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## The Thoughts and Feelings of African Americans Toward The Use of the Word Nigger by African Americans And by Caucasians

Sylvester Earl Baker  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Sylvester Baker

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## Review Committee

Dr. Cameron John, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty  
Dr. Peggy Samples, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty  
Dr. Medha Talpade, University Reviewer, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2021

Abstract

The Thoughts and Feelings of African Americans  
Toward The Use of the Word Nigger by African Americans  
And by Caucasians

by

Sylvester Baker

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Social Psychology

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May 2021

## Abstract

The word nigger has a troublesome history in America for many African Americans. It represents a strong connection to centuries of slavery, the Jim Crow era, discrimination, racism, and oppression. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the specific thoughts and feelings of African Americans toward the use of the word nigger by African Americans and by Caucasians. Although credible research in the area of racial images and racial slurs has been conducted, research has yet to specifically explore the thoughts and feelings African Americans have about the use of the word nigger by African Americans and Caucasians. The conceptual framework in this research consisted of Albert Bandura's social learning theory, coupled with the social identity theory by Tajfel, and the social comparison theory proposed by Festinger. Using a qualitative approach of criterion-based purposeful sampling, the participants of this study consisted of a very diverse group of 15 African Americans. Interviews using open ended questions were the method for data collection. The data analysis consisted of identifying recurring themes. The findings of the study uncovered three key points. The first, African Americans are not monolithic with their views on this issue. Second, the data revealed African Americans overwhelmingly feel Caucasians should never use the word nigger. Third, African Americans are allowed to use the word in certain situations where context and relationships portray key roles. This research implication for positive social change includes race relations advancements between African Americans and Caucasians and cultural improvements among African Americans, resulting in better communications and undergoing a visible level of progress.

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## Dedication

This research paper was dedicated to my children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

My hope is this research paper sends a clear message to them reinforcing what I have consistently preached. All goals are possible, when you pray and focus your mind, your time, and your efforts into a specific purpose.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In my 67 years of life, I cannot recall ever being directly addressed as nigger by Caucasians. However, I have been personally addressed as nigger by African Americans more times than I can recall. In these instances, my responses ranged from a form of acceptance to total anger. Use of the word nigger must not be disregarded and thought of as passé. An in-depth examination surrounding the impact of the word usage must be afforded serious attention. In this study, I examined this topic of grave concern. I uncovered useful data as well as included positive implications for social change. There were two implications that instantly came to mind. They were a positive impact on race relations and a newfound level of awareness for African-Americans regarding the word usage.

Chapter 1 included an introduction of the topic, followed by the problem statement, research questions, nature of the study, and the significant of the study, some necessary definition of terms, and the conceptual framework for the study.

### **Background**

It is clear research has yet to specifically explore the thoughts and feelings African Americans have toward the use of the word nigger by African Americans and Caucasians. African Americans and Caucasians overhear the use of the word nigger by African Americans in conversations on a regular basis (Thompson, 2000). The problem is that many African Americans find it offensive and resent being addressed as nigger by other African Americans and especially by Caucasians (Thompson, 2000). African Americans associate the word nigger with hate, hostility, violence, oppression, and the

slavery experience (Cato, 2002). Many Caucasians having overheard African Americans address other African Americans using the word nigger may have come to believe this was an acceptable practice among African Americans. This observation of African Americans by Caucasians can lead to a misconception related to the usage of the word and serious problems can arise. In this study, I explored the perspectives of African Americans being addressed as niggers by other African Americans and Caucasians.

There are a host of noted studies examining the topic of racial slurs. One early study conducted by Pyszczynski and Greenberg (1985) revealed that overhearing a racial slur such as the word nigger prior to evaluations can lead to potentially discriminatory behaviors by evaluators. Whether racial slurs are used privately or not, this study indicated that they have a long-term negative impact and that members of other racial groups are aware of this impact Pyszczynski and Greenberg (1985). These groups that continue use of the word demonstrate a high level of insensitivity and low level of tolerance for nonmembers of their group.

Members of the same social group use racial slurs when addressing other members. These are racial slurs which falls into a classification know as ethnonyms. Mullen et al., (2007) proposed that data on ethnonyms can have a negative impact on the target. Ethnonyms are defined as terms used by members of a group addressing members within the same group. African Americans utilize this term in a number of ways. First, African Americans of a higher socioeconomic level may refer to African Americans of a lower socioeconomic level as niggers when African Americans of a lower socioeconomic level display what they believe are totally unacceptable behaviors, such as public

intoxication, indecent exposure, or littering. Second, the term is often used to indicate group membership. Third, African Americans use the word nigger as a term of camaraderie, but also as a way to belittle, insult, or criticize other African Americans. Mullen et al., (2007) revealed that ethnonyms can be perceived as extremely offensive and volatile.

There is a noteworthy amount of available research within the body of social psychology literature on racial slurs, epithets, ethnonyms, and ethnophaulisms (Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 1985; Mullen, 2004). In the area of survey research McKinnon (2005) surveyed 623 United States workers and found that racial slurs were over heard in the workplace by 30% of the workers surveyed. McKinnon found that members of certain groups were more likely to use racial slurs when only members of their racial group were present. This finding by McKinnon suggests there is a level of awareness of the impact of racial slurs within racial groups.

Cross (1971) was one of the pioneers in the area of Black identity and self-esteem with the development of the Racial Attitude and Identity Scale (RAIS). This tool has been very valuable in the area of assessing Black self-identity and thoughts of African Americans when Caucasians use the word nigger in various contexts. This study conducted by Cross (1971) was essential because of its potential worthwhileness as an educational tool for a culture that clearly would discover its significance.

### **Problem Statement**

As stated earlier, research has yet to specifically explore the thoughts and feelings African Americans have toward the use of the word nigger by African Americans and

Caucasians. African Americans and Caucasians have overheard the use of the word nigger by African Americans in conversations on a regular basis (Thompson, 2000). The findings of the study revealed three key points. The first, African Americans are not monolithic as it relates to the thoughts and feelings surrounding the use of the word nigger by African Americans and by Caucasians. Second, the data revealed African Americans overwhelming feel Caucasians should never utter the word nigger. Third, African Americans are allowed to use the word in certain situations. It must be noted context, relationships, and current mood plays a significant role in accepting the use of the word nigger from one African American to another African American.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, I examined the feelings and thoughts African Americans have about the use of the word nigger when other African Americans use the word in various contexts. Second, I explored the feelings and thoughts of African Americans when Caucasians use the word in various contexts.

### **Research Questions**

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the specific feelings and thoughts of African Americans toward the general use of the word nigger by other African Americans?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are the specific feelings and thoughts of African Americans toward the general use of the word nigger by Caucasians?

## Conceptual Framework

I used the conceptual framework for this research to address social learning, social comparison, and social identity theories. I used several ideas in Albert Bandura's social learning theory. The theory states that behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) believed that individuals may imitate the behavior they have observed, especially when the consequences of modeling the behavior result in limited or no negative outcome. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that indoctrination to the word nigger by many African Americans originated through observing family members and friends, listening to music, or watching movies. It is not uncommon among African Americans to overhear other African Americans use the word nigger, or nigga, as pronounced by the younger Hip Hop generation. This commonly practiced behavior may have contributed to the social learning of this behavior. Bandura's theory was applicable to this study and I used it to explore the attitudes of African Americans toward the use of the word nigger.

The social identity theory by Tajfel, 1979 was also applicable to this study. The theory examines how people attempt to predict group behavior and categorize others. People have a tendency to want to be distinguishable. This desire can be at the expense of putting down members of another group. The social identity that a person adapts has the potential to affect perceptions and attitudes. This in turn can impact and fuel negative stereotypes and prejudices. Caucasians may come to realize certain stereotypes associated with African Americans without ever observing African Americans exhibit the behavior. Examination of another perspective of the social identity theory suggests that a



split personality exist among African Americans surrounding racial attitudes. It has been suggested that people express different racial attitudes while in public versus what they truly believe. It is believed that people have a tendency to align their racial attitudes with the majority of their cultural group. This phenomenon is associated with Tajfel's (1979) social identity theory.

Social comparison theory, proposed by Festinger (1954), showed how people develop stereotypes. Festinger stated that people, in an attempt to obtain accurate self-evaluation, look to people who look similar to them.

### **Nature of the Study**

The study was qualitative in nature with a phenomenological approach. This approach was valuable in answering and understanding the research questions under investigation. This approach is used to examine the human experience and identifies common meanings and themes of the same phenomenon. Additionally, the phenomenological approach was appropriate because this approach creates openness and encourages individuals to expand their responses; and as a direct result of the openness an enormous amount of in-depth and detail information is gathered which becomes extremely helpful in the data analysis process (Creswell, 2009).

I used purposeful sampling in this study. My reason for using purposeful sampling was to focus on the particular characteristics of a population that are of interest. My goal for this study was to understand the thoughts and feelings of a particular population experiencing the same phenomenon. Polkinghorne (1989) recommends interviewing five to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. The data

collection method consisted of in-person semi-structured interviews lasting five – 15 minutes in length. There were five open ended questions carefully structured to explore the experience of the participants, in regard to the use of the word nigger. I audio recorded and transcribed verbatim the interviews after I conducted them to ensure validity, allow for review, and additional comments. I made myself available for further communication with the participants via phone or email if necessary.

I employed the strategies of bracketing and member checking to address validity issues. The purpose of data triangulation is to increase the credibility and validity of the results (Cohen & Manion, 2000). I used the process of member checking to assist the participants and researcher further validates the meaning of participant responses. Bracketing is the process of organizing similar themes of information retrieved from the participant's interview that is closely related in meaning and experience. Bracketing also involves the grouping together of the data relevant to the research questions (Cohen & Manion, 2000). I used Nvivo software for qualitative data to organize the data. The data analysis process I used was closely aligned with that of Hycner's (1999) as cited in Groenewald (2004). The examination process of the data consisted of five steps.

1. The first step was bracketing and phenomenological reduction.
2. The second step consisted of delineating units of meaning.
3. I also practiced the clustering of units of meaning to form themes.
4. The fourth step involved summarizing each interview, validating it, and where necessary, modifying it.

5. The fifth and last step consisted of extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary (Groenewald (2004).

### **Definition of Terms and Theoretical Constructs**

*African American:* A black American of African descent, of or relating to Americans of African descent. They are also referred to as Black Americans (Mifflin, 2016).

*Ethnonyms:* A proper name by which a people or ethnic group is known; specifically the name a people or ethnic group uses for itself (Simpson, J. and Weiner, E., 1989).

*Ethnophaulisms:* A contemptuous expression for a member of a people or ethnic group; an expression containing a disparaging allusion to another people or ethnic group (Simpson, J. and Weiner, E., 1989).

*Nigger:* the word originated as a neutral word for Black people. A term used to demoralize or offend persons of African descent. A term used by younger African Americans as a term of endearment. A term used by African American to casually refer to other African Americans. A contemptuous term used to refer to a Black person (Mifflin, 2016).

*Whites:* The color white; what everyone calls people with white skin, and white people can't call people with black skin; a skin color – the majority in the United States – which is apparently considered a negative quality by many including those who are white themselves but consider themselves to be “not that”. Associated with poor dancing

skills and general nerdiness. For a black person to be called white is considered highly insulting (Peckham, A.1999).

### **Assumptions**

I assumed that selecting from the two different races would depict the lived experience surrounding the word nigger in the context of their race and their racial identity was characteristic of their race. The African Americans participants I selected for this study adequately reflected the demographics: age, income, level of education, and gender of the targeted population. I also assumed all African American participants were motivated and willing to respond to the questions accurately and honestly. It was necessary to make these assumptions to ensure internal (accuracy) and external (generalizability) validity.

### **Limitations of the Study**

In this study, I interviewed 15 African American participants of diverse backgrounds. The number of questions and the amount of interview time spent with each participant was similar. Some limitations were acknowledged such as replication. Replicating the methods of this study is possible. I standardized the interview process that I utilized on the participants. However, for other researchers, the results may differ significantly. The participants were not allowed prior access to the questions allowing for a more spontaneous response.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

I conducted this study because of the high level of personal interest resulting from my personal experiences encompassing the exploitation and abuse of the word nigger. A

gap in the literature was an important criterion to consider. I focused mainly on the use of the word niggers by Caucasians. This study was limited to individuals who had attained the age 21 and who identified themselves as African Americans, only because of the critical nature of the problem specifically among African Americans stemming from use of this word. The findings of this study can serve as a catalyst for researchers to explore this area of study.

