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Remembering the Cultural Trauma Legacies of Slavery: African American Young Adult Perceptions on Racism, Ethnic Identity, and Racial Socialization

Kimya Pearl Barden

Loyola University Chicago, kpbarden@gmail.com

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

REMEMBERING THE CULTURAL TRAUMA LEGACIES OF SLAVERY:
AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUNG ADULT PERCEPTIONS ON RACISM, ETHNIC
IDENTITY, AND RACIAL SOCIALIZATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WORK

BY

KIMYA PEARL BARDEN

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For mama, Zuri, and Pascal

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In West Africa, the Akan people purport belief in an adinkra symbol called the Sankofa bird (Karenga, 1993). This ancient symbol is depicted as a bird flying forward with his head turned backward looking in the direction from whence it came, all the while holding an egg in his mouth. The symbol is oftentimes metaphorically applied to the human condition of healing resultant of change as an outgrowth of past remembrances and reconciliations. That is, sometimes to engage in proactive, positive human psychosocial development and healing for both the self (the bird) and future generations (the egg), one must revisit and learn from the past.

The metaphor of the Sankofa bird's flying technique can be likened to *cultural trauma* and African American young adult psychosocial functioning. Like the bird who travels looking backward, the African American young adult can look "backward" and revisit the cultural trauma – North American slavery – and its accompanying legacies as a means of understanding this group's current well being and identity (Crawford et al., 2002). According to Akbar (1996), the African American psychosocial functioning should include a "psycho-history" which is temporal and fluid seeking to link events demarcated historical, contemporary, and future.

The Sankofa bird may be relevant to African American young adults as they navigate their psychohistory in an attempt to connect their historical, familial and group

past with their current well-being. Since the inception of North American slavery, African American young adults have always been situated to explore the implications of the “peculiar” institution of slavery and its accompanying social, political, and psychological legacies. In 1845, Frederick Douglass, an African American abolitionist and former slave recounts his firsthand experiences with slavery proclaiming “I didn’t know I was a slave until I couldn’t do the things I wanted” (Douglass, 1969). In 1961, on the eve of American slavery’s end, Harriet Jacobs, an enslaved African American girl, repeatedly brutalized and raped proclaims “death is better than slavery” (Jacobs, 2001). Dubois’ writing at the turn of the 21st century in 1903 foreshadows African American disenfranchisement as a potential “second slavery.” Civil rights poet, Nikki Giovanni, writes of the slave as a person in the world who is “not likeable” (Giovanni, 2007). Hip-hop artist, Tupac Shakur, questions the promises of freedom and equality for African Americans youth growing up in the 1990’s saying, “they never gave me nothing but slavery” (Shakur, 2007).

Though these African American scholars, writers and activists lived in different generations characterized by specific social ills their communities faced, their prose and text reveal a common theme of African American life: slavery as an impetus for the adverse race-based social arrangements which oftentimes determined African American life (DeGruy, 2005). More importantly, slavery appears to be a backdrop of African American history transmitted by parents and the larger community as a means for nurturing an African American identity. Thus, throughout African American history, the interplay of racism, ethnic identity development, and racial socialization appear to be

dominant themes as African Americans young adults interface with the legacy of slavery. That is, the specific ways African Americans have to contend with power, conceptions of self, and learning from caregivers and others about how to manage an ascribed status appears to be an important narrative in the African American community.

The following is a dissertation which seeks to explore cultural trauma and its relevance to African American young adult development. Accordingly, this dissertation is arranged in five chapters inclusive of an introduction, literature review, research methodology, findings, and discussion. While each chapter has its specific goals and objectives, the dissertation study is intended to provide a detailed description of the researcher's study aims.

Background

Young adulthood represents a key developmental stage in the human life cycle. It is simultaneously a period of exploration of both self and the larger social context (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1968). Specifically, young adulthood is characterized by an increase in independent thinking, education/skills acquisition, and finding lasting social relationships (Arnett, 1997, 2000; Erikson, 1959, 1968; Perry, 1970).

For modern-day African American young adults living in a global context, the post-slave legacy may also contribute to their psychological and social development. African American young adults ages 18 to 24 constitute about 12% of the nearly 66 million African American population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Like young adults in other ethnic-racial groups, African American young adults can be found in multiple settings reserved for their developmental demographic like college campuses and the

labor market. However, recent data suggest that the collective experiences of African American young adults differ from those of other racial/ethnic groups. Differences can be found in areas specific to fostering positive young adult development such as higher education and employment. In addition, difference can be found in industries which seek to rehabilitate socially unconventional development such as the criminal justice system and mental health. The following list highlights the state of African American young adults in these respective fields of contact.

- While recent statistics show that African American enrollment at institutions of higher education have increased from previous years, their nationwide college graduation rate is 43%, as compared to 63% of white students (*Journal of Blacks in Education*, 2007).
- Between 1990 and 2010, dropout rates for African Americans ages 16 to 24 have declined from 15% to 8%. However, African American dropout rates still trail behind Asians and whites, whose rates are 4% and 5%, respectively (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).
- Of those African Americans who forego college enrollment and refrain from being a dropout, many choose to enroll in GED programs. Nationally, over 60% test takers are between ages 16 and 24. In addition, the percentage of African American GED test takers has increased from 20.6% in 2003 to 26% in 2011 (GED Testing Services, 2012).
- Of all American groups experiencing unemployment, African American young adults historically have, and continue to have the highest rates. In 2011,

the unemployment rate of African Americans ages 16 to 19 reached nearly 50% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

- African Americans ages 16 to 24 earn less weekly than other ethnic groups. They earn \$404.00 compared to \$435, \$496, and \$414 for whites, Asians, and Latino young adults respectively (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).
- Despite varying educational levels, African American young adults with the same education earned less income than whites (U.S. Census, 2004).
- African American young adults are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).
- More than one-third of HIV/AIDS rates among the African American community are among youth ages 13 to 29 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010).
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among African Americans ages 10 to 19 after homicides and accidents (American Association of Sociology, 2006).

The aforementioned list, though notably varied with regard to industry and focus, provides an overview of the collective African American young adult experience.

Additionally, statistics also show that African Americans are not a homogenized group with each member having the same experience. Rather, differences can also be found among African Americans with regard to gender and class. While the aforementioned college data suggests that African American college enrollment has increased over the past ten years, African American women are more likely to graduate from college than

African American men, with rates of 47% and 36%, respectively (*Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2007).

Still, the criminal justice system adversely impacts African American young adult men. While African American women and other women of color are increasingly experiencing high rates of criminal justice contact (Bonczar, 2003), African American men represent over 40% of the prison population. More importantly “on any given day” nearly one in eight African American men ages 20 to 29 are under the surveillance of the criminal justice system in the form of prison, parole, and probation (The Sentencing Project, 2011).

For African American young adult women, sexual health is experienced differently. Young African American women are more affected by HIV than women of other racial/ethnic backgrounds. According to the CDC (2010), the rate of new HIV infections for African American women is eleven times and four times the rate for white and Hispanic women respectively.

Thus, it appears for many African American young adults, the overall, collective experiences of this population appear to be juxtaposed and filtered through a racialized context. Whereas young adulthood is thought to simultaneously nurture an individual’s quest for self-reflection, skill development, and intimate relationships, for many African Americans, young adulthood is a combination of extended college enrollment, higher levels of joblessness, and heightened risk of sexually transmitted disease. African American young adults appear to have a particularly unique experience in the human developmental life cycle.

Accordingly, there is much research which examines the collective experiences of African American young adults (Allen, 1985; Allen, 1992; Barnes, 2000; Davis, 2004; Feagin & Sykes, 1994; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Smith, 1981). Specifically, this work is oftentimes centered on African American experiences of broader societal *racism* (Barnes, 2000; Davis, 2004; Feagin et al., 1996), *ethnic identity formation* (Gurin & Epps, 1975; Delphine & Rolloack, 1995; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Mitchell & Del, 1992; Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995), and *racial socialization* (Bynum, Burton, & Best, 2007; Feagin, 1996; Gurin & Epps, 1975). Research finds that African American young adult developmental outcomes (e.g., academic achievement, student involvement, and self-esteem) are often couched within a larger racialized context inclusive of broader societal and college-based experiences (Allen 1992; Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Davis, 2004; Flowers, 2004; Steele & Anderson, 1995; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002).

As aforementioned, scholars assert that such experiences are not specific to African American young adults (Akbar, 1996; Degruy, 2005; Feagin et al., 1996; Wilkerson, 2010). Rather, these experiences are part of a historical, collective, intergenerational African American experience rooted in the *cultural trauma*, chattel slavery, and its horrific intergenerational legacies (Akbar, 1996; Burrell, 2010; Dubois, 1996; Eyerman, 2001; Feagin & Sykes, 1994; Leary, 2005; Wilkerson, 2010). Although slavery was deemed an illegal act in 1865, its aftermath brought about specific trauma legacies in the form of laws and policies which supported the powerlessness of African-Americans. More importantly, each trauma legacy was experienced by African-

Americans in different generations during specific temporal era's of the United States.

Such culturally traumatic legacies include:

- *Black Codes* (19th century federal and local laws passed to limit the physical movement and advancement of enslaved Africans) (Leary, 2005).
- *Lynching* (killing of African Americans via hanging and/or burning typically by white groups known as mobs) (Wilkerson, 2010).
- *Jim Crow* (1880's to 1965 post emancipation laws supporting race-based segregation and resource attainment in public and private domains) (Franklin, 1994; Wilkerson, 2010).
- *Peonage System* (early 20th century economic structure of debt servitude typically in the form of share cropping which required African American human labor as a fee for living expenses) (Bennett, 1988; Wilkerson, 2010).
- *Racial profiling* (a 1990's term used to label the deliberate act of law officials and others in positions of administrative authority to interrogate and arrest African Americans primarily because of their racial identity) (Alexander, 2010).
- *Mandatory minimum sentences* (federal laws and guidelines reenacted in the 1980's and 1990's which make crimes (usually drug possession) uniform in terms of sentencing and result in a disproportionate number of African Americans incarcerated in U.S. jails and prisons) (Alexander, 2010).

- *School re-segregation* (21st century legalized practice of educating African American and other students of in public schools void of ethnic diversity, economic resources, and engaged teachers) (Kozol, 2005; Tatum, 2007).
- *Public housing demolition* (21st century policy of demolishing public housing in American cities like New Orleans, Atlanta, and Chicago. The implications of demolition disproportionately affected African Americans of a low socioeconomic status, leaving many to lose ties with their community of origin and forcibly relocate to different neighborhoods, cities and even states) (Hunt, 2009).
- *Unemployment present-day* (African Americans historically have and continue to have the highest unemployment rate of all ethnic groups (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). While whites, Asians, and Latinos have unemployment percentage rates of 8.1, 7.7, and 11.3 respectively, the African American unemployment rate is 15.9%) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011).
- *New Jim Crow* (21st century term used to describe America's criminal justice system's tendency to mirror the racially separatists "Jim Crow" era of the mid-twentieth century, reflective of the disproportionate incarceration rates of African American men and women) (Alexander, 2010).

Accordingly, cultural trauma theory asserts that racial discrimination perpetuated against African Americans in the form of both individual acts of race-based intolerance (i.e., lynching and racial profiling); and structural limitations as legislated through court ordered policy and laws (i.e., Black Codes and mandatory minimum sentences) allowed

for adaptive behaviors and beliefs characterized on a continuum of favorable and adverse. Such behaviors and beliefs are not manifested in isolation. Instead, these behaviors exist in a social context of interplay between race relations which are thereby collectively transmitted over the years between generations of African Americans.

More importantly, the accumulation of these behaviors is specifically the result of cultural trauma, slavery, and its accompanying legacies (Akbar, 1996; Leary, 2005). That is, recently manumitted enslaved African Americans of the 1860's (and the small number of "free" African Americans) acquired a particular lens/perspective rooted in race-based trauma, pain, and discrimination which shaped their generations' collective memory of an African American identity (Eyerman, 2001). This identity shaped how they subsequently taught and socialized younger members of the community to both navigate being African American and manage the contradictory legacies of oppression and resilience (Akbar, 1996; Leary, 2005). These teaching processes are at the root of the subsequent historical stretch in which both memory and socialization patterns were passed to younger generations; this includes each generation of African Americans reared, from the late 1800's to children born near the turn of the twenty-first century, or modern day African American young adults. The present study seeks to examine the interplay of racism, racial socialization, and ethnic identity formation within the context of African American young adult development (see Figure 1).

The following chart pictorially describes the relationship between the cultural trauma, slavery; educational status; and its impact on contemporary African American young adults' perceptions about cultural trauma and its legacies, experiences with racism, racial socialization, and ethnic identity development.

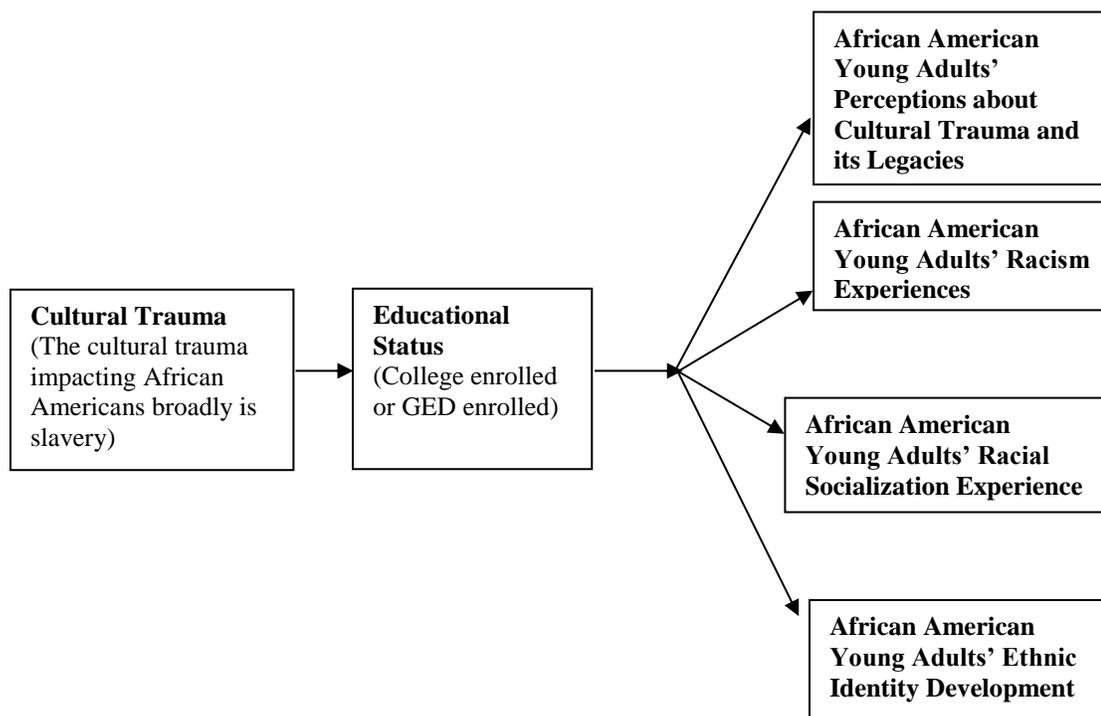


Figure 1. Cultural Trauma and African American Young Adults

Racism

According to Feagin and colleagues (1996) racism can be defined as a “socially organized set of practices that deny African Americans the dignity, opportunities, space, time, positions, and rewards this nation offers to white Americans” (p. 7). Racism has been shown to have deleterious effects on African American academic, behavioral, social, and psychological outcomes (Morrison, 1970; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Taylor, 1990). Such racism is oftentimes conceptualized as forms of “stress” ranging from

subtle, daily “micro-aggressions” (Pierce, 1995) to chronic stressors which impact emotional, psychological, and physical outcomes (Bynum et al., 2007; Sanders-Thompson, 2002; Williams & Williams, 2000).

Still, racism is also thought to yield some African Americans to believe in the inferiority of their ethnic group. This type of self-deprecation is called *internalized racism* (Watts-Jones, 2002). Internalized racism is predicated on the identification of white standards as the basis for normality (Akbar, 1996, Grier & Cobbs, 1996; Leary, 2005; Morrison, 1970; Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1992). Such identification can consequently yield to specific thoughts, behaviors, and actions which lead to African American disempowerment (Leary, 2005; Pouissant & Alexander, 2000). For example, Watts-Jones (2002) argues that “African Americans have “taken in and internalized aspects of racism” and need to be “healed” (p. 592).

Racism and its by-product, internalized racism, have been implicated in the psychosocial outcomes of African American young adults. Studies have shown that racism contributes to psychological distress (e.g., anxiety, phobias, and psychotism) and stress (e.g., nervousness, frustration, and feeling overwhelmed) (Bynum et al., 2007; Fleming, 1981; Greer & Chwalisz, 2007). Specifically, such daily and chronic stress often leads African American college students to feelings of alienation, solitude, and invisibility on both college campuses and larger contexts like jobs, shopping centers, and housing (Barnes, 2000; Solorzana et al., 2000). Internalized racism has also been shown to manifest in academic testing (Steele & Anderson, 1996; Steele et al., 2002). Steele

and colleagues have coined the term “stereotype threat” to describe the impact of internalized racism on African American standardized testing outcomes.

Racism literature provides insight into the ways racism as a culturally traumatic legacy may adversely impact African American young adults’ psychosocial functioning in the form of stress and internalized racism. However, it fails to fully explain how African Americans manage racism through an active approach of conveying positive messages through intergenerational African American communication. To gain additional insight into these matters, this research study will also consult racial socialization literature to further integrate racism concepts.

Racial Socialization

Racial socialization theory is often posited as a mechanism to counteract both experiences of racism and foster healthy ethnic identity formation. Racial socialization refers to the way adults and other systems (e.g., neighborhood and community) socialize African Americans’ sense of collective membership as a basis for establishing an African American identity (Bennett, 2006; Hughes et al., 2006; Stevenson, 1994; Stevenson et al., 2005). Specifically, racial socialization is the deliberate act of parents and other authorities teaching to African American children ethnic/racial pride, spirituality, history, heritage, reliance on family/kin, and ways to cope with racism (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Hughes, 2006; Stevenson et al., 2005).

Racial socialization has been found to support African American psychosocial functioning (Brown, 2008; Hughes et al., 2009). Specifically, racial socialization contributes to individual and interpersonal development such as academic achievement

and self-esteem (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Hughes et al., 2009; Neblett, Phillip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006). Additionally, Bynum and colleagues (2007) found that racial socialization incorporative of encouraging African American pride and racism coping was an important factor in reducing psychological stress.

Racial socialization theory provides insight into both the specific methods and health promoting outcomes of intergenerational teachings transmitted to younger African Americans. However, it fails to fully explain the variation in the ways African Americans develop a “racially-based” sense of self. Specifically, racial socialization literature is wanting on illuminating ideas pertinent to the extent African American young adults accept, embrace, and define what it means to be African American. To address these shortcomings, this study will also attend to the ethnic identity literature.

Ethnic Identity

A key strength historically employed by the African American community is to navigate notions of oppression such as racism via racial socialization to support positive African American identity formation. African American identity is an awareness and acceptance of specific cognitive and evaluative factors shared by members of the African American community (Allen & Bagozi, 2001; Phinney, 1990; Sellers et al., 1998; Tatum, 1997). Since slavery, such an ethnic identity formation has been a part of African Americans’ conception of self, as this group's’ identity was primarily viewed in terms of the white-Black dichotomy (Allen & Bagozi, 2001). That is, ethnic identity often united African Americans as a means of self-preservation against the limitations and debasement of race-based oppression.

Ethnic identity formation was particularly prominent in the Civil Rights era of the 1950's and 1960's in which African Americans – namely college students – sought to radically improve the social, political, and educational outcomes of the African American community (Bennett, 1993; Gurin & Epps, 1975). African American college students often relied on campus experiences to enhance and contribute to their sense of “Blackness” (Gurin & Epps, 1975). Concomitantly, Cross (1971) introduced the Nigrescence model of “Negro-to-Black conversion experience” which identified African American identity development in four stages: *pre-encounter*, *encounter*, *immersion- emmersion*, and *internalization*. The stages represented a shift in African American identity from “pro-white/anti-Black” to “pro-Black” to “multicultural.”

Cross's model has since been revised to account for the subtleties of African American identity (Cross, 1991; Cross, 1995). Such identities include “pre-encounter miseducation” (internalizing negative portrayals and evaluations of African American identity) and “internalization-biculturalist” (adopting both African American and white American values). Still other scholarship builds on Cross's model to demonstrate the complexity of an African American identity and conceptualized identity in terms of “salience,” or significance and “meaning,” or the subjective experiences pertinent to adopting an African American identity (Sellers et al., 1998; Vandiver, 2001).

Nevertheless, studies show African Americans who report higher levels of ethnic identification may have improved levels of psychosocial functioning (Phinney, 1990). In particular, research suggests that African American young adults may be especially impacted by the “protective” mental health benefits of an ethnic/race-based ethnic

identity. Additionally, research suggest that for African American young adults enrolled in college, racial identity may serve as a predictor for psychological defenses (Nghe & Mahalik, 2001; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005); positive self esteem (Rowley et al., 1998); improved academic adjustment (Anglin & Wade, 2007); and lower use of beer, alcohol, and marijuana use (Pugh & Bry, 2007). Furthermore, for African American collegiate young adults, greater campus involvement often contributes to higher level of African American identity formation (Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995).

Ethnic identity literature suggests the importance of African American identity formation as a key cultural trauma legacy. However, the integration of ethnic identity literature with both racism and racial socialization literature will provide this investigation with a broader perspective on the post-slave psychosocial legacies inherited by contemporary African American young adults.

Cultural Trauma Theory

African American young adults' experiences with racism, ethnic identity formation, and socialization are concepts which can be examined using cultural trauma theory. Cultural trauma is a theoretical construct which seeks to explore the psychosocial ramifications of historically-based, intergenerational cultural pains rooted in adverse cross-cultural encounters such as colonialism, genocide, and chattel slavery (Jervis & AI-SUPERPFP Team, 2009; Kira, 2001; Stamm et al., 2004). Scholarship which describes the cumulative effects of such trauma has been discussed for groups such as Native Americans (Brave Heart, 1998; Brave Heart; 1999; Struthers & Lowe, 2003; Weaver &

Brave Heart, 1999); and Jewish holocaust survivors (Danieli, 1989; Felsen, 1998; Solkoff, 1992).

For the African American community, cultural trauma is examined from the vantage point of slavery and its legacies of race-based social arrangements (Jenkins, 2001). North American slavery was a seventeenth and eighteenth century act of forced servitude of involuntary West African migrants by Europeans onto the United States of America and the current-day Caribbean. From 1619 to 1865, slavery as the initial trauma, resulted in a legalized economic and social system characterized by the Africans and their descendants, African Americans, living as enslaved chattel property.

Eyerman (2001, 2004, 2004) provides a sociological perspective pertinent to cultural trauma and African Americans. Specifically, he identifies slavery as the marked traumatic event which helped shape an African American collective identity and memory. According to Eyerman (2001), “slavery was traumatic in retrospect...which could potentially unite all “African Americans” in the United States, whether or not they had themselves been slaves” (p. 1). Eyerman views slavery as the basis for subsequent African American identity transmitted via a collective memory perpetuated over time through familial relationships and also popular cultural movements such as the Black press, Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil Rights Movement.

Additional work related to cultural trauma is promoted largely by African-American mental health scholars who discuss the “legacy of slavery” on African American mental health (Akbar, 1996; Clark, 1972; Crawford et al., 2003; Grier & Cobbs, 1968; Leary, 2005; Poussaint & Alexander, 2000). These scholars also highlight

slavery as the central point of African American identity formation, but privilege slavery's genesis as the ultimate root of this population's current psychosocial functioning. That is, for many African American youth and adults, mental health is rooted in a "post" slave status. Consequently, terms such as *post-slavery traumatic stress syndrome* (Akbar, 1996), *posttraumatic slavery syndrome* (Pouissaint & Alexander, 2000), and *post traumatic slave syndrome* (Crawford et al., 2003; Leary, 2005) suggest that current African American mental health is often manifested in cultural trauma-induced responses such as anger, depression, internalized racism, and low levels of self esteem. Still, adaptive mental capacities such as spirituality, resilience, and collectivism are also derived from a post slave experience (Akbar, 1996; Boyd-Franklin, 2003). Accordingly, these responses are considered inextricably linked to African American slave status and can be considered "ghosts of the plantation" (Akbar, 1996).

Cultural Trauma Theory and African American Young Adulthood

The collective experiences of African American young adults can be considered a reflection of cultural trauma or slave legacies which impact their psychosocial functioning. Cultural trauma theory asserts that despite historical, collective resilience, African Americans broadly have experienced and continue to experience an accumulation of *disproportionate* pains, slights, and injustices borne of chattel slavery (Leary, 2005; Wilkerson, 2010). Chattel slavery's legacy is transmitted and reenacted inter-generationally via familial/community messages and experiences with other institutions (e.g., school and work). The combination of familial, community, and broader institutional messages converge to provide a narrative for African Americans and is

implicated in modern-day African Americans' psychosocial functioning. This is seen in African American young adults' inheriting the legacy of racism management, making meaning of their explorations of identity, and relying on socialization as a potential protective factor against poor psychosocial outcomes. Thus, it can be hypothesized that African American young adults poised as emergent adults in transition between adolescence and adulthood have begun to explore the complexity of their developmental status.

Taken together, the aforementioned work provides key conceptual and theoretical insights into the relatively nascent topic of cultural trauma and African American young adult psychosocial functioning. However, the literature is wanting with respect to offering contemporary qualitative empiricism on the topic. For example, the literature is limited in its inclusion of the perspectives of young African Americans, those community members two to three generations removed from the Civil Rights era. While archival, historical, and clinical observations provide a blueprint with which to address African American mental health, the subjective experiences of African American young adults can too provide additional, firsthand insight into the topic. That is, providing a social scientifically-based platform for open dialogue can allow for a greater understanding of *their* conceptions of overall well-being and psychosocial functioning as it pertains to knowledge of American slavery slave legacies, racism experiences, African American identity formation, and racial socialization. Such knowledge is important to both identify the impact of historically-based adverse trauma legacies on young adult psychosocial functioning; as well as the collective resiliencies supportive of African American

psychosocial functioning which may thereby improve the academic, behavioral, and/or emotional outcomes of these young adults.

Purpose of the Study/Study Questions

The purpose of this study is to integrate theoretical and conceptual considerations, which posit the existence of a cultural trauma, by allowing African American young adults to tell their stories of identity formation, experiences with racism, and racial socialization processes. As African American young adults are found both in institutions supportive of varied modes of educational and career advancement, the study will offer insight into the collective experiences of both college-enrolled and GED enrolled students. The study purpose will explore the extent to which cultural trauma manifestations for African American young adults contribute to their overall sense of well-being and psychosocial functioning. Implications will be discussed for culturally sensitive mental health practice and policy and for the field of social work more generally.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant in regard to societal, methodological, and professional reasons. First, the study is significant because it offers a qualitative inquiry into notions of slavery's legacy within the modern "post-racial" or "post-Black" era (Lum, 2009; Robinson, 2010; Womack, 2010). Since America's inception, African Americans or Blacks have been considered the primary or "central" racial-ethnic minority group (Bennett, 1988). This label has been conferred to African Americans as they have historically been the numerically largest racial-ethnic group, second after Americans of

European descent. More importantly, the centrality of being the largest racial-ethnic group oftentimes defined in terms of limited power, privilege, and resources has led the African American community to be at the forefront of advocating for specific educational, political, and civil rights.

Consequently, a post-racial era is characterized by a focused shift from socially acknowledging human capabilities and development void of a particularly racial or ethnic lens. Post-racial means looking beyond race and ethnicity as a primary identity and embracing other identities as important and meaningful (Lum, 2009). For African Americans, a post-Black identity means acknowledging other identities within the African American community like class, economic status, sexual orientation. Key examples of this shift are reflected in the 2008 election of America's first African American president, a highly vocal and visible Black middle class, and an ever-present increase in African American conservative leaders (Robinson, 2010).

Accordingly, much of the previous key literature on African American young adult experiences with racism, racial socialization, and ethnic identity are birthed in decades defined by explicit racial intolerance as evidenced in the 1960's Civil Rights movement and 1990's resurgence of increased campus violence (Feagin et al., 1996; Gurin & Epps, 1974). Modern-day African American young adults have been described as belonging to the "millennial" generation, defined by an emphasis on identity as a function of global communication, mass media, and multiculturalism (Strauss & Howe, 2000). Unlike African Americans of previous generations living in a segregated context, this generation is presumed to experience increased contact with other ethnic-racial

groups and greater exposure to opportunity. Thus, this study will provide a 21st century entree into themes of post-slave African American identity for African American young adults – both college enrolled and non college enrolled – presumably living in a global, multi-cultural context.

Next, the study is significant because it offers a qualitative inquiry into African American young adults experience with ethnic identity, racism experiences, and racial socialization using cultural trauma as a theoretical lens. Whereas current scholarship illuminates conceptual and theoretical insight into cultural trauma (Akbar, 1996; DeGruy, 2005; Eyerman, 2001), this study will provide an opportunity to explore cultural trauma conceptions from the subjective vantage point of African Americans. More importantly, this study will use a psycho-historical, intergenerational approach as a means to understand the narratives of African American young adults. This study will provide a modern illumination on the current experiences of African American young adults, both college enrolled and non-college enrolled. Such demographic distinctions are made to ensure that a varied voice of African American young adults is heard. With regard to college enrolled young adults, it will build on the work of scholars Gurin and Epps (1975), Barnes (2000), Feagin et al. (1996), and Davis (2004) who use qualitative methods to tell the story of African American college students in the 1960's and 1990's.

More importantly, the study is significant for the field of social work. Social work scholars, professionals, and students are encouraged to explore the relationship between human life cycle development stages and broader societal contexts which support or negate positive mental, social, and psychological outcomes. According to the National

Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, social workers “should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression” with respect to both “race” and “age.” Additionally, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) mandates higher education social work curriculum to include study and exposure to identify specific changes which impact the overall life cycle development from birth to old age. This study will integrate both the professional and educational mandates of the social work profession by exploring a key time of human development – young adulthood – for a culturally defined ethnic-racial group – African Americans. This study will uphold the social work value which promotes “person in environment” and extend the concept to include both the immediate psychosocial environments as well as the larger psycho-historical context (Akbar, 1996).

Additionally, both NASW and CSWE stress the need for “cultural competence” and “social diversity” as key social work ethical standards when supporting the mental, emotional, and behavioral health needs of culturally diverse clients. As social workers are employed in the various sectors and industries where African American young adults may be found (e.g., criminal justice system, higher education, mental health agencies) they must be aware of specific culturally relevant experiences which may impact the psychosocial functioning of African American young adults. Social worker knowledge of modern-day racism experiences, ethnic identity development, and racial socialization experiences is key to providing service provision to a historically marginalized group (Schiele, 2000). This study will contribute to social work practitioner literature and offer best clinical practices when working with African American young adults.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

As suggested in the introductory chapter, modern day African American young adult psychosocial functioning is steeped in the historically-based, cumulative impacts of slavery and its accompanying legacies. African American well-being is situated within the realm of conjoint mental processes and collective group experiences. The interplay of the individual and collective experience renders African Americans with a unique set of mental health outcomes (Crawford et al., 2003; Degruy, 2005; Poussaint & Alexander, 2000).

Accordingly, this chapter will use existing literature to further support the key concepts of the research investigation. Specifically, this chapter has three main sections and objectives. The first section will describe theory related to both young adulthood and trauma, offering conceptual clarification for both PTSD and cultural trauma. The second section will highlight the cultural trauma specific to African Americans: slavery and its accompanying legacies. The third section will explore how slavery impacts modern day African American psychosocial functioning – specifically African American young adults – within the context of racism experiences, ethnic identity development, and racial socialization.

Young Adulthood: Theoretical Orientations

Young adulthood represents a key developmental experience characterized by young adults in transition from adolescence to adulthood (Astin, 2010). It is also a key time of identity exploration through which young adults begin to engage in inquiries of the multiple components of self (Gurin & Epps, 1975). The young adult experience has been found to encourage explorations of self in domains such as intellect, ethics, academic, and interpersonal relationships (Astin, 2010; Davis, 2004; Perry, 1970).

Accordingly, human development scholars have conceptualized and defined the specific psychosocial developmental tasks undertaken by individuals in their late teens and early twenties. One of the earliest contributions was made by G. Stanley Hall (1904) who would most likely describe today's young adults as adolescent as he conferred the adolescent label to persons ages 14 to 24. Writing at the time of great change in American society from agrarian to robust urbanization, Hall (1904) calls this period of the human life cycle – “storm and stress.” It is characterized by a series of intense biological, emotional, and relational changes throughout the ten year period.

Erickson (1959, 1968) describes psychosocial development as the extent to which humans mature psychologically as a function of social relationships over the course of a lifetime. He postulates the stages of “identity vs. role confusion” and “intimacy vs. isolation” for young adults ages 18 to 25 (Erickson, 1959, 1968). The former stage refers to individual's ages 12 to 18 pondering questions about self and social acceptance. The latter stage suggests the importance of interpersonal relationships to promote and sustain psychological and social well-being for individuals ages 19 to 40.

Still, Arnett (1996, 1997, 2000) argues young adults ages 18 to 25 should be conceptualized and labeled, “emergent adults.” Arnett states (1996) emergent adulthood is “neither adolescence nor young adulthood” (p. 469). Empirical data suggest that young adults view themselves as emergent because adulthood is characterized by being responsible, making one’s own decisions, and being financial independent (Arnett, 1996). This stage is characterized by an emphasis on demographics (residential status), subjectivity (adhering to the perspective that they are neither adolescent nor adult), and identity exploration (exploring matters about the larger world, love interests, and worldviews) (Arnett, 1996, 2000).

Thus, each of the aforementioned theories, though conceptualized in particularly different eras of American history, sought to isolate young adulthood as a unique time in life’s trajectory. Themes of transition, reflection, and change appear as themes in each of the three theories. However, it is important to note that Hall, Erickson, and Arnett researched and/or applied their respective theoretical perspectives on mostly white, middle-class, young adult Americans (Arnett, 2003). Consequently, the implications of their theories may be limited to African American young adults who may have to contend with additional themes of human development such as racism, ethnic identity formation, and accompanying racial socialization patterns (Feagin et al., 1996, Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995). Nonetheless, for African American young adults, such psychosocial experiences are often conceptualized within the psychological realm as self-esteem, belonging, and self-empowerment (Allen, 1992). Social development includes the extent

to which African American young adults utilize networks, relationships, and friendships as they approach adulthood (Allen, 1992; Gurin & Epps, 1975).

The following section seeks to integrate young adult development theory with cultural trauma theory. Combining both theories offers a unique lens used to view how the experiences of modern day African American young adults are historically rooted in the experiences of their fore-parents.

