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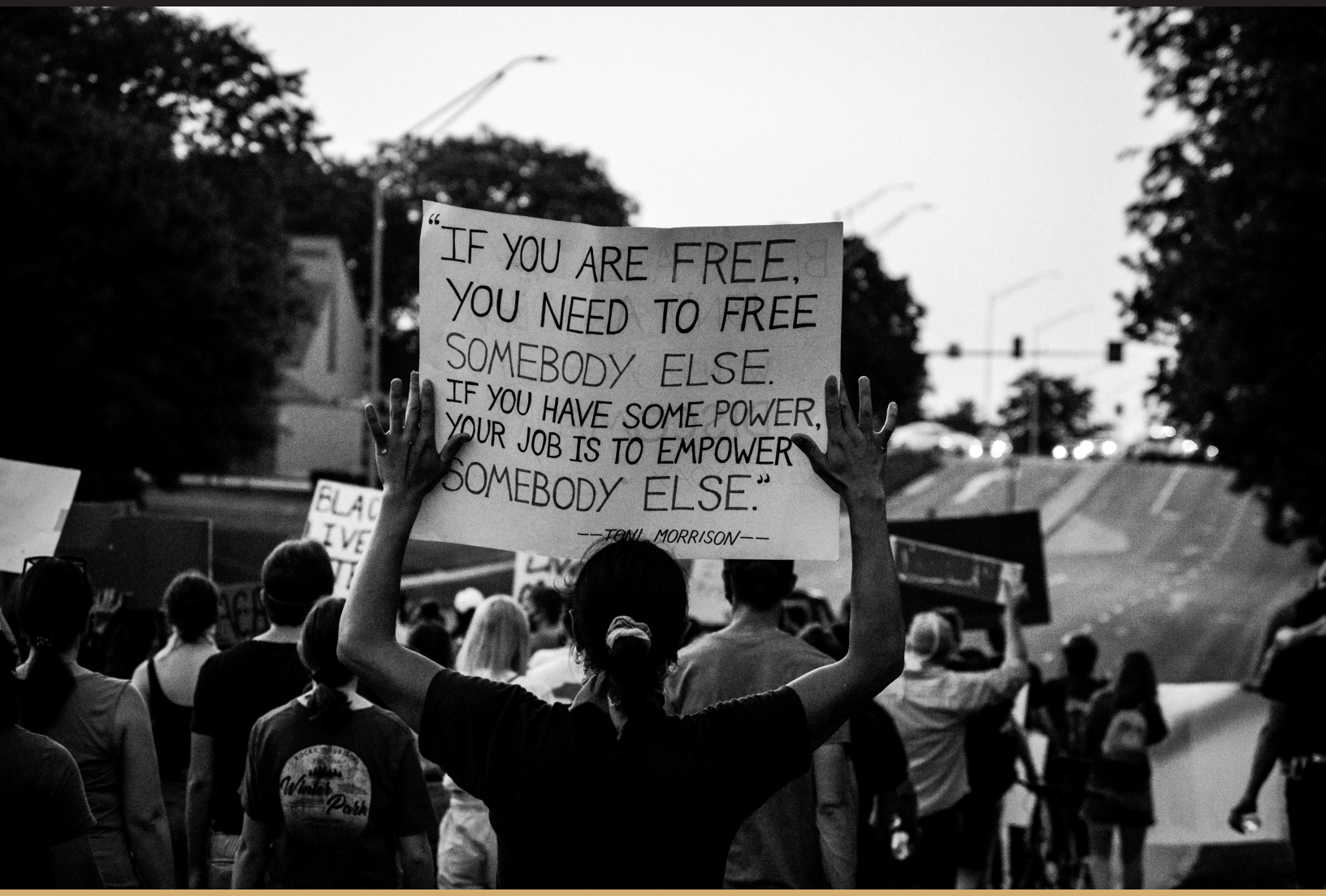
Understanding & Dismantling Privilege



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I Committed a Racial Microaggression, Now What? An Introduction to CPR: The Racial Microaggressions Reparative Response Model

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Abstract

Researchers, educators, counselors, and other service providers use microaggression frameworks to describe the subtle, individual, verbal, and non-verbal messages that are intentionally or unintentionally communicated to marginalized individuals, such as Black, Brown, Indigenous (BIB), lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer communities (LGBQ), and transgender people. As research into the phenomenon of microaggressions continues to expand, there is a growing need for effective tools and interventions to decrease the likelihood of committing a microaggression, and foster repair to promote healing and reduce ongoing harm. The following article includes a brief review of the racial microaggressions literature, an account of ongoing barriers to reducing racial microaggressions and introduces the foundational components of a newly developed tool – a microaggression response model called "CPR: The Racial Microaggressions Reparative Response Model" (the CPR model).

Keywords: racism, anti-racism, microaggressions, reparative response model

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Overview of Racial Microaggressions in the U.S.

Racism is defined as a system of oppression meant to racially oppress only people of color through individual, institutional, and cultural policies and practices via white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). The United States' history of racism is well-documented, having been founded on the genocide and colonization of Indigenous peoples and the enslavement and torture of peoples from the African Diaspora. Summarizing that history is beyond the scope of this manuscript; however, it is important to note that this history has baked racism into the systems, institutions, and traditions that make up the U.S., and influence individuals' biases in both conscious and unconscious ways. Systemic racism has led to the creation and enforcement of racially-oppressive laws and practices throughout the history of the U.S. (Omi & Winant, 2015).

The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964 in response to "Jim Crow" laws, which allowed legal segregation and discrimination. While the Civil Rights Act made most explicit forms of state-sanctioned racism and white supremacy illegal, racism and white supremacy continue to pervade U.S. culture – oppressing Black, Brown, and Indigenous (BBI) folx while privileging white folx with more access to housing, healthcare, education, employment, and wealth (Hahn, Truman, & Williams, 2018). Critical race scholars have argued for decades about the systemic barriers to racial equity and justice, and have had difficulty establishing the need for discussion and intervention; racial discrimination is, in fact, illegal. Because systems of racial oppression have evolved to become more insidious and less explicit, it is imperative to be able to detect, decode, and demystify instances of racism, and intervene in ways that support the safety and success of BBI in the post-Civil Rights Act-era in the U.S.

In response, researchers and scholars have formulated the *racial microaggressions framework* to qualitatively and quantitatively capture the seemingly subtle instances of racism that greatly impact BBI people and communities. Racial microaggressions are the harmful, often stereotypical messages specifically about BBI people and communities and are defined as: brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color (Sue et al., 2007).

Racial microaggressions stem from racism, white supremacy, and living in a racist culture, and while they can be committed by both white and BBI people, it is only BBI people who are harmed by them. Most often, white microaggressors commit microaggressions out of ignorance, internalized domination, white fragility, and white solidarity; however, when BBI folx commit racial microaggressions against another people from BBI communities, it most typically stems from interfacing with a white supremacist culture that leads to biases against other people of color, such as colorism and internalized racism. Because microaggressions refer to harmful messages about people and communities facing systemic oppression, white folx cannot be the object of racial microaggressions, although they may be the object of other forms of microaggressions (such as those based on gender or ability) that are outside the scope of this manuscript.

Microaggressions and Intentionality

There are three types of microaggressions that describe different levels of intention: microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation. Microassaults are characterized as "conscious and deliberate," and there is usually little doubt that the microaggressor intended to communicate a racist message – e.g., college parties with white students in blackface and "jokes" about different racial and ethnic groups. Some researchers and scholars use the term *macroaggression* and microassault interchangeably to communicate severity, but the prefix "micro" in microaggression does not mean "small." Rather, it refers to *subtle,* which does not equate to a decrease in harm. In fact, research shows that experiencing microaggressions may lead to more psychological harm than experiencing more explicit forms of racial bias because of the cognitive labor required to identify covert racist messaging (Sue et al., 2007).

Microinsults are characterized as unintentional and most typically occur when someone is attempting to compliment another person, but the compliment stems from ignorance and racism – e.g., touching a BBI person's body or hair and/or commenting in a surprised way on how well they speak. Though unintentional, microinsults can have deep psychological and physiological impacts that result in minority stress (Sue et al., 2007), a specific type of stress a person with an oppressed identity may experience because of how others treat them.

The third type of microaggression, the microinvalidation, is characterized by messages that "exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality" of BBI folx, and can occur as a response to being called out on a microaggression (Sue et al., 2007). In other words, after a microaggressor touches a BBI person's hair and is told not to, the microaggressor then commits a microinvalidation by nullifying the BBI person's boundary and making statements such as "It's not a big deal" or "You're being too sensitive." A common misconception about microaggressions is that they happen one-at-a-time, but in any given social exchange microaggressions can start happening and possibly never stop. One clumsy, insensitive remark gives rise to embarrassment and defensiveness and, ironically, triggers yet more microaggressions as the perpetrator attempts to minimize or defend the original conduct.

Implicit Racial Bias

A bias is generally described as a preference for or against something. Explicit bias is the conscious and controlled way in which people act on beliefs in favor of or against something or someone, whereas implicit bias refers to the unconscious, automatic beliefs, attitudes, and values that inform a person's behavior (Adams, Devos, Rivera, Smith, & Vega, 2014). Most implicit bias researchers agree that:

1) Everyone has implicit biases that are informed by their cultural worldview and life experiences;
2) Implicit bias functions on unconscious levels of the mind;
3) Implicit biases do not necessarily align with a person's explicit beliefs, attitudes, and values; and
4) Implicit bias powerfully informs decision making and behavior.

Implicit racial bias is one of the main foundations of the racial microaggressions

framework. People of all races hold implicit biases; however, implicit racial biases cause systemic and individual harm to BBI people. These internal cognitions support and maintain white racial privilege through intentional and unintentional subjugation of BBI communities (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002). Implicit racial bias research findings have indicated that even people who are committed to racial justice and whose explicit values are centered around racial equity can possess strong implicit racial biases favoring white groups (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002). This research demonstrates that white people who grew up learning that explicit racism was harmful often believe themselves to be non-racist and are often unaware of how their implicit racial biases inform their beliefs and behavior.

