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Understanding the Young Adult African American Male's Perceptions of Civic Engagement

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Carl Jackson

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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Perceptions of Civic Engagement

by

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MSW, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2015

BSW, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Social Work

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Abstract

Civic engagement and political involvement of the greater portion of the population of democratic societies are important to the maintenance of the quality of life of all members. Although 100% participation in these activities is rare, higher levels of involvement across all affected demographic groups will support a more equitable political environment in urban communities. In the midwestern metropolitan community that is the focus of this study, young adult African American males were found to participate in all forms of civic engagement at lower rates than any other demographic group. Using a critical race theory foundation, the purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions that this population holds regarding civic engagement. Heuristic phenomenographical methodology was used and data were collected in interviews with 17 African American males ages 20 to 40 years to determine their perceptions concerning civic engagement. These data were analyzed after using ATLAS.ti software to sort the patterns and determine the themes. The themes of experience, motivation and hindrances, and racial influence arose resulting in conclusions that demonstrate that these young African American men are not apathetic but driven to specific methods of civic engagement. The information gained may be used by community leaders to address participatory variances and to create efforts to ensure participation in the democratic process of civic engagement.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Marian Christine Jackson, who believed that I would reach the highest levels of education when I did not. She encouraged me toward success, when I had lost all courage, and loved me unconditionally when I did not love myself. This is for you, Mom. Thank you! I love you and I pray that I have made you proud.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Sociopolitical knowledge, defined as an understanding of the activities and purposes of civic and political participation, is an important aspect of the knowledge development of all adults in working towards the advancement of social justice and social change in communities of the United States (Leath & Chavous, 2017; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014; Worthman, 2011). In the midwestern urban community that is the focus of this study, community leaders have stressed the need for young adult Black/African American males to be educationally and socially developed for participation in the civic and political processes that govern the community to ensure that the implemented public policies address the specific community needs (Devia et al., 2017; Farmer, 2006; Pritzker, 2012; Soler-i-Martí, 2015; Teney & Hanquinet, 2012). Many young adult Black/African American males actively participate in the civic and political processes in this community and nationwide, but studies of civic engagement have shown that young adult Black/African American male participation in these activities is significantly lagging the percentages of participation among other age, ethnic, and gender populations (McDonald, 2018; Pritzker, 2012; Soler-i-Martí, 2015; Teney & Hanquinet, 2012). The involvement of the young adult Black/African American males in these civic engagement processes has the potential to increase the implementation of public policies that are in alignment with the social needs of the Black/African American community members in this midwestern community (Jones, 2016; Shuck & Helfenbein, 2015). Without the civic and political engagement of this population, the public policies and services that govern the community have the potential to be in opposition to the needs and desires of some

who live in the community (Jones, 2016; Shuck & Helfenbein, 2015). It is, therefore, imperative that the research community builds a greater understanding of the perceptions that this population has regarding civic engagement, political participation, and sociopolitical knowledge (Devia et al., 2017; Farmer, 2006; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014; Pritzker, 2012; Soler-i-Martí, 2015; Teney & Hanquinet, 2012).

In this chapter, I will introduce the research study with a brief look at the background material that demonstrated the need for this project. I will explain the problem statement and the purpose of this study in detail and I will reveal the two research questions. I will briefly explain the theoretical foundation of the research project, and I will introduce the nature of the study before I consider the assumptions in the beginning of the study, the perceived limitations, and the scope and delimitations. The chapter will close with evidence of the significance of this research study and a summary of all the information included. I obtained this information from a history of the studies of civic engagement.

Background of the Study

Many research articles have been written that introduce the results of studies related to Black/African American civic engagement and political participation, and a wide variety of topics related to aspects of these phenomena have been thoroughly researched. In researching the history of studies into this issue, I discovered some significant gaps in the understanding that exists about this subject. I designed this study with the purpose of addressing those gaps.

In noted qualitative studies that formed a foundation for the current study, Chung and Probert (2011) and Grayman-Simpson (2012) examined the role of outcome

expectations and subjective well-being of Black/African American community members who engaged in civic participation. The research of these studies indicated the importance of the emotional buy-in of members of each of these communities but lacked further insight into overall perceptions of these phenomena that were held by the participants (Chung & Probert, 2011; Grayman-Simpson, 2012). Szymanski and Lewis (2015), Shuck and Helfenbein (2015), and Veloria (2015) undertook similar courses of study by examining how race-related stress affected the motivation for Black/African American individuals to engage in various forms of civic activism. These research studies also examined how greater society reacted to this activism. The results indicated varying responses to perceived racism in which some Black/African Americans were led to act civically and politically for changes in society when injustice was perceived, whereas others responded by remaining silent and avoiding the possibility of any backlash by the majority White population (Shuck & Helfenbein, 2015; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Veloria, 2015).

Clifford (2012) and Jones (2016) each studied the political ideologies of Black/African American and Latino constituents in relation to the elected officials who represented the communities where these citizens resided. Through the limited civic and political involvement of these ethnic populations, the communities that they lived in tended to elect officials who more represented the ethnicity of those who did participate in the election process (Clifford, 2012; Jones, 2016). In the studied communities, these participants who were more engaged in the political processes were more often White. In efforts to address historical levels of political involvement, Dutter (2013) and Lichterman and Eliasoph (2014) examined the political involvement of Black/African Americans,

Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans throughout the last 5 decades. The quantitative findings in these studies were instrumental in guiding the current research toward a Black/African American population that has historically been absent from participation in civic engagement activities (Dutter, 2013; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). In other quantitative studies, Magnum (2011) and Wilson (2012) also focused studies on the numeric differences between the levels of civic participation related to race. The findings of these two studies supported previous findings that members of the Black/African American population were less likely to participate in civic and political processes than any other racial group. Indications of the need for further study into the reasons for these discrepancies have been promoted by each of these studies and it is the intention of the current study to investigate the causes for the choices that this population makes (Magnum, 2011; Wilson, 2012).

To understand the origins of the motivation to participate civically or not, Pritzker (2012), Scott and Šerek (2015), and Soler-i-Martí (2015) focused studies on the sociopolitical development of minority youth, and how that development affected civic and political engagement. The guiding preposition for these studies was that civic and political engagement are learned behaviors that would need to be instilled in young people to build a sense of responsibility toward being involved. These studies showed differences in the ways that the adults of minority and majority populations modeled civic engagement, and a significant difference in the level of responsibility for society that these adults held (Pritzker, 2012; Scott & Šerek, 2015; Soler-i-Martí, 2015).

Each of these studies pointed to a gap in the research that limited the understanding of the African American's perception of civic engagement. By thoroughly

examining the previous research, I saw a problem in the lack of definitive knowledge regarding the populations that are not civically and politically engaged. With a focus on the members of society who are least engaged civically and politically, I not only sought to discover important information related to the perceptions that this population has regarding this phenomenon, but I attempted to fill the gap in the understanding that the research community currently has about this subject.

Problem Statement

A thorough review of the research literature related to civic engagement reveals several factors that contribute to, and detract from, the participation of the young adult Black/African American male in civic and political processes, but I have found few studies that have attempted to uncover the meaning, value, and understanding that the young adult Black/African American male assigns to the process of civic engagement (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). By accessing the voices of this population, this study builds upon previous studies and addresses the gaps that exist in the understanding of the perceptions that these young men hold regarding civic and political engagement (Pritzker, 2012; Soler-i-Martí, 2015; Teney & Hanquinet, 2012). Through this increased understanding, an effort can be made to address the deficits in young adult Black/African American male civic engagement that exists in the midwestern urban community that is the focus of this study. The deficits in the involvement of the young adult Black/African American male in community civic and political processes in this community and others have been ascertained by community leaders to be one of the factors that leave some communities disconnected from city resources, and without the political capital to address community needs (Jones, 2016; Shuck & Helfenbein, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the young adult Black/African American male's perceptions of civic and political participation in an urban community of a midsized, midwestern city. I designed the processes developed for this study to gain an understanding of what motivates, or hinders, the 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American male's participation in civic and political processes in this community. The findings build on the current knowledge regarding this subject and support future development of strategies for the local political action committees including Black Votes Matter, Black Lives Matter, and Rock the Vote to affect change in the levels of African American male civic and political engagement and, thereby, improve community conditions.

Research Questions

I designed this research study to answer two specific questions regarding civic and political engagement:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of civic and political engagement and racial identity for 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males living in a midwestern urban community?

RQ2: What specific influences affect the perceptions of 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males regarding civic and political participation?

I considered it important to examine the racial underpinnings of the perceptions that this population held. Many of the researchers of previous studies noted that a significant difference in the levels of civic and political engagement could be defined in terms of racial identity.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical base for this study was Delgado's (1995) critical race theory (CRT). This theoretical framework utilizes a phenomenographical methodology to describe, analyze, and build understanding into the experiences and perceptions that the population has regarding the specific phenomena of racial inequality in civic and political engagement (Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Through "storytelling and counterstorytelling," the research subjects had the opportunity to express the reality of what has been experienced, and how this experience has affected actions and reactions to societal norms. In this theoretical view, it is accepted that reality is subjective to the views of the individual based on life experience, and Black/African Americans form a realized view that is unique to the racial underpinnings of the U.S. society. The perceptions that 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males have of the experience of civic and political engagement for the purposes of social change presented ideologies that had not been previously examined (Shuck & Helfenbein, 2015).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was heuristic phenomenographical qualitative research. This approach best aligned with the research questions and promoted the use of an inductive methodology conducive to the application of interview approaches from the social constructionist's worldview (Best, 2015; Garcia & Scott, 2016; Marton, 1981, 1988; Marton & Saljo, 1984). Utilizing a heuristic phenomenographical research design, my goal was to discover and understand the meaning that the sample population had attached to the phenomena of civic engagement and political participation, and the value that the population had placed on these phenomena (Best, 2015; Marton, 1981, 1988;

Marton & Saljo, 1984). The social constructionist's perspective accepts that the reality of the population being studied depends upon the perceptions of individuals or groups as related to cultural factors and life experience (Best, 2015; Garcia & Scott, 2016). This research study's processes have revealed information that builds on the understanding of these perspectives and allows the utilization of that understanding to facilitate conversations regarding racial identity, and civic and political engagement.

Assumptions

The assumptions that preceded this research were that the target population would be willing to honestly share personal feelings regarding perceptions of the processes and procedures of civic engagement. Based on the qualitative phenomenographical design of this study, I assumed that these individuals would have stories to tell about the experiences that have been encountered in relation to civic and political engagement and that these stories would affect the decisions that have been made regarding these phenomena. I also assumed, based on the CRT theoretical framework, that the target population of Black/African American males would associate these experiences and encounters with the racially biased foundations of the United States and that this association would have guided subsequent thoughts and actions. These assumptions proved to be correct with some of the study participants, but not for all of them.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was anticipated in the ability to involve participants who are prone not to be involved in research studies. The purpose of this study was to understand the points of view of those Black/African American males who participate in civic engagement activities and those who do not. The Black/African American males

who do not engage in the proscribed activities may not wish to engage in research studies. I distributed a preliminary survey to determine whether the target population was diverse in answers to the yes or no question of participation in civic engagement and to the willingness to engage in a study.

Another foreseen limitation was the possibility of researcher bias. As a community activist, I have spent time recruiting voters and advocating for greater civic engagement. As lead researcher, I expected that there would be times when I would be tempted to correct any misconceptions that study participants revealed. Mitigation of that possibility required constant monitoring of my own thoughts, limiting comments to research-related items only, recording all interviews and discarding any researcher-induced responses, and thereby maintaining an integrity that is indicative of the professional scholarly practitioner.