Trauma

Trauma is a devastatingly shocking blow which may render its victims excruciatingly pained. According to the National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (NCPTSD), a North American federal organization focused on trauma research and intervention, a traumatic event is “something life threatening or very scary that you see or that happens to you” (2007). NCPTSD also reports United States prevalence rates as 50% of adult women and 60% of adult men report experiencing at least one traumatic event in their lifetime. Additional statistics report trauma prevalence rates which range between 8-12% of the American adult population (Kessler, 2006).

While trauma data provides a quantifiable measurement of trauma frequency, such data is often derived from individual reports of individual human experiences. However, the veracity of its prevalence and impacts can only be assessed to the extent of construct operationalization and conceptualization (Kira, 2001). That is, trauma as a tangible artifact can only be considered as such depending on meaning. Accordingly, trauma can be considered simultaneously personal and collective and is subsumed under both the individual and cultural domain (Crawford et al., 2003; Leary, 2005).

Individual trauma is often aligned within the clinically diagnostic realm as suggested by the DSM-IV-TR thereby defined as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

or:

a traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate. (American Psychological Association, 1994).

Individual trauma is considered and conceptualized as an exclusively personal pain (e.g., experiencing and/or witnessing personal assaults, torture, kidnapping, rape, sexual assault) void of any shared connection with other people. Its subjective nature is confined within the domain of the personal self and his/her specific trauma context. Symptoms may emerge, rendering a trauma survivor in varied psychosocial states. Specifically, the American Psychological Association (1994) identifies the following traumatic symptoms:

- recurrent and intrusive recollections of the event
- recurrent distressing dreams during which the event is replayed
- dissociative states
- restricted range of affect
- difficulty falling or staying asleep
- sense of foreshortened future
- hypervigilance
- exaggerated startle response

- irritability or outbursts of anger
- difficulty concentrating or completing tasks

The individualized trauma consisting of both a personalized trauma occurrence and resulting symptomatology, may result in a constellation of symptoms of emotional and behavioral loss. Research suggests that individual trauma can impair cognitive, behavioral, and social characteristics (Kira, 2001).

Trauma and African Americans: The Role of Violence

Research on trauma and African Americans is primarily discussed within the psychological construct of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Alim et al., 2006; McCart et al., 2007). Specifically, given the increasing rates of violence which disproportionately impact African Americans living in inner-city neighborhoods, trauma research is used to identify specific mental health consequences resultant of acts such as community violence (Horowitz, Weine & Jekel, 1995; Jipquep & Sanders-Phillips, 2003).

Specifically, research suggests that for African Americans living in an urban context, community violence can be experienced in three specific ways (Bell & Jenkins, 1991; Martinez & Richters, 1993; Shakoor & Chalmers, 1991). Violence, in the form of victimization, is seen experiencing first-hand abuse, neglect, and interpersonal terror. *Witnessing* violence occurs by observing violent acts impacting one's community members. Still, *hearing* about violence from community members, media, and other sources is another form of experiencing violence.

While such research seeks to further illuminate prevalence rates (Alim et al., 2006) and identify key behavioral, academic, and familial responses of individual African American children, adolescents, and adults exposed to community-based traumas (Horowitz et al., 1995; Jenkins, Wang & Turner, 2009; Jipquep & Sanders-Phillips, 2003; Overstreet & Braun, 2000; Thompson & Massat, 2005); there is additional research which seeks to move beyond the individualized conception of PTSD. This research posits African Americans within the context of cumulative, multigenerational trauma, or cultural trauma (Eyerman, 2001).

The individualized trauma can be juxtaposed against cultural trauma. Whereas, the onset and resulting effects of individual trauma is viewed within the domain of the sole subjective; cultural trauma is pluralized and collectively oriented. Specifically, the etiology and symptomatology of cultural trauma has recently been conceptualized as theoretical, and considered to offer explanatory capacities as it relates to groups impacted by such a trauma. Specifically, cultural trauma is distinguished by three distinct features: adverse cross-cultural group encounters, historical legacies, and multigenerational psychosocial impacts.

Cultural Trauma

To begin, cultural trauma is a painful, horrifying event as experienced by “a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion” (Eyerman, 2001, p. 2). That is, cultural trauma is a kind of group pain experienced by a subjectively defined collective who exhibit a specific way of navigating life expressed in matters of language, worldview, faith, ritual, mores, etc. (Stamm et al., 2004). In particular, cultural trauma is

the product of adverse cross-cultural relationships, defined by one group's domination, annihilation, and/or exploitation by the other group. In such relationships, the dominant group may perpetuate *traumas*, which violate the dominated groups' cultural norms and thwart their attempts at self-determination. Such traumas mirror those articulated by current clinical diagnostics and include violent exploits such as: forced migration, rape, disease, torture, beatings, killings, and lynching (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; DeGruy, 2005).

Examples of cultural trauma include both contemporary and historical occurrences. Recent examples are evident and include the 1994 genocidal attempts of the Tutsis by the Hutus in Rwanda; the 2003-2009 genocidal conflict between Arabs and non-Arabs in Dafur, Sudan; and modern-day human trafficking (trading) of women, children, and men in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East for the purposes of sexual exploitation, rape, and torture) (Asafa, 2005; Shelley, 2010; Stamm et al., 2004). Conversely, in addition to the involuntary migration and servitude of African-Americans during slavery, historically-based examples of cultural trauma include the massive genocide of Jews during the Holocaust (Rosenbloom, 1995; Solkoff, 1992) and the colonization and genocide of First Nations people (also known as American Indians) (Brave Heart, 1998; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Gagne, 1998). (Because this research investigation is focused on intergenerational historical consequences of cultural trauma, detailed discussion of Jews and First Nations people follows).

Next, cultural trauma is rooted in a uniquely historical experience with specific legacies (Eyerman, 2001; Stamm et al., 2004). An individual trauma follows a

presumably abbreviated traumatic stressor as defined in minutes, hours, or even days. Conversely, cultural trauma is defined by a unique temporal and spatial quality which is cumulative, spanning multiple generations or cohorts; defined by a specific age group or era. For example, the African American experience with slavery and its legacies spans nearly 400 years (Bennett, 1988; DeGruy, 2005; Washington, 2006); Jewish persecution by German Nazi's and its aftermath spans nearly 100 years (Duran, Duran, Brave Heart, & Horse-Davis, 1998); and the consequences of First Nations people genocide and colonization attempts span over 500 years (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). This research taken together suggests that these types of traumas, birthed in 1492, 1619, and 1933 for Native American, African Americans, and Jews respectively, are defined by historical contexts and have intergenerational, snowballing effects on descendant members of these cultural groups (Stamm et al., 2004). Beginning with the first generation impacted by the initial cross-cultural encounter, each successive generation is subjected to the previous generations interface, relationship, and management of the original trauma.

More importantly, the unique nature of cultural trauma as an “historical experience” results from systemic practices, policies, and politics perpetuated and sustained by governing authorities. For example, the Nuremberg laws of 1935 were proposed as means of German discrimination to deny Jews citizenship. Still, First Nations people were subjected to an array of collective traumas camouflaged as “assimilationist” policies advocated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (1824) (Brave Heart, 1998). This act provided for the removal of First Nations children from their families

into boarding schools where they were beaten, perished from diseases, and forbidden from expressing their cultural traditions, like language and religion (Brave Heart & DeBryn, 1998).

The final criterion of cultural trauma, and the focus of the current study, is the multigenerational mental health impacts on its descendants. Cultural groups impacted by cultural trauma may experience specific intrapsychic and interactive behaviors and thoughts which contribute to their overall well-being and the well-being of future offspring (Struthers & Lowe, 2003). For example, scholars writing about the intergenerational effects of the Jewish Holocaust describe the intergenerational transmission of *survivor syndrome or survivor guilt* – symptoms of guilt pertinent to surviving the Holocaust which may be transmitted to children and other descendants (Bergmann & Jucovy, 1990). Solkoff (1992), Felsen (1998), and Solomon (1998) each provide a critical literature review on children of Holocaust survivors to identify both resiliencies and vulnerabilities which include symptoms such as separation-individuation, anxiety, mood disorders, psychosomatic complaints, as well as, strengths such as high achievement motivation and increased empathic capacities. Additionally, Rosenbloom (1995), a clinical social worker and Holocaust survivor, talks about the importance of survivor children preserving a distinct collective remembrance focused on “maintaining and transmitting the memory of the Holocaust” (p. 573).

Similarly, First Nations’ scholars describe the cumulative and collective effects of adverse contact with exploratory Europeans, also known as the American Indian Holocaust (Duran et al., 1998; Gagne, 1998). Brave Heart (1999) attributes modern day

challenges for First Nations people such as alcohol abuse, depression, and identity-conflict with unresolved traumata resultant of European genocidal attempts. Specifically, she and colleagues describe First Nations people as having a *soul wound* or a historically-based, cumulative group pain rooted in fifteenth-century genocidal and colonizing efforts (Duran et al., 1988). Additional symptoms include *unresolved grief* and *historical trauma response* (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). The former term refers to unsettling sorrow with past relatives, rituals, and objects; while the latter includes manifestations of intrapsychic responses such as anxiety, guilt, and psychic numbing. The cumulative effects of the soul wound are implicated in First Nation people's experience with depression, substance abuse, and a "devalued self-image" (Weaver & Brave Heart, 1999) resultant of unacknowledged group anguish. However, like Jewish families impacted by the Holocaust, First Nations groups too derived group strengths such as spirituality and collectivism (Jervis & AI-SUPERPPF Team, 2009). Moreover, Weaver and Brave Heart (1999) provide empirical data which highlight the complexity of identity formation for First Nations people as a source of spiritual and behavioral strength.

While a detailed discussion of the cultural trauma of slavery is discussed in the next section, one can find parallels between it and traumas experienced by Jewish and First Nations groups. In particular, recent scholarship which attempts to highlight North American slavery as central to African American mental health examines current day African American well-being as simultaneously adaptive and vulnerable (Akbar, 1996; Boyd-Franklin, 2006; Crawford et al., 2003; DeGruy, 2005). The initial adverse cross-cultural relationship between Africans and European slave traders along the coasts of

West Africa paved the way for cumulative, multi-century long traumas which scholars suggest resulted in a myriad of responses which include anger/rage (Grier & Cobbs, 1992), mood disorders (Pouissant & Alexander, 2000), internalized oppression (Russell et al., 1992), increased religiosity (Boyd-Franklin, 2006), and collectivism (Eyerman, 2001).

In sum, cultural trauma situates a traumatic experience within a group context (Stamm et al., 2004; Struthers & Lowe, 2003; Sztompka, 2000). Whereas the psychosocial implications of individual trauma breed individual responses, cultural trauma may “directly or indirectly attack what constitutes culture” (Stamm et al., 2004). The subsequent attacks can be both strengths, which aid in group regeneration, and vulnerabilities, which may compromise overall group well-being. More importantly, cultural trauma literature reveals that such adverse cross-cultural relations, spanning multiple generations, bred a system of inequality based on the acknowledgment and maintenance of differentially based power systems known as racism which fostered a unique African American ethnic identity formation and racial socialization techniques.

It is important to note that while the aforementioned groups experienced a specific cultural trauma bound by geography and time, the broad effects of each group’s pain is far reaching as a source for cross-cultural relationships. That is, cultural trauma did not exist within a vacuum with separate upsetting events impacting a specific group during a specific time. Rather, a pluralized cultural trauma of many cultural groups birthed a legacy of oppression rooted in power differentials largely perpetuated by European males of a high socioeconomic status perpetuating a “manifest destiny” against

other groups whom they deemed inferior (Franklin, 1966). This power differential based on constructs such as race, ethnicity, religion, and class sought to systematically undermine the autonomy of the dominated group (e.g., Jewish, First Nations, African Americans). More importantly, such oppression was and is perpetuated throughout the life cycle of its victims, forcing these groups to simultaneously forge a specific identity largely rooted in an oppressed status (Freire, 2007).

Cultural Trauma and Slavery: A Historical Legacy

The African American culturally traumatic experience is couched within the historical legacy of chattel slavery. It begins with a unique trans-Atlantic cross-cultural experience, equipped with physical, emotional, and political traumas; an interplay of social and political legacies thereby promoting African American oppression and pain; and specific intergenerational psychosocial outcomes.

The Adverse Cross-Cultural Relationship

Contemporary African-Americans are the descendants of 10–15 million West Africans impacted by the *Maafa*, a Swahili term for “great disaster.” The Maafa is the 500 year period of suffering experienced by Africans throughout the diaspora as a result of contact with European imperialists, invaders, colonists, and enslavers (Bennett, 1993). These Africans were involuntarily and forcibly transported from the coasts of their fruitful homelands of countries like modern day, Ghana, Togo, and Ivory Coast; to North and South America through the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Bennett, 1993; Blassingame, 1972; Karenga, 1993). For over three centuries, from 1619 to 1808, the North American slave trade operated as an international business venture perpetuated by Europeans from

England, France, Spain, and Portugal. The primary purpose of the slave trade was to strengthen and develop the economic structure of the “New World” through agricultural industry manifested as human abuse and exploitation (Stamp, 1989).

Accordingly, for several centuries, the descendants of Africa, modern-day African-Americans, were primarily seen as commodities used as modes of production, much like cattle or horses, through legally sanctioned physically strenuous, back breaking labor, known as the “peculiar institution” of slavery (Bennett, 1988; Stamp, 1989). On Southern white-owned cotton and tobacco plantations, African-Americans lived in indefinite servitude and were called “slaves” forced to “pick” cotton and other agriculture. In addition, enslaved Africans were forced to clean, cook, birth, and nurse for white plantation owners as a means of developing both the U.S. economy and individual plantations (Berlin, Favreau, & Miller, 1998). Additionally, African Americans living in Northern states like Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New York too occupied a slave status working as carpenters and domestics (Stamp, 1989).

In exchange for their servitude, these African-Americans received a series of traumatic recompenses (Akbar, 1996; Berlin et al., 1998; DeGruy, 2005; Douglas, 1969; Douglas, 1996; Jacobs, 2001; Washington, 2006). Such remuneration included eighteen hour work days in the blazing sun; minimal food rations of fatty meat and cornbread; dilapidated, overcrowded housing; indiscriminate rape of child-bearing women and girls; vicious, skin-breaking lashings resultant of non-compliance or fatigue; and the threat of death should one assume valor and escape. Additional effects included African-American families subjected to destruction and reorganization with the “selling” of men,

women, and children to other “owners” on the public auction block (Frazier, 1966; King, 1995). Still, other effects included slaves being exploited as “subjects” in medical research experiments as best exemplified by eleven enslaved Alabama women whose vaginas were repeatedly cut and sewn by James Marion Sims to advance medical practice for white women (DeGruy, 2005; Washington, 2006).

The aforementioned traumas represented the adverse cross-cultural actions of Europeans and enslaved Africans/African Americans which were perpetuated by the actions of individual Europeans; all the while buttressed by federal and local laws, statutes, and policy. In particular, the Slave Codes of the 17th, 18th, and early 19th century gave each state power to control human property in the way of defining slaves, assigning appropriate acts of violence to slave infractions, and forbidding advancement by enacting laws which forbade slaves to read and write (DeGruy, 2006). For example a 1705 Virginia slave code defines slaves as:

All servants imported and brought into the Country...who were not Christians in ir native Country...shall be accounted and be slaves. All Negro, mulatto and Indian slaves within this dominion...shall be held to be real estate.

Similarly, a 1712 South Carolina slave code upholds violence against enslaved

Africans/African Americas and reads:

Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, that no master, mistress, overseer, or other person whatsoever, that hath the care and charge of any negro or slave, shall give their negroes and other slaves leave...to go out of their plantations....Every slave hereafter out of his master’s plantation, without a ticket, or leave in writing, from his master...shall be whipped.

To further disempower enslaved Africans by denying access to education is summed up in an 1833 Alabama slave code:

Any slave who shall write for any other slave, any pass or free-paper, upon conviction, shall receive, on his or her back, fifty lashes for the first offence, and one hundred lashes for every offence thereafter.

Across states, slave codes differed in language, but ultimately conveyed the same sentiment of dehumanizing African American freedom and liberties in the name of profits and prosperity for wealthy Europeans. African Americans were subjected to physical, political, and social traumas as a function of emergent United States policy and legislation.

Other laws, including the Fugitive Slave Act 1850 and the Three-Fifths Compromise, too sought to deny African American freedoms and humanity and added to the list of traumas (Bennett, 1993; Winbush, 2002). The former act was an extension of the Fugitive Slave law of 1793, passed by the United States Congress, for the purposes of quelling African American freedom. The 1850 act made it lawful for runaway slaves to be returned to slave owning whites. To achieve this end, enslaved African American runaways would be tracked down by authoritative officials armed with weaponry and ferocious dogs as a means of human procurement. The Three-Fifths Compromise too represented political trauma as three-fifths of enslaved African Americans would be counted for the purposes of taxation and political representation. These same enslaved African Americans, however, would be denied political enfranchisement and the right to vote.

The institution of slavery in North America lasted nearly 250 years, from 1619 to 1865. Thus, for about 13 generations, African Americans lived in a society defined by daily traumas and abuse perpetuated against the body, mind, spirit, and family. From the

first twenty Africans brought to Jamestown, Virginia, to the millions of enslaved Africans anticipating manumission on the eve of the Civil War, enslaved Africans/African-Americans were subjected to a property-like status which impacted subsequent generations (DeGruy, 2005).

Cultural Trauma Legacies

Slavery served as an historical antecedent which brought about a specific legacy of policy, practice, and patronizing which sought to maintain the hallmarks of the peculiar institution, namely African American disenfranchisement and degradation. That is, from 1865 to the present, a total of 145 years spanning approximately eight generations, a kind of *de facto* slavery existed to undermine the political, economic, and social advancement of the broader African American community. The following list identifies key periods in American history which contributed to the adverse treatment of African Americans and can be considered historical, trauma legacies (DeGruy, 2005; Washington, 2006). These historical periods in North America can be further encapsulated as cultural trauma legacies.

Black Codes of 1865-1867. The victory claimed by Northern soldiers, abolitionist, and politicians, brought about an official end to the slavery of over 4 million African Americans (Franklin, 1966). However, the practices of sub-human treatment as perpetrated by white Americans, especially those living in the South, remained unchanged. Specifically, Southern laws sought to reinstate the practices of slavery under a new appellation – *Black Codes* (Bennett, 1996). Black Codes were devised to control recently freed African Americans. The codes prevented African Americans from voting,

owning land, and participating in the court process (Bennett, 1988; DeGruy, 2005). More importantly, the Black Codes reinstated a slave-like labor force, whereby African Americans had to comply with wage designations given by white plantation owners, no matter how little the wage was. A particularly salient policy of the Black Codes stated that African Americans could be arrested for vagrancy if found not working.

Peonage System (1870's-1918). The abolishment of slavery as dictated by the thirteenth amendment brought about another system of forced labor called peonage laws (Winbush, 2002). From the 1870's until World War I (1914-1918), formerly enslaved African Americans were still providing "free" plantation labor as sharecroppers. White planters took further advantage of the adverse cross cultural relationship which denied African Americans' civil rights, liberties, and fair employment and entered into an agreement with these former slavers reminiscent of chattel slavery. Specifically, the debt peonage system allowed for a kind of de facto slavery whereby an African American family agreed to work the land in exchange for housing and food (DeGruy, 2005; Wilkerson, 2010). The white planter would provide the equipment and seeds with which to harvest the crops (e.g., tobacco, cotton, sugar, etc.). More importantly, the planter would advance the African American family a line of credit equipped with high interest rates. The family would then toil the land for one year. At the end of the year, both the planter and the African American family would "settle" the account and divide the earned profits. At the end of such settlement, however, African American families rarely earned any profit. In fact, most families were found to "owe" additional monies and thereby enter into a cycle of everlasting familial debt (Wilkerson, 2010).

Jim Crow (1896-1954). In 1896, the United States Supreme Court upheld race-based segregation with the landmark case, *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (Bennett, 1988). In 1892, Homer Plessy boarded a Louisiana train car designated for whites only. Although born a free-Black of mostly white heritage (1/8th African American and 7/8^{ths} white), he was required to sit in the car designated for African Americans. When Plessy refused to leave the white's only section, he was subsequently arrested, jailed, and tried in the Louisiana courts.

The *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision provided a sixty year apartheid system which maintained "separate but equal" public accommodations for African Americans and whites. More importantly, during this era, white intolerance of African American humanity increased with thousands of Black men, women, and children subjected to traumas reminiscent of slavery including rape, murder, and forced sterilization (Bennett, 1993; DeGruy, 2005, Washington, 2006). This era also marked the height of lynching mobs who would publicly kill (by hanging) African American men, women, and children. It is estimated that nearly 5,000 African Americans were lynched.

Involuntary sterilization (1930's to 1980's). Forced sterilization of African American women contributed to the litany of physical traumas perpetuated against the reproductive capacities in the African American community. Washington (2006) describes the range of forced sterilization for African American women as sanctioned by policy, practice, and physician discretion. For example, she documents the sterilization procedures of the North Carolina Eugenic Commission who sterilized 5,000 African American women as compared to 3,000 white women. Additionally, in the late 1950's

and 1960's, the reproductive efforts of African American women living in Mississippi were subjected to legislation as state senators pushed for Congressional sanctions against impoverished women on welfare.

Legislative sentiments such as these would help perpetuate southern hospitals affinity for "routine" procedures resulting in forced sterilization. During the 1960's and 1970's African American women such as Fannie Lou Hamer, a Southern organizer and activist, were subjected to the "Mississippi Appendectomy" – or forced hysterectomy performed by physicians void of African American women's consent (Washington, 2006).

Mandatory minimum sentences (1980's to present): The New Jim Crow. The 1980's campaign to wage a "War on Drugs" resulted in uniform sentencing practices (Alexander, 2010). In 1984, the Comprehensive Crime Control Act, Sentencing Reform Act, and the U.S. Sentencing Act collectively ushered in mandatory minimum sentences determined by law instead of judicial discretion. Whereas the courts, namely judges, could historically exercise their sentencing discretion based on a defendant's character, criminal history, propensity for reform, etc.; mandatory minimum sentences relied on federal sentencing guidelines, or standards for criminal offenses.

Other federal mandatory minimum policies followed, which included the Anti-Drug Abuse Act (1986) and the Omnibus Anti-Drug Abuse Act (1988). The former policy mandated five year minimums if convicted for the distribution of illegal drugs. This act distinguished between sentencing guidelines given for crack cocaine and powder cocaine possession, with the former yielding a greater incarceration time. The Anti-Drug

Abuse Act (1988) extended the mandatory minimums to include a five year minimum sentence for more than five grams of crack cocaine. This was particularly noteworthy as five grams of powder cocaine yielded a misdemeanor charge of fifteen days for the second offense.

Accordingly, such sentences resulted in a new form of “Jim Crow” with a disproportionate number of African American men, women, and adolescents were sentenced to prison (Alexander, 2010). According to the United States Sentencing Commission (1991), mandatory minimums led to a disproportionate number of African American sentenced to prison as compared to whites, with 67.1% and 57.1% respectively. Additionally, the implications for incarceration had ripple effects on African American families, communities, and schools as many of its members spent years in a penal institution defined by punitive as opposed to rehabilitative measures.

School resegregation (1990’s to present day). *Brown vs. Board of Education*, a 1954 federal legislation which overturned the apartheid-based *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision, ushered in ethnic/racial integration as the new standard in public education. Specifically, this federal legislation prevented public schools receiving federal dollars from barring African American children and other children of color, labeling such discrimination as unconstitutional. The implications resulted in a generation of African Americans with broader access to educational opportunities in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools.

Recently, however, the “resegregation of schools” has been introduced to American public education. In 1974, *Milliken vs. Bradley* was a Supreme Court decision

which prohibited court-ordered busing of Detroit public school children across district lines on the grounds that there was little evidence that school districts had engaged in school segregation. Similarly, *Board of Education Oklahoma City vs. Dowell, 1991* challenged the “neighborhood zoning” practices of the Oklahoma City school board which resulted in school segregation based on place of residence, whereby African Americans received fewer resources. However, the Supreme Court ruling ushered in a federal mandate which upheld the school board’s zoning practices of school segregation. The implications of both cases have resulted in other judicial decisions which support school segregation which render African American children educated in poorly resourced schools distinguished by overcrowded classrooms, outdated books, high teacher turnover, and high school “drop out” and “push out” rates (Kozol, 2005; Tatum, 2007).

Public housing demolition (2000 to present day). In 1937, the U.S Housing Act was implemented to quell the growing number of American slum neighborhoods (Hunt, 2009). The Great Depression of the 1930’s fueled its implementation as unemployed and marginally employed Americans scrambled to secure affordable, safe housing (Blank, 2000).

For African Americans, the Housing Act was particularly important as millions of families embarked upon the Great Migration. The Great Migration featured African American families moving from Southern states like Arkansas, Georgia, and Alabama impacted by Jim Crow segregationist policies, to northern cities like Chicago, New York, and Detroit, with the promise of freedom and integration (Wilkerson, 2010). Public

housing was particularly important as it offered migrant families an opportunity to live in an affordable community until they were financially ready for home ownership.

The demise of public housing began in the 1960's and peaked during the first decade of the 21st century as public housing became equated with the social ills of poverty (e.g., teen pregnancy, high school drop outs, and drug possession) (Blank, 2000; Hunt, 2009). According to Wilson (1987), 1980's public housing produced social isolation for a subset of African Americans who were primarily surrounded by others with similar poverty rates. Before the Civil Rights-era gains of the 1960's, African Americans of varying economic statuses resided in communities together allowing for varied perspectives on potential livelihood, opportunities, and outcomes. The context of economic homogeneity may have impacted both public housing residents' perceptions of and access to educational and career opportunities (Wilson, 1987).

Despite many public housing residents mobilizing to resist demolition policies, such as Chicago's 1999 Plan for Transformation, housing projects in urban American cities were subjected to demolishment (Hunt, 2009). The implications of forced demolition resulted in social disorganization as community, neighborhood, and even familial ties were severed (Chicago Central Advisory Council, 2011; Hunt, 2009). While some families benefited from voucher programs which supported their full integration into mixed-income homes (CHA, 2011), many families were forced to relocate to suburbs and even out-of-state cities without community supports to navigate new contexts (Chicago Central Advisory Council, 2011).

Unemployment (present-day). Since slavery, African Americans of all ages have participated in the United States labor market in various forms. As aforementioned, enslaved African Americans involuntarily “worked” as property, void of the protections of free labor like earnings and health insurance. The theme of labor exploitation continued into the early and middle 19th century as many African Americans assumed the employment status of sharecroppers (see previous section).

While modern-day African Americans have access to greater employment opportunities than their fore-parents, when compared to other ethnic groups they disproportionately represent the largest number of the unemployed (U.S. Census, 2010). Specifically, census data reveal that since the 1980’s, African Americans are *the* ethnic/racial group with the highest number of unemployed persons (U.S. Census, 2010). For example, 1980’s unemployment percentage rates for African Americans, whites, and Latinos (Asians are not included) are 14.3%, 6.3%, and 10.1% respectively. The 1990 data for the same groups are 11.4%, 4.8%, and 8.3%. Data for 2009 reveal unemployment percentage rates of 14.8%, 8.5%, 12.1%, and 7.3% for African Americans, whites, Latinos, and Asians respectively (U.S. Census, 2010).

Current 2011 data mirrors this trend as African Americans have the highest unemployment rate of all ethnic groups at 15.9% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). The implications of the data reveal that while African Americans have lived in this country nearly 400 years, when compared to other groups they are more likely to experience joblessness. African American unemployment can contribute to decreased financial means of supporting themselves, their families, and future generations.

The aforementioned list, though not exhaustive, briefly describes the litany of cumulative, collective traumas experienced by African Americans of post slavery's end. Such traumas impacted both the personal and political development of African Americans. The following section seeks to use theory to further illuminate the specific cultural trauma impacts on African American mental health and well-being.

Cultural Trauma Impacts on African American Mental Health

The cumulative effects of trauma stemming from the African American experience as enslaved persons and continuing into America's post-slavery era, has implications for African American mental health and well-being (Akbar, 1996; DeGruy, 2005; Grier & Cobbs, 2000; Poussaint & Alexander, 2000). This accumulation of multiple traumas manifested in the form of physical abuse, political disenfranchisement, and social oppression, resulted in a unique African American functioning, characterized by both resiliencies and vulnerabilities (Crawford et al., 2003). This dual impact mirrors that of person diagnosed with PTSD, who posses simultaneous strengths and vulnerabilities. This section seeks to describe the mental health consequences of slavery's legacy by describing the theoretical and empirical discourse pertinent to slavery's effect; discussing the ramifications of its genesis, racism; and highlighting slavery as a crucial point in African American identity formation and racial socialization.

Theories of Slavery's Impact on African Americans: An Historical Overview

Many theoretical models have been offered to provide insight into African American well-being and its relationship to the cultural trauma of slavery, a few of them having achieved dominance in the field of study. The first theories postulated a "deficit"

hypothesis, labeling slavery as the “mark of oppression” (Kardiner & Ovesey, 1951). Using psychoanalytic techniques on a sample of twenty-five African Americans from varied realms of gender, class, and age, Kardiner and Ovesey discovered several expressions of the “Negro personality.” These expressions included low levels of self-esteem and aggression. Their study proved to be in line with Frazier’s assertion that slavery produced a “broken,” matrifocal family characterized by family disintegration and male absence (Frazier, 1939, 1966). Scholarship such as this was articulated during the pre-Civil Rights era, characterized by African Americans and others committed to overturning racially segregated practices; all the while articulating a particularly pathological paradigm of African American functioning as a means of race-centered policy.

Scholarship met policy with the creation of the Moynihan policy of 1965, which characterized the legacy of slavery as the primary contributor to a “tangle of pathology” reenacted in African American families and culture (Moynihan, 1965). In addition, a particularly noted work is Grier and Cobbs’ *Black Rage* (1966), which described slavery as “the shadow of the past” resulting in African American mental health outcomes such as grief, depression, and rage. Such behaviors and intra-psychic processes are considered outcomes of “white oppression of blacks” (p. 207).

A subsequent theoretical model was introduced to dispel the pathological model advocated by Moynihan (1965) and focused on African American resilience and strengths. The most noted scholarship in this direction was written in 1976 by Herbert Gutman, who used archival data to establish the African American family as a model for

resilience and fortitude in the face of inhumane treatment experienced by enslaved African Americans. Specifically, Gutman's (1976) research of Southern plantation data suggests that African American slave identity was encapsulated in a sub-culture of adaptable familial organization and structure as a means of preserving familial ties, traditions, and legacies. Thus, according to this model, slave status produced a specific type of armor and strength which was passed down to subsequent generations of African Americans.

Later theoretical models sought to integrate both resiliencies and strengths found in the African American community (Ani, 1994; Ho, Rasheed & Rasheed, 2004; McAdoo, 1981). Such literature sought to expand the conception of African American mental health and can be considered "holistic" (Ho et al., 2004). Holistic theories incorporate both an African-American and an African-centered perspective which emphasizes: collectivity, communal bonds, work ethic, spirituality, and extended family (McAdoo, 1981; Schiele, 2005).

Finally, scholarship has resurfaced in the tradition of theories articulated by scholars of the mid-twentieth century (Frazier, 1966; Kardiner & Ovesey, 1951) which assert modern day African American mental health as a "post" slave phenomenon. Specifically, Akbar (1997), Crawford and colleagues (2003), DeGruy (2005), and Pouissant and Alexander, (2000) posit African American mental health as impacted by the cumulative effects of an adverse social, political, and psychological legacy. Akbar (1997) lists several "psychological legacies" inherited from slavery which include: conflicted attitudes against work and employment, disregard for property; problematic

feelings against African American leadership, familial and community division; colorism or in-group color discrimination, and personal feelings of inferiority. Crawford et al. (2003) describe the legacy of slavery as the “multigenerational” accumulation of stress-related illness passed from the African American family, the African American community, and the larger society which manifests as both physical and psychological impairments. DeGruy (2005) identifies three key remnants of slavery which include: “ever present” anger to blocked goals; vacant esteem or feelings of low worth and self-esteem, and racist socialization expressed in believing in the superiority of white values and standards. Further, Pouissant and Alexander (2000) identify, as a legacy of slavery, the recent increases in African American suicide caused by mood disorders such as depression, mania, and bipolar.

While each scholar highlights a range of legacies from slavery, key themes highlight the African American “post-slavery” mental health status as embedded in a racist context characterized by power differentials. According to Pouissant and Alexander (2000), “the persistent presence of racism...has created a physiological risk for black people that is virtually unknown to white Americans” (p. 15). DeGruy (2005) too asserts the maliciousness of racism as a handicap inextricably bound to African American mental health and proclaims, “black people lack the power to affect the lives of white people as a group.” More importantly, this racist context has impacted notions of individual regard, ethnic identity, and socialization specific to both intra-psychic functioning and collective group functioning in the form of “personal inferiority” or “self-hatred or low self-esteem” (Akbar, 1997, p. 14).

Thus, as African Americans interface with the legacy of slavery, the interplay of racism, ethnic identity formation, and racial socialization appear to be dominant themes which contribute to their mental health. That is, the specific ways African Americans have to contend with power, conceptions of self, and learning from caregivers and others about how to manage an ascribed status appears to be an important narrative in the African American community.

The intersection of racism, ethnic identity development, and racial socialization is also apparent for African Americans college students. Approximately 7% of African Americans or 2.5 million African Americans attend college (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). While recent statistics show that African American enrollment at institutions of higher education have increased from previous years, their nationwide college graduation rate is 43%, as compared to 63% of white students (*Journal of Blacks in Education*, 2007). Moreover, African American women are more likely to graduate from college than African American men, with rates of 47% and 36% respectively (*Journal of Blacks in Education*, 2007).

Such disproportionate college graduate rates have been attributed to many factors including: the increasing costs of education, substandard elementary and secondary preparation, and culturally insensitive curriculum and university staff (*Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2007; Tatum, 2002). Additionally, the disparity between men and women is attributed to a lack of male oriented university supports which may foster male student involvement, development, and graduation (Flowers, 2004; Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995). However, scholarship has also suggested that African American

college students, among other African American groups, are also exposed to the remnants of slavery's legacy including race-based discrimination (Barnes, 2000; Feagin & Sykes, 1994) and feelings of inferiority and self-doubt attributed to negative African American stereotypes (Steele & Anderson, 1995; Steele et al., 2002). For college enrolled young adults, instances of campus related racism have implications for positive mental health outcomes as a result of positive identity development and racial socialization (Barnes, 2000; Feagin & Sykes, 1994; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Solorzana et al., 2000; Swim et al., 2003). The following sections seek to discuss racism, ethnic identity formation, and racial socialization as it relates to African Americans broadly and African American young adults in particular.

Racism and Internalized Racism

In addition to theorizing about slavery and its legacies impacting the cumulative mental health outcomes of African Americans, additional scholarship seeks to underscore slavery as the root of racism, or “an organized system that leads to the subjugation of some human population groups relative to others” (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). According to Bennett (1993), “the institution of slavery in America was a total system of social, economic, political, and sexual exploitation based on force and violence and an ideology of racism” (p. 146). Cross too defines “the real legacy of slavery... (as) white racism” (Cross, 1998).