Microaggressions and Traumatic Stress

While everyone in life experiences some type of stress, people with marginalized identities can experience more specific types of stress known as minority stress (Meyer, 2003) or ethnostress (Linklater, 2014). For BBI folx, experiencing a lifetime of racial microaggressions – specifically, within a cultural context shaped by genocide, colonialism, and slavery – creates traumatic stress that can lead to a host of other psychological and physiological health problems such as anxiety, depression, self-harm, substance use, suicidality, and stress (Nadal, 2013; Nadal, 2018; Sue, 2010). These physiological and psychological injuries are a result of how bodies process trauma. Specifically, human bodies process trauma physically through the vagus nerve and the brain stem, the oldest part of the human brain. These brain systems do not process complex thoughts; instead, their entire biological function is to determine if information coming into the body is "safe" or "dangerous." If the brain interprets a stimulus as dangerous, these physical structures complete their biological function by storing a patterned response in the physical body, often in the form of sensation, meant to help that person move towards safety (Menakem, 2017; Linklater, 2014; Haines, 2019). Often, these responses include a type of contraction or constriction, or a reflexive trauma response, that when experienced over and over again can create physiological and psychological injury (Menakem, 2017). When BBI bodies experience microaggressions daily and their bodies recognize these experiences as threatening, the cumulative damage becomes a pathway through which BBI bodies carry an increased load of illness, disease, injury, and mental health challenges. These trauma responses are not only held in response to the trauma experienced during the lifetime of each body, but are also passed epigenetically from one generation to the next (Menakem, 2017; Linklater, 2014) in a context where people have been separated from their communal and historical forms of coping. BBI bodies are not the only bodies that carry trauma as a result of the dehumanization and violence of racism, including racial microaggressions. White bodies also carry a form of trauma as a result of these exchanges. Specifically, white bodies come to these commonplace interactions with generations of trauma as a result of the brutality of European life in the Middle Ages into the 16th and 17th century. This brutality is encoded into white bodies that they needed to dehumanize and subjugate those bodies labeled as "other," or be in danger themselves (Menakem, 2017). In *My Grandmother's Hands,*

Menakem argues this hereditary trauma now divorces many white bodies from their humanity and from connecting to the humanity in the bodies of BBI people.

While bodies can pass trauma to each other, they are also capable of passing resilience, strength, and the ability to "settle" - the state in which bodies experience relaxation and therefore are able to repair and move towards healing (Menakem, 2017). Resilience is defined as one's ability to recover from potential harm or injury to return to baseline functionality or wellness. Black Americans, and specifically descendants of those who were enslaved, have developed many communal somatic practices that help bodies to settle in connections with others, including collective humming, singing, drumming, and call and response rituals and traditions (Menakem, 2017). Indigenous practitioners have also documented and shared collective interventions as supportive of resilience and healing (Linklater, 2014). Resilience is most often developed in connection with other safe and protective people. This is foundational to the rationale of developing CPR (Calm yourself, Practice humility, and Repair). Increasing the likelihood and capacity that people who commit racial microaggressions will be able to respond reparatively and protectively towards the people who have experienced harm can help build resilience as opposed to injury.

Psychological Dilemmas

Racial microaggressions are most often social exchanges between people, and people use their cultural worldview, attitudes, and beliefs to interpret their lived experiences on both conscious and unconscious levels. In their study of racial microaggressions, Sue et al. (2007) determined that there are four psychological dilemmas that influence both the microaggressor and the targeted BBI person:

1) The Clash of Racial Realities,
2) Invisibility of Unintentional Bias,
3) Perceived Minimal Harm, and
4) The Catch-22 of Responding.

Though these psychological dilemmas are posed as differences in life experiences and perception, the outcome of such dilemmas almost always favor of the person with racial privilege.

The first dilemma, the Clash of Racial Realities, describes the different perceptions people have about race and racism, as well as its impacts on BBI folx. Debating racism is fertile soil for microaggressions, as is lack of awareness of one's implicit racial bias, or Invisibility of Unintentional Bias, the second dilemma. Because of white fragility, white solidarity, and white supremacy, many people believe that microaggressions are small and innocuous – the third dilemma, Perceived Minimal Harm – despite qualitative and quantitative research findings indicating otherwise. White fragility is discomfort and defensiveness that comes up when a white person is confronted with information about racial injustice or inequality (Caporuscio, 2020). White solidarity is "the unspoken agreement among whites to protect white advantage and not cause another white person to feel racial discomfort by confronting them when they say or do something racially problematic" (DiAngelo, 2018, p125). White supremacy is the belief that people with white skin are superior to others (Caporuscio, 2020). According to Nadal (2013), the most common response from a person who has been on the receiving end of a microaggression is actually non-response – because of the shock, disbelief, and trauma response that is

often triggered. This speaks to what Sue et al. (2007) described in the Catch-22 of Responding to microaggressions – that the person who received a microaggression runs the risk of experiencing more microaggressions if they try to respond. As such, the potential for healing and repair is a gamble for the BBI person who experienced the microaggression and it can take a long time to weigh the benefits and burdens of calling out a microaggressor. According to Nadal (2013), the likelihood of healing and repair is very low, and we need interventions to change that.

The psychological dilemmas involved with racial microaggressions can lead to communication breakdowns and relationship ruptures; however, Rico (2018) and Schulman (2016) posit that successful navigation of conflict can actually lead to strengthening relationships. Therefore, the CPR Model is a healing-centered, humanistic approach to repairing relationships that have been harmed by racism, white supremacy, and racial microaggressions.

Why We Need the CPR Model

The CPR Model is both an ongoing practice and an in-the-moment tool for reducing the traumatic impact of racial microaggressions. CPR is an acronym that stands for three steps in a process: Calm yourself, Practice humility, and Repair. It is an intervention designed to be used by people of any race who commit a racial microaggression, although the practice may look different for each individual. The goals of the CPR Model are to 1) remain embodied during moments of extreme discomfort, 2) respond with intention, instead of reacting automatically after committing a racial microaggression, 3) reduce or prevent the occurrence of additional microaggressions, and 4) stay attuned to the needs of the person harmed by the microaggression in order to foster consensual healing. The CPR Model offers both a long-term and short-term intervention that requires self-care, community-care, and a commitment to improving one's relationship with oneself and others.

Development of the CPR Model

The authors developed the CPR Model to address the specific barriers to behavior change assessed after facilitating dozens of racial microaggressions trainings for medical providers, behavioral health providers, educators, and other adult learners in settings and cities across the United States. It is important to note that our trainings were designed for people in helping professions who typically hold social justice values, though not all participants fit this description. Our teaching experiences combined with a decade of microaggressions research indicated that both white folx and BBI folx intensely fear discussing racism but for different reasons: white people were often afraid to unintentionally say or ask something racist and were therefore either performative or silent during trainings, while BBI folx were understandably protective over their energy and resources in anticipation of racist comments, and therefore reluctant to engage in any discussion. We needed a way to bring our learners into their bodies, maintain consensual connection with each other in the face of harm, and prioritize the impact on the BBI person over the intentions of the microaggressor. In order to accomplish these goals, we developed – and over the years have refined – a healing-centered, embodied intervention that emphasizes authenticity over a hollow script for people

to follow.

Training participants consistently reported emotional barriers to acknowledging their complicity in perpetuating racism and managing shame around committing racial microaggressions. White people reported feeling stuck or unsure of how to acknowledge ways they had been harmful towards BBI folx, and this often led to more silence about racism. If people are not able to acknowledge racial microaggressions, then the harm and negative consequences of racial microaggressions continue to be disproportionately shouldered by BBI folx. This knowledge motivated the authors to consider ways to break down barriers that prevent white people from taking responsibility for their words and actions. Though we originally designed the CPR Model with white people as the target audience, we received feedback from BBI folx that they found the CPR Model helpful to them after they also committed racial microaggressions against other people from BBI communities.

Shame

Informed by social observations and personal internal reflection, the CPR Model is based on a workable theory that personal shame – specifically about what it means to be someone who would say or do something racially harmful – is a huge barrier to people being able to effectively move forward and attempt to repair the harm caused to a BBI person. Shame is a complicated emotion that has long been understood to heavily influence human behavior, specifically in interpersonal contexts. While there have been decades of theoretical academic work on shame, empirical research has only recently emerged due to the difficulty of reliably and accurately measuring an internal and subjective phenomenon (Tangney & Dearing, 2003). Brené Brown, a leading shame researcher, articulates shame as "the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging – something we've experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection" (Brown, 2013). Shame leads to someone feeling inferior for *who* they are, rather than feeling guilt or regret for making a mistake. This description supports the rationale behind the CPR Model.

A common cultural narrative is if a person causes race-based harm, then that person is racist. This narrative center and identifies the person, rather than the behavior, as unacceptable. Therefore, it follows that identifying a person's words or behaviors as racially harmful – which is necessary if they are to acknowledge and choose to repair that harm – would facilitate a socially conscious person who does not want to be seen as racist feel a sense of shame. In her writing about *shame resilience theory,* Brown (2006) describes how shame can motivate destructive behavior. In this context, destructive behavior is defined as the denial of or inability to respond to the harm caused by microaggressions that causes further harm to BBI folx.

Using this rationale, the authors offer the Compass of Shame (Nathanson, 1992) as a model that could help participants recognize tangible behavioral indicators for when they are feeling shame. It is suggested that this model is processed before the CPR Model is implemented because it facilitates increased participant self-awareness and the ability to examine

feelings of shame from a non-judgmental perspective. The Compass of Shame describes how most common behavioral responses to an internal experience of shame can be organized into four general categories: withdrawing or isolating, avoidance, attacking self, or attacking others. Having clear behavioral templates helps participants identify whether their own internal and external reactions to being made aware they committed a microaggression are being motivated by a sense of shame. By identifying these reactions in a facilitated environment (like a racial microaggressions training), participants are able to build self-awareness about when their reactions are rooted in shame. The CPR Model is offered as a guide that helps people to acknowledge the feelings of shame. and choose behaviors and responses that are *not* geared towards protecting the feelings of the person who has caused harm. Rather, the CPR Model offers opportunities to repair the harm and focus on valuing the BBI person who has been harmed, and the relationship between these two (or more) individuals.