### **Significance of the Study**

Although credible research in the areas of racial images and racial slurs has been conducted, research has yet to specifically explore the thoughts and feelings African Americans have about the use of the word nigger by African Americans and Whites. In this study, I documented the thoughts and feelings African Americans have about the use of the word nigger by African Americans and Caucasians.

The research and dissemination of data on this topic could potentially result in a broad positive social impact. The word nigger has a powerful emotional impact on African Americans (Kirkland et al., 1987; Mullen et al., 2007). If researchers gather data on the ramifications surrounding use of this word by African Americans and Caucasians and clearly identify them, society will benefit in the area of race relations. Society and African Americans will acquire a clearer understanding of how African Americans feel and think regarding other African Americans' use of the word. Finally, novel research in the field of social psychology such as this will provide a basis and stimulus for other researchers to further explore this area of neglected research.

## Summary

I designed this phenomenological qualitative study using purposeful sampling to collect the personal perspectives based on the specific thoughts and feelings from the selected participants. I expected the thoughts and feelings to range from acceptance to rejection and anger to neutrality. As an outcome of the data collected, I obtained comprehensive, accurate, and generalizable results. The conceptual framework of this study consisted of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and social identity theory by Tajfel (1979). Lastly, I included the social comparison theory proposed by Festinger (1954).

Chapter 2 includes a literature review of closely related literature. The chapter is focused on historical and contemporary perspectives. In Chapter 2, I continue with a discussion examining ethnohualisms and ethnonyms. I also highlight discussion between opponents and proponents. Chapter 2 includes an examination of several racial attitudes, self-identity, and self-esteem studies. The chapter concludes with a critique and summary.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this literature review, I closely examined the scarce amount of available research data on this topic and supported the position for continued research surrounding the usage impact on African Americans of the word nigger by African Americans and Caucasians. A primary goal of this study was to highlight an issue of major concern and significance to the African American Community. My purpose for this study was twofold: first, to examine the feelings and thoughts African Americans have toward the use of the word nigger when other African Americans use the word in various contexts; second, to explore the feelings and thoughts of African Americans when Caucasians use the word in various contexts.

My goal for this study was to generate a positive impact on social change, by distinguishing how a diverse group of African Americans feel and think about the usage of this volatile word by African Americans and by Caucasians. A significant positive impact on race relations was strongly anticipated. It was hopeful the results of this study will serve as a useful instructional tool for diversity and sensitivity training.

I conducted this literature search using the data bases Psyc Info, Psych Articles, Pro Quest Control, and Sage Premier. The primary search key words included: nigger, nigga, race, pejoratives, racism, racial slurs, epithets, hate, ethnophaulisms, and ethnonyms. The articles from professional journals were obtained digitally and traditionally. I secured a number of books which provided very helpful research data.

In this chapter I examined the research topic from several perspectives. The chapter begins with a historical background which includes origin, impact, and usage of

the term. This was followed by a contemporary perspective which addresses proponents and opponents of the word usage, along with usage of the word in the workplace, political arena, and Hollywood motion picture industry. These perspectives are followed by pertinent research examining the use and impact of the use of ethnophaulisms and ethnonyms. Ethnophaulisms in this case are racial terms used by non-African Americans while ethnonyms are racial terms used by African Americans. This is followed by an examination of racial attitude and identity. Finally, I offered a summary and critical analysis of the literature.

### **Historical Perspective**

Historically, to be called a nigger meant one fell under the stereotype of being lazy, stupid, dirty, and simply worthless, to oneself and anyone else (Middleton & Pilgrim, 2004). The word nigger has undergone various processes of change over time. These are tied in with the social, economic, and cultural factors, which have contributed to the development of the African American community. When examining the etiology of the word nigger, I discovered the term was derived from the Latin word Niger (Middleton & Pilgrim, 2004). In Spanish and Portuguese, it denotes the color black. In English, the word was initially used to identify Negroes but was later transferred to demoralize African Americans (Middleton & Pilgrim, 2004). During slavery, the word nigger was used to promote the superiority of Caucasian men and to establish a system of racism and oppression. In Colonial America, African Americans were called Negro, slave, or nigger by the Caucasian population. These three terms became nearly synonymous. The words Negro and nigger were used interchangeably and without any apparent difference of



meaning, especially by Caucasians in the Southern United States (Smitherman, 1977). As social, economic, and political events unfolded, the word nigger moved from its relatively neutral usage among Caucasians. It evolved into an overtly hostile and abusive word meant to intimidate Africans in America and highlight their ascribed moral and intellectual inferiority.

By the early 1800's the word nigger was firmly established as a derogatory term to describe Black people. In the twentieth century, Caucasians began to intentionally and semantically distinguish between Negro and nigger, with the latter becoming a racial epithet. Now in the twenty-first century, the term remains a principal symbol of Caucasian racism, regardless of who uses it. The word nigger carries with it much of the hatred and disgust directed at African Americans (Middleton & Pilgrim, 2004). Moore (2001) asserted that the word nigger has been a key element of many of the worst episodes of bigotry in American history. He held that the use of the word nigger accompanied numerous lynchings, beatings, acts of arson, and other racially motivated attacks upon African Americans.

The word nigger has had an emotional impact on many African Americans and Caucasians alike. However, for African Americans, the use of the word has been a very sensitive issue (Kennedy, 2002). African Americans have taken offense to Caucasians addressing them as nigger. As a result of political correctness, use of the word nigger has become an issue among many Caucasians and African American groups. The word nigger was changed to a more acceptable term. It became known as the N -word. The N -word substitution became popular during the O. J. Simpson murder trial. The goal was

that the word nigger would no longer be allowed to be used in America due to the possible volatile reactions it could initiate. At the same time, young African Americans began using the word nigger in a more positive fashion. They began to use it as a term of endearment or a greeting phrase. This movement gathered a reasonable amount of support. Scholars believe that a non-pejorative variant of nigger entered the lexicon of African Americans early 1900's (Dillard 1977 and Spears, 1998). According to Spears (1998) the term was probably used among African Americans in the earlier days of Anglophone America. It is impossible to know exactly when a form of nigger entered the lexicon of Americans; but it is possible to develop an explanation as to its beginning. It is also impossible to locate the moment when nigga developed social meanings relative to survival, adjusting to the usage intent of the word to defame, demoralize, and humiliate African Americans as explored in the next section.

### **Contemporary Perspective**

In present day times, after the year 1980 teens continue to claim that nigger was just another word and that people give words meaning rather than words giving people meaning (Thompson, 2000). The older generations of African Americans, those born before 1950, have a totally contrasting position. They want the word nigger censored from the English language. There appears to be a generation gap on how the word nigger is perceived and its use within and outside of the African American culture. The younger generation uses it as a term of familiarity and connection. Yet, the older generation wants to censor or ban the word from usage by anyone, including young African American people (Brown, 1993).

Although many members of the older generation want to ban the term, several scholars have disagreed for several reasons. Brown (1993) suggested that banning the term from the English language would be fruitless because so few people would adhere to its censorship. Along with Brown, the Harvard Law professor Randall Kennedy (2002) expressed strong belief in the freedom of speech granted by the Constitution and, therefore, argued against any effort to ban or censor the word nigger from common language. He insisted that it is important that people not forget or be naïve to the history of the word. Further, Kennedy maintained that use of the word as a term of endearment among younger African Americans is an attempt to take the power away from the word nigger. Thompson (2000) agreed that young African Americans, especially those in the hip hop culture, are not seriously offended when other African Americans use the word, thus reducing its power, but some have reservations about Caucasians using the word. Cato (2002) noted that youth in the hip-hop culture argue that context determines the meaning of the word. Therefore, the intonation, location, and relationship between those speaking determine whether the word is offensive. According to Cato, the history of slavery and the continued underprivileged status of African Americans make it impossible to erase the past, and thereby rid the power of the word by use among African Americans. Moore (2001) was pessimistic that young African Americans would succeed in converting the word nigger into a term of affection because the word still has too much power. The disagreement among scholars about the use of the term reflects the confusion surrounding the use of the word nigger in a contemporary context. Thompson (2000) discussed how the word was being used in school settings. Thompson reported that the

term nigger was frequently used by African American students to refer to other African Americans. As a result, many educators became confused and were not sure whether to be alarmed or to allow it to be used in this setting within this group. Students would tell them not to be alarmed when they used the word because they were African Americans using the term addressing other African Americans. This created a difficult discipline issue because some Caucasian students desiring to use the word were unaware of the rules of its usage and who was allowed to use it. Therefore, to decrease confusion, African American and Caucasian students were instructed not to use the word. Pollard (2001) stated that many Caucasian students believed that using the word made them cool. Many Caucasian students wanted to be cool, and cool is often defined as anything urban. One African American student reported that some Caucasian students thought it was a new slang word. The Caucasian students were totally unaware of the serious ramifications associated with their use of the word nigger.

### **Impact of the Word nigger**

The use of the word nigger by Caucasians can trigger emotional and physical responses from African Americans.’ The physical responses can range from an embrace to a punch. It is not easy to determine how an African American will react to being address as nigger by African Americans and Caucasians. Research has not been very informative as to how deep the impact of the use of the word nigger by Caucasians has been to African Americans (Kennedy, 2002; Moore, 2001).

### **Who Uses the Word nigger?**

The word nigger is probably used in more group settings than this study can adequately cover. The settings that are more impactful on the lives of African Americans are family and friends, the workplace, professional sports, Hollywood, government, and African American leaders. Use of the word in these venues appears to have a serious impact on individuals when the word nigger was used, especially when used by Caucasians (McKinnon, 2005).

### **Family and Friends**

It is difficult to determine on average how often the word nigger was used in a family setting and among friends. The use or frequency of use will depend largely on how the dominant individuals in the group feel about use of the word (Kennedy 2002). The use of the word nigger among family members occurs in moments of celebration and in moments of anger, (Kennedy 2002). For example, an older brother may congratulate a younger brother on an accomplishment by calling him little nigger. On the other hand, the older brother may verbally scold the younger brother for unacceptable behavior by calling him a dumb nigger. It is more probable that the use of the word nigger may occur between siblings as opposed to parent to offspring (Kennedy 2002). The children may overhear parents use the word in positive and negative contexts.

In the peer group the dynamics are different especially among teens and young adults. The younger generation appears to have no problem using the term. It was mostly used as a term of endearment (Moore 2001). The younger generation was unaware of the historical meaning surrounding the word nigger (Moore 2001). The word nigger has been

used in rap lyrics at a very alarming rate. The younger generation has taken on the unofficial task of turning the word into a term of affection and endearment. The use of the word nigger had its peculiar indoctrination among family and friends. It instinctively takes on a role of being taboo or a term of endearment.

### **Use of the Word nigger in the Work Place**

It was almost impossible to adequately determine the frequency of the use of the word in the workplace by African Americans and non-African Americans. The use of the racial slurs in the workplace by coworkers, bosses, or third parties can be considered a form of racial discrimination (McKinnon 2005). Even if used or directed to members of the same race racism remains in the workplace. It has been deemed unprofessional and unacceptable to use the word nigger to disparage or belittle in the workplace. CEOs, managers, supervisors, and workers have been terminated or faced termination for the use of the word nigger. The total workforce makes an extra effort to keep the word nigger out of their vocabulary while at work (McKinnon 2005). It is a known fact that use of the word nigger in the workplace may have serious consequences. Employees do not want to be faced with suspension, termination, or legal action (McKinnon 2005).

### **The Use of the Word nigger in the Motion Pictures and Books**

The word nigger has been used in movies dating back to the early nineties. The makers of the movies had very little regard concerning the feelings of African Americans. The movies were made to please the majority, which was the Caucasian population. There are a number of books where the word nigger was used in the title such as Joseph

Conrap's *The nigger of the Narcissus* (1987); Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926); and Arthur Ransome's *Look like niggers to Me* (1930's).

There are a countless number of Hollywood movies using the word nigger. It was clearly the common title used for African Americans in movie scripts. The word nigger is used throughout *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, 206 times. The *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is the record holder for use of the word nigger. The movies *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was authored by Harriet Beechen Stowe used the word nigger 48 times. The book *South Sea Tales* written by Jack London used the word nigger 48 times. The book *Topic of Cancer* by Harry Miller used the word nigger 21 times and recently in 2013 in the movie *Django Unchained* written and directed by Quentin Tarantino used the word nigger more than 100 times. In an article written by Keith Allan (2016) he discusses the frequent use of the word nigger in the Quentin Tarantino film *Pulp Fiction*. Allan addresses the composition of context, semantics, and the connotations of the word nigger.