Racism can be considered an act of discrimination by one racial group perpetuated against another racial group. Racism can include acts of individual, cultural, and universal racism. Its features have changed throughout history, whereby racism

refers to the “recurring ways in which white people dominate black people in almost every area of this society” (Feagin & Sykes, 1994, p. 3). Such domination has changed its features throughout American history. Pre-Civil Rights era racism might include legally sanctioned individual acts of terror such as lynching. However, instances of racism as it exists today refrain less from individual violent attacks, and is manifested in resource distribution perpetuated in policies, schools, businesses, etc. (Wilson, 2010).

Recent scholarship suggests that for African Americans, racism leads to specific behavioral, psychological, and physiological outcomes (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1990; Harrell, Hall & Taliaferro, 2003; Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Utsey et al., 2000; Williams & Williams-Ruth, 2000) despite demographic variables such as income and education (Kwate, Valdimarsdottir, Guevarra, & Bovbjerg, 2003). Additional literature describes racism as a key source for individual trauma (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Miliora, 2000; Sanchez-Hucles, 1999). Still, Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000) provide a conceptual model which suggests racism leads some African Americans to feelings of “psychological invisibility,” or the process of feeling and believing in one’s worthlessness.

Specifically, scholars posit that racism often occurs as an “everyday” phenomena characterized by adverse and uncomfortable interactions with whites when navigating public places, school, places of employment, and neighborhoods (Barnes, 2000; Feagin & Sikes, 1994). Pierce (1995) defines the everyday nature of racism in terms of the daily race-based encounters reenacted by African Americans and white Americans. He labels

these daily discriminatory infractions as “micro-aggressions” or “subtle, innocuous, preconscious or unconscious degradations” (p. 281).

Scholars further conceptualize racism as a source of pervasive stress or unease (Sanders-Thompson, 2002). Clark and colleagues (1999) describe racism as a “stressor” and provide a biopsychosocial model which links an environmental stimulus (e.g., constitutional, sociodemographic, and behavioral factors) with African American perceptions of racism and stress, thereby impacting their overall coping and other health outcomes. Williams and Williams-Morris (2000) review racism literature and found that racism can affect African American mental health in three ways including socioeconomic status (e.g., low levels of mobility, resource attainment, and access); poorer psychological and physiological health outcomes; and internalization of self deprecation, including embracing negative beliefs about African Americans, or internalized racism.

Additional literatures on racism’s impact suggest that internalized racism can also contribute to African American mental health. According to Williams and Williams-Morris (2000), internalized racism “refers to the acceptance, by marginalized racial populations, of the negative societal beliefs and racially stratified society...one response of populations defined as inferior would be to accept as true the dominant society’s ideology of their inferiority” (p. 255). Watts-Jones (2002) states that African Americans could benefit from “healing” from internalized racism – or the “institutionalized emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social policy practices that assume and/or promote the cultural, biological, and socioeconomic superiority of people of European descent” (p. 592). Watts-Jones posits that African Americans identification as the descendants of

slaves has resulted in dual shame: shame of slavery and racism; and shame of feeling ashamed.

For African American young adults, both college enrolled and non-college enrolled, racism and race related stress appears to manifest in an “everyday” context perpetuated on university classrooms/campuses (Barnes, 2000; Feagin & Sykes, 1994; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Solorzana et al., 2000; Swim et al., 2003), as well as in environments like shopping malls, places of employment, and housing (Barnes, 2000; Swim et al., 2003). College students describe acts of racism and race related stress on university campuses as feelings of invisibility, feeling “drained” and exhausted, feeling as if teachers have low expectations of them, and feeling watched and secretly monitored as they interact in the classes and campus (Barnes, 2000; Feagin & Sykes, 1994; Solorzano et al., 2000). Additionally, racism experiences may lead African American young adults to psychological stress in the domains of depression, anxiety, phobia, psychotism, and obsessive-compulsive behaviors (Bynum et al., 2007).

African American Ethnic Identity Theory

Scholarship has asserted that the cultural trauma, slavery, and its accompanying legacies have impacted African American well-being (DeGruy, 2005). Additionally, scholars have asserted that slavery and its aftermath have resulted in a collective ethnic identity formation based on the specific cultural and historical experiences of African Americans as the descendants of enslaved Africans. The following section seeks to build on cultural trauma theory, all the while, describing the theoretical and empirical considerations pertinent to a collective, African American identity formation.

Historically, the term African American descends from other terms, such as Black, Negro, and Afro-American used to denote American persons of African ancestry. Such terms are often considered a racial typology which characterize members based on phenotypical features and ascribed status. While the term African American is still used to signify a racial group (e.g., the United States census), scholars dispute the merits of race as a tangible category; all the while classifying it as a social construction with social and political origins (Winant, 2000). According to Tatum (2007), “racial distinctions are...socially meaningful, but not biologically valid” (p. xiv). Thus, for the purposes of this study, African American will be considered an ethnicity. However, the term race is used when scholars apply the word to a particular theory or construct.

Accordingly, African American identity can be considered an ethnic identity or a specific group characteristic incorporative of both ethnicity and identity. Ethnic or ethnicity may be interchanged with race; however, the latter is often associated with biological or phenotypical traits assumed to be specific to a group (e.g., hair texture, facial features, skin tone, etc.), while the former may refer to a group’s cultural norms, behaviors, language, and mores. On the other hand, identity is a personal construct and refers to a person’s overall sense of self.

Combined together, ethnic identity refers to a person’s relationship and regard for his/her ethnic group (Allen, 2001; Phinney, 1992). In a seminal review article of ethnic identification for adolescents and adults of varying ethnic/racial groups, Phinney (1990) describes three core dimensions of ethnic identity: *self-identification*, *sense of belonging*, and *attitudes toward one’s group*. Self-identification refers to the ethnic label one

confers to oneself. It is the subjective descriptor which defines for a person a specific ethnicity. Conversely, a sense of belonging refers to the bonds and attachment one may feel toward one's ethnic group. Attitudes refer to a person's feelings and beliefs (negative or positive) toward one's ethnic group. The dimensions, however, are not necessarily intertwined. For example, a person who may self-identify with a specific group may concomitantly demonstrate feelings of isolation and contempt toward the group. Thus, an individual with a positive ethnic identity is most likely to self-identify with a specific ethnic group, feel a sense of ethnic belonging to that group, and have pride and pleasure in the group.

For the African American community, such ethnic identification has been conceptualized and thus situated on a continuum comprised of "African" identity on one end and "African American" or "Black" identity on the other end (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001; Ani, 1994; Sellers et al., 1998). For the former, African-American identity is an outgrowth of an African-centered thesis which places traditional African cosmology and culture as central to the identity formation of its progeny – African Americans. Accordingly, African-centered theorists posit an African American identity comprised of qualities such as collectivism, self-determination, cooperation, and spirituality (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001; Schiele, 2000). There is an emphasis on a worldview which encapsulates traditional African thought and identity as a matter of "we," instead of an individualized "I."

Historically, African American identity was often posited as a construct which places a "Black" identity in relationship to racial oppression and stratification specific to

North America; stemming from the African-American-white; or slave-free paradigm. Accordingly, the empirical investigation and conceptualization of ethnic identity for African-Americans began during the Jim-Crow era characterized by legalized race-based separation (Bennett, 1993). African-American social psychologists, Clark and Clark (1947, 1950) used “doll tests” to explore the impacts of legalized racism and discrimination on the ethnic identity formation of young African-American children. The study’s results highlighted the psychological maladjustment of African-American children throughout the U.S. as they consistently preferred white dolls over Black dolls; characterizing the Black dolls as “bad” and “mean,” all the while opting to play with the white dolls. The study’s results lead to a national campaign against segregation which resulted in 1954’s *Brown V. Board of Education* which outlawed school segregation.

The legislative, political, and social gains of the Civil Rights Movement eventually sparked a “Black conscious” movement characterized by an African American collective psyche and behaviors devoted to group empowerment and responsibility (Karenga, 1993). During this time, Cross (1971) developed the Nigrescence model of African American identity formation. This “Negro to Black” or “becoming Black” ethnic identity model describes African-American adult ethnic identity in five stages. The first stage, *pre-encounter*, is characterized by individuals who may never think about or actively explore their ethnic membership. *Encounter* is characterized by an individuals’ traumatic or distressful experience with racial/ethnic oppression and/or discrimination that may transform their worldview about racial/ethnic relationships. Individuals in the next transitional stage, *immersion-emersion*, adopt a “pro-Black” stance and actively

immerse themselves in and explore historical, social, and political components of African-American culture. *Internalization* is characterized by individuals who have an inner security about being African-American without succumbing to idealized, romanticized notions of African-American-ness. The last stage, *internalization-commitment*, is characterized by an active commitment to liberate from oppression and racism African-Americans specifically, and all Americans in general.

The Nigrescence model provided a nascent conceptual and theoretical framework with which future African American identity scholarship could emerge. Specifically, the model yielded Parham and Helms (1981) to operationalize African American identity and develop the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS) as a psychometric tool used to quantify racial identity attitudes. However, Ponterotto and Wise (1987) found the RIAS to have both low construct validity and reliability. Thus, Helms (1995) further operationalized African American racial identity constructs and created four domains of African American racial identity development which include: *conformity* (adopting values and standards deemed characteristic of the white, dominant group), *dissonance* (confusion about being African American with regard to both self and group identity), *resistance* (over identification with being African American), and *internalization* (simultaneously valuing an African American identity and appreciating and working with other ethnic groups).

Additionally, scholarship emerged to include an expansive conception of the original Nigrescence model (Cross, 1987; Cross, 1991; Cross, 1995; Vandiver, 2001). The revised model includes new conceptions of specific stages, most notably the pre-

encounter and internalization stages. For the former, *race salience*, or the importance of race in an individual's life is included. This stage is also revised with the inclusion of the sub stages, *pre-encounter assimilation* (adopting a mainstream, white identity), *pre-encounter anti-Black* (adopting a pro-white identity), and *pre-encounter miseducation* (adopting and internalizing negative evaluations of African American identity (Vandiver, 2001).

For the internalization stage, Cross (1991) identified three separate identities including *Black nationalist*, *biculturalist*, and *multiculturalist*. Each of these identities is distinguished by the number of other salient identities acknowledged in addition to the African American identity. Accordingly, for the African American who assumes a Black nationalist identity, being "Black," is the primary identity. The African American biculturalist adopts a dual identity of both African American and American. Still, multiculturalist African Americans adopt multiple salient identities including racial/ethnic background, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

Building on Cross's model, Sellers and colleagues (1998) sought to broaden conceptions of African American identity and advocated for a Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI). The MMRI describes four dimensions of racial identity including: *racial salience*, *racial centrality*, *racial regard*, and *racial ideology*. The first two constructs refer to the significance race holds for individuals; while the latter two constructs refer to subjective meaning-making experiences of being African American. Furthermore, the MMRI describes four racial ideologies which include: *nationalist*, or beliefs about the cultural and historical "uniqueness" of being African American;

oppressed, or thoughts about acknowledging the shared experiences with other oppressed and marginalized groups; *assimilationist*, or perceptions about how to work within the dominant American society; and *humanist*, or beliefs about the shared experiences which exist between all humans regardless of socially constructed differences.

Research also suggests African American identity formation may impact youth, adolescent and adult psychosocial outcomes (McMahon & Watts, 2002; Phinney et al., 1997; Swenson & Prelow, 2005; Thomas, Bardwell, Ancoli-Israel, & Dimsdale, 2006). For example, research building on Cross's model of racial identity found for African American adolescents, that individuals in the pre-encounter and encounter stages of African American identity formation were more likely to experience psychopathology and depressive symptomatology (Carter, 1991; Pyant & Yanico, 1991). As such, adolescents who exhibited higher stages of identity as proposed by the Nigrescence model, were more likely to display healthier manifestations of mental health. Still, Johnson and Arbona (2006) discovered that African American college adults at higher levels of racial identity formation as proposed by Cross are positively associated with race related stress.

For African American "older" adolescents or young adults, studies have also shown the benefits of a positive African American identity formation (Pope, 2000; Walker, Obasi, Wingate, & Joiner, 2008). While much of the research is tested on college students, ethnic identity has been shown to have "protective" effects for African American young adults in matters of substance abuse, mental health, and academic adjustment (Pope, 2000; Pugh & Bry, 2007; Walker et al., 2008). Walker et al. sampled

452 college students of varied ethnic racial backgrounds and found that for the 163 African Americans interviewed, ethnic identification moderated depression-suicide ideation. Pugh and Bry (2007) sampled 167 African American college students and found students with a higher level of ethnic identity (e.g., ethnic salience and regard) were less likely to consume beer, hard liquor, wine, and marijuana.

Additional studies largely reveal that for African American college students, earlier statuses of racial identity are negatively related to mental health (Cokley, 2002; Nghe & Mahalik, 2001; Parham & Helms, 1985; Pillay, 2005; Pope, 2000). Parham and Helms (1985) found that pre-encounter attitudes of African American collegiates on predominantly white universities were related to feelings of inferiority, anxiety and hypersensitivity. Pre-encounter stages were related to higher levels of depression (Munford, 1994; Pyant & Yanico, 1991), poor self of esteem (Carter, 1991; Pyant & Yanico, 1991), and internalized racism (Cokley, 2002). Additionally, Nghe and Mahalik (2001) used the RIAS on a sample of 80 African American college students and discovered that racial attitudes, as articulated in Cross's model, predicted the level of maturity of psychological defenses. That is, students in the pre-encounter and encounter phases were found to develop "immature" and "neurotic" defenses.

African American college students in the encounter stage have been found to have self-acceptance and low anxiety levels (Parham & Helms, 1985). However, subsequent research has shown that the encounter stage is related to higher levels of depression (Munford, 1994; Pyant & Yanico, 1991) and lower degrees of self-esteem, well-being, and self-concept (Pyant & Yanico, 1991).

Still, research has shown that African Americans in the immersion-emersion stage have negative mental health outcomes such as low self-concept, depression, and adverse problem solving skills (Munford, 1994; Nghe & Mahalik, 2001; Parham & Helms, 1985; Pillay, 2005; Whittaker & Neville, 2010). Cokley (2002) tested Cross's revised model in a sample of 153 African American students enrolled at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and discovered that the immersion-emersion stage would predict internalized *racialism*, or the identification with any negative or positive group stereotype. However, Pyant and Yanico (1991) report that African Americans enrolled at HBCU's appear to score higher than compared to African Americans studying on predominantly white campuses.

Most research findings suggest that the internalization stage correlates with healthy psychological functioning, such as positive self-esteem, positive self-concept, and low depression levels (Munford, 1994; Pyant & Yanico, 1991). Some studies also suggest that college students who demonstrate racial/ethnic pride have lower levels of stressors pertinent to their culture of origin and ethnic membership (Neville et al., 1997). However, other studies found no relationship between individuals in the internalization stage and healthy mental health outcomes (Pyant & Yanico, 1991).

Racial Socialization Perspective

Whereas the aforementioned literatures describe the mental health and social benefits of an ethnically-based identity, there is also a subset of ethnic/racial identity literature which seeks to identify the key processes of achieving racial identity as a potential buffer to support positive mental health and well-being. This literature, known

as *racial socialization theory*, seeks to understand how African Americans, specifically children and adolescents, are taught both processes and meanings of group membership relevant to informing a positive African American identity (Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Phinney & Rotherman, 1987; Stevenson, 1994; Stevenson et al., 2004).

According to Boyd-Franklin (2003), racial socialization is typically a child-parent process that is purposive in instilling both “ethnic pride” with regard to African American customs, history, and heritage. Racial socialization also refers to the ways parents and other caregivers prepare youth to manage racism and acts of discrimination they may encounter (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). Hughes and colleagues (2006) describe socialization as predicated on parents teaching children about the history of their cultural group. Still, Thompson (1994) describes racial socialization as an interactive process of reinforcement, modeling, and identity with an emphasis on cultural, physical, sociopolitical, and psychological parameters.

In a review article, Hughes et al. (2006) summarized empirical findings, which suggest that parents of color are more likely to socialize or teach children about their ethnic heritage, traditions, and ethnic pride through vehicles such as celebrations, fine arts, and oral traditions. Additionally, African-American parents are especially likely to prepare their children for ethnic bias. That is, African-American parents are more likely to prepare their children to cope with and manage incidences of racism and discrimination as a means for supporting positive well-being.

Furthermore, empirical data supports both the importance and intricacy of African American racial socialization for both adolescents and adults (Hughes et al., 2006;

Neblett et al., 2006; Stevenson, 1994). For example, Stevenson developed the Scale of Racial Socialization for African American Adolescents (SORS-A) which seeks to identify factors and domains of racial socialization relevant to African American adolescents. Results of the study showed that *spiritual and religious coping* (the way parents teach their children about God and methods of spiritual worship), *extended family care* (the way parents integrate other blood relatives and fictive kin into child rearing), *cultural pride reinforcement* (the way parents teach their children about African American culture and history), and *racism awareness teaching* (the way parents teach their children how to interact in a larger society with members who may discriminate against them because of their African American membership) were key socialization factors. Stevenson and colleagues (1996) follow-up study of 229 adolescents demonstrated that their perception on the impact of racial socialization (in matters of spiritual and religious coping, extended family, and cultural pride reinforcement) provided a protective dimension related to family and kinship support. Results also showed a non-significant relationship between racism awareness and kinship support. Still, Scott's (2003) study of adolescent students revealed that parental socialization messages were related to the use of coping strategies for daily life stressors.

Research also examines racial socialization and African American adults.

Thompson's (1994) survey of African American adults demonstrated the complexities of racial socialization messages from adult family members. Borrowing from Bowman and Howard's (1985) model which posits four themes: racial identity, self development orientation, racial barrier orientations, and egalitarian view; Thompson (1994) found that

79% of African Americans discussed issues of race with their parents, and 85% discussed issues of race with another family member. The implications of this study suggest that racial socialization is communicated via multiple family members.

Socialization, however, is not confined to parents and other family members. Rather, children, adolescents, and young adult college students exist in an ecological context of multiple systems spending much of their day socialized by adults in other institutions including church, school, and extracurricular activities. Bennett (2006) has shown that neighborhood effects have impacts on ethnic identity and socialization. In particular, social service programs aimed at impacting the emotional, psychological, and social behaviors of youth often have a great capacity to socialize adolescents. Bennett found that in a sample of inner city African American adolescents, “urban hassles,” or ecological stressors, can be mediated by racial socialization.

Research also suggests that racial socialization may have implications for African American adults’ psychological health and overall well-being and adjustment (Brown, 2008; Coard & Sellers, 2005; Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Hughes et al., 2009; Stevenson et al., 2002). Additionally, for college enrolled adults, racial socialization contributes to positive outcomes such as self-esteem, academic achievement, and cognitive development (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Hughes et al., 2006; Hughes et al., 2009; Neblett et al., 2006). Furthermore, Fisher and Shaw (1999) found that racial socialization weakened the link between racist experiences and poor mental health. As it relates to racism and ethnic bias awareness and preparation, results of African American racial socialization are mixed (Coard & Sellers, 2005; Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Hughes et al., 2006). That is,

some African Americans who have been explicitly taught by parents to identify instances of race-based discrimination are prepared to manage such encounters. However, other African Americans who have been exposed to similar socialization in African American bias are less likely to be informed about how to respond to and manage racism.

Summary

In sum, the aforementioned literature review provides key historical, conceptual, and empirical work relative to exploring and applying the cultural trauma lens with African American young adults. Although originating in North America nearly 400 years ago, the cultural trauma, slavery, can be thought to birth a legacy of racism. Instances of racism experienced both individually and collectively may leave many African American young adults and others to develop feelings of stress and/or internalize or believe in a devalued or debased sense of self. The integration of racism's impacts may establish a backdrop for African American identity or the many ways African American view themselves and make-meaning of a collective African American community. African American identity awareness shapes the way its members teach and transmit messages to children and others on the best way to manage this reality of "double-consciousness," or being simultaneously American and African-American (Dubois, 1994).

Accordingly, research consistently supports that progeny of enslaved Africans – African Americans young adults – still live in a society (both on and off college campuses) where racism is abound (Feagin et al., 1996; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). The stress of racism leads some African American young adults to experience poor mental health (Bynum et al., 2007). Additionally,

racism can trigger African American identity exploration with studies suggesting a positive correlation between African American identity development and positive psychosocial functioning with regard to self-concept and decrease in risky behaviors (e.g., drug/alcohol consumption) (Carter, 1991, Pugh & Bry, 2007). Though living in a more racially tolerant country void of de jure discrimination and racism as legally sanctioned by courts, African American young adults continue to learn from elder members about both what it means to be African American and ways to manage this ascribed ethnic status (Hughes et al., 2006).

Hence, this study will explore African American young adults' experience with cultural trauma legacies. To achieve this aim, the study investigation will explore the aforesaid concepts and theories inclusive of young adult racism experiences, racial socialization processes, and ethnic identity formation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The previous introductory and literature review chapters sought to integrate the importance of exploring cultural trauma as a theoretical construct applicable to understanding African American young adults' psychosocial functioning and well-being. Accordingly, this study seeks to explore African American young adults experience with cultural trauma by posing the research following questions:

- 1) How do African American young adults interpret the cultural trauma, slavery, and its legacies as impacting their current psychosocial functioning? How does this vary by educational status?
- 2) How do African American young adults experience racism? How does this vary by educational status?
- 3) How are African American young adults socialized about the history of slavery and its legacies as a means for establishing an African American identity? How does this vary by educational status?
- 4) How do African Americans define and interpret an African American identity? How does this vary by educational status?

Study Variables

The four major variables for this study can be summarized as follows: (1) ethnic identity, (2) racism, (3) racial socialization, and (4) cultural trauma legacies. The following identifies both the conceptual and operational definitions pertinent to the variables.

Ethnic Identity

Conceptual Definition: The conceptual definition for this study will use Phinney's (1990) which describe three aspects of ethnic identity: self-identification, belonging, and attachment one has toward one's ethnic group. In addition, ethnic identity reflects a person's relationship to and regard for his/her ethnic group (Allen, 2001; Phinney, 1992).

Operational Definition: A person who self identifies as African American, is of African American descent and raised in the United States and can trace their ancestry from enslaved African Americans as passed through oral traditions from parents, grandparents, and other kin regarding African American experiences such as slavery, sharecropping, and the Great Migration. With regard to ethnic identity formation, the operational definition will use themes from Cross's Nigrescence Model (1990) which identifies multiple

“stages” of Black identity based on encounters with non-African American members.

Racism

Conceptual Definition: A discriminatory act displayed in both the public and private sector usually perpetrated by members of a dominant group to members of an ethnic minority group which may leave the ethnic minority group with feelings of diminished self-worth, alienation, discomfort, stress, and self-doubt.

Operational Definition: A discriminatory act displayed in both the public and private sector usually by white Americans which leave African Americans with feelings of diminished self-worth, alienation, discomfort, stress, and self-doubt.

Racial Socialization

Conceptual Definition: The process of teaching, learning, observing from institutions like family, religion, and education what it means to be part of an ethnic group.

Operational Definition: The messages, beliefs, and instructions given by African American family members and other African American institutions about pride, heritage, and racism management.

Cultural Trauma Legacies

Conceptual Definition: Enduring patterns of cross-cultural individual and institutional relationships which result in multigenerational inheritance of laws, policies, and individual actions resultant of an historical adverse cross-cultural experience.

Operational Definition: For African Americans, enduring patterns of traumatic legacies resultant of the cultural trauma, slavery. Legacies include “traumas” such as *Jim Crow*, *Sterilization*, and *Sentencing Disparity*. Legacies also include strengths such as collective resilience, collectivity, and resourcefulness.

Educational Status

Conceptual Definition: The specific credentials and/or years of formal education acquired by participants.

Operational Definition: African American young adults’ status as either a college enrolled or GED enrolled student.

Case Study Method

Both the research question and study variables engender a case study investigation. To actively engage in this exploratory investigation of “how” and “why” questions, the case study research method is employed (Yin, 2009). The case study method can be considered a thorough examination of a single unit of study. Such units include individuals, family, groups, organizations, and community (Gilgun, 1994; Rubin

& Babbie, 2008; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). According to Gilgun (1994), case study methodology seeks to “understand dynamics present within single settings” (p. 534). Cases are often seen as contextualized in research participant’s authentic context like a social service agency or college/university.

Case study research is further distinguished by its emphasis on in-depth exploration and data triangulation. Case study research typically refrains from the guidelines of sampling research (Stake, 1995). Instead, case studies provide an in-depth research experience characterized by deep exploration and understanding of a particular “case” within its real-life context (Yin, 2009). To achieve such an end case study is predicated on the usage of *triangulation* or the use of multiple forms of evidence to provide multiple measures of a study’s key concepts (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Data triangulation methods include interviews, focus groups, surveys, documentation, archival records, and direct observation (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

Additionally, case study research design can include single-case designs and multiple case-designs (Yin, 2009). The former seeks to describe and explore the inner workings of one case which consists of one person, one group, or one organization. Conversely, multiple case study research describes many persons, many groups, or many organizations (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

Case study method may also incorporate multiple case designs. Multiple case study designs often lend themselves to theoretical rigor as evidence and findings are produced from many cases as opposes to a single case. Stake (1995) labels such designs

as *collective case study*, or the study of several cases within a research study. Yin (2009) describes these multiple cases within a single study as *multiple case designs*.

This case study employs qualitative methods. Unlike quantitative methods which privilege statistical procedures, qualitative case study research seeks to gain in-depth understanding of the human condition of experience, meaning, and context. The qualitative case study method is appropriate as the investigation seek to explore young adults' perceptions of cultural trauma legacies, ethnic identity formation, racism experiences, and racial socialization.

Case Study Design

Case study design begins by identifying the unit of analysis, or the major entity to be studied in a research investigation. Yin (2009) describes the unit of analysis as each individual case. Analysis units (or cases) can include individuals, organizations, processes, concepts, etc. For the purposes of this study, concepts and phenomena specific to exploring cultural trauma (cultural trauma perceptions, racism experiences, racial socialization, and ethnic identity development) are thus the units of analysis or individual "case."

Accordingly, this research project employs an exploratory-descriptive, embedded, multiple case study design (Yin, 2009). The exploratory nature of the design will facilitate the exploration of young adult participants' perceptions of themes pertinent to cultural trauma theory. The study is embedded, as the context of the investigation is conducted at two sites (one college and one workforce development site). In addition, the investigation is embedded as older African Americans recruited as key informant

stakeholders knowledgeable about African American young adult development also comprise a small sector of the analysis unit. Still, a multiple-case design is applied as the study contains more than a single case: N=33 (N=26 young adults and N=7 key informants). A multiple case study is used as it relies on replication logic, similar to conducting an investigation with multiple experiments (Yin, 2009). Replication logic contrasts sampling logic as it builds the sample, case by case, by confirming or disconfirming expected findings based on knowledge gleaned from prior cases (Yin, 2009). These varied units of analysis support the richness and rigor of the project and offer an extensive analysis which highlights multiple beliefs about slave legacies, ethnic identity formation, and racism experiences.

Data Collection: Techniques and Procedures

Yin suggests three principles specific to case study research: (1) multiple sources of evidence; (2) creation of a case database; and (3) maintain a chain of evidence.

Multiple sources of evidence. This study incorporates multiple sources of evidence which converge on the same set of findings to achieve data triangulation. Accordingly, each of the data sources is analyzed concurrently so findings are based on the convergence of information from the varied data sources (Yin, 2009). The multiple sources of evidence for this research investigation include open-ended young adult individual interviews; open-ended, young adult focus group interviews; and open-ended key informant interviews. The open-ended individual interview can be likened to a conversation between the researcher and participant where participant opinion is valued and subsequently used for future inquiry. Open-ended individual and focus group

interview questions are posed to encourage rich and meaningful responses from the participants' subjective experiences (Creswell, 1994). For both individual and focus-group interviews, three instruments (see Appendices H, I, and J) are developed from the theoretical and conceptual frameworks identified in the literature, as well as, theoretical propositions identified in the research study (see Appendix A). Open-ended interviews are focused on themes related to cultural trauma, African American identity formation, perceptions of racism, and racial socialization sources/factors.

In addition, focus group interviews are included in the multiple sources of evidence. Focus groups are a qualitative research technique which allows a researcher to gather information from a small group of people with specific knowledge or insight (Greenbaum, 1987; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Warner & Karner, 2010). Focus groups are interviews with one or two interviewers posing questions and discussion topics to a small group of participants with similar characteristics and/or shared experience (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Warner & Karner, 2010). Krueger and Casey (2000) identify focus groups as "people who possess certain characteristics and provide qualitative data in a focused discussion to help understand the topic of interest" (p. 10).

This study employs two focus groups for African American young adults, college enrolled and GED enrolled, respectively. One focus group is comprised of college enrolled young adults, while the other focus group contains GED enrolled young adults. Having both college enrolled and GED enrolled participants in two separate groups generates unique discussions which offer key insights about this study's core concepts. Specifically, focus group discussions explore with participants the beliefs and

experiences African American young adults may have pertinent to identity formation, perceptions and experiences with racism, and relevant information about racial socialization. Additionally, the focus groups provide this researcher an opportunity to observe the collective interaction and discussion of African American young adults as they provide first-hand interpretation of the study's concepts (Solorzano et al., 2000).

In addition to young adults, key informants are also included as an evidence source. Key informants are "expert" sources who are specialized and knowledgeable about a particular community and/or subject area (Marshall, 1996; Tremblay, 1957). Key informants are able to make comparisons, offer opinions, and provide "facts" relevant to the research questions (Tremblay, 1957). Specifically, Tremblay describes an ideal key informant as: having a formal *role in the community* of observation, possessing *knowledge* about the research participants, demonstrating *willingness* to engage in communication with a researcher about the particular group; possessing *communicability*, and displaying *impartiality*, or limited personal bias.

Hence, key informants are recruited from African American religious institutions, higher education, and social services. These industries are chosen as they have historically birthed African American experts and leaders relevant to the study's key concepts. Church and clergy often provide African Americans with specific programs, texts, and social movements critical to supporting their ethnic identity (Taylor et al., 2000). Notable examples are found in the activities of Southern churches during the Civil Rights Movement. Higher education for African Americans often provides socialization contexts which support and affirm their positive development through

culturally relevant curriculum, campus activities, and caring university staff (Seifert, Drummond & Pascarella, 2006). Still, community-based social services have been at the forefront of providing programs and resources to enhance the workforce skills of African American young adults.

Creation of a database. The second principle of case study research is creating a study database. This involves a systematic process of organizing and documenting the data generated from the multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2009). That database is comprehensive and includes case study field notes from both the young adult participant and the key informants; as well as interview transcriptions. For this study, the case study database is organized by themes to aid in the retrieval of information.

Maintain a chain of evidence. The third principle of case study research entails maintaining a chain of evidence or a systematic process of action sequences from the study's beginning to its end (Yin, 2009). A chain of evidence is maintained by specific protocols and information reported including interviews and the contexts of the interviews, including time and place of the interview. This process allows an external reader to follow the process from question posing to case study conclusions (Yin, 2009).

Sampling Plan

The sampling plan used for this research investigation is a purposive, non-probability sample. The logic behind using this plan is that cases are selected based on the assumption they represent the sample population needed to achieve a specific research goal or plan (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Padgett, 2008). Non-probability samples are least likely to ensure external validity or generalizability of findings to similar

populations outside the study (Anastas, 1999). However, this sampling technique fits best with this study as the researcher attempts to achieve theoretical generalization pertinent to cultural trauma and not statistical generalization.

Accordingly, the research sample consists of 14 college enrolled African American students and 12 GED enrolled African American students. Of the 14 college enrolled participants, nine are interviewed individually and five in a focus group. For GED enrolled students, ten are interviewed individually and two in a focus group. In addition, seven key informant stakeholders are sampled and interviewed individually for a total of 33 research participants. Qualitative sample sizes should strive for data saturation which is exemplified with the non-emergence of new themes and ideas generated from participants in the sample (Marshall, 1996; Mason, 2010). While data saturation may be difficult to conceptually define (Mason, 2010), literature suggests that qualitative data saturation is often achieved with a sample size of at least 15 (Bertaux, 1981). The sample number for this research project (N=33) is consistent with best practices for qualitative sampling techniques when trying to identify participant perceptions.

Accordingly, this research employs a purposive “maximum heterogeneity sample” (Padgett, 2008). This type of purposive sampling seeks to achieve representativeness of a study’s population by purposefully studying sample extremes. This type of purposive sampling captures diversity across a sample population (Padgett, 2008). More importantly, this sampling technique helps aid in understanding cultural trauma phenomena on sample extremes of African American young adults – both college

enrolled and GED enrolled – to achieve representativeness to the larger African American young adult population. Sampling criterion for all young adult participants include race, sex, and age. For college enrolled young adults sample criterion also includes undergraduate year and academic major.

In addition, students who identify with the African American descriptor are sampled. African Americans are defined as only those persons who have at least one parental ancestor brought to North America as a chattel slave (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). For example, a student born of a Haitian mother and father are not eligible participants. However, a student born of a Haitian mother and an African-American father whose grandmother was born and reared in Mississippi are included in the sample. Such an identity is confirmed by student knowledge of familial experiences, such as the Great Migration of African Americans immigrating from the South to the North (Wilkerson, 2010); Jim Crow segregation (Burrell, 2010; Leary, 2005); and ancestor experience with slavery and its legacies (e.g., Civil Rights movement of the 1960's) via intergenerational communication (Wilkerson, 2010). To further assess an African American identity, the researcher poses the following questions during participant recruitment: (1) *“Do you identify with being African-American?”* and (2) *“Were your grandparents on either your mother or father’s side born in America?”*

For college-enrolled African American young adults, both male and female students are sampled. As mentioned in the previous chapter, African American women are more likely to graduate from college than African American men, with rates of 47% and 36% respectively (*Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2007). Additionally,

studies have shown that African American males are oftentimes in need of additional organizational support to improve graduation rates (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Sampling both men and women college-enrolled young adults offers additional insights into gender-based experiences with racism, identity formation, and socialization.

Next, young adults ages 18 to 22 are sampled. Erickson describes this age range as experiencing two specific psychosocial crises – “identity vs. role confusion” and “intimacy vs. isolation” (Erickson, 1968). For the first stage, themes related to self-reflection and self-image have begun to be explored by those ages 18 and 19. Conversely, themes related to social and intimate relationships are explored in the latter stage for young adults ages 20 and older. Also, Arnett (1998, 2000) defines this age group as *emergent adults* developmentally prepared to engage in exploration of “worldviews” which may differ from those of childhood and adolescence. Accordingly, such reflections allow participants additional insights into the subjective experiences about the legacy of slavery, racism experiences, African American socialization, and ethnic identity formation.