Scope and Delimitations

I conducted this research study in a midsized metropolitan city in the midwestern United States. The total population of the city was approximately 500,000 in 2020. The Black/African American population was approximately 60,000 and, of that population, the male population that was 20- to 40-years-old was approximately 560. The opinions of this population do not likely represent the thoughts of all 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males in the United States. Regional differences throughout the country affect the opinions of the constituents of those regions and the transferability of the findings of this research to other regions may prove to be difficult.

Significance of the Study

Social change is sociopolitically theorized to be what happens when a society's structures and institutions are altered in response to new demands by the populous (Rodriguez, 2013). The potential for social change in this study lies in the ability of Black/African American community activists and groups to improve educational, economic, and political outcomes for urban minorities through the understanding of the individual differences that make 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males of this urban community active participants in civic and political processes. An increased understanding of what motivates, or hinders, the engagement of these males may be beneficial in the development of motivational factors that increase the levels of Black/African American civic and political participation. The goal is to increase the understanding of social change in local under-resourced communities by identifying the factors and perceptions that effect the rates of civic and political participation.

In this study, I sought to discover facts and build upon the understanding into this issue of sociopolitical development from a social work policy practice perspective and define this issue as a human services problem as explained in the ethical principles and standards of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics* (2018) (Beimers, 2015; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015; National Association of Social Workers, 2018; Olsen, Reid, Threadgill-Goldson, Riffe, & Ryan, 2013; Reisch & Jani, 2012). The *Preamble* of the NASW Code of Ethics defines social work's mission as efforts in the promotion of social justice and social change through the empowerment of individuals and communities to act on their own behalf (NASW, 2018). To further understand the best practices for promoting community empowerment in these areas, it is

important that the social worker understand the perspectives of the community members regarding the issues of civic and political engagement.

Summary

I used this study to examine the perceptions that 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males have of civic engagement and political participation. Using heuristic phenomenographic qualitative research, I attempted to discover how this population perceives the phenomenon of civic engagement (Best, 2015; Marton, 1981, 1988; Marton & Saljo, 1984; Williamson, 2015). It has been made clear by the leaders of the midwestern community that was the focus of this study that the 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males of this community could be influential in the efforts toward social justice and social change. These leaders propose that if these members of the community consistently participated in civic and political actions, significant progress could be made toward community empowerment. Historically, this population has been one that is notably absent from these processes (Dutter, 2013; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014).

Many quantitative studies have been used to measure and report on the discrepancies between the civic engagement levels of the target population and other ethnic and gender populations (Dutter, 2013; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014; Magnum, 2011; Wilson, 2012). Those studies, and other previous qualitative research findings, showed a gap in the understanding to the reasons for these discrepancies. I used the current study to address those gaps and build understanding through the discovery of the origins of the differing attitudes toward this phenomenon.

As the division of the measurement has been consistently based on race, a CRT foundation was the appropriate anchor for this study (Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The methodology and research design aligned with the critical race perspective, and the short history of Black/African American involvement in civic and political processes in the United States supported the tenets of this theory. As the country embraces the changing political landscape of the 21st century, it is increasingly imperative that all members of society participate in the processes of democratic governance (Jones, 2016; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014; Shuck & Helfenbein, 2015). To accommodate this imperative, an understanding of the motivations and hindrances that affect voter turnout and other civic engagement is necessary. I designed this study to aid in that effort, beginning with the population that has been determined to be the least engaged: the 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American male.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In recent years, discussions of civic engagement and political participation have become more prominent in the conversations evoking community empowerment in the midwestern city that is the focus of this study and other urban communities (Braunstein, Fulton, & Wood, 2014; Jones, 2016; Su, 2017). Community leaders of this area, and some noted researchers, have indicated that increased participation in activities of civic engagement by Black/African Americans has the potential to positively affect urban community development (Jones, 2016; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014; Shuck & Helfenbein, 2015). Statistics regarding voter participation in the target metropolitan area and others have shown that Black/African American males between the ages of 20 and 40 years have the lowest rate of voter registration and registered voter participation in voting activities in the reporting voting precincts of any group when sorted by age and ethnicity (Lake, Ulibarri, & Bye, 2016; McDonald, 2018). I used this study as an in-depth examination of the perceptions that this population has regarding civic engagement and political participation using individual face-to-face interviews. This research project was intended to build upon previous studies with the objective of increasing the understanding that the research community has regarding this phenomenon.

This chapter will contain a thorough examination of the literature that is the foundation of this research study. It will begin with an explanation of the literature search strategy that includes the databases that I utilized, the search terms that I used, the types of studies that were helpful, and the desired publication dates. I also provide an in-depth examination of CRT, the theory that is the foundation of this study, that includes CRT's

origins, definitions, tenets, and implications, as well as some criticisms. I also examine the phenomenographical design of the study to include its origins, definitions, and research implications. The chapter then delves into the literature and studies that address civic engagement. I include a section that addresses the definition of the term *civic engagement* and a thorough examination of literature related to civic engagement and civil rights, youth development, race, and CRT. The chapter concludes with a look at civic engagement in the 21st century and a summary of the implications of this literature review.

The research process required the formation of a distinct course of action for locating the appropriate literature and determining which books and articles were suitable for use in the study. I searched for books and articles needed to address the theoretical foundation, as well as methodology chosen for this research (McGinn, Taylor, McColgan, & McQuilkan, 2016; Saini & Shlonsky, 2012). A careful literature review required a willingness to examine research books and articles that both supported and contradicted the research study, thereby leading to an undisputed necessity for an inquiry to build on the understanding of this subject and fill any gaps that existed. I developed a search strategy that would ensure the discovery of a significant amount of usable information from a diverse list of sources (McGinn et al., 2016).

Literature Search Strategy

The first step in this research process was to review the previous literature that focused on civic engagement and political participation (Saini & Shlonsky, 2012). That review required a precise literature search strategy that would uncover the most relevant studies. The methodical search of databases, using specific search terms, was necessary

to locate studies that would inform the research (McGinn et al., 2016). The types of studies varied, but the insight acquired from the different research methodologies proved beneficial to the building of a greater understanding of this phenomenon. The search parameters were that I sought to review studies conducted within the last 7 years, but information related to the theoretical framework and the nature of the research originated in the 1970s and 1980s, and many relevant inquiries occurred outside of the preferred timeframe. Fortunately for the research community, many databases contain research articles. The keys to knowing which databases to use lies in the ontological view of the researcher.

Databases

In the beginning phases of this project, I found most of the literature in the library databases of Walden University of Minnesota (Walden, 2017). This library included an ever-evolving list of nearly 200 databases that the university had direct access to and numerous other shared databases to which Walden students were allowed access. The most useful databases were those related to the behavioral health and political sciences, such as Political Science Complete, SAGE Journals, and SocINDEX with Full Text, but articles that included the chosen search terms existed across a wide variety of disciplines. Utilizing Academic Search Complete, National Academies Press, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search, I acquired articles that proved useful in building research-based and personal understanding of the phenomenon of civic engagement, but not all the articles and literature found were cited as reference material in this study.

Another useful search database was Google Scholar. This database allowed for a worldwide search of articles and books and was often better equipped with information

that was open to retrieval by a broader research community. Items found through Google Scholar more frequently included DOI numbers and links to the location of the original publication. These findings also included citation history that led to other articles related to the search parameters. Google Scholar searches also led to a better understanding of the usefulness of research communities such as ResearchGate and Academia.edu. I acquired some valuable information through Bing searches, but these articles tended to be listings from the above-mentioned databases. Some search terms would provide information that was irrelevant to the current study, whereas others produced an abundance of useful facts and articles. The recipe for locating the best information was in the usage of practical search terms.

Search Terms

A simple search using the term *civic engagement* can produce thousands of books and articles worldwide. Even narrowing that search by date and region produced an amount too numerous for timely perusal. The search for valuable research articles and books related to the chosen subject required a precise use of specific search terms. It is true, however, that the search for information began with the search term *civic engagement*. As the definition of *civic engagement* for the purposes of this study was developed, I used a search term of *civic and political engagement*. This was divided into two specific searches, one for the former *civic engagement* and one for *political engagement*. Several studies differentiated the terms *engagement* and *involvement*, so searches for *civic involvement* and *political involvement* were included. To further provide specific information related to this study, I included the above-mentioned terms with *African American* and *minority*. The narrower the scope of the search became, there

were fewer articles available. I found a few articles that specifically addressed *African American, youth development, male, young adults, and race, civic or political, and involvement or engagement.*

Although the above-mentioned search terms informed the subject matter of the research I conducted, searches were required to inform the nature of the study.

Qualitative research as a practice is a methodology with which I have practical experience and extensive knowledge through years of academic research and program evaluation. This knowledge did not supersede the desire to search for specifics regarding the use of qualitative methodologies in the study of the subject of this research project. Searches for *qualitative research, phenomenology, and phenomenography* provided useful information to guide the methodology of this study.

The theoretical framework of the current study, CRT, was not difficult to search for, and the search term utilizing the name of the theory resulted in many useful articles and books. CRT has a rich history and prominence in research studies and has evolved to address the issues of other ethnic groups, but its origins remain in the Black/African American community. The findings achieved using this search term have provided a firm theoretical base for this research study.

Because this study involved the Black/African American community and addressed issues of race and power, a thorough understanding of CRT was required. There was also the necessity to fully understand all other aspects of the subject matter of this study. I achieved this understanding through the narrowing of the search parameters to specific types of information. The types of research studies, as well as the various articles and books, informed the nature and methodology of this research study.

Types of Studies

The information available using the above-mentioned search terms was in many forms, but the most useful and informative were the research studies. Many types of research studies have been conducted regarding civic engagement and political involvement. Quantitative research studies were helpful in demonstrating the inequality of civic engagement related to ethnicity, environment, and cultural identity, as well as other defining characteristics, but most did not attempt to explain the personal motivating factors that contributed to the differences. Although some qualitative studies relied on interview and survey methodologies, I have not found significant first-hand examples of the perceptions that Black/African American young adult males have regarding civic engagement and political involvement. In the study of civic engagement and political participation, the tendency toward mixed-method research would seem logical because the numbers would lead to an inquiry of the reasons behind them. This has not been found to be true as most of the studies that have been found tend to be quantitative, and tend to demonstrate disparities, and leave the reasoning for future studies. It was my purpose in this study to fill that gap in knowledge and build on the understanding that the research community has regarding the subject of civic engagement. It was essential that this knowledge is timely, and answers questions driven by the latest data. For this reason, I sought only the most recent studies to inform the current research.

Publication Dates

As a rule, all searches for previous studies were set in a “most recent” search parameter. I considered research published within the last 7 years viable for the informing of the current research, and I used older data primarily as essential learning materials to

guide the procedure. I hesitantly expanded this parameter to include articles regarding research conducted within the last 10 years, because these research study results were still relevant to the current environment. As previously noted, CRT has a long history, and much information can be gained from older publications. I heavily scrutinized the value of that information and only referenced the information when the significance was enhanced by the age of the material. The origins of CRT occur shortly after the end of the civil rights movement. Books written by the founders of the theory are from that time frame and best describe and explain the foundations of this theory.