### **The Use of the Word nigger in the Government**

It has been rumored the word nigger has been uttered in government at the highest levels. President Lyndon Johnson used the N-word liberally, and he signed much of the civil rights legislation of that era. In 2013, Darrell Ehrlick, editor of the *Billings Gazette* accused the county treasurer in Yellowstone County, Montana of using the word nigger in his emails referring to then president Barack Obama (Ehrlick, 2013). In 2015, Anna Mulrine, a staff writer for the *Christian Science Monitor* reported the U.S. Army was probing an allegation reported to the *Army Times* by an African American army staff

sergeant alleging that Caucasians soldiers were allowed to use racial slurs without consequences during “Racial Thursdays” at an Alaska Army Base (Mulrine,2015). In April of 2013a Kansas State Board of Education member defended his use of the word nigger at a board meeting Morris News service, (2013). In the spring of 2012 Senator Rick Santorum speaking at an event in the state of Wisconsin nearly calls President Barack Obama a government nigger Harris (2012). In the year 2002 a Black News Weekly article written by Sinclere Lee noted prominent actor and activist Harry Belafonte referred to General Colin Powel as a house nigger Lee, (2002). According to Dyson (2001), the word nigger will be debated or used in nearly every circle in the United States.

### **The Use of the Word nigger by African American Leaders**

Some African Americans may tend to believe that most of the African American community leaders abhor the use of the word nigger, public or private. This may not be the case. Professor Michael Eric Dyson related about overhearing all the rationalizations and excuses for black people using the word nigger. This is inclusive of the one popularized by Professor Michael Eric Dyson. Dr. Dyson is also known as the rapping black "intellectual" and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. biographer. Professor Dyson proudly claims King used the word nigger in private conversations (Dyson, 2001).

### **Ethnophaulisms**

Ethnophaulisms are defined as negative terms used by members of one group directed at members of another group. The term was originally proposed by A. A. Rorbach (Palmore, 1962). Ehrlich, a social scientist (as cited in Middleton & Pilgrim,



2004), argued that ethnophaulisms are of three types: disparaging nicknames (e.g., *chink*, *dago*, *nigger*, etc.), explicit group devaluations (e.g., “Jew him down,” or *niggering* the land”), and irrelevant ethnic names used as a mild disparagement (e.g., “jewbird,” for cuckoos having prominent beaks or “Irish confetti” for bricks thrown in a fight). Palmore reported that all racial and ethnic groups use ethnophaulisms when referring to other groups. Caucasians call African Americans niggers, and African Americans call Caucasians *honkeys*. Hispanics are called *spics*; Italians are called *wops*. The French are called *frogeaters*, and so on. Middleton and Pilgrim (2004) focused on words used towards African Americans and identified the following ethnophaulisms: *niggerish*, *niggerlipping*, *niggerlover*, *niggerluck*, *niggerflicker*, *niggerheaven*, *niggerknocker*, *niggershooter*, “*niggersteak*,” *niggerbeater*, *niggertip*, *niggerwork*, and *niggeritous*.

A type of ethnophaulisms known as caricatures was also very offensive to African Americans. Many of these slurs became fully developed literary, cinematic, and everyday caricatures of African Americans. Middleton and Pilgrim (2004) held that these caricatures, whether spoken, written, or reproduced in material objects, reflected the extent and the vast depth of anti-African American prejudice in the United States. The following is a discussion on characteristics of these caricatures.

The “Coon” cartoon strip presents a degrading image of African American men. It characterizes them as unwilling to work, ignorant, and obsessively narcissistic. These were characteristics that historically made up the definition for the term nigger. The “Brute” caricature depicts African American men as angry and physically strong (Middleton & Pilgrim, 2004). Two of the most notable caricatures, “Tom” and

“Mammy,” were often portrayed as kind, loving, and friends of Caucasians. They were also presented as intellectually childlike, physically unattractive, and neglectful of their biological families. Middleton and Pilgrim argued that these traits had been associated with African Americans and were implied in the term nigger. The term nigger was a shorthand way of saying that African Americans possessed the moral, intellectual, social, and physical characteristics of the “Coon,” “Brute,” “Tom,” and “Mammy,” and other racial caricatures. Middleton and Pilgrim asserted there were many other racial slurs; however, none has impacted the lives of African Americans more than the term nigger. They held that this term, used in its most derogatory context, was the ultimate insult.

### **Ethnonyms**

Ethnonyms are defined as terms used by members of a group addressing members within the same group (Mullen, Calogero, & Leader, 2007). African Americans in daily conversation use many ethnonyms when addressing other African Americans, including the word nigger. The word nigger carries flexible meanings among African Americans and could be used in a positive or negative way. When used in negative ways, the use of the ethnonym nigger has the potential to ignite conflict among African Americans. An example of a negative use occurs when an African American person addresses another African American person as a nigger in a disapproving manner. The person who is addressed as nigger is knowingly being referred to as the type of African American who is lazy, shiftless, ignorant, and does not have any intentions on making any steps toward self-improvement. An example of a positive use of the word occurs when it is used to address other African American men with an affectionate manner, similar to another term

used by African American men, “brother” (Cato, 2002). Ethnonyms are not only used to refer to individuals, but also to groups (Mullen, Calogero, & Leader, 2007). An example of that occurs when African Americans of a higher socioeconomic level refer to African Americans of a lower socioeconomic level as niggers. They use this term when African Americans of a lower socioeconomic level display what they believe are totally unacceptable behaviors, such as public intoxication, indecent exposure, or littering. Ethnonyms can also refer to how members of a culture identify themselves within their group. African Americans use the word nigger as a term of camaraderie, but also as a way to belittle, insult or criticize other African Americans.

Erwin and Lawson (as cited in Mullen, Calogero, & Leader, 2007) revealed that ethnonyms can be as offensive and volatile as ethnophaulisms. In many cases, fights may break out among group members as a result of using ethnonyms. McDavid and Harari (as cited in Mullen, et al, 2007) uncovered that ethnonyms, can be considered significant because the names a group uses to distinguish itself can possibly influence the actions of its members in a manner similar to a self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, the person identified as “Pretty Boy” by his peers may exhibit behavior that is consistent with the nickname “Pretty Boy.” However, a person identified by a nickname that depicts inferiority may display behavior consistent with that term.

### **Ethnophaulisms Studies**

There have been a number of studies on the topics of racial slurs and other types of ethnophaulisms. In this section, exhaustive reviews of studies which were relevant to the use of the word nigger with African Americans were examined. These studies were

relevant because they explored the impact of racial slurs on individuals' thinking and behavior toward various ethnic minority groups. Though not focused specifically on African Americans, the findings may have implications for the use of the racial slur nigger with African Americans. I reviewed two studies that specifically focus on the impact of the word nigger on Caucasian perceptions of African Americans. Some studies on the impact of ethnohate focus on how ethnohate may influence the way members of the majority group may think about members of minority groups. Mullen (2004) conducted a study to explore whether images, a type of ethnohate, impacted how members of the majority group perceived an out group, specifically immigrants. Specifically, he studied whether adults' thinking about different ethnic groups influenced the way they were portrayed in children's books. His study involved four different facets of the portrayal of ethnic immigrant groups to children. These included: the presence of ethnic immigrant characters in children's books, the description of children from these ethnic groups, the portrayal of fictional child ethnic immigrant group characters, and the affective/emotional tone of ethnic immigrant folksongs. The study's sample included 19 European ethnic groups (Belgian, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Scots, Spanish, Swedish, Swiss, Turkish, and Welsh). It should be noted that the 19 European ethnic groups under consideration in this line of research accounted for 80% to 90% of all immigrants into the United States in the historical time period during which the media were published or recorded. The results of these analyses indicated that the prevailing thinking, or cognitive representation, of European ethnic immigrant groups influenced the portrayal

of those European ethnic immigrants to children. One implication that can be drawn from this study was that a positive or negative image in any form of media has an impact on the portrayal of the ethnic immigrants to children. These portrayals may then impact the children's perceptions of the ethnic groups.

To further explore the impact of ethnophaulisms on thinking about ethnic minority groups other studies of ethnophaulisms focused on how they impacted prejudice, or negative preconceptions individuals may have about other groups. Using the Bogardus Social Distance Scale, Palmore (1962) discovered a correlation between the level of prejudice experienced by a racial group and the frequency with which ethnophaulisms were used with that group. He concluded that when a high level of prejudice was present, racial slurs occurred more frequently. This, in turn, increased the level of prejudice, leading to a vicious cycle. Therefore, strong prejudices individuals had about racial groups impacted their behavior by increasing their use of racial slurs. McKinnon (2005) also studied ethnophaulisms in the form of racial slurs and how overhearing slurs impacted individuals' behavior. McKinnon surveyed 623 United States workers and found that racial slurs were overheard in the workplace by 30% of the workers surveyed. The study found that members of certain groups were more likely to use racial slurs when there were only members of their ethnic group present. When members of the group targeted with racial slurs were present, few, if any, slurs were used. One implication of this study was that individuals who used racial slurs were aware of their potential negative impact on those targeted.

The impact of ethnophaulisms on the behavior of children and their parents was the focus of a study conducted in Winnipeg, Canada. Pankiw and Bienvenue (1990) studied parental responses to ethnophaulisms being used against their children. The sample consisted of 39 parents whose children had been called derogatory nicknames while attending elementary school. The derogatory nicknames included names such as “blackie,” “brown skin,” “the last of the Mohicans,” “chink,” and “jap,” as well as disparaging phrases, negative facial expressions, and offensive gestures. The sample was restricted to visible minorities, either aboriginal or immigrant. The breakdown of the sample consisted of 26% of persons identified as Native or Metis, half of whom had been raised on Indian reservations. Thirty-one percent were of African descent. This group included persons from the Caribbean, Africa, and fourth generation Canadians. Lastly, 44% came from the Asian community. The findings indicated that parents relied on a number of strategies to help their children cope, including giving advice regarding immediate responses and ways of maintaining self-esteem. Nearly half 50% of the parents advised their children to be friendly with their peers or the bullies. About one-third 33% of the parents instructed their children to report the problem immediately to those in authority. However, the majority of parents 58% took action as soon as the problem was presented to them by their children. Parental intervention involved contacting school personnel, talking with the parents of the name caller, and talking directly with the aggressive child. Most parents reported the child who used derogatory nicknames to school officials. Furthermore, parents of African descent displayed a greater tendency to intervene on behalf of their children. The reason for this response by

parents of African descent is not totally clear. What was clear, however, was that the use of ethnophaulisms prompted parents to act to protect their children. Further, the results indicated that using ethnophaulisms with children affected their self-esteem and ethnic pride. One of the strategies suggested to combat this problem was for parents to elevate the self-esteem of their children by emphasizing personal achievement and competitiveness and to instill a high level of ethnic pride in their children.

The studies reviewed thus far concerned the impact of ethnophaulisms on the thinking and behavior toward various ethnic or racial groups, though not specifically on African Americans. The findings indicated that ethnophaulisms can have a negative impact on the mental images members of the majority group have with respect to ethnic minority groups. These negative mental images may then influence children's perceptions of ethnic minority groups. Further, the use of ethnophaulisms can impact behaviors, such as using exclusion behaviors with members of minority groups and using racial slurs more often in the presence of one's own group. Moreover, the behavior of parents of ethnic minority children may be impacted when their children are targeted. They may be more likely to act to protect their children and to provide their children with ways to cope. Also, their children's self-image and ethnic pride may be negatively affected.

Two excellent older studies that have focused on the use of the racial slur, nigger, with African Americans are especially relevant to the current study. Greenberg and Pyszczynski (1985) utilized a sample of 72 female and 61 male Caucasian volunteers from an introduction to psychology class. In this study, some of the participants,

designated as evaluators, overheard racial slurs prior to assessing a debate involving an African American and a Caucasian. The researchers found that a degree of bias occurred during the evaluation process if the racial slur nigger was overheard by evaluators. Under the ethnic slur condition, the evaluators rated the African American as only fair when he won the debate. When the African American lost the debate, the evaluators again gave low ratings to the African American. In summary, the African American was never given a high rating by the evaluators. Greenberg and Pyszczynski concluded that ethnic slurs can bring out subconscious prejudicial behavior in individuals who have prior exposure to them. In this study, the word nigger was used as a racial slur. An implication of this study was that the use of the word nigger during group decisions involving Caucasians could result in discriminatory behavior against African Americans.