Also, the sample includes both college enrolled African American young adults and non-college enrolled African American young adults enrolled in a GED program. The former group includes students in diverse academic majors, enrolled in their first, second, third, and fourth year of college. Additionally, students of multiple academic majors and academic disciplines (e.g., natural science, social science, arts, etc.) are also represented to account for the diversity of academic and social life which may impact African American outlook on the key variables of the study (*Journal of Blacks in Higher*

Education, 2007). GED enrolled young adult participants include those both employed and unemployed in the labor market. As aforementioned, nearly half of African American young adults are unemployed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Thus, a “non-college” enrolled young adult will contribute a unique voice to the study’s research questions. More importantly, over 60 percent of general education diploma (GED) test takers are between ages 16 and 24; with African Americans (of all ages) becoming the second largest racial group of overall test takers (GED, 2012).

Last, seven African American key informants are sampled using a snowball sampling method where participants recruit potential participants from their professional networks (Padgett, 2008). Such informants include community members who work to support the educational or workforce development of African American young adults. As the key informants are recruited to offer a unique generational perspective pertinent to exploring the cultural trauma proposition, only those over age 40 are recruited as participants. This age was chosen as it highlights the perspectives of older African Americans whose notions of identity, racism experiences, and socialization factors may be different from modern-day African American adults. Recruiting older African Americans as participants serve to build on the intergenerational theme of the cultural trauma theoretical proposition.

Data Collection

For this study there are two stages of data collection: (1) planning and designing the methods and (2) data collection. The first stage includes the development of the data collection protocol inclusive of composing recruitment letters, recruiting participants, and

developing pre-interview procedures. The second stage involves conducting the individual, group, and key informant interviews; triangulating the multiple sources of data, analytic memoing, and member checks to ensure validity.

Stage One

As the focus of the study is on exploring African American young adults ages 18 to 22, the researcher had to identify contexts in which this population is found. Relying on the literature and professional experience, the researcher both telephoned and visited several organizations supportive of young adult development to gauge their interest in being part of the study. The organizations included colleges, churches, and community-based agencies which focused on supporting healthy young adult outcomes. The final organizations selected as sites for the research investigation included Chicago State University (CSU) and the Center for Higher Development (COHD) (both described in the next section), for college enrolled and GED enrolled participants, respectively.

Step 1: Cooperative letter with prospective organizations. As the researcher was applying for approval from her Institutional Review Board (IRB), an introductory phone call and follow-up letter was sent to Chicago State University and the Center for Higher Development to describe both the details of the study. CSU is a Chicago-land area university with African Americans comprising 82% of the student population (www.csu.edu). This university is chosen because it is comprised of “traditional” young adult students ages 18 to 23. Both the racial-ethnic and age composition allows for greater access to a broader sample of African American young adults.

In addition, telephone and written communication about the details of the research investigation were given to the Center for Higher Development (COHD). COHD is a Chicago-based, workforce development center geared toward supporting GED enrolled students' acquire the necessary math, reading, and science skills needed to pass the culminating examination. This site was chosen as African American young adults who forego college often seek skills by acquiring a general education diploma (GED) and/or enrolling in Workforce Investment Act programs.

After preliminary introductions each institution authorized consent by supplying the researcher with a formal letter (COHD) and/or granting IRB approval (CSU). During this process each organization reviewed, commented, and approved the researcher's recruitment flyer which identified the study details (see Appendices J and K). Upon approval from the student researcher's IRB, recruitment efforts were implemented.

Step 2: Recruitment. This research project recruited a total of 33 participants, inclusive of 26 African American young adult participants composed of both college enrolled (N=14) and GED enrolled (N=12) young adults. Additionally, seven key informant stakeholders from colleges, social service agencies, and churches were also recruited.

To gain access to college-enrolled young adults, this researcher began recruitment efforts during the Spring 2012 semester (beginning in April). Recruitment for participation utilized multiple strategies which appealed to African American campus life of classes and organizations (Allen, 1992; Feagin et al., 1996; Patton, 2007). First, the researcher recruited student participants by setting up a table at the school's student union

building which advertised the study (both individual interview and focus group interview opportunities) and accompanying consent forms. Next, signage was posted on university approved campus walls (e.g., classrooms, student union, professor offices) which advertised the specifics of the study. To ensure greater access to the study opportunity, the researcher circulated throughout the various academic departments and presented the study opportunity to university classes of varying disciplines including Social Science, Natural Science, Computer Science, Art, and History.

In both the student union and in each academic class, a contact list was either distributed and/or circulated the room. Interested and eligible students wrote their names and phone numbers on the list. The researcher then followed up by calling potential applicants about study participation. During the phone call, each student is provided with information about the study, inclusion/exclusion criteria, voluntary consent process, level of risk for study participation, and study incentives. If the student appeared to both meet the study requirement and was interested, both he/she, and the researcher agreed on a time an individual interview could be held in a classroom at CSU. If the student was interested in participating in the focus group interview instead of the individual interview, the researcher advised him/her of the date and agreed to follow up with the details.

For GED enrolled African American young adults, community outreach recruitment took place in the Center for Higher Development (COHD). As GED classes were held throughout the day, the researcher visited each class and announced the study particulars (both the individual interview and focus group interview). Similar to recruitment efforts at CSU, a contact list circulated the GED classrooms and interested

participants wrote their name and telephone number on the list. The researcher then followed up by calling potential applicants about participation. During the phone call, each student was provided with information about the study, inclusion/exclusion criteria, voluntary consent process, level of risk for study participation, and study incentives. If the GED student appeared to both meet the study requirement and was interested, both he/she and the researcher agreed on a time an individual interview could be held in a classroom at COHD. If the student was interested in participating in the focus group interview instead of the individual interview, the researcher advised him/her of the date and agreed to follow up with the details.

Last, key informant stakeholders were recruited for the research study. As aforementioned, key informants are “expert” sources who are specialized and knowledgeable about a particular community and/or subject area (Marshall, 1996; Tremblay, 1957). Hence, key informants were recruited from both CSU and COHD, specifically the IRB Chair and executive director, respectively. As the sample utilized a snowball method, the researcher then asked each of the two participants to refer her to another “older African American adult over 40” in industries such as social services, and higher education, and church.

Stage Two

Step 1: Open-ended questions in an interview. Both individual and group participant interviews began with an informed consent process aimed at both disclosing information needed to make an educated consent; and protecting participants’ confidentiality. During this time participants were given a written consent form which

outlined the details/purpose of the study, risks/benefits, and research incentive offered (see Appendix E). Participants were instructed that consent is ongoing and at any point they can opt to disengage from the study all the while receiving the incentive. For focus group interviews, the researcher reminded participants to maintain confidentiality and refrain from discussing responses post the group interview.

In addition, during the consent process focus group and individual interview participants' were advised that the interview would be recorded using both field notes and audio recording technology. Field notes are the researchers written records of participant words, discourse, and gestures. The researcher took notes throughout the interview process including both during the interview and upon completion of the interview. Field notes taken during the interviews included participant paraphrases and additional commentary. Notes taken after the interviews included the subjective experiences of this researcher; including reflections, insights, and even questions.

Additionally, with their informed written consent, participants were audio-taped. Recording participants' voices and physical interactions and gestures allowed for verbatim analysis and detected subtle nuances in voice inflection and bodily maneuvers. Particularly, audio-taping focus group interviews allowed for accuracy of participant comments. Working with audio recordings also yielded this study's reliability (Peräkylä, 2004). Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and stored both in a locked cabinet and a password protected computer. After one year audio-recordings were destroyed.

Step 2: Open-ended questions in a focus interview. Yin (2009) differentiates between three interviews including an *open-ended*, *focused*, and a *survey* interview. The

open-ended interview can be likened to a conversation between the researcher and participant where participant opinion is valued and subsequently used for future inquiry. Focused interviews, however, are a bit more structured than open-ended interviews as the focus of the interview is decided by the researcher based on the study's key concepts. Open-ended questions are used to determine the participants' point of view. Survey interviews are the most structured and allow for no participant creativity and/or free insights.

This project employed one in-depth face-to-face *focused* interview for both the nine college enrolled and ten GED enrolled African American young adults. Interviews were given in a structured format, but participants were also encouraged to give opinions and other subjective experiences which may not have elicited a response from the standard survey.

This study also employed two focused, focus group interviews. One focus group was comprised of five college enrolled young adults, while the other focus group contained two GED enrolled young adults. Having both college enrolled and GED enrolled participants in two separate groups generated unique discussions which offer key insights about this study's core concepts. Specifically, focus group discussions explored with participants the beliefs and experiences African American young adults may have pertinent to identity formation, perceptions and experiences with racism, and relevant information about racial socialization. Additionally, the focus groups provided this researcher an opportunity to observe the collective interaction and discussion of African

American young adults as they provide interpretation of the study's key concepts (Solorzano et al., 2000).

Still, the study employed focused individual interviews with seven key informants. These individual interviews sought to explore the beliefs and experiences African Americans in older generations may have regarding African American young adult identity formation, perceptions and experiences with racism, and relevant information about socialization. In addition, African Americans born in generations such as those of the Civil Rights era (Wilkerson, 2010) and Hip Hop era (Kitwana, 2003) may offer a critical, intergenerational perspective on African American young adult development.

The project employed member checking techniques post interviews. Member checking refers to the researcher revisiting participants for verification of beginning findings (Padgett, 2008). During each individual interview the researcher asked participants targeted questions pertinent to exploring the broader themes of the study to determine and evaluate if other participants were thinking about and navigating the concepts similarly. Post-interview member-checks were also done as follow-up phone interviews with a few participants for additional clarification on the study's key concepts. Member checking was done throughout data collection to ensure the investigation's credibility – how well the findings, as analyzed by the researcher, represent the accuracy of the participants' views (Padgett, 2008).

Validity and Reliability

Social science research is concerned with study trustworthiness inclusive of the following: *construct validity* (correct operational measures for study variables), *internal validity* (focused on causal relationships between variables), *external validity* (focused on generalizing conclusions), and *reliability* (focused on repeating procedures to yield the same results) (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Yin, 2009).

For the purposes of this case study investigation, construct validity was increased as multiple sources of evidences, inclusive of both young adults and key informants, were participants in the research study. Similarly, this study used theoretical generalizations rather than statistical generalization applicable to a broader population of African American young adults. Theoretical generalizations are used to examine issues pertinent to cultural trauma and the main study variables on a smaller sample of African American young adults than would be used in a qualitative/statistical study. To ensure reliability, the maintenance of a case study protocol and database was implemented which included careful documentation and examined the patterns and themes of the multiple cases.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for case study methodology theory research followed a systematic format, which included five primary processes: theoretical proposition formulation, open coding, axial coding, cross-case analysis, and pattern-matching (see Figure 2).

Theoretical proposition formulation was the first level of analysis. It included relying on the empirical and conceptual literature identified in the literature review to formulate well-informed hypotheses which can be applied to each research question (Yin,

2009).

Open coding was the examination of themes presented in the data. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) open coding “fractures the data and allows one to identify some categories, their properties, and dimensional locations” (p. 97). During the open coding stage, the researcher would simultaneously read the typed-written transcript and listen to each interview to ensure accuracy of participant content. Once content accuracy was ascertained, each participant transcript was subjected to line by line coding procedures characterized by examining, comparing, and identifying similarities and differences between participant responses. Data was then examined for initial themes that would inform the researcher’s understanding of participants’ perceptions and interpretations of cultural trauma theory on young adult ethnic identity formation, racism experiences, and African American socialization. For example, for young adult participants’, open coding procedures identified three major categories: young adult violence exposure, young adult stereotype stigmatization, and young adult varied socialization sources pertinent to supporting positive African American ethnic identity. For key informants, open coding procedures identified participant worldviews as key to influencing interventions. During open coding, thematic coding was implemented to compare similarities and differences, and questions were thus posed about the relationship between each of the four categories and ethnic identity formation, racism experiences, and African American socialization.

Axial coding was the next coding procedure focused on making connections between categories and subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1997). This stage is

where categories were refined through an integrative process which explored the conditions that engendered a particular phenomenon, the context in which the phenomenon was embedded, the strategies participants used to manage and understand the phenomenon, and the consequences of the phenomenon. For example, axial coding supported open coding and included the following subcategories: young adult violence exposure are experienced as direct violence *and* indirect, violence threat; young adult stereotype stigmatization are experienced as inter-ethnic stigmatizations, intra-ethnic stigmatizations, and public stigmatization; and young adult varied socialization messages include those from family, teachers, and church. Axial codes for subcategories specific to participants' worldviews included family of origin beliefs; and educational and neighborhood experiences/processes.

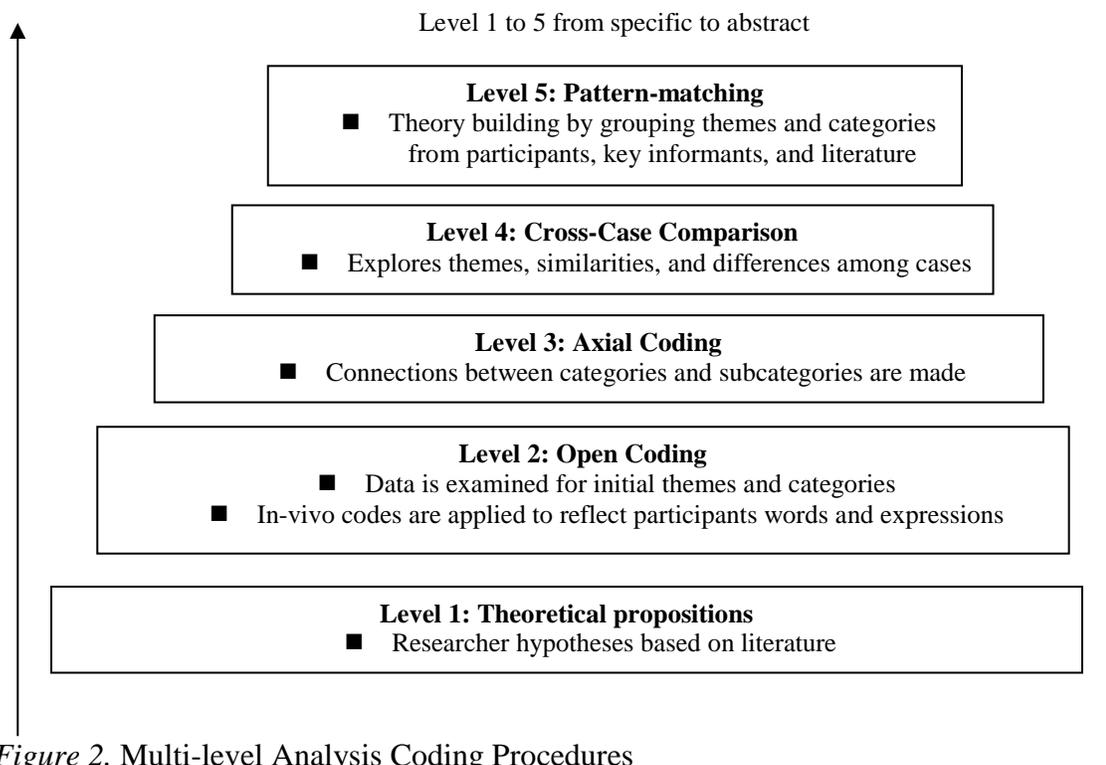
Cross-case analysis was the next coding procedure. It explored themes, similarities, and differences across participant responses. For example, cross-case analysis subcategories revealed young adult violence exposure across gender groupings. For male participants, violence was primarily experienced as direct victimization; whereas indirect, violence-threat was experienced by females, both college-enrolled and GED enrolled.

Still, *pattern-matching* was the last employed coding procedure. Pattern-matching includes grouping themes and categories from participant data, key informant data, and existing literature to build theory. This procedure compares empirically based patterns (based on data collected) with the predicted patterns. This is often done by comparing study findings with pattern predicted from the theoretical proposition and the

literature. Accordingly, young adult responses, older adult key informant responses, and literature pertinent to exploring the cultural trauma theoretical proposition were each subjected to pattern-matching analysis.

Throughout this process of open, axial, cross-case, and pattern-matching coding, the researcher also wrote self-reflective memos to document and enrich the analytic process. Analysis driven memos consisted of questions and speculations about both the data and emerging theory. Additionally, self-reflective memos documented the researcher's personal reactions to participants' narratives. Both types of memos were included for analysis.

The following diagram depicts the coding procedures employed during the investigation from the least to the most abstract (Padgett, 2008; Yin, 2009).



Ethics

Research ethics include the practices and principles which support the morality of human inquiry with the primary goal of promoting what's "right, good, and virtuous" in social science (Israel & Hay, 2006, p. 1). Accordingly, researchers are mandated to abide by principles of autonomy, beneficence, and justice to ensure participant independence, safety, and equity respectively (Israel & Hay, 2006). Thus, research participants completed informed consent forms which identified the nature of the study, addressed participant rights, and acknowledged potential risks and benefits. Also, anonymity and confidentiality was maintained by assigning identification numbers to participants on the completed interview measures instead of using participant names. The audio-taped interviews were then stored in a locked file cabinet at this researcher's institution of higher learning. Only this researcher and her Dissertation Chair were privy to interview data.

In addition to maintaining high ethical standards, this research project is in accordance with the federal mandate issued by the National Institute of Health Revitalization Act (1993) which calls for researchers to bridge health disparities by including women and people of color in human subject research. African-American young adults, both male and female, are included in this demographic. Although this study fails to compare ethnic identity formation with other undeserved, under-researched ethnic groups, it is still ethically sound in contributing to the knowledge base of meaning-making experiences which support positive psychosocial health of African American young adults.

Despite addressing the aforementioned ethical considerations, participants may have been subjected to minimal risks. The main risk included feelings of discomfort which may have arisen by completing audio-taped individual and focus group interviews. Although young adults have presumably engaged in discussions pertinent to notions of ethnic/racial identity formation, racial oppression, and racism; some research participants may have experienced feelings of anxiety or emotional discomfort. To address this matter, participant safety was ensured and clearly conveyed at the onset of participant recruitment that participation in focus groups and interviews is purely voluntary and should feelings of discomfort become so overwhelming, participants have the right to voluntarily disengage from the research project.

Summary

This research investigation employed a qualitative case study methodology on sample of African American young adults enrolled in either a Chicago-based college or workforce development center (N=26). Key informants (N=7) were also recruited as participants to further illuminate insight on the study's key concepts: cultural trauma legacies, racism, racial socialization, and ethnic identity development. The embedded research design included both individual and focus group interviews to present participants' perspectives on study's key concepts. To address issues of research trustworthiness, validity and reliability were addressed. Still, the chapter communicated the data analysis plan incorporative of multi-leveled analysis of participant responses.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The chapter presents the analysis of the raw data which identifies manifestations of cultural trauma phenomena on a sample of African American young adults ages 18 to 22. In the first section study participants' demographics are reported. In addition, outcomes of multi-analysis inclusive of themes, subthemes, and codes are presented. Charts and diagrams are presented in the first section to provide a visual depiction of the investigation results.

The second section of the analysis interrogates each of the four research questions by integrating the outcomes of multi-leveled data analysis. Young adult interview excerpts which highlight the themes and subthemes of the analysis are presented. As the case study utilized an embedded design, key informant interviews are too presented for each research question when applicable.

Participant Demographics

African American young adult participants (N=26) enrolled in both college and a GED program were interviewed. Table 1 provides a description of the young adults including their age, gender, educational status, and years of school. As young adults were recruited from two sites, one college and one workforce training center which offer GED classes, Table 2 compares participants based on educational status. Table 3 describes the key informant demographics including age, professional industry, and

educational degree. As this chapter focuses on illuminating the rich responses engendered from the interviews, pseudonyms are assigned to each participant to ensure anonymity.

Table 1. Young Adult Demographics (N=26)

Participant Name	Age	African American	Gender	Educational Status	Completed years of school	
Aaron	20	Yes	Male	GED	11	
Aliya	22	Yes	Female	GED	11	
Bria	19	Yes	Female	College	14	
Brittany	19	Yes	Female	GED	10	
Chris	22	Yes	Male	College	14	
Dante	18	Yes	Male	GED	9	
David	19	Yes	Male	College	13	
Devon	22	Yes	Male	College	16	
George	22	Yes	Male	College	16	
Jaheim	20	Yes	Male	College	14	
Jamal	22	Yes	Male	GED	11	
James	20	Yes	Male	GED	11	
Jamilah	20	Yes	Female	College	14	
Joy	19	Yes	Female	GED	10	
Keisha	18	Yes	Female	GED	11	
Kenny	22	Yes	Male	College	16	
Kiana	20	Yes	Female	College	14	
Raya	22	Yes	Female	GED	11	
Raymond	19	Yes	Male	College	13	
Sarah	19	Yes	Female	College	12.5	
Sean	18	Yes	Male	GED	10	
Tanya	19	Yes	Female	GED	10	
Tia	22	Yes	Female	College	15	
Tiffany	18	Yes	Female	College	13	
Tim	19	Yes	Male	College	13	
Tony	22	Yes	Male	GED	11	
	Mean: 20.92 yrs	100 % African American	M: 14	F: 12	College GED (N=14) (N=12)	Mean: 12.44

Table 2. Young Adults by Education

College Enrolled				GED Enrolled			
Name	Age	Gender	Years of School	Name	Age	Gender	Years of School
Bria	19	Female	14	Aaron	20	Male	11
Chris	22	Male	14	Aliya	22	Female	11
David	19	Male	13	Brittany	19	Female	10
Devon	22	Male	16	Dante	18	Male	9
George	22	Male	16	Jamal	22	Male	11
Jaheim	20	Male	14	James	20	Male	11
Jamilah	20	Female	14	Joy	19	Female	10
Kenny	22	Male	16	Keisha	18	Female	11
Kiana	20	Female	14	Raya	22	Female	11
Raymond	19	Male	13	Sean	18	Male	10
Sarah	19	Female	12.5	Tanya	19	Female	10
Tia	22	Female	15	Tony	22	Male	11
Tiffany	18	Female	13				
Tim	19	Male	13				
	Mean: 20.21	F: (N=6) M:(N=8)	Mean: 14.10 yrs		Mean: 19.90	F: (N=6) M:(N=6)	Mean: 10.5

Table 3. Key Informant Demographics (N=7)

Key Informant	Gender		Age	Industry				Education		
Mr. Carl	Male		45	Social Service				Bachelor		
Ms. Day	Female		51	Nursing				Bachelor		
Ms. Love	Male		67	Social Service				Graduate		
Dr. Mitchell	Male		60	Higher Education				Post Graduate		
Ms. Scott	Female		55	Social Service				Bachelor		
Dr. Shields	Female		66	Higher Education				Post Graduate		
Pastor Washington	Male		60	Religion				Graduate		
	M: N=4	F: N=3	MEAN= 57.7	Soc Ser N=2	High Ed N=2	Nurs -ing N=1	Reli- gion N=1	Bachelor N=2	Grad N=1	Post- grad N=2

Analysis of Research Questions

This section explores participants' perceptions about cultural trauma legacies, racism, socialization, and ethnic identity formation. To achieve this aim, first the themes of the research analysis are discussed. Table 4 provides the specific thematic clusters, sub-themes, and codes revealed by data analysis. Next, each of the four research questions is interrogated and participants' rich descriptions are presented. When applicable, key informant responses are offered after young adult participant responses to further triangulate data responses.

Table 4. Thematic Clusters

Thematic Cluster →	Sub-themes →	Codes
<p>Cultural Trauma Legacies</p> <p>(intergenerational impacts of the cultural trauma, slavery, and its aftermath on African American psychosocial functioning/development)</p>	<p>Viewed as Legitimate</p> <p>(Slavery and/or post-slave legacies impact African Americans today)</p>	<p>Slavery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mentality</i> • <i>Familial relationships</i> • <i>Incarceration</i> • <i>Creativity</i> <p>Post-slave legacies (i.e. Civil Rights Movement)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Goal Aspiration</i> • <i>African American collective responsibility</i> • <i>African American Pride</i>
	<p>Viewed as Non-Legitimate</p> <p>(Slavery and/or post-slave legacies do not impact African Americans today)</p>	<p>Vocation Oriented (<i>focused on employment</i>)</p> <p>Non-applicable to my life today</p>
<p>Racism</p> <p>(discrimination based on being African American)</p>	<p>Viewed as Stereotype Awareness</p> <p>(Keenly aware of being negatively stereotypes by others)</p>	<p>Hypervigilance (<i>acutely aware of stereotypes</i>)</p> <p>Microaggressions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stares (“Looks of Disgust”)</i> • <i>Vibes</i> • <i>Surveillance</i> • <i>Ignoring</i>
	<p>Viewed as Stereotype Internalization</p> <p>(Belief in negative stereotypes given to African Americans)</p>	<p>Believe in or witness other African Americans uphold negative generalizations of African American life pertinent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Morality</i> • <i>Labor Market Access</i> • <i>Access to public space navigation</i> • <i>Access to wealth</i>
<p>Racial Socialization</p> <p>(process of learning about one’s African American heritage from parents, school, church, etc.)</p>	<p>Experienced as African American Centered (Individual and Group Focused)</p>	<p>Instills African American pride</p> <p>Cumulative</p> <p>(<i>experienced by multiple sources and (i.e. parents and schools/or experienced with intensity by one source (i.e. schools)</i>)</p>
	<p>Experienced as Non-African American Centered (Individual Focused)</p>	<p>Vocation oriented (<i>Focused on employment</i>)</p> <p>Intermittent (<i>Experienced as irregular by few sources/institutions throughout life cycle</i>)</p> <p>Non-relevant (<i>positive racial socialization has little impact on individual and group identity</i>)</p>
<p>Ethnic Identity</p> <p>(process of African Americans identifying with, belonging, and attaching to other African Americans)</p>	<p>Experience of Community-Based Violence</p> <p>(From other African American peers)</p>	<p>Gun Violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Witnessing</i> • <i>Victimization</i>
	<p>Experience of Inter-ethnic Violence</p> <p>(From both non-African American peers and police)</p>	<p>Victimization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Intimidation</i> • <i>Verbal Assault</i>
	<p>Experience of Indirect Violence Threat</p>	<p>Hearing about Violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Media</i> • <i>Community</i>

Thematic Cluster I: Cultural Trauma Factors

This thematic cluster incorporates young adult perceptions about the cultural trauma, slavery, and post-slave legacies (i.e., themes pertinent to the Civil Right Movement). The properties for this theme are family of origin, level of education, and ethnic identity formation. The dimensions of these categories are related to messages received by young adults from family members, how much education the young adult completed, and his/her stage of African American identity development.

Young adult perceptions of cultural trauma as legitimate. This sub-theme captures the meanings young adults give to the legitimacy of both slavery and post-slave legacies as important to understanding modern African American psychosocial functioning.

Young adult perceptions of cultural trauma as non-legitimate. This sub-theme captures the meanings young adults give to slavery and post-slave legacies as unimportant in understanding modern African American psychosocial functioning.

Thematic Cluster II: Racism Factors

This thematic cluster illuminates young adult perceptions about their experiences and encounters with racism, inclusive of psychological outcomes such as internalized racism. The main property for this theme is gender. The dimensions for this category are whether participants are male or female.

Racism is viewed as stereotype awareness. This sub-theme captures the meanings young adults give to racism which they broadly view as being hyperaware of

adverse generalizations (stereotypes) imposed on them by non-African Americans when navigating public spaces.

Racism is viewed as stereotype internalization. This sub-theme captures the meanings young adults give to racism's impacts thereby viewed as believing in the devalued, stereotype status of African Americans broadly.

Thematic Cluster III: Racial Socialization

This thematic cluster reveals young adults' perceptions about the process of learning about African American heritage, pride, and racism management from other African Americans. The properties for this theme are gender, level of education, and ethnic identity formation. The dimensions of these categories are whether participants are male or female, how much education the young adult completed, and participants' stage of African American identity.

Experienced as African American centered. This sub-theme captures both the sources and impacts of African American racial socialization. The former includes sources such as parents, schools, and churches. The latter is inclusive of messages which support African American cultural pride.

Experienced as non-African American centered. This sub-theme captures young adults' racial socialization experienced as focused less on messages specific to African American socialization. Instead sources of socialization inclusive of parents, schools, etc. are minimal. In addition, African American messages are experienced mainly as pertinent to individual goal attainment within the labor market.

Thematic Clusters IV: Ethnic Identity

This thematic cluster reveals young adults' perception about an African American ethnic identity inclusive of both salience (significance of being African American) and regard (the meanings assigned to an African American identity); and young adult ethnic identity stage development. The properties for this theme are gender, level of education, and ethnic identity formation. The dimensions of these categories are whether participants are male or female, how much education the young adult completed, and participants' stage of African American identity.

Experience of community-based violence. This sub-theme captures the impact of community-based violent experiences perpetuated by African American peers on participants' African American identity development.

Experience of inter-ethnic group violence. This sub-theme captures the impact of inter-ethnic group violent experiences perpetuated by non-African American peers and police officers on participants' African American identity development.

Experience of violence threat. This sub-theme captures the impact of violence threat experiences by both the media and community observations of violence which inform participants' African American identity development.

Table 5 below offers a summary of the key findings of this study. The interrogation of each of the four research questions follows.

Table 5. Summary of Findings at a Glance

Conceptual/Theoretical Area Probed	Findings
Perceptions of the cultural trauma, slavery, and post-slave legacies (<i>i.e. Jim Crow laws, Civil Rights Movement, election of President Barack Obama</i>)	There is a strong contrast between college enrolled and GED enrolled African American young adults' cultural trauma perceptions. Both groups express knowledge about events such as chattel slavery and post-slave legacies, such as the Civil Rights Movement. However, college enrolled African Americans perceive slave legacies as legitimately impacting modern African American psychosocial functioning in the form of: African American mentality, familial relationships, incarceration rates, and creative expression. On the other hand, GED enrolled African Americans perceive cultural trauma legacies as non-legitimate and non-applicable to their current psychosocial functioning.
Experiences with racism	Across both educational and gender groupings, participants define racism largely as interpersonal stereotypes experienced largely as either hypervigilance and microaggressions such as stares, bad vibes, and incessant surveillance (Pierce, 1995). Accordingly, some participants express internalization of negative stereotypes conferred to the African American community. They believe that being African American is prone to moral devaluation; and the inability to access the labor market, public spaces, and wealth.
African American Racial Socialization	College enrolled students' express comprehensive racial socialization from varied sources such as parents, schools, and church which emphasize African American pride, heritage, collectivism, and responsibility. Such racial socialization appears to support an <i>internalization-commitment</i> (Cross, 1990) African American identity stage, committed to freeing other African Americans from oppression. GED enrolled students' express intermittent, infrequent African American racial socialization characterized by less exposure to themes of African American pride, heritage, collectivism, and responsibility from parents, schools, etc. This contributes to GED enrolled students expressing an African American identity characteristic of either the <i>pre-encounter</i> (not thinking about race) or <i>encounter</i> (begin thinking about race due to an adverse race-based encounter) stage.
African American Identity Defined	Across all educational and gender-based groups, participants reveal racial identity <i>salience</i> (significance), identity <i>regard</i> (meanings attached to an African American identity), and identity <i>belonging</i> as impacted violence. While GED enrolled and male participants express being victimized by community-based violence and inter-ethnic violence, respectively; across all participant groups, hearing and witnessing violence appears to threaten both individual and group identity, specifically the ways in which participants feel a sense of belonging to the broader African American community.

Research question 1: How do African American young adults interpret the cultural trauma, slavery, and its legacies as impacting their current psychosocial functioning?

Embedded in the question is the idea that two distinct time periods – slavery and post-slavery – appear to impact African American psychosocial functioning.

Accordingly, analysis reveals that participants broadly identify slavery as a notable event specific to the African American historical experience. However, few participants, namely college enrolled young adults; interpret slavery as legitimately impacting their functioning *today*. These participants identify psychological, interpersonal, and creative post-slave legacies. Conversely, GED enrolled participants largely describe slavery as notable, but void of a present-day connection.

Still, post-slave historical legacies, specifically the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 1960's are too acknowledged as important. However, like participants' perceptions of slavery, interpretations of post-slave vestiges appear to be conceptualized differently based on educational status. For college enrolled participants, post-slave vestiges are thought to impact psychosocial functioning by instilling a source of inspiration, collective responsibility, and/or ethnic pride. For many GED enrolled participants, the Civil Rights Movement is acknowledged but appears to be non-applicable to their contemporary perceptions of African American individual and social functioning.

Cultural Trauma is Legitimate

African American young adults enrolled in both college and a GED program identifies African American enslavement as an important historical event pertinent to forging both an African American individual identity and an African American community. Accordingly, 23 out of 26 young adult research participants named “slavery” as an important historical event critical to the African American community. However, only four young adults, each of them college enrolled, discussed cultural trauma as legitimate for explaining modern day psychological and social manifestations specific to *their* individual, familial, or inter-ethnic group experiences. They discuss slavery as the birthplace for modern African American experiences with regard to African American mentality, family, incarceration, and creativity.

African American Mentality: A Modern Cultural Trauma Legacy

Two young adults discuss the structure of slavery as one which historically undermined the individual and collective power initiatives of enslaved African Americans. Such a structure bore a legacy supportive of intergenerational “slave mentality” transmission. Kenny identifies African-American themed books and literature mostly given to him by his college professors as critical to his belief that his collegiate peers’ passivity and lack of classroom inquisition is a “psychological” slave legacy. He states,

Slavery was more so the mentality. It was how to have that submittal mentality but keep them strong physically...sometimes nowadays we [African American college students] don’t like to think things through really. We just kind of do it on command, when someone tells us to do something. We don’t like to really question stuff, the student body...how come this is happening...why isn’t this

happening?...and we don't like to ask questions. So, people don't get answers, people get frustrated. A lot of the [university] staff are like, "yall don't ask questions!" (*Kenny, age 22, college enrolled*)

Kenny believes that his college peers' complacency as manifested in their inability to ask college faculty questions about course content, curriculum, and opportunity is a legacy resultant of the enslaved African American-white slave owner relationship. This relationship forbade enslaved Africans to express individual empowerment such as "questioning" for fear of white brutality and oppression (Bennett, 1993). Kenny believes that his peers' tendency to refrain from being quizzical is attributable to,

their upbringing...because it was passed down that a lot of things you couldn't question – especially when it comes to authoritative positions. So, you just try to do what you can with the information that you have. But, if you don't have information, then what can you do?

Kenny expresses that the "slave-like" behaviors reproduced in African American college students represent a paradox by which they seemingly give their best academic effort using the little "information" in their possession.

African American Family Relationships: A Modern Cultural Legacy

Like Kenny, Tiffany's exposure to African-American themed books and videos in both high school and college, impel her to discuss slavery as a "mental" process important to both modern-day African American family structure and male responsibility. She says,

It's like that slave mentality. Like you know, you let your boys do whatever, but your girls gotta be successful. Like my teacher was explaining to me how the slave master beat all the men in front of they women and children. So, the women would go back and tell their children not to ever retaliate [against white

perpetrators]. And nowadays, you'll see every Black family and you'll see a woman not caring what her son do. (*Tiffany, age 18, college enrolled*)

Tiffany reveals that the slave legacy which sought to protect enslaved African American men from further humiliation and abuse indirectly produced Black male irresponsibility evident in her family today. She states,

And I honestly started looking. Like my Auntie didn't care if her ten year old son, drank, smoke, had sex, any of that. A lot of guy's parents don't care, like 'oh, you a guy, you ain't got to take care of the kids' or if you gonna smoke, you gonna smoke. If you gonna sale drugs, you gonna sale drugs.