Critical Race Theory

CRT is a theoretical strategy that addresses the specifics of the lives of Black/African Americans in these United States (Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The experiences of this population in the United States continue to guide actions and reactions to every aspect of Black/African American life. This theory attempts to explain the reasons and reality that the Black/African American population holds regarding life's interactions and is thereby the best theoretical fit for this research study. A Black/African American focus of this study aligns with the origins of CRT's philosophical view, and the recent events affecting Black/African American males between the ages of 20- to 40-years-old make this theoretical framework particularly relevant when attempting to ascertain the perceptions of this group. It is posited that the racial identity of this population is a factor in the determination of whether to engage in civic activities (Bush & Bush, 2013; Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Origins

CRT's origin can be traced to the early to mid-1970s and is seen as a response to the increase in discrimination against Black/African Americans that was a result of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the resulting change to existing laws (Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Taking the elements of Critical Theory (CT), which was developed by German philosopher and sociologist Max Horkheimer in the 1930s, CRT applies the core concepts of CT to the subject of race relations in the United States (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). These core concepts, that focus on the historical events of society and build an understanding of the way in which that history affects the nation, began the discussion of race as related to CT. Derrick Bell (1980) led the conversation with his book, *Race, Racism, and American Law* (1973) and continued with a critique of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1980). In his book and analysis, Bell stated that Black/African Americans were victims of White oppressors akin to the Marxist's portrayal of class division (Bell, 1973, 1980). These concepts would be further expanded and developed by the colleagues and students of Bell and others to become a prominent theoretical view (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

Definition

CRT is a theoretical view based on the oppression of individuals and communities where that oppression is prompted by the law and racial discrimination (Hylton, 2012). The underlying foundation of this philosophical view is that society is stratified by race and power structures that exist and systematically perpetuate stratification through processes that continually discriminate by race (Hylton, 2012; Su, 2017). This racial

discrimination has a psychological effect on people of color by initiating traumatic responses that are demonstrated in the thoughts and actions of the members of this population (Degruy-Leary, 2005; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2015).

As the theoretical foundation of this study, CRT is seen as a factor in the motivation of people of color to participate in civic and political activities of the overall society and individual communities. It is posited that in a racially stratified society, those who experience high levels of racial discrimination make decisions based on personal responses to that discrimination (Hylton, 2012; Su, 2017; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2015). This response may be characterized in different ways depending on the perceptions of the individual of his or her personal interactions with the greater society, but there are some essential elements in which CRT is based that have proven to be common in the individual responses to racism (Bush & Bush, 2013; Degruy-Leary, 2005; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2015).

Basic Tenets

Elements of CRT are based on the observations of many scholars who have contributed to the advancement of this philosophical view for the last 50 years (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). These begin with the tenets that racism is a regular feature of life in this country, and as such, serves an essential purpose in the maintenance of ascendancy over people of color by the dominant White population (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Another tenet is that racism serves the interests of Whites of all economic classes which lessens any motivation of a significant portion of society to address or eradicate it (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT recognizes that race as a category is a social construct that has no

basis in biology or genetics and is created as a convenient manipulation to advance specific agendas (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

These tenets inspired the recognition of a differential racialization in which people of color are portrayed in images that are ever changing in relation to the needs of the dominant population (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). An example is seen in the depiction of the happy-go-lucky slave who, once he was freed by law, became the menacing black brute who was out of control and needed supervision and restraint (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT holds that no individual has an essential racial identity but are products of multiple identities and varying allegiances. It is also a critical CRT element that people of color of all ethnicities are better versed in matters of racism than Whites and are better able to speak about race and racism due to the experiences of life in these United States (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The tenets of CRT advances thought about many aspects of race and racism in the United States. By addressing elements of White privilege and the microaggressions that many individuals experience in everyday life, as well as the personal storytelling of people of color, CRT brings to light the ineffectiveness of passive liberalism and color blindness (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT drives a revisionist view of United States society that recognizes the racism that has disguised itself as civil and human rights and urges people of color to remove the constraints of oppression that continue to be wielded by the dominant population (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Implications

The implications of CRT draw a focused attention to the racism that continues to thrive in the United States, and the effect that the continuation has on people of color (Bush & Bush, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Hylton, 2012; Su, 2017; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2015). The foundations of this theoretical view are based in the African Black/American experience in the United States (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Black/African American males have had unique experiences of racial discrimination in these United States, and the responses demonstrated by this population are varied and challenging to categorize (Bush & Bush, 2013). With recent awareness of this distinctness being increased through social media and the push to hold law enforcement officials accountable for discriminatory practices by communities, the plight of the Black/African American male has become more common knowledge throughout society (Bush & Bush, 2013; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2015). Efforts to address this issue have continued to be summarily dismissed by those who benefit from a racially biased system that is the foundation of this nation (Bush & Bush, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to further examine the implications that this system has on the perceptions of Black/African American men who have the potential to impact society for the betterment of all through civic engagement, but do not participate at levels that could make a significant impact (Bush & Bush, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Farmer, 2006; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2015).

Criticisms

While evidence of racial bias is witnessed throughout society, there remain those who will challenge the validity of a CRT theoretical view (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Most criticisms that I have found are based on the narrative nature of CRT's assertions. Critics of CRT contend that the storytelling aspect of this theoretical view allow for unverifiable "evidence" to be presented as the foundations of this theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Racism and discriminatory practices that accompany it are personal experiences that affect the minds and bodies of the individuals who are victims of such oppressive actions (Degruy-Leary, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). To dismiss personal accounts as invalid, may be perceived as demonstration of the existing power structure and a desire by the dominant population to maintain that dominance through the racial oppression in the form of such dismissal (Bell, 1980; Degruy-Leary, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Wilkins et al., 2015). Qualitative research relies on the examination of narratives collected as data and analyzed for building understanding into phenomena that are often personal to the subjects (Saini & Shlonsky, 2012). The phenomenographical research design of this study was the chosen path for understanding the perceptions that Black/African American males hold regarding civic engagement for that reason.

Phenomenography

Phenomenography is the research design that facilitated the narrative nature of this project. The purpose of this study was to build on the understanding that exists regarding the perceptions of 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males concerning civic engagement. To accomplish this goal, in-depth discussions with

members of this population was required for the purpose of uncovering the experiences that these subjects have had in relation to this phenomenon (Saini & Shlonsky, 2012).

Definition

As a research design, phenomenography is defined as a methodology that utilizes close interviews to examine the perceptions that an individual or population has regarding a phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2008; Marton, 1981, 1988; Marton & Saljo, 1984). These perceptions are posited to be formed from the experiences that these subjects have with the phenomenon in question and are theorized to be unique to each individual (Åkerlind, 2008; Marton, 1981, 1988; Marton & Saljo, 1984). Phenomenography has its origins in empirical research in the educational field and is based in the constructivist's ontological view that perceptions of individuals are subjectively based on the person's experience and knowledge (Åkerlind, 2008; Marton, 1981, 1988; Marton & Saljo, 1984). The processes of this study examined the commonalities and differences that Black/African American males have in perceptions of civic engagement to build knowledge into the understanding of both aspects.

Research Implications

This phenomenographical research study allowed an in-depth view of what this population thinks and feels about civic engagement in its many different forms. It is hoped that through this greater understanding of the perceptions that these young men hold, a more meaningful conversation can be begun into the design of civic engagement processes and the expectations of democratic societies. This research was not developed to be an intervention into perceived issues related to the rate of civic engagement of any population but was designed to build knowledge of population characteristics. Future

research projects may benefit from this increased knowledge, and this information may be utilized by local advocates to empower under-resourced communities toward greater levels of civic engagement and social equity.

Civic Engagement

The literature related to civic engagement that was located more often followed a quantitative methodology and compared the voting characteristics of differing populations. This was helpful as a foundation for this research study but did little to support the contention that the perceptions held by the various population groups affected the civic participation of those groups. In the review of this literature, it became apparent that a need existed for the research study into the opinions that are held by all populations. This study examines the perceptions held by the Black/African American male population between the ages of 20 and 40 years regarding civic engagement. The term “civic engagement” may represent different meanings for individuals of varying cultures and sub-groups, so to begin the literature review, a precise definition must be established.

For the purposes of this study the term “civic engagement” included all activities of public and private activism related to social change including protests, both private and public, and community organizing, as well as political participation to make a difference in the community. However, defining civic engagement is not an easy task due to the subjectivity of the term and the differing meanings it may elicit for various respondents (Gaby, 2016; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). Considering the increase in social media activities that can be defined as acts of civic engagement, it is of value to examine the literature that delineates what civic engagement represents.

Defining civic engagement. Civic engagement is the process of connecting individuals in society with one another, to share common interests and work for the common good (Hylton, 2015; Jones, 2016; Shuck & Helfenbein, 2015). In an article titled “Civic Action”, Lichterman and Eliasoph (2014) conducted a comprehensive study of civic engagement through an examination of literature and two ethnographic case studies involving housing advocacy and youth civic engagement projects. The researchers sought to understand the different ways in which society defines the term “civic”, and how that definition guides activities referred to as civic actions (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). Alluding to the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, who held that participation in governance by citizens was of vital importance for societal development, the researchers examined what is termed the neo-Tocquevillian approach to studies of civic engagement where face-to-face involvement in democracy is the norm (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). By the neo-Tocquevillian standard, civic engagement is defined as public action taken in-person by a group of like-minded individuals towards a common goal to challenge the larger society (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). In this study, a comparison was made between the U.S. model of civic engagement, which often involves non-political activities towards social change such as economic protests, and the European model, that more often involves political movements like direct protests of the governing body. The indication is that defining civic engagement is subjective and a consensus on the definition is dependent on the personal characteristics of the subject of the inquiry (Gaby, 2016; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). The normative perceptions of civic engagement are developed through life experiences that are relative to the environment of the individual (Gaby, 2016; Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014).

In the United States, the civic engagement model of non-political action can at times be attributed to the seemingly ineffectuality of politically directed actions towards policy change. Even efforts that begin as non-political activities often have goals that can only be accomplished through a shift in laws which are most often the result of political maneuvering. The civic actions that begin in the community are often prompted by the perception of a lack of civil rights. An uncomfortability prompts like minded individuals to engage in activities that seek social change. The resulting civic engagement sometimes is labeled as a movement with civic actions designed to elicit a specific social change.

Civic engagement and civil rights. Throughout history, there have been innumerable occasions of civic actions taken by citizens to achieve civil rights equality from the larger society. These actions, dating back thousands of years, have been guides for civic engagement today. The ethnicities of those who acted to achieve civil rights were often different from those who were the targets of protest and civic action, but this was not always the case and it was never a requirement of inequality. When talk turns to civil rights, thoughts often go to the Civil Rights Movement of the United States that occurred in the mid-20th century. That act of civic engagement in the form of protests and political involvement lasted more than a decade, achieved changes to some laws and the creation of others, and cost many lives. It is also a legacy that has been described by some community leaders as being diminished through the lack of civic engagement by the Black/African American community. Some of these leaders believe that this lack of participation is the cause of the reversing of some of those changed laws (Briggs & Andrews, 2015; Cameron Kelly, 2013).

The efforts of the Civil Rights Movement are often thought to have begun when Rosa Parks refused to change bus seats in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955, but efforts of civic engagement to protest the treatment of Black/African American citizens officially began as early as 1845 (Clayton, 2018; Miletsky, 2017). The Jim Crow laws that promoted discrimination against Black/African Americans were first challenged through the civic engagement actions of Benjamin Roberts who in 1849 brought a lawsuit against the city of Boston for his daughter's experience of not being allowed to attend segregated schools and having to walk past three of them to attend the black school (Miletsky, 2017). Roberts would lose his case for equality but would inspire a school boycott that led Boston to be the first city to desegregate schools in 1855 (Miletsky, 2017). Such early civic actions in the North would be the precursors to civic engagement in the South and throughout the country that would ultimately result in the laws that are in place for the purpose of ensuring racial equity (Clayton, 2018; Miletsky, 2017).

From those first efforts of lawsuits against unequal facilities and protests against discrimination to the marches and speeches for overall equal rights, courageous men and women placed their lives on the line for the sake of civic engagement. Many would die for the right to participate in the civic and political processes of this country (Clayton, 2018; Miletsky, 2017). Today, many appear to not be concerned about those efforts and do not take the opportunity to participate in civic actions. Many research studies have been conducted to demonstrate the lack of participation of the Black/African American population in civic activities, but few have inquired as to the specific reasons for the lack of engagement. With the recentness of the establishment of the Black/African American's right to vote, some suggest that there is a lack of understanding of the process and that the

youth are at an educational disadvantage when it comes to civic engagement (Bush & Bush, 2013; Clayton, 2018; Farmer, 2006; Gaby, 2016; Jones, 2016; Miletsky, 2017).