Kirkland, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski (1987) conducted a second study that focused on the impact of overhearing the racial slur nigger. This study was based on a true case in which the defendant was charged with transporting a stolen vehicle across state lines. The sample was composed of Caucasian students, 86 female and 55 male students, enrolled in an undergraduate psychology course. Every subject was given an experimental packet that included a photograph of the defendant, his defense attorney, and a transcript of the trial. There were two different photographs of the attorneys, but only one was used in each packet. In one photograph, the attorney was an African American middle-aged male. In the other photograph, the attorney was a Caucasian middle-aged male. The defendant was a Caucasian male in his late twenties, and his photograph was used in both experimental conditions. The transcript of the trial was a



slightly altered account of the one used by Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Mack and Wrightsman (1981) and Kassin and Wrightsman (1979). In the incompetent condition, the subjects read a version of the transcript in which the judge twice interrupted the defense attorney and admonished him for instructing the jury as to its duty as follows:

Counselor Green: "...if the accused is found to have possession of the stolen vehicle without knowing that it was stolen, your duty is to ren—"

Judge Wood: "Excuse me, counselor, but it is my job, not yours to inform the jurors of their duties..."

Counselor Green: "Now, according to United States' Federal Law

Number 19025-01, which states that interstate transportation of a stolen vehicle"

Judge Wood: "Counselor Green, any first year law student knows that it is inadmissible for you to inform the jury of the law; that is my job. One

wonders where you obtained your law degree. If you are to continue presenting in my court, by all means show some understanding of the rules that govern it. Can you manage that, counselor?"

Counselor Green: "Yes, your honor" (Kassin & Wrightsman, 1979, p.1882).

In both experimental conditions, two confederates were used. One confederate made a derogatory remark containing the word nigger and an expletive. A second confederate made a derogatory statement using the word "shyster" and an expletive. Participants who overheard either derogatory comment rated the African American attorney in the transcript poorly, though the comment using the term "shyster" had less of an effect than the comment using the word nigger. Neither comment had a significant effect on the

ratings of the Caucasian attorney. The study results indicated that overhearing derogatory comments, and specifically, the racial slur nigger, had a prejudicial effect similar to the effect found in prior research by Greenberg and Pyszczynski (1985). As in the previous study, an implication of this study was that overhearing the word nigger could result in discriminatory behavior against African Americans. Consequently, both original studies that focused on using the word nigger as a derogatory term against African Americans showed the strong prejudicial effect this term can have. The cause of such extensive treatment was not discussed.

### **Relevant Studies**

The following seven studies exemplify a possible connection between use of the word nigger, racial attitudes, racial identity, and self-esteem.

#### **Racial Attitude and Identity Studies**

Being addressed as nigger has an impact on the self-esteem of many African Americans. Self-esteem is closely related to how an African American identifies or views himself. There were valuable studies by noted researchers in this critical area of racial attitude and identify. Included in this section was an overview of several Black racial identity theories. The initial theories of Black racial identity surfaced in psychological literature over 25 years ago. Pioneers of these theories were Vontress, Jackson & Kirshner. Their initial purpose was to examine racial issues that impacted the therapeutic process. It was also assumed that African Americans assimilation into the Caucasian culture was essential for African Americans to maintain good mental health (Helm, 1990).

There were numerous, precisely described models that address the Black identity development process. The models have been separated into two main approaches. They are the main stream approach and the underground approach. The mainstream approach examines the cognitive, affective healthy racial identity. This approach was also referred to as Nigrescence racial identity models.

The underground approach which was considered an alternative approach was in clear contrast to the mainstream approach. It posits that the African American personality consists of two primary components. They have been identified as the African self-extension orientation and the African self-consciousness. However, I discussed only the mainstream approaches in my research data. However, it must be noted that both mainstream and underground approach are both useful in determining the Black racial identity development of African Americans.

### **The Nigrescence Theory**

The Nigrescence theory whose two main components were identity orientation, self-esteem along with four stages of Black racial identity developed by Cross 1971 was considered by many to have laid the foundation for many of the racial identity scales that followed. Helm (1990) related that the major model for examining racial identity in the area of counseling and psychotherapy has been Cross's model. The first Nigrescence theory took the position that racial preference had an impact on the person's mental health and it was considered to be a part of an African American's personal identity. In other words, if they were accepting of the African Americans identity they were considered as possessing a high self-esteem and being psychologically health. This was

in contrast to African Americans accepting the values associated with Whites. If this occurred they were considered to have low self-esteem and suffer from self-hatred. These two cultural perspectives are modified in the revised Nigrescence theory.

The revised Nigrescence theory has four stages as opposed to five. Briefly, the four stages are; first, the Pre-encounter stage which takes the position that Blacks are inferior to Caucasian, next, is the encounter stage, it marks a shift from anti- Black to pro-Black sentiments, this is followed by the Immersion-Emersion stage where an urge for knowledge of self emerges, and finally the fourth stage Internalization characterizes the person who has achieved a positive self-identity. The original five stages differed in part from the four stages. The five stages do not represent identities. The four stages are more comprehensive when describing the stages. Utilization of the four stage original theory was greater than of the five stage theory. Cross's original theory was primarily used because it was associated with the Racial Identity Attitude Scale-Black (RAIS-B) created by Parham and Helm, 1981, which made Nigrescence theory more accessible for practical and research application. Cross conducted studies on his original theory to ensure the theory's validation

Two noted studies on the Cross Racial Identity Scale: B strengthens its validity. The first study examines the structural validity of CRIS. The participants consisted of 296 African Americans college students 212 females, 76 males, 8 unspecified. They all were students attending a predominately Caucasian University located within the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Ninety percent (264) were undergraduate students. Nine percent (27) were graduate students, and five were unspecified. The majority (91%)

classified their social status as working class. Seventy-five percent related that their maternal parent had successfully completed high school. All participants were instructed to complete a background sheet. The background sheet collected data on sex, age, racial designation, GPA, educational level of each parent, income of family of origin, academic class standing, and social class status of family of origin.

The Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) a seven point scale consisted of 64 items across eight subscales. This study centered its focus on six subscales and 50 items. There were only fifty items because two subscales containing 13 items were still in the development phase. One item was a filler item having no association to any of the eight subscales. The subscales were: Pre-encounter assimilation eight items, Pre-encounter miseducation 11 items, Pre-encounter self-hatred seven items, Immersion-emersion anti-white 5fiveitems, International Black Nationalist 11 items, and Internalization multiculturalist inclusive eight items. The recruiters were African Americans. They went to the student center, residence halls, cultural centers, and the cafeteria in an attempt to recruit African American students. The recruiters also solicited sororities, fraternities, the chorus, and student associations. There was also a solicitation attempt via electronic mailing from a list maintained for full time African American students. There were eight African American data collectors administering the survey, three men and five women. Their academic status was three undergraduates, three graduates and two members of the faculty. The participants were given a five dollar monetary incentive and told the study's purpose was to examine social identity attitude.

In study one the results indicated that the correlation between Immersion –Emersion Anti White (EIAW) and International Black Nationalist (IBN) was greater than anticipated. The results suggest that Black individuals have the potential to work toward self-improvement without hating members of the Caucasian culture.

In study two, only 35 of the 50 CRIS items from study one were used. There was a focus change. There was an attempt to reduce the overlap between the subscales Anti-Caucasian and Black Nationalist. The Black Nationalist subscale was narrowed to focus on an Afrocentric identity as opposed to global Black Nationalist. There were 336 African American students 119 males, 212 females, and five unspecified. The University was located in the Northeast region of the United States. It was a predominately White University. The participants' ages ranged from 17 to 59 years. Ninety-three percent (313) were pursuing a Bachelor Degree. Six percent (20) were pursuing a graduate degree and three were unspecified. Ninety percent of the students reported coming from a middle or working class community, five percent from a lower class community and three percent from an upper class community was also reported. Roughly 66% had maternal parents who were high school graduates. Sixty-five percent reported their parents who were high school graduates.

### **The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity**

The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) (Sellers et al., 1998) contained 56 items and was designed to examine the racial identity of African Americans across the dimensions of ideology, regard, and centrality. A seven point Likert Scale was used.

### **The Balance Inventory of Desirable Responding**

The Balance Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) (Paulhus, 1984) consists of 40 items and examines social desirability. There were two subscales containing twenty items each, Impression Management and Self Deceptive Enhancement. This instrument uses a seven point scale. Paulus (1991) has done research on the BIRI and has generated a summary of the validity and reliability. The summary was based on the adults and college students. The generalizability from these studies would face easy criticisms. First of all, the limitations of these studies included the issue that all African Americans were attending predominately Caucasians Institutions in a given region of the United States. There were other concerns that may clearly generate debate when attempting to generalize African Americans in other regions of the country or those who attend Historically Black Universities. Secondly, it was noted that a large number of students were middle and upper class, and had obtained a higher education level than many students in the African American culture. Another pertinent concept that needs to be addressed is the concept Psychology of Black Identity.

### **Psychology of Black Identity**

The concept of the Psychology of Black Identity PBI was multidimensional. It was a dynamic concept that was believed to have developed over a period of time resulting from a process of exploration and commitment. PBI was more than just the knowledge and understanding of an individual's in-group associations. PBI emanates from experiences (Richter, L. M.; Norris, S. A.; Pettifor, J.M.; Yach, D. & Cameron, N. 2007). Theoretical and empirical evidence support the notion of PBI as a multifaceted

concept that includes a number of dimensions (Norris, S. A.; Richter L. M. & Fleetwood, S. A. 2007). A considerable amount of data examining PBI was derived from studying group identity conducted by social psychologist (Combs, Penn, Cassisi, Michael, Wood, & Warner, 2006). This group held the perspective that PBI was part of one's social identity, closely aligned with the individual's self-concept which comes from the person's knowledge of their social group membership combined with the values and commitment to the group membership. In order to gain a working understanding of PBI and its impact, it would be a plus to have some background knowledge on literature related to black self-hatred (Johnson, Lecci, & Swin, 2006) as well as literature on Cross's Nigrescence theory (Cross, 1971). Assimilation into the dominant American culture (White) lead Blacks into experiencing feelings of self-hate and inferiority.

### **The doll study**

It was theorized that strong associations with Africa assisted Blacks in their developing of a healthier racial identity. The self-hate paradigm that was examined was the studies conducted by Clark & Clark (1939). Their studies investigated the preference of Black children between stimuli representing a Black individual to one representing a Caucasian individual. Clark & Clark (1939) went further to examine the degree to which the children were capable of discriminating between the dolls symbolizing Black individuals when instructed. Follow up studies were conducted as well by (Clark & Clark 1939) using a set of four dolls, two black and two Caucasian, along with a series of eight questions.



The purpose was to measure racial preference and racial self-identification. Kenneth and Mamie Clark was both African American psychologist who often worked as a team. They were well known for their experiments using dolls to study children. The doll experiments evolved out of Mamie Clark's Master's degree thesis. The doll experiment involved a black child being present with two dolls. They were completely identical with the exception of their hair color and skin. The children were asked questions such as: which doll is nice, which doll looks bad, which doll do they want to play with, and which doll has the nicer color. The results of this experiment revealed an overwhelming preference for the Caucasian doll by all the children in the study. It was found that Black children rejected Black dolls and gravitated toward the Caucasian dolls. Clark and Clark (1939) took the position that the children perceived Black as less than beautiful.

The conclusion from the Clark and Clark (1939) studies suggests that as a result of the discrimination and bias experienced by Black people throughout the United States. Black children have somehow internalized these experiences and have developed a negative attitude about being Black and have a desire to be Caucasian. The concept used for this was referred to as "Wishful thinking". It was associated with desiring to be Caucasian feeling like a full person and not having to experience discrimination. This study was challenged due to its limited data and its inability to be generalized to the larger African American culture especially due to the data coming from children three – seven years of age. I should remind you this was a dated study and may not be reflective of the current mindset. The Nigrescence paradigm being the second component of PBI

was addressed thoroughly earlier in the paper. Two other very important concepts worth investigating are racial identity and self-esteem.

### **Racial identity and Self-esteem**

Racial identity and self-esteem are two concepts that are closely related. The early research conducted on racial identity took the position that African Americans possess negative self-images (Cross, 1991). The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) was used to examine the relationship between racial identity and Personal Self-Esteem (PSE). The psychologists Horowitz (1939); Kardiner & Ovesey (1951); Steel & Aronson (1995) suggest that African Americans who have strong Black self-concepts face a psychological risk of a result of the stigma associated with being Black. On the other hand the psychologists Azibo (1989); Baldwin (1984); Cross, (1971) (1979) suggest the opposite that possessing a strong identification with one's culture can result as a buffer to personal self-esteem in African Americans. These two opposing positions suggest a challenge to probe the unanswered theory; what is the relationship between racial identification and self-esteem. There is available research suggesting that a person's self-concept was greatly impacted by the perceptions and the way one is viewed by others (Kardiner & Ovesey, 1951; Pettigrew, 1978). African Americans were assumed to suffer from an inferiority complex and low self-esteem until this belief was challenged by researchers in the late 1960's and early 1970's it was noted by research that early work on African Americans' racial identity generated erroneous assumptions. A mere preference for Caucasian stimuli was sufficient to support to position for self-hatred in the African American participants (Brand, Ruil, & Paddillo 1974; McAddo

1970; Porter & Washington, 1979). It was not until the availability of paper and pencil measures of self-esteem in the late 1960's that researchers finally initiated measuring the self-esteem in African Americans directly. There were two studies worth examining to identify the relationship between self-esteem and racial identity.