For Tiffany, slavery vestiges are apparent in the African American mother-son relationship, which appears to simultaneously excuse and promote irresponsible male behaviors throughout the life cycle. Tiffany believes that her family and other African American families' tendency to conform to an African American adage, "spoil the sons, and raise the daughters" is rooted in a post-slave legacy.

African American Incarceration: A Modern Cultural Trauma Legacy

Tiffany and Kenny describe the psychological vestiges of slavery observed in interpersonal and intra-psychic relationships, respectively. However, George reveals learning from both his college professors and parents about the current penitentiary system which disproportionately incarcerates African American males as a structural example of a post-slave legacy. He mirrors the sentiment of Michelle Alexander's (2010) thesis in the book, "The New Jim Crow," which states modern Black imprisonment rates are a vestige of both slavery and de jure Jim Crow segregation. George emphatically states,

To me slavery still exists...I believe that there have been systems set up in our nation from that time period to keep us in the struggle, the bondage, mainly the prison system, it's modern day slavery (*George, age 22, college enrolled*)

Since he became a licensed driver at sixteen, George has been pulled over by cops, most of whom are white, ten times while driving. He has been issued only one ticket. He perceives his chances of being subjected to the “new Jim Crow” as increased given frequent adverse surveillance and harassment with police. Thus, his propensity to believe that African American imprisonment initiated by police officers is a new form of the cultural trauma, slavery, is even more tangible as he is frequently subjected to interpersonal “struggle” perpetuated by police officers.

African American Creativity: A Modern Cultural Trauma Legacy

Still, Jamilah describes the often overlooked strengths of slavery as a means to forging an innovative African American identity and community rooted in creativity. Jamilah, who is a self-described “creative writer” introduced to African American literature in high school insists,

In slavery, we were introduced to a lot of things that the white culture was doing and through slavery we were able to recreate a system for us, because when we came to America, it wasn't just one type of African, it was so many different cultures that the slaves were dealing with...so slavery recreated a culture in which slaves were able to understand each other. (*Jamilah, age 19, college enrolled*)

Jamilah attributes African American cultural movements such as the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's, with its emphasis on literature and fine arts as a positive slavery relic. She expresses a personal connection with her “ancestors” during this era as writers born out of the Harlem Renaissance inspired her to write stories which creatively give voice to the “political and social” concerns of an African American perspective. For

Jamilah, writers, poets, fine artists, and movement artists represent the “recreated culture” born of African Americans’ resourcefulness and ingenuity evidenced in slave and post-slave eras.

For Kenny, George, Tiffany, and Jamilah, knowledge of chattel slavery and its vestiges appear to be informed by family and teachers in both high school and college (discussed later in the chapter). More importantly, its vestiges appear to encourage self reflection about their individual, familial, and ethnic-group prospects. That is, slavery is interpreted as a legitimate institution directly impacting African American psychosocial functioning amongst their peers, family, and even themselves.

The Legitimacy of Cultural Trauma Legacies

African American young adult participants describe the Civil Rights Movement as an important historical event pertinent to the African American community. In fact, each of the 26 participants describes a key event (ex. Southern lunch counter boycotts), notable person (ex. Martin Luther King) or political advancement (ex. civil rights legislation) which speaks to the collective achievements of the broader group. However, interviews suggest interpretations of the Civil Rights Movement as impacting modern psychosocial functioning appear to be experienced differently between college enrolled and GED students. This section will highlight both college enrolled and GED enrolled participants interpretation of the post-slave legacy: the Civil Rights Movement.

Post-Slave Legacy is Legitimate: Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement

African American college enrolled participants broadly discuss post-slave vestiges, particularly those of the Civil Rights Movement, as legitimate historical events critical to their current psychosocial functioning. Specifically, data analysis reveal college enrolled participants largely view the American Civil Rights Movement as a means of encouraging individual goal aspirations, collective responsibility, and cultural pride for the broader African American community.

Goal Aspiration: A Civil Rights Legacy

Goal aspiration is evident as college students broadly identify the gains of the Civil Rights Movement as critical to providing them the political, social, and educational opportunities needed to ensure their personal achievements, autonomy, and voice. Here are some of the reflections offered in the interviews:

Maybe I'm being optimistic over here – but if something in the past did happen bad, I feel like it made everything better...it made me work harder...everything that happened in the Civil Rights Movement itself showed me that if you have a voice, you can do something. I have a voice. (*Bria, age 19, college enrolled*)

Just like the whole Black history movement...stuff they did to make opportunities for us...what people did for me, like Martin Luther King...he made African Americans have opportunities as far as you know, giving us rights and basically breaking the stereotypes. (*Jaheim, age 20, college enrolled*)

Growing up you always hear about Malcolm X or Martin King. When I heard people talk about these people and they would say such great things and it was such a stark difference from what I heard about the people around me in my neighborhood...in fact, it kind of showed me that we don't all have to be where we come from. We can be greater. We can have people look up to us. (*Tia, 22, college enrolled female*)

[Dr. King's I Have a Dream Speech] motivated me to stay in college because sometimes I have a hard time in class. But, I still try hard because I want to be a

physical education teacher and a coach when I get out of college...that's my dream. (*Tim, age 19, college enrolled*)

The quotes suggest that most college enrolled participants interpret the Civil Rights Movement as an encouraging period in African American history. In specific, the quotes suggest that prominent leaders such as Dr. King, who advocated non-violent methods to ensure racial integration, and Malcolm X, who advocated African American collective economics, provided an inspiring political, social, and educational platform. Participants acknowledge the Civil Rights Movement has a personal impact on their goal attainment as it: instills a sense of personal empowerment and work ethic (Bria), allows African American community members to move beyond negative labels and benefit from civil rights (Jaheim), fosters greatness within the African American community (Tia), and inspires career oriented vision (Tim).

Collective Responsibility: A Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement

In addition, for African American college enrolled young adult participants, historical awareness is also used as a source of collective responsibility to continue a positive legacy for the broader African American group. Many participants express gratitude as they acknowledge African American leaders' sacrifice resultant of a life devoted to African American uplifting. Raymond states,

I have to keep my game up so I don't let down everyone that put forth all those efforts like Dr. King, Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, and anybody like that...because they did all that and they died for these things and why wouldn't I want to carry on that legacy. You don't want anybody to die in vain when they were trying to make provisions for you (*Raymond, age 19, college enrolled*)

For Raymond, excelling in both academic and positive interpersonal relationships is an example of “keeping up his game.” Raymond’s personal commitment to adopting a career as a “motivational speaker” fulfills a cultural imperative. He feels indebted to his Civil Rights ancestors who provided sacrifices to ensure future generations of African Americans could have ease and equal opportunity, based on merit rather than race. More importantly, Raymond is beholden to the African American tradition of collective responsibility fueled by elder reverence as his success exemplifies his desire to not disappoint older African Americans whom he deems responsible for his modern opportunities.

George also shares this sentiment about preserving the gains of the Civil Rights Movement and states,

Especially after Martin Luther King was assassinated...I always just think, like, people died for this. People died for me to go to school here. People died for me to get an education or do this. So, I just always feel like I shouldn't waste that...So I have to take my role as a young Black adult and to help and influence other black kids and give back to the community. (*George, age 22, college enrolled*)

Like Raymond, George exposes his immense gratitude at African American human sacrifices of the Civil Rights era. George believes that modern rights conferred to African Americans such as “education” should be obtained as African American life was lost to acquire such rights. In addition, George upholds the value of collective responsibility he believes originates from his slain ancestors. He seeks to model this notion to the broader African American community; specifically children whom he feels are “lost” from the communal values and traditions characteristic of older African

Americans.

Still, Tiffany reports feeling a connection to “strong African American women” in particular like “Harriet Tubman,” leader of the Underground Railroad, whose goal was to manumit through escape enslaved African Americans; and “Bessie Ross,” the first African American woman female pilot. Like George, she talks about modeling their legacy for modern-day African American community members, especially the youth and says,

I feel like, you know, many Black people once they get rich and famous, they often forget about the Black community and don’t give back to the Black community and I feel like that’s kind of sad. I want to give back to it. I want to help it be better. *(Tiffany, age 18, college enrolled)*

Tiffany appears concerned and disheartened by “many” successful African Americans in “sports” and “entertainment” whom she believes abandons the broader community; all the while refusing to restore to them economic and social benefits accrued primarily because of ancestor sacrifice. Tiffany decidedly advocates for collective responsibility and its ultimate exemplification: personal obligation as a means to ensuring African American collective success.

African American Pride: A Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement

For other college enrolled participants, historical knowledge instills a source of ethnic pride. Kiana identifies slavery and its legacies as a source of pride and states,

I’m proud to be African American...being African American it is very important to me just because how like we came from slavery and I’m like proud to be African American cause I think we’re really strong and we just came like so far. *(Kiana, age 20, college enrolled)*

Kiana identifies African American collective achievements as resultant of enduring strength stemming from the brutality and oppression of the slave era. She describes how an African American identity rooted in intergenerational resilience gives credence to her modern ethnic pride.

Like Kiana, Tia also expresses a similar outlook about having African American pride and states,

I don't think that we should forget where we come...I mean, having that sense of knowledge, knowing where you're from, it can give you more confidence in yourself, in your people. *(Tia, age 20, college enrolled)*

Tia describes observing other cultural groups, like "Latinos" and "Chinese," and admires their ability to cling to their cultural ties through language, storytelling, and economic development as a means of promoting group solidarity. For that reason, Tia promotes African American collective remembrances of an historical African American experience to instill both individual and collective confidence.

Chris, who receives familial messages about first-hand Civil Rights experiences says,

I have a lot of family that resides in Alabama...they stood alongside all the people who marched who we read about in the text books. So, being African American it's just a sense of pride for me. *(Chris, age 22, college enrolled)*

Chris conveys his pride stems from his extended family narrative of grandparents, uncles, and aunts who participated in African American led boycotts, marches, and protests in a quest for 1950's and 1960's "equal rights." Pride is even more tangible as unlike many of his peers who learn about Civil Rights Movement processes via textbooks

or film, Chris can personalize the accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement through his intergenerational family narrative.

Cultural Trauma Legacy is Non-Legitimate

Unlike many college enrolled participants, GED enrolled participants largely view post-slave events such as the Civil Rights Movement as non-legitimate and thus irrelevant to their current psychosocial functioning. Instead, many of their responses suggest a focus on either individual vocation; or they view African American themed history as non-applicable to their current psychosocial functioning.

Perceptions of Vocation Access are Paramount to Cultural Trauma Perceptions

In response to being asked whether African American historical events impact his current successes, failures, and functioning Tony states,

To be honest, I really don't know...to be honest...I try to do what's best for me...I can't relate to no history events right now...I just try to do what's good for myself. *(Tony, age 22, college enrolled)*

As Tony's quote conveys, historical knowledge about his ancestors though accessible, refrains from being a priority. Instead, Tony, a twenty-two year old parent of one, is focused on how to obtain consistent employment. During the interview he immediately shifts the interview topic from African American historical events to his lack of success accessing the labor market. He states,

Finding a job, yeah 'cause it's hard nowadays, real hard. I been at it since I was about 18. I came across one and I don't know what's going on. I got hired in December and I still ain't started. So, that hurts your heart...for you to work so hard and then obtain something and not start. And then they give me the runaround every time you call them about it. So, it [historical African American experiences] ain't got nothing to do with any events in history or nothing but it's hard out here finding a gig. *(Tony, age 22, GED enrolled)*

Tony recounts his experience entering the labor market with a potential job lead within the field of “janitorial” maintenance in a hospital. He expresses doubt at securing the job as nearly five months after being “hired” he has yet to report to work. For Tony, his knowledge of “slavery,” including the post-slave vestiges like disproportionate African American male unemployment rates, appear disconnected from his modern experience of securing gainful employment to provide for he and his daughter.

Aliya also suggests that historical knowledge specific to the African American community is disengaged from her current functioning. For Aliya, historical knowledge acquisition is contextualized within her own lived past of violence witnessing, rather than the past of the broader African American group. She says,

I don't think I use to go to history class...I went, but I didn't pay attention...I mean nothing happened in the past...I seen somebody get killed in front of me when I was little. I remember that! It was bad in my past. *(Aliya, age 22, GED enrolled)*

When the student researcher poses a question about describing the importance of an African America historical past as key to her current functioning, Aliya provides a literal interpretation and recounts a “bad” traumatic murder she observed during her childhood. In addition, she blames her inability to connect an African American past with her present functioning to school truancy. More importantly, like Tony, Aliya eschews the historically-based questions posed by the student researcher and describes her inability to become employed at the local fast food restaurants in her neighborhood. She says,

Because certain jobs that I apply for in my community...like at Subway and Dunkin Donuts... I can't get in and I wonder why. *(Aliya, age 22, GED enrolled)*

Like Tony, she believes her repeated attempts at entering the labor market have little to do with historical significance specific to the African American community.

Cultural Trauma Legacies as Non-Applicable

Other GED enrolled participants identify the relevance of African American historical strides, yet feel disconnected from its applicability in their own lives. Tanya is an advocate of the accomplishments of Ruby Bridges, the first African American child to attend an all-white elementary school (Bridges, 2009). She describes being infuriated at Bridges' maltreatment as white teachers and students yelled racial obscenities to intimidate her from accessing the all-white school. She states,

Ruby Bridges...they didn't want her...people were taking their kids out of school 'cause they was Black and they didn't want their white kids sitting next to her, so she was the only one in the classroom. It made me look at myself like that's what they think of us. That's what being Black do to people. Like, I'm Black and that's how they treated us! (*Tanya, age 19, GED enrolled*)

Despite being alarmed at the racial insensitivities perpetrated against African Americans of the 1950's, Tanya admits that unlike Ruby Bridges who demonstrates tenacity, she has yet to realize her own educational goal and says,

It [the Ruby Bridges story] made me think that you can do whatever you want if you put your mind to it...like I be saying I can't pass the GED. I don't really know. I just think I can't, but I never really tried.

This quote suggests Tanya reveres Ruby Bridges' maverick determination in accessing education in the face of racial hostility. Yet, her historical reverence fails to manifest into positive cognitions translated into concrete steps needed to successfully pass the GED examination.

Other GED enrolled participants too appear knowledgeable, yet conflicted, about

the modern-day impact of the structural changes evidenced in the political and educational institutions during the Civil Rights Movement. According to Sean,

It was like at that point in time we was just reaching our peak, because of the leaders we had back then such as Malcolm and Martin Luther King. We had so much energy to just get things right for ourselves and our family so our kids can go to school. (*Sean, age 18, GED enrolled*)

Sean appears to be inspired by the gains of the Civil Rights movement, yet his academic actions demonstrate otherwise:

You know school is something that I feel passionately about...I probably never finish though. But, I always had that passion for it, education period. Even though I dropped out of school, I'll never stop learning.

Sean, who dropped out of high school in the eleventh grade due to feeling unsafe as a result of in-school peer harassment, is doubtful about maintaining the educational legacy of his ancestors and states,

Like, okay, I could go and put in an application now. On my application it will say no high school diploma or no GED. Then, when it get to the background check, it'll say I got two felonies in my background. Then it will really be like oh yeah, that's out the question – he Black, don't have no high school diploma, no GED, and he's a felon. (*Sean, age 18, GED enrolled*)

For Sean, the educational outcomes he identifies of the 1950's appear to be out of his immediate reach. He prophesizes his attempts at acquiring a job in the labor market would be met to no avail as he is doubly stigmatized as a “high school drop-out” and “felon.” It should be noted that of all participants interviewed, Sean appears to be the most versed in historical knowledge acquisition. He vividly describes not only events pertinent to slavery and the Civil Rights Movement, but also expressed being knowledgeable about “ancient African pyramids” and “Egyptians” as important to the

broader African-Diaspora experience. However, Sean's adverse relationship to both school and the criminal justice system leave him disconnected from personally benefitting from the gains of the Civil Rights Movement.

Research question 2: How do African American young adults experience racism?

This question elucidates African American young adults' perceptions of modern-day experiences with interpersonal racism primarily experienced in public places. It seeks to examine how interpersonal and structural racism is experienced by young adults.

Stereotype Stigmatization in African American Identity Development

It is important to note that this study's research and interview questions refrained from explicitly exploring stereotypes. Instead, open-ended questions about "racism experiences" posed to young adults were generally responded to with statements about both being aware of, and experiencing adverse generalizations and labels conferred to the broader cohort of African American young adults. To illustrate this trend in participants' responses, 20 of the 26 participants actively used the word stereotype when describing both inter-ethnic group *and* intra-ethnic group racial experiences.

Stereotype stigmatization too appears to inform African American young adult identity development. Stereotype stigmatization refers to disgraceful labels (Goffman, 1963) participants' perceive are imposed on them solely because of their ethnic identification. Participants discuss stereotype stigmatization as both stereotype awareness and stereotype internalization. The former refers to two processes: (1) hyper-vigilance about negative generalizations conferred to African American young adults, which often leads them to be defensive; and (2) being acutely aware of public displays of

subtle “microaggressions” perpetrated mainly by small businesses solely on the basis of participants’ ethnicity. Stereotype internalization refers to the young adult participants’ observation and/or belief in adverse stereotypes prone to devalue attributes of their ethnic group in preference for qualities seemingly available only to non-African American groups.

Stereotype stigmatization appears to manifest differently, depending on whether participants are female or male. For the former, stereotypes appear to inform African American female young adult identity, specifically when it comes to societal expectations about young motherhood, incessant social service consumption, and academic achievement. Of the 13 female participants, six are mothers. Of those six, five are GED enrolled. Only one college enrolled female is a mother. Even still, stereotypes about young, Black maternity seem to be an essential characteristic of their young adult identity. Even when they presumably defy the stereotype, they are met with incredulity from others, which increases sensitivity.

Stereotype Awareness

The role of hypervigilance on identity. Across all groups, young adult participants discuss being hyperaware of negative beliefs given to African Americans. Tiffany illustrates being markedly aware about African American female stereotypes. When asked by the researcher what it means to be “Black” she says it’s an identity likened to being the “underdog.” She states,

I mean being Black, you know. It’s a lot of stereotypes. I mean I have to face a lot, because I had my son so early you know. And people really don’t expect that much of you. Like they expect you basically to live off the State all your life or

you not gonna be much. Or you might finish high school and that's about it.
(Tiffany, age 18, college enrolled female)

According to Tiffany, a single mother of one child, an African American female identity is oftentimes disgraced,

You don't want that stigma, like going with you...like, hoodrat – especially that...baby mama, especially...and everybody thinking like you from the hood, you supposed to be shooting at people.

For Tiffany, stereotypes that she believes are mostly disseminated from mass media, like daytime “talk shows and reality TV,” appear to bleed into her daily encounters with others. For instance, when collegiate peers, “Black” and “white,” discover she is a mother, they assume she is unmarried and thereby inquire of the whereabouts of her “baby daddy,” instead of the child’s “father.” She believes her status as a single, African-American mother prompts people with whom she encounters to indiscriminately impose onto her both ill-informed generalizations, as well as anticipations of stereotype fulfillment, as one with blighted lifetime goals.

Tanya further exemplifies her perceptions of being stereotyped as second best, as she interacts with a white, female, social worker responsible for coordinating the social service needs of her and her young child. Tanya feels that the social worker is abrupt and condescending with her, and thus prioritizes “Mexican girl” needs over the needs of “Black girls,”

The way she treated me, she was probably like forget what I'm talking about because I'm Black, I'm uneducated, I'm just in here on welfare...I just felt like she thinks I'm dumb and Black, that's how most white people do think about you know, Black people around here. *(Tanya, age 19, GED enrolled)*

Tanya correlates awful, harried treatment by helping professionals as solely contingent on their personal outlook of African American young adult mothers as stereotypically obtuse. Her feelings of being dismissed and unheard by a white, social service professional appear to conform with her broader experiences with “white people” who inform her identity as prone to being dismissed and unheard because she is both African American and a teen parent.

Bria also lends credence to gender-based stereotypes and discusses intra-ethnic group stereotype stigmatization. When describing her interactions with African American female peers, she says,

The stereotypes are...and I hate it...you don't have any kids. What does that mean? You never been pregnant? No. Like what does that mean? Does that mean that all young, Black girls have to have a baby? And I have to be sitting around collecting welfare checks. My life doesn't consist of what you see...and I mean I hear it a lot. (*Bria, age 19, college enrolled female*)

For Bria, identity informed by stereotype stigmatization extends beyond generalities from non-African Americans, to simplified constricted perceptions from members of the actual ethnic and gender groups in which she belongs.

African American young adult males too express feeling stereotyped, largely because of their attire. Jaheim demonstrates this feeling and exclaims,

If you sag, you're automatically classified as being violent or in a particular gang...something like that...and that's usually a stereotype on African Americans! I mean everyone sags, but I don't believe if a white person sags, like they would have the same stereotype that an African American would have if they sag. (*Jaheim, age 20, college enrolled*)

Jaheim discusses stereotype stigmatization as being solely directed to African American males, recognizing that non-African American males too wear a similar style

of pants but receive less stigmatization.

Sean concurs with the opinion of attire stereotype stigmatization, and contextualizes it with regard to intra-ethnic group judgments dispensed from other African Americans. He says,

We looked at a certain way...we gotta fight against all them stereotypes just to get to a comfortable place where we feel comfortable at...I could show you a perfect example. I was walking down the street I had my son with me. I gotta habit ...'cause it's just how I grew up, of always cocking my hat. And my son. He see me do it. And he want to do the same thing. So, I could always try and put his hat straight but he would always turn it, right. So, as I am walking down the street I am steady turning his hat back and the lady looked at me. She, 'aww so since you wear your hat cocked, you want your son to grow up a gang banger too.' I looked at her. And I wasn't finna pay no attention to her. Then she was like 'that's what's wrong. Babies raising babies nowadays. Y'all messing a whole generation up.' And it was a Black lady! (*Sean, age 18, GED enrolled*)

For Sean, stereotype stigmatization seems to inform an identity prone to public intra-ethnic group scrutiny and undeserved sweeping generational blame, despite displaying behaviors contrary to the stereotypically “absent” African American father. Although Sean is an active and present father who actively models appropriate behaviors for his young son, he is viewed primarily based on his attire as the stereotypical African American, male “gang member.” Sean thus appears upset and states,

And when I heard that I felt like...okay you just see me walking down the street. You see me with my hat cocked. You see me with my pants sagging. You automatically think I am one of them type of people. You don't even get a chance to know me.

For Sean, intra-ethnic group stereotype stigmatization leaves him feeling unjustly depicted despite giving his best effort at conforming to societal expectations of responsible fatherhood.

Raymond too describes intra-ethnic group experiences in which he experiences stereotype stigmatization. According to Raymond, stereotype stigmatization initially based on his “urban” attire fuels his depiction of some African American older adults over “age 40.” Raymond states,

They [older African Americans] feel we are all the same...cause I have talked to older Black people who are very egotistical and think they look at somebody like me, like I love to wear gym shoes or something, they look at me and they're like, 'oh this young, guy.' (*Raymond, age 19, college enrolled*)

For Raymond, who “expects” this type of generalization from non-African Americans, intra-ethnic group stereotype stigmatization contributes to:

A big gap between young [African American] and old [African American] people...because a lot of young people feel that older Black people do not listen to us.

Raymond believes that stereotype stigmatization is unjust, and also threatens a cultural bond with African American older adults. He ponders, “why would you look at me some way lower than you when we are the same?” Like Sean, intra-ethnic group stereotype stigmatization appears to leave him puzzled and even distressed by older African American community members with whom they feel the propensity for attachment. That is, disparaging comments and judgments from elder African Americans with whom they encounter in both public and private settings are often wrought with condemnation. This type of exchange appears to threaten intergenerational solidarity and support.

The role of “disgusted looks” and “vibes” on identity. As aforementioned in Chapter two, Pierce (1995) describes everyday racism as “microaggressions,” or slight,

subtle interpersonal attacks on African American community members in both public and private settings. When asked about their “racism experiences,” six young adults describe adverse inter-ethnic group experiences, usually in commercial business stores, in a manner likened to microaggressions. Thus, participants’ repeatedly describe subjective racism experiences as either non-verbal “vibes” or “disgusted looks” given to them mainly by non-African American proprietors.

Sean describes his interactions with non-African Americans when he ventures outside his “all-Black” neighborhood to other parts of the city predominantly populated by whites and says,

The racism I always got was the okay...I get that vibe...a vibe that maybe you are not wanted. (*Sean, age 18, GED enrolled*)

Sean contrasts this with “direct” racism characterized by “someone who come out and say you not supposed to be around here.” He alludes to body-language and non-verbal cues from non-African Americans in the form of frowns, hasty interactions, and feeling ignored, as identifiable behaviors supportive of an adverse “vibe.” For Sean, being a young, African American adult means experiencing an intangible aura by non-African American community members who subtly convey discriminate dislike and aversion. More importantly, these interactions suggest that his African American ethnicity means he and other African Americans are not wanted.

Like Sean, George conveys that he too never experienced overt racism exemplified as white store proprietors yelling, “you’re Black...get out of my store...you don’t need to be in here.” Instead, George describes modern racism as

a vibe where they try to catch you in something or make sure you're not trying to steal...if you just in a store, or something like that, they'll just constantly follow you or just ask you, 'Can I help you,' or 'Are you looking for something?'
(George, age 22, college enrolled)

For George, store proprietors' "vibes" are specific primarily to African American consumers as he says,

And you'll see another person of another race walk in. They're [store proprietors] not on them, you know...you're not following them all over the damn store. Why you following me, you know? I'll let you know if I need your help!

For George, "vibes" appear to be undeservedly disseminated solely to African Americans in an attempt to discourage them from committing illegal behaviors. Thus, an African American individual identity is constructed as a presumed criminal who bears continuous "following" until a transaction is made.

Young adult participants also talk about adverse inter-ethnic group experiences as the self-described revolting looks that are given to them. Brittany describes multiple shopping experiences, mostly with white proprietors, and like George and Sean reveals she has never seen "racists up close." Instead, Brittany describes,

It's like the way they look at you...that disgusted look, you know? Like, you just walked into the room and they look like they about to throw up because they looked at you. That's racist. Especially if they another color." (Brittany, age 19, GED enrolled)

For Brittany, proprietor loathing dispersed to African American young adults is both racist and non-racist. While she admits to never been exposed to "racist" behaviors such as race-based name calling, her self-defined "racist" experiences characterized as sickened glances from non-African-Americans appears to manifest as she frequents stores owned and/or managed by non-African Americans. These behaviors too suggest for

Brittany, being a young, African American consumer means conjuring in others intense dislike, despite their willingness to financially support the “racist” business.

Jaheim too describes his travels into downtown integrated apparel businesses managed by whites, which oftentimes result in

Looks of disgust just for not belonging...they see you and give you a funny look or attitude or mood swing or something like that...looks of disgust, you know?
(*Jaheim, age 20, college enrolled*)

For Jaheim, disgusted looks are interpreted simply resultant of ethnic differences between African Americans and non-African American due to the former “not belonging.” Despite experiencing these occurrences “all the time,” Jaheim articulates such microaggressions as normative to an African American identity:

You just you got to learn how to get through it...and that’s a part of being African American. You can’t just fall into the traps and perceptions.

For Sean, George, Brittany and Jaheim, non-verbal gazes of repugnance labeled as either “vibes” or “disgust” appear to leave them feeling unwanted and undesired by the non-African American business owners they support. That is, for them an African American identity means bracing oneself for inevitable proprietor scrutiny and intangible looks of repugnance despite supporting their economic interest.

Participants also describe microaggressions perpetrated by people of color. Both Tim and Aliya consistently observe unwanted looks given to African Americans by non-white business owners/proprietors of color who work in their neighborhood. Tim recounts when patronizing “a Chinese beauty supply” feeling unwanted because,

Most of the time when I'm in another store, other races speak another language. I think they talking about me...cause most of the time they don't start talking in their language until they see you. (*Tim, age 19, college enrolled*)

Tim appears mistrustful of bilingual store workers abruptness in speaking from English to another language upon his entrance.

Aliya also exclaims feeling similarly scrutinized when she shops at "Arab" owned stores in her predominantly African American neighborhood. She says,

Like every Black person that came in there...he kept telling the other man he was speaking in the language, telling him to get over there and watch them...I'm looking for a certain product, he right next to me, you know what I'm saying like I'm going to steal.

Like other participants, she names this type of interaction as "racism." She says,

So, I feel that was racism...every time I go up in there, he be on me. I don't even go in there no more, cause I be having to tell him like, I'm not finna take nothing. Watcha keep steady following me for?" (*Aliya, age 22, GED enrolled*)

For Aliya, despite giving repeated economic support and demonstrating honest behavior to this particular business, she believes her identity as a young, African American female is viewed as someone likely to steal store products.

For Tim and Aliya, feeling unwanted and/or "watched" manifests in proprietor and manager linguistics. They believe the tendency for bilingual proprietors to abruptly cease from speaking English upon seeing African American young adult consumers confirms the assumption that African American young adults are dishonest and prone to steal. While Tim identified microaggressions such as these as natural or "part of being" African American, Aliya offers an empowering intervention,

Since he make you don't even feel comfortable wanting to go up in there, so I just leave out of there. (*Aliya, age 22, GED enrolled*)

By “leaving” the store void of purchasing an item she seeks to challenge proprietor constructions of African American young adults as deceitful.

Stereotype Internalization

Being simultaneously hyper vigilant and subjected to frequent microaggressions appear to manifest as participants seem to internalize stereotypes (Leary, 2005) imposed on both themselves and the broader African American community. Many participants, across both educational groups, conceptualize desirable traits, characteristics, lifestyles, and opportunities as principally available to ethnic groups other than their own.

Accordingly, 10 of the 26 participants explicitly express either knowing other African American young adults who wanted to be a member of another ethnic group or desiring themselves to be a member of another ethnic group. Such desires can be attributed to perceived access to power and/or freedoms seemingly unavailable to most African Americans in the areas of morality, labor market access, public navigation, and access to wealth.

According to Jaheim, some of his young adult peers’ desire to partake in the moral benefits of a white ethnic identity:

If they [African American young adults] want to be in another race or wish they was another race, it’s just because they, they go back to stereotyping because white’s usually are right or positive or all that...whites are typically known to be successful and always be right and on top...’cause basically, I’m guessing, they think associating with whites makes them positive or you know, right. (*Jaheim, age 20, college enrolled*)

Jaheim links stereotype internalization, specifically generalizations about African Americans as immoral and disposed to negative behaviors, as key factors which

contribute to their longing to adopt a white identity. Such an identity appears to be constructed as a direct contrast to a white identity constructed in favorable terms as “right” or “positive.”

Tim also describes the tendency of some of his African American peers to identify whites as the preferred ethnic group most likely to enter the labor market. He states,

Cause I know a lot of kids try to get jobs, but they can't get one...I guess they think Caucasian kids can get a job before them. Like if they try to apply for Family Dollar or any other kind of job, they think that a white person will get the job before them because of the color of they skin. *(Tim, age 19, college enrolled)*

Tim believes many of his peers attribute their lack of labor market entrance as solely due to their African American identity. That is, if it wasn't for white competition, specifically a preference for white people as employees, African American young adult unemployment would be lower.

Still, Bria states her friends often associate better qualities commensurate with healthy young adult development only with the “white group:”

They [African American young adults] want to be in the white group. The white group gets the jobs. The white group don't get stereotyped. White groups get better education. White groups...this is what they say...the white groups, they can go anywhere they want. They can party all night and not have to watch they back. *(Bria, age 19, college enrolled)*

According to Bria, many of her collegiate African American friends view their current and future experiences in the labor market and schools as disadvantaged in comparison to their white peers. More importantly, as young adulthood seemingly provides an opportunity to experience new freedoms characterized by self-selected safe

travels to “anywhere” destinations, Bria conveys being empathic to her friends who view African American young identity as wrought with numerous obstacles experienced both contemporarily and throughout the life cycle.

Stereotype internalization too resonates as a sub-theme for several participants themselves, mostly male, as they personally associate wealth solely to white identity. For example, Aaron exclaims,

Would I want to be another race? Honestly yeah...the number one reason, a different class and wealth. Wealth is everything. Cars, clothing, what area you stay, the schools you have your children attend. Wealth is power. (*Aaron, age 22, GED enrolled*)

Tony, a 22 year old, GED enrolled participant, is in agreement and exclaims, “I would like to have the money of the white group.” For Tony and Aaron, each enrolled as GED students, African American identity is constructed as void of access to a higher socioeconomic status which allows for quality education, safe neighborhoods, and the ability to purchase material items. More importantly, an African American identity characterized by “no money” means being void of power over one’s life and agency.

David, who embraces the label “American” instead of “African American” also expresses feeling an affinity toward other ethnic groups, based less on positive attributes conferred to whites, but more on a lifestyle less privy to stereotype stigmatization.

According to David,

I wanted to be another group not because of what other people in our group are doing, but because the way I was treated outside the group based on their assumptions about me and they knew nothing about me. And I feel like nobody should have to deal with that and I was really upset because here I am doing nothing wrong, but being judged by other people...like certain people hold their bags tighter when I’m walking down the street and it’s really annoying knowing

that...cause I understand why they're doing it, but there's nothing I can do about it. (*David, 18, college enrolled*)

Several African American young adults also describe stereotype internalization described as non-white, ethnic groups of color they too believe appear to enjoy benefits unavailable to most African Americans. Kenny describes his affinity toward Mexican Americans and when compared to African Americans he states,

I like their unity [Mexicans]. It's not more so a personal gain, it's more so a group gain or communal gain...they'll have mom and pop places, they won't go to Walmarts because their cousin has a shop down the street that's a little more expensive...but they understand, that's family, so we're going to support family before we support something else. That's just my perception from what I see. (*Kenny, age 22, college-enrolled*)

Kenny appears to revere the communalism of Mexicans, all the while noting the absence of such collectivism in the African American community. This is particularly true in the "Black business" sector which he believes fails as African American community members lack collective cohesion. According to Kenny, an African American group identity resembles less of a supportive family and is thus likely to be fragmented and focused on "individual gain."

Tim also shares the belief that being Asian, specifically Japanese, could have impacted his educational outcomes. As he has matriculated in "all Black" schools from elementary school to college he reveals,

I probably could have gotten into another school if I were another race or something. Sometimes, I think with other races, it is easier to get into certain schools. (*Tim, age 19, college enrolled male*)

This quote suggests that he may value the education offered at more integrated schools. Also, when compared to other ethnic groups of color, Tim perceives an African American identity as more likely to struggle to gain access into the educational system.