Civic engagement and youth development. A growing consensus in the study of civic and political participation is that education in these areas should begin early in youth development (Bush & Bush, 2013; Farmer, 2006; Gaby, 2016; Jones, 2016). In some middle-income communities, this educational process is begun at home, and youth are acclimated to activities of civic and political engagement by the adults with whom they interact (Bush & Bush, 2013; Gaby, 2016; Jones, 2016; Lake et al., 2016; Scott & Šerek, 2015). Scott and Šerek (2015) examined the political participation tendencies of 15- to 26-year-old individuals in relation to the ethnic majority or minority status in which each identified. The researchers found that members of the majority population tended to have higher levels of civic engagement which was attributed to the acknowledgment of personal responsibility for current civic and political issues (Scott & Šerek, 2015). Members of the minority population were found to engage in public efforts that were directly beneficial to the local community and were inclined to view more civic activities as the responsibility of the government, and beyond any community control (Scott & Šerek, 2015). Findings in this research study indicated the need for an in-depth qualitative analysis into the meanings that minority populations assign to the phenomenon of civic and political engagement.

In two separate quantitative studies, Pritzker (2012) and Gaby (2016) examined the variances in viewpoints and actions toward political involvement that were held across different ethnicities using data from the 2006 Monitoring the Future (MTF) national survey of high school students. The findings verified a predicted lower minority

participation rate due to individual covariates that motivated a negative attitude towards political involvement (Gaby, 2016; Pritzker, 2012). Gaby (2016) noted a decline in participation of youth in election politics, but an increase in activities such as protests and boycotts over the length of the survey. However, the gap between minority and majority ethnic participation remained persistent (Gaby, 2016). The findings also showed that minority female participation in civic and political activities was consistently higher than minority male engagement (Gaby, 2016). These studies indicated a need for further research into the precursors of the negativity persistent in the attitudes of these minority youth and the gaps in civic involvement that continue to exist across race and gender lines (Gaby, 2016; Pritzker, 2012).

Soler-i-Martí (2015) conducted a mixed-methods research study into the changes that have occurred in youth political involvement over the last three decades. Using survey data obtained from over 2000, 15- to 29-year-olds, the researcher found evidence that a decline in traditional political involvement activities such as voting has been accompanied by an increase in the non-traditional activities such as demonstrations and protests (Soler-i-Martí, 2015). This type of political involvement was predicated on the goal-oriented nature of the civic engagement that young people deem to be cause-driven, and thereby, personally important (Soler-i-Martí, 2015). The results of this research study demonstrated a beginning into inquiries that examine the subjective nature of individual civic engagement. Further research would need to answer the questions regarding the perceptions and specific motivations of populations related to race or ethnicity.

Civic engagement and race. Racial division is a social construct that has been an intricate part of the experience of life in the United States since its inception (Bush &

Bush, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2015). As such, most citizens of this country continue to view all aspects of life in racial terms (Bell, 1980; Degruy-Leary, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Wilkins et al., 2015). Through that racial lens, researchers have studied the variations that exist in both the actions and perceptions of the different ethnic groups. It is through such a lens that the feelings and opinions of Black/African Americans can be determined. Many of these opinions were developed at a time in history when Black/African Americans, recently freed from slavery, sought to establish a meaningful place in the society that was the United States.

Dutter (2013) performed a theoretical case study using the United States of America as the subject. The researcher sought to build on the understanding of the political behavior of the varying ethnic groups in the United States by utilizing census data and a social identity theoretical framework (Dutter, 2013). The study involved the historical examination of the political involvement of Black/African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic/Latino Americans with the goal of predicting future political activity (Dutter, 2013). Through political analyses and literature reviews, this study introduced a gap in the ability of researchers to define the research questions that should be asked to determine the condition of the political environment in the United States (Dutter, 2013). The research further indicated a need for qualitative research into the phenomenon of political participation to understand the minority perspective.

Chung and Probert (2011) sought to prove the hypothesis that civic engagement was related to individual and community outcome expectations (OE). Using survey interviews and chi-square analysis, these researchers were able to indicate that a

relationship did exist between these variables, but further studies were recommended to verify these findings to expound upon the reasons for the association (Chung & Probert, 2011). The data showed that Black/African American young adults who had experienced positive results regarding OE in previous participation in civic engagement activities were more likely to engage in future civic endeavors, but that OE was low for initial involvement in civic actions (Chung & Probert, 2011). The study indicated the importance of identifying perceptual reasons for initial low OE among Black/African Americans and what was considered to be a positive experience.

Clifford (2012) used data from the 2000 National Annenberg Election Study (NAES) and Achen's (1978) proximity measures to examine whether the political ideologies of Black/African American and Latino constituents were in alignment with the political ideologies of the legislators who represented these residents in public offices. The researcher was able to verify the findings of previous studies that indicated that legislative representatives were more aligned with the ideologies of White constituents than minority groups (Clifford, 2012). These findings did not, however, reveal concrete reasons for the differences, and posited that these variations might be the result of districting policies that lead to homogeneity in minority districts (Clifford, 2012). In minority districts, the relative legislative power is lessened by the number of participants available during the election cycle. This legislative power is further diminished by minority populations who do not fully participate in political activities (Clifford, 2012). Clifford also noted that White constituents are more likely to hold legislative representatives accountable for ideological stances that may have led to the initial voter support (Clifford, 2012).

Grayman-Simpson (2012) conducted a qualitative study on the perceptions of well-being that Black/African Americans have regarding community involvement. The researcher used a face-to-face survey method to collect the opinions of 50 Black/African Americans in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States and used content analysis to determine the precursors of motivation toward civic engagement in the community (Grayman-Simpson, 2012). The researcher found that community involvement was subjectively beneficial to the well-being of these constituents in four distinct categories: social, psychological, emotional, and spiritual (Grayman-Simpson, 2012). The themes were driven by desires to benefit self and community and were remnants of the Black/African American traditions that led to the activities comparable to the Civil Rights Movement (Grayman-Simpson, 2012). This study indicated some of the perceptions of Black/African American constituents but only addressed the wellness categories. As further research is conducted, a more comprehensive approach needed to be considered utilizing other methodologies and incorporating questions regarding different aspects of motivation to participate. The article demonstrated a gap in the research regarding civic engagement and pointed to the applicability of further study.

Szymanski and Lewis (2015) examined the relationship between race-related stress and Black/African American activism for 185 Black/African American and Bi-Racial college students. The sample was taken from a predominantly White southern university and consisted of all class levels (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). Using the two social constructs of race-related stress and racial identity, these researchers sought to predict the participation tendencies of the Black/African American students (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). Utilizing survey scales that measured these three variables, the findings

indicated that those with higher amounts of race-related stress due to environmental racism were more likely to engage in activism, but the varying forms of activism did not indicate political involvement or direct civic engagement for social change (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). The results of this study emphasized the importance of understanding the motivation and hindrances of minority young adults towards decisions to participate in civic activities, with questions remaining as to other relevant factors and the magnitude of racial identity in informing these choices.

Leath and Chavous (2017) conducted a study of the civic engagement practices of 322 Black/African American men and women during the first year of college at predominately White institutions. The researchers sought to determine whether political self-efficacy effected the propensity for these students to use civic engagement practices to address and challenge perceived racial stigma and racial inequality. Leath and Chavous also wanted to determine if the socio-political beliefs of these students, such as the belief in a just world and racial consciousness, would have any effect on that self-efficacy. The quantitative study was conducted in two parts and used surveys and multiple regression methods to test the students at the beginning and end of the first year. The findings suggested that Black/African American men and women with high political self-efficacy were more likely to engage in civic activities to address perceived racial injustice, but that women had a higher propensity to do so. Men and women with high racial consciousness were also more likely to engage in civic activities, but men with a low self-efficacy and a high racial consciousness still did not participate in civic engagement activities. Women with an initial low political self-efficacy and high racial consciousness significantly increased their involvement in civic engagement activities over the year.

Also, men and women who viewed the world as a just place were more likely to civically engage in activities to address perceived racial injustice and hostilities, but the men's civic engagement potential was moderated by the level of political self-efficacy. The civic engagement of the women was not hindered by the initial levels of political self-efficacy. The researchers indicated several factors that required further research and of those was the need to determine the perceptions that the young adult population hold regarding race and marginalization in the context of civic engagement.

Civic engagement and CRT. Black/African Americans, and other minorities, regularly interact in a society where racism, whether blatant or through micro-aggressiveness, is commonplace (Bell, 1980; Bush & Bush, 2013; Degruy-Leary, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2015). Such an environment is prone to create levels of anxiety similar to those experienced by soldiers entrenched in military battle (Degruy-Leary, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Amid this anxiety, an opportunity may arise to engage in an activity that has the potential to benefit a community of color but increase the likelihood of a backlash of racial aggression towards the people of color. Many Black/African Americans will question themselves in that situation as to the proper response and whether that response will make a difference. Questions often arise as to whether the effort will be worth the results. It is posited that engrained in the Black/African American psyche is the memory of 400 years of oppression that continues to guide thoughts and actions of individuals (Bell, 1980; Bush & Bush, 2013; Degruy-Leary, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2015). This oppression in the forms of capture, slavery, rape, murder, discriminatory laws, and continued racial bias has led many to dwell in a

lingering state of anxiety (Bell, 1980; Bush & Bush, 2013; Degruy-Leary, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2015).

Degruy-Leary (2005) chronicled the results of a 12-year mixed-methods study into the psyche of Black/African Americans in the United States. Using historical and psychological research, Dr. Degruy-Leary sought to understand the etiology of the behaviors of the Black/African American population (Degruy-Leary, 2005). The results of the research culminated in the theoretical suggestion of Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS), which is a theory that describes how the thoughts and actions of Black/African Americans are driven by trauma symptoms passed down through the generations. Degruy-Leary posits that the multi-generational trauma and the lack of any opportunity to heal have left many Black/African Americans to adhere to survival habits that are no longer effective. Among these is the propensity for Black/African Americans to not trust one another and have difficulty in working toward common goals, to possess an apathy toward traditional community unity, and to live with a heightened fear of reprisal from the majority population (Degruy-Leary, 2005). These and other feelings of anxiety and inferiority are posited to lead many Black/African Americans to avoid civic and political engagement (Bell, 1980; Bush & Bush, 2013; Degruy-Leary, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). These same conditions, however, drive the passion of some Black/African Americans to engage in activities that promote social change toward racial equity (Bell, 1980; Bush & Bush, 2013; Degruy-Leary, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2015). This research study sought to understand the validity of those assumptions through the direct inquiry of the individuals who live that reality.

Civic engagement now. In the current socio-political environment, civic engagement has taken on a modern methodology that utilizes the technological tools that are now available (Bush & Bush, 2013; Gaby, 2016; Jones, 2016; Lake et al., 2016; Scott & Šerek, 2015; Soler-i-Martí, 2015). Practices of online and remote voting, social media protests, and online petitions have taken a more significant role in the civic engagement activities of the 21st century (Bush & Bush, 2013; Gaby, 2016; Jones, 2016; Lake et al., 2016; Scott & Šerek, 2015; Soler-i-Martí, 2015). With these changes, there would appear to be more ease in becoming involved in civic engagement activities, and therefore a more significant percentage of those who become civically involved, but this has not been the case for the population that is the subject of this study (Bush & Bush, 2013; Gaby, 2016; Jones, 2016; Lake et al., 2016; Scott & Šerek, 2015; Soler-i-Martí, 2015; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). Studies of the civic engagement of Black/African American males continue to show this population as lagging all others in voter participation, protests, and community involvement (Bush & Bush, 2013; Gaby, 2016; Jones, 2016; Lake et al., 2016; Scott & Šerek, 2015; Soler-i-Martí, 2015; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilson, 2012). I have found no studies that sought to understand the perceptions that Black/African American males held regarding civic engagement and, therefore, posited that examining this phenomenon would build the levels of understanding that the research community holds, and thereby improve this society.