In study number one there were 165 African American students from an introductory psychology participant pool covering a four- semester duration. The study was conducted at a middle size University in the Southeastern region of the United States. The females comprised 64 percent of the participants. The participants were composed of 5% seniors, 12% juniors, 27% sophomore, and 49% freshmen, and the 7% unknown. The family income level ranged from \$55,000 to \$64,999 The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) was used to examine these dimensions of racial identity ideology, regard, and centrality. Participants were instructed to respond based on whether they agree or disagree with the items. A seven point Likert scale was used. The regard scale consisted of two parts public and private regard. The private regard scale was composed of seven items. The public regard scale was composed of three items.

The private regard focused on the participants feeling toward African Americans. The public regard examines how the participant's felt about non-African Americans. The centrality scale was composed of 10 items. It examined how committed the participant was to his African American culture. Those scoring high on the private regard scale tended to feel better about them. They tended to be more likeable, and attractive. They were also more willing to speak up in groups. Those who scored high in public regard

tended to be more sociable with other cultures as well as possessing a higher tolerance levels for others. It must be mentioned the correlation between racial identity and self-esteem is significant. It's highly possible a person who entertains issues with membership of their specific cultural group more than likely has issues with himself.

### **Summary**

This review of the literature began with a historical perspective, elaborating how the word nigger came into existence. The historical review of the term also showed that it has been especially controversial and provocative. The contemporary perspective shed light on the fact that differences of opinion exist between the older and younger generations concerning the use of the word nigger. The younger generation, particularly the hip-hop culture, has used the word as a term of endearment when addressing each other. By contrast, the older generation would like the word banned. Scholars also disagree on whether the word should be banned from the English language or whether it is possible for younger African Americans to reclaim the word, thus ridding it of its power.

The literature revealed a distinction between ethnophaulisms, or negative terms used by one group against other groups, and ethnonyms, or negative terms used by a group with its own members. A particular type of ethnophaulism, the caricature, has been used to portray African Americans in literary and cinematic media. African Americans have found the caricatures offensive because the images provide a disparaging view of them as simple, unintelligent, unattractive, or brutish. Ethnonyms have also been used in positive and negative ways, but scholars have pointed out that

they can also be as offensive as ethnophaulisms. Consequently, both ethnonyms and ethnophaulisms may have a negative impact on African Americans.

Though most studies on ethnophaulisms have not specifically focused on African Americans, their findings may have implications for the use of the racial slur nigger with African Americans. These studies, which examined the impact of racial slurs on individuals' thinking and behavior toward various ethnic minority groups, indicated that ethnophaulisms affect how members of the majority group think about members of ethnic minority groups. Furthermore, the use of ethnophaulisms can affect behaviors, such as using exclusion behaviors with members of minority groups and using racial slurs more often in the presence of one's own group. Moreover, both parents of ethnic minority children may be impacted when their children are targeted, and their children's self-esteem and ethnic pride may be negatively affected.

Therefore, as a whole, these studies implied that ethnophaulisms may be offensive and harmful to any ethnic or racial group targeted. An examination of racial identity and self-esteem theories revealed that the more a person identifies with his culture the more psychologically healthy the person is expected to be. The research also suggests that if one does not associate with his culture he can still be a healthy individual.

A review of studies that specifically focused on the impact of the term nigger revealed that only the impact on the majority group was examined. The impact of any potentially discriminatory behaviors on African Americans was neglected. The tendency to neglect the impact of this word on African Americans was evident in this literature review. Despite the knowledge gained from studies on other ethnic groups

about how harmful racial slurs can be, researchers have neglected studying the use of the word nigger among African Americans. Notably, despite having knowledge about how hurtful this term has been for African Americans, none of the studies touched on African American attitudes toward it or any other racial slur.

To begin addressing this gap, in this study I focused on the experience shared by a group of African Americans regarding the use of the word nigger by Caucasians. It was imperative to explore how African Americans feel and think about the use of the term today. It was most appropriate to begin determining how the word nigger impacts African Americans. It was intended that the results of this study provide a thought provoking layer of data on a racial slur that is strongly connected to a history of slavery and oppression for many African Americans, and therefore, still possesses the power to insult and provoke African Americans.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the thoughts and feelings of African Americans toward the use of the word nigger by African Americans and by Caucasians. The practice of using the word nigger goes back as far as the early 18th century. The word nigger elicits a range of responses; the responses range from acceptance to physical violence from the individual being addressed. While there is an adequate representation in the literature probing use of the word nigger, there is a gap in the literature relating to how African Americans feel and think about other African Americans' and Caucasians' use of the word. Caucasians have experienced African Americans addressing one another using the word. Caucasians may have developed an inaccurate perception as to how a majority of African Americans feel and think about the use of the word.

In this study I provided insights into the thoughts and feelings of African Americans from very diverse backgrounds. I recruited male and female individuals who were college grads and non-college grads. I also recruited individuals the ages of 18 and over. I was making certain this study identify different perspectives African Americans hold regarding the use of the word nigger. I examined a broad category of perspectives, such as; historical, contemporary, ethnonyms, ethnophaulisms, opponents and proponents of the word usage. I discovered the older African Americans took the position the word should not be used and some feel that it should be banned from use. On the other hand,

the younger African American generations often used the word as a term of endearment and pronounce the word nigger as nigga.

In this chapter I addressed two research questions that addressed the study's design, including the role of the researcher, the participant selection, sampling strategies, and the methods of recruitment. I also addressed the data collection process, data analysis, strategies for trustworthiness in the collected data, protection of participant's identification, and ethical issues.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The two research questions that I investigated in this study were:

RQ1: What are the specific feelings and thoughts of African Americans toward the general use of the word nigger by other African Americans?

RQ2: What are the specific feelings and thoughts of African Americans toward the general use of the word nigger by Caucasians?

In this study I used a qualitative phenomenological approach to gather data for this study. In this approach I examined the human experience and identified common meaning of the same phenomenon. This approach was clearly best fit for this research project (Creswell, 2009). The phenomenological approach was best suited for a couple of reasons (Creswell, 2009). I discovered there were two good reasons to use this approach. The first reason, this approach creates openers and encourages individuals to expand their responses. The second reason, as a direct result of the openness an enormous amount of



in-depth and detail information was gathered which becomes extremely helpful in the data analysis process.

I clearly stated earlier, the goal of this study was to identify the thoughts and feeling of African Americans when they are addressed as nigger by African Americans and Caucasians. In This study I highlighted the similarities and differences in the experiences of the participants. The participants were the ones who shared their honest thoughts and feelings on how they were impacted by use of the word. Their open and honest expressions allowed the researcher to objectively explain their perspectives.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I am an African American who has experienced the constant use of the word nigger my entire life. I observed many African Americans express anger and disgust when addressed as nigger by other African Americans. I also experienced younger African Americans in the millennial generation use the term as one of endearment. These observations heightened my curiosity and interest relating to how African Americans vary in their thoughts and feeling regarding the use of the word nigger. Another factor that influenced the decision to study this phenomenon was my observation of the total disgust, anger, and the provocation aroused in African Americans when Caucasians use the term to address or insult African Americans. I was extremely curious as to why cultural internal use of the term was more acceptable than nonculture external use of the term. I am aware of the notorious history of the word. Lastly, overhearing the word being used in the lyrics of rap songs also served as a motivator for this study. My role in this study was that of a co researcher with the community as my partner. My role as

researcher in this study was similar to the role of a facilitator. My objective was to maintain objectivity and remain unbiased. My objective was to relate and open up the participants, enabling them to be as honest as possible in sharing their thoughts and feelings.

My prior experience as an interviewer served as an asset. During my law enforcement career, I served as a police investigator for 10 years on the Cook County Sheriff's Department. Moustakas (1994) and Van Mance (1990) suggested that when conducting an interview, three crucial points to remember are: maintain focus on your participants' use of words, observe and identify their nonverbal communication, and lastly remain non-judgmental throughout the entire experience. In the process of separating how I felt, my personal beliefs, or knowledge about the topic I was able to give my undivided attention to the experiences being shared by the participants. I decided to use the epoché process throughout this entire study. I was committed to setting aside all biases, preconceived ideas about things, and prejudgments. According to the epoché process, the researcher was to remain as open and objective as possible throughout the entire data collection process. Janesick (2000) maintained that some degrees of bias are present in all research designs. It should be noted that Morse (1994) concurs with Janesick's assertion. I made every effort to avoid any degree of bias. Some practices that I utilized to avoid bias consisted of; reviewing the university's guidelines, remaining neutral, asking open ended questions, avoid guiding the participant, collating and sorting the data, and keeping excellent records.

### **Participants Selection Process**

Identifying participants was a key responsibility for me. Identifying participants who can best answer the research questions was the main consideration for participant selection. This is a main purposeful sampling procedure (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The participants in this study were drawn exclusively from the African American population. Purposeful sampling was employed in the selection process. Patton (2014) defined purposeful sampling as a process of case selection which strategically locates information sources. I chose to examine a phenomenon that has an above average probability of being experienced by all of the prospective participants. Creswell (2007) implied that 10 participants are a reasonable number for proposed phenomenological studies as it falls into Creswell's recommended range between one and 32. Polkinghorne (1989) recommended that researchers interview five to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. Creswell (2012) discussed three considerations to observe when using purposeful sampling: first, which participants are desirable; second, identify the specific sampling strategy and third, decide the size of the sample required. After these conditions were satisfied, I became a step closer to the selection process. Creswell (2012) highly recommended the use of saturation, the gathering of a sufficient amount of information to adequately address the research, especially when using a small sample size. It can be perceived that the smaller the sample size the greater role saturation plays (Creswell 2012).

In my study I selected 15 participants of diverse backgrounds and both genders. It was more efficient, wiser, and considered a general rule to use small sample sizes in

qualitative studies. It appeared to be wiser because in this particular study an understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the 15 participants were gathered at a deeper degree than used of a survey in a quantitative study. An adequate amount of data provided me with a sufficient amount to draw reliable and valid conclusions. I was fully aware and confident on how to effectively select the participants for this study and readily recruited the participants.

### **Sampling Strategy**

The selection process involved identifying 15 participants. To ensure an adequate range of data, I utilized venues where a large group of diverse African Americans were known to frequent such as churches, block club meetings, community meetings, and other social gatherings for selection purposes. I generated a list identifying the demographics desired to make certain that a diverse group was selected. The list consisted of the following demographics: nine men, seven women, three between the ages twenty-one to thirty-five, six between the ages thirty- six to fifty, six between the ages fifty-one to seventy-five, six college grads and nine non-college grads. My assumption was that a participant having a higher educational level resented the use of the word nigger by other African Americans and by Caucasians. I assumed this was a possible result of their dignity level.

### **Informed Consent**

I selected all 15 of the participants. I made certain each was given an informed consent form to review. I reviewed the consent form thoroughly at the beginning of every interview with each participant. I addressed any concern of the participants. An

opportunity was provided to each participant to ask question before a signature was obtained. I decided when the participant agreed and decided to precede further a copy of the consent form will be provided. The form provided the following information to the participant: a description of the study; the purpose of the study; procedures, the nature of the study, potential risks, the benefits of improving race relations and providing relevant information surrounding this provocative behavior, the confidentiality and privacy involved; the role I played; and my contact information. I obtained participant's signature after a full understanding of what was required of them to participate.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection was the most crucial component of the study. Data collection activities should be formulated before the actual process starts. The activities included: locating the participants, the use of purposeful sampling, collecting data, recording information, resolving issues, and storing data. Data collection in this study was composed of semi-structured interviews, which occurred between me and participant in a face-to-face setting. There were six open ended interview questions.

1. How do you feel about being addressed as nigger?
2. What are your thoughts about being addressed as nigger?
3. How do you feel about African Americans using the word nigger?
4. What are your thoughts about African Americans using the word nigger?
5. How do you feel about Caucasians using the word nigger?
6. What are your thoughts about Caucasians using the word nigger?