Still, Aliya describes her unsuccessful employment seeking outcomes at the local “Indian” owned business and attributes that to her ethnic identity. She says,

Because certain jobs that I apply for, I can’t get in and I wonder why, because I’m gonna say for instance Dunkin’ Donuts – I can’t get in there because if you look at it, you don’t see no Black people really working in there like that. (*Aliya, age 22, GED enrolled*)

Aliya appears to believe that economic independence found by working in the labor market, a key trait of young adulthood, is out of her reach. Instead, such job opportunities within the fast food industry are reserved for Indian immigrants, not African American, native-born young adults.

Interestingly, many participants who experience stereotype stigmatization in the form of hyper-vigilance, microaggressions, and internalization reframe its manifestation as a source of resilience. In particular, college enrolled participants tend to reframe stereotypes as fuel for defying the limitations imposed on them by the broader society. Five college enrolled young adults reframe their ethnic group’s stigmatization as a source of resilience to achieve goals unexpected of them. Here are some reflections about reframing stereotype stigmatization offered in the interviews:

So, I’ve tried my best so far in life, not to meet any of those stereotypes I see. I really am trying to break through them all and I’ve beat them so far. (*Bria, age 19, college enrolled*)

And some [African Americans], you have some that are determined to not fall into that stereotypical category, determined to be successful and make it in life. I

mean just because we African American, don't mean we have to fail. We can be on top. (*Jaheim, age 20, college enrolled*)

I feel like I don't want to be another statistic out here who just graduated high school and didn't do anything and just became a hustler basically. I feel like I have to do something with myself. I want to live the best life I can and show the people being Black isn't just being ghetto, not having a good job, not having enough education and just moping around or destroying our neighborhood. (*George, age 22, college-enrolled*)

As far as my future goes, I try not to fall into the stereotypical Black guy image with the way I dress, to what I watch, and even to the type of music I listen to. And it's, as far as I'm concerned, it's all for my future. When I go to parties with my parents and he introduces me to a white guy, I can have a decent conversation with somebody out of my race because I've experienced trying not be that stereotypical Black guy. (*Chris, age 22, college enrolled*)

I would just wanna be like an African American that proves to be something different (*Kiana, age 20, college-enrolled*)

The participants spoke in detail about not allowing the limitations of stereotypes to shape their future individual goals. Embedded in these quotes is a common theme of excelling in their career and social relationships for individual goal attainment, but also to “prove” to the broader society that an African American young adult identity is indeed “successful.” That is, being hyper-vigilant about adverse stereotypes, experiencing subtle microaggressions, and observing and/or experiencing negative appraisals appear to leave college enrolled participants wanting to prove to the broader society they negated and overcame adverse stereotypes.

Key Informant Comparisons with Young Adults' Racism Experiences

When discussing how young adults' experience racism, key informants refrain less from describing interpersonal racism resultant of stereotypes. Instead a common theme reveals key informants view the institutions in which they work like higher

education, the criminal justice system, and social services as receptacles to systematically disempower African American young adults with whom they support.

According to Mrs. Scott, a social service program director responsible for overseeing GED test preparation for both young and older adults, young adults are unaware of modern forms of structural racism. She laments that many African American young adult mothers enroll in the agency's GED program solely to "maintain benefits" in the form of welfare cash. Ms. Scott believes this type of arrangement is disempowering as African American mothers rarely finish the GED program. Their attendance only fulfills the eligibility requirements of the state of Illinois's social welfare program. She states,

I don't think they even understand the control the government puts on them to mandate them to come to these types of programs...to maintain their TANF and all of that...it's really a form of racism...I believe that it's their way of controlling them. (*Ms. Scott, social service director, age 55*)

Still, Dr. Shields, a university professor concurs with Mrs. Scott and describes the current structure of American education as "racist." She recognizes that many of her students are knowledgeable of the gains attributed to the Civil Rights Movement. Yet, she expresses that many of her young adult students fail to view education disparities within the larger system of structural racism:

I think a lot of times, young people don't recognize it [racism] for what it is because there's been a feeling that racism is gone due to the Civil Rights era...however, there is still institutionalized racism...I work in education, I see it everyday...the modern educational system is where they immediately pigeon hole Black students...in the form of standardized tests...they still give the GRE...it's a racist test. It does not tell you at all, how well somebody's going to do at college. I've had students who've done very poor on the GRE, who were excellent

students. I've had students who did well...who were poor students. (*Dr. Shields, university professor, age 66*)

Last, Dr. Mitchell, both a university professor and African American male activist, describes the “racist structure” of the criminal justice system. Like Mrs. Scott and Dr. Shields, he believes that African American youth and young adults, particularly “inner city males” fail to connect their repeated contact with street cops, jails, and juvenile courts with the larger system of racism.

Most of the kids that I deal with in the inner-city, they run up against structural or institutional racism...kids who are in prisons or in trouble or on probation, or being kicked out of school because of a behavior problem. They might say the probation officers are racist, but [to them] the probation officer is a racist because you broke the law and now you got to pay the consequences...And the probation officer don't want to hear it, the excuses, and he might be white, but he's not a racist. It's the system that's racist. It's the structure, the relationship that's racist. (*Dr. Mitchell, psychologist/college professor, age 60*)

The quotes suggest that there is a discrepancy between African American young adult and older adult perceptions of modern racism. While young adults seem to label and describe adverse race-based experiences within the context of interpersonal stereotypes, the adult workers in their lives describe the basis for these stereotypes as rooted in “unseen” structural racism.

The differences in responses are no doubt due to age, education, and profession (see Table 3). Most of the older adult participants were either children or adolescents during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. Thus, their experiences were characterized by interpersonal racism, remnant of the “separate but equal” doctrines of forced racial apartheid. The legalized race-based separatism provided the foundation for

not only “stereotypes,” but also fear of sanctioned violence perpetuated by whites solely on the basis of a 1950’s and 1960’s African American identity (see next section).

In addition, education appears to impact the differing perceptions of racism between young and older adult participants. Each older adult participant has at least an undergraduate degree. Five out of seven of the participants have a graduate degree or higher. Thus, the exposure to theory and content that comes with pursuing degrees in higher education, particularly in academic disciplines like psychology, education, and sociology, appears to inform older adult perceptions of racism through a structural rather than interpersonal lens.

Still, profession appears to impact the contrasting perceptions of racism between young and older adults. Older adults work in positions of power as executive directors and leaders in higher education, social services, and religion. Thus, their status offers an opportunity to view the structural considerations of racism which often manifest in disparate access to economic, political, and social resources for programs supportive of healthy African American young adult development.

Though each form of “racism” is legitimate – the interpersonal and structural – the contrast of racism conceptualization and perceptions by either young or older adults appears to impact African American young adult identity development.

Research question 3: How are African American young adults socialized about the history of slavery and its legacies as a means for establishing an African American identity?

This question seeks to examine African American racial socialization, the integrated processes by which participants learn about their cultural history, societal contributions, and importance. Racial socialization goals include instilling ethnic pride, cultural longevity, and racism management. It consists of an integrated learning experience from multiple institutions such as schools, parents, neighborhoods, and churches (Hughes et al., 2006).

For the young adult research participants, African American historical knowledge acquisition was primarily found in an array of institutions such as schools, family, friends, media, and church. Data analysis reveals that African American young adult socialization is varied by source (parent, school, neighborhood, media, etc.) and frequency (consistently, intermittently, rarely). More importantly, both source and frequency appear to inform the particular ways African American young adults establish both an individual and inter-ethnic group identity. Similar to the findings for research question one, interview data suggests the means for establishing an African American identity appear to be experienced differently, based on educational status. The data suggests that for college enrolled young adults, positive racial socialization is cumulative, enduring, and incorporates multiple socialization agents (ex. schools *and* family) experienced throughout the life cycle. However, for GED enrolled young adults, positive racial socialization is often transitory and/or includes one socialization source (ex. one

notable elementary school teacher). The following section highlights the different patterns in racial socialization for African American young adults, primarily based on educational status.

The broad collective of college students express racial socialization experiences characterized by multiple sources and/or frequent interactions which foster either an individual identity of cultural pride and/or collective identity characterized by African American social responsibility. GED students often describe racial socialization as either given by one source, intermittent, and/or focused on supporting achievements without imparting the expectations of African American pride and/or collectivist responsibility.

College Enrolled Young Adults and Racial Socialization

For college enrolled young adults, African American socialization appears to be cumulative and multi-systematic. Thirteen out of 14 young adults describe varied modes of socialization which cultivate a sense of African American pride, resilience, perseverance, and/or group responsibility. For George, Raymond, Bria, and Kiana, family and school experiences appear to be jointly influential.

George expresses his “Black pride” is resultant of his parents teaching both him and his siblings the importance of being African American. He recounts that during his childhood and adolescence,

My parents just really instilled it in me from the time we were young, just, like, educating us about Black things, taking us to Black events. I even remember going to see plays on Martin Luther King...they made me understand who I am and what it means to be a Black person... and just educating me on the things that Blacks have gone through and what I have to do as a person to succeed, basically.
(George, age 22, college enrolled)

George says his parents were purposeful and deliberate in exposing him and his siblings to “Black” cultural events like theatrical performances and plays. In addition, when his family travelled together by car throughout “Black Chicago,” communities known for producing African American businesses, leaders, and churches, his parents would “always tell us a story about Black this and Black that.” He says his decision to attend college was also influenced by his parents and extended family, each of whom attended a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). George’s childhood socialization paved the way for him choosing classes and professors known for exposing students to African American authors and content. George states,

I had an African American Theatre class where we [learned about] Black playwrights, play-wrighting and theatre and stuff like that...and my freshman year, I took African American History (*George, age 22, college enrolled*)

The combination of familial and school messages provided an enduring African American socialization experience rooted in perseverance and positive African American images.

Raymond too describes multiple levels of socialization experienced both in parochial elementary school and from his family. Each source contributed to him identifying as a “proud Black male.” For the former he states, his mostly African American teachers,

They showed us these movies like every year. I didn’t even know they had all these movies about certain people’s lives. Like, there are a lot of documentaries about Martin Luther King’s life, Malcolm X’s life. We saw so many different documentaries...first grade through eighth. (*Raymond, age 19, college enrolled male*)

His school also ritualized yearly “Black history” plays and performances where students dressed as notable African Americans. In addition to school, Raymond recounts the pioneering lessons learned from his grandfather as key to instilling in him a sense of pride:

My grandfather, my dad’s father, was the first greyhound bus driver in Memphis, Tennessee...so, having that [accomplishment] close to my family, for my grandfather to have made history like that is amazing...and every month in February they put an article in the newspaper about him.

Raymond’s grandfather, who single-handedly broke down racial barriers within the busing industry, provides an immediate reference to an “amazing” African American pioneer. Raymond also describes his grandfather’s encouraging words given to him with regard to being “Black” in America,

He said [to me] that basically things that most people see as negative [being a Black male] you should try to use as something empowering to make you better yourself.

Both intergenerational familial messages and elementary school experiences appear to inculcate Raymond’s African American pride.

Kiana too discusses a multidimensional racial socialization experience through both the oral tradition of her family. She says,

I learned about what it means to be African American probably more from my family and the people who are around me, like them sharing of what happened to them like when segregation was at its prime... so they’ll tell me about experiences they had growing up with the whites only, Blacks only signs. (*Kiana, age 20, college enrolled*)

Kiana recounts her “love” for the African American community began with family stories consistently retold by her grandparents and other extended kin who

experienced public discrimination during the “separate but equal” Jim Crow era. Kiana also identifies the “Black church” as a conduit for African American communal reciprocity and states,

I guess the church kinda taught me about the struggles that we go through being African American and how to go about living your life as an African American... And then community-wise they always encourage you to go to school or to get a job or this or that. The church encourages you to be the best you can and live a good life. They also encourage you to be active in the community and actually help each other out. (*Kiana, age 20, college enrolled female*)

Like her family, the African American church she attends purposefully commemorates African American traditions. Kiana reveals the church both acknowledges the disproportionate economic and educational “struggles” seen in the broader African American community, as well as, attempts to remedy these problems through individual and collective efforts to ensure healthy functioning. Both intergenerational familial messages and church contributed to Kiana’s individual “pride” and her mission to “give back” to the broader African American community as a social science researcher, post college graduation.

For other college enrolled young adults, concentrated racial socialization refrained from emanating from two or more institutions. Instead, for six participants, racial socialization was concentrated from multiple sites of a primary source – the education system. For example, Tiffany, Tim, and Kenny each vividly describe how their family rarely discussed with them notions of African American pride and responsibility. During the interview Tiffany gropes and states,

Messages I heard at home, it was like nothing [pause]. I mean [pause], Black people, they don't really explain culture to their kids. (*Tiffany, age 18, college enrolled female*)

Kenny resonates a similar outlook with regard to racial socialization and racism management and says,

My parents don't really like to get into talking about the races...I guess it's more of a self-defense mechanism so we won't have to be influenced by certain things if that does happen. (*Kenny, age 19, college enrolled*)

Still, Tim says his mother refrains from talking to him about African American positive socialization as she doesn't like behaviors exhibited by some African American young adults whom she believes,

Like to fight all the time and argue...and always killing each other (*Tim, age 19, college enrolled*).

Despite their families' lack of racial socialization, Kenny, Tiffany, and Tim received positive racial socialization messages from their school experiences. Kenny describes how his parents "were more focused on our education" than conversations with he and his siblings about exploring the applicability of African American historical significance to their lives. Accordingly, Kenny describes both high school and college as key to fostering a sense of African American responsibility and individual goal attainment. For the former, he says,

My teacher was an African American and he was knowledgeable about not only African American history, but world history...I learned in high school that understanding your past in order to better understand your present and hopefully influence your future. (*Kenny, age 19, college enrolled*)

Kenny describes how his high school teacher modeled and practiced learning about history as a means of individual goal setting and personal agency. More

importantly, Kenny's teacher provided the foundation for his current college experience as Kenny is a history major slated to graduate in May 2013.

Tiffany too identifies school as a critical socialization source, notwithstanding a unique elementary school experience. She describes the racial socialization messages learned from elementary school as questionable interventions given to decrease both teenage female parenthood; and teenage male gang involvement and criminal justice contact. She states for both her and her African American peers of both genders,

Even in elementary school, my teacher ended the school year saying, 'when I see you, I don't want to see someone else with you'...and [for the boys] in seventh grade we took a field trip to Cook County jail. (*Tiffany, age 18, college enrolled*)

Tiffany reflects she wishes her teachers were more proactive, opting to expose them to "museums" and aquariums" instead of "going to Cook County jail to see inmates!" Like Kenny, Tiffany upholds the messages received from one extraordinary African American high school teacher. She says,

I always want to take advice from my teacher. I mean like we had one teacher in my high school that actually gave us a Black history fact, everyday...and taught us about all these great Black inventions.

Tiffany reports the message of excellence promoted by her favorite high school teacher who said, "you know you got to show them that Black people can be more" supports her collegiate classroom experiences. She says,

When I came to college and was in my diversity class, it really helped me. Everybody was like what school did you go to? Did you go to Whitney Young [a college preparatory high school known for academic rigor]? No, I went to Simeon [a vocation-based high school known for trade development]. But, I had one good teacher who opened up my eyes and was like 'ask questions, don't believe everything you hear!' (*Tiffany, age 18, college enrolled female*)

Tiffany credits her high school teacher, who insisted she and her African American peers actively approach education with inquisition, with providing the blueprint for her current college experience. Tiffany identifies a “couple” college professors who adhere to a similar standard of African American uplifting established by her high school teacher. However, she attributes her current college success to her high school teacher’s emphasis on critical thinking and query. The lesson learned in high school provided the basis for her current college experience and accompanying course/teacher selection, each with similar standards and expectations of African American identity rooted in exceptionality. Like Kenny and Tiffany, Tim describes the bulk of his racial socialization experiences in school – elementary, high school, and college. He reflects,

The [elementary] schools I went to were all Black, and I guess when you go to history class they talk about history with Martin Luther King, Harriet Tubman, Malcolm X. (*Tim, age 19, college enrolled*)

Like Kenny and Tiffany, he describes the exceptional African American male high school history teacher whose role extended beyond the classroom,

I had a good history teacher in high school. He used to always try to keep us on track and teach us about Black heroes. He used to be a mentor, help us with our grades...if we had a problem and needed money for bus fare, he would always help us with it.

Tim identifies the notable high school teacher as one who purposefully instilled in him and his peers the importance of learning about African American historical leadership and accomplishments. The teacher also assumed additional roles similar to a parent by providing monetary assistance to ensure safe travels to and from school.

Tim's integrated educational socialization also included an auxiliary out-of-school high school experience with Upper Bound, a university-based program aimed at providing high school students and their families to college entry test-prep and college tours. Tim vividly recalls a college tour at a Southern HBCU where he saw positive African American collegiates whom he describes as, "Black Power people...trying to get out their opinions...their voice." His high school and Upper Bound experiences provided a context to support his current college experience. Tim describes his current African American college Speech professor as continuing the legacy of positive African American socialization. Tim says,

[My teacher] "teaches me how to speak well, [he says] don't be nervous...cause we had a couple of speeches and he gave us a topic in class, and now I'm not really nervous.

For Tim, school appears to provide an affirming African American socialization experience primarily predicated on positive African American male models.

GED Young Adults and Racial Socialization

Whereas college enrolled participants report cumulative, African American socialization; GED participants describe racial socialization as non-African American centered. GED participants describe racial socialization in three ways: (1) vocation oriented as a means to "getting a job"; (2) intermittent; or (3) void of relevance to modern psychosocial functioning. Like college enrolled participants, many GED participants describe African American socialization from varied sources; however, the frequency of positive socialization is experienced differently.

Racial Socialization is Vocation Oriented

For many GED enrolled adults, deliberate, positive racial socialization is less likely to emanate from the family. It should be noted that the average “drop-out” grade for GED enrolled students is the eleventh. Thus, GED enrolled participants describe family members’ racial socialization as focused less on the integration of African American history to their modern-day psychosocial functioning and/or group accountability and betterment. Instead familial lessons are more focused on encouraging GED enrolled participants to complete the GED program and/or other workforce training programs.

For example, Raya, who left high school in the eleventh grade, describes racial socialization from her mother and extended kin and states,

My family just gives me courage to keep going to school...to get back in school to make my life better. *(Raya, age 22, college enrolled)*

Dante, who left school in the ninth grade, too, describes an African American parental socialization rooted primarily by,

The parents I been raised by...they encourage me...they raised a good child. *(Dante, age 18, GED enrolled)*

Tanya too describes racial socialization within the context of school completion. Tanya, who left school during her sophomore year, states her mother,

My mother used to teach me about Black History Month and telling me you Black...you gonna have to be independent one day, I want you to finish school. *(Tanya, age 19, GED enrolled)*

For each of these participants, African American racial socialization was not in the form of storytelling; celebrating an African American tradition or leader; or visiting a

cultural institution like an African American university, festival, or museum. Instead, positive racial socialization manifests in parental encouragement to persevere at completing the GED program to ensure economic independence.

Racial Socialization is Intermittent and/or Happenstance

Still, for many GED participants, positive racial socialization appears either intermittent; or occurs by happenstance. The latter is evident for both Tony and Jamal who recount their most salient memories of African American racial socialization as almost accidental. Like Raya, Dante, and Tanya, Tony's family refrains from discussing "historical [Black] stuff like that." Furthermore, he recalls only a "couple Black history school assemblies and books" he deemed semi-important. However, Tony remembers during his early adolescence his "friend's mother" showing he and three other male teens the movie *Roots*, a film which chronicles African American identity formation within the context of slavery. He says, "she brought all of us together and made us sit down and watch the whole movie." For Tony, who has watched the movie several times since his initial adolescent viewing with friends, being introduced to *Roots*:

It really forced me to appreciate stuff a whole lot more...because people in my age group wouldn't make it as slaves. (*Tony, age 22, GED enrolled*)

Though Tony acknowledges his appreciation for his ancestors' struggles depicted in the film, this notable socialization event cultivated by his friends' mother is the only one he deems as critical in thinking about the interconnectedness of an African American past with present functioning.

Similarly, Jamal's most noteworthy racial socialization experience occurred when he was eleven and too can be characterized as haphazard. Jamal, an ex "gang banger" who in his adolescence often solicited strangers for money, met an "African American man" while panhandling. The man refused to give him cash dollars; opting instead to cultivate a six-month phone based mentor-mentee relationship. Jamal states,

He was like a father-figure for a short period of time...the whole thing was he came into my life to really tell me about who I was as a Black male and the war that it is against us. (*Jamal, age 22, GED enrolled*)

The man's brief presence contrasted both familial and school messages which Jamal often "tuned out" as he was attracted to the profitability of selling drugs in downtown Chicago. Instead, Jamal's chance meeting with the affirming African American man sought to offer an alternative African American male image, characterized by gender and race-based teachings relevant to his healthy survival and development.

Still, Aaron and Keisha describe intermittent racial socialization first exhibited in elementary school. According to Aaron,

When I was younger...in elementary school, they teach you about being African American or Black...through stories about who invented this...who brought about change. (*Aaron, age 19, GED enrolled*)

Keisha too reveals a similar school experience,

I learned in school...from my middle school teachers that we as African Americans came a long way...in high school I can remember only a paragraph in a text book about Black people. (*Keisha, age 18, GED enrolled*)

In addition, Keisha recounts her recent introduction to Black jazz artists like Billie Holiday as instrumental in teaching her about African American issues of social injustice. Still, Aaron recounts his church as a key site for racial socialization, particularly with

regard to racism management when confronted with adverse inter-group conflict. He states his church urges its members to “breathe” and know that “racism period is something you have to get through.” While Aaron received positive messages about African American innovation in his formative years in elementary school, such positive affirmations were discontinued in his two year stint in high school before dropping out. The five year gap between elementary school to his modern church experiences, suggest a discontinuous African American socialization.

Even when an African American socialization appears to be integrated, positive, and fostered through family or other institutions, for some participants, modern-day psychosocial functioning may negate the historical accomplishments as relevant to their lives. Sean eloquently describes learning “what it means to be Black” from his extended family. He says, “my grandma, she really stressed education and my uncle he stressed education too.” More importantly, he recalls the stories told by his grandmother who experienced 1950’s voter disenfranchisement,

She was telling me about the time when they start letting Black people vote. She said she remembers when it was a long line outside...and they’ll ask you all type of stupid questions like ‘how many jellybeans in this jar.’ Things that had nothing to do with you voting. And if you get it wrong then you just can’t vote. Just cause you Black! (*Sean, age 18, GED enrolled*)

While Sean proclaims that the lessons learned from his family “gave him a sense of pride” he is doubtful about exercising his “right” to vote. He says,

It [my grandmother’s experience] makes me not want to vote, cause I just look at it like you vote for one person, just cause of the things you see in them. That’s only cause of the things you see in them. So, when they get in office they might not bring the things you see in them to life. I’m not finna take that gamble.

Sean appears to view his grandmother's 1950's narrative of voter marginalization as providing a historically-based foundation unsupportive of African American suffrage. Furthermore, Sean appears doubtful that today's politicians will fulfill their campaign once elected. Thus, he views voting as risky behavior with the inevitable costs of disappointment. The combination of intergenerational familial socialization, characterized in storytelling about African American hardships, as well as Sean's perception of modern gains accrued the political system, suggests historical knowledge may negate a positive African American group identity.

Key Informant Comparisons to Young Adults' Racial Socialization

Key informants reflect on African American young adult socialization processes in comparison to their own youth and young adult socialization. They express many African American young adults with whom they work lack an integrated, comprehensive racial socialization by varied members and institutions of the African American community. This fragmented socialization appears to render them "lost" and "disconnected" from values specific to their African American sensibilities.

African American Families as Sources for Positive Racial Socialization

Key informants describe an integrated and purposeful racial socialization largely given by their families. Mrs. Scott describes both the oral tradition and vocational diligence of her extended family contributing to her African American "heritage." She reminisces,

My dad sat us down, talked about integrity, about family value and work ethic...oh my God...the work ethic of my parents and grandparents, my uncles, that generation, we saw that. (*Mrs. Scott, social service director/pastor, age 55*)

Mrs. Scott describes her father's role as a 1960's family patriarch as one that purposefully communicated to his children lessons about individual and interpersonal principles. In addition, Mrs. Scott describes how she also observed extended kin committed to working in the labor market. Even still, for Mrs. Scott, her relationship with her extended family instilled a sense of legacy-based responsibility to her own children and grandchildren. She says,

I remember my great-great grandmother. I was fourteen when she died. And she was born a slave...slavery was abolished six months after she was born, so heritage to me is where I came from and what I'm leaving.

Mrs. Scott doubts intergenerational stories of African American family strength and perseverance are transmitted to today's young adults. Instead she believes "a combination of school and the media" are young adults' primary sources of African American socialization, void of familial collective storytelling which highlights poignant African Americans fortitude and resilience.

Pastor Washington too expresses his childhood lessons about excellence learned from his grandfather "who recognized the realities of segregation" and imparted to him,

You must always do better, you must always be twice as good, you must always excel, you will succeed...you can...[he spoke] that into our lives, constantly.
(*Pastor Washington, pastor, age 60*)

Pastor Washington says his grandfather's maxims were given to encourage excellence in all contexts of the segregated American South including school, the labor market, and public places like convenience stores. He believes that many young parishioners lack consistent affirming messages from family members due to parental/caregiver absence, parental/caregiver stress, and parental/caregiver inability to

profess such affirming language due to their lack of household exposure. Instead of today's youth looking to family first for appropriate guidance, Pastor Washington believes televised music and sports celebrities appear to provide the predominant examples for African American values and behavior. He says, "we went from the R and B world to the hip-hop world." The former, a musical tradition enjoyed by Pastor Washington during his youth, encompassed not only a soulful musical genre but a commitment to "social change" as evidenced in the philanthropic endeavors of African American celebrities of the 1960's and 1950's like "Muhammad Ali." In contrast, modern young adults of the "hip-hop world," are socialized by televised entertainers and athletes that "excellence" connotes adopting a materialistic, self-centric perspective predominated namely by "paper chasing millions" of dollars at the expense of African American group responsibility. For Pastor Washington, many modern African American young adults with whom he works are socialized by media "images" void of parents and other family members offering a contrary collectivist, non-material model.

Mrs. Love also describes how her parents instilled a foundation of an educational legacy during the 1950's and proclaims,

It was always understood that we would continue our education...it was an expectation in the household...it had been an expectation with my daughter who went directly from high school into college and finished. (*Mrs. Love, social service director, age 67*)

The expectations of educational matriculation through both high school and college were a household mandate supported by her parents' actions as active participants throughout her student career. Like Pastor Washington, Mrs. Love believes youth and

young adults enrolled in her social service center often lack similar household messages of continuous education:

Young adults today don't have the same support mechanisms within the home... their parents have succumbed to looking to other institutions to raise their children...and instill cultural values. (*Mrs. Love, social service director, age 67*)

Mrs. Love believes parents and other guardians acknowledge and express their desires for their children to be successful and graduate from college. However, they lack the “personal resources” essential to navigating the educational systems including the application process, helping with homework, and supporting standardized test preparation. Accordingly, many parents look to Mrs. Love and her staff to both impart the necessity of attaining formal education and also navigate the school system for them. Mrs. Love contrasts lackadaisical parenting practices with the active techniques of her parents during the 1950's and 1960's as a key indicator of contemporary youth and young adult educational and labor market success. That is, parents' inability to successfully navigate school systems reflects modern youth and young adult experiences as high school drop-outs and marginal employees in the labor market.

Still, Dr. Mitchell expounds on how his father, whom he describes as a “race man” immersed in the advancement of 1960's Black liberation culture, relied on African American media to impart to his family positive messages:

He read everything...there was the Negro Digest, Ebony, Jet, of course...he read all them...they would be lying around and once I got older, I would read them...he always had something about, on, or by Black people. (*Dr. Mitchell, psychologist/college professor, age 60*)

Familial socialization pertinent to expressions of collective “Black pride” are seen as Dr. Washington was reared in a household that purposefully exposed him to African American current and past events through popular weekly and monthly magazine subscriptions devoted to African American lifestyle, culture, and politics. Unlike his household filled with Black magazines as the primary popular medium he believes,

Today’s African American adults are exposed to the wider culture of the 21st century...the digital age...being plugged in 24/7 to the grid [largely void of the] cultural expression of Black pride.

Dr. Washington expresses how young adults’ tendency to use modern technological expressions in the form of internet use, social media, and smart phones have contributed to the replacement of an exclusively African American themed agenda, in support of the interconnectedness of a global agenda void of explicit messages of “Black pride” and “Black consciousness.”

African American Neighborhoods as Conduits for Positive Racial Socialization

Perceptions about young adult socialization processes are rooted in key informant youth and young adult broader socialization processes. Five out of seven respondents reflect on the interconnected network of African American families and neighborhoods during the 1950’s and 1960’s Civil Rights era they deem responsible for positive African American socialization. Schools, churches, businesses, and neighborhoods fostered a collective means for securing a positive African American identity. More importantly, each conveyed messages about how to best express an African American identity.

Dr. Shields, a college professor who came of age as a young girl in Chicago during the 1960’s states,

My environment was African American. At high school all the teachers just about were Black. I went to a Black church. It was seldom that I had to go downtown. A lot of African Americans owned businesses back then. We patronized those businesses all up and down Cottage Grove, 79th Street, 63rd Street, all the major streets. There were African American businesses, so I really didn't have to go anyplace else. I could get my hair done. I could buy clothes. I could buy food...all of that, right in my own community. (*Dr. Shields, university professor, age 66*)

Dr. Shields describes how segregated Chicago neighborhoods provided African American young people reared during this period with numerous examples of African American pride. According to Dr. Shields, African American neighborhoods of the 1950's and 1960's consisted of African American entrepreneurs, educators, and clergymen, each of whom modeled for its younger progeny ingenuity, excellence, and economic responsibility. The context of segregation, with its mandated mode of homogenized African American neighborhoods through the "separate but equal" dichotomy, birthed thriving communities characterized by both economic entrepreneurship and group solidarity. She offers this reflection as a comparative to the neighborhoods of her African American students who also live in racially segregated Chicago neighborhoods, though void of the extended cultural capital seen in the 1950's and 1960's, namely in the business sector.

According to Dr. Shields, today's African American young adults have limited exposure to first-hand African American entrepreneurs. As described by young adults in the previous section, the "beauty supply" and "fast food" businesses which dominate their neighborhoods are often owned and operated by non-African American "immigrants." Thus, Dr. Shields mourns the lack of African American business models

seen post integration as it directly constricts both African American economic mobility and African American young adult entrepreneurial aspirations.

Still, Pastor Washington, reared in Baton Rouge, Louisiana offers a similar perspective about segregation in the American South. He states,

I grew up in an environment where everything that I touched and everything that touched me was African American. It was a totally segregated society. Therefore, schools, doctors, lawyers, banks, pharmacies, stores...were run, operated and owned by African Americans. The university I went to...and I went there through grades one through undergraduate degree, was run by, established by, and operated by African Americans. (*Pastor Washington, pastor, age 60*)

Like Dr. Shields, Pastor Washington reminisces about the integrated network of powerful African American educational and business institutions. When asked to contrast his young adult experiences with those of young adults today, he expresses that 1960's segregated communities often bore African American initiative and gumption:

Sometimes I think we [African Americans] were better off when we were under segregation. Not better off being oppressed by somebody else...Hell no. That's not what we're saying. What we're saying is we lost some of who we are, some of the things that put the fight in us and the drive to create [universities such as] Hampton, Clark, Bishop College...we lost that. (*Pastor Washington, pastor, age 60*)

Pastor Washington too describes the contradictions of segregation which simultaneously denigrate African Americans through systematic political "oppression" while fostering African American group fortitude and perseverance, specifically within the realm of higher education leadership. Like Dr. Shields, Pastor Washington's youthful reflections identify the strengths of segregation, namely African American educational leadership and collective business savvy, as a relic unseen for many African American young adults today.

Dr. Mitchell, also reared in Chicago during the 1950's and 1960's, portrays a similar youthful picture of the protective consequences of living in a segregated environment with intensive and positive racial socialization. He recounts,

Growing up in a completely segregated community... I didn't know that we were poor. I didn't know that we were second class citizens. My universe... My world was this Black community. (*Dr. Mitchell, psychologist/college professor, age 60*)

Dr. Mitchell expresses his child and adolescent development in a "segregated" community was filled with intra-ethnic group norms of support and protection. However, exposure to instances of integration characterized by "leaving" his neighborhood and venturing to predominantly white neighborhoods as one of few African Americans would be met, not with acceptance, but "danger and violence... we'd [he and his African American friends] have several inter-group skirmishes, fights." The protection by African American community members from physical and verbal degradation was replaced by personal protective methods. Dr. Mitchell says he and his adolescent peers "knew how to protect ourselves" from the bodily harm that frequently came with interacting with white peers.

Research question 4: How do African American young adults define and interpret an African American identity?

This question elucidates African American young adults' perceptions of their ethnic identity, inclusive of both their sense of salience (significance of an African American identity) and regard (meanings ascribed to an African American identity). In addition, responses speak to participants' identification, sense of belonging to other African Americans, and attachment with the broader African America group.

The Role of Violence on Individual and Group Identity

African American identity is interpreted and described broadly by 25 out of 26 participants as one which invokes ethnic “pride.” However, one common theme participant interviews reveal is African American identity salience (significance) and identity regard (meanings assigned to an African American identity) is described as a reflection of their cumulative experiences with direct violent perpetration and/or violence-threat. That is, participants’ discuss experiencing both direct and indirect violence in the form of witnessing community-based *intra*-group youth shootings/killings; as well as victimization in the form of *inter*-group harassment outside their home communities. In addition, they overwhelmingly report feeling vulnerable to violent victimization, or feel violence threat, when navigating public spaces. Based on both first-hand violent experiences and feelings of vulnerability, they identify accompanying feelings of paranoia, fear, and shame as key individual identity sub-constructs. Still, violence informs *intra*-group identity formation as participants’ express feeling disconnected from the broader African American community.

Direct Community Based Violence: The Role of Witnessing and Hearing Violence

One of the most prevalent sub-themes across all groups of young adult participants is the impact of direct, community-based violence on African American identity formation, specifically their level of attachment and connection toward other African American community members. In specific, GED enrolled students, regardless of gender, overwhelmingly describe witnessing and/or hearing direct, community-based violence. That is, GED-enrolled participants tend to describe the neighborhoods in which

they and their families live as havens for random youth shootings. These neighborhood violent observations thus threaten their sense of inter-ethnic group communalism.

Seven of the participants explicitly discuss hearing about violence in the African American neighborhoods in which they live and or frequently visit. When asked by the researcher to assess “how close” she feels to the broader African American community, Raya says,

[I feel] kind of close, but not as close. It’s a lot of shooting up there. So, kind of close, but not really close close...I try to stay inside...But, other than that we kind of close. (*Raya, age 22, GED enrolled female*)

As Raya noted, the extent to which she feels a sense of intimacy and belonging to other African Americans is contingent on hearing about neighborhood gun violence, specifically intra-ethnic group young adult shootings.