The lack of civic participation by Black/African American males is additionally perplexing since the most prominent current events that would prompt the need for civic unrest affect Black/African American males more directly than any other population. Increasingly, African American males are the subjects of police and civilian brutality

resulting in death. The Black Lives Matter movement and the kneeling protests of many sports teams were designed to bring attention to these discriminatory practices, but even in these protests, aside from the athletes themselves, the Black/African American male was not a prominent participant (Bush & Bush, 2013; Gaby, 2016; Jones, 2016; Lake et al., 2016; Scott & Šerek, 2015; Soler-i-Martí, 2015). It was one of the goals of this research study to understand the reasons for the disparity in engagement displayed by this population.

Summary

Perceptions are generally personal and develop from experiences of individual's lives as an attempt is made to understand and explain occurrences. Human nature leads people to seek methods to respond to phenomena in ways that are personally beneficial and therefore a perceived understanding of each phenomenon is necessary.

Unfortunately, perception and reality do not always match, and the perceptions of some individuals may lead to actions or decisions that are not beneficial to the individual or society. Understanding the perceptions that another person holds regarding any given phenomenon requires a well-planned listening strategy, an open mind to alternate realities, and a thorough understanding of the phenomenon in question. This review of the literature has been an attempt to fulfill the latter requirement.

The research articles, studies, and books examined have revealed many efforts to explain and understand the realities of societal perceptions of race, gender, and civic engagement, but the conclusions drawn, and hypotheses given, have tended to leave out an important factor. I have not found articles in which the perceptions of Black/African American males about civic engagement have been examined. Studies have shown that

Black/African Americans participate in civic activities at lower rates than the majority population and most minority populations, and many researchers have posited the reasons for this disparity, but none have asked directly (Bush & Bush, 2013; Gaby, 2016; Jones, 2016; Lake et al., 2016; Scott & Šerek, 2015; Soler-i-Martí, 2015; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Wilson, 2012).

The Black/African American male is the only source that could unambiguously explain the perceptions that are held regarding this phenomenon. The seemingly logical conclusion would be to ask this population directly. This study focused on the perceptions held by Black/African American males 20- to 40-years-old and used face-to-face conversations to build a better understanding into how this population thinks and feels about civic engagement. The research methodology allowed these individuals to fully articulate what this phenomenon meant to them and gives the research community a clearer understanding as to the reasons for the disparities in civic engagement that exist.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Understanding social and political change in urban communities requires in-depth study into the motivation and hindrances of civic and political participation. For significant change to occur, political participation and engagement in civic reform activities from most, if not all, residents of these communities are necessary (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014; Worthman, 2011). However, research has shown that Black/African American males between the ages of 20 and 40 years, who represent a significant proportion of urban community inhabitants, are disproportionately absent from engagement in civic activities (Farmer, 2006; Pritzker, 2012; Soler-i-Martí, 2015; Teney & Hanquinet, 2012). This research study was an inquiry into the perceptions that this population holds regarding civic engagement.

The previous chapters have been the results of an in-depth examination of the background and purpose for this study, as well as a thorough review of the research literature that precedes this inquiry. The information in this chapter will be a comprehensive explanation of the method in which I conducted this research. I will explain the design of the research, my role as the researcher, and the methodology utilized along with the issues of trustworthiness. I designed this research to answer two distinct questions:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of civic and political engagement and racial identity for 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males living in a midwestern urban community?

RQ2: What specific influences affect the perceptions of 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males living in a midwestern urban community regarding civic and political participation?

Research Design

In this study, I used Marton's (1981) phenomenography as the basis for the research design. Phenomenography examines the experiences that a population has with a phenomenon and how that experience affects the perceptions that the study subjects hold regarding the phenomenon (Best, 2015; Garcia & Scott, 2016; Marton, 1981, 1988; Marton & Saljo, 1984). I utilized heuristic inquiry techniques to discover information that was previously unknown and build understanding into the learned responses that the subjects have to the phenomenon of civic engagement (Williamson, 2015). The ontology of phenomenography is subjectivist, holding that individuals experience life differently and that those experiences guide the actions that the person takes in response to opportunities to act upon a phenomenological situation (Best, 2015; Garcia & Scott, 2016; Marton, 1981, 1988; Marton & Saljo, 1984).

In the context of this study, heuristic phenomenography allowed an opportunity for a larger research community to understand the perceptions that 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males have regarding the phenomenon of civic engagement. The study subjects explained the experiences that each has had with this phenomenon in the past, and how that experience has guided the current decisions of whether to participate in civic engagement activities. I made effort to discover any underlying history that may have induced a learned response to the phenomenon, but the focus was on the individual choices being made now. The narrative nature of phenomenographical data promoted an

in-depth understanding of the subject's viewpoint and increased the chances of gaining valuable knowledge towards the promotion or hindrances of a full democracy (Best, 2015; Garcia & Scott, 2016; Marton, 1981, 1988; Marton & Saljo, 1984). It was my responsibility to ensure that full descriptions and knowledge were achieved with clarity and objectivity and that the research procedures adhered to proper ethical standards.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in this study was one of unbiased facilitator and analyst (Dupin, Larsson, Dariel, Debout, & Rothan-Tondeur, 2015). It was important that relationships of mutual respect were established with each participant in the study so that a free and open conversation could take place. The participants felt comfortable sharing information that may not have been at the forefront of his thoughts. I established trust that allowed the subject to share information that may have been considered to be private and may have evoked different physical, emotional, or psychological responses. I had to be aware of this possibility and remained prepared to address any of these personal feelings if that would have been necessary (Dupin et al., 2015).

As a member of the community that is the focus of this research, it was important that I maintained an objective view of the research procedures, research questions, and the relationship with the participants. I utilized self-reflection, self-monitoring, and a constant state of self-awareness to maintain a focused objectivity toward all aspects of this study. When any biased activities occurred, I discarded the data of that interview, and revisited all the above-mentioned activities.

The collection and analysis of phenomenographical data was also an essential part of my role as the researcher in this study. That task required a precise methodology that

adhered to ethical standards of research as well as academic expectations of scholarly study. I maintained an unbiased approach to ensure trustworthiness and assured all procedures to be ethically sound. The methodology of this study was in alignment with all those requirements.

Methodology

Qualitative research methods require in-depth inquiry into the meanings that study subjects assign to phenomena (Boddy, 2016). To address that requirement, I utilized a face-to-face interview methodology that allowed discussions with participants and ensured the obtainment of rich personal data regarding the subject of civic engagement. To guarantee the integrity of the research, I developed a specific plan for research participant selection, the instruments being used, and research procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection in advance. I also developed a specific data analysis plan that promoted adherence to ethical practice and trustworthiness.

Research Participants

The subjects targeted for this research study were Black/African American males between the ages of 20 and 40 years who reside in a midwestern urban community. This generational age grouping included individuals referred to as Millennials for whom the statistical data related to voter turnout, as well as anecdotal research regarding protests and other civic activities in this area, indicated were less involved in civic and political activities in this community than other populations (Lake et al., 2016). Some members of this population are civically engaged, and I sought to determine the differing factors that guide those discrepancies. I determined that the best way to uncover the views of this

population regarding this phenomenon was to conduct face-to-face interviews in the community.

Instrumentation

The questions that formed the instrumentation in this study were semistructured to follow the heuristic phenomenography research design (Best, 2015; Garcia & Scott, 2016; Marton, 1981, 1988; Marton & Saljo, 1984; Williamson, 2015). I asked each participant three initial questions to begin the official interview process (See Appendix A). I collected demographic information pertaining to age group, marital status, education level, employment status, and yearly income to determine whether these factors had any relationship to the participants perceptions of civic engagement (See Appendix B). Guidance from previous studies that attempted to answer research questions like those presented in this study assisted in the process. The semistructured interview method created a relaxed environment of mutual respect in which information was freely shared. The conversations with the participants followed set procedural steps that improved trustworthiness of the research study.

Procedures

The selection of participants for this study followed a purposeful sampling design to target a subject pool of Black/African American males between the ages of 20 and 40 years in this midwestern metropolitan area (Benoot, Hannes, & Bilsen, 2016). The purposeful sampling design aligns with the research questions that apply to the specific population. The goal was to recruit a diverse mix of individuals who all fit within the research criteria. I asked each individual who responded to the recruitment flyer to meet at a location of the respondents choosing for a short conversational interview. After

COVID-19 restrictions were put in place, I moved all interviews to an online format. I informed the subject of the purpose of the study, the benefits, the possible discomforts, and the rights that are his regarding consent and discontinuation. Each qualifying participant read and signed the informed consent form before the interview began (See Appendix C). I recorded the conversations with the participants permission and securely stored the data on my computer for input and analysis.

Recruitment

I placed flyers that invited participation in this study in local community gathering locations such as barber shops, community centers, and grocery stores (See Appendix D). There were also postings of the flyers on social media, at the community college, and at the local university. The participation criteria were on the postings and I screened those interested in participating in the initial contact to ensure that the criteria for involvement were met.

Data Collection and Analysis Plan

The qualitative data was in the form of handwritten notes and audio recordings. Care has been taken to ensure that all information remains confidential through storage of data in a password protected drive and the use of encoding of the identities of each participant.

I coded the responses to the interview questions and the recorded information for analysis manually using a purchased ATLAS.ti software package (Franzosi, Doyle, McClelland, Rankin, & Vicari, 2012; Humble, 2015; Paulus, Woods, Atkins, & Macklin, 2017). This software assisted in sorting and coding the unstructured responses and the collected interview recordings to indicate the patterns and themes that emerged (Franzosi

et al., 2012; Humble, 2015; Paulus et al., 2017). I used those patterns and themes as the rich data that told the story of the experiences of the study participants and drew some informed conclusions.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is used to demonstrate the reliability and validity of the findings (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham, Fox, & Doran, 2015). In quantitative studies, these variables are addressed in the ratings of the instruments being used to assess the research subject, and thereby are established by the tools being used. The subjective methodologies of qualitative research do not often allow the use of previously rated instruments and establishing trustworthiness requires some specific action steps (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham et al., 2015).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) worked to develop specific criteria for the establishment of trustworthiness in qualitative research. The four criteria that establish trustworthiness are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Throughout this research project I made effort maintain these four criteria and adhere to ethical practices and procedures that ensured a high level of integrity during the process.

Credibility

The criterion of credibility is defined as the extent to which a researcher has confidence that the findings of the study are true (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham et al., 2015). For this research, I used prolonged engagement with the study subjects to establish credibility. I took time to form a communicative relationship in which honesty was revealed through familiarity. I used triangulation to compare the

responses from different sources and help determine the discovered themes and patterns (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham et al., 2015).

Transferability

Transferability is the capacity to show that the findings are applicable in other related contexts (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham et al., 2015). In this research study, I addressed transferability by using thick descriptions of the findings and the context of the responses of the participants. These thick descriptions will allow those who peruse this study a better opportunity to understand the meaning behind the findings, actions, and responses (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham et al., 2015).

Dependability

The trustworthiness criterion of dependability show that the findings are consistent across the variety of participants and that the research can be repeated and receive the same results (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham et al., 2015). I established research dependability by thoroughly documenting every aspect of the study. I recorded the procedures, instruments, and responses were in a manner that will allow an inquiry audit to demonstrate all dimensions of the study wherein repeating the activities will not be difficult and thereby the findings may be duplicated (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham et al., 2015).