I anticipated developing questions from the participants' responses. The interview lasted the duration of five-15. All interviews were audio recorded. The interview was conducted at a community library meeting room. I collected the interviews after which, they underwent verbatim transcription. Once the transcription had taken place, the participants were allowed to review the transcripts to help ensure accuracy. Individual participants' review of the transcripts occurred within 24-72 hours after being transcribed. Each participant was given a copy of their transcripts for review and confirmation. This additional review and confirmation step ensured that accurate meanings of the statements given by the participants were clearly understood by the researcher. This was also an extra measure to help avoid researcher bias. (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008) stated that the semi-structured interview has a tendency to illicit more information from the participant and has a positive impact on how the participant is experiencing the interview situation.

As I previously stated the time for each interview would lasted five -15 minutes. Each participant set aside a time agreed prior to the meeting between the participant and me. I used a digital recorder. I had the recorded interviews transcribed. After I completed all transcriptions, a copy was provided to each participant for them to review. If the need for a second interview arose for clarification or extended responses it was scheduled immediately via phone, email or text. I selected these modes of communication.

I made the decision to ensure confidentiality for all participants by assigning a pseudonym and number code. My purpose for this action was to make certain that no

identifiers of the participants were recognizable. All information was only accessible to me.

### **Data Analysis Strategy**

The strategies of bracketing or epoché cluster of meanings and horizontalization as suggested by Moustakas (1994) and Van Maneu (2010). When analyzing the phenomenological data, in this study I focused only on data that was directly related to phenomenon under study. The concept of bracketing or epoche strongly recommended that I sit aside my personal experiences, as much as possible Husserl (1970) and Creswell, (2007). This enabled me to obtain a transcendental perspective of the phenomenon. This allows the process of categorizing data based on how closely related the data is to the research questions. The horizontalization process is when the researcher will develop clusters of meanings taken from the transcripts. The cluster of meanings was derived from the statements, which have been gathered into meaningful themes.

I had the responsibility of utilizing my skills and insights to assist in the interpretation of the data. The process of reading and listening to the transcripts and tapes a number of times served as a valuable tool. The Nvivo software package assisted tremendously with identifying the themes and synthesizing of the data.

### **Trustworthiness**

There were two questions to consider relating to trustworthiness. Will the results of the study be worth paying attention to? Will I have any confidence in the results? To further validate the research, the following components was addressed in the research; internal validity, external validity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The

accuracy or internal validity was safeguarded. I used the interview procedures. The external validity factor was assured by making certain that a diverse group of participants, considering age, income, education, and gender, were selected to help ensure the generalization factor was high and the study was easily replicated. The transferability factor was assuredly satisfactory. The results of the research were applicable to other groups or individuals. All groups conducting training in the area of cultural sensitivity hopefully will find the results useful and significant. The results due to the consistency throughout the entire process, along with the meticulous monitoring of the results and the audit trail helped to guarantee dependability. The option of the interviewer to probe by asking the participants more open ended questions when the interviewer needs more clarification on a point made by the participant. This process will be utilized by the interviewer to help ensure confirmability.

### **Summary**

Chapter three has strategically identified and outlined the role of the researcher, the research design, the use of informed consent, and the participation selection process. Details of the data collection and data analysis processes were reviewed. I was now ready to proceed to chapter four to discuss the results and findings of this study.



## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the thoughts and feelings of African Americans regarding the use of the word nigger by Caucasians and by African Americans. This chapter shared the findings gathered from interviews with fifteen African American participants from diverse backgrounds. In my study results centered on the impact the use of the word nigger had on African Americans regardless of the usage context or the relationship between the user and receiver.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection process was a critical process. Identifying participants were a key responsibility me. Identifying participants who would openly and honestly answer the research questions was the main consideration for participant selection. I employed the purposeful sampling strategy in the selection process. I selected the participants in this study exclusively from the African American population. I selected the participant pool from community churches, members of civic organizations, students, and friends. The recruitment process took approximately three and one half weeks. I ultimately found 15 willing participants to share their thoughts and feelings. I conducted the interviews in a library study room. The interviews lasted from five to 15 minutes in length. I posed a total of seven open ended questions to the participants.

1. How often do you use the word nigger?
2. How do you feel about being addressed as nigger by Caucasians and by African Americans?

3. What are your thoughts about being addressed as nigger Caucasians and African Americans?
4. How do you feel about African Americans using the word nigger?
5. What are your thoughts about African Americans using the word nigger?
6. How do you feel about using the word nigger?
7. What are your thoughts about using the word nigger?

I made certain to ask all questions in the same order for all participants. It took 2 weeks to complete the interview process with all participants. The interviews were recorded on a small recording device, after which the interviews were downloaded onto my laptop and emailed to a reputable transcription company. It also took 1 week to have all of the interviews transcribed. All participants confirmed their transcript to be accurate. I reviewed and analyzed the data through open and AX101 coding. As a result, I discovered the presence of consistent reoccurring themes among the participants. This phenomenon could probably represent an indication of saturation. I identified ten common themes.

1. I strongly believe the word nigger was never to be used by Caucasian people, regardless how often they overhear African Americans use the word they can never use the word.
2. The word nigger was acceptable only if African Americans use the word; a participant stated we, meaning African Americans, are the only persons allowed to utter the word.

3. The word nigger should not be used by African Americans, a participant shared why do African Americans use the word so much knowing the true meaning of the word, that's shameful.
4. Caucasians make me fighting mad when they use it, I feel like going toe to toe when a Caucasian person slips or intentionally uses the word.
5. It doesn't bother me when people use the word; I don't pay any attention to people use the word. I look at them like they are ignorant.
6. I use it with my friends sometimes; I don't mean anything negative when I use the word. The participant related it's a habit that needs to be broken. I am just use to saying the word so much.
7. The context is important; a participant stated when you call me a nigger during a positive conversation its cool. I have done it myself sometimes, no disrespect is intended.
8. I use it when I am angry; a participant shared if they are arguing with another African American the word just comes out automatically. They cannot help it.
9. African Americans use the word more than Caucasians. A participant related he thinks some African Americans can be hypocrites. They use the word all day, but get bent out of shape when a Caucasian person utters the word.
10. I really have no thought. A participant related they believe that it's just how the world is, what's the big deal, it's just a word.

### **Analyzing the Data**

In Chapter 4 I have attempted to synthesize the data to generate a simple and reader friendly interpretation of what the participants' thoughts and feelings centered

around. I decided to use these themes stated earlier as the reference of information to the reader. Following is a demographic breakdown of the participants followed by an analysis of the themes specifically focused on how the participants expressed themselves given the specific interview questions.

### **Demographic Breakdown of the Participants: Gender, Age, Income, and Education**

I inserted a table for the reader to easily interpret the demographics. An explanation of the data follows the table.

Table 1  
Demographic Breakdown of the participants' gender, age, income, and education

| Variable                     | n  |
|------------------------------|----|
| <u>Gender</u>                |    |
| Male                         | 9  |
| Female                       | 6  |
| <u>Age</u>                   |    |
| 21 – 35                      | 3  |
| 36 – 50                      | 6  |
| 51 – 60                      | 6  |
| <u>Income</u>                |    |
| Under \$35,000               | 3  |
| \$35,000 - \$75,000          | 10 |
| &75,000 up                   | 2  |
| <u>Education</u>             |    |
| High School only             | 5  |
| 30 – 60 College credit hours | 4  |
| Bachelor Degree              | 4  |
| Master's Degree              | 2  |

The participant pool consisted of nine male participants and six female participants. The age breakdown was as follows: In the age range of twenty-three to thirty-five,

there were three participants. In the age range of thirty-six to fifty, there were six participants. In the age range of fifty-one to sixty, there were six participants. This brought the total number of participants to 15. The income range varied with slightly more representation from the middle income bracket. The income representation was as follows: under thirty-five thousand dollars there were three participants, thirty-five thousand dollars to seventy-five thousand dollars there were 10 participants and seventy-five thousand dollars and above there were two participants. The educational breakdown varied also in this demographic I had more participants having only attained a high school education. The group consisted of five participants having achieved a high school diploma. There were two participants having earned 30 to 60 college credit hours. The group consisted of four participants who had earned a bachelor's degree. Lastly there were two participants who earned a master's degree.

### **Reoccurring Themes**

I have decided to share some of the thoughts and feeling shared by the participants consisting of sentence fragments before I address the re-occurring themes. Some of the participant's thoughts shared were: "it's crazy, will it ever end", "they are racist", "they are stupid," and "why do African Americans use the word", and "wow, give me a break." The feelings expressed about use of the word nigger were as follows: anger, frustration, sadness, and wanting to become violent.

The word nigger was never to be used by Caucasian people. This theme was most frequently expressed by the participants. Eleven participants stated this word should never be uttered by Caucasians. There was a clear consensus of the participants agreeing

that when Caucasians use the word, they strongly believed their intent was to offend, put down, or anger African Americans. Two of the participants shared they have experienced being called nigger by Caucasians. One participant related that he responded to the situation with anger and wanted to become physically aggressive. The other participant related that they were so shocked. They played it off, which is a form of ignoring what occurs. The other participant related that they had no personal experiencing of being called nigger. The participants believed that some Caucasians may be confused why they cannot use the word. The confusion may result from Caucasians often overhearing African Americans frequently using the word between one another. Some participants appeared visceral when talking about a particular instance of Caucasians using the word nigger. The example shared was a situation occurring where Caucasians were a majority at a social event and an unknown Caucasians person yelled out the word nigger. There were four participants who related they were not emotionally upset or angry overhearing Caucasians using the word nigger when they considered the Caucasians as being cool. Being cool meant the Caucasians in question were not perceived as racist. They were thought to genuinely accept and admire African Americans.

The word nigger was acceptable if used by African Americans. I did not receive a consensus from the participants on this question. However, there are many additional comments from the participants that I noted. Twelve of the 15 participants thought it to be acceptable if African Americans use the word. Two of the 15 participants expressed the context in which African Americans expressed the word played a key role for them

accepting the word being used. One participant related he was comfortable with African Americans using the word. In addition, five participants stated that we are accustomed to it. Another participant stated you cannot control what people say so why let it bother you. The participant's made statements based on their thoughts. It is a "term of endearment" related two participants. One participant responded "absolutely not". "It is not a good feeling to be called a nigger". One participant took the high road. They related that it's just a word. It is believed when African Americans overhear Caucasian people use the word, it did not upset them. I believe this position was rare as it related to the other participants. They further related that they did not see a difference in a Caucasian or African American persons using the word. Another participant stated "Hell No" it's a defamation of character. The participants appeared to have many perspectives and appeared eager to share their perspectives on this question. One participant related that some African Americans have taken a very derogatory word and used it in a positive manner. They stated that in music and television it has been used so often that it is just a common phrase now. One participant related that you have to know your audience; some people will be offended even if an African American uses the word nigger. One participant stated that it was cool if everyone being addressed as nigger was comfortable with it. Eight participants related that it was a term of endearment to many young African Americans. One participant related that when African Americans use the word they are being disrespectful to whomever they are addressing. One participant related that African Americans who use the word do not know any better and should be ashamed

for using the word because they are ignorant. One participant related that when African Americans use the word it leaves a bad taste in their mouth (meaning makes them angry).

### **Nigger should not be used by African Americans**

I don't give a damn; African Americans cannot use the word nigger. It is a sign of our ignorance, meaning African Americans, when we address one another with that word. If an African American calls me nigger, I am going to check him, meaning advise them to not address them as such. These were statements uttered with emotions by some of the participants. It was nearly unanimous, 13 participants agreed the word nigger should not be used by African Americans. Two participants related that it was okay if African Americans were addressing other African Americans who did not have a problem being addressed as nigger by the person talking. They generally were close friends or relatives for this to occur.

### **Caucasians make me fighting mad when they use it**

I have experienced being called nigger before by Caucasians. It nearly blew my mind. I dare a Caucasian person to call me nigger to my face. I got something for them. I almost cried when called nigger by Caucasians. I was so emotionally upset: The participant stated it's an unbelievable experience. They would not wish it for nobody. Only three participants had experienced being called or overheard Caucasians use the word nigger directly or indirectly at an African American or African Americans. One female participant shared on one occasion while at a concert they overheard a



couple of Caucasians female's state it was too many niggers here for them. The participant asked her girlfriend did she hear the comment. Her girlfriend replied yes I did. It was perceived the individuals felt very uncomfortable because of the large presence of African Americans attending the concert. The participant admitted to current feeling of anger, hostility, and hatred toward the Caucasian females. The participant also thought it was brash and intentionally disrespectful for the Caucasian female to make a statement such as that in close proximity to African Americans. Another participant, a male college graduate related while at a play mostly attended by Caucasians, he overheard a Caucasian male state you cannot go anywhere these days without niggers showing up. The participant related he experienced feelings of anger, sadness, and ambivalence. The participant stated he thought it may have been an honest statement based on how the Caucasian male may feel but an inappropriate statement on the part of the Caucasian male. The participant related his thoughts ranged from amazement to reality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The participant also related they prayed to God on the spot to calm them down because they were ready to get it on. The phrase, get it on, meant they were ready to engage in a physical altercation.