Tanya too describes how community-based violence threatens her level of connectivity, particularly with her African American peers:

I want to be close...but because the way they act, [I can’t]...anything can happen, domestic violence, or you can get killed, shot, just by talking to someone...people get killed all the time just by sayin’ something, talking to somebody, saying something to somebody, especially people my age. (*Tanya, age 19, GED enrolled*)

Tanya desires a greater bond with other African American young adults, but is hesitant as she either knows directly or indirectly, peer members who have been physically hurt or killed. Her tenuous relationship with African American peers is resultant of the random nature of violence – “just by talking to someone” – which weakens communal bonds with her peers and leaves her voluntarily isolating from other African Americans as a means of self protection.

Aaron too illustrates a similar sentiment when he describes his affinity and connectivity with other African Americans in his immediate neighborhood. He states,

It's hard to be – yeah, it's hard to be close...I really don't want to be outside with all the killings. You know, it's like a bullet on your back. (*Aaron, age 20, GED enrolled male*)

Like Raya, Aaron's ability to bond with African Americans is constrained by hearing about gun violence. In addition, Aaron bemoans how "hard" it is to connect with other African Americans. This terminology suggests that despite a desire for intra-group relationships, violence thwarts his efforts at establishing a meaningful connection with other African Americans.

Aliya too describes diminished connectivity with the broader African American community, primarily due to "dangerous" experiences. She describes how witnessing youth gang-related gun violence experienced two blocks from her home threatens her sense of attachment to the African American community. She recounts vividly how she and her three children were in their neighborhood walking to a local eatery and survived a shoot out between warring African American male young adults, some of whom she has a personal affiliation. She says,

Like around seven o'clock at night...we was going to the restaurant, and like two blocks down from my house...gun shots [was] coming from you know...I'm saying they just shooting. (*Aliya, age 22, GED enrolled female*)

Aliya's traumatic observation of neighborhood gun warfare appears to inform both her individual identity and her identification with the larger African American group. She states,

So, being Black, I mean I feel good being Black, but it's the people that I'm living around that's the same color and that's hurting each other, that's what I meant by dangerous.

For Aliya, a dual identity appears as she simultaneously values self-identifying as African American, but lacks the connectivity to the broader African American group, which she identifies as void of safety and protection. This is particularly troublesome as she feels disconnected from “dangerous” people with whom she can presumably identify as they are African American, in their late teens/early twenties, and live in the same residential area.

Inter-ethnic Group Violence: The Role of Victimization

The second sub-theme pertinent to African American young adult, male identity construction born out of direct community-based violence is centered around inter-ethnic group violence. While community-based violence is perpetrated within participants' home neighborhoods by people of the same ethnicity, inter-ethnic group violence is perpetrated by non-African Americans to African American young adult participants both within *and* outside their immediate neighborhoods. Accordingly, six of the participants, all male, explicitly discussed inter-ethnic group violent victimization characterized by intimidation, harassment, and verbal assaults by non-African American peers and/or police. More importantly, such victimization appears to inform African American male individual identity construction.

The impact of non-African American peer violence on ethnic identity. James, a 20-year old GED enrolled student describes an African American male identity as one which prevents safe travel to non-African American neighborhoods located in other parts

of his city of residence. Both he and his older brother of two years experienced victimization in the form of verbal harassment by Latino young adults. He says,

Like we can't go certain places on the West Side, cause it's either a whole lot of Mexicans or Puerto Ricans over there...either we'll get beat up or something else.

James describes an African American male identity as one indiscriminately prone to physical violence by other people of color.

In addition, Tony, a 22-year old GED enrolled student, describes an inter-ethnic group violent experience critical in his self-examination of African American male identity. He recounts to the researcher his racially rooted angst when experiencing car troubles in a predominantly Mexican neighborhood less than three miles away from his home:

My cousin had a flat tire, and we had went and got the tire and went to get it fixed, me and my hommie. So, we riding...we take a short cut. And like as soon as they seen Black people coming down their block, they tried to surround the car. They was Mexicans...they had sticks, bricks, poles, and tire irons. (*Tony, age 22, GED enrolled male*)

According to Tony, young adult violent experiences are not confined to his immediate neighborhood; rather, violence is experienced in neighboring communities, even during times of vulnerability and need. Instead of receiving assistance to repair his stranded car, Tony perceives he was met with hostility and aggression, simply because he is identified by others as African American. Tony continues,

It was a race thing, you know what I'm saying. By us being Black, he was like, look at these n****s."

Like James, Tony appears to connote African American male identity as devalued and inherently subjected to insensitive aggression, even by other marginalized ethnic groups.

In addition, Jamal echoes a similar sentiment of aggression diffusion from non-African Americans as he is riding the public train home from a professional baseball game. Jamal says,

I've been a victim of a racial conflict. Actually, I'm still is. I feel like I'm still a target. Here's an example. I'm on the train. Some Caucasian people got on the train at Addison from a Cubs game...they sat right behind me. I guess it was a personal target on me because they seen me as they proceeded to they seat. They was just speaking of how they do Negroes, Black people. How they have video games for them. How they put them in games. Kidnap them. Take them somewhere I guess. And have games with them. Have fun. Give them a chance of survival. (*Jamal, age 22, GED enrolled*)

For Jamal, an African American identity is constructed as repeatedly being “victimized” by cross-ethnic verbal assaults, which constantly render him subjected to unprovoked harassment. The most recent instance reflected in the quote was perpetrated by “drunk white” train commuters who attempt to inflict cruel intimidation as Jamal rode the train alone from Wrigleyville – a Chicago community both historically and contemporarily inhabited by whites and other non African-Americans. The aforementioned quote suggests an African American male identity often results in Jamal feeling intimidated in public places in which he is the numerical ethnic minority; all the while outnumbered by a few insulting whites.

Aaron, a 20-year old GED enrolled student, too describes unprovoked, inter-ethnic group harassment expressed in cyberspace, resultant solely due to him “being Black.” He recounts multiple times when he was 18 years old and avidly played on-line 3-D games with gamers of different ethnic backgrounds as indicated by their on-line profile. Aaron reports that once his “mostly male” gaming peers discovered his ethnic

identity, they said often spewed race-based attacks such as “I don’t like your kind, your kind can go to hell, fuck you n****s.” For Aaron, who prefers the safety and quiet uncharacteristic of his neighborhood currently plagued by random gun violence and youth shootings, the anonymity and invisibility seemingly afforded by digital gaming render him to think about African American male identity as one prone to race-based degradations – even in cyberspace.

James, Tony, Jamal, and Aaron discuss interpersonal violence perpetuated by non-African Americans as both travel to other parts of their city largely inhabited by non-African Americans, as well as through their navigation of cyberspace. This inter-ethnic group violence reinforces the idea that an African American male ethnic identity is prone to adverse inter-ethnic group exchanges, which subject them to both random and reckless ethnically-based verbal assaults; as well as messages which suggest they are forbidden to travel beyond African American predominated neighborhoods and environments. That is, the participants’ quotes reflect that the unspoken code of African American male neighborhood confinement as a means to stay safe from inter-ethnic peer violence appears to reinforce positive regard for their immediate African American or neighborhood. This idea is reflected as Tony describes how racial insensitivities encourage increased regard about both identifying as African American and living in close proximity to other African Americans. He says, “I love it. We got our own sense of going about things. It’s just a sense of home.”

The impact of police violence on ethnic identity. In addition to an identity informed by inter-ethnic group violence perpetrated onto male participants by non-

African American laymen, such violence also manifests in the form of arbitrary police officers entrusted with protecting public citizens. Five out of 13 male participants (two enrolled in a GED program and three enrolled in college) allude to adverse interactions by police officers in the form of interrogation, harassment, and surveillance. Such encounters appear to foster an African American male identity constructed as paranoid and fearful when navigating both public and private spaces in which police officers may be present. As examples, George and Raymond, both college enrolled participants, ages 22 and 19 respectively, vividly describe how police violence and terrorism contribute to an African American male identity.

According to George, a commuting college student, his car travels from his home to school and other communities continuously subject him to violence in the form of harassment and degradation. He states,

I've been pulled over at least ten times, maybe more, and yeah, I've only been given one ticket...but they've always been white cops...I've never been pulled over by a Hispanic or Black cop, ever! (*George, age 22, college-enrolled*)

For George, who has been driving for only six years, being an African American male means random subjection to unjust surveillance when driving. In addition, George connotes this injustice as “race-based,” perpetrated by non-African Americans onto him simply because of his identity as male, African-American, and young adult.

It is important to note that inter-ethnic group police violence is particularly problematic for George as he recently experienced being pulled over in front of his family home in which he resides. George lives in East Chicago, Indiana, a small town about 10 miles from Chicago. He and his older two sisters and brother were reared by

their parents in this home. This has been the home to his nuclear family since before he was born – nearly 25 years. According to George, East Chicago is a “diverse” town populated mostly by African-Americans and Mexicans, with a few whites. Thus, he is disturbed when he recounts how police officers, “one white, one Hispanic...pulled me over in front of my own house.”

According to George, who was “coming home” from attending the college in which he commutes almost daily to earn a bachelor’s degree in Communication, he notices “two county cops chilling on the corner by my house,” their patrol cars facing opposite directions. Because he has a history of experiencing random police surveillance as both a driver and a passenger in other cars driven by African American males, he describes being sensitive to the aforementioned experience. He states,

I was making a right...one of them was going this direction...was leaving. The other one that was turned in this direction, he turned around. And I had a bad feeling when I passed them, right away. I was like, “Man, here we go.” And sure enough, soon as I was turning the corner, he turned around and he followed me. And I just kept going and I...‘cause my house is right here. So, I just pulled over and his lights had came on...I was like, “Man, screw this, I’m home.” (*George, age 22, college enrolled*)

George’s internal proclamation of residence as well as knowing his father was home lead to his resolve of exiting the car, despite the cops’ demand to “get back in the car.” George’s quote reflects an African American, young adult, male identity often means there is an increased probability of being ceaselessly racially profiled by white cops – even in front of one’s home. George has internalized this identity construct as he recounts how experience has taught him to be a strategic driver in an effort to avoid inevitable police surveillance. He says,

So I got back in the car and I'm sitting there and I'm so pissed. I'm like the one thing I did was I made sure I made a complete stop 'cause I knew... I'm like I'm not going to do anything that gives these dudes, you know, the right to come follow me.

For George, African American male identity is prone to the delicate balance of accepting the inevitability of officer terrorization and the realization that his home, a place which typically provides protection from harm, is not necessarily free from fear-evoking experiences perpetrated by cops who prey on African American young adult males. George's experience speaks to the pervasiveness of inter-ethnic cop violence as it even follows African American males to their home.

Similar to George, Raymond, a 19-year old, college enrolled African American male participant also describes a similar narrative of inter-ethnic group violence committed by police officers. Like George, Raymond describes an African American young adult identity as capriciously prone to cop-induced violence and harassment, even when navigating spaces presumably thought of as safe and protected. Raymond highlights the incessant inter-ethnic group violent experiences and states, "so, I have been stopped and questioned, I don't know how many times." However, he privileges one experience as paramount to his identity as an African American male consistently managing cop behavior. As a fourteen year old high school student in an academically prestigious downtown Chicago school predominated by non-African American students, he says,

But, there was a day when I had on a button up shirt that was like, red, blue, green. I had like every color. An officer stopped me and said, 'we just got a report that a six foot Black male in a colorful shirt just hit a woman in the face and robbed her.' (*Raymond, age 19, college enrolled*)

After being released, primarily because the victim identified another African American man as the rightful assailant, Raymond acknowledged that both this incident and a slew of others he has experienced leads him to believe both his ethnicity and physical build fit the prototype of targeted criminals: “I’m the six foot two Black male that police are often looking for.” Like George, Raymond is strategic in identifying preemptive measures to ensure both his safety and freedom from unjust criminal sentencing he sees as disproportionately impacting African American males. He says,

That makes me step up to what I’m doing and make sure I’m in a good place. Cause if I’m in the wrong place at the wrong time...that could be jail time for me.
(Raymond, age 19, College enrolled)

For Raymond, inter-ethnic cop harassment suggests an African American male identity prone to strategically spatial navigating spatial arrangements to ensure freedom from imprisonment.

Both George and Raymond lend credence to inter-ethnic group police violence and terrorism as key to African American male identity formation. Identity is simultaneously constructed as simultaneously fearful, paranoid, and deliberate. For the former, intra-ethnic group violence invokes trepidation of petrifying cops who participants’ know have the authority to negatively alter their life outcomes through sentencing and physical violence. In addition, identity is often constructed as justifiable paranoia, or distrust, due to frequent exposure to police interrogation, terrorism, and aggression. Both fear and paranoia appear to shape African American male identity, as they are deliberate and thoughtful in planning how to manage and interface with public

and even private spaces to mitigate the often destructive consequences of inevitable cop violence.

Indirect Violence Threat: The Role of Hearing

As described in the previous sections, young adult identity is constructed in response to first-hand experiences with both community-based and inter-ethnic group violence. However, young adult participants also discuss indirect violence threat, or the potential to be subjected to violence, as critical in both their individual and group identity formation. Whereas male participants, regardless of educational attainment, talk explicitly about first-hand direct experiences with violence in the form of harassment and verbal assaults, both college-enrolled and GED-enrolled young adults of both sexes talked about violence threat as critical in identity formation. That is, void of any personal first-hand violence observations, attacks, or harassment, participants still express feeling at-risk for violent acts as they travel to both their communities and other city neighborhoods. These feelings are no doubt due to hearing about community violence.

For example, Bria, a 19-year old college student, expresses feeling at-risk for violent victimization:

Bullets fly and the news says when bullets fly...not just one and two and three bullets...but ten and fifteen and twenty it's most likely a Black person gets killed...[while] I haven't been personally affected...I guess I have been affected because from the outside, it's like you gotta watch out.

Bria describes herself as “a young lady doing the right thing,” attending school with the intent to graduate, delaying parenthood, and working a part-time job in retail. On occasion, when she and her girlfriends decide to “party” and/or “hangout” like “most”

college students, she describes how she has to continually contemplate and deliberately plan what neighborhood and/or dance club she and her friends will visit. Such strategizing is done to ensure their safety from shootings from assailants who reportedly fit their demographic – young adult and African American.

The threat of violence as a tangible reality serves to reinforce how Bria and others periodically think about the broader implications of African American violent perpetrators as “shameful” assaults on the image of the broader African American community. Bria reveals that the possibility of death or bodily harm due to violence leaves her with accompanying feelings of trepidation, shame, and embarrassment. Bria states,

And it becomes a fear thing that leads to what a shame! What a shame that you're scared because this may happen. Because the news says anytime it gets hot...and you're Black...bullets fly. (*Bria, age 19, college enrolled*)

For Bria, shame is personal, as she feels mortified at her peers who adopt violent gun methods to handle conflict during summer pastimes at the public beach and park.

In addition, Aaron echoes these sentiments and describes how a small number of African American young adult violent perpetrators damage the integrity of the broader group, which leads to him feeling shame. He states,

Shame is understandable because I know how some people think, you know, like one apple spoils the bunch, you know, if one person did something, we're all the same. (*Aaron, age 20, GED enrolled*)

For Aaron, group shame experienced by African American young adults who refrain from violent behaviors appear to be a logical response as innocent African Americans are thus indiscriminately categorized the same as the perpetrators.

Still, Aliya, a 22-year old GED enrolled student states how she experiences group shame stating, “I love being Black, I just don’t like the stuff (shootings) that most Black people do.” For Aliya, she feels embarrassed about the violent behaviors perpetrated by a small minority of African American young adult males. As articulated by Aaron, Bria, and Aliya, inter-ethnic group young adult violence appears to function as a source of embarrassment or shame. Young adults feel that violence lends to dishonor and disgrace the African American young adult collective – regardless of violence perpetuation.

Indirect violence threat also negates young adult participants’ connection and affinity to other African Americans. Raya describes young adult relationships as:

Nobody really gets along. Like it’s a lot of killing. It’s a lot of people going against each other. Basically Black on Black crime. It’s all African Americans that are doing the killing. Basically, mostly. (*Raya, age 22, GED enrolled*)

Brittany too offers commentary about how violence compromises connectivity amongst her African American young adult male peers, saying

Boys are scared...it’s all about who has the biggest gun. Well, that’s me. That’s all I see around my house.” (*Brittany, age 19, GED enrolled*)

Kenny also discusses his feelings about belonging to the African American community, and says he concurrently feels,

Pride, but also humbleness...it’s a little heart breaking to see, it’s more of the self-destructive because of our violence and just our own crimes against ourselves, that’s heartbreaking. (*Kenny, age 22, college enrolled male*)

Aaron offers a similar conflicting outlook, stating,

It’s kinda depressing, but then again proud to be African American as we are now becoming the minority killing each other...but through it all, we pushing ahead. (*Aaron, age 20, GED enrolled*)

These quotes suggest that even when African American young adults display individual acts of pride, solidarity, and unity is compromised as they often feel demoralized and discouraged as a result of intra-ethnic group violence.

In addition to hearing and seeing random acts of community-based violence, African American young adults, namely those enrolled in a GED program, recount how indirect violence directly impacts their personal experiences with peer death which lead to personal loss. According to Tanya,

For the Black males, they out here shooting and killing. A lot of males my age is dying. I know like ten people that died in 2011...boys, all boys and like two of my girlfriends that got killed, just for mistaken identity, riding in a drive-by, stuff like that. (*Tanya, age 19, GED enrolled female*)

Raya reflects on her friends' death within the year,

I lost two friends in guns, during the streets, got shot...both were shot in the head. (*Raya, age 22, GED enrolled female*)

Still, as Tony recounts to the student researcher a story presumably unrelated to shootings, he contextualizes his response in relationship to his good friend's death and says,

It was two years ago. I was 20ish...around the time when my boy got shot and killed. (*Tony, age 22, GED enrolled*)

An essential component of young adulthood is the development and maintenance of healthy peer relationships (Arnett, 1999). The aforementioned quotes suggest that educational status may impact African American young adult relationship formation with peers and others. GED enrolled students appear to experience the impact of peer death through violence. Thus, for many GED enrolled participants, indirect violence threatens

the likelihood of maintaining long-lasting relationships and friendships. That is, participants' sense of sustaining long-term friendships with their African American school and neighborhood peers is compromised and thus subjected to the whim of a few violent peers. This informs their personal narratives, as African American young adult identity is characterized by pre-mature loss, abbreviated amity, and devaluation of African American life.

Key Informant Comparisons with Young Adults' Ethnic Identity Development

Cross-case analysis reveal key informant participants express the belief that African American young adults with whom they work or support interpret an African American identity void of high identity salience and high identity regard. Like young adult participants, they similarly express modern African American identity is void of group attachment. The lack of African American connectivity is attributable to neighborhood factors, increased focus on individualism, and a lack of positive African American socialization.

Older adult participants reveal that being a child, teen, or young adult during the "movements" of the Civil Rights era sparked a sense of both group and individual African American identity development. That is, the concentrated African American populous, with its increased cultural capital of African American positive models within the community, as well as, national models of African American leadership depicted on televised programming provided older adult participants with incessant reminders of African American strength, perseverance, and unity. With regard to African American group identity, Dr. Mitchell states,

My generation, those who became adults during the Civil Rights Movement or the Black Power Movement...I think there was this cultural cohesion, this group cohesion. (*Dr. Mitchell, college professor, age 60*)

Dr. Mitchell vividly recalls the “literature,” “leaders,” and “consciousness” which banded together African Americans in a unified stance supportive of African American political, social, and economic justice. The Black Power Movement, noted for African American “liberation” was particularly resonant as its ethos allowed African American young males in particular to assert a Black male identity characterized by protection and leadership. Dr. Mitchell juxtaposes his young adult formation with modern-day young adults and says,

I don't think that this generation, these young people, have the kind of exposure to struggle and efforts at liberation and talk about revolution, talk about Civil Rights or the kind of activity or consciousness that binds people together in a sense of who we are and who am I. (*Dr. Mitchell, psychologist/college professor, age 60*)

Dr. Mitchell admits the social and political gains birthed from the collective sociopolitical movements of his youth and young adulthood provide modern young adults with “limitless opportunities” as evidenced in America’s ability to elect the “first Black President,” or become a “Black millionaire.” However, the lack of vivid “exposure” to African American struggle of the “masses” also disengages them from assuming a collective African American identity and “consciousness” historically prone to encourage African American pride as a means for social change.

Still, other participants describe African American segregated socialization of the Civil Rights era as a source of group self-respect and dignity. Mrs. Love says,

I'm going to hearken back to the sixties and the Civil Rights Movement and the fact that it spurred in us a sense of pride and wanting to accomplish. (*Mrs. Love, social service director, age 67*)

Mrs. Love believes the environment of social and political transformation born of the Civil Rights Movement encouraged in her and her young adult peers, a desire to achieve and excel, particularly in school. Like Dr. Mitchell, she believes the Civil Rights Movement led to a shared unity among African Americans unseen in the young adults she supports accessing workforce training: “[African American] young adults don’t have that same connect, not at all.” Mrs. Love, who is the CEO of a non-profit workforce development community-based organization, attributes the lack of solidarity among young adults to three key factors. She states,

What I think has adversely impacted young African Americans today is the extent of drugs, the extent of crime, and the extent of violence. (*Mrs. Love, social service director, age 67*)

The protective factors specific to her young adult socialization in her segregated, predominantly African American Chicago neighborhood inclusive of drug-free neighborhoods, law abiding neighbors, and peaceful means at conflict resolution, provided Mrs. Love with the context of assuming a positive African American identity. Mrs. Love attributes these factors to modern young adults’ disengagement from the broader African American community as “[African American] young adults don’t have that same connect...not at all.”

Similarly, Mrs. Scott expresses feelings of individual and group “pride” as a young child growing up near the end of the Civil Rights movement. She says African American pride was largely due to acquiring a sense of collective “struggle,”

I'm 55 and so a lot of the Civil Rights Movement I was a kid, but I know what some of them went through. I know the struggles. I know what they sacrificed. I know what my ancestors sacrificed. (*Mrs. Scott, social service director/pastor, age 55*)

Like Dr. Mitchell and Mrs. Love, she believes African American young adults are disconnected from the political, educational, and social accomplishments specific to African American “community” empowerment. Mrs. Scott critiques,

They are so self-absorbed and individualized...they have a totally different mindset...they stomp on their values...they stomp on struggle...so I don't think they have a sense of community.

She believes African American young adults' tendency to be “individualized” not only lends to diminished connectivity, but concurrently lessens *her* bonds to young adults.

The group identity born out of African American struggle to overcome the pitfalls of segregation oftentimes fails to manifest for Mrs. Scott in her relationships with the young adult African American cohort she supports through her day to day work.

Summary

As described in detail in Chapter Two, the central tenet of cultural trauma theory is that chattel slavery is the traumatic event essential to African-American identity formation. Furthermore, cultural trauma theory asserts slavery birthed for African Americans an intergenerational legacy of adverse laws, policies, and intra-group interpersonal relationships which helped establish a complex African American identity. Specifically, African American identity is reflected in post-slave vestiges such as interpersonal and institutional racism experiences, as well as racial socialization messages. Together, an African American identity, racism experiences, and racial

socialization are often transmitted to form the collective memory – or intergenerational group remembrances used to fortify its members against racial insensitivity and injustice (Eyerman, 2001). Akbar (1996) describes this phenomenon as *psychohistory*. A collective memory or psychohistory is most notably thought to be activated by older African Americans immediately impacted by first-hand events such as legalized “Jim Crow” segregation experienced in the American South. However, data analysis reveal African American young adults seven generations removed from African American enslavement too engage in the collective memory of the broader African American community.

Accordingly, this chapter reveals findings which suggest that the cultural trauma thesis has implications for modern African American young adults. Historical knowledge acquisition of the cultural trauma, slavery, and its legacies, specifically the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950’s and 1960’s, appears to inform young adult psychosocial functioning as a means of establishing an African American identity. Specifically, for college enrolled young adults, African American historical knowledge acquisition appears to instill ethnic pride as a source of individual goal aspirations and collective responsibility. Still, the extent to which African American historical knowledge is accrued is contingent on racial socialization messages, with college enrolled participants reporting increased socialization experiences from multiple socialization sources. Conversely, GED enrolled students’ inability to engage in the collective remembrance as a tool for individual and/or collective action for the broader African American community appears to be informed by decreased African American socialization.

In sum, the analysis demonstrate that like African Americans from other generations, cultural trauma legacies, namely in the form of violence and stereotypes, appear to exist for a sample of African American young adults. That is, a pathway to a positive African American young adult identity appear to be mediated by an integrative experience comprised of their immediate neighborhood context, interpersonal relationships, and negative perceptions by other African American and non-African American community members. Specifically, violence and stereotype stigmatization have implications for young adult ethnic identity formation and intra-ethnic group African American attachment.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Young adulthood is a developmental period between adolescence and adulthood typically characterized by psychosocial competencies such as independent thinking, responsible sensibilities, and skills/knowledge acquisition (Arnett, 2000; Erickson, 1959). For African Americans, young adulthood psychosocial outcomes may be disproportionately impacted by juvenile justice contact, unemployment, and decreased labor market earnings. Such disparities are often attributed to the cultural trauma, *chattel slavery*, and its legacies.

Cultural trauma theory asserts that despite African American manumission in 1865, intergenerational African Americans born out of a culturally traumatic slave experience are disproportionately impacted by systemic challenges in institutions such as education, criminal justice, housing, politics, and employment which may undermine their well-being. More importantly, for African Americans, the cultural trauma, slavery, appear to etch a collective memory of slave legacies, inclusive of both challenges and resiliencies which shape African American identity formation (sense of belonging, attachment, and self-definition), racial socialization (process of learning ways to manage and identify a positive African American identity), and racism experiences (adverse interpersonal and/or institutional race-based encounters). This chapter will review and

summarize the dissertation research, identify the qualitative methods used, and discuss their implications in the study.

Accordingly, the primary goal of the current study was to apply cultural trauma theory to modern-day African American young adults ages 18 to 22. The researcher sought to examine young adult psychosocial functioning and gain insight into their interpretation of an African American identity formation, racial socialization messages, and racism experiences born out of chattel slavery. A second goal was to integrate the perspectives of older adult African Americans (over age 40) that work with this population and are thus knowledgeable about their developmental needs. To achieve this end, the researcher employed a qualitative case study, incorporative of semi-structured individual and focus group interviews. Three Chicago-based participant groups were included in the research study: African American college enrolled young adults (N=14), African American GED enrolled young adults (N=12), and African American older adult, community-based key informants (N=7). Of the college enrolled participants, nine participated in individual interviews and five participated in a focus group. For GED enrolled participants, ten participated in individual interviews and two participated in a focus group. Seven individual key informant interviews were conducted. There were 26 total young adult participants and seven older adult key, informant participants; for a total of 33 participants. Each participant was interviewed about the themes pertinent to racism, racial socialization, and African American identity development.

Chapter Four presented the study's key findings and offered an analysis of the qualitative interview data. The collective findings suggest that the cultural trauma theory

has implications for African American young adult psychosocial functioning. Specifically, the findings suggest that African American young adult identity development is nuanced and concurrently impacted by violence, stereotype stigmatization, and racial socialization messages. The trauma, slavery, and its 21st century legacies are contemporarily conceptualized as disproportionate violent victimization rates, violence-threat and stereotype stigmatization. However, like African Americans in previous generations, positive racial socialization appears to impart resiliencies in the form of African American pride, collectivism, and responsibility to support both individual and group identity. Accordingly, the key findings are: (1) the experience of violence is a pathway that threatens African American young adult identity formation; (2) stereotype stigmatization is a pathway that threatens African American young adult identity formation; and (3) positive racial socialization messages are a pathway to African American collective responsibility. What follows is the synthesis of the data findings incorporative of exploring the Theoretical Propositions (see Appendix A) for future study.

Ethnic Identity Formation and Violence

Research on African American identity development suggests that racial salience (significance) and racial regard (meanings attached to an African American identity) are informed by one's ethnic identification, sense of belonging, and attachment (Cross, 1995; Phinney, 2005; Vandiver, 2001). The data from the study reveals that for many African American young adults, racial regard is experienced as African American "pride."

However, their sense of belonging and attachment to the broader African American community is largely informed by violence.

Specifically, young adult participants report experiencing violence as: “Black on Black” community-based shootings, intra-ethnic violence from non-African American peers and police, and violence-threat. The data reveal GED enrolled participants of both genders overwhelmingly describe witnessing neighborhood violence. Males, regardless of educational status, appear to experience both intra-ethnic peer victimization and violence victimization perpetrated by police officers. In addition, across all groups, twenty young adults (including those impacted by direct violence victimization) report violence-threat resultant of hearing about violence. That is, they feel at risk for one or more of the aforesaid elements when navigating public places. While the study refrained from explicitly exploring how violence impacts African Americans, these subthemes emerged from interview questions posed about African American identity formation.

Thus, violence, in the form of direct assaults or at-risk situations, appears to threaten a positive African American identity formation. African American, young adult participants report feeling embarrassed to be identified with perpetrating members of their ethnic cohort. Additionally, violent experiences appear to threaten group connectivity and solidarity. That is, the connectivity component of the ethnic identity construct appears to decrease as violence and violence-threat experiences increase. In addition, educational status appears to inform African American identity formation. This is particularly salient for GED participants who expressed violence and violence-threat

experiences and thereby reported feeling less likely to proclaim African American group attachment and/or responsibility to the broader African American community.

Accordingly, the theoretical propositions gleaned from the literature are confirmed. The data reveal that African American identity is informed by the broader context of neighborhood and city violence. Of the African American ethnic identity formation stages discussed in the literature review, college enrolled participants in particular, expressed an identity characteristic of the higher stages of identity. These stages include both the *internalization* stage (feeling secure about being African American without romanticizing an African American identity) and *internalization-commitment* (commitment to liberate from oppression African Americans and other ethnic groups). GED enrolled students, however, appear to express an African American identity in the earlier stages inclusive of the *encounter* stage (an individual experiences an adverse and hostile encounter from a member of another ethnic group). Still, across gender and educational groups, participants describe characteristics that resemble a *pre-encounter miseducation* stage (adopting and internalizing negative evaluation of an African American identity) (Vandiver, 2001).

The study's violence narrative mirrors the violence narrative in Chicago, the hometown of all but three young adult participants (two young adults live in a neighboring suburb and one young adult lives in a neighboring state). While national murder rates have declined, Chicago murder rates reached 500 by December 27, 2012, an increase of 65 deaths since 2011 (*Chicago Sun Times*, December 30, 2012). Many of the murder perpetrators and victims were African Americans teens and adolescents. One

predominantly African American neighborhood reported 43 homicides in 2012 (*News One*, 2012). Chicago police report that up to 80% of the murders are “gang related” and perpetrated by youth and young adults. At least three local aspiring young rappers have died from gun shots wounds (*Chicago Reader*, 2012). Thus, the study’s findings contribute to ethnic identity research and isolate violence in the form of witnessing firsthand violent attacks and experiencing violence-threat in the form of hearing about violence; as a mediating variable which impacts healthy African American ethnic identity development.

Stereotype Stigmatization and Identity Formation

A second key finding of the study is racism experiences are perceived and labeled by African American young adults largely as interpersonal stereotypes. Like the violence subtheme, this study refrained from explicitly posing questions about stereotype experiences to young adults. Instead open-ended questions about identifying “racism experiences” in spaces such as school, work, and shopping were responded to, not as receptacles for adverse racism, but places where “stereotypes” emerged from both non-African Americans and even other African-Americans. Twenty out of 26 participants actively used the word stereotype.

Steele and Aronson (1995) describe stereotype-threat as the internalization of a social or ethnic group’s negative attributes. Stereotype-threat suggests that African Americans perform based on the negative traits associated with their ethnic group. While many young adults lamented negative and restrictive perceptions imposed by others on their group, the extent to which they altered their performance in educational and/or

social settings goes beyond the scope of the study. Instead, the findings suggest participants appeared to perceive the behaviors, values, and aesthetics of their African American identity as stigmatized, or disgraced/discredited from the dominant American culture (e.g., white, upper middle class, educated, etc.) (Goffman, 1963).

Thus, the theoretical propositions are confirmed as African American young adults' express experiencing racism in the form of interpersonal microaggressions and internalized racism. While 24 participants identified with the "bicultural" label (identifying as both African American and American), their daily experiences impact their "racial regard" (subjective meaning assigned to being African American) (Cross, 1991). As aforementioned, African American racial regard is broadly characterized by feelings of ethnic "pride." However, college and GED enrolled young adult participants describe both being hypersensitive toward African American stereotypes disseminated from "non-Blacks," and also older African American community members as a form of "race related stress" (Sanders-Thompson, 2002). They describe "microaggressions" (Pierce, 1995) in the forms of disparaging gestures, comments, and looks. In addition, media portrayals of African Americans characterized by familial dysfunction, female sexuality, male aggression, and fleeting economic stability appear to leave some young adult participants to adopt a "pre-encounter mis-education" identity (Vandiver, 2001) and associate attributes such as "wealth," "communalism," and "family" with non-African American ethnic groups. The findings suggest that young adults' awareness and consumption of negative African American appraisals may compromise their ability to

positively regard their ethnic group. Like violence, stereotype stigmatization appears to threaten the pathway to an African American ethnic identity.

Socialization and Group Responsibility

The third major finding suggests that African American collective, group responsibility is related to positive racial socialization messages. More importantly, a significant sub-finding is educational status appears to inform racial socialization. That is, a big difference found was the distinction between college enrolled and GED enrolled experiences of racial socialization. Data reveal that for college enrolled participants, racial socialization is comprehensive, continuous, and emanating from multiple African American institutions (ex. parents, schools, church, media) and/or one institution, namely schools, throughout the life cycle (ex. elementary school, high school, and college). College enrolled African Americans describe racial socialization as cultivating African American pride, resilience, and group responsibility. College enrolled participants expressed value in responsibility to ensure collective African American economic, educational, political, and/or social empowerment. They consistently expressed commitment to the broader African American community through their current and future career work; as well as volunteerism experiences. Conversely, GED enrolled participants, many of whom have yet to enter the higher stages of African American identity, characterized by a commitment to liberating from oppression African Americans and other groups (Cross, 1991), expressed racial socialization as intermittent and/or happenstance. The data revealed that GED enrolled participants expressed racial socialization primarily as vocation oriented to ensure GED completion and/or job

attainment, largely void of a commitment to African American communal values of group responsibility.

Thus, the theoretical propositions were partially confirmed. Literature suggests African American *parents* typically engage in racial socialization to instill ethnic pride, support racism management techniques, and provide historical knowledge acquisition in their young children (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Hughes et al., 2006). However, the research findings suggests that for socially responsible young adults committed to African American sustainability, socialization is cumulative and enduring, thereby enacted by multiple sources including parents, extended kin, school teachers/professors, church ministries, and media.

Significance for Theory Building

While theory attempts to explain or predict the relationship among several phenomena, this study offers theoretical significance. As aforementioned, cultural trauma theory and its relevance to African Americans has been described as the historical consequences of chattel slavery impacting intergenerational African Americans. Scholars such as Akbar (1996), Pouissant and Alexander (2000), and Leary (2005) describe how America's political, social, and economic forces intertwine to shape the collective well-being of African Americans. This study can contribute to theory building as community violence can be added to the list of cultural trauma legacies impacting African Americans.