Confirmability

Confirmability is the assurance of the neutrality of the study and the findings of the research (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham et al., 2015). This criterion addresses the bias of the researcher and the extent to which that bias may influence the results of the study. For this study, I assured confirmability by using

reflexivity to remain aware of the bias that existed and taking actions to alleviate any influence on the subjects or the study design. I established an audit trail that documents all interactions and omitted any indication of researcher influence from study results. A confirmability audit examined the audit trail to affirm that the interpretations of the data received was internally coherent and without any researcher influence (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham et al., 2015).

Ethical Procedures

The importance of ethical procedures and practices is a pillar of social services research and potentially challenging in qualitative research designs (NASW, 2018; Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, & Cheraghi, 2014; Steen, Mann, Restivo, Mazany, & Chapple, 2017). Aspects that must be addressed are the caution to not harm the study participants in any way, confidentiality of the subjects, informed consent, and researcher integrity (NASW, 2018; Sanjari et al., 2014; Steen et al., 2017). To address these ethical principles, the procedures of this study were designed in adherence to the standards set forth by the NASW and the IRB of the university. As the data collection for the study began, I took care to monitor the reactions of the participants, and had any distress been detected, the study would have ended. I stored all data received on password protected flash drives to ensure confidentiality and the protection of identities of participants. Full names or other identifying characteristics were not included in any findings or public reports unless permission was specifically given by the participant. The request for participants and the application included a full description of the nature of the study, the procedures, and the possible uses of the findings. I required that each

participant fully understand these aspects and demonstrate that understanding verbally before signing a consent form.

As a researcher, it is imperative that I maintain professionalism and remain unbiased in conducting any qualitative study. Self-reflection and constant consciousness of the necessity to display a high level of integrity as a representative of Walden University and the greater research community guided all activities related to this research study. Had any of the aspects and issues of ethics throughout the study proven to be challenging beyond my ability to address them, the study would have ended (NASW, 2018; Sanjari et al., 2014; Steen et al., 2017).

Summary

The research design described above was supportive of the heuristic qualitative study and was in line with the phenomenographical methodology being utilized (Best, 2015; Garcia & Scott, 2016; Marton, 1981, 1988; Marton & Saljo, 1984; Williamson, 2015). The subjectivist ontological nature of the research study left much of the data analysis to the discretion of the researcher, so it was important that I remained cognizant of the role that I played in collecting and disseminating the data and the findings that were discovered (Dupin et al., 2015). It was imperative that I maintained strict adherence to the prescribed methodology throughout the course of the research study. This included, but was not limited to, the activities of recruitment, participant selection, data collection and analysis, and the reporting of the findings.

Maintaining integrity during the processes of the research study ensured the levels of trustworthiness that will allow the greater research community to accept the findings as valid and meaningful and increase the likelihood of the findings being impactful

toward social change (NASW, 2018; Sanjari et al., 2014; Steen et al., 2017). Everyone who participated in this study deserved the highest levels of respect and were treated with the dignity afforded one who assists in efforts of social change and social justice. It was an honorable position to design and administer a research project of this magnitude. I made all effort to display the highest levels of ethical integrity as I collected, analyzed, and disseminated the data of this study as research results (NASW, 2018; Sanjari et al., 2014; Steen et al., 2017).

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this heuristic phenomenographical qualitative study has been to build knowledge on the understanding of the perceptions that young adult Black/African American males have regarding civic engagement. Some of the previous studies, reviewed in Chapter 2, have suggested ideas regarding what circumstances or phenomena may affect the view that this population holds toward the subject of civic engagement, but few have ventured to ask the question directly of these individuals. The intention of this investigation was to directly ask 20- to 40-year-old African American men in an urban metropolitan community what they thought and felt about civic engagement. As a foundation of this study, questions regarding the role of race were added to the discussion citing the theoretical position of CRT and the posited effects that race has on this subject (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

In this chapter, I examine the results of the study into the perceptions of 17 young adult Black/African American males. I will explain the recruitment of participants and the general setting where the research occurred, and I will present the demographic profile of the participants. I will thoroughly describe the process of data collection, as laid out in Chapter 3, to include an assessment of what went well and the challenges that I encountered. I will consider the procedures that I used to analyze the data collected, and I will decipher the findings and assure the trustworthiness of the findings. Finally, I will present and summarize the study results.

Research Setting

The setting for this research project was a midsized urban community in the midwestern United States. The total population of the city was approximately 500,000 in 2020. Of that population, approximately 60,000 were Black/African American and an estimated 1,200 were between the ages of 20 and 40 years. Of that population, approximately 560 were males. These individuals were the target population of this research study.

Recruitment

The initial plan for recruitment of participants as explained in Chapter 3, was to post “request for volunteers” flyers on social media and at local community gathering areas with a description of the study and researcher contact information. This proved to be a less successful recruitment strategy than first anticipated. Though many “liked” and “shared” the flyers, there were no requests for participation as a result of that strategy.

I developed an alternative strategy to directly approach potential participants in public settings. If I encountered individuals who appeared to be within the desired age range and appeared to be Black or African American, I would initiate a conversation to determine eligibility for participation in this study. If the individual fit the criteria for participation, I would offer them the opportunity to participate in the study and give them a flyer and consent form. This recruitment method resulted in five in person face-to-face interviews.

I attempted snowball sampling techniques for recruiting more study participants, but these original subjects demonstrated a reluctance to engage in that practice. Although all the participants were content to sit, or stand, for the short interview, there was marked

hesitation in referring others or giving out any information. This disinclination to attempt to influence the actions of others is significant and is addressed later in this chapter and in chapter 5.

In March of 2020, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic initiated social distancing guidelines that ended all in-person, face-to-face interviews. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted approval of virtual face-to-face interviews for data collection and allowed the recruiting process to continue. This method of data collection would prove more acceptable to the population that was targeted for this study. After posting several discussions related age and ethnicity to social media regarding COVID-19, I posted an inquiry as to who might be interested in further discussions on those subjects and being involved in a response. This inquiry resulted in 30 individuals who I contacted directly via Facebook and email, thereby narrowing the field to 15 who matched the study criteria. Virtual face-to-face interviews via Zoom and Facebook netted 12 interviews. By the end of the data collection phase, I completed 17 face-to-face interviews. There were five in-person and 12 virtual interviews. None of the participants were known to be related to, or acquaintances of, one another. The interviews took place in various locations around the city such as a church fellowship hall, an office lobby, on a public sidewalk, on a patio, at a coffee shop, and in Zoom and Facebook virtual meetings.

Demographics

The main demographic of the participants of this study was the criteria of being a Black/African American male who was 20 to 40 years old. I collected general demographic information for the purpose of identifying any specific patterns that might emerge with respect to these other variables. Table 1 shows the demographic breakdown

of participants related to age group, marital status, education level completed, employment status, and income level. This information demonstrates a vast cross section of study participants.

Table 1

Demographics

Variable	Number
Age (years)	
20 to 24	2
25 to 29	2
30 to 34	4
35 to 40	9
Marital status	
Single	8
Married	9
Education	
No diploma	1
H.S. diploma/GED	8
Some college/no degree	2
College degree	6
Employment	
Unemployed	3
Employed part-time	5
Employed full-time	9
Yearly income	
\$0 to \$12,000	5
\$12,001 to \$25,000	7
\$25,001 to \$50,000	3
\$50,000 or more	2

Data Collection

The data collection procedures, as previously described, were to interview eligible participants face-to-face, in person and virtually, while recording the conversation for later transcription and analysis. Each interview began with a formal introduction of

myself to the participant and a thorough description of the purpose of the study. Next, I would establish a more casual speaking approach to discuss the nature of the study, and the procedures that would be followed throughout the interview and as I collected, transcribed, and analyzed the data. The study participant was then required to confirm a full understanding of the study procedures and the processes that would ensue. I asked each candidate to read the consent form and acknowledge a thorough comprehension of what the study entailed before signing and dating the form. I gave each subject the option to take a day and read and study the consent form before signing and when the level of understanding was sufficient, the interview proceeded. After I received the signed consent form, the casual conversation would ensue in which I gave a description of the various methods of civic engagement. In these conversations, there was no intentional reference to my own experience or any civic engagement actions that had been taken by me in the past. The conversations remained honest and open and I kept the focus on the subject of the interview. I reminded the subjects of the three specific interview questions which were also printed on the consent form, and the conversation would turn to answering those questions.

Interview Questions

I designed the interview questions to elicit thoughtful responses from the participants and provide a deeper insight into not only the present perceptions that these individuals had regarding civic engagement, but any underlying feelings that guided those perceptions. I have confidence that these goals were achieved. The development of the three interview questions followed thoughtful study of previous literature and the questions aligned specifically with this study. The interview questions are available in

Appendix A. Each question was initially quoted verbatim and then rephrased to match the conversational style of the participant. Some of the subjects needed clarification and asked questions to build better understanding of what was specifically being asked, but all the participants spent significant time answering the questions and explaining the reasonings behind those answers. I asked follow-up questions to achieve deeper insight into the meanings that each subject gave to the concept being discussed and I tailored those questions to the style and register in which the participant spoke.

Data Analysis

The analysis of these data began with transcription of the recorded interviews. I spent some time in search of transcription software and tested many of the software packages I discovered through free trial subscriptions to determine accuracy and speed. This learning process was valuable in informing me that there was not an easy way to transcribe recorded data. In the end, reliance on manual transcription was the most accurate, though time consuming, option. To save time and effort, I did not transcribe much of the conversational sections of the interviews. These were the areas where I used casual register to build relationship and ease the interview process, but all the interview recordings are stored in their original format and are available for re-evaluation.

Coding

I uploaded the audio interview recordings to an ATLAS.ti 8 software package where I flagged sections that contained relevant responses to the interview questions for coding. I then transcribed these sections into a Word document and imported that into the documents tree of the software package. I next grouped and sorted the answers to each specific interview question and developed codes by tagging words and phrases that I

thought were most relevant to the research study. I placed these precoded data into code groups related to the interview question that was being answered. Next, I analyzed the data to identify the themes that crossed all demographic groups and those that were specific to certain demographic characteristics. I further analyzed these themes to determine the meanings that were the drivers of the perceptions that this population holds regarding civic engagement.

The relevant themes that I discovered were experience, motivation and hindrances, and racial influence. These themes provided informative answers to the interview questions. These themes and the answers were instrumental in uncovering plausible resolutions to the research questions that were the basis of this study. I fully explain the analysis in the “Study Results” section later in this chapter.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As with all research projects, it is important that the information presented is reliable and factual. Using the four established criteria for trustworthiness, I carefully examined the procedures and activities of this study and monitored all aspects to maintain the highest levels of integrity and trustworthiness. I took credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability into consideration throughout this study and all are demonstrated in the paragraphs that follow (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham et al., 2015).

Credibility

Credibility is the extent to which there is confidence that the results of the study are accurate and true (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham et al., 2015). The conversations that occurred in the interviews of this data collection process were casual

and took place with enough time to establish a comfortable atmosphere. The participants were relaxed and speaking their own reality. The fact that none of the participants were acquainted with one another, yet all spoke towards similar themes, indicates a genuineness in the responses and that each individual was speaking truthfully from his own experiences. This study possesses high levels of credibility.

Transferability

The criterion of transferability is seen in the ability to relate these findings to the experiences and realities of other African American males in other communities. The recordings from this study indicate a common theme related to the racial relationships encountered in this country and the experience of civic engagement in communities of color. While the response to feelings of oppression or discrimination will vary for each individual, it is the perceived understanding of this study population that for African American males, it is necessary to be aware of the existence of racism and discrimination towards African American people. This necessity varies in level of intensity throughout the different geographic areas of these United States, but studies and anecdotal evidence indicate that as a nation we live in a state of constant racial inequality. This study is highly transferrable.

Dependability

Dependability shows that the collected data are consistent for a variety of study participants and that the results are capable of being repeated using the prescribed procedures (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodham et al., 2015). All materials and procedures of this research project are well documented above and available to any who wish to repeat this study. The results received, as with any study, will be subjective

to the individual participant's experiences, but the consistency of the methodology is dependable.

Confirmability

Care has been taken to ensure that the biases that are held or any preconception that is envisioned were totally acknowledged while effort was made to keep them absent from the research process. Confirmability was achieved by diligently examining my state of mind and thought processes before entering a research setting. This neutrality was written into the forms of consent and stated at the beginning of each interview. Each interview is recorded in its entirety to provide an audit trail that is available should a confirmability audit be deemed necessary. As a result of these efforts, this study possesses a high level of confirmability.

Study Results

Analysis of the collected data indicated some themes and patterns that were helpful in the building of understanding into perceptions that are held by young adult African American males regarding civic engagement. Of these 17 participants, all had practiced civic engagement at some point in the recent past, but the levels and types of participation varied and was more often related to something to which the individual had personal involvement. The interview questions and the subsequent conversations gave insight into the motivating factors that impacted the decisions made by the study participants regarding civic engagement and were effective in drawing out rich data regarding perceptions that these individuals held. The themes that were discovered allowed for clear interpretation of the views of the participants and assisted in

deciphering the meanings behind the answers to the interview questions. These themes, again, were experience, motivation and hindrances, and racial influence.

Theme 1: Experience

Interview question #1 was designed to give an insight into the previous and current state of understanding that the study participants had about the process of civic engagement and what the term “civic engagement” meant. The responses to the first interview question often began with a request for clarification. A conversational exchange about the meaning and processes of civic engagement often resulted in a surprised look and nod or even an exclamation of “oh, that!” before the participant began to think back to the last incident of engagement. The data indicated that the responses were limited to four specific areas of civic engagement: voting, petitioning, volunteering, and protesting. While 15 of the participants indicated voting in an election as an activity that had been engaged in, some verbally indicated a lack of complete understanding in the process and anxiety regarding whether it was making a difference. The response of one participant was, “I didn’t feel really comfortable. Maybe a lack of truly understanding the laws,” and another stated “I didn’t know some of the choices, so I didn’t pick anything in that line.” Of the two who did not vote, the reasons given were a “lack of understanding of the process” and “not knowing who the candidates actually were.”

Each of the five who signed a written petition, including one who personally petitioned city hall, were convinced either by a peer, or a petitioner, that this action would directly affect their personal lives. There were two individuals who stated, “a friend told

me to sign this petition,” and “I found out from a friend.” The individual who petitioned city hall stated:

“I was so frustrated by being blocked by these road signs every day when I took my kids to school. There was no work being done anywhere so I called to complain. I ended up having to call three different departments, but they removed the signs.”

The five participants who volunteered did so with organizations or causes with which they were previously involved. A response was, “I volunteered for the Urban League, and it was a rewarding experience because these are my people.” Another participant stated, “I volunteered for an outreach event for my church. It felt really good to give back to the community.”

The four individuals who had been involved in protests had done so in person and recently. These participants, all of whom were in the 20-24 and 25-29 age groups, had been on the front line of protests to demand a legislative response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in support of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Interview quotes that represent these individuals were, “I felt like I had to say something,” and “if we want a better future we have to act now.” There were two other participants who stated that they wanted to attend the BLM protest, but did not want to take their children so they did not go, “I did not go to a rally because I didn't feel safe taking my kids with me.”

The quoted responses above were demonstrated themes that would be coded as “Experience.” Table 2 shows a breakdown of the responses to interview question #1 by category. Some participants engaged in more than one activity.

Table 2

Most Recent Experience with Civic Engagement

Activity	Number of participants
Voting	15
Petitioning	5
Volunteering	5
Protesting	4

Theme 2: Motivation and Hindrances

The second interview question called for an indication of what motivated the study participants to engage in the civic activity and what factors may have hindered that participation. The wording of the question was intended to prompt further conversation that would develop a better understanding as to what the activity of civic engagement meant to the subject and whether that meaning could be affected externally. The responses centered around certain themes related to either motivation towards engagement or hindrances against engagement. The themes of motivation to participate included obligation to the greater society or culture, personal comfort or satisfaction, and peer encouragement. There were 11 of the respondents who engaged as a response to a feeling of obligation to the greater society or culture with responses like, “I wanted to do my part. I felt it was my responsibility,” and “I want to be active in my community.” Another participant stated, “I have great love for my community and my people.” Some of these were motivated by a specific cultural affiliation as in the member of the U.S. Army who stated that his participation was due to “mainly my military affiliation,” or

another who simply answered “God” when asked of his motivation to participate. There were three individuals who indicated that a friend had prompted them to get civically involved with all indicating that had the friend not encouraged them they would not have engaged in the civic activity. One of the individuals that indicated a reluctance to participate civically had been prompted by a friend to register and vote, only to arrive at the polling location and find that his registration had not been filed. This embarrassment further motivated him not to ever participate in that activity, which he initially did not trust. This individual stated, “My parents taught me not to trust the system.”

The conversations with the participants who had voted indicated that the activity, though often frustrating and confusing to some, was an obligation. Each contended that they were not confident with the process and did not participate in every election, but felt it was something that must be done, “I voted in the last election...because that’s what I’m supposed to do.” Another stated, “I wanted to do my part. I felt it was my responsibility.” The younger participants, ages 20 to 24-years-old, indicated that they were highly engaged in all activities of civic participation. Each spoke of the necessity for change and the requirement of being engaged in civic activities to elicit that change, “if we want a better future, we have to be the ones to do it.” The two of the older participants, 35 to 40 years of age, cited a mistrust of governmental effectiveness and a racist society that encouraged a lack of involvement in civic issues, but each did take civic actions for personal concerns. The participant who called city maintenance was upset by lane blockages on streets where no road construction was evident and civically engaged in the remedy of that situation but does not vote. He states, “I know that my voice is ignored, and I try to avoid the process.” The other older participant was involved in anti-

engagement activities, encouraging others not to vote, citing the lack of concern for Black people by elected officials. He stated that "...if they don't say anything about the issues facing Black people, I have nothing for them." These quotes were themes of "Motivation" and "Hindrances." Codes that directly affect the potential for, and the direction of, civic activities for the study participants.

Though all participants cited a lack of fully understanding the processes, candidates, and procedures for engagement as factors that discouraged participation in civic activities, most pushed ahead and did their best to be involved. There were some who gave specific reasons for not participating in civic activities. When asked about voting, one participant stated that "the only time you see these people is when they're running for something. I don't know them so I ain't voting for them." He further spoke of growing up in a cultural environment that "didn't trust the system" and asked why he should start now. The most vehement participant in his total opposition to civic engagement, particularly voting, listed specific issues that a candidate had to address before he would even consider voting. All the issues were directly affecting Black people, and he stated that "until a candidate talks about what they're going to do about racism specifically, I will not vote." One remaining factor cited as a hindrance to civic engagement was accessibility. Important obligations to family were stated on three occasions as hindrances to engagement in activities of protests and voting.

Theme 3: Racial Influence

In answering the third interview question, each participant stated that being Black/African American had an impact on the decision to be civically engaged. For 15 participants, it was a motivating factor for being involved in civic processes in the

community and country, but there were two who cited their racial identity as a reason to not participate. These themes were expressed from the two oldest participants in the study group, ages 35-40, and the conversations revealed that the views that they held were developed from childhood and were reflections of their parents and other adults in their lives at that time.

Many of the subjects mentioned their immediate family and the Black/African American race as factors of the obligation to be civically involved, while others spoke of the obligation to the greater society. The youngest participants were adamant about a better future for themselves and their peers using statements like, “It is important that we work to change the way things are so our future is secure for people of color.” A common theme in each conversation was the understanding that racism and discrimination towards African Americans has existed since the United States began. None of the participants indicated a fear of violence, but for some a sense of futility was expressed in the words used to describe how race affected civic engagement decisions. A participant stated, “I see the racism that is everywhere,” and another said, “I was hopeful, but scared of the outcome.” A repeated concept stated that being African American “...we have to make sure our voice is heard” and “we have to stand up for each other.” There were 11 participants who spoke of civic engagement as a “right and obligation” stating that “too many people have died to get this for us to not use it.” There was an individual who used the term “double-mindedness” to indicate the division of our society. His concern was for the increase in “racial turmoil” in recent times and how the Black/African American population needed to “ensure its place in the country while being aware of its minority status.” All these men indicated a need to “put in work” at all levels of society and be

civically engaged in all decision-making processes. All the participants agreed that being Black/African American was the driving force behind their feelings toward civic engagement. They all viewed the racism in these United States as hindrances to participation by citing the media evidence that “our votes are being suppressed” and “we don’t count.” In follow-up questions, all agreed on the dearth of Black/African American elected officials, particularly in this community. Each of these young men stated that they saw themselves as powerful Black men, but each also seemed to be uncertain of the ability of people of color to achieve true equality in these United States.

Summary

The results presented above demonstrate a beginning of a process for understanding what the young adult African American male thinks about civic engagement and other societal phenomena. There are many other subjects to which few have ideas of the young adult African American male’s perspective. This perspective has proven to be not easily attainable, but for some communities it is imperative that this population is not only understood but included in the decision-making processes. This research project was the first attempt to directly ask questions to obtain that perspective, and the lessons learned, and challenges encountered, will inform further research.

This process of data collection, and the analysis of these data, have increased insight into the various perceptions that Black/African American young adult males have of civic engagement. The answers to interview question #1 may indicate differences in the perceptions of the importance and effectiveness of varying forms of civic engagement. These may also be a sign that some possess a preference of different methodologies for civic engagement. Interview question #2 responses indicated a

collective mentality that recognized the value of the civic society and the significance that civic engagement has on influencing society both positively and negatively. The responses to interview question #3 were illuminated by the theoretical position of CRT in the African American community and some potentially divisive perceptions that continue to affect the actions of community members. Further conclusions will be discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Introduction

This heuristic phenomenographical qualitative research project has been an effort to discover the views held by young adult Black/African American males regarding civic engagement in a midsized midwestern city. In this community, individuals in the above-mentioned population were the least civically engaged of all members of the community. Some civic leaders and community organizers questioned what these young adults thought and felt about the processes of political involvement and civic engagement. Though many have posited the motivation and hindrances of the involvement of this population, few have ventured to ask directly. I developed this study for the purpose of interviewing the young adult Black/African American male and discovering the perceptions that were held.

I designed the study activities to allow this population to speak of their own experiences in civic action and the perceptions that were gained due to these actions. As such, I have achieved my purpose of this study. The preceding chapters have allowed for the foundation of this research endeavor and the collection of relevant data pertaining to the uncovering of answers to the original research questions:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of civic and political engagement and racial identity for 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males living in a midwestern urban community?

RQ2: What specific influences affect the perceptions of 20- to 40-year-old Black/African American males regarding civic and political participation?

Interpretation of the Findings

The data that I collected during this study are the responses to three specific interview questions that are listed in Appendix A. In coding the answers to the questions, three themes emerged. These themes were related to the experiences that the participants had in previous civic engagement activities, the motivations and hindrances involved in those experiences, and the racial implications that underlay the overall perception of the civic and political processes that govern U.S. society. The following is further interpretation of those themes.

Theme 1: Experience

The theme of experience is related to all previous acts of civic engagement and is often, but not always, predicated on the learned activities and responses to that act. Each of the participants in this study had previously engaged in some civic activity. These involvements were categorized in to four specific activities of voting, petitioning, volunteering, and/or protesting. The activities of choice for these individuals were those that were perceived to be personally beneficial and likely to result in a positive outcome for the individual. This is reflective of the results of surveys conducted by Chung and Probert (2011) and Grayman-Simpson (2012). These researchers discovered that African American community members were more inclined to civically participate when an expectation of a positive outcome was present. These previous findings also indicated that a sense of well-being was developed in the subjects who had participated civically. As previously stated, studies have shown that young adults are more driven to goal-oriented civic activities that have a specific cause and thereby an instantly measurable result (Soler-i-Martí, 2015).

Of the participants in the current study, three had indicated that less than positive outcomes of civic engagement had caused them to never again participate in that activity. Such attitudes were aligned with the findings of Leath and Chavous (2017). In a research study of young adult African American men and women, survey results showed that the men were less likely to continue participation if they perceived themselves to have less of an ability to effect civic or political change. These experiences, coupled with a self-reported limit to the understanding of the processes of civic engagement, increase the requirement for the action to be personally beneficial to warrant involvement.

Theme 2: Motivation and Hindrances

The theme of motivation and hindrances addresses all the factors that drive the participant to become involved and all those factors that go against or diminish that drive. The main motivator for participation in civic and political activities of this population was mentioned by all current study participants to be family and/or community. This result aligns with findings of Scott and Šerek (2015) who discovered that minority populations viewed local civic activities as a responsibility of the individual in support of the community. Large-scale infrastructure issues were of government responsibility and not as important to the individual. These findings also showed that motivation to participate in civic activities cannot be accurately measured by voter turnout alone as some may prefer different means of engagement. Gaby (2016) and Soler-i-Martí (2015) each noted a trend of younger minority community members to decline involvement in election politics and lean more toward protests, demonstrations, and boycotts to engage civically.

The findings indicated that lack of understanding and negative experiences are the main hindrances to civic engagement among the study participants. Pritzker (2012) and Gaby (2016) discovered that minority youth and young adults tended to be less knowledgeable in the processes involved in election politics. This tendency was correlated to decreased levels of participation in election politics and increased incidence of negative experiences when there was involvement. The understanding necessary to participate with higher levels of self-efficacy was once developed in the home, by parents and guardians, and in the schools, through courses in social studies (Bush & Bush, 2013; Jones, 2016). Changes to home security, the negative experiences of parents and guardians related to civic engagement, and the discontinuation of social studies courses in primary and secondary education have created a need for supplementary education in the processes of civic engagement (Bush & Bush, 2013; Jones, 2016).

Theme 3: Racial Influence

The theme of racial influence examines the ways in which the social construct of race influences the perceptions that these young adults have regarding civic engagement. The distinct racial identity that these participants expressed was the focus of this examination, but in no way excludes or diminishes other racial identities. The findings of this research project indicate that the racial identity of Black/African American was one of the primary influencing agents of civic engagement for the participants in this study. In answering all the interview questions, race was mentioned by each of the respondents. For all the participants, the Black/African American racial identity was a factor in decisions to engage civically. This was similar to the findings of Szymanski and Lewis

(2015), who discovered that minority young adults with higher levels of race-related stress were more likely to engage in activism.

There were participants in the current study who saw the Black/African American racial identity as a reason not to participate. These individuals spoke of the suppression of the Black/African American voice in U.S. governance and the futility of civic and political engagement efforts. This mirrors the findings of Degruy-Leary (2005) who posited that African Americans in the United States suffer from battle fatigue and trauma passed down from generations of being an oppressed people. The survival habits suggested by Degruy-Leary's research include a mistrust of the governmental system and processes and a mistrust of other African Americans.

These findings directly align with the tenets of CRT, which posits that racial identity and racism are a feature of life in these United States and that African Americans bear the constant burden of considering race in all aspects of community interaction (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The participants in this study vary across the spectrum of responses to the stimulus of racism in everyday life. The continuum goes from those who strive for change by engaging enthusiastically in all aspects of civic involvement to those who avoid these processes (Bell, 1980; Bush & Bush, 2013; Degruy-Leary, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The current climate of civic unrest will be motivation for increased engagement of this population as mantras such as "vote like your life depends on it, because it does" are echoed across the communities. The results of such increased engagement will likely affect the motivation for participation in the future.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations presented in this research study involve the setting, the sample size of the participants, and the subjectiveness of the responses. Although the setting size and location may be considered typical of a midsized, midwestern city, the dynamic relationship between the leadership and constituents, the racial demographics, and the physical layout of the city may not be so typical. The findings are based on the responses of individuals who live in an environment that has been influenced by social and economic factors that may not exist in other locations. The procedures and processes of this study are documented for duplication in other locations, but there is no guarantee that the findings will be identical.

Of the population consisting of more than 500 who matched criteria for this study, 17 participated. Countless unknown factors exist regarding the reasons one may or may not participate in a research study, but the findings of this study are the results of these 17 interviews and may not represent the views of the entire population. There is no certainty that the same questions asked of a sampling of the remaining population would result in the same answers or findings.

Finally, the location of this study has a unique identity due to the geographic layout. The racial divisions that exist in this city regarding geography, education, and socioeconomic status may influence the responses and perceptions of this population. Further study would be necessary to determine the true level of limitations that exist.

Recommendations

The findings of this research study bring to light many viewpoints and perceptions that young adult Black/African American males have regarding civic engagement, but to

fully understand this population, more research is needed. A recommended study subject would be to determine the opportunities available in the Black/African American community for young people to learn about civic engagement. Research into the value of early education into civic and political processes would determine if this lack of understanding is the result of insufficient planning or a more systemic issue.

In this study, I focused on young adult Black/African American males. The perceptions of young adult Black/African American females needs to be assessed and compared with these findings. There may be value in understanding the perceptions held by populations of other ethnicities, ages, gender identities, and political affiliation and comparing them to build a more inclusive democracy.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study build an understanding into the feelings that the young adult Black/African American male has regarding civic and political involvement. With this improved understanding, communities of color can better communicate with these individuals with an insight that informs them that there is not one point of view that encompasses all. By realizing that diverse opinions, ideologies, and fears drive each individual, community leaders can diversify the approaches used to reach these constituents for input regarding community planning and social justice. The amalgamated information that forms community opinion is often lost due to the leadership finding agreement among themselves without hearing all points of view. As these results show, there are actions being taken that are not always seen as the “normal” route of expression for reasons that are temporary and due to communication barriers. To avoid those barriers and open conversations to all affected parties, the collective mental model must be

expanded to include input from unconventional sources. The community improves both socially and economically when all the population is present at the decision-making table. Invitations to that table are better received from those who understand the points of view of each individual being invited.

Conclusion

In democratic societies worldwide, the success of governance depends on the participation of the residents of each community. True democracy takes place when all eligible community members are involved in the decision-making process. In the midsized midwestern city that is the location of this research study, community leaders have expressed concern over the low voter turnout of young adult Black/African American males (Lake et al., 2016; McDonald, 2018). I designed and executed this study to build understanding into the perceptions that this population holds regarding all aspects of civic engagement. These aspects included voting, volunteering, petitioning, and protesting.

Of the 17 Black/African American males ages 20 to 40 years interviewed for this study, 15 had in the past actively participated in voting in an election. The voting record was not consistent in that none had voted in every election since they became eligible to vote and not all immediately registered to vote upon reaching the eligible age. These individuals perceive voting to be an important activity in the society. The act of voting is known to be a right to the U.S. citizen that many Black/African American ancestors fought and died to secure. All the participants of this study expressed feelings of obligation to family and community to be involved in the voting process, but if they did not have confidence in a personal ability to make the right choice, they did not vote. If

the candidates did not express specific policies that were beneficial to the Black/African American community, they did not vote. This is an indication of a limited understanding of the election process to which the blame falls on the generation that came before. The importance of the vote was passed down only in that it was hard to achieve and not as a powerful tool to shape the direction of government of our nation. There has been a failure to teach youth how each vote is instrumental in a broader narrative of social justice and that it is imperative to learn who the candidates really are and to participate even if every specific need is not being addressed.

These study results have revealed that these young people are not complacent; rather, they are unguided. The passionate way in which these young people volunteer, and protest, indicates a deep caring for the family and the community that is based in a personal understanding of what to do. When individuals volunteer and protest, the reward is immediate. Even if the goal is not fully accomplished, there is the satisfaction of something being done. The vote is an uneventful process that does not often satisfy the need for instant gratification. In fact, the vote has been prone to end in disappointment for all of one's efforts to affect social change.

A new strategy must be developed to build inclusion into all processes of civic engagement. All the activities described above are equally important and, as such, none of the activities can be ignored or left out. There is a need to volunteer to build community resources and help one another. There is a need to petition and protest to bring awareness to social injustice that is experienced in any part of the greater society. There is a need to vote to put people in positions of power who will listen to the needs of the people and react positively to those expressed needs. These are the things that need to

be taught to all young people of color, and not just of the need, but of the procedures and steps required. It is necessary to be forthcoming and comprehensive when sharing information about candidates and policies. The step-by-step processes required to achieve social change must be readily shared with all community constituents. This includes not only the information of where and when to engage in a civic activity, but how to engage, what each step means, and what to do next. Most important, these young people need to be taught how to fail and keep trying. Each member of the community needs to be reminded how to lose, regroup, and start again. The crisis is not of apathy; it is a crisis of education. This crisis can only be averted by actively reaching out to community members with information combined with relationship.

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Appendix A: Initial Interview Questions

1. What was your most recent experience with volunteering, voting, protesting, signing petitions, or any other form of community involvement and how did you feel about it? What did it mean to you?
2. What motivated you to get involved or not get involved in any of the activities listed above?
3. How does being Black/African American affect your decisions of whether or not to get involved?

Appendix B: Demographics

Age (Years):

- 20 to 24
- 25 to 29
- 30 to 34
- 35 to 40

Marital Status:

- Single
- Married

Education:

- No Diploma
- H.S. Diploma/GED
- Some College/No Degree
- College Degree

Employment:

- Unemployed
- Employed Part-Time
- Employed Full-Time

Yearly Income:

- \$0 to \$12,000
- \$12,001 to \$25,000
- \$25,001 to \$50,000
- \$50,001 or more

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study about the perceptions of civic and political participation in the Black/African American community. The researcher is inviting 20 to 40-year-old Black/African American men to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Carl Jackson, who is a Ph.D. candidate at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to build understanding into the perceptions that are held regarding civic and political engagement and participation.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

Participate in a 15 to 30-minute face to face interview to answer questions about your thoughts and feelings regarding civic and political engagement; voting, protesting, volunteering, etc.

Here are some sample questions:

1. What was your most recent experience with volunteering, voting, protesting, signing petitions, or any other form of community involvement and how did you feel about it? What did it mean to you?
2. What motivated you to get involved or not get involved in any of the activities listed above?
3. How does being Black/African American affect your decisions of whether or not to get involved?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as frustration or becoming upset. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

By participating in this study, you may help to improve the ability of this community to address issues of political control, resource deficits, and community empowerment.

Payment:

There is no payment for participation in this study.

Privacy:

Reports coming out of this study will not share the identities of individual participants. Details that might identify participants, such as the location of the study, also will not be shared. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Data will be kept secure by using password protected flashdrives and computers, using codes instead of names, and storing the names and codes separately from the data. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at (402) 650-8416 or email at Carl.jackson2@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Research Participant Advocate at Walden University at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by signing below.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer

Volunteers Needed for a Community Research Study

Purpose:

This research study is designed to build the understanding into the thoughts that Black/African American men have towards volunteering, voting, protesting, petitioning, and other forms of community involvement.

Eligibility:

Black/African American Men ages 20 to 40-years-old are being asked to participate in this study.

Activity:

You will be required to meet with the researcher and answer three interview questions regarding community and political involvement.

Benefits:

As a participant in this study, you may help to improve the ability of this community to address issues of political control, resource deficits, and community empowerment.

To learn more, contact the Principal Investigator of this study:

Carl Jackson, Ph.D. Candidate

Email: carl.jackson2@waldenu.edu Cell: 402-650-8416