### **It bothers me when Caucasians use the word**

When I hear the word nigger used in motion pictures by Caucasian for some reason I cringe. I find it hard to understand why some African Americans allow Caucasians to call them my nigga. That seems so much like master to slave talk. I prefer to exit the scene when I think I am around Caucasians who want to use the word nigger loudly in their conversation. I am afraid of what my reactions will be. This question had a

unanimous response being all participants related that Caucasians should not use the word under any circumstances. They related that even when the word nigger was used in movies or television feelings of anger are experienced. A female college graduate participant shared the movie Mississippi Burning with its excessive use of the word nigger turns her stomach. The participant related experiencing feelings of hatred, loss of appetite, and anger. Another participant stated he could not watch the entirety of the movies, The Hateful Eight or Django, because their excessive use of the word nigger exceeded his tolerance level. A participant under thirty – five reported while at the mall with friends he had to be held back by his peers because he overheard a group of Caucasians referring to a couple of African American females as sexy niggers.

**I don't mean anything negative. I use it with my friends sometimes**

Some of the participants commented; within my group of friends, we call one another nigger on the regular, no one is offended. On occasion I may call my girlfriend a nigger. It is clearly understood that I am not bashing her. We use the word nigger for breakfast lunch and dinner. Only three of the participants responded to use of the word nigger with their friends. The vast majority of the participants were against using the word regardless of the level of friendship or relationship that existed. A male participant under Thirty-five related he uses the word often when addressing his peers. He stated he uses the derivative nigga very often with his peers. It is considered a normal greeting. A normal greeting meaning the word nigger was being used as a synonym of the name of the person being addressed or a term of endearment. Another participant, a college

graduate, reported he uses it on his peers when engaging in a debate and becoming explosive. In this situation the word nigger is being used to identify the person being addressed as naïve or ignorant. He stated the debates generally covered the topics of politics, religion or sports.

### **I use it when I am angry**

Surely enough some participants shared; if you piss me off, I will call you a nigger. In a moment of anger I cannot control my tongue and I use the word nigger. Charge it to my head, not my heart. I will call you nigger if it's going down at the time. 11 participants reported using the word at another African American. This occurred when engaged in an argument or as a response to an incident that occurred between another African American and them. One participant a college graduate stated she used the word repeatedly while having a serious disagreement with a longtime friend about an unpaid debt. She stated she lost her temper and failed to filter any words that came from her mouth.

### **The context is important**

In a more serious tone some participants related; don't call me a nigger, I don't play that. You need to check yourself before you start calling people nigger. I am going to ignore you calling me nigger because I am certain you don't know better. Six of the participants related that how the word was used played a significant role in how the receiver reacted to its use. Two male Participants stated they had experienced being called nigger by longtime friends and the context was generally a serious conversation or

debate where they failed to grasp the point or concept that was being shared or expressed to them by their counterparts.

### **African Americans use the word nigger more than Caucasians**

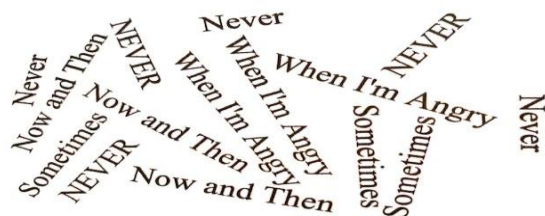
Being very honest some of the participant shared; Man Africans Americas use the word so damn much, what's the problem? African Americans need to stop using the word too. Brothers, meaning African American males, need to start setting an example by refraining from using the word. Three of the participants responded that African Americans use the word way more than Caucasians If the word is so terrible no one should use the word. One female participant over Seventy-five years old related she hates hearing African Americans use the word nigger. She shared her refusal to speak to a longtime friend of twenty years for approximately three years for calling her a nigger.

### **I really have no thoughts**

In a sincere tone participants related; I don't care who uses the word. We have a thing called freedom of speech. People can say whatever they want. It's really doesn't bother me either way. Two participants responded they had not thought about Caucasians using the word nigger. It is just a word to them they stated. One participant very nonchalantly stated, I wonder what the big deal is. African Americans use the word nigger all day long. They have the nerve to trip when Caucasians use it. The word trip refers to becoming upset or angry. It is not a big thing to me. I do not give it a second thought.

In summarizing the interviews, it can be noted that there appeared to exist a level of acceptance of the use of the word nigger by Caucasians. However, it would not be wise for Caucasians to make a practice of using the word nigger. To examine the seven interview questions, I chose the approach to interpret the results by identifying the common descriptors expressed by the participants throughout the interview process. Each question has a summary of common descriptors expressed by the participants. A word cloud illustration was used to make the data reader friendly.

1. How often do you use the word nigger?



2. How do you feel about being addressed as a nigger by Caucasians and African Americans?



3. What are your thoughts about being addressed as nigger by Caucasians and African Americans?

Put down Uncertain  
Attacked Demeaning  
Disrespectful Disrespectful Attacked  
Put down Demeaning  
Uncertain Attacked  
Put down Demeaning  
Disrespectful

4. How do you feel about African Americans using the word nigger?

Offended Angry  
Confused No feelings  
Accepting No feelings  
Confused No feelings  
Accepting Offended  
Angry Confused  
Angry Offended

5. What are your thoughts about African Americans using the word nigger?

Ignorance Off Limits inappropriate  
Term of Endearment inappropriate  
Disrespectful Term of Endearment  
Disrespectful Inappropriate  
Accepting Off Limits  
Accepting Ignorance

6. How do you feel about Caucasians using the word nigger?

Angry Shocked Offended Amazed  
Amazed Insulted  
Angry Insulted Ambivalent Offended  
Shocked Insulted Ambivalent  
Angry Ambivalent

7. What are your thoughts about Caucasians using the word nigger?

Provocative  
Unacceptable  
Amazing  
Intentional  
Disrespectful  
Disrespectful  
Provocative  
Unacceptable  
Provocative  
Intentional  
Puzzling  
Puzzling  
Puzzling

The interviews were enlightening, thought provoking, and unforgettable. One interview that stood out for me was a male participant, a college graduate, under thirty-five who appeared to have an excellent grasp of the power the word nigger possesses. The participant stated he recognizes the pain and suffering associated with the word nigger and he understands the higher frequency of the use of the word nigger by the younger generation of African Americans. However, the participant admitted his use of the word nigger on occasion. I did not hold that against him because during the interview process he demonstrated a high level of maturity and appeared committed to making the world a better place.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion, Recommendations, and Summary

The goal of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the thoughts and feelings of 15 African American participants as it relates to their reactions to the use of the word nigger by Caucasians and by African Americans. The perspective of these 15 African Americans participants were facilitated through interviews. Their perspectives represent their life experiences associated with the use of the word nigger. An exhaustive examination of the literature review revealed a limited amount of published research examining the thoughts and feelings of African Americans toward the use of the word nigger by Caucasians and by African Americans. The current body of research on this specific topic appeared to be scarce. I found this to be my prime motivator prompting me to pursue this specific phenomenon.

The first research question in this study was:

RQ1: What are the specific feelings and thoughts of African Americans to the general use of the word nigger by Caucasians?

The participants' responses, which consisted mostly of adjectives, fluctuated from both ends of the spectrum. The feeling responses were: anger, shock, sadness, confusion, and curiosity. The participants by far reported anger more than any other responses. These thoughts were shared by the participants. They are racist, meaning Caucasians hate African Americans because of their skin color. Caucasians believe African Americans are inferior to Caucasians. I am appalled; I wonder why Caucasians called them nigger. I also wonder why Caucasians feel this way. I am amazed and very



much surprised Caucasians react in this fashion. I doubt, did I really hear that? I wonder why did they say it. I want to strike them.

The second research question was:

RQ2: What are the specific feelings and thoughts of African Americans toward the general use of the word nigger by other African Americans?

The thoughts and feelings responses shared by the participants regarding African Americans using the word versus Caucasians using the word was interesting but not surprising. The thoughts were: ignorance, self-hatred, and stupidity, and low self-esteem, term of endearment, neutrality, and acceptance. The feelings responses were: anger, confusion, and resentment.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings of my study shared insight to the participants' life experiences associated with the use of the word nigger by Caucasians and by African Americans. There was a notable contrast in the thoughts and feelings of the usage between Caucasians and African Americans. The seven female participants related it was disrespectful, intentionally used, upsetting, and unacceptable for Caucasians to use the word nigger. The women stated they thought African Americans should not use the word nigger. However, they were not as disturbed by African Americans using the word nigger as compared to Caucasians using the word. The nine male participants related that Caucasians using the word made them feel angry, shocked, insulted, and inferior and made them want to retaliate aggressively. They related when African Americans use the word nigger, they feel disrespected, puzzled, and angry. The men reported they have a

higher tolerance level for African Americans using the word nigger as compared to Caucasians using the word nigger. The college graduates participant totaled five. They were a very interesting group. They stated they felt offended, angry, shocked, defenseless, and “pissed off” when Caucasians use the word nigger. The graduates related they felt puzzled when African Americans use the word nigger; they believed the African Americans were naïve, did not know better, had self-hatred issues and failed to realize the notorious history of the word. However, the graduates stated they were more accepting and had a higher tolerance level for African Americans using the word nigger than Caucasians.

The theories which supported the conceptual framework for this research were Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory. The social learning theory states that behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. The findings in this study revealed the African Americans participants during their upbringing observed and overheard other African Americans’ excessive use of the word nigger, which may have led them to believe the use of the word nigger was acceptable. It is also probable some African Americans participants were reared in environments where use of the word nigger was forbidden. This experience more than likely incorporated a different perspective into those participants reared in environments where there existed a high frequency of use of the word nigger. On the other hand, Caucasians who have observed and overheard the use of the word nigger by African Americans should not take this behavior as a license for Caucasians to use the word. Caucasians would experience a serious pushback from African Americans regarding their use of the word nigger.

The social identity theory by Tajfel (1979) was also applicable. His theory examines how people attempt to predict group behavior and categorize others. The findings clearly revealed many of the participants felt that Caucasians cannot use the word nigger under any circumstances regardless of the behavior pattern of African Americans, referring to the high frequency by African Americans using the word nigger. Caucasians may wonder what the big deal is. Some Caucasians may wonder if it is okay after overhearing African Americans use the word nigger excessively. Caucasians cannot identify with that behavior under any circumstances.

Lastly, the social comparison theory by Festinger (1954) was used to examine how people develop stereotypes, explaining how individuals of one culture view individuals of another culture. The findings strongly suggest African Americans can be viewed by Whites as having a serious problem with Caucasians using the word nigger under any circumstances. This position is a direct result of the word's notorious history. However, according to some participants, it is okay or acceptable to some African Americans for other African Americans to use the word nigger. In the study I revealed the notion, surrounding the reactions of African Americans toward Caucasians using the word nigger. I predicted Caucasians generally possess a good working knowledge concerning usage of the word nigger and are aware concerning this words volatility when uttered by Caucasians.

Caucasian and African American individuals may think and feel African Americans are monolithic on the question of Caucasians using the word nigger. However, the data suggested there was a strong position against Caucasians uttering the word

nigger. However, the participants in this study were not absolute. A few of the participants had different perspectives possibly because of age, positive interactions with Caucasians, or for other reasons. These participants were able to partially cope with Caucasians using the word nigger.

It was worthwhile to note and insert several recent studies and articles in my findings that were relevant to the research questions being examined. I included only a brief synopsis of those studies for the reader to incorporate. The first article titled *“Perceptions of Racial Slurs Used by Black Individuals Toward White Individuals: Derogation or Affiliation”?*

This article examined two studies by (O’Dea, D. A., Saucier, C. J., 2020) focusing on slur appropriation. One study utilized Caucasian participants and one study utilized African American participants. In the Caucasian study, 324 Caucasian participants were instructed to read a short story concerning an African American using a slur to refer to a Caucasian at a basketball game. There were two versions of the story. One version alluded to them as stranger; another version alluded to them as friends. The slurs ranged from nigger to nigga from cracker to asshole to buddy. The words nigger and nigga were perceived as less derogatory than cracker and asshole. The Caucasian participants also viewed the African American racial slurs altered by African American’s toward Caucasians as more friends and affiliation. An example being if an African American addressed a Caucasian as nigga it was perceived in a more positive way than an African American calling a Caucasian a “cracker and asshole”.