Historically-based trauma legacies such as the *Black Codes*, *peonage system*, and *Jim Crow*, emerged as systematically structured power differentials expressed within a

“Black-white” binary. However, the findings from the study reveal modern trauma legacies embodied as both intra-ethnic, “Black on Black” crimes and violations; and discriminations disseminated from non-white, people of color. Scholars such as Shakoor and Chalmers (1991) and Bell and Jenkins (1991) have written extensively about the effects of urban violence, mainly on young African American children. However, this study provides additional information on the legacy of community-based violence and its ability to threaten the connectivity, solidarity, and sustainability of the African American collective. Violence exposure, victimization, and witnessing perpetuated by African Americans toward other African Americans threaten intergenerational and intra-generational bonds. Such constraint may prevent collective action toward policy, program, and people supportive of African American well-being.

Significance for the Social Work Profession

Whereas social workers work in industries where African American young adults are found including: schools/universities, social service agencies, criminal justice institutions, hospitals, and churches; the study has best practice implications. Specifically, the findings of the study have implications for social work practice, education, and research.

Practice

The findings suggest that micro, mezzo, and macro social work practice should adopt approaches commensurate with its professional mission to adhere to principles such as “cultural competence” and “social diversity” (NASW, 2008). Specifically, micro-level assessments, like individual biopsychosocial histories, should incorporate measures

which explore an African American *psychohistory* (Akbar, 1996) incorporative of intergenerational psychosocial functioning specific to an African American historical experience. Finn and Jacobson (2002) describe knowing the ethnic group “history” of marginalized populations like urban, African American young adults as essential to uphold the “social justice” social work value. Thus, social workers working with African Americans should be knowledgeable about how historical movements, legislation, and policies impact contemporary young adult outcomes. In addition, social work clinicians should actively explore with African American young adults meaning-making experiences of their ethnic identity to identify the impacts of violence and violence-threat; as well as stereotype stigmatization inclusive of hyper-vigilance and microaggressions.

Specifically, for African American young adults enrolled in GED programs, micro-level efforts should seek to consistently affirm a positive African American racial identity. A commitment to social service professionals aimed at imparting images of successful African Americans is critical. In addition to social service organizations hiring African American females and males, social workers should ensure consistent positive role modeling. For example, former African American GED students who have completed both their educational and career goals should be invited to GED programs to potentially normalize the GED process, inspire hope, and model success.

Mezzo-level approaches involve social work interventions with small groups and organizations such as schools, neighborhood organizations, and social service agencies. The study’s findings suggest that for mezzo-level social workers, supporting healthy

African American young adult development is contingent on establishing partnerships and collaborative endeavors supportive of peace initiatives. As violence appears to threaten positive African American identity formation across all groups, social workers should rely on the professional skill of community activism to activate an interconnection of organizations inclusive of social services, schools, churches, and citizen patrols to ensure the neighborhoods in which African American young adults live and navigate are free from random shooting violence.

In addition, the data reveal positive African American socialization is instrumental to both individual and group racial identity. Thus, social workers should spearhead African American intergenerational initiatives, specifically for those young adults enrolled in GED programs. Social workers should create spaces where young adults can interface and learn African American heritage and history from older African Americans in varied professions and careers. Still, social workers should partner with agencies and institutions where African American elders are found, like senior citizen facilities and churches to integrate programs specific to intergenerational communication and interaction. The data suggests that creating culturally sensitive GED tests characterized by themes pertinent to African American history and positive imaging for young African American young adults may fuel GED completion. For example, to supplement the reading component of the GED exam preparatory tests, text excerpts can describe notable figures to the African American community like Oprah Winfrey and Harriet Tubman. Innovations such as these are likely to strengthen African American

identity and social capital and thereby cultivate a space for African American resource and network development (Bourdieu, 1986).

Still, the study's findings are significant for macro-level practice. The social work profession is distinguished from other helping professions as it is committed to political advocacy supporting state and federal policies crafted for social equity. Thus, social workers should rally to support existing laws which directly impact African American young adults such as the *End Racial Profiling Act of 2011* (NASW, 2012). In addition, social workers must also collectively pressure politicians and social think-tanks to introduce legislation pertinent to gun control, violence prevention, urban economic revitalization, youth and young adult job growth, and responsible media characterized by healthy African American imaging.

Education

The findings also have implications for social work education at the bachelors, masters, and doctoral level. The extent to which social workers engage in culturally relevant micro, mezzo, and macro interventions supportive of African American psychosocial development may be related to social work demographics. According to a nationally conducted NASW study, 86% of all licensed social workers are white, while only 7% are African American (Whitaker, Weismiller & Clark, 2006). Still, over 60% of social workers are over age 45 (Whitaker et al., 2006). Thus, social work schools must increase efforts at both African American and young/middle adult enrollment and retention to ensure social service staff is reflective of the African American young adult population.

More importantly, for social work students interested in supporting African American young adult development, school social work curriculum should mandate the inclusion of articles and texts pertinent to exploring an African American psychohistory (Akbar, 1996) and collective memory (Eyerman, 2001). Books such as: *Breaking the Chains of Psychological Slavery* by Akbar (1996) and *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* by Leary (2005) can be introduced in social work mental health courses to identify and analyze potential mental health implications of slavery and its legacies. Still, *Medical Apartheid* by Washington (2006) can be a required text used in research courses to explore the relationship between enslaved African Americans, ethics, and modern science. Still, *Human Services and the Afrocentric Paradigm* by Schiele (2000) can support macro-level social work courses focused on developing culturally sensitive social service organization, specifically supportive of African American psychohistory stemming from slavery.

Research

Still, the study has implications for future research. The study's findings refrain from being generalized to the broader African American young adult population as 26 young adults were recruited from either one four-year college or one workforce developmental center supportive of GED completion, both located in Chicago. Chicago is known for shaping African American racial identity based on de jure neighborhood segregation stemming from the Black Great Migration movement from the South to cities in the North (Wilkerson, 2010). Thus, to glean additional young adult perspectives, future research should include a comparative sample in other American cities to find

similarities and differences in expressed African American identity, racial socialization, and racism experiences. In addition, as the site was sampled from a Historically Black College/University, predominated by African American college students, future research should examine the main study variables at African American students enrolled at predominantly white institutions. Still, future studies on “non-college enrolled” participants should investigate the study’s main variables on young adults’ void of either a high school diploma or GED enrollment, but either working in the labor market or unemployed.

In addition, there are implications for future research for the intergenerational component of the study, inclusive of key informant individual interviews. Future studies should seek to incorporate several focus group interviews of specific generations (e.g., one group age 35 to 40; one group ages 40 to 45; and so on) to identify the relationship between youth and young adult socializations as a means for culturally sensitive interventions supportive of contemporary African American young adult development.

Limitations of the Study

While this study sought to explore African American young adults’ perceptions about the cultural trauma thesis, it has a several limitations. First, the study engaged African American students from one Midwestern university, predominated by African American students. Accordingly, one must refrain from generalizing findings to all North American universities in which African Americans attend. For college enrolled young adults, differences in student experiences and perceptions can be attributed in part to city of college attendance and institutional types (e.g., small liberal colleges,

community colleges, Ivy League colleges, and “Big-Ten” schools) (DeSousa & King, 1992).

Still, the study sampled from a workforce development site for GED students. “Non-college enrolled students” could have also been sampled as employed in the labor market, unemployed, or attending social service programming to achieve additional certification other than a GED. Thus, the findings should not be generalized to all non-college enrolled African American young adults.

Next, this study is limited to a small sample size (N=26) of young adult research participants. Qualitative research is historically predicated on gaining an “in-depth” research experience of a specific population. The goal differs from quantitative techniques of calculating effect size and impact to determine the strength and relationship of key variables (Padgett, 2008). Consequently, such a small size precludes findings from demonstrable representation to the larger African American young adult community.

Last, this study is limited in terms of its sampling technique. As the study sought to explore a theoretical construct, “cultural trauma,” the researcher utilized a convenience, non-probability sampling technique. This type of sampling technique prevents statistical generalization (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Hence, this sampling technique will decrease the ability to infer from this population to the larger population of African American young adults broadly, and African American college students and non-college students specifically.

Despite these limitations, this study has theoretical value. The study was designed to explore the theoretical construct, cultural trauma, with the descendants of enslaved African Americans – African American young adults. Such explorations may provide new insights about the subjective, meaning-making experiences of African American young adults with regard to contemporary experiences with racism, ethnic identity formation, and socialization narratives. Such insights can extend the cultural trauma theoretical lens to include first-hand African American young adults' perceptions of a post-slave legacy.

APPENDIX A
THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

Case study method relies on theoretical propositions or researcher hypotheses based on empirical and conceptual themes found in the literature. Accordingly, the following theoretical propositions will reflect the major study variables ethnic identity formation, racism, and racial socialization, and cultural trauma legacies; as well as the broader research questions.

Cultural Trauma Legacies

Research Question: How do African-American young adults interpret the cultural trauma, slavery, and its legacies as impacting their current psychosocial functioning?

Literature suggests that the cultural trauma, slavery, birthed a litany of race-based legacies supportive of African American resilience and challenges which were transmitted inter-generationally. In addition, slavery set the tone for African American identity formation, African American experiences with racism, and African American racial socialization, each of which may impact African American psychosocial functioning.

Proposition 1: Racial socialization pertinent to exploring an African American history which encompasses chattel slavery will inform young adult interpretations of slavery and post-slave legacies as impacting their current psychosocial functioning.

Proposition 2: African American ethnic identity formation will inform young adults' interpretation of cultural trauma theory. Specifically, African Americans in the internalization stage of an African American identity (characterized by feeling secure embracing and African American identity) will interpret the cultural trauma theory as directly impacting their psychosocial functioning.

Racism

Research Question: How do African American young adults experience racism?

Literature suggests that African Americans continue to experience racism primarily in the form of micro-aggressions (Pierce, 1995), or subtle attacks and degradations perpetuated by non-African Americans as they navigate public and private spaces. The impacts of micro-aggressions include feeling pervasively stressed, internalized racism (internalization of self-deprecating and devaluing and believing in the devaluation of African Americans), and stereotype threat (operating in accordance with adverse stereotypes disseminated to the broader African American group).

Proposition 1: African American young adults, both college enrolled and GED enrolled, will experience interpersonal racism which consists of micro-aggressions.

Proposition 2: African American young adults who consistently report feeling the pervasive “stress” of racism may also experience internalized racism and/or stereotype threat.

Racial Socialization

Research Question: How are African American young adults socialized about the history of slavery and its legacies as a means for establishing an African-American identity?

Literature suggests that a positive African American identity is contingent on racial socialization or the processes of teaching and modeling to African American children the importance of African American history and heritage as a means to both forge individual and collective pride; and cope with and manage interpersonal racism (Hughes et al., 2009). Literature suggests that racial socialization is mainly enacted by parents and other family members.

Proposition 1: African American young adults are primarily socialized about the history of slavery and its legacies of African American heritage, culture, and pride by parents and other family members.

Proposition 2: African American parents are likely to prepare their children to cope with racism.

Proposition 3: In the absence of parental socialization, African American children may experience racial socialization from other institutions, namely churches.

Ethnic Identity Formation

Research Question: How do African American young adults define and interpret an African American identity?

Literature suggests African American ethnic identity refers to both salience (significance of African American identity) and regard (subjective meanings attached to an African American identity) (Phinney, 1990). Specifically, an African American identity is reflective of his/her *self-identification*, *sense of belonging*, and *attitude* toward other African Americans. Sociopolitical contexts rooted in cultural trauma legacies which either promote (e.g. 1960’s Black Pride movement) or undermine (e.g, Jim Crow legislation) African Americans appear to inform African American identity. With regard to African American identity formation, literature suggests a five stage model of identity from *pre-encounter* (an individual never thinks about his/her ethnic identity) to *encounter* (an individual experiences an adverse and hostile encounter from a member of another ethnic group) to *immersion-emersion* (an individual adopts a “pro-Black” stance

characterized by cultural immersion in his/her group, heritage, etc.) to *internalization* (feeling secure about being African American without romanticizing an African American identity) to *internalization-commitment* (commitment to liberate from oppression African Americans and other ethnic groups). Higher stages of identity are found among African American college students, particularly those enrolled in institutions predominated by African Americans.

Proposition 1: Definition and interpretations are based on a combination of identification, belonging, and attitudes based on the interface with broader sociopolitical contexts.

Proposition 2: African American young adults who display higher stages of identity formation are more likely to display healthier manifestations of psychosocial functioning.

Proposition 3: African American young adults enrolled in college will display higher levels of African American identity development.

Proposition 4: African American young adults in the higher stages of identity (e.g. *internalization*) will have a greater sense of African American group accountability and responsibility.

APPENDIX B
VERBAL SCRIPT FOR PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT
(CENTER FOR HIGHER DEVELOPMENT)

Verbal Script for Participant Recruitment
(Non-College Enrolled – Center for Higher Development)

Researcher: Hi. My name is Kimya Barden and I am a doctoral student at Loyola University School of Social Work. I am interested in learning about what African American young adults think about their ethnic identity, manage racism experiences, and messages about race you learned growing up. Just so you know, I am not connected to a program or class at the Center for Higher Development so your decision to participate will in no way impact your status as a participant here.

Does that sound like something you would be interested in?

(If consumer says, “Yes, it does”)

Researcher: Great. Well let me tell you a little more about the study. Research participants will be asked to participate in one of the following: one individual interview or one group interview. If you decide to participate, you can expect the individual interview to last roughly 30-45 minutes. The group interview will last roughly 60 to 90 minutes. You will be paid a \$20 Visa gift card for your participation. The interview will consist of me asking you questions regarding your perspective on African American identity, racism experiences, and messages learned about race growing up.

In order to determine if you're eligible to participate in the study, I'd like to ask you two questions. First, do you identify with being called African-American or Black American? Second, on either your mom or dad's side were your grandparents born in America?

(If they answer yes to either question, proceed as described below; if not, I will say “Thank you so much for your interest but unfortunately we are looking for participants who identify as African-American or Black American and can trace their lineage to being American born.”)

If you are still interested in participating in the study, we can set up a time right now for us to meet. I can meet either meet you in an available room at the Center for Higher Development or at a room at the Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Branch located at 400 South State Street. At that meeting, I will go over all of this in more detail and then you can make your final decision as to whether or not you want to participate in the interview. Setting up this meeting time now does not require you to participate in the study. How does that sound to you? What day and time works for you?

(If consumer says, “No, I don't want to be involved”)

Researcher: Okay, well thank you so much. If you change your mind, please feel free to call again. Thank you.

APPENDIX C
VERBAL SCRIPT FOR PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT
(COLLEGE ENROLLED)

Verbal Script for Participant Recruitment
(College Enrolled)

Researcher: Hi. My name is Kimya Barden and I am a doctoral student at Loyola University School of Social Work. I am interested in learning about what African American young adults think about their ethnic identity, manage racism experiences, and messages about race you learned growing up. Just so you know, I am not connected to a program or class at Chicago State University so your decision to participate will in no way impact your status as a student.

Does that sound like something you would be interested in?

(If consumer says, "Yes, it does")

Researcher: Great. Well let me tell you a little more about the study. Research participants will be asked to participate in one of the following: one individual interview or one group interview. If you decide to participate, you can expect the individual interview to last roughly 30-45 minutes. The group interview will last roughly 60 to 90 minutes. You will be paid a \$20 Visa gift card for your participation. The interview will consist of me asking you questions regarding your perspective on African American identity, racism experiences, and messages learned about race growing up.

In order to determine if you're eligible to participate in the study, I'd like to ask you two questions. First, do you identify with being called African-American or Black American? Second, on either your mom or dad's side were your grandparents born in America?

(If they answer yes to either question, proceed as described below; if not, I will say "Thank you so much for your interest but unfortunately we are looking for participants who identify as African-American or Black American and can trace their lineage to being American born.)

If you are still interested in participating in the study, we can set up a time right now for us to meet. I can meet either meet you in an available room at Chicago State University or at a room at the Chicago Public Library, Woodson Branch located near CSU at 9525 South Halsted. At that meeting, I will go over all of this in more detail and then you can make your final decision as to whether or not you want to participate in the interview. Setting up this meeting time now does not require you to participate in the study. How does that sound to you? What day and time works for you?

(If consumer says, "No, I don't want to be involved")

Researcher: Okay, well thank you so much. If you change your mind, please feel free to call again. Thank you.

APPENDIX D
VERBAL SCRIPT FOR PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT
(KEY INFORMANT)

Verbal Script for Participant Recruitment
(Key Informant)

Researcher: Hi. My name is Kimya Barden and I am a doctoral student at Loyola University School of Social Work. I am interested in learning about what African American professionals think about African American young adults. Specifically, given your background in working with African American young adults, I am interested in what you think about their conceptions of ethnic identity, racism experiences, and messages about ethnicity and race they learned growing up. Does that sound like something you would be interested in?

(If consumer says, "Yes, it does")

Researcher: Great. Well let me tell you a little more about the study. Research participants will be asked to participate in one individual interview. If you decide to participate, you can expect the individual interview to last roughly 30-45 minutes. You will be paid a \$20 Visa gift card for your participation. The interview will consist of me asking you questions regarding your perspective on African American young adults experiences of identity, racism, and messages learned about race growing up.

In order to determine if you're eligible to participate in the study, I'd like to ask you two questions. First, do you identify with being called African-American or Black American? Second, was your mom or dad born in America?

(If they answer yes to either question, proceed as described below; if not, I will say "Thank you so much for your interest but unfortunately we are looking for participants who identify as African-American or Black American and can trace their lineage to being American born.)

If you are still interested in participating in the study, we can set up a time right now for us to meet. I can meet either meet you in an available room at your place of work or at a room at the Chicago Public Library. There are rooms available at the Woodson Branch located at 9525 South Halsted or the Harold Washington Branch located at 400 S. State Street. At that meeting, I will go over all of this in more detail and then you can make your final decision as to whether or not you want to participate in the interview. Setting up this meeting time now does not require you to participate in the study. How does that sound to you? What day and time works for you?

(If consumer says, "No, I don't want to be involved")

Researcher: Okay, well thank you so much. If you change your mind, please feel free to call again. Thank you.

APPENDIX E

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (YOUNG ADULT)

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Cultural Trauma Theory and African American Young Adults

Researcher: Kimya Pearl Barden

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Janice Rasheed

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Kimya Barden for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Janice Rasheed in the School of Social Work at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are a member of the African American community and are between the ages of 18 and 22. There will be a total of 40 participants in the study.

Please read the form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of culture on African American identity and experiences with racism.

Procedure:

If you agree to be in the study you will be asked to do only **one** of the following:

- Participate in a face to face interview with the researcher to discuss your experiences being African American. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped.
- Participate in a face to face focus group interview with six other participants and discuss your experiences as an African American young adult. The interview will last one 60-90. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped.

Optional Procedure:

- Agree to be contacted for a brief phone interview should the researcher need further clarification about your responses given in the initial interview.

Risks/Benefits:

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but the results of the study may give additional insight into best practices which support the positive development of African American young adults.

Compensation:

Participants will receive a \$20.00 gift card immediately upon completion of the interview and/or focus group. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time and still receive the \$20.00 gift card.

Confidentiality

- Information gathered will be confidential and coded so that no names will appear on any interview questionnaires. Specifically, instead of using your name you will be assigned a number so that no one can identify your interview responses.
- Records will be kept confidential and will be available only to the researcher and her committee members. Specifically, records will be kept in a locked cabinet and on a password protected computer. If the results of the study are published, the data will be presented in group form and individual participants will not be identified.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you do participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about this research interview, feel free to contact Kimya Barden at 312-646-9031 or kbarden@luc.edu; or Dr. Janice Rasheed at 312-915-6680 and/or jrashee@luc.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by Loyola University's Institutional Review Board

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in the research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

 Participant's Signature

 Date

By completing the rest of the consent form, I agree to be contacted by phone via follow-up interview. I understand that the follow-up interview is **optional** and I can agree to be interviewed in-person without committing to the phone interview

Telephone Number: () _____

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX F
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
(KEY INFORMANT)

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Cultural Trauma Theory and African American Young Adults

Researcher: Kimya Pearl Barden

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Janice Rasheed

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Kimya Barden for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Janice Rasheed in the Department of Social Work at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are a member of the African American community and over the age of forty. There will be a total of 40 participants in the study.

Please read the form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of culture on African American identity, socialization, and experiences with racism.

Procedure:

If you agree to be in the study you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in a face to face interview with the researcher to discuss your experiences being African American. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audiotaped.

Optional Procedure:

- Agree to be contacted for a brief phone interview should the researcher need further clarification about your responses given in the initial interview.

Risks/Benefits:

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but the results of the study may give additional insight into best practices which support the positive development of African American young adults.

Compensation:

Participants will receive a \$20.00 gift card immediately upon completion of the interview and/or focus group. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time and still receive the \$20.00 gift card.

Confidentiality

- Information gathered will be confidential and coded so that no names will appear on any interview questionnaires. Specifically, instead of using your name you will be assigned a number so that no one can identify your interview responses.
- Records will be kept confidential and will be available only to the researcher and her committee members. Specifically, records will be kept in a locked cabinet and on a password protected computer. If the results of the study are published, the data will be presented in group form and individual participants will not be identified.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you do participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about this research interview, feel free to contact Kimya Barden at 312-646-9031 and/or kbarden@luc.edu; or Dr. Janice Rasheed at 312-915-6680 and/or jrashee@luc.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by Loyola University's Institutional Review Board

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in the research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Participant's Signature

Date

By completing the rest of the consent form, I agree to be contacted by phone via follow-up interview. I understand that the follow-up interview is **optional** and I can agree to be interviewed in-person without committing to the phone interview.

Telephone Number: () _____

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX G
YOUNG ADULT INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

Young Adult Interview Question Guide

Hello. Thank you for participating in this one-on-one interview for my research study. The purpose of this interview is to explore your feelings and experiences about being African American. The interview will be conducted like a conversation. I will ask you a series of questions. Should you feel inclined, you can then respond aloud. The interview will take about thirty minutes. Let's begin with the first question.

Introductory demographic questions:

How old are you?

What is your gender?

Are you college enrolled or enrolled in a workforce program such as a GED program?

If college enrolled, what is your academic year and major?

Questions about African American identity and young adulthood

1. *(This question seeks to identify the "identity" construct of ethnic identity formation)*
How would you describe what it means to be African American?
2. *(This question seeks to identify the "identity" construct of ethnic identity formation)*
Given your description, how important is being African American to you?
3. *(This question seeks to identify the "closeness" construct of ethnic identity formation.)*
How would you describe your level of attachment or closeness with members of the larger African American community?
4. *(This question seeks to identify the "feeling" construct of ethnic identity formation)*
What are your feelings about belonging to the African American group?
5. *(This question seeks to explore both Cross's and Helms construct of identity)*
What are your thoughts about the different ways African Americans may perceive themselves?

Some people say that belonging to an ethnic group like the African American community means adopting different identities or different ways you see or perceive your group. They say some African Americans may have the following identities: 1) Feelings of shame; 2) Wanting to be another ethnic group; 3) Feelings of Pride; 4) Feelings of confusion; and 5) Feelings of acceptance of both the African American community and of other ethnic groups.

What are your thoughts about these different African American identities?

6. Some young adults in other ethnic/ racial groups say “Being white or Asian or Latino has influenced where I currently am in life.”

Do think that being African American has influenced where you are in life?

Questions about Cultural Trauma Theory

7. *(This question seeks to identify “trauma” parallels to other ethnic groups)*
Other groups assert that their current way of life is a result of past events. For example, Native American youth often describe the effects of genocide. Jewish descendants often describe the holocaust as key to Jewish development.

Can you think of any key times or events in African American history that were important in shaping the African American community’s way of life? If so, please describe

(This question seeks to unpack the historical legacies of slavery)

Can you think of any key times or events in African American history that were important in shaping your current views about the African American community’s way of life? If so, please describe.

(This question which seeks to unpack the legacies of slavery)

Can you think of any key times or events in African American history that were important in shaping your accomplishments and challenges in life? If so, please describe.

(This question seeks to unpack the mental health legacies of slavery (e.g. invisibility, stereotype threat, etc.)

Can you think of any key times or events in African American history that were important in shaping your current views about your possibilities as an African American person? If so, please describe?

Question about racism

8. *(This question seeks to identity their conceptualization of the racism construct)*
What does the term racism mean to you?
9. *(This question seeks to identify modern manifestations of the racism construct)*
Given your definition of the term racism, have you ever experienced racism in your lifetime, say as a student in school, an employee at work, or in public places? If so, please describe what happened?
10. *(This question seeks to identify the “microaggression” construct of racism)*

Have you ever experienced racism since you turned age 18 and/or graduated from high school, say in school, work, or in public places like the mall. If so, please describe what happened.

Questions about socialization

11. *(This question seeks to explore the concept of socialization)*

Some people say being a young adult is a product of learning in one's childhood and youth. Describe how you came to understand and learn about what it means to be African American. That is, was there someone, something, or some event that happened in your life which taught you about being African American?

12. *(This question seeks to explore the socialization construct of "ethnic pride")*

What kinds of activities or holidays do you practice and celebrate specifically geared toward the African American community?

13. *(This question seeks to uncover the concept of "racism management" as a socialization theme)*

Have you ever heard of stories from your relatives about their experiences with racism? What did they say? What did you learn about how to handle racism from your relatives' stories?

APPENDIX H

YOUNG ADULT INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE: FOCUS GROUP

Young Adult Interview Question Guide Focus Group

Facilitator Instructions

Hello. Thank you all for participating in this group interview for this researcher's study. The purpose of this group discussion is to explore your feelings and experiences about being African American young adults. The group interview will be conducted like a conversation. I will ask a series of questions to the group. Should you feel inclined, you can then respond aloud. The interview will take about an hour. I will respect your privacy and keep the contents of this discussion in the room. However, I cannot be responsible for the confidentiality of everybody else in the group. So, let's respect everyone's opinions and maintain group confidentiality. Please refrain from repeating to others outside of the group what is said in this group interview. Let's begin with the first question.

Questions about African American identity and young adulthood

1. *(This question seeks to identify the "identity" construct of ethnic identity formation)*
How would you describe what it means to be African American?

2. *(This question seeks to identify the "identity" construct of ethnic identity formation)*
Given your description, how important is being African American to you?

3. *(This question seeks to identify the "closeness" construct of ethnic identity formation.)*
How would you describe your level of attachment or closeness with members of the larger African American community?

4. *(This question seeks to identify the "feeling" construct of ethnic identity formation)*
What are your feelings about belonging to the African American group?

5. *(This question seeks to explore both Cross's and Helms construct of identity)*
Some people say that belonging to an ethnic group like the African American community means adopting different identities or different ways you see or perceive your group. They say some African Americans may have the following identities: 1) Feelings of shame; 2) Wanting to be another ethnic group; 3) Feelings of Pride; 4) Feelings of confusion 5) Feelings of acceptance of both the African American community and of other ethnic groups.

What are your thoughts about the different ways African Americans may perceive themselves?

6. Some young adults in other ethnic/ racial groups say "Being white or Asian or Latino has influenced where I currently am in life."

Do think that being African American has influenced where you are in life?

Questions about Cultural Trauma Theory

7. *(This question seeks to identify “trauma” parallels to other ethnic groups)*
Other groups assert that their current way of life is a result of past events. For example, Native American youth often describe the effects of genocide. Jewish descendants often describe the holocaust as key to Jewish development.

Can you think of any key times or events in African American history that were important in shaping the African American community’s way of life? If so, please describe.

(This question seeks to unpack the historical legacies of slavery)

Can you think of any key times or events in African American history that were important in shaping your current views about the African American community’s way of life? If so, please describe.

(This question which seeks to unpack the legacies of slavery)

Can you think of any key times or events in African American history that were important in shaping your accomplishments and challenges in life? If so, please describe.

(This question seeks to unpack the mental health legacies of slavery (e.g. invisibility, stereotype threat, etc.)

Can you think of any key times or events in African American history that were important in shaping your current views about your possibilities as an African American person? If so, please describe?

Questions about racism

8. *(This question seeks to identify their conceptualization of the racism construct)*
What does the term racism mean to you?
9. *(This question seeks to identify modern manifestations of the racism construct)*
Given your definition of the term racism, have you ever experienced racism in your lifetime, say as a student in school, an employee at work, or in public places? If so, please describe what happened?
10. *(This question seeks to identify the “microaggression” construct of racism)*
Have you ever experienced racism in your day to day living since you turned age 18 and/or graduated from high school, say in school, work, or in public places like the mall. If so, please describe what happened.

Questions about socialization

11. *(This question seeks to explore the concept of socialization)*

Some people say being a young adult is a product of learning in one's childhood and youth. Describe how you came to understand and learn about what it means to be African American. That is, was there someone, something, or some event that happened in your life which taught you about being African American?

12. *(This question seeks to explore the socialization construct of "ethnic pride")*

What kinds of activities or holidays do you practice and celebrate specifically geared toward the African American community?

13. *(This question seeks to uncover the concept of "racism management" as a socialization theme)*

Have you ever heard of stories from your relatives or other people close to you about their experiences with racism? What did they say? What did you learn about how to handle racism from these stories?

APPENDIX I

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

Key Informant Interview Question Guide

Hello. Thank you for participating in this one-on-one interview for my research study. The purpose of this interview is to explore your feelings and experiences about modern-day African American young adults – those ages 18 to 22. The interview will be conducted like a conversation. I will ask you a series of questions. Should you feel inclined, you can then respond aloud. The interview will take about thirty minutes. Let's begin with the first question.

Questions about African American identity

1. *(This question seeks to identify the “identity” construct of ethnic identity formation)*
How would you describe what it means to be identified as an African-American?
2. *(This question seeks to identify the “closeness” construct of ethnic identity formation.)*
How close or attached do you feel to the African American community?
3. *(This question seeks to identify the “closeness” construct of ethnic identity formation.)*
Given your feelings about being identified with the African American community, as well as, your feelings of attachment, how would you describe how African American young adults feel about belonging to the African American community?

What do you see or observe in your interactions with African American young adults which allow you to draw that conclusion?

4. *(This question seeks to get at both Cross's and Helms construct of identity)*
Some people say that belonging to an ethnic group like the African American community means adopting different identities or different ways you see or perceive your group. They say some African Americans may have the following identities: 1) Feelings of shame; 2) Wanting to be another ethnic group; 3) Feelings of Pride; 4) Feelings of confusion; and 5) Feelings of acceptance of both the African American community and of other ethnic groups.

Given the five different perceptions just mentioned, what are your thoughts on how modern-day African American young adults identify with their ethnic group?

Questions about the cultural trauma, slavery (and its legacies)

The following questions will explore your beliefs and opinions about African Americans and the institution of slavery.

5. *(This question seeks to identify “trauma” parallels to other ethnic groups)*
Other groups assert that their current way of life is a result of past historical, events. For example, Native American young adults often describe the effects of genocide

and colonization. Jewish young adult descendants often describe the holocaust as key to Jewish development.

Do you think this statement can be applied to African American young adults?
Is the current state of African American young adults a result of past historical events specific to the African American community? If so, please describe

6. *(This question seeks to unpack the historical legacies of slavery)*
Can you think of any key times or events in African American history that were important in shaping African American young adults way of life? If so, please describe.
7. *(This question which seeks to unpack the legacies of slavery)*
Can you think of any key times or events in African American history that were important in shaping African American young adults accomplishments and challenges in life? If so, please describe.
8. *(This question seeks to unpack the mental health legacies of slavery (e.g. invisibility, stereotype threat, etc.)*
Can you think of any key times or events in African American history that were important in shaping African American young adults views about their possibilities as an African American person? If so, please describe?

Questions about racism

The following questions will ask you to reflect on your feelings and beliefs regarding experiences with racism, if any.

9. *(This question seeks to identify their conceptualization or the racism construct)*
How would you describe or define racism? That is, what are some distinguishing features?
10. *(This question seeks to compare the intergenerational experiences of racism experienced within the African American community)*
Growing up as a young adult, did you ever witness and/or been the recipient of an act of racism? If so, please describe.
11. *(These questions seek to identify modern manifestation of the racism construct)*
What are your thoughts on racism perpetuated against today's African American young adults?

How do you think African American young adults think about and define racism today?

12. *(This question seeks to identify the “microaggression” construct of racism)*
What are your thoughts on how racism impacts the day to day living of African American young adults say in college, work, or in public places like the mall.

Questions about racial socialization

13. *(This question seeks to explore the concept of socialization)*
From who or where do you think African American young adults learn what it means to be African American?
14. *(This question seeks to explore the socialization concept of “ethnic pride”)*
In your work or interactions with African American young adults, how do you teach them what it means to celebrate and honor African American culture?
15. *(This question seeks to explore the socialization concept of “ethnic pride”)*
How do you convey these messages? For example, information about being a specific ethnic group may be given in multiple ways such as the media, conversation, or technology. What method do you use to give messages of culture and identity to African American young adults?
16. *(This question seeks to explore the “racism management” concept of socialization)*
Should the young adults with whom you work experience acts of racism, what do you teach them about how to manage or handle acts of racism?

APPENDIX J

RECRUITMENT FLYER: CENTER FOR HIGHER DEVELOPMENT

Participants Needed for Research Study!!!!

Loyola University doctoral student is looking for volunteers to take part in a study of African American young adult identity development and well being.

Eligibility:

- African American
- Ages 18 to 22
- Working on GED or other workforce training certificate
- Males **and** Females

What will you be asked to do?

- Participate in **one** of the following
 - Focus group (1 hour)
- OR**
- One on one interview (30 minutes)

Compensation

- In appreciation for your time you will receive a \$20.00 gift card

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study please contact: Kimya Barden at or 312-646-9031

APPENDIX K

RECRUITMENT FLYER: CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Participants Needed for Research Study!!!!

Loyola University doctoral student is looking for volunteer Chicago State students to take part in a study of African American young adult identity development and well being.

Eligibility:

- African American
- Ages 18 to 22
- All academic majors
- Males **and** Females

What will you be asked to do?

- Participate in **one** of the following
 - Focus group (1 hour)
- OR**
- One on one interview (30 minutes)

Compensation

- In appreciation for your time you will receive a \$20.00 gift card

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study please contact: Kimya Barden at kparden@gmail.com or 312-646-9031

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VITA

Kimya Pearl Barden was born and reared on Chicago's Southside. After completing her work at Whitney Young High School, she went on to Fisk University in Nashville, where she studied Sociology and Education. She then attended the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration (SSA) and graduated with a master's degree in 2004. For the next three years she worked as a social worker supporting the social and emotional development of children and adolescents in Chicago Public Schools. She then enrolled at Loyola University's School of Social work in August 2007. As a doctoral student she helped build community-based mentor programs and specialized in teaching courses on race, ethnicity, and culturally sensitive social work practice. In the Fall, she will begin work as a tenure track professor at Northeastern Illinois University's Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies.