at first. I remember that was, I was probably about 19 when that happened, 19 years old. That put me on guard again to watch out for this certain type of person, that try to get under your skin, to get you riled up, to mess with your money, to get you fired.

Encounters with Police

The *Encounters with Police* meaning-unit describes co-creators' incidents involving police profiling or statements made by police officers and any description of

the criminal justice system writ large: judges, prison officials, prison guards, attorneys, etc. Seven of the 14 co-creators described encounters with the police or criminal justice system. Some encounters with the police were relatively harmless, such as the following one described by Mudada:

Yeah, just being out having a little fun at a bar. And you got patrons walking out. And the parking lot police, they targeted us. In one particular instance, out of all the people walking out of the club, they targeted us. It was four of us and they jumped in behind us and pulled us over. And immediately, "Somebody's going to jail tonight" I'm like, "Okay, why are we going to jail? What's going on?" And I knew it was profiling because, like I said, out of all the patrons walking out, they zeroed in on us. They were staring at us the whole time we were walking out. So yeah, we did not go to jail, of course, because they did not have anything on us. But the fact that they immediately pulled us over and said, "Yeah, somebody's going to jail tonight," I knew it was probably racially motivated.

Davu described an encounter with the police that resulted in him being detained and his car being ripped apart:

I was driving my car at 20 miles per hour in the school zone and got pulled over because I was going too fast. 15 is the legality of the school zone speed limit. But he thought I did not know nothing, because the 15 miles per hour only is in effect from 8:00 to 4:00, and it was 5:30. Still, I was driving at a respectable speed. But when I brought this to his attention, well he said, "You must think you Johnnie Cochran or some shit, huh?" I was like, "No, sir. I'm Davu" You know what I mean? Led to me being detained, my car was searched, he ripped out my backseat

looking for drugs. Had to put my car back together. Dug all in my underwear, in my nuts and stuff.

Still yet, some encounters with the legal system can cause one to lose several years of their life. This was the case with Bakari, who was falsely accused of a crime. He stated:

I actually went to prison for a crime that I did not commit, facing a life sentence. I served three years of my time, two and a half was in the county jail. I was sentenced to prison for six months in a court hearing that I was not there for, never signed any documentation for. I was told after the fact that it was a mistake by the court clerks and that it would get resolved, a few days later I'm on the bus going to prison. And I get to diagnostics, which is like the in-processing center. Everybody's confused. My counselors are confused. The medical doctors are confused as to why I'm there. How did I get there? Nothing makes sense. None of my paperwork makes sense, but it was, even Black examiners that, my counselor was actually a Black man who looked at my paperwork and basically told me "I see so many young men come through the system just like this and nobody cares. You shouldn't be here, but there's nothing that you can do about it"

When I got out of prison I contacted the district attorney over the state of Georgia, which is where I went to prison. Somebody who was completely, I guess I can say unbiased, had no knowledge on what was going on. I made a phone call to him. All I did was ask him, look at my case. He looked at my case, he called me back about two months later. He said "Mr. Bakari, you're a free man" I'm like, "What does that mean?" He said "You're a free man, your record is clean"

Now I've lost virtually everything at this point. So of course like most people would think, "What comes next? Oh, you should have a pretty good lawsuit, right?" Well, after contacting all the big name agencies, NAACP, what is it, what does the organization for that help a wrongfully convicted...One of the organizations, it was like three or four of the big name organizations. I reached out to them, pretty much basically most of them responded back to me, it took a while, but most of them responded back to me, basically explained to me that there are higher priority cases on their case load. And honestly, I will probably never get a response back from, that's just how many cases that they're dealing with.

And it's funny to me because as I was incarcerated, for whatever reason a lot of guys that stay incarcerated, like to watch guys being incarcerated. And I used to see all the time how, guys used to be exonerated of crimes that they did not commit after serving 20, 30, 40, 50, even 60 years in prison with no evidence, little evidence, flat out lies. And all they get is a couple of thousand dollars and you're a free man, go live your life. Missing out on opportunities to raise kids, have a family, they've missed witnessing so many loved ones die and be born, and the most a system can say is "Oops, we made a mistake" So I count myself as one of the blessed ones. I made it out my situation as soon as I did cause that was rare.

So I contacted a couple of lawyers and the fees that I was being charged just to take the case because it was dealing with an entire state, I'm being asked for 10, 15, \$20,000. I'm fresh out of prison. I don't have that type of money. So,

no big deal I'll do what I have to do to come up with the money. So I got me a job. I started working, in about a year and a half, almost two years I came up with the money to be able to pay a lawyer. Well, found out some interesting news. Apparently, when dealing with wrongful convictions, there's a statute of limitations placed on them in the time that you can sue. The statute of limitations for a wrongful conviction is 365 days. Yeah. The way the system is set up, it's not designed for us to succeed in hardly any ways.

Institutional or Covert Racism

Institutional, or covert, racism was experienced by eight of the 14 co-creators. This meaning-unit describes co-creators' references to systemic racism, or racism so covert the co-creator is unsure if the experience can be defined as racism. In some instances, co-creators are sure they experienced racism but cannot pinpoint specific examples or are unsure if they experienced it at all due to a lack of overt racial experiences. For example, in regard to covert racism, Hakim stated, "I never really truly felt personal racism to me, I've never really felt it. Now, was it something that may have been covert? Maybe? I don't know. Because you don't know what you don't know, but overt racism I've never experienced." Furthering this conclusion, Kinaya stated:

I've never seen a clan outfit up close. No one's ever burned a cross anywhere near me and I know that those things aren't just racism because people think those things are racism and racism is deeper than that. But I haven't dealt with any of those kinds of things. Systematically, I'm sure I've dealt with racism. I was a child in the inner city for awhile and then I was a Black child in a predominantly, or maybe even half-White, school, So I know that I dealt with it

systematically, but I don't know exactly how because I never went back and looked at the policies. I just know how people treated me in particular, how they responded to me. But yeah. It's hard for me to think of microaggressions and I also have to admit that the vast majority of my life, now that I'm thinking about it, I spent around Black people. That might be why I can't think of anything. I don't think I can. I spent the majority of my life around Black people. So if I did experience racism, it was that internalized foolishness.

Bakari summed the convert constituent up perfectly. He stated:

I fully believe that when it comes to racism, it's becoming harder and harder to beat for the simple fact that the system is becoming so opaque to the point where even Black people can't see it, it's evolving to that level that it's not as easy as "Did you hear what he said?" It's one of those, you can do something with full racist intentions, but even a Black person standing next to me did not realize what happened.

A specific example of systemic racism was identified by Gasira. She stated:

And I think where I saw that was in education. Which is why I'm in education is because the schools in the districts, and things like that were segregated based on race and class. And so even though it felt like San Francisco was diverse, everybody who was Black lived in the projects. And then there was a small section of Asian or White population who had it all that you would never know of because you never got to see them. So I never saw successful Black people growing up, ever. Everything was drugs, gang violence, everything was that, that was it, struggle, single mother. Everything was around the idea of what

it meant to be Black to me was born in struggle. Those are the things that I identified with growing up.

And so then my mom was my first advocate of like, “You can’t go to schools in this area because if you do, this is all that they have” So then fighting, trying to get me to go to school across town and not being able to, and then her going on the news and trying to advocate and say, “It’s not fair that you have these schools here, they have all these resources and that they’re... It’s the rich kid’s school,” and things like that. And then for me, I have to go to this school because this is where I grew up. And so fortunately, me being able to go across town to go to other schools, me being able to see what I did not, I couldn't identify with, but being able to see what other people had. It’s like, okay, that was my first exposure to the difference in how they view you, the prejudices and the inequities in education. And seeing that like, wow, based on your race and your social class, these are your realities.

Intra-group Bias and Displays of Internalized Racism

Twelve of the 14 co-creators witnessed displays of internalized racism or experienced intra-group bias. This meaning-unit is comprised of five constituent parts: circumstantial bias, colorism, men vs. women, preference for self, and religiosity.

Circumstantial bias. The *Circumstantial Bias* constituent was experienced by five of the 14 co-creators and describes bias against co-creators by other Black people due to a diversity in circumstance or difference in behavior. For example, Kinaya, Imari, and Mudada reported being called “White” because they speak standard English. Further, Mudada reported people saying he wanted “to kiss the White man’s butt” because of his

career aspirations. Additionally, he reported associates making antagonizing comments such as “You with that White girl. You think you all of that” due to him being married to a White woman. Imari also mentioned antagonizing comments from friends due to his chosen career such as “Oh, now you’re trying to be better than us, you act like we’re beneath you.”

Colorism. Seven of the 14 co-creators described experiencing or witnessing colorism. This was experienced by both men and women, dark and light hued, alike. For example, Naeemah recalled:

I’m lighter complected. And so, I was always taught, like, “Stay out of the sun. You don’t want to get too brown” And I would just be like, “Why? I want to go swim. What do you mean, get out of the sun instead, there’s an umbrella. I want to go swimming” But I started understanding especially with dealing with some of my family members that are darker complected than me. Even like in comparison to how I was treated with them in the same arenas, like, okay. My mom gave me the saying, it’s like, “If you’re light, you’re all right. If you’re brown stay around, and if you’re Black, get back” And I was like, “Okay, so on the spectrum of being colored, being less colored, matters more” And so, I started doing those things. I’ve fixed it now, just by chopping it all off and starting over, but I’m like, straighten my hair consistently because even now, if I have my hair straightened, the way people treat me is 100% different than how people treat me when my hair is curly, as a vast majority, Black community included. And so, I did at some point, assimilate to being more aligned with like Whiteness. And after I like fried my hair, and it started falling out.

Mudada also had an experience as a child being a darker hued male. He recalled: That used to be a thing when I was growing up. That used to be a real big thing. Dark-skinned guys, they got counted out. I remember liking this girl. I liked her a lot, man. I was in the 7th grade. And she's like, "I don't want his Black ass," or whatever, just saying how dark I was. And I ran off crying. I ran off crying, and now she's trying to ... Well, never mind [laughing]... But no, I used to get that all the time, back when I was younger. But it seems like that's corrected itself, I think, anyway.

Kinaya had experiences with colorism as an adult. She recounted:

I had to quit talking to the men in my life because I would hear the dumbest things about what beauty was. "Oh. Brazilian women are this.." and all the things that people are talking about when it comes to these preferences and exoticals and things of that nature. It's out. Like the stuff I was feeling, folks have really talked about it and it really excites me because those are the things I was feeling for a long time. I felt common. I suppose I have racism to thank for that because whatever made Black not beautiful, and those are the features I was associated with at the time, or something else exotic or lighter or whatever had to be more beautiful. "Oh. You're from the islands or the Caribbean or you're mixed with this or whatever" I'm still hearing Black men say that. It's definitely a product of racism. Definitely. So I had to get past feeling common like not special. I had to get past that.

Gasira discussed being discounted in discussions of racism due to her light skin. While she understands the plight of darker hued Black women, she also feels excluded. She stated:

That goes into just how you view yourself and feeling like I have to be quiet. I can't say much. I can't really express how I feel about it because I'm not Black enough. And that, to me I know that it stems from a... There's a deeper history around that and there's a system created around that. So I try to be sensitive to that too, but then it's like, well, at what point do I voice my concern about it? Because it's a deeper issue that needs to be confronted within our own community, but nobody ever wants to talk about it because it is offensive and it is a sensitive topic. And I think we have to be able to have these conversations, understand they're sensitive for both people.

Etana discussed being treated more aggressively by Black men due to her being a dark-hued Black woman. She stated:

The aggression! The aggression! The aggression was crazy! It was in the way that they spoke to me, it was in the way that they approached me, it was in the way that they ... they hyper-sexualized me. I was, on one hand a very hyper-sexualized being that they wanted to fuck, but on the other hand they treated me really aggressively. They've mishandled me in a way, it was very rough in the way that they spoke to me, they weren't kind to me at all. When I cried they did not feel bad. When I hurt they did not see my pain. I felt more like an object even, because I feel like if I were on their level as their friend, as another male peer they would see me if I was crying or if I was upset, but I don't think they even saw me

then, as like a peer. It was just that aggression that they had towards me. I think I expected that more from White men, but I got it from Black men mostly.

The way that I saw lighter-skinned women being represented in the media, being treated, and in relationships it was different, they were softer. They were more responsive to her needs and her pain from what I could see. Representation in film when you see it they're looked at as damsel in distress, you can see that, but not dark-skinned women, I did not see that represented either. It was the way that we hear rappers talk about dark-skinned women in interviews, and how they praise light-skinned women, and now yeah, definitely light-skinned women are definitely over-sexualized and disrespected, they have that same struggle, but with dark-skinned women I feel like it was more blatant disrespect, and disregard for us as human beings.

The oppression olympics: men vs. women. Seven of the 14 co-creators sparked conversation about the opposite sex. In most conversations, co-creators stated their gender was more oppressed than the other. Most of these assertions were backed up by one anecdotal experience or another. For example, Aniyah made several points about the way Black women are oppressed by White society and Black men:

I always say, "Yes, I'm a Black person, but specifically I'm a Black woman" I feel there's a difference between being a Black person, which per my understanding a person, when you say, "A person," is usually a man. So a Black person is usually understood as a man. But when you specifically say, "A Black woman," well, that's a whole other conundrum. And so there are different oppressions that Black women face that Black men do not face, but we face them

not only because we're Black, but also because we're women. Racism gets coupled in with sexism in that case for me, because there's this understood hierarchy of men and then women, White and then Black. If you look at it in that instance... it's very understood there's an extra struggle not just because I'm Black, not just because I'm a woman, but because I am both Black and woman at the same time.

Black women have these certain stereotypes that are placed on us. "She's going to act a certain way. She does this type of thing. She's going to go through your phone all the time. She don't cook...All she do is go out with her girls and drink Hennessy all night" I've read this and I've experienced it like Black men who have dated Black women and White women, they have expectations that are starkly different. They expect Black women to be wild. We are not animals. I've had a Black guy—we never even made it to the date. "I've always wanted to experience dating a black woman" This is a Black man saying this. "Excuse me sir, what? This is not a safari. This is not an experience. You don't pay your little \$50, get the ride on the back of an elephant, and then go home. This is not what this is"

Etana echoed these sentiments in the following statement about Black women being at the bottom of the social hierarchy:

I feel like on the hierarchy Black women are definitely on the bottom. I feel like because I'm Black, and because I'm a woman that my life matters a lot less, even though I contribute the most to society. I feel like everybody expects me to be a source of strength, comfort, even when I feel like I need to crumble. I feel like

because I'm Black and a woman, I don't have the grace to be broken or have mental health issues, or be a poor mother, or recovering addict. I have to be everything for everybody all the time. It's feeling like you're failing all the time at stuff, even though your stats show that you're not failing... I feel like I have Imposter Syndrome all the time in every aspect of my life.

Bakari also discussed the relationship between Black men and women. However, he brings a different perspective in believing White people are the root cause of Black women having to effectively act as women and men. He stated:

I think the story of Harriet Tubman would probably be the most shocking to me, that's the one that stood out the most to me after I kind of learned the true story and the accounts of what happened. I feel that's what kind of set the tone for the separation between the Black man and the Black woman today. Because one of the biggest things that stood out to me was Harriet Tubman's, technically her husband who was a free man due to an agreement that was made chose to stay on a plantation, even though Harriet wanted to escape.

She did what so many men that were around her at the time were afraid to do. For me, it really set a tone to how Black women are today. Where it seems like they're playing the part of the Black man because the Black man is so afraid to be the Black man because of the historical trauma from the White man. Once the White man, through torture, trauma, and systematically enabling the Black man to be seen as a child pretty much. Forcing the Black woman to lose respect, and lose that hope and that confidence. To lose that confidence in that Black man protecting her, and keeping her, and help making sure that she's taken care of.

Hakim had a divergent opinion on the strong Black woman trope. He believes darker hued Black women have adopted undesirable characteristics as a result of choosing absentee fathers—an issue lighter Black women don't have as they likely come from two-parent households. He further stated that Black men are simply becoming what Black women want:

I think from what I, and I'm just speaking on the experience of my own Instagram...there has been an adoption of undesirable behavior. I don't want to say, I really attribute that to a certain skin color, but if we are just being realistically realistic on the statistics of the shade, it's going to be more dark-skinned women than light-skinned women right now. And I'm saying to say, if there are more dark-skinned women than light-skinned women in this case, they're going to be the majority, right? So if there is an adopted culture where it be the Megan Thee Stallion or different things like that, I mean, there are going to be Black men, the ones who do marry, right? Cause that's a whole 'nother conversation of straight Black men and Black men who marry period.

I think that has something to do with it as well, but also the cycle of the single parent households and the type of man that they see and the type of man that they want, and the type of what they call real or what they call boring or what they call exciting, that has something to do as well. I also think that because Black men were taken out of the household, you saw the Black woman take on a different role, which the Black society is more matriarchal than any other society. Right? So it's always about mom, it's always about grandma. So that within itself created a sense of more masculine woman because

they had to take on a different role. So that being passed down throughout the years, I think created kind of a hardness.

As opposed to maybe some of the lighter skin who may have had a different role in the household, which in some cases may be two parent households. I don't really know the statistics on that, but just basing it off of what I see. That's, that's really what it was. It's a cycle of a single parent household that really created this strong. Cause we hear that, right? We can't handle a strong woman. What does that really mean? And most men that I've talked to, they just feel like the women are assholes. That's what's strong to many men is. It is really difficult to say where it started and what the real thing is. But I think the adoption of just a negative culture, both on the men, women side. Because we do whatever y'all say if y'all want. So if women say we don't want nothing but doctors and lawyers, men, we are going to be doctors and lawyers. But if a woman says that she wants a King Von, that's what you start to see young Black men go to. Killer, thug.

Gasira, on the other hand, problematized the entire notion of oppression olympics.

She stated:

I think though, this is the issue though, they've been pinning us against each other. And so then we're constantly comparing struggles and constantly comparing, oh, it's me versus you. And the reality is it, it doesn't matter because both of them were both designed. We're both that same thing. We're both on autopilot, Black men and Black women. And I think for, especially for, I think for Black women, when you say romantically, I think it's because when you talk about the

[oppression] Olympics it's because they're viewed as that, because they feel like they are perceived as that. As opposed to though there are systems, there are services that do protect them though. So in some cases, even though they're perceived as that, they do have things like welfare or child support, those kind of things are put in place that can protect them. And they do not protect Black men. So I do think if we're arguing one against the other, there are things that we could both say that are not fair. But I feel like if we take that out of the equation and we stop comparing struggles and we just say, we both struggle.

Preference for self. *Preference for Self* was displayed by five of the 14 co-creators and describes the opposite of circumstantial bias. In this constituent, co-creators exhibited a clear bias against Black people who do not come from a similar background as them or who do not hold the same values as them. The most evident perpetrators of this were Hakim and Jamilah, though they were not the only ones. In the following excerpt, Hakim showed a clear bias against working class Black people, single mothers, scantily-clad women, and those who do not want traditional families. He passed judgements on respectability, what it means to be a "good man" or a "good woman," and opinions that the youth he works with should strive to be more like him and the other Black middle-class people he knows:

Yeah. And that's the men and women, I think again, it goes back to choices and what we see, right? Because at the end of the day, if we're being honest, us in this room are being out... I mean, this is probably not the best word to use, but outbred. Because you begin to see those single parent households, not just have one or two children, you start to see five. And what kind of system does

that bring about? And then the type of men that they pick. If this young man sees a certain type of man that all he has is his mother, right? So he begins to see that this is the type of man that my mother loves. And I hold my mother up here because she's all I have. Right. And with the mother that it's a sense of this is all I have, this is my bill. I have the power, all of that creates a cycle of how the young girl thinks and how the young man thinks. So he's going to mimic what mama, who is everything to me, and what is he going to go after? The same type of woman mama is. So it's just a cycle. So how do we break that with, individuals in this room? How do we show it's okay to be who you are, but you also have this over here that you can kind of strive to be towards. It's okay to be this. It's not lame to be us in this room. Right. So that's what we're fighting against.

And even in my profession, I'm in charge of working with youth and family services. More importantly, the at-risk youth with gang prevention and intervention, showing them what a real man is. And we also have women who show them what real women are. And in our everyday interactions with them, we show them that it is okay to have a nuclear family. And even if you're not that way, it's okay to want somebody who's good, even if you identify with something else, sexual orientation. So we challenge that every day just by showing that it's another way. You don't have to be this way to be a man. You don't have to be this way to be looked at as beautiful. You can be respectable and it can always start with your mind. So I try to change that every day.

Jamilah, on the other hand, showed a clear bias against lighter hued Black men as romantic partners. She knew this was an issue and struggles with it, but ultimately concedes she may never change:

To the extent my father was deep and does tend to go overboard in many things. One of the things he taught us growing up was that the darker you were, the more likely the purer your blood was. He felt if you were light-skinned, then you more than likely were a child of the slave master and therefore, got some White in you. So he feels like the darker you are, the more purer you are. And he really did have a prejudice against light-skinned people and White people, which he passed on to me as a child. I believe the same thing. And to this day, even when I'm dating, I don't want to date no light-skinned dude. And I want a dark-skinned man.

And now this is something I'm starting to understand, it's hard to unlearn things. So even when I used to hang out with this guy Dorian, he was our minister of music in church. And he started to come around my family and he found out about that belief we don't like him, people was like, "Jamilah, what you doing with him?" I'm like, "This is my friend" We don't really deal with light skin people, they know I don't like him. And he was like, "Is you for real?" His feelings was really hurt. And I'm like, "Yeah, I'm serious but I'm trying to mature and grow out of that. That's just how I was raised. So I'm trying to be a bigger person"

So then it's hard to come back from that when light-skinned people find that out, like, "What? You don't fuck with us?" But now you trying, you making

an effort” I’m making the effort to change my life around. That’s just the way I was raised, don’t hold it against me. I’m trying to be better. That just is what it is and I get flack for that. Some dudes really be mad. I’m like, “I’m sorry” And this one guy was trying to talk to me, super light skinned, with freckles and ginger hair, he’s a full-on ginger. I’m like, “Bruh, no. No, not at all’ I just know. It was just discouraging, I really just... Oh my God, the way I felt.

And I don’t even know if it’s really that I believe what my daddy is saying about you part of the slave master’s illegitimate child, or just... I don’t know, maybe it’s just so ingrained that I’m just turned off by that. When it comes to friends, and we can be friends but romantically, no. But wow, that is crazy. You have to make a conscious effort to be different if it’s something you want to change, something you just not on board with. So trying to change my life, but sometimes it’s only so much changing. It’s a limit, so in certain areas it just is a limit.

Religiosity. The *Religiosity* constituent pertains to intra-group bias against co-creators on the basis of religion or religious expression. This was experienced by three of the 14 co-creators, though oppression of Black people in general, specifically through religious means, was mentioned by six of the 14 co-creators. In regard to intra-group religiosity, this exchange between Gasira and Hakim was especially illuminating:

Gasira: There's liberties that we have in our own mind, in our own way of life. But then there's still feeling as though we do not have the space to operate in our own way and feeling like we can't openly talk about that without being judged or without being, I don't know, shunned in some way from our own community, because this has been the truth that we've accepted. And so in that way I do feel like we have to sometimes walk on eggshells with how, what we've accepted as our truth or how we believe we should operate. But I don't know.

Kyee: Can you give me a specific example?

Hakim: She talking about White Jesus.

Gasira: Yeah.

Hakim: Well, I mean talking about the White Jesus on the wall. We were taught that way. Especially me.

Gasira: I grew up with a Black Jesus on my wall. I don't know about him. But all in the same, all in the same, just accepting that to be true and rightfully so. That's what we've known, that's what our families have known. So like I said, we understand why those are widely accepted views. And even still, it's not a total like, "Nah, we can't. This is not something that.." It's not totally against or on the other side of it. We choose to be spiritual because there are certain facts that we know that we don't want to ignore.

So I think for us, when I say it's hard because if you're growing up and you have friends and you have family members. And for example, Old Mississippi, Old Baptist, his mom is heavily in. So you can't say anything. So what does that look like when you're raising children? And then what respects do we have from other people to respect those boundaries in how we choose to raise our kids? And I don't think that we're able to. And I think that that's an issue across the whole community. That we are held to live in a certain way, believe in a certain thing, and practice certain practices.

To me, I feel like, as we are starting to change the cycle and develop our own way of thinking and learn and increase our knowledge about everything in the world, it's like you don't have the freedom to express that. You may have the freedom in your mind, but then

sometimes you still feel like, “Well, I might be in chains to my own people because I can’t even express that without getting pushback”

Hakim: Yeah. So I think that goes back to communication, both receiving and giving it. Most people don't even want to understand our viewpoint. We're not saying that we don't rock with it at all, because there are great things inside of it. But again, our education is a gift and a curse because once you dive into it you're like, "Oh, the first slave ship was called The Good Ship Jesus. Oh, that's interesting" So you're like, "Ah, now we're in a place where, yeah, I can eat the fish and spit out the bones" Tha's where we are.

Etana, who identifies as a queer woman even though she is hetero-presenting, further exemplified this point by discussing what religious views are socially acceptable within the Black community. She stated:

So within my family they identify as Christian, which is another thing that I don't understand for us, but go off, sis...So that's what I wanted to talk about next... It's socially acceptable in a Black community to be Christian, or even Muslim, I feel. But if you identify as anything that's nonreligious, like spiritual, then it's looked at as demonic, and it's really oppressive, but then again Christianity is oppressive. So just having to unlearn some of the practices that I've taken on just because I'm Black, and learning something that fits me has been really hard. I think because we were taught Christianity by our colonizers anything else is wrong because it is demonic.

Micros and Stereotypes

The *Micros and Stereotypes* meaning-unit was experienced by all 14 co-creators intensely and depicts the various micro-aggressions, micro-insults, micro-invalidations,

and micro-assaults endured by co-creators as a result of the prevalent stereotypes in society. This meaning-unit does not include overt hate speech. For example, Lesedi described being approached by an English teacher in college who thought all the Black students were in a gang due to them wearing Africa medallions—a very fashionable accessory at the time. Another example came from Kinaya who reported, “I remember someone I was spending a lot of time with told me that all soul food was fried chicken and Lawry’s seasoning salt. I’m like ‘Who told you that or where did you even get that?’” Specific examples, of micro-insults and micro-assaults came from Etana who recalled how co-workers have used the term “professional” as a backhanded compliment and as a direct assault on her character:

When I open my mouth in meetings people don't expect me to know what I'm talking about, or they question what I'm saying because I'm Black. It's my program director, the same one that I had the conversation with about nuances and Black Lives Matter, turn around in the same breath, “Oh, my God, you did really well in that meeting. You sounded so professional,” and her to think that it's an actual compliment, and instead of me standing up for myself it's me smiling and nodding. It's that. I asked some of my other co-workers who were White, I said, “Hey, has whatshername ever came up to you and complimented you, and told you that you sounded really professional?” She said, “No,” and I was like, “Oh, okay” I was like, “See?” “Well, I'm sure she did not meant it that way” “I'm sure she did not, but it still came out, and it still offended me, and it hurt me”

It's so funny because that same line that she said, “Oh, my God, you sounded so professional,” we had some Black secretaries upfront, and I came

through the door and I was like, “Oh, look at you all, you all look so professional,” and they did the same nervous laugh that I did so I knew. I knew, I’m like, “Yup, it’s the same for everybody,” because they were like, “Professional? What’d you mean I look professional? Don’t I look professional everyday?” They did not say anything, but that was that same look, and I could tell when I walked out of the room that they were kind of they, they kind of felt some type of way, you know?

I’ve had people that did not like me say, “Oh, my God, you’re so unprofessional,” and they use it as a weapon, “You’re unprofessional,” and it hurt my feelings. I’m like, “Damn,” but I knew that they weren’t saying it because they actually felt that I was being unprofessional, they said it as a way to hurt me, it was an assault on my character. I was like, “Okay, I get it. I get it, all right” It was by White people, and I’m just like, “Okay, that’s your way of saying slow your roll, nigger” You might as well just say the ER because honestly that’s how it feels.

Chioma offered an excellent example of a micro-invalidation. She described an experience she had with a philosophy professor that resulted in the professor implying Chioma did not have the mental capabilities for philosophy and may be better suited for African American studies, as if an ethnic studies program is less rigorous than a philosophy program:

I was a philosophy major for a while and I had taken a bunch of classes. And so I came to her office hours to talk about like, “Hey, I’m interested in this material and do you have any research positions?” And like, “I’m interested in grad school

potentially or whatever” And she was like, I told her my research interest at the time, the word Black was not in it. It was just like, “Oh, introspection, talking about love, dah, dah, dah” And she was like, “Oh, I think that’s better suited for African American studies” She was like, “I don’t think there is a place like that in philosophy. It’s just dominated by White men” And this is an Asian woman.

And so I’m like, “What do you mean there’s not a space or you don’t think this is a good fit when that’s literally what you are doing?” When she wrote all these papers about it, she’s had so many talks, there are other people who were in the field who are talking about this stuff. Because I’m like, “I’ve taken the classes. Y’all talk about political philosophy. Y’all talk about sex. Y’all talk about love. Y’all theorize about what it means to be a human being all the time. So what do you mean all of a sudden when I say the same thing that you’re interested in, you’re saying go to African American studies” Like what?

And she was like, “Well, this is hard. Philosophy is like hard. Yes, dominated by a lot of White men and I’ve had a lot of struggles” And I’m like, “I came to her with research interests and I was talking about the field” And she was just, immediately discouraged me and it messed with me because I’m like, “She’s a woman in the field. Who’s doing this work” I could see if I got it from a White dude, okay. You know what I mean? But it was she was young. She was talking about these very powerful things about empathy and love. And I’m like, “Damn, you can’t extend that same grace and compassion that you do in your classes to me?” It just blew my mind and I took it personal.

In regard to micro-aggression, Aniyah had a poignant example from high school:

It was in high school, classmate of mine. We were in AP US history and it was probably during Black history month because I can't think of another time when we actually talked about slavery in high school. And the young man made a joke about, "Why would the slave masters need other women anyway, that's what they had Black women for. Ha ha ha" It was a young White boy. The teacher was an older White man. He turned red in the face and actually almost left us in the classroom with him... It's 20 of us, he's the only White boy in the class. That all hit us because we all stopped and we did the look around, "Did y'all just hear that? Y'all heard him say that, right?" And a couple of us actually started getting up to walk over, I'm pretty sure if the teacher would've left, we probably all would've gotten in trouble for fighting...

Physical Violence

Acts of race-based physical violence were experienced by five of the 14 co-creators. None of the descriptions offered occurred in adulthood, all were experienced in childhood. For example, Jamilah experienced racial violence from other children in elementary school. She recalls an incident that happened in the fourth grade:

I was outside playing and this little White kid pushed me down and called me a nigger. And I got up and pushed him right back down. And then the teacher did not see him push me down, but they saw me push him down. So then now I'm in big trouble and they wanted me to apologize. And I was standing against it like, "No, I'm not apologizing to him. I don't care what you saw, but he's not finna mistreat me like that" So that was my first understanding that I'm going to get in

trouble because this White boy said I was wrong and they ain't asking me what he said or did to me. It's just I'm wrong.

Naeemah has a similar incident in kindergarten, but it was perpetrated by a student and a teacher and her mother had to intervene. She explained in the following exchange between her and I:

Naeemah: I lined up and a boy that was standing in front of me, turned around and punched me in my stomach. And I doubled over and she [the teacher] snatched me up. She was like, "Stand in line straight" And I tried to tell her that he punched me in my stomach and she was like, "You probably deserved it" And so, me being the firecracker that I am, I kicked him in his shins, and she grabbed me so hard. I remember thinking like, "She's going to snatch my arm off" And this was a White teacher. And she slapped me on my face. And she called me, a dumb n-word. And I was just like, "What?" And I told my mom because my feelings were just so hurt, and I've never seen my mom open up a can of whoop-ass on anybody the way that she did on that teacher. I feel bad for the lady, honestly. But she let her ass have it. So...

Kyee: So, your mom came to the school and fought the teacher?

Naeemah: No, she did not fight, she just jumped on her. She was like, “Don’t put your hands on my baby,” and commenced to like snatching. I think she more so like, roughed her up than anything else. But the fear in the teacher’s eyes said it all which, ultimately, the teacher tried to hold me back and said, I wasn’t socially ready for the first grade, even though I had the highest test scores in the entire class.

Kyee: Okay, so your mom has kind of shoved her around a little bit. I’m surprised that the teacher wasn’t fired.

Naeemah: She ended up quitting. But back then, I think that, especially with my mom being so young... She had me pretty young. She was 18 when she had me. I don’t think that she thought about following the chain of command and reporting the teacher. She was like, “Uh-huh (negative), you got my baby messed up” I think that, especially knowing where I was in my mind at like, 22, 23 years old. It’s more of like, you don’t think about how it’s going to impact you. You’re like, I just have to get justice in some way even if I have to take it into my own hands.

Social Control

Social Control refers to the means by which White people exert social control via policy control, culture control, physical control, forced isolation, and tokenism. This was experienced by five of the 14 co-creators. A workplace example of social control was

offered by Hakim in stating “Because even then, you may say, ‘We’re going to hire Black women because it checks the boxes for both gender and race.’ But again, at the end of the day, it’s still 9 times out of 10, somebody White making that decision. Now there are one offs, you got Bob Johnson’s, and the Michael Jordan’s, but those are far and few in-between. Is more Jeff Bezos of the world that are really making those decisions”

Bakari offered an example of how social control works in a cultural and educational realm in his critique of the way history is taught:

What’s being taught right now, is that Black people have never played in any really important or significant role in building America. In making this country what it is. What’s being taught now is that it’s okay for White people to be as crooked as they want to, and still be deemed a hero in history. You know like Ulysses S Grant, or General Lee. It doesn’t matter what type of person they was because, we can paint a nice picture to where at the end of the day, they’re still looked at not necessarily as heroes but they’re placed on a pedestal. They’re trophies in history. You look at the Emancipation Proclamation. We’ve got five presidents on Mount Rushmore who signed a document that excluded Black people completely. And it’s still accepted today. It’s still placed in museums. It’s still talked about in school. It’s still repeated all across the country like it’s a positive notion.

The most poignant example of this is exemplified in the following story of Naeemah’s friend, Brianna:

I had this friend Brianna, who was like my best friend at that time, and she was like, “I really want you to come over” Her dad always said no, but she ended

up asking her mom when her dad was away on business if I could come over to her house, and we could do a sleepover. Her dad ended up coming home early, and saw that I was there. And was like, “Who told you, you could be here?” And I was like, in my mind, in my 12-year-old mind, I was like, “Why would I be in your house without permission? You see I’m hanging out with your kids, did I just climb in a window and say, oh, I want to hang out with you?” He treated me like I was a criminal and I was like, “I’m Brianna’s best friend” He was like, “No, you’re not Brianna’s best friend. Hillary is Brianna’s best friend” I was like, “We’re all three best friends” And he was like, “Call your parents and have them pick you up” And I was like, “I mean, Okay” I called my dad, I was like, “Come get me”

And the next Monday, Brianna came to school. She always wore these really cool hip clothes like Hollister, Abercrombie, and they had rips, or they might show like a little bit of stomach. But she had on this huge hoodie and some sweatpants. And I was like, “What’s wrong?” And she was like, “Nothing” We had almost all of our classes together. And finally, we got to gym, and we have to change into our gym clothes. And she refused. I waited until everyone left out of the locker room and I went over to her and I was like, “What’s wrong? Gym is your favorite class” And she was like, “My dad beat me up,” and showed me the bruises all over her body. And she was like, “And he told me, I can’t be friends with you anymore” And [starts crying]

... I’m sorry. That really hurt me because that was my ride or die. And just like that, just from us wanting to be kids and be friends, our whole entire

relationship was erased that day. So, I think that was one of the most hurtful situations that I've ever been and made me feel like, "Okay, racism exists," right? But, it's real, people really hate you because of the color of your skin. Nothing any like, rip off all the skin and everything else up under it is exactly the same. But the color of my skin was so, revolting to him that he not only demolished the relationship that I had with my best friend for three years, but was so upset with her that he beat her so badly that she did not even feel comfortable like taking off our clothes and going to gym class.

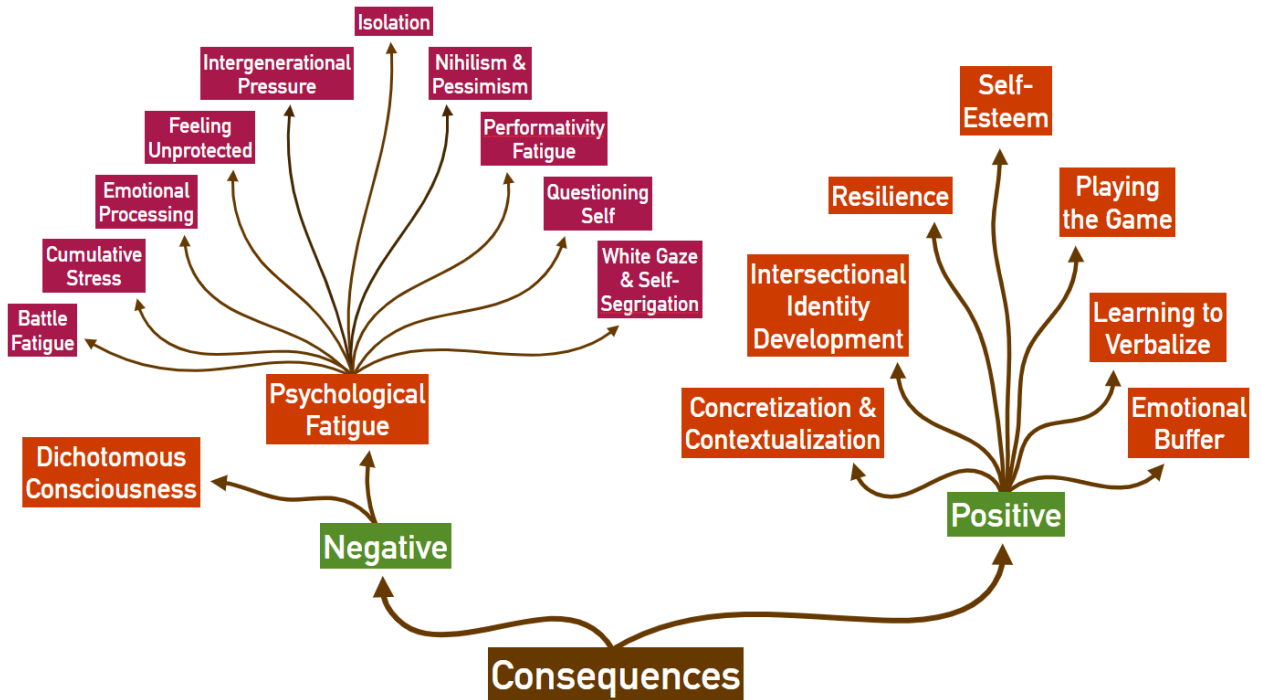
Consequences

The *Consequences* theme is comprised of two main meaning-units: *negative consequences* and *positive consequences*. This theme describes the consequences of learning about racism, not the consequences of racism itself. I will begin with the negative and then move to the positive. A physical representation of this theme (brown), along with its meaning-units (green), constituents (orange), and facets (maroon), is

represented in **Figure 5.4**.

Figure 5.4

Consequences Code Tree



Negative Consequences

The negative consequences meaning-unit is comprised of two constituent parts: *dichotomous consciousness* and *psychological fatigue*.

Dichotomous consciousness. Dichotomous consciousness was experienced by three of the 14 co-creators and described competition of opposing values and desires. For example, Bakari described balancing between nihilism and militance. He juxtaposed his anarchist thoughts and desires to demolish a society built upon racism with his reality of having a family to provide for and wanting to be successful. The pendulum of his mind swung between having hope that his children will have something better for the future

and the desire to bring America to be held accountable for its sins, no matter the cost. However, dual consciousness was best exemplified by Etana's description of her maternal grandfather both hating White people and using a sort of proximity to Whiteness as a separator from Blackness in the ordinary:

It was so funny because it was like they were trying to break out of that system of racism and fight that by educating their children about racism, but then failing to recognize that they had internalized racism, and they were perpetuating that in the household. It was super funny because it's not even within my immediate family, it was within my mom's family, talking to my maternal grandfather, and him talking about, "Oh, no, my family members did not come from Africa, but we came from Egyptians, and we had White people in our family" But then he'll turn around and say, "White people are evil!" and I'm just like, "You can't also want a proximity to Whiteness but then hate White supremacy at the same time" I don't understand it.

Psychological fatigue. Psychological fatigue was experienced by all co-creators and is the foremost constituent of their experience of negative consequences learning about racism. This meaning-unit describes isolation, cumulative stress, emotional processing, feeling unprotected, intergenerational pressure, battle fatigue, nihilism and pessimism, performativity fatigue, questioning self, and discomfort under the White gaze, leading to self-segregation.

Battle fatigue. Battle fatigue, described as the feelings of exhaustion from dealing with racist people or systems or feeling weary and overwhelmed from consistently combating racism and its effects, was experienced by four of the 14 co-creators. On this

topic, Jamilah sighed, “it’s like you are trying to fight this unwinnable fight to just live, just live a decent life, and it’s a uphill battle” However, the most prominent example of this comes from Chioma, who in response to a question about how she challenges the status quo in relation to race, stated:

Before I felt like I had something to prove and now the answers to those questions have changed a lot because I got exhausted...I don’t want to challenge authority as much because I just don’t like doing ego battles. I really hate it. I can’t do it. It just doesn’t do what it needs to. I just know they have more-- and maybe that’s me being insecure—I’m like, “No, you have more power” They can just not care. They don’t care. When I look at them and I get so passionate and upset I’m like, “This is a lost cause they not fucking listening” And I can say it in logical terms but even then that shit is fun to them. That’s entertainment. So I just let that go.

Cumulative stress. Cumulative stress was experienced by six of the 14 co-creators. This facet of psychological fatigue describes the compounding of stress resulting from hyper racial awareness, experiencing racial oppression, or witnessing racial oppression. As Bakari stated, “It is not the isolated events. It’s the combination of everything. It’s the combination of points in our lives where it seemed like something was happening every single day because you’re the color that you are. And a lot of times it’s hard to get past that. It’s hard to get over that.” An excellent example of this comes from the following exchange between Folami and I:

Folami: It's like a subconscious racket, tennis racket or something, like you know it's there, you don't really focus on it so much, but you know it's right there. It's like this Big Brother always watching over you, and you just learn to be aware that this Big Brother, this shadow, is there, but you can ignore it for the most part. But if you try to move a certain way, it's going to be there to remind you, right.

Kyee: Going to be there to smack you in the face.

Folami: Yeah, yeah. So, like I said, it gets tiresome sometimes, and I say sometimes because we're free enough where we can find ways to avoid it, whereas, again, that's why I always give the nod to those who have come before us, because we all know in segregation and Jim Crow, you couldn't avoid it. There was no forgetting it, other than through church, right? There was no vacation. So it was every day, bam, smack, in your face. And whereas here now we obviously have more freedoms, but we've still got a long way to go.

We have a long way to go to where I'm not... And I don't think I'm going to see it in my lifetime. To where I'm not reminded that my color, that I had no choice over, is supposedly supposed to be inferior, or criminal, uneducated, inadequate, just less than, than everyone else, just because the powers that be says so. So, like I said, I don't think it's going to happen in my lifetime, though.

Kyee: So that brings us back again to that psychological warfare, almost. I mean, you really said something powerful, you said we're free enough now to be able to avoid a lot of racism, but at the same time not free enough to not be reminded that you are considered less than because of your color.

And I think, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I think the psychological part of it is that you just never know where that's going to come from. You never know when the psychological or the mental tennis racket's going to smack you in the face.

Folami: Yeah, I mean, because it's so ingrained in this society, and not just American society, but in the world in general. I mean, Africans were enslaved all over the world.

Emotional processing. Nine of the 14 co-creators experienced the Emotional Processing facet, which describes the emotional pain, anger, sadness, confusion, or shock caused by learning of historical and current injustices or having one's color-blind, meritocratic worldview challenged. On this, Kinaya stated, "I had people say you're not as happy as you used to be; and like I'm in my James Baldwin at that moment. To be aware and Black is to be enraged most of the time- and that's where I was." She further stated, "I got angry and cynical for a while and I know for some people I was difficult to be around". In corollary, when asked if there were negative consequences to learning about race and racism, Jamilah exclaimed "Yes! Just the hurt! Just knowing that the color

of my skin made somebody just not want me to succeed in life. Like why, what is that? I just, it is baffling to me. It is that's the hardest part, the, just the hurt, the hurt".

Furthermore, Etana explained:

Mostly between the Master's and my Bachelor's and somewhat in my Master's Program I've had this fear of learning about these things on a deeper level, and just really just not knowing how I was going to take it. I did not want to be re-traumatized by information that I did not know about, because I know it's bad now but read history books it could get a lot worse. I did not know if I had the capacity to process all of that alone, because I've already been doing a lot of yelling and screaming, and crying, especially with the news of black bodies dropping, and black women being ignored.

This short exchange between Davu and I sum it up:

Davu: Every Thursday, we knew we were going to get angry. Because it was a lot of stuff that we did not know. In order to know the history, you have to be taught. You can only go off experiences from people that you know and your experience that you endured during that present time. But as far as origin stories, that was like everybody's in that class first time experiencing those type of ideas and thoughts and theories and situations that occurred. All we knew, we were kidnapped from our country and our tradition and religion was taken from us. We were forced to adapt to the laws of the land that were not our own. But as far as in-depth theories, that was the first time everybody in that class eyes were open to that.

Kyee: So you didn't know the depth of the harm, basically?

Davu: Correct.

Feeling Unprotected

Four of the 14 co-creators described instances where they felt unprotected from violence—racial, emotional, or otherwise—due to racism, colorism, or White solidarity. Most of the co-creators experiencing this facet were women; however, Mudada did as well. He described believing as a child any encounter with a White person could end in his demise and the fear that invoked in him. Etana also spoke about the fear of being unprotected in stating, “I think the scariest thought for me is the fact that at any given moment I could be assaulted by police, or anybody that doesn't look like me for that matter, and there's not a lot that I could do about it. It could really go left, and I could be

a hashtag anytime, so that's been really hard on my psyche sometimes.” Chioma echoed this sentiment in stating “It’s no consequence to treating me like a lower class citizen or being disrespectful. That’s the norm. And it’s stuck in my brain, [I] automatically default to that, but the bar is so low that it’s hard to have realistic expectations when you just accept the reality of the situation and the history of what has happened, violence that has been done as a black woman in America.”

Intergenerational Pressure

Four of the 14 co-creators experienced the psychological fatigue facet, which describes feeling pressured to succeed because co-creators’ ancestors faced too much oppression to reach their full potential. This theme is often expressed as inability to be mediocre, or act as an individual due to being considered a representative of the entire race. An excellent example of this came from Folami’s grandmother. He recalled:

Whenever I walked out the door, especially if I got in trouble at school, she would scold me and say, “When you walk out this door, you don’t just represent yourself. You first represent God, then you represent all Black people, then you represent your surname, and finally you represent Folami. So you think about that, and you remember that, before you decide you want to walk out this door and go act a fool. Because, you got everyone out here thinking God is either foolish or he raised a fool. You got everyone out here thinking every Black person that look like you is a fool” And she goes, “And God forbid you got everyone thinking everyone in this house is a fool”

While Folami did not mind this pressure, and even spoke about intergenerational pressure as a motivator, Chioma resented it a bit. She states “Sometime, it feels like a

burden. I can't just sit here and be like, 'Oh, I don't care' And just like, "Oh, I want to be like, I don't know, just a random career." I hate sometimes how I have to take in consideration, all those things that have shaped me in my past and I can't be disrespectful. I can't just sit here and make buku money and not care." This is a sentiment Bakari and I discussed in the following short exchange:

Bakari: It could be the rebel in us, a lot of us that chose alternative routes had to go through the mud in order to get it. And if we did not reach that level of success that we wanted, now we're imposing that on our kids. Like, okay, I halfway figured it out, I need you to figure out the rest.

Kyee: You're saying we're counting on our children to carry us through the finish line?

Bakari: Yeah.

Isolation

Seven of the 14 co-creators experienced isolation as a result of being the only Black person in their educational, social, or corporate environment. For example, Bakari described the first Black man to be hired into his department in its 16 years of operation. He described it as being very isolating for him to be the only one, especially because they were expecting him to be a token, and he refused the tokenism they were offering. Lesedi had the most poignant example of this. She recalled:

No. And so, how it worked or... Okay, so elementary school, I was pretty much segregated off. I don't know if it was experimental or what it was, but I did have

the grades to be in the class. And...they wanted me to transfer to another school that was dedicated to gifted and talented students. And my mother said, “No, I’m not going to have my child going to an all White school”...But she did not realize, even though there was a Black principal at the school...I was still isolated in that class. She just felt, “Oh, because it was other Black kids at this school, then that meant that there were Black kids in my class” but it wasn’t...she did not know I was already with all White kids.

Additionally, participants also felt isolated from other Black people who differed in dedication to Black issues. For example, Etana lamented: “I do have to lean on other Black women for things, I feel like Black men kind of suck because of the fucking misogyny. It makes me really, really sad. I never really thought about it like this, but I’m realizing that I’m really, really sad because I feel alone, and I feel isolated, and I feel helpless.”

Nihilism and Pessimism

Half of the co-creators, seven of 14, experienced nihilism, pessimism, or both. This facet of psychological fatigue describes co-creators’ admissions of anxiety, depression, or losing hope in humanity or a better future due to the current racial circumstances. For example, when Gasira was asked about the ways in which she resists racism, she stated, “Sometimes I feel like, ‘Is it possible for us to really go against the system?’ I mean it’s like roots in the ground. It’s hard to be able to kind of pull that up.” Another example comes from Folami who, when speaking about systemic racism, stated, “it’s just ingrained, and I don’t think it’s going to change anytime soon. That would take, in my opinion, my humble opinion, hundreds of years to undo.” The most intense

expression of this came from Chioma. She stated, “I would say I did not realize how pessimistic I was. I’m from Mississippi, and just my upbringing, just being exposed to the deep South and just messed up stuff. It de-sensitized me... I always saw that hidden repressed part, or messed up part, of society. So it was very hard to be optimistic and not automatically project negative things onto people.” I asked a clarifying question about her difficulty in giving people the benefit of the doubt. She responded, “Yes. Because I know what White people are capable of. All of that fear and pain kind of got passed down and I have to deal with it.”

Performativity Fatigue

Six of the 14 co-creators described being weary of performativity, inability to be their authentic self and have authentic reactions, or self-censorship as a result of the White gaze that contributes to their psychological stress burden. For example, Jamilah, in recalling a conversation between her and a colleague, stated, “That’s the dichotomy that I fight. Like how much can I say or not say or share in my experiences because I don’t want to be perceived as the angry Black person.” Likewise, in pondering the friendships between Black women, Aniyah stated, “There’s always this performative aspect of, how do you be authentic as a Black woman without being a negative stereotypical Black woman? Whatever that stereotype is.” In corollary, Naeemah stated, “It does give me anxiety because I know that not only do I have to show up, I have to show up and give 100%. And 100% all of the time is exhausting. And perfection is not a thing. Humans are very imperfect, right? But Black folks, Brown folks, are expected to show up and be more than perfect. No matter what they do. No matter what credential comes behind their

name. They have to show up and show out all the time. They don't really get to be mediocre."

Questioning Self

Seven of the 14 co-creators mentioned questioning themselves in racial matters. This questioning took many different forms. For example, Naeemah described reaching out to White friends to process. She stated, "And, if I have a racist situation, something that feels racist, I'll try to check myself and be like, 'Is this implicit bias on my part?' And I'll reach out to them like, 'Let me run a certain situation by you'... And I was like, 'Am I tripping? Or was that kind of racist?'" However, this theme was mostly expressed as an extension of the workplace. For example, Folami described it as a more insidious form of racism due to its covert nature. I summarized his experiences as "It's the sort of racism that makes you question like, 'Did I not get that promotion because I'm not qualified for the promotion, or did I not get the promotion because even if I am qualified, there was a better candidate, or did I not get the promotion just because I'm Black?'" to which he simply responded "Right." Another example of this type of questioning was expressed in this exchange between Imari and I:

Kyee: So yeah, I think it sounds like you're saying that you have to wonder. It takes a psychological toll. Even just having to wonder, are they treating me in this way because they don't like me as a person? Are they treating me this way because I'm black? Like, why are they treating me this way? Am I getting paid less? Because, then you have to go through this investigation and talk to all of these people to try to figure out, is this company just paying everybody low? Or is it just me that's getting paid low?

Imari: That's correct.

Kyee: And then if it's me that's getting paid low, "Am I not as educated as everybody? Oh, I'm more educated than everybody else"

Imari: That's correct.

Kyee: So then, you have to go through this process of elimination and spend all of this mental energy and even physical energy, on trying to almost maintain your sanity because it's just trying to realize that it's not you, it's them.

Imari: That's right, so yeah. I mean, you hit it right on the head, that is a thing where, once you do the research on why you're not getting paid that amount. And then at the end you have enough in your tool belt where you can say, "Alright, why am I not getting enough?" You know you don't flat out, come and ask or whatever, but it's like, "Can you please explain to me why I'm not getting enough? Here's what I've done here"

 And that's when you come with accolades on what you've done for the company and you lay it out in a plain like, "Why come this person over here got a raise? And he just comes to work every day. And he might even screw up all of his projects. He gets a \$3 raise or whatever, just because, but I come in and I make the company money. I don't get no raise. What's the problem?" So yeah, it's like, "What is the problem? Is it race?" And when you call them out on that, the first thing they want to say is, "I'm not racist, if I was racist, you wouldn't be here" I'm like, "Well, I think I might have been a little bit more qualified than some of the folks that you want to put in my position anyway. So that's why I'm still here.

 Another reason why I'm here is because someone in your family had more faith in me to be here versus someone else of your complexion." So yeah, it's sad though, like you said, you have to do the research and gather the information and it's very draining. Very draining.

The White Gaze and Self-Segregation

Ten of the 14 co-creators experienced feelings of discomfort under what feels like the watchful eye of White people. These created feelings of discomfort being around White people, and in many instances, self-segregation from White people. Many of the co-creators admitted to not having White friends or allowing White people into their personal lives. For example, Naeemah stated, “It does take a psychological toll because I feel like... dealing with a group of White people gives me anxiety. My poker face is like, a true poker face, they would never know it. But it gives me extreme anxiety...” She continued on to state that she had “built up a wall” against White people and felt she was unable to trust them. She stated, “I have my guard up with them most times because I’ve been burned so many times in the past.... I’m just guarded.” Mudada recalled: “Some of the most uncomfortable times in school was when we watched some of the slave movies, and things of that nature, Sounder. And there was some stuff on KET that we used to watch about slavery and Jim Crow and stuff like that. And I would be in a classroom full of primarily all Caucasians, all White people. And it was just very, very uncomfortable.” Another example came from Kinaya, who simply stated, “I know that the White gaze is something that I can’t quite escape.” A great example of this came from Folami. He observed “It’s like we’re always having to adopt, or adapt, rather. You’re always feeling like an animal out of its habitat, always feeling watched, and it gets tiring, man. It gets depressing if you let it get to you too much...I definitely get tired of it, and it just makes it hard.”

Positive Consequences

Positive consequences of the racial conscientization process were experienced by 13 of the 14 co-creators. This meaning-unit includes the ability to perceive racial situations and maneuver accordingly, the ability to concretize and conceptualize racial situations, building an emotional and intellectual buffer, the development of an intersectional Black identity, and learning to verbalize or speak eloquently about racial matters, resilience, and self-esteem.

Playing the Game: Perceiving, Assessing, and Maneuvering Accordingly

The *Playing the Game* facet of the *positive consequences* constituent was described by 12 of the 14 co-creators and describes their ability to perceive racial situations, assess them for what they are, and effectively avoid them or maneuver through them relatively unscathed. For example, when discussing code switching, Kinaya stated, “Anybody from a different culture than White has that ability; and it’s allowed me to move a bit more freely and dare I say, a bit undetected...” As if in agreement, Imari stated, “Yeah. Like I said, if I have a conversation with a person I can hear it in his voice, or he or she, it could be certain keywords they say where I’m like, ‘Oh, okay. I know how to deal with this person. I know exactly what to say and what not to say to this person.’” Folami echoed this sentiment in stating, “I don’t feel that I’m as naïve as some that I’ve come across... I feel that I’m better prepared than most because of it, because I feel like I operate in reality... It’s almost like a matrix, if you will, and you’re just trying to figure out how you move through the matrix.” Along those same lines, Etana stated, “I’m more cognizant, I guess, about microaggressions and microassaults, I recognize them more now, I know what they are. I think I see the system now for what it is.” Davu summed it up in stating “Yeah. It’s a game plan you have to devise. You can’t maneuver if you

don't know where you're going or what you're trying to do for one. You have to have a plan. Like chess." And Jamilah confirmed this by stating, "But learning about racism, you just have to, I guess, learn how to manipulate to the best of your ability. So it's advantageous for you because it's going to be some things that happen that you have no control over. But if you got some forewarning pre-planning, you may be able to deal with it a little bit better." Mudada had one of the best examples of this. He stated:

The positives, is it opened my eyes wide open. I wasn't walking through the dark pretending. I know that this stuff is out here and it's real, what I'm going to have to do to overcome it...But there was a time when I thought there was no racism. But it opened my eyes wide open so I know what approach to take when I'm out here in the world. I know this stuff goes on now, so that's the only positivity I took out of learning about racism...I mean, what I'm facing when I go on to a job interview or what I'm facing when dealing with police, law enforcement. I just know that people have a predisposed notion of when it comes to Black people and how we have to change what we do a little bit to overcome, which we shouldn't have to. I'm hoping one day, I mean, we don't have to change anything. But just knowing that racism is here and we're behind the eight ball a little bit in what we have to do to try to overcome it. I could still be walking through, like everything's everything, and still thinking that there's nothing going on. But now I know. I know. And knowing is half the battle.

Concretization and Contextualization

This constituent describes instances where co-creators' experiences concretize their conceptualization of racism, or oppression in general. Additionally, this constituent

describes co-creators' ability to contextualize racial experiences or events and apply them to other situations. An excellent example of contextualization came from Kinaya's denial to align herself to the *Strong Black Woman* trope. She stated, "I participate in self-care because I am a Black woman and we have largely been the mule of the world. Now I've never been the mule of the world, me, Kinaya. I know that. I realize I've had a very sheltered and to some degree privileged upbringing. I believe that's the hope and the will of my ancestors. So, I am not going to question that; and I'm not going to disgrace them by putting myself back in that position." Another example came from Naeemah's simple statement: "I think that dealing with racism as a Black person, gave me an idea of how it would be treated as a gay person." Kinaya echoed this in stating:

Learning about racism helped me more quickly understand the nuance, the other nuances in other systems of oppression. So it's like learning one romantic language. You can understand what everybody else is saying when. If you learn French and you get real thorough with it, you can understand what's being spoken to you in Spanish, Italian, and whatever. You might not know it completely but if you read it, you're like oh. That's what's happening. Okay. You have a good guess. You have a good platform.

In regard to concretization, Bakari opined, "You can prepare yourself, your entire life for certain events, but until you go through those events you truly never understand or know how you're going to react, how you're going to make it out, how you're going to be after the fact." Mudada echoed this sentiment, recalling, "Through school you learn because the White kids, they had no problem using racial slurs and things of that nature, because they're kids. That's what they hear at home. They don't think anything is wrong

with it, apparently. And that's what started the formal, going from having a conversation with my parents to, 'All right, now this is real. This is what's going on out here.'"

Emotional or Intellectual Buffer

Eight of the 14 co-creators displayed an enhanced ability to deal with racial situations due to an emotional or intellectual buffer. For example, Bakari stated, "Kind of like going through life with a blindfold on. If I would've had to do that and every wall that I ran into I sat there confused as to how the hell I get through it, how the hell I get around it, or why it's there to begin with. That takes a lot more energy versus understanding what I'm going to run into or what I'll possibly run into. That way before I get there I can prepare myself mentally, physically." He went on to describe reigning in his expectations of White people so he isn't as upset when they let him down. Jamilah seconded that notion: "Because when you learn, it kind of helps you, I guess, build up your defenses as far as your expectations of other people. Because if I already know you don't want the best for me, then that's going to limit the expectations I'm placing on you." Chioma discussed having an understanding of herself in relation to White people and therefore not taking it as personal when they try to reject the Black part of her. She stated, "I don't take it as personal. I mean, I understand psychologically what's going on. I understand the dynamics and I'm like, 'This has nothing to do with me.' But I mean, it still hurts my ego a little bit." This grace can even be extended to other Black people as Davu explained, "This system is set up against us on different levels. And they all fall into place under one carefully calculated designed system, as far as African Americans. But it's in us to be natural born Kings and leaders. It's just the system can deteriorate a

majority of our minds to think otherwise. We have be patient with our people.” Kinaya said it best:

I think learning about racism and all the other isms has freed me. I realized okay. Auntie Toni, as in Morrison, describes racism as a disease, all right, which means me as a Black person, it’s not something I can really catch. Some of us internalize things. Like we have our issues with racism like colorism, texturism, whatever, but those are all indirect results of somebody else’s sickness. So as a Black person, I know full-well being racist is not one of my options. That thing is going to be gray. All the other options might be Black but that one, I can’t choose. So it frees me from having to concern myself with other people’s issues. I’ve been free for a while.

Intersectional Identity Development

Nine of the 14 co-creators displayed a more advanced development of their intersectional Black identity as a result of the racial conscientization process. Resultantly, co-creators were able to see themselves as more than Black while understanding that being Black is part of their “whole self.” For example, Aniyah stated, “Experiencing racism and oppression or things of that nature, help me to find other parts of my whole self. Understanding and accepting those parts of myself also helped me try to make sense of the historical race relations...like understand my place as a Black woman.” Bakari opined a similar notion in stating “[racial learning and trauma] helped me understand my whole self better because learning about race is not enough to truly understand one’s self. It is not until you actually go through things that strengthen you and that, strengthen every part of you, rather it is physically, mentally, spiritually.” Hakim, in response to a

question of if learning about race helped him understand your whole self better, responded:

I just think the process itself was beautiful, but also scary. Learning about me was the process of educating who I was as a Black man. How I identify with Mississippi culture. How I identify with the class that I grew up in and moving into being an educated Black man. How do I treat Black women? How do I treat women in general? So I think that shaped all of that into how I'm viewed as a Black man in the world. Well at least in the United States. Because I guess we're viewed differently in different places

Learning to Verbalize

The *Learning to Verbalize* constituent describes how co-creators learned the language to verbalize their experiences with race and racism and was experienced by five of the 14 co-creators. For example, Chioma stated, "I took sociology classes and they were like, 'This is how power manifest and this is how people see.' And I'm like, 'Oh my gosh, this has been my life. What do you mean? This is theory, what? This is a fact.' I'm like, 'No, if you go here, that is what will happen.'" Etana furthered this concept in saying, "I've been able to verbalize how I've been feeling, like for instance learning about microaggressions, microassaults, that's been really helpful for me because, like I said I'm able to verbalize that, put a name to the way that I've been feeling. I don't have to feel crazy because I know that there's a thing that's actually happening and it has a name." In corollary, Kinaya recalled, "In terms of color and picture, she was able to take blobs of color and space and put structure there with lines in black and White to create the full scope of what I was actually seeing because, I had already understood and

appreciated these things but I did not have language to go with them, and she gave me that.”

Resilience

Resilience describes the will of co-creators to use instances of racial injustice as motivation for success and was experienced by seven of the 14 co-creators. This constituent was perfectly summarized by Bakari in his statement: “You do kind of build a chip on your shoulder and you have to carry it. Now, what you do with that chip is completely up to you. You can use it as a crutch where a lot of people do that decide to live the street life or live the life of crime. A lot of people use that as their crutch. Or you could use it as a stepping stone and every time you go through something, you just put more and more under your feet.” He continued: “I don’t think I would’ve had the drive that I have now had I not known the struggles that my ancestors went through. I don’t think I would’ve had the motivation to succeed had I not known the dilemmas and the barricades that I would have to break through in order to get there.” Davu added this perspective by stating, “I was never taught to believe that it’s over because we have the short end of the stick. We can maneuver with that short end of the stick.” Also, Mudada stated, “In my head, I want to conquer this thing. I want one day there to be no barriers or anything like that. And the only way to do that is to just kick down the door, take what’s ours, educate yourself, educate others, and break the system. We got to break the system, somehow... So I’m motivated, in that sense. I know it’s out here, but I want to do something to get rid of it.”

Self-Esteem

The *Self-Esteem* constituent refers to co-creators' elevated self-esteem as a result of the racial conscientization process. This boost in self-esteem, and general pride in being a Black person, was experienced by six of the 14 co-creators. This pride was exemplified in Mudada's statement "Black people, we're proud people. We're proud, independent people. So, I've never been ashamed. I've never wanted to be White. If I could go back and be born again, I would want to still be Black." Aniyah also exemplifies this pride in stating "I think that's probably the most positive thing is like learning about blackness and falling more in love with like black in general."

However, Etana had the most profound experience of this constituent. She stated: We know all of the negative tropes about Black women, the stereotypes, that's mostly rooted in misogynoir and all of the things. I had to overcome all of those things, not just the colorism, but just all of the negative stereotypes about Black women. I struggled with sex addiction, and it really fucked up my self-esteem, and in many ways I only saw myself as a sex object. As a child, my step-daddy used to say, "You're not going to be good for anything but suck a dick. You're a black tar-baby." He used to do things to me, spit in my mouth, stuff like that, and so it just really, my self-esteem really, it suffered.

But now that I've seen this movement of Black women refusing to be a monolith, and embracing their differences, and their sexuality, and what it means to be a woman, and to be Black, and talking about the intersectional struggles, it's really helped me strengthen who I am and what I stand for, and what I like, and disregard everything that I've been taught about who Black women are. I'm just really learning about who I am, and seeing the different representation of Black

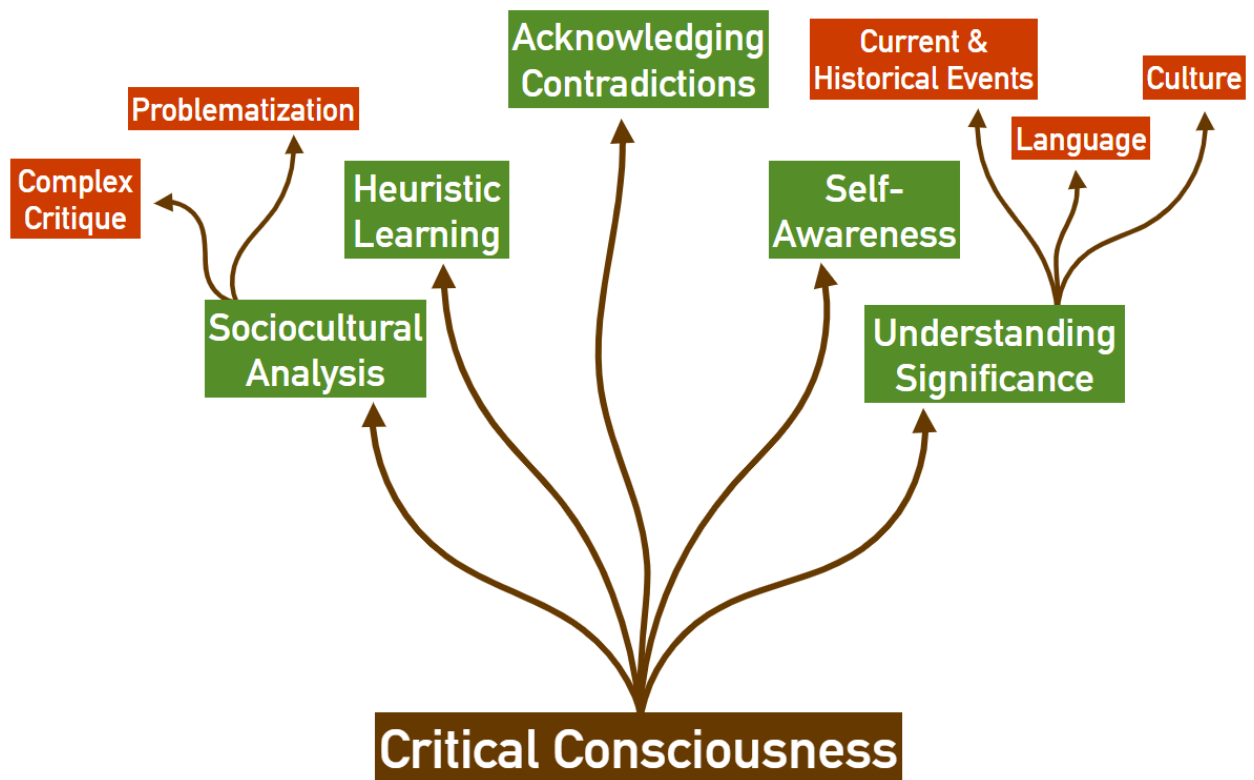
women in the media, on TikTok, on Facebook, on Instagram, in film, in magazines, just it helps me to feel like I'm a part of that community.

Critical Consciousness

Aspects of critical consciousness were observed in all 14 co-creators. This theme encapsulates co-creators' displays of complex critical thinking skills pertaining to race and racial matters. This theme is comprised of five meaning-units: acknowledging contradictions, heuristic learning, sociocultural analysis, and self-awareness, as well as understanding the significance of culture, current events, historical events, and language. A visual representation of this theme (brown), along with its meaning-units (green) and constituents (orange), is presented in **Figure 5.5**.

Figure 5.5

Critical Consciousness Code Tree



Acknowledging Contradictions

The *Acknowledging Contradictions* meaning-unit was experienced by eight of the 14 co-creators and describes their awareness of cultural, political, educational contradictions and their subsequent questioning of the status quo in relation to spheres of influence. For example, when Aniyah was a child, she recalled never being accepting of the segregated status quo and subsequently questioning her father about racism. She asked, “Why is this a thing? Why is it so significant?...Why don’t White people like Black people, like why?” She further explained, “I wanted answers as to why, like I loved being Black. I’ve never not wanted to be Black or like, I’ve never been like ‘Oh my gosh, being Black is so terrible.’ Like I’ve never been like that. And I wanted to know why does that seem like White people feel that way towards me?” Chioma also had a similar experience noticing a discrepancy and questioning it. She stated, “I mean, I was asking these questions third grade like, ‘What’s going on? Why is this school different?’ Because when I switched schools, the funding, having to be in the bus, not wearing a uniform, how the kids treated me, that was different.” Another example came from Imari who stated, “I had to go on my journey at 16 turning 17 as a senior and was like, this is what I want to know more about. I want to know more about my people, more about why are we being stepped on? Why come we can’t uplift ourselves?”

The most poignant examples came from Mudada and Naeemah:

Mudada: I had this particular teacher. We were in social studies. And we were talking about politics and what it would take to be president of the United States. We went through the whole, you got to be a certain age, and things of that nature. And he was going through the list of what would disqualify you as being president. He was like “You’ll never see a woman president. You’ll never see a Black president”... And I was thinking, “Okay, why not?” Later on, when I watched the movie *Malcolm X* with Denzel, that part where he was asking about becoming a lawyer and his teacher told him, “You could never become a lawyer because you’re a nigger, and you couldn’t be a lawyer. You could do things with your hands. You could be a carpenter, but you couldn’t be a lawyer” So that’s the stance that I took when he said that, “Why can’t I be? I make good grades.

I make better grades than my White peers sitting right here, that cheats off me every day. You’re saying he can become president, but I can’t?”

Naeemah: I was like, “Mm-hmm (negative). So, you mean to tell me these people were thriving at some point. At one point, it was like, Egypt was separated from the rest of Africa. And it was like, “Oh, Egypt was amazing. Ancient Mesopotamia was amazing” But these are ultimately, Brown folk. And everything around that, it was like, “Oh, everyone else is savage” Just like, but these places are in [Africa] You’re talking about an entire continent, and then you’re saying that, “Oh, these people were amazing. But the rest of the continent is savage” I find that very hard to believe. So, even at a very young age, I was questioning the things that were taught to me and doing my own research, honestly.

Heuristic Learning

Eleven of the 14 co-creators described heuristic learning practices that furthered their understanding of race and racial issues outside of formal education and informal structured activities. These activities included reading or listening to books, watching documentaries, seeking diverse perspectives, and even Googleing or Youtubeing topics. For example, Mudada realized he did not know much about Malcolm X due to his school focusing more on Martin Luther King Jr. So, at 16, he started doing his own research. He stated, “I always was interested in Martin and Malcolm. Really did not get into any more of the leaders until I was much older because that’s all they taught you in school, was really Martin. They really did not go into Malcolm. I had to read the autobiography of Malcolm X to get introduced to Malcolm, and then the movie came out.”

Lesedi took it upon herself to learn more as well. She recalled thinking, ““Let me see, let me take more steps and be more proactive in learning about my culture because it has to be more to it than race, more to it than what I’m being told in my home,’ which was nothing. ‘and more to it than what’s in the books.’ because you surely couldn’t get it from television. There weren’t any documentaries, just a few movies about Black people or race and culture. They weren’t exposing that on television.” Likewise, Kinaya stated, “I am a very avid learner. I learn. I go and I’ll buy a book or go on YouTube to see if there is a professional or someone out there who has been able to quantify whatever it is I’m feeling or dealing with. What will happen? I’ll read an article. I’ll learn.”

Sociocultural Analysis

Thirteen of the 14 co-creators exhibited the ability to analyze and critique, or *problematize*, hegemonic systems, or events and sociocultural circumstances. Twelve of those 13 co-creators exhibited the ability to analyze and critique multiple systems and/or events at a time and synthesize them into one *complex critique*. Problematization is exemplified in this exchange between Naeemah and I in which she critiqued the ability of White gay men and White trans women to step in and out of identifying with their status as a sexual or gender minority:

Naeemah: I'm going to speak about White gay males, specifically. They're proud in all of those ways until it becomes convenient for them to X out things like being gay specifically, and they're able to tap into their White male privilege, and ultimately, extract themselves from the community. And it's like, I don't know. I think it's like, for lack of better terms, I think it's fake because if you're part of a community, be part of that community. Don't mute it when it's convenient for you.

Kyee: Can you give me an example of that?

Naeemah: Okay, like I have a trans friend that is a trans-woman, but was born male. And needed to get some business stuff done, like court related things. And ultimately, like, stopped wearing the wig, stopped wearing the makeup, and was like, "I need to handle business" put on a suit, slicked their hair back, and stepped into the world as a straight man for a day. A straight White man for a day, and got a ton of shit accomplished.

And it's like, as a Black woman, I can't do that. I can make myself look like straight. I can't walk into a level of privilege that's afforded from being White. When it all boils down, whether I'm gay or not, I'm still a Black woman. And if I wasn't a woman, I'm still Black. It's just some certain things you can't take away.

Another example of problematization occurred in this exchange between Lesedi and I. In this example, Lesedi critiqued depictions of Black women in media. While it is not lost on me that the following exchange is heavily rooted in respectability politics, it still serves as a useful example:

Lesedi: We have such a negative connotation in society. If you look on television, how we're portrayed, and even in movies, how we're portrayed, even the awards that some of the actresses have received they were demeaning roles for Black women. Whereas, their White counterparts did not have to have demeaning roles to win an Academy Award"

 But, for instance, Halle Barry, she won the Academy Award for *Monster*, I think it was, because of what happened in the movie, when she's been in many movies. Maybe she should have won an Academy Award for being the junkie in the Spike Lee movie, in *Jungle Fever*. I'm just saying.

Kyee: Or her performance in *Saving Isaiah*, right?

Lesedi: Absolutely. That was wonderful. She played another junkie role, but she did not win an award until the one guy was raping her. "Oh, that was just so real. That was just awesome" Or even with Monique, when she played the role as the Black mother, because that's probably what a lot of White society think of Black single mothers.

And I felt that that movie was disgusting. I watched it, and I was horrified. And why would she even choose to play that role? Maybe it was for her profession, but it really made Black women look really bad. And she won an Academy Award for that.

Even Denzel Washington, he won his Academy Award for being a dirty cop, a Black, dirty cop killing people, dealing drugs, whatever but he also had awesome roles. He's great in every movie, to me. He's so diverse, but he wasn't ever considered for an Academy Award for his portrayal as Malcolm X or even Philadelphia, but Tom Hanks was recognized in Philadelphia and he played a gay guy with HIV and dying of AIDS. But the reputable role that Denzel Washington had as his attorney, educated Black man, he did not win an Academy Award for supporting actor.

An example of complex critique can be observed in the following statements by Kinaya. In this excerpt, she integrated racism and its effects into a conversation about health and wellness. She also seamlessly integrated culture and epigenetics into the discussion of racism and wellness. The integration of so many concepts and systems is what makes this particular critique *complex*:

When there's something I feel the need to question, I dig and learning about, sorry, learning about racism helped with that and it informs so many decisions. It informs everything. Like I'm on a fat cell shrinking journey but you don't actually lose fat cells. They just shrink. That's good to know. But some

people would call it fat loss and learning about how change anything about your body requires you to appreciate the things that your body is responding to like your environment, your diet, your level of stress, the hormones that are produced from all these different things, which give you what you see and racism affects every single one of those things.

Racism stops you from being able to go to places that have the things necessary to make those changes. Racism creates food deserts. It creates very stressful environments. All of those things is create hormonal imbalances in the body and when people deal with those things for so long, it becomes trans epigenetic.

So now you've got people out here believing that diabetes is hereditary and it ain't. The system, the culture for diabetes is hereditary, heart disease. None of those disease are actually hereditary. Those things are just what happened when you get thrown in the same pot your ancestors have been thrown in for hundreds of years. Who knew?

Another example of complex critique can be observed in this exchange between Aniyah and I. In this exchange, Aniyah offered one of the most comprehensive critiques in the study. She effortlessly blended observations of Black church leaders, Black politicians, gentrification, Black small business, corporate greed, poverty, and capitalism into one critique:

Aniyah: Yeah, unfortunately. Yeah. I think probably the negatives come from like, again going back to like positions of power. So when I think about Black politicians, Black celebrities, Black people who are in these higher places of power in my mind and in my spirit I feel like you should be doing something to help negate the negative. But I don't feel that. And so I will admit like I definitely side eye, like a lot of Black politicians, a lot of Black celebrities. Religion is huge for Black people. So a lot of Black religious leaders like, I side eye them a lot. Like, I really don't feel like you down for the cause. Like you, you, you forgot your ruts, not your roots, but your ruts. Like I have a problem with that. So I think that's probably the negative because the camaraderie, the sense of like, once you get their help somebody else get up, I don't feel like a lot of Black people in higher positions of power do that. And I don't understand why I haven't, I haven't answered that question yet either.

Kyee: So you're saying that you don't feel like a lot of Black people in higher positions of power do enough to help advance the race. Am I saying that right?

Aniyah: Yeah, that's about all that's spot on spot on.

Kyee: And you mentioned religious leaders, you mentioned politicians and religious leaders. Is those seem to be like, it you can correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems like you're talking about like Creflo Dollar type People who have these T.D. Jakes, people who have these ginormous churches, you know what I, I don't know. And you could correct me if I'm wrong. I don't know if you're talking about like, the 50 person church down the street or like these Joel Austin, is that his name or Stein Stein. I mean, just mega churches. Is that what you're talking about? Or are you talking about them all?

Aniyah: So to a certain extent, them all but, definitely like the mega churches. And so like with smaller churches, I do have issues with like some of the corruption that I've experienced, growing up, I grew up C.M.E. Which is Christian Methodist Episcopal. You know, I've witnessed some of the corruption that goes on in smaller churches, money laundering for instance, taking advantage of teenage girls for instance. Those are issues for me like you're in a position of power, but you abusing your power to some of the most extremes.

For mega churches the same thing goes on. There's no reason why your church brings in \$80,000 every Sunday, but you don't even give out scholarships to the youth that are participating in your choirs and your liturgical dance teams that are doing mission work. Like, you're taking from your community and you're not investing anything back. I have a problem with that.

Kyee: Okay. So is that like also the problem that you seem to, or not seem to have? I don't, it sounds like that, but the problem that you have with politicians, because it seems like, and you can correct me if I'm not understanding this correctly. It seems like the community invested. It seems like this is what you're telling me. The community invested in you to get where you are, whether you're a high profile pastor or a politician and then you get to where you are. And like you said, you forget your ruts and You don't remember. So then they distanced themselves from the community and they're not really giving back to the community that gave to them. So, in essence it's like a one sided relationship for black people in power and that is what's bothering you about it.

Aniyah: Definitely. I definitely think it's one sided. I can't say specifically whether or not certain politicians think that they got there based on their own merit, or if they just have selective memory on who donated to their campaigns who was out there, you know, getting people to vote for them or who was on their planning committees.

 I can't say for a fact that that's their thought process, but what I can say, just from what I've witnessed. You know, doing voter registration work even, the community invests in these Black politicians that they feel have really good talk game. And they, and I will give them that the talk game is immaculate. I've heard politicians that say things I'm like that sound real good, but then turn right back around. Let's just say, we're talking about, you know, providing more community resources. But once you get into office, instead of providing community resources, you provide gentrification opportunities, and you allow these Black people to be pushed out of their homes that have been in their families for generations, you allow White corporations to come in and create these pop up shops.

 And these, these little bakeries and, and eateries in these historically Black communities, and you push them out, you push them away, you get rid of the small businesses. You get rid of the small, tiny community centers that were functioning out of these people's pockets. And then you give them nothing in return. But you tell them this is

good for the community, but they're no longer a part of it. They've been pushed out. You forgot about the people who supported you.

Aniyah:

I mean, it has a lot to do with capitalism. I lied, I have figured it out. I do know what the issue is. It's capitalism, but what I haven't figured out is like, how do we get beyond that? You got your dollars, your bank account is okay for the next, your bank account is fine for your great-grandchildren. Now can we focus on someone's children? They're not even sure if their mom is going to be able to make it home from her third job to cook dinner, but she donated \$20 to your campaign.

Aniyah:

And you forgot about that. You forgot about the smallest people. You forgot about some of the high up people who donated \$2,000 to your campaign, because somebody else offered you \$20,000 to get rid of those people. So they could build their coffee shop. I have problem with that.

As discussed in the *Author Note*, one of the most impactful complex critiques came from Bakari. He integrated discussions of violence, politics, White rage, the housing market, the education system, the judicial system, career opportunities, isolation, historical events, the military, the credit bureau, and historical figures into a critique of America, incremental racial progress, and resistance:

If you look at the language of America, and you can go back as far back in American history as you want, America has one language. That's the one language that the Black community failed to realize, that it's the only language America speaks and that's violence. America knows no other language, but violence. They try and make it seem like that's what makes the difference between a Democrat and a Republican. The only difference is the Democrats will sit down at a round table with you, and hey, you're going to do what we tell you to do, but we're also going to give you this, this, this, this, this in return, we're going to ask you nicely and say, please, last resort, we gone fuck some shit up. Republicans gone to tell you, you gone do what the fuck we tell you to do, or we gone fuck some shit up first? That's the only difference.

America has never believed in actually compromising, they've never believed in actually negotiating. The negotiation is how fast this bullet can come out of this chamber before you give me what I want. That's one of the biggest things that I feel America has taken from the Black community was the ability to effectively unite and physically fight because we've been spending centuries trying to fight racism the White people way. By going to school, getting the right careers, whatever those look like, whether it's [to] be a doctor, a lawyer, a police

officer, a politician, but it's in a system that was already designed to oppress us. It's not until we get into these positions that we realize, yeah there's not a lot of us here to begin with. A lot of the changes that we hope to have made are drowned out, because at any point in time when it seemed like Black people are figuring it out and it looks like we're looking to finally get over that wall.

That's when you see rosewood, that's when you see Black wall street, that's when you see systems implementing, rather it be the housing market, rather, it be the credit bureau, rather it be military. That's when you start seeing major shifts in these areas, because they can care less what we do mentally, they can care less what we do systematically, because at any point in time if it comes down to it, they know we're not going to speak their language and their languages will always win.

I like to point out, you look at our history, the major historical events that's happened in history that White people like to throw in our face, but a lot of Black people also hold on to, i.e Dr. Martin Luther King and the changes that he made. Now, Martin Luther King did not make no changes, granted he had good intentions, but the changes weren't made until Malcolm X. The changes weren't made until blood was shed, the changes weren't made until we started physically fighting back. In our history, going all the way back, it wasn't until we started rioting, until buildings started falling, shit getting caught on fire, actual destruction that changes were actually made, that people actually stepped down and said, "okay, hey, hold on, wait a minute. What can we do to help?" That's when those band-aids was applied. As long as Dr. Martin Luther King preached

and marched, they let him have his way. As long as you keep them peaceful, we'll let you march as long as you want to. You can march until your legs fall off, but the moment you start teaching violence, that's when you have a problem.

Self-Awareness

Twelve of the 14 co-creators displayed being keenly aware of their own thoughts, feelings, and the rationale behind various actions. Of the 12, eight were aware of their intersectional self and all 12 exhibited elevated reflexivity. In regard to awareness of the intersectional self, Bakari described the difficulty of being viewed by society as both a Black man and as a potential terrorist due to his last name being identifiably Muslim. Chioma described realizing not all Black people grew up middle class as she did and being disappointed upon realizing not all Black people had the same cultural enrichment opportunities she did. Aniyah, also on the topic of class, stated:

My mom has a Masters, my dad has two Masters degrees and a specialist degree. I come from educated parents. I have cousins who, my aunt or my uncle, when they left high school, they went to the factory because factory jobs were big then. They did not come from educated households. Two parent households where both parents had upper level degrees. And I did, I would go to my family reunions when I was younger like, "Why y'all don't know this? Why y'all act like this?" Not understanding that there was a lack of access to resources. It wasn't by choice and that's not their fault.

I definitely had to change the way that I thought about other Black people who did not have access to the knowledge and the resources that I had. It's not for

a lack of trying. Honestly, in a lot of cases it's a lack of access. It's like you can try your hardest to get out of a ditch, but if you don't have access to a rope or a ladder, it's going to be almost impossible. If you're in a 10 foot ditch and you are five feet tall, it's almost impossible to get out of there no matter how hard you try, if you don't have access to what you need to get out. The ground is muddy...It's going to sink.

In regard to reflexivity, many of the co-creators displayed the ability to critically consider their own actions, thoughts, and feelings. For example, Gasira, in reflecting upon her definition of racism and an incident that happened in her classroom, stated:

I think what we are teaching younger kids is to identify every preference or prejudice as racism, but then we would have to be hypocritical because we in turn also teach our kids too. "If she can't use our comb then you can't bring her home" So we have these teachings too. We have these preferences where we side eye when we see things that go against what we would prefer to see. And so then we have to really ask ourselves and look inward, are we actually, are we being racist by the definition that we hold other people to?

Understanding Significance

Twelve of the 14 co-creators displayed a comprehensive understanding of the extent to which race and racial matters are affected by culture (N=8), current and historical events (N=7), and language (N=5). In regard to culture, Hakim discussed how various aspects of American culture created a system of oppression for Black people. Gasira, adding to Hakim's statements, furthered: "Everything correlates. Everything, families, systems, government, all those things, religion. Everything correlates. So when

we look at the cohesiveness of it, it's cohesive because it correlates within the whole system that was developed and designed that was not for us. So it's still playing its part"

To this Hakim stated "It's on autopilot now."

Also, as it pertains to culture, the following exchange between Mudada and I exemplified how Black people must be aware of White culture, but White people do not have to be aware of Black culture—even if they have chosen a Black mate:

Kyee: So is it safe to assume, and you can tell me if I'm not correct, that being a Black man, if it affects you as a father to biracial children, does it affect you as a husband to a White wife?

Mudada: It affects me ... I would say culture difference. Our cultures are totally different. Some of the things that we do culturally, she doesn't understand, and vice versa. But I'm a pretty well-rounded person, so I understand a lot about culture, but our cultures are just totally, totally different... I mean, like if I want to sit down and watch a movie, what we call a Black movie, she doesn't seem to be as interested as I am. And that extends to some of the music. So I would say that would be the only thing, the only disadvantage or the only thing that... It's just that she just doesn't understand. She did not grow up with the culture. If I want to listen to Teddy Pendergrass all night, she don't understand that. She did not grow up with the culture. And I don't want to listen to Travis Tritt all night, or whoever.

Kyee: So it sounds like it does affect you as a husband, but the way in which it affects you is just the way it would affect anybody with cultural differences, whether they are Black or White. If you are Black and you grew up in a very urban environment and you marry somebody who was Black who grew up in a very rural environment, then the cultural difference there. Is that what you're saying?

Mudada: Yeah. Yeah, that's what I'm saying. Yeah, absolutely.

Kyee: But it also seems like, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, it also seems like you are saying that you as a Black man have had to learn her culture. And it doesn't seem like she has had to learn your culture. You've had to develop a respect for her culture, belonging to White America, but she does not have that same ... I won't say respect, but just acknowledgement of your culture.

Mudada: Well, coming from rural Kentucky, I'm pretty well-versed in her culture. It's just how I grew up. I had so many White friends, and things of that ... and my dad had so many White friends, and my mom did. We just grew up with their culture. So yeah, I already knew her culture prior to. But no, I mean, she has no interest in diving deep into the culture.

Hakim offered an excellent example of understanding the significance of current and historical events. In discussing the effects of Black fathers not being in the home, Hakim detailed how historical welfare policy and the war on drugs changed the dynamics of the Black family. He further discussed how the cycle of absentee fathers is perpetuated even to this day:

I think that was the start. I think if you look at the 1950s, 1960s, you saw that the Black family was the strongest unit in the United States of America. We were around 70% or maybe even higher and then, you started going into where up until Lyndon B. Johnson, the systems that he put in place, the welfare system. You started seeing probably even before that in the '40s, when soldiers were coming home, the things that they put in place where it made it easier for them not to get jobs when they came home. And the only way that they were able to take care of their family was sometimes to make a hard decision of just allowing the wife to be on welfare and that system within itself. And then you start to see the crack epidemic and the drug epidemic come and just continue to wipe out that Black father being in the home. And then it became a system where... I want to talk about autopilot, because now there's a system in place and that cycle just continues from generation to generation. So now [it's on] autopilot...

In relation to language, Gasira was able to discuss how skin-tone-based name calling in childhood carries the connotations of colorism into adulthood. She stated:

As a kid I'm "pissy color." I mean, it's more so like you called names like, you're a "pissy color girl" or "White girl" or whatever the case may be. And so I think those names of course, you play around with people. You are cool with people

who you grow up with. So then you think like, “I guess it’s cool.” But I mean, those are names that you don’t really think about the magnitude of it until you get older. Like, man, people really calling me that when you are younger, you just like, it’s like, well, we just joking around, you capping on each other, and then you get older and then you also feel like it’s even more deeply rooted because you’re in the South and that’s where, of course, it stems from.

Also pertaining to language, Folami discussed how having so many negative connotations associated with the word “black” could affect the self-esteem of Black people. He stated:

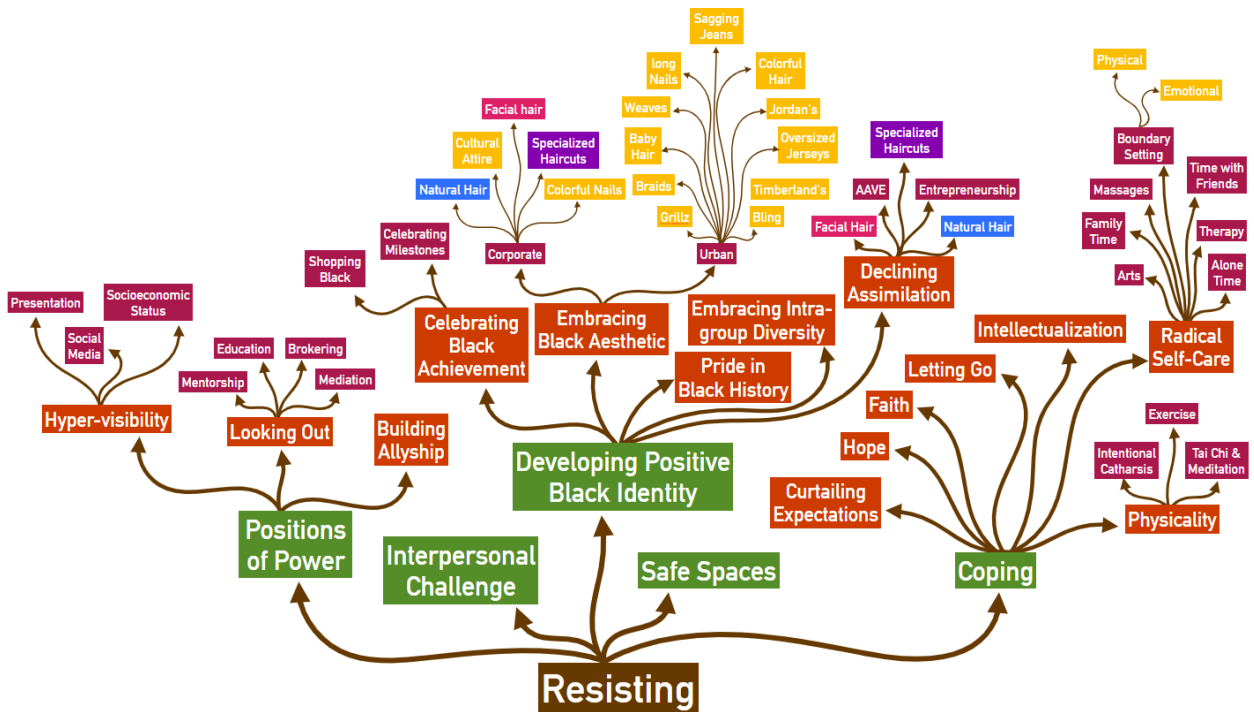
I’m not the type of person that wonders why this microphone is black, “Oh, why it has to be black and you call my people Black?” But I am the person that sometimes wonders like, “Why is it, a lot of times, when we use the word black in a descriptive sense, it’s the chosen color to describe something in a negative connotation?” You know, you got blackballed. You know? And then you turn around and you teach a child what blackballed means, and then you turn around and point to a girl and say, “She’s Black” She’s Brown, damn it. She’s Beige, she’s Tan. She’s Black. It’s the same word, though, you use to describe every other bad thing in your society. So you’re subconsciously just training everyone to think of us in that sense. You’re training ourselves, you’re training yourself and you’re training everyone else around you, to just connect the two. “Black is bad, you’re Black, that’s what I’m calling you” White is supposedly good, so your pale face gets to be called White.

Resisting

All co-creators displayed or described actions of resistance against racist systems, situations, or people. Meaning-units comprising the *Resisting* theme include finding or creating safe spaces, developing a positive Black identity, coping with racism, interpersonal challenge, and using positions of power. This is by far the most saturated theme. It is the only one to have multiple meaning-units broken down into elements. Resisting (brown) is visually represented in **Figure 5.6** with its meaning units (green), constituents (orange), facets (maroon), and elements (yellow). There is overlap in some of the constituents and facets, which are highlighted in matching colors so as to be easily identified.

Figure 5.6

Resisting Code Tree



Coping

Thirteen of the 14 co-creators described various methods of coping to living in a racist society. Coping in this context is, in and of itself, a form of resistance. Many co-creators described coping in this way, especially women, as they described being expected to shoulder living in a racist society in silence. In this section, italicized words represent a constituent of the coping meaning-unit.

Bakari and Chioma described *curtailing* their expectations of White people so they aren't as disappointed when let down by them. Mudada and Folami discussed prayer and leaning on their *faith* to help them get through tough racial times. Three of the 14 co-creators discussed building and maintaining a healthy amount of *hope* in the future as a buffer against a deeply racist present. Four of the 14 co-creators displayed *intellectualization* as a means of coping. This constituent describes how some co-creators turn to learning about race and racism or separate their emotions from racial experiences for analyzation as a means of coping.

Half of the co-creators, seven out of 14, described *letting it go* as a form of coping. In this constituent, co-creators try not to focus on the negative effects of racism they have no control over. Instead, they favor the positive consequences of their own actions, one of the few things they can control. Three of the 14 co-creators described the use of *physicality* as a means of coping. Physicality includes physically exhausting activities such as walking, running, and weightlifting. It also includes tai chi and other forms of meditation. Cathartic activities such as screaming and punching pillows also fall within this constituent.

Five of the 14 co-creators, all women, discussed *radical self-care* as a means of coping. Activities within this constituent include spending time with friends and family, getting massages, going out to dinner with self, and generally partaking in pleasurable activities. *Setting boundaries* could be considered a facet of *radical self-care*; and was utilized by four of the 14 co-creators. Co-creators described setting both physical and emotional boundaries. For example, Etana described maintaining her own space on sidewalks and in grocery stores. She reported not moving out of men or White people's way unless specifically asked to do so. She also described setting emotional boundaries like not watching "violence porn," or social media videos of Black people being beaten or killed by police. Other co-creators also described setting emotional boundaries such as not doing things they do not want to for the sake of appearing amiable, not being agreeable for the sake of being pleasant, not allowing themselves to be provoked by racist people, and not leaving the house unless necessary to prevent from becoming emotionally drained.

Indulging in *the arts* was a coping mechanism for four of the 14 co-creators. They described listening to music, painting portraits, and appreciating film projects. The last coping mechanism discussed by co-creators was therapy. Two of the 14 co-creators discussed being actively in personal and family therapy. Other co-creators discussed using informal therapy. For example, Imari talked about going to his pastor when he needed counsel.

Developing a Positive Black Identity

Ten of the 14 co-creators discussed positive Black identity development as means of resistance. This meaning-unit is comprised of five constituents: accepting or

embracing diversity within the Black community, declining to assimilate or code switch, celebrating Black achievement, embracing the Black aesthetic, and taking pride in Black history. Six of the 14 co-creators discussed acceptance, and in some cases embracement, of diversity within the Black community. This constituent represents co-creators' disillusionment with a monolithic Black culture and recognition of intra-group differences in political ideology, aesthetic presentations, class, culture, activism interests, and goals for posterity.

Eight of the 14 co-creators detailed the various ways in which they decline to assimilate into stereotypical White culture, especially White corporate culture, or refuse to code switch. Examples of this included speaking in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) at all times, even when they have the ability to speak stereotypically proper English, utilizing directness and passion in speech while knowing White corporate Americans prefer pleasantries and the separation of emotion from conversation, wearing natural hair styles though it is more socially acceptable and less physically intimidating for Black women to straighten their hair, wearing beards and goatees for men though they acknowledge they could go further in their career with a clean shaven face, men wearing locs or a drop fade (i.e., also known as a DC Fade, characterized by longer hair at the crown, occipital bone, and sides at or above the temple) though the expectation in White corporate America is for them to wear a Caesar (low, even cut) or other short low fade, or starting one's own business so they do not have to participate in White corporate American culture.

Three of the 14 co-creators described celebrating Black achievement as a form of positive Black identity development. For example, co-creators described shopping Black-

owned businesses or brands and celebrating small victories like friends and family members buying a house, car, graduating from college or getting an advanced degree, and starting a new position or getting a promotion. Four of the 14 co-creators described celebrating Black history as a means of resistance. Co-creators described studying to understand the trials and triumphs of ancestors, returning to traditional African spiritual practices, and tracing their lineages back as far as they can.

Six of the 14 co-creators discussed embracing the Black aesthetic as a means of resisting racist standards of beauty. This includes both the stereotypically urban Black aesthetic and the corporate Black aesthetic. The urban Black aesthetic includes grillz, colorful hair, braids or weaves, baby hair, very long nails, lots of jewelry, loosely tied Timberland or Lugz boots styled with sagging jeans, Jordan sneakers styled with sports jerseys, etc. Corporate Black aesthetic includes wearing locs or other natural hair styles, wearing cultural attire instead of traditional suiting, wearing colorful and longer length nails for women, or wearing facial hair for men.

Finding or Creating Safe Spaces

Eleven of the 14 co-creators discussed finding or creating safe spaces as a means of resisting. This was also a form of coping, but most co-creators differentiated between seeking safe spaces as refuge and creating safe spaces as a means of claiming a portion of the world for themselves. Co-creators utilize their safe spaces to vent, process complex emotions, discuss current events, complain, debate, or discuss nuanced topics within the Black community, or simply be their authentic selves without fear of judgment or reprisal.

Interpersonal Challenge

Nine of the 14 co-creators described utilizing interpersonal challenge as a means of resistance. This meaning-unit describes the various ways by which co-creators correct, challenge, educate, dispute, oppose, or defy displays of racism from peers. Peers include classmates, friends, romantic partners, and co-workers. In this context, peers can also include people in positions of power, such as professors or supervisors, where fears of retribution are low for the co-creator. Co-creators discussed directly challenging racist assertions or jokes, correcting and educating after being micro-aggressed, reporting discrimination to supervisors or directly to Human Resources, advocating for themselves in regard to pay and promotions, and leaving emotionally damaging or psychologically fatiguing work or educational environments.

Using Positions of Power

Thirteen of the 14 co-creators discussed using their positions of power to advance the Black community and resist racism. Positions of power in this context refers to instances where co-creators hold a professional, educational, or financial advantage over the person they are encountering. This meaning-unit is comprised of three constituents: building allyship, hyper-visibility, and looking out and providing community resources.

Five of the 14 co-creators described efforts to build allyship with people of other races. This is different than interpersonal challenge in that the person with whom the co-creator is engaging has not micro-aggressed the co-creator, is seeking to learn from the co-creator, or the co-creator is preemptively engaging said person for the express purpose of building allyship. Seven of the 14 co-creators described using hyper-visibility as a means of resisting stereotypes of Black people. They reported using their social media,

status, and general presentation (i.e., way of showing up in the world) as challenges to the dominant narrative of Black inferiority. For example, Mudada uses his status as a manager in his company to show that Black people are hardworking, Hakim and Gasira use their social media to show positive Black relationships, and Folami uses social media to promote his business and build his personal brand as a successful Black entrepreneur.

The last constituent of this meaning-unit is *looking-out* and was described by 9 of the 14 co-creators. This constituent describes how co-creators mentor, educate, and create advancement opportunities for other Black people. For example, both Aniyah and Gasira discussed educating their students about race and racial matters, helping to dispel negative stereotypes, build positive Black identity, and provide proper names for experiences of oppression. Folami and Imari look out by helping younger Black men navigate White corporate America, effectively teaching them the culture and, specifically, what to do, how to act, and how to present aesthetically to be promoted. Folami, Mudada, and Naeemah look out by hiring Black people into their businesses or companies. Naeemah and Kinaya look out by shopping Black business even if the price is higher.

Summary

In summation, there are five situated narratives that pertain to the lived experience of Black American racial conscientization (RCZ): impactful learning, descriptions of racism, consequences, critical consciousness, and resisting. These situated narratives represent how co-creators moved through the RCZ process. Co-creators learned about racism, initially from their families; but also from school, peers, and community members. This learning was concretized by firsthand experiences with racist systems and

people. These experiences contributed to their learning and propelled them further into the RCZ process. Co-creators then had to overcome the negative consequences of the RCZ process in order to reap the benefits of the positive consequences. Once the negative consequences were overcome, and the positive consequences embraced, co-creators were able to develop a critical consciousness. This critical consciousness led to their overt and tacit acts of resistance.

I began this chapter by providing the general narrative, also known as composite textual description. I then provided composite structural descriptions for resisting, negative consequences, critical consciousness, and Black American RCZ. Next, I detailed the five situated narratives of the study. This thematic analysis was presented with co-creator excerpts and figures of the various code trees. Last, I provided a summary of all findings.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will be interpreting key findings of the study. Next, I will discuss the limitations, delimitations, and ethical issues within the study before finally concluding the dissertation. As it pertains to key, or divergent, findings of the study, I will be discussing each of the five themes discovered. For the impactful learning theme, I will be discussing why Black Americans have a continuous catalyst to race. I will then discuss intra-group gender issues as part of the descriptions of racism theme, the partial conscientization of co-creators to intra-group intersections in identity as part of the critical consciousness theme, consequences, and resisting. Within each section, I will be discussing the results while connecting them to previous research or scholarly literature. I will also be discussing the implications of my findings and providing recommendations for future research.

Impactful Learning

In chapter 1, I mentioned wanting to examine why Black Americans tend not to have an epiphanic catalyst to race and racism. Through the course of this study, however, I have come to understand that they actually do. They *appear* to have a continuous catalyst due to early and often conversations with their families on racial matters and early exposure to racist people and systems forcing them to process events and emotions.

This impactful informal and experiential education effectively solidifies their Black identity in early childhood. Since their epiphanic catalysts occur much earlier in life than that of their White counterparts, by adulthood they have progressed much further in the racial conscientization process. Racial incidents are no longer a shock and they are much better equipped to handle them than when they were small children.

In corollary, their families and peers have helped them cope with the traumatic events that caused them to gain their initial awareness. Therefore, they do not remember these learning experiences with the same intensity as their adult learning experiences. Black Americans report an ever-present awareness of their Blackness, as if they were born knowing of racism. It is true they know much earlier than their White counterparts; however, if one reflects long enough, they will find they have been taught their beliefs either explicitly or tacitly. This is not to say that Black people do not have things to learn, or are not occasionally jolted by a racist reality they had forgotten or hadn't come across. This is to say that Black people spend a significant amount of time grooming their children for life as a minority.

Racial Socialization

This study found that Black families teach Black history, describe personal experiences with racism, allow children to witness their reactions to racism, teach how to survive and thrive in a racist society, and help to foster a positive Black identity and self-esteem. These results are consistent with Lesane-Brown's (2006) study of Black racial socialization. She found that Black families not only teach their children how to interact with members of their own and other racial groups, they also teach children how to cope with oppression due to their racial minority status (Lesane-Brown, 2006). She also found

that racial socialization serves many important functions. Namely, it develops and stabilizes racial attitudes across the life course. Also, it serves as the foundation of Black children's racial identity, self-esteem, attitudes, values, and beliefs regarding race (Lesane-Brown, 2006; Tatum, 2017).

Therefore, the racial socialization that occurs within the Black family unit heavily contributes to one's starting point within conscientization. If a family internalizes the racism promulgated by society, then the child will likely have lower levels of critical consciousness and self-esteem. This is because the child—as they enter into adolescents and eventually adulthood—will have to first put off the internalized negative self-images before being able to progress to a positive Black identity. However, if the family dispels the negative stereotypes prevalent in society at a young age, then the child will likely enter adolescents with higher levels of critical consciousness that continues to elevate throughout their life course. This was certainly the case with co-creators in my study. Ones that reported early and often talks with family around racial matters, displayed more critical consciousness traits.

Nigrescence

My study is also consistent with Cross's (1991; 1994) theory of positive Black identity development. Cross's 1971 model of Nigrescence is one that details the movement from a psychologically damaged and self-hating Black identity to one that is self-loving, self-affirming, communal, collectivist, and action-oriented (Cross, 1971; 1991; Vandivier, 2001). In this model, one progresses through five stages, some with two phases. In the first stage, *Pre-Encounter*, Black people are described as having a negative Black associative identity while glorifying Whiteness. This is due to a lack of accurate

historical positioning of Black people and internalization of White supremacist ideology. As it pertains to conscientization, this can be likened to the semi-intransitive stage of consciousness. In the context of my study, the pre-encounter stage would represent early childhood before Black children have had a racist encounter. In this stage, they are not Euro-American so much as they are in a state of blissful ignorance. They see color and differences as all people do, but have yet to ascribe meaning to those differences.

In the second stage, *Encounter*, one becomes displaced from their general assumptions (by a traumatic event or accumulation of experiences) long enough to begin questioning the accuracy and validity of their self-hatred (Cross, 1994). In the context of children, which I purport my co-creators were when moving through these stages, there would not be a questioning of self-hatred. Rather, there would be a questioning of why the children, teachers, or a random Payless employee treated them in such an unkind manner. They will wonder what it is about them that makes others dislike them. This would be the time they begin having conversations with familial adults. The adults, seeing their struggle with children at pre-school, their kindergarten teacher, or having to react to racism in their presence will be prompted to being having “the talk.” These talks would happen often, each time exposing the child to a new facet of Blackness or, at the very least, solidifying the Black identity already in progress. As it pertained to conscientization theory, this would mark their transition into a naive-transitive consciousness.

Cross (1994) suggested the third stage, *Immersion-Emersion*, is where they withdraw from all things pertaining to Whiteness and White culture while submerging themselves into Blackness and Black culture. They degrade Whiteness while deifying

Blackness. As described by the co-creators, this happens in either middle school, high school, or college. Ten of the 14 co-creators practicing a form of self-segregation is an example of this. Within the conscientization framework, they would still be in the naive-transitive consciousness.

According to Cross (1994), at some point they realize the nuance of Blackness and emerge from their prejudiced and dichotomous ideals with a budding calm and confidence. In this evening of temperament, they transition into the *Internalization* stage where they develop security in their own Blackness. They now have a nuanced understanding of Blackness and Whiteness, as well as a budding understanding of their own intersectionality. This is characteristic of the transitive consciousness of conscientization theory. They become so rooted in all aspects of their identity that race is no longer the most salient.

As the Black person self-actualizes, they enter the last stage, *Internalization-Commitment* (Cross, 1994). In this stage the Black person moves to activism for all oppressed groups, as their focus shifts from the micro to the macro. They now have a true understanding of systems and causality, as well as a positive and secure Black racial frame. The last stage can be likened to attaining a critical consciousness and was displayed by all co-creators in the study. Kinaya and Aniyah described becoming more aware of their gender after exploring race, for example. Other co-creators have moved on to exploring their LGBTQIA+ identity (Naeemah and Etana) or classism (Chioma and Aniyah). All co-creators displayed the development of an intersectional Black identity. Therefore, if nigrescence were adapted to compensate for differences across the life course, then the theory very closely aligns with the findings of my study.

Recommendations

The findings of my study are closely aligned with both the theory of racial socialization (Lesane-Brown, 2006) and nigrescence (Cross, 1994). However, more studies should be conducted on the how familial racial socialization impacts the racial conscientization process. This is particularly important in the age of social media. Younger generations have more access to the internet than the Millennials and Generation Xers of my study. Is the family still the main racial socialization agent, or has social media taken its place? Does that have a positive or a negative impact on the racial conscientization process?

Descriptions of Racism

What could she say when the black man cried that the black woman had never believed in him, had hated him in fact? It wasn't entirely untrue. She could not completely deny it. And even her response that she was his mother, that she had made his survival possible, was made to sound feeble and was turned against her... I am saying, among other things, that perhaps the last 50 years there has been a growing distrust, even hatred, between black men and black women.
(Wallace, 1978/2015)

Most of the results for the *descriptions of racism* section were along the lines of what one might expect. Instances of economic hinderance (Roediger, 2007), emotional trauma (Winters, 2020), encounters with police or the judicial system (Alexander, 2012), institutional or covert racism (Eberhardt, 2019), micros and stereotypes (Nadal, 2018), physical violence (Washington, 2006; Anderson, 2016), and social control (Wellman, 1977/1993) are all well documented. However, very few studies showcase intra-group

bias, or displays of internalized racism. Of the five dimensions of intra-group bias, colorism is perhaps the most well-known. I would argue that the least known, or perhaps the least known to me, is the blatant gender divide within the Black community.

The Oppression Olympics

As discussed in chapter 4, Black men and women seem to be competing in an Oppression Olympics with one another. Black men say they are the ones being stopped and frisked, accosted by police, and in-prisoned or killed (see Hakim, Imari, and Bakari). They say their jobs are being given to Black women and they are not being supported by the government in the same manner Black women are (see Hakim, Imari, and Bakari). Not only that, Black men insist Black women need to be held accountable for their obesity, their horrendous attitudes, and rates of single motherhood (Pink, 2021a). Black women say they are oppressed not only by race but also by gender (See Aniya, Etana, and Kamiya; Pink, 2021b). They say they are also discriminated against in the workplace and are frequently the targets of police violence (See Aniya, Etana, and Kamiya; Pink, 2021b). They also say that Black men in particular oppress them not only because of their gender but also due to their distance from the ideal beauty standard (See Aniya, Etana, and Kamiya; Pink, 2021b). Additionally, Black women lament that they are expected to be fit, beautiful, submissive while working, rearing the children, and paying half or more of their share of the bills (Pink, 2021b).

There was a lot of he-said/she-said offered in this study. However, this is representative of the all-out war between Black men and women playing out very publicly on radical sections of the internet. On one end is Abba and Preach (n.d.), Kevin Samuels (n.d.), the Red Pill community, and the Black incels of the manosphere (Most of

Miree, 2021). On the other end is Cynthia G (n.d.), Pink Mahogany (Pink, n.d.), and Chrissie (n.d.) pushing Black women to *get on code*, about-face from unconditionally loving the *dusties* and *trash bag bandits* that are Black men, and to *divest* from the fantasy of Black men's love by running into the arms of White or other non-Black men. How did this happen?

The battle between Black men and women has been raging since the end of slavery. In 1867, Sojourner Truth argued, "They [Black women] go out washing, which is about as high as a colored women gets, and their men go about idle, strutting up and down; and when the women come home, they ask for their money and take it all, and then scold because there is no food" (as cited in Guy-Sheftall, 1995, p. 37). In 1892, Anna Julia Cooper stated "[I]t strikes me as true that while our men seem thoroughly abreast of the times on almost every other subject, when they strike the woman question they drop back into sixteenth-century logic" (as cited in Guy-Sheftall, 1995, p. 24). She further stated, "The colored woman too often finds herself hampered and shamed by a less liberal sentiment [of Black men opposed to White men] and a more conservative attitude on the part of those for whose opinion she cares most" (as cited in Guy-Sheftall, 1995, p. 45). These battles continued into the twentieth century with Black women such as Zora Neale Hurston's (2006) 1937 work, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, or Alice Walker's 1982 historical fiction, *The Color Purple*. Even recently, Brittany Cooper (2018) stated that Black men "have always gauged their nearness to patriarchal dominance by measuring both how far beneath White men they fall and how far above black women they rise" (p. 239).

Black men are not without their critiques. Since the time of reconstruction, Black men have unabashedly been *talking Black while sleeping White*. This popular colloquial phrase suggests that while many Black men want the advancement of Black people, part of that means the men's ability to separate from, or at the very least subjugate, Black women. There is a long line of examples of Black male activists marrying White or near-White women. As far back as Frederick Douglas, Walter White, and George Wiley (Kennedy, 2002) and as recent as Jessie Williams, Jordan Peele, and Donald Glover. *Jet Magazine's* November 12, 1953 issue titled, *Do Japanese Women Make Better Wives*, is an example of the long-standing idealization Black men exhibit for non-Black women and the concurrent taunting of Black women. Even Derrick Bell's (1992) allegory, *The Last Black Hero*, tussled with the issue of Black men's propensity for interracial marriage and the subsequent cacophony of heartbreak and betrayal endured by Black women. However, there is no better example than the notorious Eldridge Cleaver allegory in which the character representing him stated:

The White man made the black woman the symbol of slavery and the White one in the symbol of freedom. Every time I embrace a black woman I'm still embracing slavery, and when I put my arms around a White woman, well, I'm hugging freedom... I won't be free until the day I can have a White woman in my bed and a White man mind his own business. Until that day comes, my entire existence is tainted, poisoned, and I will still be a slave..." (cited in Cooper, 2018, p. 189)

So, as Black men saw freedom as the ability to love and marry White women: "Freedom for Black women has meant freedom *from* White men, not the freedom to

choose White men as lovers” (Collins, 2000 as cited by Banks, 2011). The truth is, as so eloquently stated by Michelle Wallace in the introduction to this sub-section, Black men and Black women have been at war. As far as I can surmise from my reading, the argument stemmed from Black women complaining about equity within the home in much the same way White women of the time were complaining about the home and suffrage. However, Black men were much less likely than White men to grant a modicum of equality as they have very little themselves. They saw any gain in Black women’s power as a loss for themselves, whereas White men still had authority over Black men, even with the right to vote. Black men would only be left with authority over children. This simply would not do as true patriarchal power does not lie in subjugating those who wish to be subjugated, but in the ability to force subjugation onto the willful.

Though women’s critiques started at reconstruction. Men’s critiques did not manifest in mass until the 1940s. Wallace (1978) posited that as Black men and Black women became more acculturated into American society, adopting the notions of what masculinity and femininity were, they became increasingly disillusioned with each other. Black men were not “men” who, due to economic hinderance, were not able to provide for their families or protect their women and children from White rage. Women, who were forced to work outside of the home as a means of correcting the deficit in income not provided by their husbands, were not “women” who were quiet, submissive, fair skinned, dainty, and domesticated. Men welcomed the help of the women, but wanted them to provide it quietly so as to maintain their patriarchal manhood and respect. Women did not mind providing support, but wanted to be acknowledged and appreciated

for their efforts. If men could not uphold their end of the patriarchal bargain, why should they have to?

Black men say this is why they date White women, because Black women are not “real women.” Black men are turned off by the strength and resilience of Black women, and as Wallace (1978) argued, so are Black women. So, Black women plead, and cry, and march, and unconditionally stand by the side of Black men. This display of strength and loyalty further infuriates Black men who resultantly reject Black women outright, as this is the only power they have left (Wallace, 1978). If they cannot rule Black women in the patriarchal sense, then they will punish them for their resilience, perseverance, intelligence, and savvy. The argument continues until the present where Black men and women are radicalized by YouTube figures like Kevin Samuels or Cynthia G. One blames Black women for all the ills of the Black community due to their weight, rates of single motherhood, and poverty. The other calls Black men “dirty trash bag bandits” and encourages Black women to divest from Black men and the fallacy of Black love.

I do not purport to know the answers to this issue, investigating has only let me know how ill prepared I was for the depth of the hurt that Black men and women heap upon one another and themselves. Black men are hurting because they are denied the ability to be patriarchal men by pervasive and persistent economic and social exclusion. Black women are hurting because they are denied the precious title of *woman* by Black men and the security, love, and admiration the title engenders. My study shows that Black men and women are at odds with each other, even ones in happy marriages, engagements, or long-term relationships. Half of the co-creators stated the other gender was less oppressed than their own. Hakim and Gasira opined that Black women take

Black men's jobs. Etana and Aniyah anecdotally stated that Black men can be at the least dismissive and objectifying and, at most, openly hostile toward Black women. The connections to popular thought reach over a century into the past and the implications of this will reach even further into the future.

Recommendations

More research should be done on the attitudes of Black men and women, how those attitudes create hostility between the genders, and effective interventions to assuage the hostility and provide tools for relational success. This is particularly important in the study of racial conscientization, as one's perception and experience of racism is inextricably intertwined with their gender. Gender impacts not only how Black people relate to the world or society, but also how they relate to each other and the various impacts of intra-groups biases on their lives. A fair skinned Black woman like myself will not experience colorism in the same manner as a darker huggd Black woman. Therefore, without education, I am likely to minimize or negate the effect of colorism on the educational, occupational, and romantic opportunities of dark-skinned Black women. However, the opposite is true for Black men.

Though there are studies that have examined Black marriage from strengths-based perspectives (Dew et al., 2017; Vaterlaus et al., 2017; Perry et al., 2018), effective solutions are still missing. Furthermore, when studying Black issues, one needs to understand and compensate for the gender divide. One cannot simply study Black issues utilizing a heterogeneously gendered sample without at least acknowledging the results could be skewed by gender politics. Last, this phenomenon needs to be analyzed through various lenses. In my discussion of it, I utilized a Black feminist framework. However,

colonization theory, queer theory, or other critical theories could and should also be utilized depending upon the context.

Consequences

“To be black in America is to live in a constant state of rage.” (Baldwin, as cited in Newman, 2000)

Conscientization is generally considered to only have positive effects by the academic community. For example, it has been heralded an “antidote for oppression” (Watts et al., 1999) and has been linked to increased critical thinking (Watts et al., 1999), educational aspirations (McWhitter & McWhitter, 2015), and civic engagement (Diemer & Li, 2011). This is why it has been used to predict different forms of civic and political participation among urban youth (Diemer & Rapa, 2016), help African American women overcome the pathology of the *Strong Black Woman* (Bryant, 2018), assess college persistence among Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students (Cadenas et al., 2018), and promote critical-thinking and dialogue among Saudi college students to create active learning environments where there is respect for other’s thoughts and differing opinions (Alajlan & Aljohani, 2019).

My study certainly agrees with the findings of others. I found seven distinct positive outcomes of the conscientization process including concretization and contextualization, intersectional identity development, resilience, self-esteem, ability to play the game, learning to verbalize, and the development of an emotional or intellectual buffer. However, it is also very important to acknowledge the negative consequences of conscientization; if these are not overcome, one will never progress far enough through the process to gain the benefits of the positive outcomes. As discussed in chapter 4, the

most prolific of the negative consequences is *psychological fatigue*. This fatigue results from nine different stressors including battle fatigue, cumulative stress, emotional processing, feeling unprotected, intergenerational pressure, isolation, nihilism and pessimism, performativity fatigue, questioning self, and the White gaze.

These stressors are readily present in the daily lives of Black Americans. However, if we assume, as conscientization theory does, that the reason Black Americans tolerate these stressors is because they are not fully aware of them, then we make them fully aware of them, the impact these stressors have on their life is magnified. If you walk through life believing that everyone has the same opportunities and the disadvantages you have are just the *luck of the draw*, then you will not be too phased when things don't go your way. However, if you are then told that there are systems in place that ensure you receive a bad hand while others receive a good one, then your perspective on life will change. All of a sudden being passed up for a table isn't bad service, its racism, and being passed up for a promotion isn't an oversight, it's a micro-invalidation.

In a previous study, one of my co-creators stated, "Once you see, you can't unsee" (see Appendix F). He elaborated: "I pulled back society's mask and now I see the horrendous face underneath. I see the blemishes, the pimples, the busted lips, the black eye. I see all that and it makes me sick...It's like hell, two sides to every coin...So its the most heavenly hell you'll ever dwell in" (see Appendix F). Therefore, educators and conscientization facilitators must provide emotional support for students learning about racism.

Recommendations

My study aligns closely with previous studies on the positive effects of the conscientization process. However, it also elucidates previously unreported aspects; namely, its negative consequences. As will be discussed in the following sub-section, we cannot assume our BIPOC students have attained a critical consciousness just because they belong to a subordinated race. While they may not be wholly ignorant of the circumstances around them, many people's worlds are still very small. They are only one person and, as such, only have one experience. Especially in their late teens or early twenties, the age of college students, they have yet to connect all the pieces to assemble a complete picture. As educators, we have to stop dumping potentially traumatizing, or re-traumatizing, information onto our students as if they are not people with emotions. Furthermore, we must be mindful of the White gaze and the alienation BIPOC people feel in less diverse spaces when learning of race and racism. As we are planning *what* information to present, we should also plan *how* we present and how we can help the students process it, particularly, if our class looks like pepper in mashed potatoes.

This is the only study reporting negative consequences for conscientization and critical consciousness. More research needs to be done on the negative consequences, as what I am presenting are only the ones for Black Americans undergoing a racial conscientization process. How do the negative consequences look if the population of study changes? For example, are the negative consequences the same for White people learning about race? Or other BIPOC groups learning about anti-Black racism? Do the negative consequences differ if the domain of oppression differs? What are the consequences associated with LGBTQIA+ people learning of homophobia? What are consequences of women learning the extent of misogyny? How do we emotionally

support student learning about oppression- those of the oppressed and oppressing groups?
These are questions we still need answered.

Critical Consciousness

Partial Conscientization

As displayed by the assertions of co-creators presented in chapter 4, one cannot assume the oppressed are holistically educated about their oppression simply due to their status. This is true for several intentional and unintentional reasons. First and foremost, Black people are not a monolith. This is something we often say but do not put into practice as evidenced by 1/3 of co-creators' propensity to preference their Black experience over others just as valid and another 1/3 of the co-creators being discriminated against for expressing a different Black identity than their peers. Black people, as with all people, construct their realities based upon what they personally experience. Therefore, there is very little room, or desire, to account for the realities of others unless they connect to the *truth* we already know.

David Gray (2016) asserted this is due in part to beliefs being an imperfect model constructed from navigating an unpredictable reality. He also maintains that the models of our beliefs are constructed hierarchically using theories and judgment which are based on selected facts and personal subjective experiences. Therefore, beliefs are layered on top of one another like toppings on a pizza. A pizza isn't a pizza without each element just as a person isn't themselves without all the layers of shared experiences and beliefs. This is similar to the belief matrix discussion in chapter 1. Therefore, the base layers of beliefs, like the crust or tomato sauce on a pizza, are tied to fundamental portions of one's identity and worth. They are therefore much more difficult to let go of.

Half of the co-creators, regardless of skin tone, experienced or witnessed colorism, and half of them participated in unprompted discussions of the Oppression Olympics. This is due in part to one's natural predisposition to center themselves in discussions. This is also due to educated people's inclination to only mention what they can speak about eloquently and even the intellectual's ability to slightly twist facts for their own benefit (Sharot, 2017). For example, Hakim asserted that Black women are hired into jobs more than Black men because they check two important minority boxes, both Black and woman. He contended that this is due to White people's racism, but the undercurrent of age-old accusations alleging *the White man and the Black woman conspire in the Black man's oppression* (Wallace, 2015) is still evident in his tone and argument. Black women do outnumber Black men 2-to-1 in White-color positions. However, Black women are also two times more educated than Black men in law, medicine, and the STEM fields that grant access to these positions (Banks, 2011). Also, there has never been a time in U.S. history that Black men did not have more jobs than Black women or, despite the education, make more money and have more wealth than Black women (Banks, 2011). Thus, Hakim's argument is not only dismissive of Black women's persistence and resilience, it is also ill informed.

The précis is this: just because one is conscientized to one aspect of racism doesn't mean they are conscientized to all aspects. They may know how it affects Black men, but deny how it affects Black women. They may understand how it affects middle class families but be wholly ignorant of how it affects low-income family formation. Middle class Black people, or those with a university degree, may want to share their wealth of knowledge with Black people facing economic disadvantages in an effort to

advance the race. However, their lack of structural analysis often makes them more likely to engage in cultural imperialism than address the unique issues of the community (Ginwright, 2002). That is to say, they unsuccessfully try to impose their middle-class values, or adaptation of positive African culture, onto economically disadvantaged Black communities without addressing the structural constraints that limit autonomy and self-actualization (Ginwright, 2002). They do this because they view their economic disposition as a moral failing instead of a systemic outcome.

Black people are not immune to separating themselves from others in much the same manner as Whites. This thought and pattern is pervasive among Black people as evidenced in five of the 14 co-creators showing a clear preference for the self. Hakim literally said middle class Black families were being “outbred” by poor, single mothers. Kendi (2019) recalled a jolting conversation with his editor in which he stated his displeasure in being treated like “one of them niggers” by police (p. 136). Kendi (2019) stated, “He separated himself from ‘them niggers,’ racialized them, look down on them. He directed his disdain not for the police officers who racially profiled him, who mistreated him, but to ‘them niggers’” (p. 137). Kendi (2019) further discussed how actor/comedian Chris Rock introduced the term *them niggers* as a means of expressing the competing values of assimilation and anti-racism, Black people had at the turn of the millennium. It is much easier to look down than it is to acknowledge you are being looked down upon. Therefore, the need to feel superior is yet another reason one cannot assume Black people are conscientized.

Furthermore, if differences in experience and *truth*, one’s need to center and validate self, incomplete analysis, and need for superiority to deflect from inferiority do

not stand in the way of the conscientization process, then outright individualism and greed can. The colloquial adage *all skin folk ain't kin folk* isn't popular for no reason. Conservative author and Fox News pundit Candace Owens is an example of this. While part of her rhetoric likely does stem from her experience as a Black American, it cannot be denied that a great deal of her discourse is to advance her own career and line her pockets, even at the cost of Black people. This is a concept called interest convergence, introduced by critical race theorists (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The notion of interest convergence, or material determinism, is the assertion that the privileges afforded by racism to Whites—and non-Black minorities in gradation—of all education levels and socioeconomic statuses create a situation where most have little motivation to annihilate racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). African Americans also benefit from racism and fall into this category at times. Though it is true their tokenism perpetuates the false notion of meritocracy, their elevation creates a sense of exceptionalism which has positive psychological effects. The psychological effects are, of course, in addition to the material benefits allocated to their status. To bring racism into extinction is to remove power and wealth from one group of citizens and disperse it to the masses, which includes the power and wealth of Black Americans whose socioeconomic status places them into the top 20%. The very nature of human behavior ensures that those who benefit from the system of racism, such as members of subjugated groups who echo the sentiments of the subjugating group, have a vested interest in its continuation, and will actively or passively protect it. With all the points discussed, it is a wonder anyone is conscientized at all to race.

Very little can be done to combat one's greed but that is not to say that people like Candice Owens are lost causes. Quite the contrary, my study shows that by introducing Black people early and often to the facts behind common rhetoric, the conscientization process can be initiated and progressed. Though co-creators did not experience epiphanic catalysts to race in general, this was mostly due to early and often discussions with familial adults about the realities of racism and what that meant as a Black American. Additionally, all co-creators did have epiphanic catalysts to intra-group diversity issues like colorism, classism, religiosity, and sexism. Therefore, just because one has not yet been conscientized to an intra-group domain of oppression does not mean that they never will be. It is the duty of the educator to ensure students are being exposed to these topics and their intersects while simultaneously challenging internalized-racism, classism, sexism, ableism, and the like.

Recommendations

My study does build upon the assertion that conscientization processes need to be assessed and scored separately by the domain of oppression within measures (Diemer et al., 2017). This is an assertion that counters the dominant CZ measure consensus, as all other Lykert-type measures combine the domains of oppression to generate a general CZ score (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016; Shin et al., 2016; Shin et al., 2018). The results of my study stand to refute the possibility of a general conscientization process as one must be learning and acting against *something* specific and knowledge of one thing does not constitute knowledge of an adjacent thing. Again, just because someone has an awareness of racism does not mean they have an awareness of gender issues or how race and gender intersect to form a web of oppression.

Therefore, more research needs to be conducted on how the oppressed are conscientized to the various separate domains of oppression. Additionally, more research is needed on the various concurrent conscientization processes within the oppressed at any given moment. For example, how can being broadly conscientized to racism translate to beginning a conscientization process in gender issues, or can it? How do social movements like Black Lives Matter and MeToo affect the CZ processes, or do they? Very little is known about the mechanisms at play, how one conscientization process begets or stunts another, or how emotional bandwidth or fatigue play into one's willingness to be conscientized. These are all excellent questions that are still in need of answering.

Resistance

Co-creators described resisting racism in many different ways. However, the current CZ scales only measure resistance by direct (i.e., interpersonal challenge) or socio-political means like voting, protesting, contacting politicians, and participating in voter registration drives (Diemer et al., 2017; McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016; Shin et al., 2016; Shin et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 2014). This can be an effective means for measuring the CZ process of younger people. However, older and more formally educated people have work in the morning and bodies that aren't as forgiving as they were 20 years ago. As Jamila stated, "[I]n my younger days, I used to be out protesting and being an activist. I ain't out walking and marching no more...I'm just not the young people, frontline workers, out on the street...I have less free time to be out there and walking around and break my body down."

Additionally, co-creators in my study have lived long enough to become disillusioned by the political process. They have lived through Reagan’s war on drugs, Clinton’s crime bill, Bush’s war in the Middle East, Obama’s virtual ambivalence to specifically Black issues, and Trump’s alternative facts. Co-creators like Folami only vote to honor their ancestors who were denied the full rights of citizenship. Additionally, co-creators like Davu are very clear that they prefer to spend their time and intellect making change in ways that do not require them to be pepper sprayed. Co-creators want to give back but want to do so on their own terms—terms that allow them to see more immediate and fulfilling benefits.

CZ measures should be adapted to capture the various forms of resisting described by co-creators. They described resistance by radical self-care that includes leaning on their faith, meditating, and indulging in pleasurable activities. They discussed boundary setting to include not moving out of the way of White people without requiring them to say “excuse me” and not willingly indulging in the reproduction of traumatic events on social media. Co-creators described taking refuge in safe spaces and building them if none existed. They discussed wearing their natural hair, Afrocentric clothing, and embracing a diversity of Black aesthetics, including ones deemed “ghetto” by mainstream society. They discussed using their positions of power, including hyper-visibility, to look out for other Black people and challenge negative stereotypes. This is all in addition to phone banking, providing community resources, interpersonally challenging racist people, financially contributing to political campaigns, voting, and grassroots organizing to address a plethora of issues from financial literacy to food deserts.

These findings build upon results from Mosley et al. (2020), who elaborated nine overt ways Black Lives Matter protesters challenge racism including: storying surviving, activism, physical resistance, organizing, teaching, coalition-building, modeling-mentoring, scholar-activism, and space-making. My study confirms these findings and adds the ways Black people tacitly participate in liberatory acts by embracing the Black aesthetic, accepting diversity within the Black community, effectively coping, refusing to code-switch or assimilate, and celebrating Black history and the current success of Black people.

Recommendations

More research should be done on the various ways Black people support and advance the agenda of Black people who have different intersections in identity than themselves. How do Black women support Black trans women? How do cis-het Black men support Black gay men? How do Black men support Black women and girls? Though we know how Black women, as well as gay and queer Black people, support cis-het Black men via protest and activism, there are very few studies on how Black men return the favor. Instead, the internet is rife with examples of Black men's failure to stop Black women from being beaten in the streets by other Black men, refusing to stop their friends from sexually assaulting Black women, and gang beating gay men. We need more academic studies to counter the narrative.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Ethics

Limitations

The limitations of this study are few, but do exist mainly in the form of who did not participate in the study. For example, only two of the 14 participants are currently

working class and both of them were raised in middle or upper-middle class homes. All of the participants went to college, even if they did not obtain a degree. All participants are from below the Mason-Dixon Line and either lived in the Midwest or the South. None of the participants were from the East Coast, North, or Northwest. All of the co-creators are cis-gendered, decedents of American slavery, and citizens of the United States of America. Therefore, there is a lack in diversity among the sample of Black people. Future studies should include immigrants, American born Black people of diverse lineage, people who have not gone to college, gender and sexual minorities, more people who are working class, persons with intellectual delays, persons in young adulthood and those in their golden years, and differently abled persons.

Delimitations

There are a few important delimitations to note. First, though conscientization theory was heavily utilized in the conceptualization of this study, it is important to note it is not being used to analyze data, as such a technique would violate Husserlian phenomenological standards (Peoples, 2021). Additionally, though assumptions sections are typically characteristic of various phenomenological and qualitative methodologies, there will be no assumptions section in this study. This is because to have assumptions that are not bracketed is counterintuitive to the transcendental phenomenological process (Peoples, 2021). Last, I did not conduct follow-up interviews because original interviews took so long. Participant burden will be further discussed in the following section.

Ethical Issues

As Jones (2001) and Kendal (2020) opined, scholars must be vigilant not to add to the emotional and psychological burden of oppressed populations. Therefore, it was of

the utmost import for me to ensure there were no unintended costs of participation. However, interviews took much longer than anticipated, which was a larger burden on participants than anticipated. I anticipated interviews taking between 45 minutes and one hour. However, most interviews took at least 1.5 hours. Therefore, since the time burden of participation was already great, I decided not to do follow-up interviews with co-creators.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I interpreted key findings of the study, connecting them to previous research and making recommendations for future study. I also discussed the limitations, delimitations, and ethical issues of the study. In this section I will discuss the implications of the study and list the final, and most pertinent, takeaways from the study.

Implications

Portions of the knowledge gained in this study could be reasonably extrapolated and transferred to the racial CZ processes of other ethnic and racial people of the global majority. Additionally, this study can act to re-establish a starting point for future inquiry into the applications of CZ toward Black populations and racial issues. With clear conceptualization of racial CZ, educators and practitioners alike can begin to operationalize the concept constructively. Operationalization can lead to development, testing, and eventual integration of best practices into social work classrooms and community programs. These best practices can initiate a lifelong racial CZ process for students, professors, clients, and practitioners. This study commences bridging the gap in knowledge and experience between teachers and learners, or practitioners and clients.

Pertinent Considerations

1. Black Americans do have an epiphanic catalyst to racism. However, these catalysts typically occur in very early childhood. Additionally, the initial shock of the traumatic incidents spurring the conscientization process has dulled by adulthood. This leads most adult Black people to believe they had a continuous catalyst race and racism when this is simply not the case. In actuality, early and frequent interventions by the family unit help to progress Black people through the racial conscientization process by providing a support system by which a positive Black identity and self-esteem can be developed.
2. For the foreseeable future, the results of studies revolving around the American Black population, especially studies of intra-group diversity, will be tainted by a “tangle of pathology” (Moynihan, 1965, p. 29) between cis-het Black men and women. This pathology is well-researched and many have suggested interventions to alleviate the tension to no avail.
3. The negative consequences of the racial conscientization process are numerous and exacerbated by constant exposure to racism, leading to psychological fatigue. Educators introducing sensitive topics in class must do so as if they are indeed sensitive. Educators must be aware of how Black students are absorbing the information and facilitate much needed emotional processing, focusing their angst into appropriate and concerted action.
4. There is no general conscientization process or critical consciousness. Therefore, there is no theoretical justification for adding the results of one critical consciousness scale to another for the purpose of ascertaining one’s level of awareness, critical

thinking, and liberatory acting as it pertains to a domain of oppression. CZ scales need to measure the construct appropriately.

5. Black Americans resist in a plethora of overt and tacit ways. While overt actions pertaining to political participation or direct challenges are easier to quantify and therefore measure, they do a poor job at measuring the myriad covert liberatory actions Black Americans take. CZ measures need to account for the various overt and covert methods utilized by Black Americans on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of intervention.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

Research Participants Needed

for a Study on the Black American Experience of Learning About Race; and Resisting Racism

DATES AND TIMES FOR INTERVIEWS ARE FLEXIBLE AND CAN BE CONDUCTED IN PERSON OR VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING SOFTWARE.

INTERVIEWS WILL TAKE APPROXIMATELY 1 HOUR

*****THIS RESEARCH IS BEING CONDUCTED AS PART OF A DISSERTATION UNDER THE DIRECTION OF DR. SHAWNISE MARTIN MILLER, KENT SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE*****

CALL OR TEXT KYEE YOUNG, LMSW TO SCHEDULE YOUR 1 HOUR INTERVIEW 502.905.5935

TO PARTICIPATE YOU MUST:

- BE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 & 65
- BE A BLACK AMERICAN OF ANY ETHNICITY
- BE ABLE TO DETAIL AT LEAST 1 EXPERIENCE RESISTING RACISM

Appendix B: Unsigned Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT AND RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Black Racial Conscientization: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study

Introduction and Background Information

You are invited to take part in a research study because your experience as a Black American is invaluable. The study is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Shawnise Martin Miller at the University of Louisville.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the phenomenon of racial conscientization among Black Americans. The aim of this study is to develop textual and structural descriptions of Black racial conscientization and its themes, with particular interest in explicating the catalysts of racial conscientization.

Procedures

You will be asked to participate in an interview in which you will be expected to describe yourself and provide information about your background including: your age, sex, gender identity, religion, socioeconomic status, marital status, parental status, and education level. You will be asked to describe how you identify as a Black American and why you identify as such, how you became aware of race—specifically your race, the meaning of race—specifically Blackness—to you as a Black American, the process of learning attached to your meaning making in relation to the process of Black racial awareness, and what role race plays in your lived experiences. The interviews will take approximately one hour. This study will take one year (from August 2020 to August 2021) to complete. However, you will only be asked to participate in your initial interview, along with any clarifying subsequent interviews. Please be advised that you may decline to answer any questions that may make you uncomfortable as the interviews will be tape recorded.

Your de-identified interview, and the data collected from it, may be stored and shared with researchers for future analysis without additional informed consent. Again, your identifiable private information, such as your name, university, and department will be removed. Your de-identified data may be used for future research studies or given to another investigator for future research studies without additional consent from you.

Potential Risks

There are no anticipated risks of participation in this study. However, there is potential for a mild feeling of discomfort in answering personal questions. If this occurs, you may

pause the interview until you are feeling better, or stop the interview and discontinue your participation in the study.

Benefits

You may not benefit personally by participating in this study. The information collected may not benefit you directly; however, the information may be helpful to others.

Payment

You will not be paid for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you are in this study.

Confidentiality

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. We will protect your privacy to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public. Once your information leaves our institution, we cannot promise that others will keep it private.

Your information may be shared with the following:

- The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Protection Program Office, Privacy Office, others involved in research administration and research and legal compliance at the University, and others contracted by the University for ensuring human subjects' safety or research and legal compliance
- The local research team
- People who are responsible for research, compliance and HIPAA/privacy oversight at the institutions where the research is conducted

Security

The data collected about you will be kept private and secure by a password protected computer, secured server, and limited access to identifiable information.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide not to be in this study, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits for which you qualify. If you decide to be in this study, you may change your mind and stop taking part at any time. If you decide to stop taking part, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits for which you qualify. You will be told about any new information learned during the study that could affect your decision to continue in the study.

Research Subject's Rights

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office at (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in private, with a member of the

Signature of Investigator (PI, Sub-I, or Co-I) Date Signed

Phone number for subjects to call for questions:

Sponsor assigned number:

Contract/Grant number:

Sponsor(s) name and address:

Investigator(s) name, degree, phone number, University Department, and address:

Site(s) where study is to be conducted:

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Preamble

Hello, my name is Kyee and I'm a doctoral candidate at the Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville. I'm interested in your experiences learning about race as a Black person in America. I will be asking you questions today that require you to describe those experiences in detail. As already discussed in the consent form, our session will be recorded; this will allow me to transcribe what you've said and analyze it, along with the other interviews I complete. Nothing will be identifiable to you personally; there will be no way to trace any statement back to you as an individual. May I turn the recorder on?

Age		Marital status	
Sex		Parental status	
Gender identity		Education level	
Religion		Socioeconomic status	
Nationality		Ethnicity	

1. Tell me about yourself. This is for the purpose of demographics.
2. Definition racism. What does it mean to you?
3. Does racism affect you in any way? How?

11. In what ways (micro, mezzo, macro) do you challenge the status quo in relation to race? Do you think it has an impact?

12. Are there any other experiences you want to share?

13. Do you have any questions?

Notes:

Appendix D: E Interview

- Kyee: Alrighty. Um, first I'd like you to tell me a little bit about yourself.
- E: (laughs). Um, my name's E. I'm 20 years old. Uh, I live in Louisville.
- Kyee: (laughs).
- E: (laughs). I'm currently a student at JCTC with the hopes of transferring to UofL in the Spring semester.
- Kyee: Okay.
- E: So ...
- Kyee: What are you hoping to study?
- E: Mmm, originally I was going to study psychology, but now, um, my interests have, uh, shifted towards Pan-African studies. Um, I wanna go ahead and hop on they department and hopefully, uh, establish a career path, um, suited for me and my peoples. So ...
- Kyee: Awesome. Awesome. Okay. So, what about the fellowship? Tell me about that. What about the opportunity, um, attracted you?
- E: Um, initially, uh, what I'd say the allure was for me was the, um, the idea of having a- a voice heard. Uh-
- Kyee: Do you mind if I take notes?
- E: Oh, yeah. I have no problem.
- Kyee: Okay.
- E: Um, I think oftentimes, uh, folk my age have, um, become jaded in regards to how slow, um, black progression has been on all fronts. It can be very discouraging. Um, and oftentimes we don't really see a point in even, you know, uh ... m- c- by ... we don't see the point in even utilizing platforms available to us to, you know, vocalize, you know, the atrocities in which we, uh, witness on a day to day basis.
- E: Um, but for me however, I had to, um, you know, find some sort of avenue to release this. Otherwise, you know, it was going to continue to ... it's like stay within me and eventually like, uh, I was gonna implode. Like it was only a matter of time so I ... it- it was either that or die. So (laughs) I had to, I had to do it. And that was the draw in, you know, for me. Um, the idea of leaving, you know, a mark.

- Kyee: And you said that you feel like a lot of people your age think that progress has been slow. Why do you think that is?
- E: Mmm, for one thing, uh, part of the reason why I think that, uh, that progress has been slow is due to the fact that, um, oftentimes when we think of change we think of, uh, we think of, uh, of a huge impact being left that's visible to, you know, the naked eye. Something that's tangible. It's like when a, like if like a meteor falls from like outer space and it smashes into the earth it leaves like a big hole. When in fact, that's not exactly how change comes about. Change is incremental. Um, but that's often, that is oftentimes is not the narrative we're given when it comes to, uh, you know, the na- the nature of change. Um, it takes its own, it takes its time. Goes at its own pace. It varies.
- E: But our situation as Black Americans is- is so ... requires so many immediately like essentials in order to live that we kind of can't afford to sit back and wait on this incremental change. And when you look at the conditions in which we dwell in, it's hard to really, to really, uh, peep or give any attention to the incremental change when you're being, when you're surrounded by nothing but just like, you know, dilapidated houses and, you know, neighborhood crime. And if you living in a certain, uh, like in a certain household in which, um, you know, those atrocities follow you like within those spaces, it's kind of hard to really, to really peep the change. You know what I'm saying? Uh, especially, especially when it's domestic.
- E: Um, so as far as, as far as that, it's hard to really like ... We ain't even, we're not even con- we're not conditioned to really peep incremental changes like now, now, now. I need it now. I'm hungry now. I gotta eat. Like, you know, like it's like, it's like that. Everything's so immediately. I need to feel safe like now. I don't have that safety. I need that security now. I need to get it by any means. And that's how we move. Everything's immediate. You know, every generation, like the urgency just, it just continue to escalate, escalate. The pot's continuing to boil and boil until they eventually culminate into my generation with a, which is, with a basically a, a- a pot on the verge of just boiling over.
- E: That's what my generation is. We're at that point. Um, it's been allowed to escalate to that point. We're just like, you know, like, you know, "Fuck the incremental changes. I ain't got time for that." Like it's like now. We need it now. And if, and if the older generation's gonna get in our way then it's like well we gotta roll 'em over. That's how many of us think, you know, and yeah like ... I don't know anything else to say about it.
- Kyee: (laughs).
- E: (laughs). Like that-

Kyee: How do you think participating in this program allows you to put change, you know, to steal a- a phrase from Mos Def in the now, now time signature?

E: (laughs).

Kyee: You know, like how- how does participating in this program really, you know, do you feel like that speeds up the change?

E: Mmm, it creates the potential to speed it up. Um, as far as when you're, um, allowed into spaces in which you normally were given the, you know, a door slam. You know what I'm saying? So you're allowed to be in the spaces in which the, uh, the policies are being formulated or where legislators are in the room or councilmen and all that. You see that it's your ... that- that's like you're, like a big break for you. It's time for you to like ... You just did this study. It's time for you to make known everything that you've been suppressing for so long in hopes that those individuals will, uh, that- that- that they'll be receptive to what you're putting down.

E: Um, so in that regard it feels as though that progress is being made. But (laughs), I had to throw the but in there.

Kyee: (laughs).

E: But, um, for me I'm at a point now where I don't really have no interest in, um, negotiating with these so-called policy makers and, you know, uh, district representatives because it- it, uh, it feel ... it's like the equivalent of- of to me talking to a brick wall. Uh, they're ... they ain't hearing me. And can you really blame 'em 'cause like in this society they're not really ... uh, if anything White America, let's just be real, like most of the representatives are ten- tend to be white within, um, you know, uh, official positions, uh, in American society.

E: So these white folk are brought up to turn a blind eye toward the black man or black woman's struggle. They're not t- t- they're not even taking the steps forward to even really peep or understand. So it's like why even try. You know what I'm saying? And if anything I'm now putting more of an emphasis on us, uh, as- as Blacks to pull ourselves out of this trench even though we didn't push ourselves down there. We're not getting a rope thrown our way. So we're either learn how to climb. (laughs). Climb up there and those of us who manage to get over the top of trench reach down, pull the next person up, keep going. So Sankofa, gotta go back and get 'em. Like, it's like that. You know what I'm saying? That's what my focus is now 'cause at this point I'm not really, uh, I've lost all faith in American politics. I don't have any sort of ... I don't have any, uh, inkling of hope in regards to that.

Kyee: What about, what about this, um, yesterday was the largest turnout in mid-terms. We had the-

E: It was.

Kyee: ... the most amount of women that were elected to Congress.

E: That's true.

Kyee: The most amount of minorities. We have the first, uh, Native Americans.

E: What?

Kyee: The first Muslim.

E: Really?

Kyee: Yeah.

E: I didn't know that.

Kyee: We have two Muslim women. One that wears a hijab, that are have been elected to Congress. Does that make you any type of hopeful, um, that maybe you could maybe one day get politically involved and make a change since people are I think seems like, you know, which I don't know if you agree with this or not, that people are kind of bucking against the established political system and trying to make a change in it.

E: No doubt. They definitely are. And my only thing from a representatives standpoint, it- it's very, uh, very inspirational. But in the grand scheme based off of, uh, what history tells me when people, um, essentially assimilate into it, while they may have good intentions ... I'm not doubting that 'cause I've seen these candidates, some of these candidates in which you're referring to and they're all ... but like everything you said about bucking the system and everything. Like that's- that's their whole thing, you know. And that may be their intention as of now. But you got ... but to me 'cause I don't ... like I always have to say like 'cause I don't wanna bring like this ... like this is the overarching reality and this and that. It's my perception. Like, um, it's- it's like you're going on their ball field to play ball. So you gotta play by their rules. They've established it. This system was never made with them in mind. You know what I'm saying?

E: And while they may have, uh, intentions to go in there as like a, as a handyman or a handy woman to go fix this, this little kink like, "Oh, we know some kinks up in there, you know. Let's go ahead and try to bust those out." Uh, if they don't want the kinks, you know, busted out they're not, it's not happening. 'Cause there it's their way or the highway or no way. (laughs). Like, you know what I'm saying? Like that's just how it,

how it, how it roll. You know what I mean? So they're, they'll be ... they're liable to, uh, to, uh, to prohibit certain policies from being passed that may benefit a sub-sector of the population. Um, try to label it as being a reverse racist or whatever all the, all those illusionary, uh, like ideologies.

E: And they try to place that on there and I just don't really see American politics as the route to really go with implementing change. I feel like it has to be more grass roots, um, 'cause I don't think you can really ... Like Assata Shakur said, I don't feel as though you can appeal to the moral compass of your oppressor and expect to, and expect to see change. I don't, I just don't see that working out. I know folk who've tried it in the past and I'm not doubting their intentions. And I respect, enough respect for 'em. But in the grand scheme, like eventually like you're gonna be a buttoned up, wired shut, you know, pawn.

Kyee: I understand that.

E: Yeah.

Kyee: Okay. Well let's switch over to critical consciousness.

E: (laughs).

Kyee: (laughs). No, seriously. That's the next question.

E: Yeah.

Kyee: (laughs). Okay, we'll switch over to critical consciousness. Within the campaign and frame of the fellowship we talk a lot about raising critical consciousness. Um, how do you define the term critical consciousness?

E: Uh, I define critical consciousness as being able to, um, to analyze a situation and break it down to like a, to its, uh, to the bare minimum. So rather than ... so say when for example, why, what we see on like WDRP or WLKY, what we see all the time, it, uh, "Young black male, 20 years old, shot in the west end. Left dead." People who aren't critically equipped will see it as just, "Oh, it was these- these thugs and this and that. They naturally aggressive. They brutal. You know, let us take it as that. Like let's take it for the mur- just for the murder in itself." Someone who is critically equipped will break down like, "Okay. Like how did it end up culminating to this?" They'll consider all the factors that- that, uh, eventually led to this, um, to this occurrence occurring, you know. Um, that's how I see it.

E: It's like br- putting pieces together, creating, putting like putting together a puzzle almost in order to provide context for, um, certain situations and certain issues because that's how you really have to look at it. It's almost like a, well you gotta look at it from a functionalist perspective. Uh, like,

you know breaking things down. Like, "Okay, how did it lead up to this point?" And from there, once you understand the origin you can act accordingly to that. "Okay, well he needs to be accountable. What's the antithesis that needs to be concocted to make sure, to ensure that this doesn't happen again or lessen this." You know, that's what comes with that. You look at things differently. It's not all black and white anymore. You know what I'm saying?

- E: And that's, and that's the reason why it's crucial that, uh, our campaign continue to push that message 'cause so many folk aren't know ... and not to, and not really at a fault of their own are, uh, aren't equipped to think critically. There was a time when I wasn't 'cause I wasn't in JCPS. And they weren't teaching me how to think critically. They were just tak- they taught me to take things for face value and how to, uh, operate off of, um, memorization and direction telling. It was like, you know, they were just preparing for me to be another worker. You know what I mean because they want workers not thinkers. They don't want thinkers 'cause when you have thinkers in this society then we'll dismantle this whole mother fucker and flip it on its head.
- E: They don't want that. So they can't condit- they're trying not to condition people to think. You know what I mean? And then pu- by pushing propaganda through the media that's a easy way to indoctrinate people into believing all these, um, all these fallacies that are just, you know, just wafting around in the air out here. Like, you know, you'll just take it. So, that's what it ... yeah, like that's what I define it as. Just being able to break things down like to the basics. You know what I'm saying? And then moving forward from there.
- Kyee: Now you said two really interesting words that I've kind of took note of and that is equipped and you also said context. Um, I'd like to know what do those words in particular mean to you?
- E: Um, equipped. I see it as like a general giving any soldier an AR15. (laughs).
- Kyee: (laughs).
- E: Like I see it just as that. Uh, prepping and ensuring that the generation coming up or what, or, uh, or whatever individual, uh, may be, um, you know, receiving or whatever it may be. That's what I see equipped, equipping as, uh, as- as far ... uh, as ... as like prepar- as preparation. Um, preparing folk for what's to come. Uh, and that can be both, uh, feel like, feel like physical means or it could be a literal like, get just get a straight up, AR15 in ya hands 'cause you about to go to war out there, you know, they after you. Or it can be arming you with certain, um, with certain levels of knowledge.

- E: So, such as, uh, black history. You know what I'm saying? So you are aware of the, um, hi- the historic, uh, context, which is gonna provide me the segway to what context is. Uh, the historic context of your, uh, your peoples' station. Um, what it is they may have, uh, tried in the past. Um, if as far as, uh, uh, attaining whatever it is they desired and then you adopting that into your own, uh, into your own individual context and going off that.
- E: Context, that's basically like the, um, the situation at hand is what I see it as. So, um, and that also requires you to break down, you know, break down things as well. So, like it ... yeah, there's a lot of, uh, there's a lot of intersectionality between like the words that are all like interconnected. You know what I'm saying? So like that's context like the situation at hand. There's various context. You know what I mean? Like for various folk, various different sit- for various different situations. So that's what I see a context as being and what equipping looks like.
- E: So really you gotta be aware of the context first before you equip is what I think. You have to be aware of like, um, what the situation calls for. What's the, what's the enemy's ammunition. What are they using it, um, and then going off that. You know, as far as equipping, what does that look like, you know. So it varies from like situation to situation, person to person it look different. So ...
- Kyee: Cool. Do you think that this concept of critical consciousness, the understanding the context and how you can equip yourself, do you think that, that's important? Like is that an important concept for people to have?
- E: To equip people?
- Kyee: I mean do you do like critical consciousness in general. Do you think that, that's like an important concept to have, grasp, understand or do you think it's like not so much in the way you function in the world?
- E: No, most definitely it's very important. It's of the, of the utmost importance. I- I- I would argue that it's a necessity to have 'cause otherwise you'll end up as ... Life's a (laughs) ... I don't wanna sound, uh, this may have a negative connotations, but you know life's a game at the end of the day. And your role in it varies depending on what level of consciousness you may have. You know what I'm saying? So based off that, you will end up either playing the game or getting played. And nobody wants to be played. Nobody wants to be played. You know, that's ubiquitous amongst humanity. Nobody likes getting played. And if you're not equipped, you know, with the right ammunition then you may very well end up getting played. Might not even be aware that you are, you know.

- E: Um, I'd say like the bulk of the black community isn't aware of how we're getting played. You know what I mean? We're getting played by so many entities. We're getting played by these landlords. We're getting played by some the immigrants that are set up shop in our communities. We're getting played by these politicians that you get our votes. We're getting played by the judicial system that's focused on building the prisons and keeping us in, in order to generate revenue. We're getting played by all types of folk. We're getting, getting played by each other who have peep game and are recognized like, "Oh, well black people are a commodity. Uh, let's go ahead and exploit that and use it." Like, you'll end up getting played if you don't have that. If you don't have the necessary, you know, tools in order to counteract all that bullshit. You know what I mean?
- E: If you don't have that you will get played. So critical con- it's a, it's a necessity 'cause otherwise you'll end up getting played and after a while peep a plaything eventually lose its, uh, it loses, uh, its value over time. Like as you continue to play with it. And once they're done, whoever it is that's playing you, the pimp (laughs), like once the pimp's done, there's, you know. Get, throw you out. You all washed up. Like that's it. So then, you know, off to the graveyard.
- E: So, you ... nobody wants that. It's, it'll limit your life. You know, and that's mm-mm (negative) it's not, it's not fair. It's inevitable. It also creates problems for, uh, it also ... they also end up, uh, uh, unknowingly becoming a problem to others as well when they're not, when you're not equipped with the right ammunition 'cause the- the- the collective is as only as strong as, you know, those within it and there's a- a ... there's like a brick holding 'em back. Then, you know, they gotta like they either gotta cut ties or the rest of the group will get drug down.
- E: So that's what makes it difficult for us to progress 'cause sub, you got, so you got a sub-sector of us that have, you know, peep game and there's some of us who have been denied entry to the game, you know. And it's creates this divisiveness, which cause us to go at each other, you know. And that what cause us to go at each other. You know like, you know, we really one and the same at the end of the day it cause us to, you know, it cause friction to occur and we lose sight of the bigger picture.
- E: So it's, the whole ... it's- it's- it's (laughs) ... it's essential. You need it. It's crucial. And those who are in power recognize that. And their power's linked to it not being, uh, as accessible to some folk. So that's why it's oftentimes denied within, uh, within institutions that you think it would be, you know, a given. So ...
- Kyee: What about yourself? Do you consider yourself to be critically conscious?

E: Um, I have the capabilities to be. Um, it really ... it honestly depends on my mood.

Kyee: (laughs).

E: It (laughs), like it does. Sometimes I may purposely, uh, neglect, uh, the benefits that come with being critically conscious due to my own, uh, selfish desires as a human. Uh, so it really depends on my mood. I have the capabilities to be, no doubt. And fundamentally I am. But at times I choose to neglect it because, uh, it might not be conducive to my wants at that time, which may override, may overshadow the bigger picture. May cast a lens over why I don't peep it, you know. 'Cause I, if I don't ... I want, I wanna get mines. You know, like ... so I'll just purposely shut it and go run off and do what I know ain't right, you know. But at ... but fundamentally at the end of the day, yes. Uh, I have the ability to do that while some of my peers just haven't, like they liter- like literally aren't like equipped at all. They never, they would never. They have had no access. You know what I'm saying? Like none. While, I on the other hand, have but sometimes choose to shun it.

Kyee: So tell me if I'm understanding this correctly. You believe that you have the capability to be critically conscious and to the most extent you are, but sometimes you turn that critical consciousness off-

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: ... for the pursuit of self-pleasure.

E: Sometimes a nigga just wanna be a nigga.

Kyee: (laughs).

E: Like it's just, like it's just real. Sometimes a nigga just wanna be a nigga. And to be a nigga (laughs) you can't be critically conscious.

Kyee: But do you think that, that's part of the critical consciousness process to cycle?

E: Well to be able to turn it off, yeah. Like you, even that, even that requi- even then I'm exercising it, you know. Even within my niggatry. (laughs).

Kyee: (laughs).

E: You know. Like, even within that I'm still exercising it. So, yeah it definitely plays a part in it. So, I guess yeah, I'm critically conscious.

Kyee: (laughs). So how did you come to this conclusion though that, you know, have, have there been like specific experiences that you've, um, gone

through that have said, you know, "I can be, but I choose not to be sometimes." Like, you know, what- what formed that opinion?

- E: Mmm, I think it honestly started as far back as middle school. Um, first I gotta provide context for that. Uh, like I was brought up under, like, you know, a nuclear family and everything. Uh, we grew up on the south side of Algonquin Parkway, uh, which is of course, you know, a area that's been historically, um, uh, disenfranchised, uh, in various ways. Um, rampant poverty, drugs, the whole nine. Um, my parents, uh, created this, um, I wouldn't say a fantasy world but ... well, yeah, a fantasy world for me to dwell in that counteracted the harsh reality that I was really living in. Um, and that end within that fantasy world I was, uh, allowed to explore myself on a, um, on a more introspective level than say others who may have been living under, uh, certain, uh, conditions in which, uh, some social determinants weren't like, uh, weren't being met. So, you know, they were living in a more immediately survivalist like mentality. I didn't have to. I was able to explore myself as a individual.
- E: So unknowingly that like planted the seed for me to be able to think, uh, critically. Uh, it was, it wasn't until I was put in public school that all that kind of became countered 'cause now it was like I was, um, almost a- a free man living among slaves. Um, so it was like, yeah, the mentality of a free man while, who was living, a free man living on a plantation, which is a complete oxymoron. But that's what I was, that's what I was living in.
- E: And naturally we all as ... like naturally humans want respect and attention. Um, so we all want a place, uh, where we feel we belong. We wanna be amongst our own and we wanna be able to, you know, have someone we can relate to. Uh, and the identity in which I had constructed, which was my ... that at the end of the day my true essence wasn't really conducive to all that. So I chose to shun it in exchange for the, uh, the characteristics and behaviors that would garner me that acceptance that I was craving. So that's when it really first occurred.
- E: But then as time went on, I began to, uh, I began to question what made these behaviors normal 'cause I was given examples at a young age, uh, of positive representations of black men and women that completely counteracted the overarching narrative of, "We ain't shit and da da da da." You know, "We, we came from a, we came from monkeys on the continent and na da da da da." Like, you know, "We, we weren't shit then and they brought us over here and we still ain't shit." You know like that's ... 'cause that's what's out there.
- E: So I, everything I was taught by my folk was, uh, completely counter to that. So they had already planted that seed. So when I was able to participate in those ain't shit behaviors it began to make me think like, like, like, "How did it get to this point? This don't ... like this ain't black."

You know what I mean? Like, "This is limited. Like these stereotypes don't like don't define me. Like I'm not stupid. I ain't ugly." Like, you know what I mean? Like it was like all that, like it was just, it was just like, aw, man, I was like in a co- like in a constant state of war like with myself. 'Cause I was just like, "This don't make no, this don't make no sense." Like, "Why are we, why are we po- like why do we accept like living like this, man? This ain't ... " You know, like it just began to like, yeah, I just began to question things.

- E: Um, and that's when it really began to, you know, it began to ... that's when that critical conscious really began to formulate. And honestly, me getting put outta school is really what allowed me to, uh, like getting off the plantation basically 'cause that's what that was. I got, I escaped the plantation, uh, and that allowed me to become hip to reality. And that's when it was really like critical conscious and able to really be incubated, uh, by escaping the plantation, which is a necessity for I think anybody's, uh, critical conscious to be developed. 'Cause how can you, how can you think free in an oppressive environment? Like it don't make sense.
- Kyee: Yeah. Um, what are your thoughts on sociopolitical development?
- E: Sociopolitical development. Can you give me, uh, like a definition?
- Kyee: Sociopolitical development. So, um, policy, politics, um, within the people, within yourself.
- E: Uh-
- Kyee: Do you feel like that has been developing within you? Do you feel like there's an energizing or development with, of it within your community?
- E: Mmm, I think as of lately due to the, uh, current political climate that you're seeing a, um, a resurgence of Blacks who, uh, are now starting to see that as a ... 'cause for example, like you and you talked about it earlier. Like the folk who are running for office now. Like all these black women we woulda been running for like, you know, Governor and Mayor and all that. Like you're starting to see like n- n- because the climate, uh, was like was, uh, conducive to that. So despite my whatever you say about Trump, he did create like this sort of, uh, awakening amongst the masses of like, "Oh, shit. Like we gotta do something." You know, and that kind of, uh, sparked that. So now people are unknowingly pursuing it. You know what I mean? Uh, as far as me, uh, like I say I lost all faith-
- Kyee: (laughs).
- E: (laughs) ... in American politics. Ah, it is hard 'cause, you know, my job revolves around, you know policy formulation, which I have ideas for that but I know the, ugh. I know the inevitable push back that comes with, you

know, uh, arming those at the bottom. 'Cause if there's not a bottom there can't be a top. And they don't want that. So, why would they ever ... you know, I don't expect them to pass, uh, certain policies when their very system benefits over certain, um, certain amenities not being granted.

E: So I have a very, uh, nihilistic view as far as like on the real I really just given up. Uh, and for real, um, I have. I've given up on American politics completely. Um, only reason I voted this time was just for damage control. That was the only reason. But as far as it ... as far as, um, me adopting like, you know sociopoli- sociopolitical like methodologies, um, while I'm aware of them, I don't necessarily practice them. I'll admit that much. Um, maybe if somebody, uh, somebody shows me a way to, if somebody shows me a way to, uh, to practice it that'll be conducive to my wants and ultimately my peoples' wants then maybe I'll be more, um, uh, more willing to engage in that realm. As of right now I'm just not, not interested until we start doing it right.

Kyee: You seem really hopeless-

E: (laughs).

Kyee: ... in the political system. But at the same time you say that you voted, um, in this past election for damage control. That seems like a little bit of hope. Um, how do you reconcile those two things?

E: That's a good question. You just kind of brought that to the light. I never really thought about that. That's kind of, like that's kind of a contradiction really.

Kyee: (laughs).

E: Like 'cause you wouldn't vote if that wasn't the case. I guess part of me does have some semblance of hope like a small inkling of it. A small candle. There's like a candle in the dark that, you know, that maybe-

Kyee: (laughs).

E: ... just, just maybe ... I don't know. I doubt it. I really doubt it, but just maybe there could be some form of revolt.

PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:31:04]

E: There could be some form of revolt within American politics, potentially, I don't know.

Kyee: (Laughs).

E: Like I just-

Kyee: Do you think your nihilism maybe comes from a place of hurt? Maybe comes from a place of fear like that, that not wanting to get your hopes up so that you don't get them crushed type thing?

E: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I er, mm-hmm (affirmative), I think that's what it is. You get your toes stepped on enough eventually you're just gonna to, you're gonna stop wearing flip flops (laughs).

Kyee: (Laughs) stop wearing flip flops.

E: You just gonna stop 'cause why even try? Take all, the i' ... The potential's there for you to get hurt.

Kyee: Mm.

E: And life's about risk and I know this I hate being aware of all like-

Kyee: (Laughs).

E: Dude, life's about risk so you don't do nothing that you might not, you know, reap the benefits that may potentially come from the fruits of your labor. Potentially, it could be no fruit, at all. But there might be fruit, so you have to like balance that-

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: Like the risk and reward. So I, I guess um, it does come from a place of er, not wanting to be hurt. It's very, if any, if anything my er, my nihilism is a defensive mechanism. I guess. I don't even think I'm truly nihilistic. 'Cause if I was truly nihilistic I would just give up on living completely. I probably would have like blown my brains out by now. You know what I'm saying?

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: If I was truly nihilistic, 'Cause like what the poi', what's the point. Like at, at the end of the day noth', nothing matters. So I really think, yeah, it's a defense mechanism. Like I'm tired of seeing like you know, like going to these meetings, and proposing this idea and them shutting it down. You know what I'm saying? 'Cause I've been the, the, I've been doing this work since I was seventeen, sixteen. And I've been to a plethora of JCPS board meetings advocating for black history um, trying to get that enforced. Trying to schedule meetings with people who just um, straight up lied to my face saying that, "Oh yeah, we'll meet with you," and then all of a sudden you call them back they won't answer. And you see them and they'll be all like, "Oh what's up?" And you're like, "Oh, yeah," like then

they just, then they just straight up like blatantly tell you, "Oh yeah, like I just didn't pick up the phone," or, "I didn't respond to your e-mail," 'cause you know it's selling me false hope.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: I get tired of that like getting pimped (laughs). You know what I'm saying, you get tired of that. Like it gets old, it's played out, you know, goes back to what I said, nobody likes being played.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: And I'm getting tired of being played. I don't want to be played no more. So, that's what it is. It's really a defensive mechanism, so.

Kyee: So you talked about entering these new environments that you wouldn't have entered. In this program do you think that you did gain access to some new environments or maybe gained some knowledge that you wouldn't have had? Like can you give me a specific example of anything that, any new knowledge, any new experience that you had as a result of the program?

E: Mm.

Kyee: I mean you talked about the board meetings and stuff, but-

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Um, I think (Laughs), I think I uh, I think of how complicated uh, like how complicated it really is to either get policy, not really to get policies enforced but to even create um.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: 'Cause there are so many um, uh, you know, red lights that you have the lights stopping at here to go and even create them. There's so many unknown stipulations and regulations and this and that, I can't do that, that goes against the constitution and this and that. You know, the whole thing like it, it's, it's hella complicated. It's ... and that's probably what turns most people off from it, just like, damn like how does this work?

Kyee: (Laughs).

E: There's no like, like one on one, like uh, policy formulating one on one. There's like no book on that. At least like none that I've found yet. There probably is some, but I don't, like I haven't seen um. You know what I mean? So it kind of gets you jaded. And I've also peeped that a lot of these folk who were in these positions of great influence are really just motivated by self interest. So they won't hear what you're saying unless

you, unless you get you, unless you give them something that'll scratch their back.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: They got these itches and unless your idea is going to somehow scratch those itches, they won't hear no part of it. So you gotta frame, if you, if you're gonna talk to them then you've got to frame it a certain way that makes it sound good. But, um, like I remember when I went to uh, what was it, like uh, was a Senneca high school um, and Steven Pruitt, I think that's his name was uh, over there, who was like he's some big wig like within uh, within JCPS. And I went ahead and ran up and snatched the mike and tried to frame, tried to frame my um, my proposal in a way to get him on board.

E: So I was like, "Yo, you all will be like the first county in the state of Kentucky to implement this, so you know you all would have bragging rights." 'Cause at the end of the day that's what they want. Like let's just be real. Let's, while we got the mandatory test scores and everything like that.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: 'Cause they're competing with other schools. 'Cause education is also a market.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: You know what I mean? It shouldn't be. At least I don't think it should be. You know what I mean? Like, as yeah, that's uh-um (negative). That's a no, no.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: Makes no sense ... It doesn't make any sense to me. But it's a market and they're competing with these other schools. They're ... continue having funding and have a resources allocated to them and da ta da ta da and all those little semantics. All that shit. You know what I mean? So you have to like phrase it like that. Course it still didn't work out, 'cause at the end of the day like a black history isn't in their um, isn't their standard issue despite serving, you know, students of African descent. You know what I mean, I mean they're not really interested in teaching them about themselves. You know, rather just teach them about us because they're going to be working for us.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: So let's go ahead and get those gears turning instead, rather than this we'll neglect that and let the dust go ahead and accumulate and da da da da So,

that's what I've learned about them like. Motivated on', solely by self interest, not really as far as I'm seeing, I don't want to over generalize like some of them they may have good intentions, but so many folk don't really give a fuck about nobody but themselves. And they have no interest in really pursuing the um, interests of the folks that they're serving. Um, as far as I'm concerned they're not even equipped to uh, represent us and then if they're not representing us.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: You know, they don't even look like us. So it's like, yeah, that's what I've learned through this, like I said complicated as hell and there's a lot of ... The rules to that game are (laughs), unless you in that room like 24/7 you will never get, the, yeah, it's complicated like.

Kyee: Do you think that any aspect of that complex, you know, complex workings and you know, the kind of quid pro quo, you scratch my back I scratch your back-

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: Do ... has that like translated into your personal life in any type of way?

E: Um, part of it I think is just in human nature actually, now that I think about it more. Uh, because I've observed that even with you know, folk on the street, like just in the various exchanges you know. Uh, we're all motivated by self interest at the end of the day. Uh, but it's about being ... but if you're, if you're again, if you're not correctly equipped to see how you're, to see how your actions will inconsequentially affect others, then that could be potentially problematic to yourself and other folk. But most folk aren't equipped for that, so they're just going solely off that self interest. You know what I'm saying? And that leads to that pro quo you were talking about. As far as like you scratch my back I scratch yours.

E: Like you know, that's like the fundamentals to any interaction at the end of the day. Like every body's trying to introduce like some positive stimulus being generated from it, um, you're going to continue to engage. That's what you're getting from it. And they must be getting something else like by proxy, so. Yeah. I see have it, I probably have actually engaged, I have engaged in it actually, um-

Kyee: In your personal life?

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, I have. I peep game.

Kyee: Do you think you'll continue to use the elements that you've learned about in this program as you go forward?

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: And like build on them?

E: Oh definitely, definitely, we're in a constant state of evolution so I have no choice but to. Uh, so yeah, definitely I'll continue to learn how I can expand my uh, range of thinking, um, how I can translate those thoughts into action. I'll uh, I'll def' ... I'll never be able to move the way I used to move as far as just being completely uh, completely reckless. As far as you know, doing it and not giving a fuck what happens to the next man or woman like. At that ... Those days are over. In fact, I don't think those days ever really existed (laughs).

Kyee: (Laughs).

E: 'Cause I was always uh, like uh, I was always aware, but now I'm even more aware. Like I got some uh, like, I got like x-ray vision now. Like first I just had supersight like 20/20, now I'm like x-ray like I see. You know what I mean?

Kyee: (Laughs).

E: Like I'll never be able to see the same again.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: So, I have no choice but to build on that because it ain't going away. (Laughs). So I have no choice but to build on it. So that's definitely, I'll definitely be, it's definitely going to stay with me until the day I die.

Kyee: Um, you know you talked about not being able to move through the world the way you used to. Can you give me specific example of that, that's really interesting. Like of you know, before being in this program, or before being as aware as I am now if approached with this situation, I would do this, now I do this?

E: Uh, like back then it was all about, it was all me, me, me, me, me constantly. I was very uh, very selfish. Uh, to the point of it almost being like sociopathic. Like you know, people were kinda like looking like, "Man, he don't think about nobody else, like he's always um, like he only think I'm hun'," you know, "I'm hungry."

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: So I'm going to take this from the store and not give a fuck like who it's effecting or who like, or who could have got it or none of none of that, this is mine. I got my money. I got paid. This dude homeless. You know what I mean?

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: He ain't ... he hungry, he trying to eat. Well I'm trying to eat too. So you ain't gone, (laughs) you know is like I would just keep moving. Now, I, I will stop and be like, "Mm," and weight the situation. And like, okay, like, what do I have that my ... What can I, do I have the means to give this brother a dollar. If I do I will and I'll weigh in and do it. If I uh, if I'm hungry, at that moment, that weigh in, like kind of weight. Uh, do I really need to uh, you know, steal from this person or do I just like just go back home, wait it out. Just wait it out, you know. Like you don't want to affect that persons' wellbeing. Plus somebody, this could be, it could be a blessing for somebody else.

E: So now everything I like I, I, I think before I act. Back then it was just act. I just did it 'cause it was the first impulse "Boom." Do it, taking it, it's mine, I want it. I think I want that.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative), mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: It's now like, "Do you really need it?" Like do you now like, "Do you need it or what?"

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: Like okay, which does, which matters longer. And which maters more on the grand scheme of things. You know, it's not a necessity, so nah go ahead like, whatever, pass on that. Like you can get it later, potentially. You know, like now I think, constantly to the point it dri- it drives me mad sometimes actually.

Kyee: (Laughs).

E: It does because now I just can't like again, like I said, "Nigga just wanna be a nigga." That makes it hard, like it's hard to just be the nigga and think." You know what I'm saying?

Kyee: (Laughs).

E: Like in fact the, you're not a nigga at that point. 'Cause now you're able to, you know, now you're thinking for self. Now you're a, you're a, you're a man, or you're a woman. You're no longer, you know, that labels cast off at that point, once you are-

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: Well once again, once you become critically equipped. Like cast off all, all societal labels unless you choose to adopt them, so.

Kyee: So it seems as if, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, that you have changed personally?

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: And even professionally as a result of going through this program.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: So you do agree with that. Do you feel like the changes are like, are these positive changes for you? Um, is it a good thing to be crit' ...

E: (Laughs).

Kyee: I mean good, bad, binary aside, like you know, is it really positive that you become critically consciousness or gained some kind of consciousness? Or is it really kind of negatively affecting the way you interact in the world?

E: Both.

Kyee: It's both?

E: Uh, it's both yeah. There is two sides to every coin. Like that's an absolute law of the universe, like there's two sides to everything. A positive and a negative. On the positive tip, it allows me to um, I'm, I'm more aware of my, of my um, perceived status by um, a bulk of society. And I can act according to that as far as either defining it or maintaining despite it. Uh, it allows me to empathize more, um, think before I act. Um, act proactively and be pre', preemptive. You know, in my methods, um, that's a benefit, benefits that come with it. It makes me have a, an insatiable thirst for knowledge as well. I just want to learn more and apply it.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: The downside is I'm now uh, I'm more uh, aware of the woe, societal woe's. So, that gets overwhelming. So theres some things that, things I would once turned a blind eye to and now end up following me home.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: Uh, instead of just ... 'Cause normally I'd like, I'd just be able to pass, you know, a homeless brother or homeless sister on the street and not think anymore about it. Now, now it like stays with me for like, like, "Why are they homeless?" You know like-

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: Like, "Why are they homeless, they need this and the, well they're, like the world doesn't care about them and da da da da." Or I'd see a crack head and I'm just like, like, "What led you to get on crack?" Like, "What happened?" You know like, you know.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: Like, "What happened?" "Why did they turn they back on you?" Or certain words like I can't even just like, you know, there are certain words I ca', I can hardly use at this point. Or when I see them used, I just like uh, like I just like cringe. You know what I'm saying? And can't watch certain movies at this point.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: 'Cause I realize like, "Ah this is perpetuating, you know, that misconception about black men," or, "That's, um, uh, perpetuating the stigma that black women had to experience," and I can no longer just participate in behavior, in behaviors and activities that were once normally just been like, you know, recreational. Now I just, now I like I'm. I'm, cursed to see like what really lies behind the mask. I pulled back societies mask and now I see like the horrendous face like underneath. I see like the blemishes, the pimples, the busted lips, the black eye. I see all that and it makes me sick.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: So I have to, and that's where self care is so important because without that you, that's the thing... So [clapping loudly] critical conscience cannot be- my bad for the clap.

Kyee: No (laughs).

E: Critical conscience cannot be um, enforced without self care accompanying it. 'Cause that's going to come, 'cause all that's going to come with it. You become aware like every, like e', it's like hell. Two sides to every coi', like I said two sides to every coin, so it's like the most heavenly hell you'll ever dwell in. You know what I'm saying? It's like, yeah. Like it's, it's yeah, it's torture almost at some extent. As you see, you peep everything, like just little stuff.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: Like little things. "He said this on TV?!?"

Kyee: (Laughs).

E: Like you be, like you just see, "Like he just said that amongst like the whole nation called African countries shit hole countries, you know what that's perpetuating as far as like what black folk think about themselves and what goes on the con', the con', the conduct feel, on the motherland of what white people already think about us?" Like is perpetuating all of that. So I see, I see all that shit. You know what I mean? Most people just bli- turn a blind eye like "Oh is it, okay,". That's true, you know (laughs).

Kyee: (Laughs).

E: I see it as like, like, "Look what he just perpetuating, the little kids that deen done seen that and now how are they going to move as a result, like go, like growing up? Are they going to walk around with a chip on their shoulder, or feel low or hang their head low? You think about all of that. So it's like it, if you don't have self care it will kill you. So you need it. It's like crucial. So you can't talk about critical consciousness without self care. Those need to be like a joint conversation if you're going to talk about that.

Kyee: Let's talk about your self care. What supports do you have (laughs), that get you through these tough times? Where you kind of feel like, you know, it's weighing on you.

E: That's the thing like, I'm still in the process of developing a regimen in this you know, conducive for that. Um, I work out a lot uh, as a means of um, uh, expressing whatever it is I'm feeling. Um, just getting it out. I write. Um, I confide in music. Uh, I have a hard time confiding in people, um, due to me having this like uh, I don't want to be like a burden and all that, you know what I'm saying? 'Cause they got enough going on and uh, it's what I feel, like you know. They got their own shit, they ain't got time to like put your baggage on top of theirs. You know, they're barely pulling their like you know, you know what I'm saying? So its hard for me to confide in people but yeah, exercise, music, cartoons. Um, it used to be video games, I haven't played video games in a long time though.

E: Um, I smoke but I don't, I'm starting to um, really reconsider that uh, because I don't want to be dependent on anything outside of myself. Because I feel like you know, God or this higher power has already given me everything I need uh, in this human body to care of self. So I don't really need to seek out anything outside of me. So I'm trying to figure out what exactly uh, what tools I was gifted with to practice that self care. So that way I don't become dependent on anything because nothings really you know, smoke ain't a given, people aren't a given. Um, you can always rely on music, there will always be music. So I'm trying to figure out what things are, what's a given and what's not. And for those that for what's not a given I had to uh, concoct something from myself, from myself for myself.

E: So self care, yeah, that's a touchy subject. Sometimes I just fall asleep.

Kyee: (Laughs).

E: (Laughs), like for real. Like just fall asleep and I just collapse and then I wake up and hope that the uh, that the, that whatever was troubling me uh, that it's moved on elsewhere. Uh, so self care, yeah, I'm still trying to really figure that like what that looks like.

Kyee: What would it mean to you to have the type of ... because correct me if I'm wrong, it seems like your saying that you don't have like the people support that would be great. What would it mean to have that people support? I mean what would that relationship look like?

E: Mmmm, someone who can, or I don't know, I don't really want to say someone 'cause I don't want to put all that on one person. That's not fair. Uh, at least I feel as though it's not. Um, just having folk who are willing to um, listen, you know, um, remain ob', as objective as they possible can, which can be difficult. You have a little bit more intimate relationship with that person, 'cause how can they not look at you know, your issues from a subjective lens. They're associated with you but yeah, someone who can just listen, give advice when it's asked for. Uh, who's willing to act when I'm not, you know what I'm saying, when I'm like, 'cause you know I got depression and everything like.

E: You know like clinically, like I have a chemical imbalance. And I have you know, PTSD and all these other like, they throw in like every mental illness from the book on me. And they've got me on these pills. I've been taking since I was fifteen and while I absolute, utterly despise that fact um, I've been doing them for so long that when I do try to you know, wean myself off of them, or you know, cut it lose. I like you know, I just like I can't, I can't, I can't function.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: You know what I'm saying? So now I have to uh, engage in that and that troubles me. So, yeah, it's like you know, I sometimes I'm just, sometimes I get to a point where I reach a catatonic state and just don't move. And sometimes you need people, but necessarily people who are willing to you know, to take, to push you like you know, like when you're just overwhelmed with life and have just completely and utterly like seized up and become paralyzed. Like to push you, you know, and try and get that momentum going. You know what I'm saying? Like that's what it would look like for me. And, and vice versa as well because I wanted to be, I want, I, I can't have an equal relationship to be one sided.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: So it has to be definitely like a mutual exchange, so goes back to the pro quo, like a pos', a positive instance of that. You scratch my back, I scratch yours. So that's what it would really look like. Did you hear a mouse?

Kyee: (laughs). That was my shoe.

E: Oh.

Kyee: My shoe.

E: Like I heard that man I was going to get up and climb up this mutha.

Kyee: (Laughing), that was my shoe. (Laughs).

E: That bugged me out. Like I heard it and I like was looking like okay I'm going to save this right, 'cause we just talk out further. I heard that like it was a, like it was a mouse. So, as soon as I get this done like I'm gone on another (laughs).

Kyee: My shoe rubbed up against the (laughs).

E: Yeah, that scared the mess out of me boy. I was like, "Oh, wow, okay were the traps at?"

Kyee: Oh I'm sorry.

E: Its all good, yeah (laughs).

Kyee: So as far as your work here at the YVPRC do you feel like you're supported to go out and do that work in the community?

E: Um, I think we're still defining what that looks like.

Kyee: Um-hum (affirmative).

E: As far as what that works, that work like. You know, what does that even mean.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: You know what I'm saying? Uh, I feel as though um, we had to begin practicing it within the office before we take any sort of um, take any sort of blueprint out into the community and just disperse it. 'Cause you know, like we don't know where we're going and then we could poten' ... And we're giving the uh, ad we're put in a position to lead. We could lead everybody into a, you know, burning building or off a cliff, or you know what I'm saying? Like it could be potentially detrimental. So I believe once we figure out what that is I'll have full support. But until like we figure out like what exactly that looks like um-

Kyee: And you're, you're speaking in context of what the work in the community looks like?

E: Yeah.

Kyee: Okay.

E: Like until we figure out what that looks like um, you know, we'll still be over here like you know. Kind of uh, you know doing research and trying to then, then, then participate in trial and error.

Kyee: Yeah.

E: And all of that. Uh, but once we you know, we uh, once that, you know, light bulb come on, then there will be full support in like keeping it on. So, I believe that.

Kyee: Do you think there are any challenges right now, aside from like the maybe discombobulation in direction, um, are there any challenges to doing this work?

E: Um-hum (affirmative). Um, huh, being patient. Uh, like I said like, I'm from that uh, that uh, that boiling pot overflow. I'm of that boiling pot overflow. So we're just like, now, now, now, now, now, you know. Those guys, what we've been through, you know, too much. Like you know you've been through too much, you know what I'm saying? This, is this whole um, the slavery tips getting old, like it's a hell played out man, we done. You know what I'm saying? So, keeping, keep, being patient and attent- and trying to appreciate the uh, small victories. Again that's in trying not to look at the small victories as small victories. 'Cause a victories is a victory is a victory, like you know what I'm saying?

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: It shouldn't be like, it shouldn't be given no sort of like, no labels like that. You know what I mean? That's dismissive it, it you know, it undermines it. It undermines it saying a small victory like, come on.

Kyee: Yeah.

E: That's uh, that's undermine, so even getting like not viewing victories other than trying to keep maintaining hope that's, that's the hardest part. Like it's hard. Like that's what is, really is. Um-

Kyee: So it seems like there's some like emotional barriers. What about any like structural barriers? Are there any like structural barriers to doing this work?

E: Oh yeah.

Kyee: (Laughs).

E: We at UofL. You know what I'm saying? So this is like you know, bureaucratic as you could possibly get. They're not just politics. This is like the pinnacle of politics. The Mecca of politics. Like this is what UofL is. So where you're trying to, I guess, trying to manage like staying within that fine line.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: And also enacting uh, enacting upon uh ensuring change. And like those two to me don't really coincide well. Uh, 'cause you're looking at the movements that raise like that, that really had an impact um, in the context of black folk. None of them operated from federal entities. Black panthers completely grass routes, I love 'em for that. You know what I'm saying?

Kyee: (Laughs).

E: Love the panthers, ah, like I just, like I just wish I was born there ... it sounds crazy 'cause like go back in the 60's I was like yo like I would have been here if I could of hopped on, like for real. You know what I'm saying? Like I would have, oh my God like I fantasized about it sometimes. But like you know, panthers, completely grass route. Um, you, the, the United Nigger Improvement Association. Garvey started that up you know, by himself you know. A couple of other folk, you know what I mean? Completely grass routes. Southern Christian Leadership Council out the church, snip, collage students, you know what I'm saying? I guess that could somewhat be attributed to it, but they were operating like outside of um, those institutional uh, barriers. So they were defined and what being within that realm. So they've let ... So we're going to be doing that, that's what's up. But I'm not really um, seeing that amongst the uh, collective. You've got a select few individuals who'd challenge this status quo but not enough to really you know, completely flip it.

E: But you look at those movements, and they did not operate from outside, like within federal institutions. Rather, they were defying them and were seen and were uh, and were deemed as opposition to those institutions. Which means to me like you doing something right.

Kyee: (Sneezes). Sorry.

E: God bless you. Um, it seems to me like you are doing something right. They're trying to counter you because you're like, you're defying ... If you're really defying the status quo, you're going to receive oppos', opposition from those entities.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: So, as far as I'm concerned they were all doing something right. Uh, now I'm starting to question like 'cause like, oh we aint really getting too much push back. So like we must be, we must be safe.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm.

E: So that's the thing, it could, like, operating under this environment kind of limits you and, and puts you in this area of being you know like, you know like safe. You go from being a like a fierce lion or a panther to a little kitten and awe you know like, awe yeah, it's meowing. And then you know it's meowing and making all this noise, it's got claws and stuff but you know it can't really do too much.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: So it ant too much of a threat. So we're not really ... So we're kind of limited in that regard where we always had to pounce around these parameters and peep folk code switch and you had folk like me who won't code switch and, and that puts all of us in jeopardy.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: You know what I'm saying? Like there was a recent incident in which that occurred. Like you know what I'm saying? Uh, and now you're having to work that out 'cause of me and my big mouth (laughs), going ahead and just like, just like F it like what do I got to lose? You know what I'm saying and that?

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: 'Cause I'm not about you know, playing within you know, playing within the lines defined to confine (laughs). You know what I'm saying?

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: That's not my mode of operations. I've defined my own lines and do whatever the hell I want (laughs). Do whatever the hell I want.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: And that's not conducive to, you know bureaucracy. So that, that's really hard people.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: "Don't say this, but I don't 'cause we're trying to encourage folk to speak without any sort of restrictions or inhibitions, or nothing. You know what I'm saying? I like to be able to speak their mind. This aint seem fit. Use that mouth that God gave em." But at the same time we're not allowed to fully practice that 'cause you're not only representing yourself at that board meeting you're representing UofL. So it's like a catch 22.

Kyee: Um-hum (affirmative).

E: So if you do say it, there's known as a potential for consequences to occur. You may get your grant money just completely just, "Ch," you know what I'm saying? Like they'll just gank it. And I'm ... so it's like those two world are like yo it's crazy lying there so and that's a world that we black folks have been living in since like we first uh, since uh, hell emancipation. Really that whole code switching.

PART 2 OF 3 ENDS [01:02:04]

E: ... since, uh, hell, emancipation, really that whole code switching. You know, like being- being yourself, which in essence is a free spirit to being what they want. And I aint about being what they want because that's not good ... 'cause that's- that's ... like I was talking about one-sided relationships before.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: That's a one-sided relationship. They getting everything they want and I don't get nothing. If anything, I get deprived, uh ... I leave with less as a result of that. My integrity is, uh, just completely, uh, you know, stomped-stomped on. And that's just, uh ... It's not fair.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: So that's what it is. I'm staying within those lines and just ... and really not being free at the end of the day. You're not really free. You're still, you're still trapped. Well, yeah, that's a big, that's a big one.

Kyee: So the bureaucracy is a big one.

E: Yes. And the politics that come with it. A hierarchy. You know the hierarchy-

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: ... there. Literally, the complete opposite ... like it represents the complete opposite of what we're trying to do.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: Like how are you going to ... Like I don't see how you can really, um ... how you can really spearhead an initiative, um, or is it around liberation under an oppressive system. Like that's just ... that's like hypocritical.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: Like it don't make sense. How can you liberate people when you yourself aren't liberated? Like it's ... Like that don't make sense. Where you leading them to? Like where are you ... Are you really freeing them or is that just another form of indoctrination? Like it's just like ... you know what I'm saying? Like that's what it is. That's the, that's the ... where the challenge comes from.

E: But then you ask why do I still work here then?

Kyee: (laughs).

E: 'Cause I get paid.

Kyee: (laughs).

E: And that- that's the reason. I got to make ends. So, you know, it's like what Pac said. Pac was ... Pac said you know, everybody gets ... is getting pimped; it's about how long you get pimped. So right now, you know, I'm getting pimped, most def, but, uh-

Monique: [crosstalk 01:04:06]-

E: Yeah.

Kyee: Oh, thank you. We're on our last question.

Monique: Okay. Well, I have to run and grab my kiddos.

Kyee: Okay.

Monique: So, if you want to leave the recorder for me to do the upload, then you can just leave it on my desk-

Kyee: Okay.

Monique: ... and I'll have somebody lock it.

Kyee: Okay.

Monique: And then I'll get it back to you.

Kyee: All righty. So this is my last interview for the day, right?

Monique: Yeah, 'cause if he's not here now, he's not gonna be here-

E: He's not here?

Kyee: Okay.

Monique: But he should be here on Friday. But I'll let you know before then.

Kyee: Yeah.

E: Okay. But, yeah. nah it's not, it's not working.

Kyee: Yeah.

E: It's how long you get, how long you get pimped. So, I'm getting pimped right now. But, you know, as soon as opportunity opens, the door opens, they just got to open the door a little crack there, just a little crack go-

Kyee: (laughs). You in there

E: Like a, like a, like a mouse. Like that mouse from earlier-

Kyee: (laughs).

E: ... just shoot out of the room. They ain't going to stop me. Like that's it. I'm in there, you know what I mean? So I got ... It's how long you get pimped. So right now, I guess we- we really ... yeah, we really getting pimped. So it's- it's ... Yeah, it's discouraging.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: But hey, (laughs) ...

Kyee: Yeah. So I feel like you gave us a lot of information to work with. A lot of good information. And it -

E: Really?

Kyee: Yeah!

E: I think I was kind of just rambling for real. Like-

Kyee: No. No. Um, is there anything that you think that should have been brought up? Any questions you think I should have asked that you want to give answer to? Want to give voice to?

- E: Um ... uh, what can be done to improve this, uh, this grant in which you've been granted. So if we, uh, choose to reapply, you know, there's going to be some certain things that are going to have to change. We're going to definitely need to have a, uh, uh, more room to flex, you know, our artistic integrity uh, within this space. And we're definitely going to have to cast off some of the, um, principals which we've adopted from our oppressors. I definitely believe that. Um-
- Kyee: Such as what?
- E: Such as limiting, uh, individual voice. Um ... not allowing certain, uh, not allowing certain acts that I think are inevitable when it comes to revolution to occur. Um, trying to make things palatable, uh, to certain audiences. You know, there's no such thing as a peaceful revolution. No such thing. So, if you're really about change, you're going to have to allow some things to occur that might not be, you know, nice children's stories. It's gone to have to happen. It's gone get worse before it get better. And I really believe that. Like that's just how it's going to be. But in, uh, but instead, we're trying to delay the inevitable. Might as well get it over with now, 'cause it's going to happen. So that's what I feel like, yeah. They going to have to cast those off. Like in order ... Shoo, we're gone be liberating people then we ourselves gotta be liberated, so it needs to be focus ... there has to be ... this grant got to be ... it got to be a libratory grant.
- E: Some folk gone have to change. Um, you know, those systems may have to change. But hell, like I said, I don't really expect that. You know what I mean? (laughs) So, right now I'm just kind of speaking uh, idealistically-
- Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- E: ... as far as what I would want. But it's definitely going to have to, going to have to cast them ... those- those bureaucratic principals, the ... all the- the po-la-tricks and all that, all that got to go. All that got to go. It's all got to go, if you really want to see some change out here. Like if you really want to see that, that's the only way like. Can't keep operating off of this, you know, this disrespectful paradigm. You know, we got to start mo- moving counter to that. You know what I'm saying? Like, I- I don't know. You know, get paid more.
- Kyee: (laughs).
- E: [crosstalk 01:08:22]-
- Kyee: More money never hurts (laughs).

E: I'm broke man I ain't mad about that. Y'all want to go ahead and raise a brother's pay or whatever? Like put more money on top of that? Like that's- that's cool.

Kyee: (laughs).

E: That's- that's helping somebody.

Kyee: Yes.

E: I'm talking- I'm literally talking to the tape recorder. They can't see me, but like-

Kyee: (laughs).

E: ... that- that would be helping. That would be helping a young black male come up. Like help us come up. You want to give us some more money so we can be good? So I don't have to be out here participating in nigga...

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: ... Yea raise him up, pay grade up.

Kyee: (laughs).

E: Don't be like Bevon. Raise the minumum wage-

Kyee: (laughs).

E: Like, you know, what I mean?

Kyee: Don't be like Bevon-

E: Don't be a Bevon. Like go ahead, raise the wage. He's on his way out anyway, so that, you know ... You could do that if you want to. But really, it ... the other, the former is what takes priority. So it's got to be ... If we really is about liberation issue. We got to ... we can't just talk it; we got to walk it too, man, because people are looking at ... people are trying to peep how you, uh ... or peeping how you move, as well as what you say.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: So you gotta, you gotta do both. Like, they're synonymous. And right now we're doing a lot of ba ba ba ba ba. We talking, but people are like, "What's going on out here? Ain't nothing changed. If anything, it's gotten worse! You know what I mean? More people die. More ..." Hey, House Bill 169 that passed ... this gang injunction basically. You know what I'm saying? More brothers are dropping, you know, like flies and stuff.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: STD rates are going up. Like all that. Like it's getting worse. So it's like, you know, we talking all this, but then ... And that's 'cause we're still trying to figure out what it looks like and we're still trying to operate off the oppressive, the- the oppressive, uh, the- the oppressive landscape in which we have, um, uh, forced ourselves into. So, it's a ca- catch 22.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: So that's got to go.

Kyee: What about me? Do you have any questions for me?

E: As far as what?

Kyee: The project, anything we've talked about ...

E: So what- what ... With the project, um, what is the, uh, what do you see the finished product like looking like?

Kyee: Um, well, we're hoping to publish our results because critical consciousness is still a very-

E: Abstract concept?

Kyee: Yeah, it's still really an abstract construct ... uh, construct. And, um, for me personally, I believe that what Paolo Freire, which is the originator of the concept, had in mind for it, we have strayed significantly from it. And so it's- it's really kind of considered an educational practice-

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: ... instead of being a revolutionary practice.

E: Right, right.

Kyee: And it is, in essence, a revolutionary practice that-

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: ... uh, utilizes the education system in part. And so, I think because we only see his ideology in part and utilize it in part, we don't reap the full benefits of it.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: And so, that's what I'm hoping to really get into. And then, Freire does talk a lot about the, um, con- consequences of being critically conscious on the

person. And he proposed a lot of the things that you talked about about kind of feeling like, you know, maybe I'm the police ... You know, um, I don't know if you've ever seen The Good Place. It's like a show I watched on Netflix, but the ... One of the guys is a moral philosophy, uh, or a moral ethics philosophy professor or something like that.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: And he's always talking about ethics and what's good and what's not good. And so like, he made everybody around him miserable, you know what I mean, because of talking about what's ethical and what's not ethical, you know. And there's this phrase that- that they keep repeating, "That's why nobody likes a moral philosophy professor." (laughs) You know, and so ... Um, people feel like once they, like you said, see, they can't unsee.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: And that sometimes really hurts people, because ignorance can be bliss.

E: True.

Kyee: And so that's an area of the research of the critical consciousness that has not been explored, to my knowledge, at all. And so we're really hoping to get that message out there, get a more comprehensive view of what critical consciousness is, um, out there. So, yeah, that- that's the whole goal of this. That ... Those were our two main aims is, what is critical consciousness. Is there a point where people can identify that they become aware, that they, you know, get there? Is it a point in time that we get there? Is the spectrum-

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: ... you know ... Can you be critically conscious in one area, say race matters, and not be critically conscious in another area, like, uh, socio-economic status or gender relations?

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: You know, so we're really just exploring critical consciousness, and then also with that, uh, specialize interest in what people perceive to be the negative consequences of being aware of the circumstances they're in.

E: That's crucial. That's crucial, yeah. Y'all doing ... def- definitely doing good work. Like I definitely want to peep like whatever outcome is out there-

Kyee: Oh, yeah.

E: ... 'cause, uh-

Kyee: And we'll probably be doing some fact checking. You know, after we analyze our data, we'll probably be doing some focus groups, maybe coming back with y'all sometime in the summer, because we have three more rounds to go through of- of participants.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: Um, but, you know, just saying, "Did we get this right?" you know, 'cause that's important for us to know. Like did I, "Did I get this right? Did I accurately, you know what I mean, understand what you were trying to say to me?" because that's important, you know.

E: Yeah, for real. Yeah, yeah, that's also crucial.

Kyee: 'Cause I could be looking at what you say one way and you intended it a completely different way.

E: Right. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: You know, so that- that's important for us to come back after we've done our analysis to say, "What y'all think? You know, is- is this right?"

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: So-

E: Dang. That just gave me like a whole, like a whole-

Kyee: (laughs)

E: ... said I got like a, like a plethora of other things to consider now. Huh.

Kyee: Well, that's the thing with critical consciousness. Freire talks about, you know, what he calls our thematic universe, and the thematic universe is ... How can I explain it? (laughs) The thematic universe is our generative themes, and each generative theme is like a- a tiny aspect of our universe. So our race, you know, and the way we deal in race. Uh, our gender and the way we deal in gender. Our socio-economic status ... These can all be kind of thematic, you know-

E: Right, yeah.

Kyee: These can all be like generative themes-

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: ... and he calls them generative themes because when you encounter a generative theme, like race, you count ... encounter only one facet of it, and then it unfolds again once you've encountered it and considered it into as many questions or as many aspects to view it as ... You thought, you know, you thought, "I've got this one thing mastered."

E: Right.

Kyee: And then, once you encounter it again and a ... from a different angle, you're like, "Oh, I didn't- didn't know shit about that." (laughs) You know what I mean?

E: Yeah. its like another, more to consider.

Kyee: Yeah, you ... now you have more to consider. Right. So ... And all of those tiny nuanced facets of themes that we interact with, that creates our universe, our thematic universe.

E: Right.

Kyee: And our thematic universe kind of creates, what he calls, an epochal unit, so a- a moment in time. So you have pre-awareness, and pre the program, that can be an epochal unit in time. Um, that you ... that have specific characteristics, specific uh, themes that you dealt with. You talked about, um, like the selfishness you dealt with, getting kicked out of school, um, the depression ... The different things that you dealt with in that epochal unit.

E: Sure.

Kyee: And some things may still come over into this epochal unit, but now you're in a completely different place with different things that you're thinking about.

E: Right.

Kyee: How I interact with the world now; how I view homelessness; how I do this; and how I do that. And what are my new goals? And ... you know. So you can see these epochal units ... what he calls epochal units in time in people's lives. And each one of those has a thematic universe with themes that are important. And you lead into the next epochal unit by facing those themes in your life from all possible aspects. And you'll never be able to get through all the themes-

E: Mm-mm (negative).

Kyee: ... because each time you encounter one, you have a bazillion questions to then reflect on, you know, do the praxis to reflect on and then act in a new

way. Then when you act, you encounter a new generative theme that you (laughs) have to reflect on and act in a new ... So this process, we call it an iterative process of acting, reflecting, acting, reflecting, acting ... It goes on forever. It can.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: You know, so we want to know ... We wanted ... That's what kind of started this process of, "What is critical consciousness? Do people attain it one time? Is there like an ignition, a spark where they get it? Um, do you continually grow in it or is it a place that you've just kind of arrive and it doesn't matter how much new knowledge you dump on it, you already got the basis and you're already there, so ...

Kyee: Yeah. Paolo Freire's pretty deep. (laughs)

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Definitely man-

Kyee: He's pretty deep. Um-

E: Yeah.

Kyee: And I- I think, um, what really brought me to the project was that we weren't studying him in the depth that he really has. You know, we- we- we don't see him as- as deep as he is. You know-

E: For real.

Kyee: We just kind of like say, "Oh, you know, there ..." It's like an education thing.

E: Yeah.

Kyee: We don't apply it to public health. We don't apply it to social work, you know, really.

E: Yeah, we just cherry pick.

Kyee: We cherry pick.

E: Yeah.

Kyee: And- and like you said, we have to have context. And without all of the other elements-

E: Right.

Kyee: ... that he really talked about, people literally take one chapter out of his book and then cherry pick what they want out of that chapter. There's four

other chapters, and these chapters are long. (laughs) You know what I mean? So there's four other concepts that help build the ideology, that help build the framework-

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: ... and we're not paying attention to them as much. And one of the concepts that he talked about was the consequences, you know, of being critically conscious.

E: Hum, Whew.Man. Now ... So, those, um ... I'm sorry. What did you refer to it? Economic universes?

Kyee: Epoch ... Oh, thematic universe.

E: Yeah, thematic universes- ... Is it poss- ... Do you believe it's possible for a person to stay in just one and not progress into another all the time that they didn't overcome, or break, or they didn't participate in that reflection process you were talking about? You think it's just possible for them to just stay in just one thematic universe without progressing into a new one?

Kyee: Into a different epochal universe?

E: Yeah.

Kyee: Well, our lives will always be comprised of epochal units, whether our consciousness changes or not, because you have times where you are single and times where you are coupled.

E: Right.

Kyee: You have times where you ... before you have children and then the time for the rest of your life after you have children. And then, forbid, you lose a child, there's then a separate epochal unit-

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: ... of you've lost a child. There's a time that you have your parents and then there's the time that they die.

E: Yes.

Kyee: You know, so each point in our lives can be, you know, really ... Most people can look back on their life and say, "You know, that was during the time where I did this. Or that was during the time where this was happening."

E: (laughs) Right, right.

Kyee: You know, and-

E: In the old days-

Kyee: Yeah, in those days ... And so, that really, when you hear people say that, that ... they're talking about an epochal unit, right? A- a specific time frame in their life where they were dealing with specific ... a specific thematic universe.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: And some of those generative themes that make up the thematic universe could transfer over into a different epochal unit, you know, such as I dealt with selfishness as a child. I've never dealt with it really, so even as a 45 year old man-

E: I'm still selfish.

Kyee: ... I'm still selfish. (laughs) You know what I mean?

E: Yeah.

Kyee: So that's still a generative theme that I ... well, piece, you know, of my universe that I've carried all throughout my life, and so it may not seem as if I've transitioned in any other ways ... And maybe I didn't grow at all in my selfishness-

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: ... but maybe I grew in other ways. And maybe I didn't. You know, so, but it still is a different point in my life, because the things that I can do with my body as a 20 year old man are different than the things I can do with my body as a, as a 45 year old man.

E: True that.

Kyee: You know what I mean? So there's still going to be something that defines, you know, the way we move through the world and- and what we understand and- and what challenges we're facing. There's going to be a point in time where your parents stop taking care of you and you take care of them maybe.

E: Right. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: So that would be-

E: We talked about that actually.

Kyee: Yeah.

E: Yeah.

Kyee: So that would be a completely different paradigm. A completely different world view that you have now, realizing that your parents are fallible. That they're fragile.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: You know what I'm saying? So there- there's always going to be a different epochal unit that you're operating in, but that doesn't mean that those generative themes that make up the thematic universe of that epochal unit won't continue on.

E: That makes sense.

Kyee: So, like, yeah. Just to recap, you have those generative themes which are the tiny little parts-

E: Tiny part.

Kyee: ... and that creates a thematic universe that defines the epochal unit.

E: It defines it. Okay. So that's a [crosstalk 01:21:55]-

Kyee: So it's like, uh, it's like having these balls. Imagine three balls. You have a ball, a string, a ball a string, a ball. Within this ball, there's a bunch of wires wound up.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: The wires that are wound up are the generative themes and they fit together the ball inside-

E: The thematic universe?

Kyee: That's the thematic universe. And then that outside shell of a ball is the epochal unit-

E: Okay. I see.

Kyee: ... that separates this epochal unit.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: And inside that epochal unit is another ball of strings that make up a ball, right?

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: But each little strand, is the generative theme that make up the ball, which is the thematic universe, and it's shelled inside-

E: An epochal unit.

Kyee: Yeah, an epochal unit. And then, just as there are strings that attach each ball, there are generative themes that attach each epochal unit.

E: Epochal unit. Oh. That makes sense. Huh. You could really facilitate like ... I could see ... The way you just broke it down ... Like I couldn't see how some like ... Like a kid can't, you know ... You put that in front of them, like this seems like a concept that even they could grasp early on, you know-

Kyee: Yeah.

E: ... like framed in a, um, in like a ... more kid oriented context. You know what I'm saying? Like, that ... yeah.

Kyee: And sometimes it is difficult to differentiate one epochal unit from another-

E: From another one.

Kyee: ... because time is continuous.

E: Right on. So-

Kyee: And humans have ... Freire talks about humans ability, being the only being on the planet that can tri-dimensionalize time.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: And so at the same time, we are historical beings and creating history-

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: ... um, and also creating future, so we are living in the past, the present, and the future all-

E: All at the same time.

Kyee: ... at the same time. And we situate ourselves in society based on the past, the present, and the future.

E: Right.

Kyee: You know what I mean? Like that's the way we move, that's the way we interact, that's the way we understand ourselves and society. And so, you

know, it- it really ... All of these things kind of really go into critical consciousness, and it's not something that we really educate that much on-

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: ... you know, all of these facets, these aspects, these nuances within the framework. And so that's what I'm interested ... This is my field of study. Critical consciousness is my field of study, so that's why I am-

E: Right.

Kyee: ... you know ...

E: Wow. Yeah, I can see your passion in it.

Kyee: (laughs).

E: For real. Dang. (laughs).

Kyee: (laughs).

E: I'm just still here trying to like ... it's got my mind racing. Now I'll get, I'm getting like ... 'cause I'm thinking about like- like there was a school, you know, like a school ... for us that facilitated -

Kyee: (laughs) That is literally what I want to do for my dissertation.

E: For real!

Kyee: And it's funny that you got to that same spot, because that's what I was like, "We need a school." Like that is ... We need a school-

E: Yeah.

Kyee: ... that teaches critical consciousness. And not as a educational practice.

E: Mm-mm (negative).

Kyee: You know what I mean? Because that's what we teach it as, as like this educational thing.

E: Yeah.

Kyee: You know, and then they pick and choo ... Like there's this whole methodology to critical consciousness that people don't even do. You know what I mean? That's why you hear me asking, "Well, what does this mean?"

E: Yeah.

Kyee: "How does that-"

E: I peeped that.

Kyee: Because you have to, you have to be able to form generative words, and generative words create the generative themes. Generative words are words that are ... you speak. Words that you understand. The way that you ... Like Niggrazi- Nigger- Niggerati-

E: Nigga-

Kyee: Or something like this-

E: Nigga- niggatry.

Kyee: Niggatry, you said niggatry. That is a generative word. That's something that you understand, that forms your context. So if I'm talking to you and I could be like, "That is some niggatry right there." You be like, "That's what I'm saying!"

E: (laughs).

Kyee: You know what I mean? (laughs) Like it really gets to you.

E: Yeah.

Kyee: You know what I'm saying?

E: Yeah, I feel that. I feel that. Yeah.

Kyee: And then that connects to a generative theme in your mind about maybe I do the right thing, maybe I don't do the right thing, which connects to the universe in your mind of how do I act on a normal, how do I don't act on a normal, what am I facing on the normal, what am I not facing on the normal, which gets to this epochal unit of time of you being critically conscious. Or engaging in critical consciousness.

E: So it's really like ... So it doubles as both the individualized concept and one that, uh, that transfers by proxy then to society-

Kyee: Correct.

E: ... as a result. So that's how ... So if it ... So in a classroom, uh, so in a classroom setting, it seems as though it would look more so as getting the individual to ... So like as far as like getting to understand like the idea of, um, like thematic universe and epochal units, you would have ... try to get the individual to pinpoint exactly where they are as far as that progression

and then play some applications like with, uh, tied in with like the, uh ... I'm trying to figure out how to ... like how to articulate it.

Kyee: So you kind of ... When you're teaching in the, in the sphere of critical consciousness, what you're basically doing, it's called problem posing education.

E: Okay.

Kyee: So what I'm doing is I'm gathering all of your generative words, I'm investigating your thematic ... generative themes, creating your ... constructing your thematic universe, so that I can fully understand what you do, the situations that limit you, the situations that free you, your actions or awareness of your situations, right? And then, I create like a vignette. A scenario. And I pose that to you. You know, and that gives you an opportunity to confront your reality without realizing you're confronting your reality, so it's kind of safe, right? So that gives me an opportunity to say, "Hey, what do you think about ... I don't know, statistics? Did you know that this statistic is this and this statistic is that?" And you're a black male, but I'm not giving you statistics on black males, so I'm really engaging your interest in math.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: Right, and seeing if you can apply math to your world and see the importance of math for your world. But instead of asking you about statistics about yourself, I'm going to ask you about statistics about animals. You know, something like that. And that gives you an opportunity to critically think about something with freedom.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: You know, something that doesn't endanger you, doesn't make you nervous. And then, as you're thinking about that, you can say, "Well, I wonder, if I can learn all these things about animals, about a cat-"

E: (laughs).

Kyee: What can I learn using math about myself?

E: Yourself, yeah.

Kyee: About my people?

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: You know, so it's- it's ... You're- you're giving them a prob ... posing a problem to them for them to solve, and in the process of solving that

problem, they learn a little bit something about themselves. So it's kind of sneaky. You know, (laughs) in a way.

E: Yeah, yeah, it is.

Kyee: It- it- it's sneaky-

E: Like it's deceptive-

Kyee: ... but it's not-

E: ... but at the same time ... yeah, it's not though.

Kyee: It's deceptive, but it's not. Yeah.

E: Yeah. Huh. Wow. Yeah, that's like ... man.

Kyee: And it can even be something like spacial. You know, it can be like, you know, instead of saying, "Go to the back of the class to get the stethoscope," it could be, you know, "Go to the corner of Mohammad Ali and-"

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: "... such and such, you know, and get the stethoscope." And so now, you created an environment where people are comfortable, because they're like, "Oh, I'm in my hood."

E: Right.

Kyee: You know what I'm saying? "I'm on Mohammad Ali and 28th."

E: Right.

Kyee: "I'm on, you know, go to Shawnee Park and get that." "Oh, I'm in Shawnee."

E: Yeah.

Kyee: "Go to Chickasaw and get this." You know, and so you can even do things like that in a classroom that put people at ease, you know, and say, "What does it mean for the stethoscopes to be in Chickasaw Park?" Ask them a question like that. Make them be like, "Man if I had a stethoscope in Chickasaw Park, for real."

E: That's home. Like right there.

Kyee: Yeah. "I can do this. I could look at the soil. I could look at the sky. I could do this. I could do this. I could-"

E: Yeah.

Kyee: You know, so it's- it's really about-

E: Contextualizing it.

Kyee: Yeah, exactly. But then they- they- they ... 'Cause they ... You live in this universe and you're oblivious to it until you're made aware of it. And it's really about making people aware of their universe. That's what really critical consciousness, what I believe it is. Um, now, the study will show me if that's what it is or not.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: You know, but it's really about making people aware of the universe that they interact in. Their own personal interactions with it-

E: [crosstalk 01:30:07]-

Kyee: ... and the way society interacts with it, you know. There's this humanization that happens. We talked about before being able to just walk by a homeless person, and now you see that person as a human.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: And Freire talks about that a lot. He talks about how struggle and how oppression dehumanize both the oppressor and the oppressed. And instead of trying to liberate people from oppression, he- he has this statement in the book where he says they want land, not to be, not to be free from oppressors, but to become oppressors themselves. They want land ... 'cause he was dealing in a Third World country, so agrarian society.

E: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kyee: They want land to be bosses of other people. They don't want land to work for themselves. They want land to have other people come and work for them and for them to rule over.

E: To become the oppressor.

Kyee: To become the oppressor. And that's something that's really easy for oppressed people to do, because-

E: Right.

Kyee: ... he talks about the internalization of oppression, you know, and how-

E: Definitely. Yeah.

Kyee: ... how oppressed people are at the same time the oppressed person and, on the inside, the oppressor. So they oppress their brother, they oppress their wives, they oppress their children, they oppress themselves because on the inside, instead of aspiring to liberation, they aspire-

E: They internalized it.

Kyee: Yeah.

E: Huh. You can definitely see that in some of these, in some of these movements. Like hell, like when I was ... the times I talked to the Hebrew Israelites, they always talk about us, you know, reclaiming our rightful spot like on top. Like they're supposed to be subservient to us, not us to them, and I have no interest to becoming the oppressor. I'm like, I just want to be free.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: I don't really have no interest in like ruling ... That's inevitable. That's how it's going to be. And you can really see that like underlying ... like you look like you're pulling the mask back of- of ... behind those words is really like- like you refer- like you talked about, internalization of oppression. But that's crazy. Huh.

Kyee: Yeah.

E: Yeah, we definitely like ... yeah, the new Black Panthers they on the same tip. Like just eliminating all white people, like white genocide, like that's the answer.

Kyee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E: Like it is, it is crazy, man. So we have ... huh. Yeah, we ...

Kyee: Do you have any more questions for me?

E: (laughs)

Kyee: (laughs)

E: Uh-uh (negative).

Kyee: Okay. I'm going to go ahead and turn the recorder off then, okay?

E: Yeah, yeah, yeah. 'Cause I'm over here like-

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [01:32:33]

Appendix F

DEFINITIONS

- **Conscientization:** The process of learning to perceive the intricacies of an oppressive system and the subsequent action to assuage or obliterate it in the pursuit of full humanization
- **Continuous Catalyst:** Occurs when one has an ever-present awareness of a system of hegemony before being formally or informally notified of said system explicitly
- **Co-researchers or co-creators:** Research participants or respondents
- **Critical Consciousness:** The highest level of thinking identified in conscientization theory characterized by the ability to problematize overlapping systems of oppression within a historical and cultural context, in addition to engaging in action that aims to increase self-actualization and autonomy of themselves and the oppressed group to which they belong
- **Epiphanic Catalyst:** Occurs as one becomes aware of a system of hegemony, or facet thereof, suddenly from a meaningful educational or experiential event
- **Essence:** A representation of the actual events that take place and the way those events are experienced or perceived (both the noema and the noesis)
- **Imaginative Variation:** the process of using one's imagination to discover the invariant constituents of phenomena across temporality, spaciality, bodyhood, materiality, causality, [and differentiations within one's] relation to self and others
- **Noema:** The *thing* we are thinking about
- **Noesis:** The act of thinking

- **Phenomenon:** An experience as it is lived, omitting opinions, perceptions, perspectives, or reflections about said experience
- **Racial Conscientization:** the process of becoming aware and learning to identify the intricacies of institutionalized and interpersonal racism as a whole, or a specific facet thereof, and the subsequent action to assuage or obliterate racism and its effects on Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color (BIPOC)
- **Structural Description:** An accounting of how the phenomena was experienced based on noesis and constructed via imaginative variation and uses general language
- **Textural Description:** A full accounting of one's conscious experience of the phenomena based on noema; utilizes direct quotes from co-creators
- **Textural-Structural Synthesis:** A combining of the textural and structural descriptions. Uses general language with direct quotes for emphasis or impact

CURRICULUM VITAE

K y e e A l t r a n i c e Y o u n g

Location. Iowa Colony, TX | **Phone.** 502.905.5235 | **Email.** kyeealtranice@gmail.com

LICENSES

Licensed Master Social Worker (TX) | **License Number:** 104512 | **Expiration Date:** 1/31/2023

Certified Social Worker (KY) | **License Number:** 255550 | **Expiration Date:** 3/9/2024

CERTIFICATIONS

Level 2 Gottman Clinical Training | **Institution:** Gottman Institute | **Effective Date:** 2/27/2022

Level 1 Gottman Clinical Training | **Institution:** Gottman Institute | **Effective Date:** 2/17/2022

EDUCATION

2022 Ph.D. | Social Work | **University of Louisville** | Louisville, Kentucky

2018 MSW | Social Work | **Spalding University** | Louisville, Kentucky

2016 BSSW | Social Work | **Spalding University** | Louisville, Kentucky

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- 2020-2022 Co- Investigator | Learning the Language of America: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study of Black Racial Conscientization | **Qualitative - Phenomenological**
- 2019-2020 Co-Investigator | Catalysts of Conscientization Amongst Black Communities | **Quantitative - Survey**
- 2019-2020 Co-Investigator | Conscientization Amongst the Professorate: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study | **Qualitative - Phenomenology**
- 2018-2019 Co-Investigator | “Are we woke?” determining the initial praxis point at which urban minority youth reach Critical Consciousness (CC) - utilizing a Social Justice Youth Development (SJYD) framework - within a youth violence prevention program | **Qualitative - Case Study**

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2020, Fall Teaching Assistant | Kent School of Social Work | University of Louisville | Louisville, Kentucky | **Diversity, Oppression, and Social Justice Practice**, SW 603, Section 52, 20 Students (online)
- 2020, Spring Co-Teacher | Kent School of Social Work | University of Louisville | Louisville, Kentucky | **Diversity, Oppression, and Social Justice Practice**, SW 307, Section 1, 24 Students
- 2018, Summer Adjunct | Department of Sociology | Simmons College of Kentucky | Louisville, Kentucky | **Sociology of Health & Wellness**, SOC 301, Section 1, 4 students

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2022-Present **POSTDOCTORAL RESIDENT** | EBONI HARRIS THERAPY | HOUSTON, TEXAS

- Provides Gottman Method marriage and couples therapy for Black, interracial, and intercultural couples that:
 - Teaches productive conflict management
 - Increases friendship, fondness, and admiration
 - Amicably dissolves relationship and teaches effective co-parenting
- Provides therapeutic interventions for highly successful BIPOC that:
 - Decreases isolation
 - Validate experiences
 - Improve anxiety and depression
 - Balances work and life
- Provides therapeutic interventions that disrupt cycles of racial and intergenerational trauma within BIPOC or interracial families.

2021- Present

EMERGENCY ROOM SOCIAL WORKER |
HCA HOUSTON HEALTHCARE| WEBSTER, TEXAS

- Assesses for social determinants of health and barriers to patient success.
- Assess and reports suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children, elderly adults, and adults with disabilities to appropriate agencies.
- Facilitates adoptions, surrogacies, and Baby Moses cases.
- Utilizes therapeutic interventions including: Motivational Interviewing, crisis and grief counseling, resource advocacy, and education

2018-2021

UNIVERSITY FELLOW | UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE |
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY | 2018–2021

- Researched conscientization and critical theories.
- Utilized rapid report building techniques to engage research participants.
- Applied critical theories to increase empowerment and assist participants in overcoming structural barriers to physical and mental wellbeing.
- Taught courses on DEI, Social Determinants of Health and Illness in Diverse Populations.
- Taught students skills needed for rapid community and individual assessments.
- Utilized Motivational Interviewing to overcome student's ambivalence to change work.

2017-2018

**CAREER DEVELOPER | JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
| LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**

- Developed and implemented the REimage Employment Connection Program for the Kentucky Youth Career Center.
- Allocated 80k in grant funding as part of the REimage Program.
 - Connected court involved youth (ages 14-24) to community resources to promote resilience and support employment.
- Developed and implemented the Workforce Education Program for REimage.
 - Created trainings for financial literacy, soft skills, conflict resolution, food safety, and customer service.
 - Utilized grassroots organization techniques to establish community partnerships
 - Utilized Motivational Interviewing to to overcome ambivalence toward attaining employment.
 - Provided brief solution-focused and task-centered interventions to encourage compliance.
 - Provided crisis assessment and intervention to at-risk participants

2016-2017

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MANAGER | VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA MID-STATES | LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

- Established and maintained organizational and programmatic accreditation as part of the quality assurance and compliance department.
- Maintained the Performance and Quality Improvement System for 39 programs across 5 states.
- Provided oversight of all organizational Case Record Reviews.
- Developed and implements trainings on trauma informed care.
- Developed several initiatives to improve employee wellness, corporate environment, cultural humility, and quality assurance.
- Wrote and analyzed institutional and programmatic policy.

2015-2016

DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL | DAYSPRING | LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

- Supported independent living for adults and senior citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities comorbid with severe and chronic conditions.
- Provided crisis intervention during psychotic episodes caused by delirium, seizures, and Sun Downers Syndrome.
- Created behavioral plans to assist with effective communication between staff and clients.
- Completed reports for appropriate state agencies related to concerns for abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Maintained case documentation for each client.

2014-2015

YOUTH CARE WORKER I | USPIRITUS | ANCHORAGE, KENTUCKY

- Implemented and maintained the Psycho-Educational Model (PEM) as part of the behavioral and treatment plan for each residents.
- Engaged residents (ages 5-18) in their recovery from a sexual, physical, or emotional trauma using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy interventions, Motivational Interviewing, and brief solution-focused or task-centered interventions.
- Taught life skills to adolescent residents.
- Modeled behavior modification techniques for destructive or maladaptive coping mechanisms to promotive effective social skills.

2007-2009

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER | UNITED STATES NAVY | NAVAL AIR STATION PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

Responsible for providing safe, orderly, and expeditious movement of air traffic. This includes multi-million dollar aircraft filled with civilians and vehicles operating on airport movement areas. Naval Air Station Pensacola controllers work closely with the Blue Angels and are highly trained to maintain composure and efficiently operate under extreme pressure or stress.

ACCEPTED PUBLICATIONS

Altranice, K., Mitchell, B. (n.d.) Catalysts of conscientization amongst the professorate: A descriptive phenomenological study. *Social Work Education*.

PUBLICATIONS IN REVIEW

Altranice, K. (n.d.) Toward the erotic: Audre Lorde, Paulo Freire, and remembering as a means of erotic conscientization. *Feminist Theory*.

PUBLICATIONS IN PROGRESS

Altranice, K., Mitchell, B. (n.d.). The conscientization of Dr. D: A case study of conscientization complexity

Altranice, K., Mitchell, B. (n.d.). Conscientization processes: A examination of themes from a descriptive phenomenology study of the professorate

Altranice, K. (n.d.). Is Nigressence still relevant? A look at the theory through the lens of Conscientization.

Altranice, K. (n.d.). The philosophical underpinnings of conscientization.

Altranice, K., Thomas, S. (n.d.). 50 years of consciousness: A review of Paulo Freire's conscientization from 1970 to 2020.

Altranice, K., Immekus, J. (n.d.). Critical consciousness: A review of theory and measurement.

Altranice, K., Archuleta, A. (n.d.) Racial conscientization among Black communities.

Altranice, K., Williams, M. (n.d.). "It makes me sick": The unintended consequences of critical consciousness development.

PRESENTATIONS

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Young, K., Williams, M. (2019, May 16). "Are we woke?" Exploring the development and impact of critical consciousness (CC) development within a youth violence prevention program. International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry; Urbana-Champaign, IL

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Williams, M., Howard, T., **Young, K.** (2019, November 4). Unintended consequences: The impact of critical consciousness development in a youth violence prevention intervention. American Public Health Association Annual Meeting; Philadelphia, PA

Young, K. (2018, May 18). Using policy to increase recruitment and retention of a diverse professorate: Creating a student to professor pipeline. Spalding University School of Social Work Culminating Colloquium; Louisville, KY

HONORS AND DISTINCTIONS

2018-2021	University Fellow University of Louisville
2018	Jillian and Knowlton Johnson Scholarship Award Recipient Spalding University
2017	HRSA Grant Recipient Spalding University
2016	Cum Laude Spalding University
2015	University Scholar Spalding University

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND ACTIVITIES

2022-2023	Member NASW National & Texas Chapter
2022-2023	Member SSWR
2020-2021	Member Diversity Committee Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville
2018-2021	Member Multicultural Association of Graduate Students University of Louisville
2018-2019	Member 8th Annual Dialogue on Diversity Conference Planning Committee Louisville, KY
2016-2017	Member Wellness Initiative Group Volunteers of America Mid-States
2016-2017	Member Trauma Informed Care Committee Volunteers of America Mid-States
2015-2016	Member Diversity Consciousness Action Group Spalding University
2015-2016	Undergraduate President Student Social Work Association Spalding University
2015-2016	Member Faculty Search Committee School of Social Work, Spalding University

2015-2016 Co-President | **Multicultural Student Association** | Spalding University

2014-2016 Member | **Spalding University Honor Board** | Spalding University

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

2019 **Chair** | 15th International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Champaign, IL

2018 **Attendee** | Kentucky Engagement Conference: Kentucky Campus Compact. Spalding University; Louisville, KY

2018 **Attendee** | 7th Annual Dialogue on Diversity Conference. Bellarmine University; Louisville, KY

2017 **Attendee** | Angela Project Conference. Galt House Hotel; Louisville, KY