In the Black study, 211 African American participants were used. This examination involved African Americans using African American racial slurs directed at Caucasians. As in the Caucasian study, it was found that African Americans addressing Caucasians as nigga was perceived as less disrespectful and more affiliative than using asshole and cracker. There is some available information that using reappropriated slurs were perceived positively. The Caucasian participants still perceived using the word nigga as more disrespect and less affiliative than using the word buddy.

In another interesting article a mixed study by (De Malshe, F. 2019) entitled A Mixed- Method Study of Flemish Millennial' Use of and Attitudes towards Nigga. I included this study which was an excellent examination of the use of the word nigga, a derivative of the word nigger. I collected useful data from this study which consisted of two phases. The data were collected from online surveys and interviews thus being a mixed – method mythology study, qualitative and quantitative. The first stage of the study was the online survey it was composed of eight dimensions. The interpretation of these dimensions resulted in 421 responses with 154 being excluded due to incomplete surveys. In the second phase, consisting of semi structured interviews, the examiners utilized participants from the survey who expressed interest in being interviewed. Their answers on the survey questions played a key role in their selection as a participant. The study results pointed to strong opposition surrounding the use of the word by Caucasians in formal settings. With a negative tone in written context however, using the word in a positive tone by African Americans among African Americans was found to be more acceptable. The study also revealed a bit of indecision and dividedness amongst the

participants, towards using the term. Some found its use acceptable in certain situations other chose to refrain from using the word.

A group of serious scholars conducted a survey study. The study article was entitled “Who has the right to use the N-word” King et al., (2018). A group of 347 undergraduate students at a Historically Black College University located in the southern part of The United States participated in this fact-finding examination of the word nigger. The African American participants totaled 88%. The female participants totaled 62%. I utilized a five-point semantic differential scale. The scale categories ranged from always to never. Participants were asked their perspective concerning the degree of acceptability of the use of the word nigger and its derivatives.

The participants agree to the selection of never totaled 70% for African Americans to use the word nigger. Fifty-six percent of the participants were in agreement. These participants agreed it is never acceptable for anyone to use derivatives of the word nigger in any social setting.

A study of African American comedians examined their role in the development of variants of the word nigger Rahman, (2013). There were four African American participants in this study. The four were versed in the vernacular and extremely familiar with the work of the nine comedians utilized in the study. The study was divided into three categories of performers. They were all considered socially conscious. Meaning they were all involved to a degree in the social equality movement. The data primarily consisted of 40 minutes of performance by each comedian being examined. There were several uses and meaning of the word nigger. The participants in my study appeared to

have similar associations with the word nigger. The word nigger has an intra cultural meaning. All African Americans can relate to our shared thoughts and feelings when the word nigger is spoken by an African American or a Caucasian. The opprobrious use of the word nigger was a way of displaying disapproval or a form of censorship for a form of behavior that was unacceptable.

The hip-hop meaning represented a developing consciousness of African Americans as persons as opposed to objects or chattel. There also was a movement to erase the negative association of the word; hence a term of endearment evolves. It must be noted the different type/style of comedians had their appeal to particular age groups. There was strong opposition from sectors of African American community. However, hip-hop comedians have used the term prodigiously, utilizing a number of heuristic strategies aimed at elevating the self-esteem of African Americans. Next are a recap of my research mission and an interesting summary of the collected data.

In summary, I examined using my two research questions the specific thoughts and feelings of 15 African Americans participants toward the use of the word nigger by Caucasians and by African Americans. The data revealed African Americans possess the ability tolerate other African Americans using the word nigger without becoming extremely emotional or harboring negative thoughts about that individual. This perhaps relates to the decades and generations of the use of the word nigger being spoken within the African American family and culture. It must be clearly understood context, current relationship, mood, and other variables can impact the reception of the word nigger from one African American to another African American. On the other hand, Caucasians using

the word nigger may be a different experience. A majority of the participants were aware of the history of the word and had become a victim of the negative sometimes uncontrollable visceral and psychological impact it has on African Americans when used by Caucasians in their presence. The participants' collective thoughts and feelings, as revealed earlier were not monolithic. However, the data suggested African Americans prefer Caucasians to avoid using the word nigger.

### **Limitations**

This study was limited by the five–15 minute interviews of 15 African Americans subjects all from diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds, the groups consisted of men and women. The ability to generalize was slightly impacted due to the small number of participants in the study. The transferability of this study was fair to good. This study's findings are applicable to situations where racial slurs have been used and altercations erupted. The use of more probes would have been effective in generating more data from the participants regarding their life experiences. I trust the data received was credible. The participants appeared truthful and honest. They were motivated to share their experiences. The process of confirming the data was very important. I refused to allow any biases to enter regarding interpreting the data as received. Some of the participants appeared to be out of information to share without being redundant. I did not compel them for data. However, the information gathered from the data collection process was extremely valuable and useful.



### **Recommendations for Action**

As a result of this study's findings, there were several initiatives I highly recommended to help disseminate this information regarding the thoughts and feelings of African Americans toward the use of the word nigger by Caucasians and by African Americans. African Americans cannot be considered a monolithic group in relation to the issue examined in this study. The findings of this study supported a non-monolithic position on the issue being examined.

- Community groups and non for profits groups should host meetings and seminars that are informal. These groups should host friendly debates and discussions for the community allowing the participants to share their perspectives on the use of the word nigger.
- Colleges and universities must commit to working more closely with African Americans student groups to identify and share their thoughts and feelings regarding the use of the word nigger.
- The business community and corporations should sponsor sensitivity training with a focus on racial slurs on the work site when the workforce consist of any number of African Americans employees.
- The government should sponsor public service announcements identifying the sensitivity surrounding racial slurs and the use of the word nigger. The government should allocate funds for longitudinal studies regarding

the impact on African Americans resulting from the use of the word nigger.

The recommendations communicated above were simple, reasonable, cost effective, and can be easily implemented without unnecessary bureaucracy.

My intentions were to circulate my dissertation findings among the Black Greek Organizations, Masonic groups, social clubs, and community groups that have a history of promoting Black cultural excellence and awareness.

### **Recommendations for further Study**

The findings of this study provided genuine insight into the thoughts and feelings of fifteen African American participants who maintain serious convictions regarding the use of the word nigger by Caucasians and by African Americans. The willingness to share their perspectives is a strong indicator this is an area in need of future research.

- A narrative inquiry could be undertaken to examine the experiences of African Americans who have experienced being called nigger in the work setting and by law enforcement officers. The narrative inquiry's use of multiple data gathering strategies such as field notes, short stories, letters, interviews, photos, and life experiences for analysis is very helpful. This helps tremendously in creating a higher level of trust worthiness in the data.

- A longitudinal study should be conducted to examine the impact of being called the word nigger on career success. A long term study would validate the impact of the experience on African Americans and increase credibility as well as the level of generalizability to the larger population of African Americans.

### **Synopsis**

Following is a short analysis of the participants' response based on the demographics. There were four participants whose salary exceeded \$75,000.00 annually. These participants related they felt insulted, angry, and shocked when Caucasians use the word nigger. They reported they also felt uncomfortable, angry, disgusted, and embarrassed when African Americans use the word nigger. This demographic also related they were more tolerant of African Americans using the word nigger than Caucasians using the word nigger. The demographic under 35 years old differed from the other demographics. There were three participants under 35 years old. This demographic related they were not as angry when Caucasians used the word. If the Caucasian person was a friend, co-worker, they were more accepting. This group related they had no issue with African Americans using the word. They preferred to use the word nigga. Their tolerance for Caucasians using the word nigger was normal except when the intent was to offend or demean an African American individual. They stated it was somewhat acceptable for African Americans to use the word nigger.

The last demographic, the seniors had no acceptance of either African America or Caucasians using the word nigger. The seniors demographic felt offended and angry when Caucasians and African Americans use the word nigger. However, they stated the tolerance level for African Americans using the word was higher than for Caucasians using the word. Anger, shocked, surprise, insulted and provocation were key descriptors shared by the participants. All fifteen participants related their tolerance level for Caucasians using the word was lower than for African Americans. What I found interesting was the under 35 demographic were more tolerant than any other demographic regarding the overall use of the word nigger.

### **Implication for Social Change**

It is imperative for me to follow up with a targeted dissemination of the findings of this study. A few of the targeted groups will be social action groups, community activist, not for profits, and Black Greek organizations with a tract record of consistent community involvement, and whose mission is committed to the improvement of relations and communications between African Americans and other cultures. The primary goal of this study was to elevate the level of awareness for both cultures Caucasians and African Americans. Hopefully, this study has accomplished two missions. The first hope was to assist in igniting mindsets of critical thinking on the powerful impact of the word nigger. The second hope was to initiate a change in social etiquette involving the use of the word nigger. The members of the Caucasian community who observe African Americans using the word and wonder why it is so

offensive when Caucasians use the word will gain useful insight into the phenomenon. African Americans who thought use of the word nigger was acceptable to all African Americans because their peer group use the word on a frequent basis will hopefully understand that all African Americans do not mirror their peer group behavior as it relates to the use of the word nigger.

### **Conclusion**

As an African American male it was personal for me to conduct this research. I overhear the use of the word nigger among African Americans so frequently that I had to prove to myself it was not common place among African Americans. What was my take away from my research? The use of the word nigger by Caucasians is like a lightning rod to trigger emotional distress and anger from African Americans. I have discovered African Americans, mostly those 50 years and older, will become totally discombobulated mixed with anger upon hearing the uttering of this word. This can be a dangerous combination. I have noticed many older and educated African Americans do not use the word in their conversations. On the other hand the younger generation is not as angered by the use of the word nigger by Caucasians. They use the word nigga frequently in their dialogue.

The word nigger is extremely powerful. I use the term interesting to explain this phenomenon among African Americans. On a personal note, I strongly wish African Americans would consider the process of becoming desensitized to the use of the word by Caucasians or anyone. I overhear African Americans using the word nigger at a high

frequency. I know this is wishful thinking. Actually, this can be considered close to impossible. If my peers were aware I thought this way, I would probably face some form of being ostracized by the group. Lord knows if I publicly took this position among African Americans, I would be considered off my rocker. Finally, I must add I am truly proud of myself for undertaking this assignment, examining how African Americans think and feel on this particular issue. My energy and effort were rewarded. I strongly believe this research was a job well done.

### **Summary**

This research study afforded fifteen African American participants the opportunity to openly and honestly share how the use of the word nigger impacts them. The information that was shared by them strengthens the position that African Americans were not a monolithic group. African Americans by far vary significantly as it relates to the use of the word nigger by Caucasians and by African Americans. The data revealed age, gender, income, and level of education have distinct impacts on African American's reactions of the use of the word nigger. I am certain this study will add to the present body of literature on this topic. This study will serve as an eye opener for those persons who believe their position on the use of the word nigger is universal among African Americans. I hope and trust Caucasian readers will be enlightened and share the findings among their peers. This body of research will clearly have a positive impact on race relations and make this world a better place.

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Anger Shocked Offended Amazed  
Amazed Insulted  
Anger Insulted Ambivalent Offended  
Shocked Insulted Ambivalent  
Anger Insulted Ambivalent

Question number 7: What are your thoughts about Whites using the word Nigger?

Provocative Unacceptable Amazing  
Amazing Intentional Disrespectful Unacceptable  
Disrespectful Disrespectful Intentional Amazing  
Provocative Intentional Puzzling  
Unacceptable Intentional Puzzling  
Provocative Intentional Puzzling

Appendix B Table 1

Demographic Breakdown of the participants' gender, age, income, and education

| Variable                     | n  |
|------------------------------|----|
| <u>Gender</u>                |    |
| Male                         | 9  |
| Female                       | 6  |
| <u>Age</u>                   |    |
| 21 – 35                      | 3  |
| 36 – 50                      | 6  |
| 51 – 60                      | 6  |
| <u>Income</u>                |    |
| Under \$35,000               | 3  |
| \$35,000 - \$75,000          | 10 |
| &75,000 up                   | 2  |
| <u>Education</u>             |    |
| High School only             | 5  |
| 30 – 60 College credit hours | 4  |
| Bachelor Degree              | 4  |
| Master's Degree              | 2  |