Shame is a defining factor in many individuals' responses to being called out on racial microaggressions. Sometimes these feelings turn into what is called a "shame spiral," where feelings of shame deepen and become so overwhelming that the individual can only focus on their own feelings (Kaufman, 1992). Once a shame spiral begins, the emotional attention is fixed on the person who committed the racial microaggression, thus centering the microaggressor's feelings rather than addressing the harm they caused. As described in Pendler and Beverly (2015, p.12):

> The deceptive element of the shame spiral is that it allows the person to place the responsibility for the statement, behavior, or belief on something outside of him or herself. It elevates responsibility to the cultural level and absolves the transgressor without ever addressing the damage of the original interaction that was challenged.

Identifying and discussing shame is an important part of explaining the CPR Model, as it encourages participants to recognize and normalize their shame response and the feelings of overwhelm it may cause, while still locating the responsibility for harm and ability to create as much change as they can within their purview.

White Fragility

Another key concept that informed the development of the CPR Model is white fragility. White fragility describes the expectation that white people remain in racial comfort at all times, and thus they have a low ability to tolerate racial stress (DiAngelo, 2011). Whenever that racial comfort is challenged – e.g., being told you committed a racial microaggression – the feelings of discomfort that are triggered feel intolerable and often trigger a range of intensely defensive emotions and reactions designed to return to their desired state of white racial equilibrium. Because white people in general are inexperienced in being confronted with racism – or even talking about race in any way that does not center whiteness – they often lack the socio-cognitive skills to engage in constructive discussion about racism and their own role in upholding it. Consequently, being challenged on their racist words or behaviors feels so threatening that they feel physically unsafe, provoking an amygdala

(fight/flight/freeze) response. However, this sense that white people are unsafe when simply talking about racism discounts and minimizes the centuries of institutional harm – in the form of enslavement, lynching's, Jim Crow, mass incarceration, and other atrocities – experienced by BBI communities through white supremacy (Alexander, 2012; DiAngelo, 2011).

Additionally, white people have had the privileged ability to remain largely ignorant of the experiences of BBI folx and the historic systems of racial oppression that enable and perpetuate racism, which often leads to them questioning, doubting, or outright dismissing the experiences and perspectives of BBI folx after being called out (DiAngelo, 2011). It is therefore a necessary step in the CPR Model that they instead demonstrate humility by acknowledging their ignorance and seeking to educate themselves. It is important that this education is also considered through an anti-racist lens and should be sought through channels that either acknowledge and compensate BBI folx when they offer their emotional and intellectual labor, or by accessing any of the many available other resources that have already been developed around this topic.

Pendler and Beverly (2015) developed an analogy to describe the way white people's brains often react when they are confronted with a challenge to their racial equilibrium, which they named the Root Kit Program (2015). A computer root kit is a set of software tools that enable an unauthorized user to gain control of a computer system without being detected. The Racism Root Kit analogy posits that the human brain runs an automatic and unconscious process that immediately activates to try to gain control in a situation of racial stress (Pendler & Beverly, 2015). The authors argue there are 13 feelings or behaviors in the Racism Root Kit that emerge to prevent the conscious awareness or acceptance of racism, including denial, hurt feelings, shame, defensiveness, attack, and white guilt. Common responses that reflect these feelings and behaviors are listed in the "Defensive Responses" column of Table 1. The intention of the CPR Model is to teach individuals how to override this automatic system so that the response to committing a racial microaggression is thoughtful and intentional rather than automatic or unconscious, and that it stays focused on repairing the harm that the microaggressor caused the BBI person, rather than on maintaining racial equilibrium for the person who committed the racial microaggression.

Values and Priorities of the CPR Model

The authors developed the CPR model using a very specific set of values and priorities as a guide. The assumption is that participants accept, or are at least open to accepting, these values. The CPR Model is not intended for – and will not work for – individuals who are content with ignoring the impact of racism, who shun any feelings of social responsibility around racial harm, or who bristle at the ideas of anti-racism.

The first value behind the CPR Model is that the impact of an action is more important than its intent. This is especially important because often, when people commit a racial microaggression, they unconsciously act from their implicit racial bias and do not intend to be racist. Indeed, as described earlier, some forms of racial microaggressions are intended to be compliments. Implementing the CPR Model requires that the person acknowledges the reality that harm was

caused and prioritizes taking accountability for that harm, rather than arguing about whether or not the person intended to do harm. Simply put, the intent of an individual's words and actions is not an adequate defense if it contributed to furthering the marginalization, oppression, or dehumanization of BBI people and communities.

The second value is that emotional skills are important and valuable. The authors believe that emotional skills are beneficial both in the successful use of the CPR Model, as well as for building healthy reciprocal relationships in general. Specifically, the CPR Model requires that people are able to center and practice empathy. The authors use the work of empathy educator Kate Kenfield (2019) to inform their framing of empathy within the context of CPR. Empathy, according to Kenfield, is "the process of being curious and nonjudgmentally engaged with someone *else's* emotional experience. It is not about *assuming* we know what someone else is feeling. Empathy requires humility. That is part of why it is difficult. Sitting with the uncertainty of someone else's feelings, without knowing what those feelings are or how to fix them, is uncomfortable" (Kenfield, 2019). According to Brené Brown, empathy fuels connection, which is necessary in repairing harm caused by racial microaggressions. The CPR Model also requests that people practice mindfulness skills, including non-judgmental self-awareness – both internally and externally. These skills support the development of emotional regulation, which people need to manage uncomfortable internal feelings without responding to or trying to "fix" them externally.

The third value is that after harm has been caused to a BBI person, the most ethical and trauma-informed response is to move towards healing and repair. This is in direct conflict with American societal norms of punishment for transgressions rather than healing and repair. The CPR Model does not frame apologizing or recognizing that harm has occurred as punishment, although it can create uncomfortable feelings. Instead, the approach aims to repair and heal by applying care and attention.

Finally, the fourth component to the CPR Model is prioritizing racial justice. Racial justice requires an acknowledgement of the fact that the U.S. was founded on – and maintains today – a white supremacist system, and the historical realities of how that system was set up to benefit white people above people with other racial identities (Alexander, 2012; Omi & Winant, 2015). With this understanding, it is imperative that people's actions do not just maintain the status quo. The status quo is a system continuing to afford preferential treatment and opportunities to white people. Instead, people need to actively resist the ways our system creates and perpetuates inequities for BBI people and communities. The CPR Model also requires an understanding of the ways in which historical racial oppression has caused generational trauma to BBI communities (Leary, 2005). That historical and lifelong trauma is often triggered through experiencing daily racial microaggressions in ways that may not be understood in the moment, but should be contextualized within that reality.

Using the CPR Model

Applying CPR as a Tool

At its core, the CPR Model is a template for making an authentic response and taking responsibility for repair after committing a racial microaggression. Below are the steps of the CPR Model, designed to be applied *by the person who committed the racial microaggression*. This response model is *not* intended to be used by the BBI person who was harmed by a racial microaggression. Addressing that situation requires a very different model, which is outside the scope of this paper.

1. **C - Calm Yourself.** The CPR Model begins by specifically naming the emotional stress that people feel when they have been identified as causing harm. While the CPR Model acknowledges this emotional stress, it also tasks the emotional management of this stress as an internal responsibility instead of allowing the person harmed by the racial microaggression, or the surrounding witnesses, to be responsible for managing these emotions. The CPR Model uses education about the autonomic nervous system and basic mindfulness skills to offer the participants tangible tools to help them manage the uncomfortable feelings, and the bodily responses that often accompany them.

When individuals are called out for committing a racial microaggression, their immediate reaction may run the gamut of strong emotions: defensiveness, anger, confusion, fear, humiliation, shame, angst, panic. When individuals are confronted about committing a racial microaggression — either privately or publicly — they often interpret feelings of being uncomfortable with feeling unsafe or being under attack. They may experience physical manifestations — heart pounding, face flushing, palms sweaty, eyes tearing. The feeling of being uncomfortable can be so strong it can trigger an amygdala response (fight/flight/freeze), also known as the acute stress response. When individuals' bodies feel that they are under acute stress, it can be hard to think clearly. Their bodies are acting on instinct to get them out of perceived danger. Defensive words may come tumbling out before they can think, lines such as "That's not what I meant!" or "You misunderstood me!" They become reactive instead of intentional.

A strategy to help keep calm during these uncomfortable sensations is to breathe deeply, which has been validated as a physiologically proven technique to calm the sympathetic nervous system (Brown, 2012). Individuals can use deep breathing to remind themselves that they are not in danger. It may be helpful to think of a calming mantra, such as "I am safe, "I am going to be OK," or simply to count to 10. By taking a few moments to calm down, most people are then able to react in a more controlled way and be more intentional and thoughtful in choosing how to respond. Over time, by practicing this step of calming the autonomic nervous system, it is possible to retrain the body's acute stress response in these types of situations.

2. **P - Practice Humility.** The second step in the CPR Model guides people towards how to frame the interaction in their mind. The construct of humility is characterized by an accurate assessment of one's characteristics, an ability to acknowledge limitations, and a "forgetting of the self" (Tangney, 2012). In the CPR Model, it is a reminder to focus attention on the other person – the person who was harmed by the racial microaggression. It is important to center their feelings and their experiences, rather than the microaggressor's feelings. This step also helps the microaggressors to remember not

to get defensive, explain their intent, or otherwise aim to focus the conversation on their own feelings. While it may be human nature to want to defend oneself by clarifying intentions, that could make the interaction worse by leading to microinvalidations. Defending or explaining is one way of prioritizing the microaggressor's feelings, intentions, or reputation. It does not communicate that harm was caused to a BBI person. Even if there was no intention to cause harm, it is critical to realize the *impact* of microaggressive words and actions. In reality, good intentions often do not matter if the impact of microaggressions is the continued marginalization and dehumanization of BBI folx. A commitment to anti-racism requires the willingness to affirm the perspective of BBI people who have experienced generational trauma through centuries of explicit and implicit racial oppression and reflect on how racial privilege may prevent white people from being able to perceive the impact of racial microaggressions.

In many cases, the individual who committed the racial microaggression gets caught up in trying to prove that what they said was not wrong or harmful. When it comes to racial microaggressions, the pursuit of being right is antithetical to repairing the harm. Even if there was a misunderstanding regarding what was said, the focus in that moment should still remain on the harmed individual. The painful impact of racial microaggressions is rooted in generations of historic oppression — it goes much deeper than a single comment. Thus, focusing on the harm caused by a single comment without understanding the history of oppression that the comment reflected is not sufficient.

In applying step two, people should aim to use words that take responsibility for their actions. [See Table 1 for examples of reparative responses compared to defensive responses.] Because white people are unable to experientially understand the impact of racial microaggressions, they should demonstrate a commitment to listening to and believing BBI folx when they share their experience.

3**. R – Repair.** The final step in the CPR Model guides people towards actions that value the relationship and aim to repair and make amends for the initial racial harm. This step requires the first two elements of the CPR Model to be in effect so that the priority can be considering ways to respond that could 1) prevent the harm from occurring in the future, 2) take accountability for the harm that was caused, and 3) offer support and care to the BBI person harmed.

Repair can happen in a myriad of ways, and it is important that the CPR Model not be formulaic or a script for people to follow. Instead, this step encourages people to consider what repair might look like in each unique situation. As explained in step two, the focus should remain on the BBI person who was harmed by microaggressive words or actions. One common repair strategy includes considering what would need to happen to facilitate future behavior change. Repair is a social process that requires emotional labor. White people should undertake the emotional labor of educating themselves, without placing the burden of providing this type of education on BBI folx. Instead of saying "I don't understand why you are offended, can you explain it to me?" a more reparative response would be, "I realize I need to learn more about this issue so I can better understand why my words had a negative impact and make sure

I don't make this same mistake in the future." While asking BBI folx to do emotional labor is not aligned with the values of the CPR Model, getting consent to ask BBI folx if there are specific actions or responses that would feel healing from their perspective is. Another common repair strategy is to offer a genuine apology. Apologies that center the experience of the BBI folx should not necessitate or request a response or reward from the BBI person.

The most important aspect of the Repair step is to do the work to *change future behavior*. Demonstrating a commitment to learning about racial oppression and understanding the power of words to either perpetuate or fight white supremacy are critical tools to guide the repair of the ruptured relationship.

Table 1: Responses to committing racial microaggressions

Reparative Responses	**Defensive Responses**
I am sorry my words and actions hurt you.	I am sorry if you are offended.
Thank you for holding me accountable. Thank you for doing the emotional labor to let me know.	Why are you being so sensitive?
I recognize I have work to do about this.	No one else was offended.
I will reflect on this so I can do better next time.	I am deeply hurt that you think I am racist.
I need to learn more about this and will take responsibility for educating myself.	You are being so divisive.
What can I do to regain your trust? How can I make this right?	I feel attacked.
I understand that what I said/did hurt you and I am so sorry.	I'm not privileged. I've had a hard life, too.

Changing behavior that stems from implicit racial bias requires an ongoing commitment to unlearning white supremacy and practicing new emotional skills. Part of the racial microaggressions training includes providing opportunities for all participants to demonstrate the CPR Model through small group role plays. Facilitators encourage participants to develop calming strategies and some possible responses in their own words as well as think about how they will react the next time — acknowledging that there most likely WILL BE a next time eventually — so that they can intentionally react in a thoughtful manner.

Applying CPR as a Practice

The CPR Model is more than a post-microaggression intervention, it is also an ongoing practice for actively working against implicit racial bias. The same steps apply in practicing CPR, though they may look different for white people than for BBI people. Below are the steps of the CPR Model as a practice, designed to be applied *by everyone with a commitment to racial justice.*

1. C – Calm Yourself. Previously, we stated that both white and BBI participants attend training with heightened anxiety and fear about discussing racism. This activated state of the body increases the likelihood of amygdala responses and could make it more difficult to apply CPR in the moment if one's central nervous system is already flooded with stress hormones. We offer that both white bodies and BBI bodies could benefit from intentional efforts to reflect on how racism and white supremacy inform and affect attitudes and beliefs, and how this manifests somatically. This awareness takes repetition and a focus on what physical sensations arise when these beliefs and attitudes are activated. For white people, this should look like dismantling white fragility through shame tolerance and management, which can be practiced through connecting with other white people who are consciously working to unpack their white privilege and sever ties with white solidarity, and establishing an accountability group for ongoing support and information that does not come at the expense of unpaid, non-consensual labor from BBI folx. As an in-the-moment tool, Calm Yourself serves the purpose of halting amygdala responses so that microinvalidations can be prevented and people can respond instead of react to the microaggression they committed. As an ongoing practice, Calm Yourself deepens this intervention so that a body is already calm when called out on a microaggression and the microaggressor can move right into Practice Humility.

For BBI folx, calming both self and community around racism and white supremacy is first and foremost an act of self-love. We are not suggesting that BBI folx "get over" or even through racism by ignoring the psychological and physiological impacts on their bodies; rather we highly suggest that BBI folx take more time to notice and respond to both fresh and old wounds from racism, validate their own and other BBI peoples' experiences of racism and white supremacy, and most importantly, that BBI folx take as much time as possible to rest. Specific practices for this are recommended in the book "My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Mending of Our Bodies and Hearts" by Resmaa Menakem. Over time, Calm Yourself can help prevent dissociation and other trauma responses which may not only prevent future microaggressions, but also mitigate the harmful effects of racism and white supremacy.

2. P - Practice Humility. The quickest way to Practice Humility after committing a microaggression is to prioritize impact over intent. As an ongoing practice of thinking of oneself less instead of thinking less of oneself (see Shame section), Practice Humility looks like proactively educating oneself about other cultures for the purposes of decreasing the likelihood of making an ignorant comment in the form of a racial microaggression. For white people, this looks like not only educating oneself about BBI cultures, but also acknowledging that white culture exists as the norm due to centuries of colonization

and erasure of BBI culture, and that what feels normal to a white person and/or people indoctrinated in a white supremacy is not superior. For BBI folx, Practice Humility could look like educating oneself about other cultures of color as well as the diversity within one's own culture – a history that was most likely not included in any U.S. formal education. Both of these practices are rooted in maintaining a consistent internal sense of curiosity, and the assumption that there is always more to learn and more variation and diversity than what has been encountered thus far.

While Calm Yourself is self-focused and an act of self-love and care, Practice Humility is other-focused, and its emphasis is on responsible, consensual community care. The CPR Model is an intervention designed to keep people connected during conflict and hopefully strengthen communication and relationship building after racial harm has been caused. With the first two steps focusing on self and other, the last step naturally centers around the relationship between the microaggressor and the BBI person who was targeted.

3. R – Repair. Ongoing repair is the most nebulous aspect of the CPR Model as a practice because the stages of repair are contingent upon the context of the relationship. In other words, repair with a new co-worker typically looks different than repair with an intimate partner. Similar to Repair in the moment, an ongoing practice of repair also depends on how capable and resourced the microaggressor and the BBI target are, and resources can shift over time; also, the people involved in the relationship may have differing opinions on definitions of repair. It is critical to gain consent from the BBI person who was harmed before continuing to embark on repairing the harm that was caused. In other words, the decision-making power and timeline around discussions and actions towards repair need to be determined by the BBI person who was harmed.

The successful navigation of conflict can lead to strengthening communication and connection, but sometimes racial microaggressions cause ruptures that cannot be repaired. This does not relieve the microaggressor of their duties of continuing to work on repair; instead, it is an invitation to deepen one's understanding about their impact on others without falling into a shame spiral, as well as maintaining a commitment to lasting behavior change. Used solely as an in-the-moment tool, the stage of Repair has the potential to amplify the harm caused by a microaggressor. Instead, it is imperative to increase attunement to the needs and wants of the person who was harmed. As an ongoing practice, Repair has the potential to prevent future microaggressions and continue to foster healing after relationship ruptures have been restored to equilibrium. For white people who have committed a microaggression, an ongoing practice of repair could include standing up for and in solidarity with BBI people, de-centering your own voice, and supporting and amplifying BBI voices, leadership, and decision-making. For BBI people, repair might include ways of accessing racial affirmation and validation, celebrating BBI joy, investing in therapeutic practices where possible. It may involve the practice of incorporating "microaffirmations," which are defined as "small acts, which are often ephemeral and hard-to-see, events that are public and private, often unconscious but very effective, which occur wherever people wish to help others to succeed" that specifically aim to "value the perspectives, thoughts, and feelings of

the other person within the context of a society that privileges some identities over others" (Rowe, 2008).

Limitations of the Reparative Response Model

The CPR model is intended to guide individuals through a sequential series of decisions, to diffuse defensiveness, to intentionally choose words and actions to demonstrate that they take responsibility for committing a racial microaggression, and to seek to repair the harm that they caused. However, it is not a script. While examples of reparative responses are offered in Table 1, the responses must be based on the microaggressor's sincere feelings of humility and an honest desire to apologize and repair the harm that was caused. The conversations need to be customized so that they respond to the unique situations and relationships. In past trainings, participants have often sought examples of specific words, disclosing that they "just want to say the right thing" or they "don't want to make it worse." Practicing the CPR Model in trainings, or with colleagues or friends before it needs to be used in a response to committing a racial microaggression is often helpful for individuals to gain confidence in using the CPR Model in an authentic way. Practicing the three steps also helps individuals develop emotional skills of being able to tolerate discomfort and override the brain's automatic defensiveness that often make these situations worse. Using the CPR Model does not ensure that there will be repair, that the person harmed by the microaggression will feel they were able to move towards healing, or that the person who committed a microaggression will have a comfortable sense of closure after the interaction. It is useful as a guide, but not to be seen as a guarantee for any outcome.

We are offering the CPR Model as a communication tool. It is not an intervention that has been tested or developed into some type of measurement. Evaluation feedback results have demonstrated that participants who have learned the CPR Model find it overwhelmingly useful. Future research could include testing the applications of the CPR Model and measuring behavior change or other outcomes.

Other Applications

The CPR Model can be applied in many situations, including professional settings where an individual commits a microaggression in an interaction with a client, where there is a clear power differential. In those instances, additional work is needed during the Repair phase to center the needs of the harmed person. Ideally, the client should be offered options for continuing their interaction with your agency/company so that they can make choices to accommodate their safety and comfort. For example, in a healthcare setting, asking "Would you like to continue with another medical provider?" may be appropriate.

While the CPR Model was designed specifically for racial microaggressions, it has been adapted for use in trainings for application with other kinds of microaggressions – specifically, transgender and mental health microaggressions. The co-authors are in a collaborative process with colleagues and other scholars of determining whether the model applies equally as well to other kinds of microaggressions (gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc.).

The CPR Model was only designed for individuals to implement after they *commit* a racial microaggression – not for individuals who are on the receiving end of a racial microaggression. BBI folx who are the *target* of a microaggression could benefit from a response model that centers their own feelings and guides them through a decision-making process for whether, when, and how to respond. Likewise, there is a demand for response models for individuals who are bystanders witnessing a microaggression occur. These response models are currently under development by the authors of this manuscript.

Responses to the CPR Model

Since implementation of the CPR model as a training tool in November 2017, more than 2000 participants to date have been trained on their ability to identify, describe, and implement the CPR Model. A sub-analysis of post-training evaluations of 269 participants who received training on and practice in the CPR Model between 2017-2020 (before the COVID-19 pandemic required pausing on these trainings) rated their ability to meet the objective of practicing implementing CPR an average of 3.38 out of 4.00 on a Likert scale. Participants who responded to an open-ended question asking them to list a new fact they learned during training, replied "CPR" or "the response model" 38.2% of the time. The CPR Model was the most cited response to that question, occurring more commonly than any other category, including learning the definitions and types of microaggressions. When asked what they would do differently after the training, participants cited the CPR Model 18.6% of the time and 29.2% of the time when asked what in the training was most useful.

Sample qualitative responses about the CPR model

In response to what they found most useful, one participant replied the following: "The repair step […] was helpful - both for realizing the barriers to repair attempts (for myself) and for realizing what I need from others in their repair attempts directed at me (i.e. vulnerability, lack of expectation that I'll soothe them). Thank you." Another participant replied that the CPR Model was the most challenging part of the training for them "because it was scary and uncomfortable, which is also why I found it most useful". Another wrote: "I had participated in many 'trainings' regarding microaggressions. It was helpful to have a strategy to deal with microaggressions which focused on the injured party and didn't pander to making white people more comfortable."

Conclusion

The CPR Model supports individuals who commit racial microaggressions to recover and begin to repair the harm they have caused. The authors offer CPR as both a tool and an ongoing practice from the perspective that white supremacy needs to be fought on all levels of social systems, from micro to macro. The CPR Model is offered as one tool to address racial harm that occurs on one level – interpersonally. We theorize that the benefits of adopting the CPR Model, which supports people in centering the needs of BBI folx and to value healing and repair, could potentially occur along many social systems, as the consequences of microaggressions have been demonstrated to negatively impact BBI folx from intrapersonal levels to social indicators at macro levels of our culture (Sue, 2010). The authors recognize the continued struggle against white supremacy

requires constant evolution and commitment to rigorous self-evaluation and personal and professional growth. We are hopeful that the CPR Model is framed as one part of a larger conversation that will inevitably require adaptation and development to remain relevant to the constantly evolving fight towards racial justice. Next steps include the development of models for people from BBI communities who have experienced a microaggression and a framework for bystander intervention. This work could also be furthered by the gathering and analyzing of more information about the impacts of learning and beginning to adopt the CPR Model. Even before these steps are taken, the authors believe that the CPR Model is an effective tool aimed at addressing the harm caused by racial microaggressions.

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Understanding & Dismantling Privilege

The Official Journal of The Privilege Institute

Privilege and Access: Latinx Families Navigating the United States Tax Credit Scholarship for School Choice

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Abstract

In the United States, providing school choice as a means of competition in K-12 education is a neoliberal goal that has gained momentum over the latter half of the twentieth century. As more states begin to experiment with school choice, families' experiences must be shared, particularly that of Latinx, whose testimonios have largely been unheard. This study explored the experiences of Latinx parents in Georgia as they moved their child(ren) from their districted public school to the private Catholic school of their choice by use of a Tax Credit Scholarship program. To better understand the system of privilege and access, Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit) was employed as a theoretical framework. The findings of this study presented through critical narrative analysis demonstrate that Latinx families continue to face multiple barriers to their educational existence, and specifically as they navigate the Tax Credit Scholarship within the school choice marketplace.

Keywords: Latinx, School Choice, School Vouchers, LatCrit, Privilege, Georgia Catholic Schools

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There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process.

-- Paulo Freire

Educating a nation's citizenry is arguably one of the most critical functions of government; yet the process by which a government educates its citizenry, the curriculum inculcated to the youth, and the funds devoted to education is entrenched in political philosophies dating back as early as the Enlightenment (Aguirre, 2012; Giroux, 1983). This study sought to share the experiences of Latinx families, as they took part in Georgia's Qualified Education Tax Credit Scholarship program to move their child(ren) from their districted public school to a private Catholic school of their choice. These private Catholic schools partnered with the state's largest Student Scholarship Organization (SSO), Goal Scholarship Inc., to provide these taxpayers funds as financial aid to their families. Two research questions were posed for this study: (1) What do Latinx parents describe as the key factors that led them to participate in Georgia's Tax Credit Scholarship program to enroll their child(ren) in a local private school instead of the traditional public school the student would otherwise attend and (2) What are the experiences of Latinx parents in receiving and maintaining their child's voucher for initial and continued enrollment in private school?

Latinxs are the largest non-dominant US ethnic group, composing 18.7% of the total population or over 61 million people (US Census Bureau, 2021). In this study, Latinx is used as an inclusive term that encompasses all individuals within the gender spectrum and may be interchangeable with Hispanic and Latina/o/@ to identify the same population type (Salinas & Lozano, 2019; Scharrón-del Río & Aja, 2015). Latinx refers to both genders except when specifically addressing a cisgender, self-identified man (Latino) or woman (Latina) (Milian, 2019; Martínez et al, 2023). Navigating between a Latinx culture at home and the broader U.S. "whitestream" school system (Grande, 2004; Padilla, 2001; Urrieta & Villenas, 2013), originated on the practices, principles, morals, and values of White supremacy (Urrieta Jr., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011), Grande's (2004) argument is that "mainstream" implies "white", Urrieta (2009) uses the term "whitestream" to historically recognize and "decenter whiteness as dominant" (p. 181) and to value the non-whitestream cultural capital (Yosso, 2005) within US public schools. Many Latinx families and children may not have a critical understanding or critical language to speak about what they are living and may have mostly internalized and resisted the oppression concurrently (Martínez, 2020; Padilla, 2001; Urrieta & Villenas, 2013). Lured by the U.S. whitestream society of Georgia, unaware of the many centuries of conditioning, many Latinxs are unknowingly indoctrinated into the hegemony of the dominant US culture, which highlights only the history of White Anglo-American and male culture in a hetero-patriarchal, authoritarian, top-down system (McLaren, 1989; Urrieta, 2009, Martínez, 2020). Latinxs are subconsciously encouraged to ignore the language and customs of Latinx cultures and heritages; and in return, the assimilation into such surroundings helps in gaining access to a set of public and private privileges to avoid being the object of others' domination (Anderson, 2015; Padilla, 2001).

Public education in the United States was initiated and has been mostly funded by federal and state taxes since the 1830s (Giroux, 1983; Kober & Rentner, 2020). However, due in part to neoliberalism

(Gabriel et al., 2015; Zamudio & Rios, 2006), a sizeable aspect of today's education reform in the United States has been devoted to providing US American families more educational options in addition to their districted, "zoned" public school. Thus, school choice appears to be a solution for numerous families, which affords them to use taxpayer-provided funds to be applied to a private school of their choice. Although many states have adopted this neoliberal perspective, non-dominant populations do not particularly agree that it is equitable in accessing the educational marketplace (Mavrogordato & Stein, 2016, Simms & Talbert, 2019).

Although some of today's neoliberals and conservatives alike may assert that school choice is about equality (Carl, 2011; Garcia, 2018; Gooden, Jabbar, & Torres, 2016), for Southeastern states in particular, school choice was not originally or solely philosophical in nature, but it was politically practical with its foundation in white flight (Carl, 2011; Kruse, 2005). In the case of Georgia, upper-class white families fought desegregation in every way possible; creating private schools was a way of having "segregation academies," using school vouchers or "tuition grants" to assist white families in moving to segregated private schools and relying on already established private schools to further segregate themselves (Kruse, 2005). As demonstrated by this study, although not as overt, whiteness continues to have a hegemonic stronghold, through access and resources, to school choice. Today, 32 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have at least one form of private school choice, and others are currently experimenting with school choice efforts (Durrani, 2023).

The *A Nation at Risk* (1983) report was a monumental impetus for families to seek alternatives to a failing public education system. Neoliberals called for more competition and deregulation, yet the consensus was the Blaine Amendments, found in many state constitutions, which barred state support of religious education, would serve as an impediment to vouchers (needed for a true educational marketplace). It was not until the turn of the 21st century that school choice advocates found a way around the Blaine Amendment and, in the process, made it financially lucrative. As a result, support for the program can now be found on both sides of the political aisle. The mechanism enacted is known as a Tax Credit Scholarship program. By enacting Tax Credit Scholarship programs, what Welner (2008) called "kissing cousins" of voucher systems, neoliberals have successfully asserted the State does not, in fact, support religious education. It was this type of school choice program that was enacted in Georgia in 2008.

The Tax Credit Scholarship program begins by first receiving approval from Georgia's Department of Revenue to shift a portion of their state tax burden from going to the State and instead going to a Student Scholarship Organization (SSO), where individuals and businesses can send money directly to the SSO of their choice. In the process, the individual or business can identify which school(s) they want their tax dollars redirected to for student financial aid. The SSO then creates a bucket of money for each school based on the redirected tax dollars received. When the school has a family in need, the school files with the SSO to receive a portion of the funds. The SSO then sends a check to the institution for families who are moving their child(ren) from public to private schools, for financial aid. As such, this tax mechanism

ensures that tax monies never fall into the hands of the State thus avoiding any definitive critique of a separation of Church and State (Espinoza v. Montana, 2020).

Private schools have better revenues because they can use the Tax Credit Scholarship funds to offset what may have traditionally come out of the school's financial aid bucket. In addition, these families are paying a portion of the tuition and fees, as the Tax Credit Scholarship funds do not cover a school's full tuition and fees. For the families, they are receiving additional financial aid, which makes a private education much more affordable. For the State and public-school districts, it is a financial win because the average amount awarded to each family since its inception has been roughly 50% of the cost of the State funds per pupil, thus the popularity of school choice (GOAL Report, 202).

However, the *process* available for families to navigate, as they seek the best educational options for their children in the US, is not neutral (Freire, 1997; Henry, 2020). The privilege of and access to Catholic school education is historical, political, and often determined by economic inequalities for Latinx families (Darder, 2016). Latinxs have often viewed Catholic schools as superior, private schools, for those who can afford it, and not for the have nots. In contrast, lower-income Latinx families have often experienced exclusion from Catholic schooling (Murname et al., 2018). The status of Latinxs and their educational participation as systematically presented through a critical theoretical lens, Darder (2016) uses the concept of cultural democracy (Adams & Goldbard, 1995) as the philosophical principle necessary to start to transform the education of Latinx children within Catholic schools and other private entities. The Church proclamations offered by Pope Francis were intended to help revolutionize the labor of the Catholic Church and Catholic education to engage with the pedagogical needs of Latinx communities (Darder, 2016). It was not intended to be a recipe or prescription for how emancipatory education (Martínez et al., 2015; West, 1993; 2023) may look, but rather how all teachers, educators, scholars, and religious leaders can consider the culturally democratic dimension necessary for structural changes required to provide educational justice for Latinx and all students (Martínez et al., 2023; Darder, 2016).

Researchers have demonstrated that school choice is rife with greater societal issues such as race (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Simms & Talbert, 2019), socioeconomics (Delgado & Palacios, 1975; Rowe & Lubieski, 2017), and geography (Bell, 2007; Taylor Haynes, Phillips, & Goldring, 2010). Despite a rise in both school choice efforts and Latinx enrollment in schools, there is a gap in the literature as to how Latinx parents are participating in and experiencing school choice options (Gooden et al., 2016; Mavrogordato & Harris, 2017; Mavrogordato & Stein, 2016; Sattin-Bajaj, 2015; Taylor Haynes et al., 2010).

Theoretical Underpinnings

As both federal and state policymakers evaluate the merits of school choice legislation, it is prudent to look beyond economic theory or budgetary constraints and focus on the constituents' experiences (Aguirre, 2012). However, major concerns with this focus are whose *testimonios will* be heard, and whose experiences will be seen. As a culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) community, Latinxs navigate social institutions, such as private education and/or school choice, which were not created with

them in mind, in different ways than the dominant US culture (Yosso, 2005). These communities' *testimonios* and experiences must be recognized if we want equitable opportunities for diverse stakeholders.

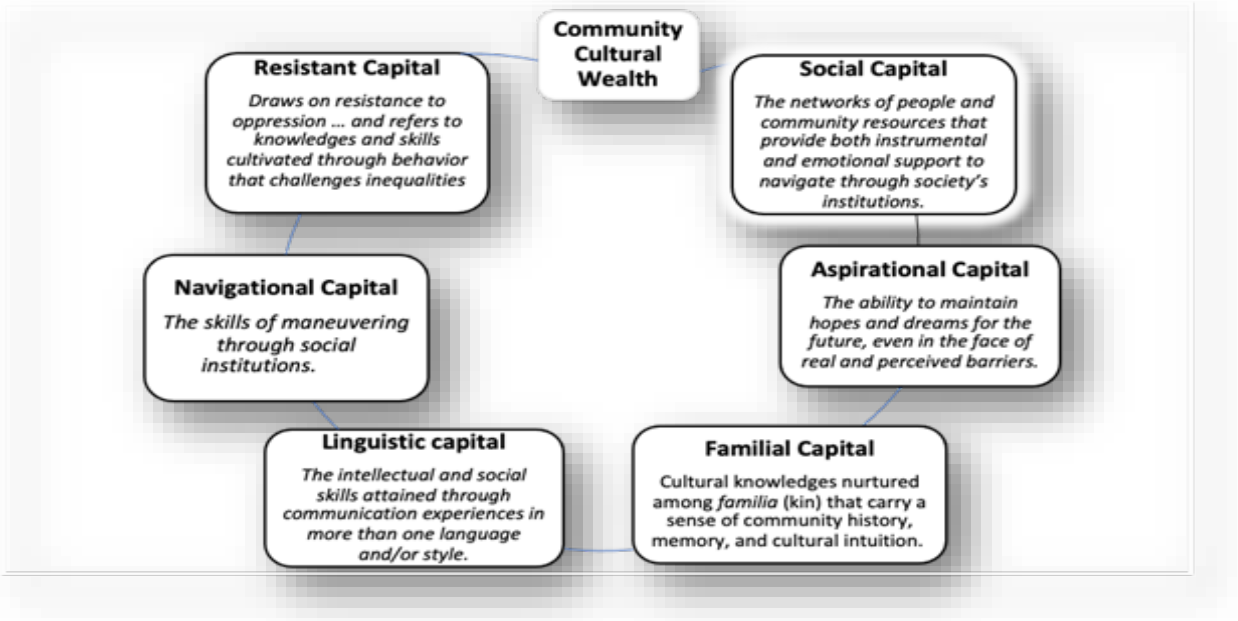
To make possible a race-center focus on Latinx families with teacher-educator knowledge(s) and understandings about their work and lives, autobiographies and personal or professional histories, this study was grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT) tenets of (1) race and racism centrality; (2) challenge to racial objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, and equal opportunity; (3) commitment to social justice; (4) experiential knowledge of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) people, and (5) an amalgamation of transdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). Due to the specific interests in addressing School Choice and the GA Tax Credit Scholarship for Latinxs in Georgia, we leaned on the evolved concepts of CRT to include Latinx experiences, namely that of LatCrit.

We landed in LatCrit as a result of unpacking CRT (Zamudio et al., 2011) and finding resonance with the critical counter stories of Latinxs known as *testimonios*. While it is understood that not all Latinxs seek a private education, this study illuminates the individual and family stories of Latinxs who have a critical counter story of their school choice experience (Horne, 2022). These critical counter stories illustrate who they are, how they came to be, what they believe, and how they think regarding being a Latinx parent and/or student within the 21st Century educational school system in the USA. LatCrit theory is combined in the counter stories to elucidate Latinxs' multidimensional identities and to address the intersectionality of racism between and among gender, ethnicity, culture, language, and social class (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Delgado Bernal, 2002). We use CRT counter stories and LatCrit *testimonios* as methods of recounting the experiences and perspectives of racially and socially marginalized Latinx families, challenging the majoritarian stories that omit and distort the histories and realities of oppressed people (Urrieta & Villenas, 2013; Villenas, 1996), particularly those who identify as Latinx (Martínez, 2016; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Rios, 2008).

School choice: Assets and barriers to Tax Credit Scholarship for Latinx in the US

Due to sociohistorical injustices experienced by Latinx in the United States, Latinxs utilize and rely on community cultural wealth (CCW) to navigate much of society (Yosso, 2005). CCW refers to the accumulated cultural assets and resources a community uses to increase wealth (Yosso, 2005). According to Yosso, CCW also includes socially intangible assets existing in various forms. Figure 1 defines various assets of CCW.

Figure 1
Assets of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005).



In fact, Yrigollen-Robbins (2022) documents how Latinx families in Georgia use CCW to navigate through different socioeconomic struggles in both local schools and communities. However, CCW is limited, particularly regarding school choice, due in part to overt practices embedded in white privilege and antiimmigrant policies (Aguirre, 2012; Leonardo, 2013).

Previous research indicates that despite CCW efforts, economic, socio-lingual, and political structures in the United States impede Latinxs from maximizing their potential to participate in school choice initiatives (Darder, 2016; Yosso, 2005). Barriers such as (a) issues related to low socioeconomic status, which affect the affordability of transportation, food, clothing, and extracurricular associated expenses (Joseph et al., 2017; Taylor Haynes et al., 2010; Waitoller & Super, 2017), (b) issues related to English-only approaches which may inhibit limited-English speaking parents' access to resources and engagement at school (DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005; Hill & Torres, 2010; Sattin-Bajaj, 2015), and (c) Latinx families' documentation status, which may deter them from interacting with government agencies or institutions due to distrust (Cross et al. 2019; Yoshikawa, 2011). Collectively, these and other barriers may serve to avert Latinx families from utilizing school choice.

Methodology

This qualitative study uses critical narrative inquiry (CNI) to best share the experiences of seven Latinx families with school choice. Kim (2016) described narrative inquiry as "a way of understanding human experience through stories that, in turn, help us better understand the human phenomena and human existence" (p. 324). The narrative inquiry approach allows the

researcher to tell the stories of the participants (Clandinin, 2013). However, CNI draws on LatCrit to tell counterstories, which allow the Latinx *testimonios* to be heard and to "destroy the mindset," and "subvert that ingroup reality," of dominant groups, with the goal to "construct a new world richer" than the one we have (Delgado, 1989, pp. 2413-15).

Recruitment of participants

CNI research can have as few as one participant, however, for this study, multiple participants were sought to gain varied experiences. Thus, a list of Catholic schools that used the student scholarship organization (SSO), GOAL Scholarship Inc., was solicited. The only Catholic schools that use GOAL Scholarship Inc. were independent Catholic schools. Independent Catholic schools are those run by monastic orders and are independent of Diocesan control (Guernsey & Barott, 2008). Only six catholic schools met the criteria. As such, the gatekeepers, often the heads of school, were contacted through email and phone calls. For this study, school heads from three different geographic areas in Georgia agreed to participate.

To recruit parents for the study, the heads of school disseminated a recruitment flyer to parents. The recruitment flyer was written in English and Spanish, and it offered a donation toward their child's tuition to encourage participation in the study. Seven parents showed interest, shared their email with school administrators and then with the researcher. Parents were then contacted to confirm they understood the study and to answer any questions. Parents were given the option to meet virtually or in person for the interviews.

Data Collection

In a narrative research approach, individual lives serve as the primary source of data (Bloom, 2002; Patton, 2015). As such, the semi-structured interviews utilized an interview protocol with open-ended questions to allow the participants to provide their *testimonios*, enhancing the use of in-vivo coding (Patton, 2015). We used Seidman's (2013) approach, which included a total of three 90-minute interviews over a three-month timeframe. Table 1 provides the goal of each interview and sample interview questions. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish, via in-person interviews, digital platforms, and telephone. Interviews with the participants, who solely spoke Spanish, were conducted with the assistance of a Spanish-speaking colleague.

Table 1

Goals and Sample Questions for Each Interview

Interview	Goal	Sample Interview Questions
1	Focused Life History	Tell me about how your own educational experiences relate or were counter to your child(ren)'s.
2	Details of Experience	Reflecting on this experience, what, if any, challenges did you face as a Latina/o family?
3	Reflection on Meaning	Given what you said in our previous interviews, how do you explain/reflect upon your experience of moving your child(ren) from public to private schools with assistance from the GOAL scholarship?

Data Analysis

Patton (2015) best summarized what is sought in narrative analysis: "The central idea of narrative analysis remains, that stories offer especially translucent windows into cultural and social meanings when understood and analyzed as narratives (p. 128). A total of 15 interviews were conducted, with six interviews translated to English, transcribed by Wreally Studios, and uploaded to MAXQDA for data analysis. The method of narrative analysis that appeared most logical for this study was Polkinghorne's narrative mode of analysis (also called "narrative analysis"). Kim (2016) added an additional type of paradigmatic analysis following Polkinghorne's lead, one that is "derived from a predetermined foci of one's study" (p. 335). This was employed to sort through the data to further identify categories and concepts. For example, participants' excerpts were categorized by their use of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW). Two cycles of coding were employed: in-vivo coding and subsequently focused coding. In-vivo coding was employed for the first cycle of coding to most accurately capture the words, phrases, and meanings of the participants in their own voices rather than those developed by the researchers. In-vivo coding was used, and each line of text was interpreted and coded as needed (Saldaña, 2016). In-vivo coding was selected specifically to provide a platform for this marginalized community using their own *testimonios*. Focused coding was then employed to pinpoint the most frequent or significant codes. Utilizing MAXQDA, data analysis continued, comparing the new focused codes across the participants' data and assessing comparability and transferability (Saldaña, 2016). Codes emerging from the data were then categorized and emergent themes were noted.

Researcher Reflexivity

Researchers bring their own biases to a study (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021). As the lead researcher, I am a White male, non-Latino, non-Spanish-speaking principal of a Catholic high school in Georgia. My academic institution uses the GOAL scholarship for families who enroll from public schools. As an educator, I have worked with countless students who were only able to attend my institution because of the financial assistance given to their families. Matias (2022), drawing on her Catholic background, calls for researchers to identify "the atrocities of whiteness in ways that stops masking as innocence, ignorance, or unintentionality" (p. 8). As a Catholic, my religious convictions dictate that I am to care for those marginalized in my community and highlight the barriers to their access and the role privilege plays in discouraging their access to a government-sponsored program.

Like everyone, despite grand intentions (Leonardo, 2013), I have my own beliefs and possible biases about school choice. Nevertheless, for this study, I sought to ensure the participants' experiences speak for themselves. The open-ended interview questions were crafted to allow their *testimonios* to establish the narrative, regardless of what researcher biases I brought to the study. However, to keep personal biases at bay, reflective memos were used during the data collection and analysis process and Latinx, Catholic peers, and co-researchers to review study findings (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021).

Findings

In this section, demographic information of participants, followed by three emergent themes, presented as narratives, gathered from data analysis are shared. LatCrit was employed in the narratives to tell families' counter stories with navigating Georgia's school choice in Catholic schools.

Participant Demographics

Table 2 provides demographic information of the Catholic schools. All three schools are college preparatory schools located in the state of Georgia.

Table 2

Composition of Participant Catholic Schools

School	Century Founded	County Population [a]	Student Population/ Grades Served	Gender Designation	Tuition Cost (Approx $)
A	21st	<150,000	200/9-12	Co-Ed	10,000
B	20th	<300,000	400/9-12	Single Sex [b]	15,000
C	20th	>1,000,000	500/PK-12	Co-Ed	5,000-25,000

Note. [a] Population is based on the April 1, 2020, U.S. Census Data.
[b]Single sex refers to cisgender male and female.

As Milian (2019) indicates, the Latinx population is quite diverse and any attempts to narrow down such a diverse group haves been problematic. Participant demographics in Table 3 provide a more in-depth understanding of who these participants were and are not attached to which Catholic school their child(ren) attended to ensure their identities are concealed (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021).

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Demographic Information
María	Female (32); First-generation American of Mexican descent; married; dropped out in 11th grade; mother of four children.
Fernando and Daniela	Male (41) and female (39); Mexican; married; high school education; parents of three children.
Sebastián and Antonela	Male (50) and female (48); Mexican; married; one completed graduate school, the other completed high school; parents of three children.
Gabriela	Female (53); Peruvian; single; high school education; mother to one child.
Isabela	Female (35); Mexican; married; associate degree; mother of two children.

Emergent Narratives

From the data, three narratives emerged as commonalities in the participants' experiences. Each narrative provides context to the participant's experience(s) and answers the research questions to shed further light on this community.

Narrative 1: Dissatisfaction with Public Education

Participant dissatisfaction with their assigned public school emerged from the data analysis. It should have been expected that the participants of this study were unhappy with their districted public school(s), which led to their consideration of private education. All participants expressed what they perceived as a better educational opportunity for their child(ren). This should not come as a surprise, since to be considered a participant, the family already had to make the transition to a private school of their choice. Negative rumors about their children's public schooling or personal experiences drove these families to seek out an educational alternative. Georgia, like other states, has government accountability offices, in addition to the state's Department of Education (DOE), that publish school districts' data for the public. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) retrieves data from the DOE and ranks each school and district on a 0–100-point scale. Ranking includes content mastery, progress, closing gaps, readiness, and graduation rates. Out of the five families, all but one family lived within a school district that was given a rating of 71 or below out of 100 by GOSA; one family lived in a district that was given an 85; two families lived in a district that was given a 71 and two families lived in a district that was given a 66 (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2021).

Shifting from whatever parents hear about their districted public schools anecdotally, based on the quantitative score of each participant's school district, their concerns appear to be justified. Of course, as demonstrated by Valencia (2010), we know that low socioeconomic and CLD students often find themselves in "At-Risk Schools" where inequities in teacher quality and funding are significant (pp. 117-125). What is important is why these Latinx parents became unhappy or were worried about what the future in their assigned public schools may entail. Consistently, each family mentioned that their districted public school classroom dynamics caused them concern, which prompted them to look elsewhere. Individually, participants also stated negative views of student behavior at their districted public school, an inability on the teachers' part to form meaningful relationships with their students, worry about their child(ren)'s academic future, and disappointment with a lack of any religious guidance (or morals).

Narrative 2: Challenge(s) With the GOAL Scholarship

Data analysis supports that the primary challenge facing Latinx parents is being aware of the GOAL Scholarship Inc. or other student scholarship organizations providing financial assistance. None of the participants was aware of the financial aid enabled through Georgia's Qualified Education Expense Tax Credit legislation before embarking on this journey. To successfully navigate a marketplace, one has to know the options available to them in the first place. The next excerpts highlight participants' experiences with this process. *Inadequate guidance*. As with study participants, the first-place parents often looked to for guidance is their local parish Catholic church. Regarding the school

choice legislation or the GA Tax Credit Scholarship program, participant Isabela suggests that local parishes "[distribute] it...or get more flyers about what or where the scholarship is in both of the languages, English and Spanish." Gabriela felt it was the Church's responsibility to "…get information [out] about the affordability of private education." She further explained there should be a designated person to speak about the program "because people still believe that they can't afford [tuition] and don't have all the information." "We need this because it's good stuff," said Sebastián. He argued that the program needs to have better marketing through the churches or on television.

To better understand this experience, I asked María to walk through the application process as when she was a new parent to her school. María's experience with locating a Spanish version for an online admission application at her school pointedly shows this was difficult. When asked, María shared that she was not aware of a Spanish version of the online application. I, too, attempted to locate an online Spanish application to no avail. I then contacted the school personnel and they shared that they "dug deeper" and finally found the button for a Spanish-translated application. This experience shows challenges with access to information, particularly for families with limited English language and/or technology skills. Thus, a complicated process is likely to deter families from using it.

Issues with Documentation. For many people who apply for financial aid to attend college, the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) application is a great deal of stress. One can only imagine how difficult it might be trying to complete a FAFSA in a foreign language, or for undocumented families who may have limited literacy or need verification papers (Graves, 2022). For study participants applying for financial aid, this was the first time they were asked to provide so much documentation for something of this magnitude. "It was things I either didn't have or that I did not quite understand what they were looking for," said Gabriela. Many of the requested documents for financial aid are like those required for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

When applying for financial assistance, many participants commented on the number of documents required to receive it. "They would ask for stuff that I didn't have," said María. "The paperwork was a lot," said Fernando and Daniela, "it took a couple of months [to complete the paperwork]." Sebastián lamented that "They asked for like 20 forms. It took me two or three hours to complete the whole thing because it asked for so much personal information. In the application, they ask a lot of questions that I didn't have the immediate answer to."

Financial aid forms use specific financial language that can be challenging to many parents, particularly for those who are not English proficient. Study participants noted the challenges in the process for navigating financial aid applications in English. Participant Fernando shared, "It can be difficult for those who don't speak English, because the papers are, at least the ones we saw, in English [only]." Similarly, Sebastián expressed the concern that other Latinx people he knows may be able to speak both languages but cannot read either of the languages. Sebastian shared that "So, if they can't read it in Spanish, it is easy for them to quit applying because they don't understand what they are reading." Echoing concern for a language barrier, Gabriela stated, "You know Latin American Spanish-

speaking families are afraid to ask questions because of the language barrier. They're not only afraid to ask the questions but also afraid of what the answer might be. There's a fear with the language barrier."
All study participants mentioned being helped through the financial aid application process by the school's financial aid personnel, but Isabela cautioned, "If they don't know the [English] language, they need to find an interpreter." Isabela mentioned several times that her proficiency in the English language was an advantage in this process. However, she worried that some of her community members, who may not be English proficient, would be dissuaded by being overwhelmed or by fear of the outcome being a denial of assistance. An additional concern posed by Sebastián was about his friends who worked jobs that only paid in cash. These friends would be, in his eyes, declined from receiving financial assistance from the GOAL scholarship. Sebastián shared that one of his friends "...can't prove his income because they only pay him in cash. I remember that was a challenge for his family [for seeking financial assistance]." Lamenting his friends' lack of options, knowing that an income tax form was a requirement, Sebastián believed his friends' children were permanently stuck in their districted public schools. Lastly, none of the participants recalled any additional requirements to continue to receive scholarship funds other than maintaining their children's enrollment (such as good grades and good conduct). GOAL Scholarship Inc. allows each school to use its own financial aid process but does give guidance on award amounts.

When asked about their reflections or recommendations as the participants who have successfully navigated their school's Tax Credit Scholarship process, participants in this study found the process through the GOAL scholarship cumbersome. Most participants indicated a concern for other Latinx families who may struggle with the Tax Credit Scholarship process even more than they did. The concerns were about the use of financial aid English-only documents, the possibility of not being able to procure certain financial documents that were requested, and challenges with bi-illiteracy in English and Spanish. These challenges, as articulated by participants, with drawing on school choice to finance their children's education stand as barriers to their participation in Catholic schools.

Narrative 3: Continued Aspects of Community Cultural Wealth

In the face of barriers to accessing this marketplace, several forms of the participants' communities' cultural wealth (CCW) were notable in data analysis. Embedded in participants' *testimonios* was their overall reliance on social and familial capital. However, prominent forms of capital in data analysis were aspirational, social, navigational, and linguistic. Excerpts below demonstrate participant's use of CCW.

Aspirational capital. All participants in this study demonstrated aspirational capital in various ways. Yosso (2005) defined aspirational capital as "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (p. 77). The most obvious aspiration for participants was seeking what they perceived as their child(ren)'s best education, that in their eyes, would lead to future prosperity in the form of a good career. In other ways, the participants sacrificed their hopes, aspirations, and dreams for their child(ren). For example, Sebastián remained in the US, sacrificing

his career as a medical doctor back home in México. Similarly, Gabriela quit a more lucrative, but time-consuming job, and began working as an Uber driver so that she was able to "be more responsible and attentive" to her daughter.

A few of the participants mentioned their ongoing belief in the US as a country of opportunity. María described herself navigating through her son's schooling options as her trying to "…have like that American life" and impart to her son "the American dream." Fernando and Daniela described the US as "a country of your dreams." In reflecting on her own experiences, Isabela shared she always kept her children in mind and "tried to do the best I can for my children." Participants see themselves as attempting to live the "American Dream" by seeking to set their child(ren) up with a better opportunity in life than they themselves had.

Reflecting on how her experience navigating school choice also reflects on her life as a Latina parent in the United States, María lamented how many within the Latinx community "don't have people around them to talk to them and tell them, this is an opportunity…this is a door opener." Having limited experience(s) being shared within a community may lead to less fruitful outcomes for Latinx families. Sebastián answered the same question by saying, "Well, at a certain point, you feel like you've been discriminated [against]." Sebastián was expressing a feeling of isolation as a Latino parent. His focus was on the disadvantage he felt not being able to speak English fluently had on his own experiences.

Navigational Capital. Yosso (2005) defined navigational capital as "skills of maneuvering through social institution" (p. 80). The participants of this study cited the help of other Latinx parents, the assistance of school personnel, and English proficiency as forms of navigational capital that helped them successfully navigate their way into and through Georgia's complex school choice options. Isabela, Gabriela, and Sebastián and Antonela all mentioned their local Catholic Church as being a central location for Latinx families to share their experiences with one another and for the dissemination of information about the financial aid provided by Georgia's Qualified Education Tax Credit Scholarship program. Knowing that Catholic Church is often a place for fellowship, it follows that the social capital used to navigate society's institutions, in this case education, may be widely shared among parishioners.

Linguistic capital. Yosso (2005) defined linguistic capital as "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (p. 78). The participants had to navigate life within the US for many years prior to their experiences navigating school choice. For each participant, proficiency in the English language was seen as a necessary skill to successfully navigate Georgia's school choice options. Sebastián described his experience as "…hard because I have to learn more about this language." Isabela described navigating school choice as "…challenging sometimes. I would say for a Latina that doesn't know the [English] language, it will be more challenging, but, with me, I know English, so that kind of helped me out there." Even those participants not proficient in English, like Gabriela, worried that without the information being translated into Spanish, other Latinx families would be left behind. As immigrants, Fernando and Daniela had a history of navigational capital to find success in the US. For instance, to navigate

school choice, they had to rely on their son and friends because "It can be difficult for those who don't speak English."

Regardless of the degree of English proficiency, participant experiences show that they persisted in addressing the inherent English-only barriers in navigating school choice. They used several forms of social capital to successfully navigate Georgia's school choice marketplace. As demonstrated by Thorsos, Martínez, and Gabriel (2020), US schools and society have historically devalued any primary language other than English. This theme demonstrates a continuation of the implicit/explicit supremacy of the English language felt by the Latinx community as recounted by Martínez (2020). Experiencing the privilege given to the English language continuous to sustain internalized oppression among the Latinx community as demonstrated by Padilla (2001).

Discussion

Elected representatives have debated Georgia's educational system and based on neoliberal principles, decided to enable a broader educational marketplace for *all* (emphasis added) their citizenry. However, the process is not neutral. The Latinx community in Georgia faces continued barriers to their access into the marketplace, based largely upon privilege, that members of the dominant group possess.

The goal of this critical narrative study was to bring to light the experiences of Latinx parents as they navigate Georgia's private school choice initiative enabled through the Qualified Education Tax Credit Scholarship program legislation. Using LatCrit as a theoretical framework, the researcher sought to answer two questions: (1) What do Latinx parents describe as the key factors that led them to participate in Georgia's Tax Credit Scholarship program to enroll their child(ren) in a local private school instead of the traditional public school the student would otherwise attend? and (2) What are the experiences of Latinx parents in receiving and maintaining their child's voucher for initial and continued enrollment in private school?

Analysis of interview data shows four factors that led participants to seek a Catholic school as an alternative to public school. According to participants, those factors were their negative views of student behavior at their districted public school, an inability on the teachers' part to form meaningful relationships with students, worry about their child(ren)'s academic future, and disappointment with a lack of any religious guidance or religious-based morals. Collectively, these factors demonstrate participants' dissatisfaction with their districted public schools. These feelings of dissatisfaction could only have been exacerbated by the GOSA low ratings of their child(ren)'s schools.

Dissatisfied with their districted public schools, participants sought a Catholic school alternative. In their exploration, participants became aware of the financial aid provided by Georgia's Tax Credit Scholarship program. Ultimately, this additional financial aid assisted them in enrolling their child(ren) at their local Catholic school. However, they came to learn of the challenges associated with the application process to receive the funds. The experiences of Latinx parents in receiving and maintaining their child's voucher for initial and continued enrollment in private school were frustrating.

Participants expressed initial frustration with the lack of knowledge about the

scholarship funds. In addition, the size and scope of the required documents whereas intimidating for all participants, but especially for non-English speaking parents who had to complete the documentation in English. For participants facing aspects of a societal institution created without them in mind, privilege and access possibly served as deterrents to their equal opportunity in taking advantage of a private school education (Jenkins, 2016). However, participants made use of their Community Cultural Wealth to navigate the Tax Credit Scholarship program, though their child's continued enrollment was performance-based and other information relating to the scholarship award was concealed.

Although one may look at the conclusion as the end of one's research study, this is not the end. Clandinin (2013) best summarizes the journey taken during this research study: "Of course, for narrative inquirers, exit is never a final exit. We continue to carry long-term relational responsibilities for participants, for ourselves, and for the work we have done together…narrative inquiry always begins and ends in the midst of ongoing experiences" (p. 44). The Latinx families who were given a platform for their *testimonios* to be heard and experiences to be seen are not exiting. On the contrary, their role in ongoing research is growing. In this sense, critical researchers like me, and many others will continue to shine a brighter light on this community, one so bright that they can no longer be ignored.

Implications and Recommendations

Elected representatives have the responsibility to determine whether legislative programs effectively address the needs of all their constituents. As demonstrated through this study, the Latinx community is largely unaware of the financial assistance entitled to them. Few aspects are as crucial for state legislators as education; they must tirelessly work to ensure equal access to Georgia's school marketplace for all communities. This study corroborates previous research that Latinx parents are struggling with English-only documentation, and English proficiency is impacting their participation in school choice (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atiles, 2005; Joseph et al., 2017; Mavrorgato & Harris, 2017).

As a nation without an official language, linguistic discrimination should not happen in the United States. Spanish far exceeds other non-English languages spoken in American households, accounting for almost 62% of foreign language speakers and close to 30 million people (Deshmukh, 2021). Furthermore, Latinx families are the second largest group enrolling in Catholic schools (NCES, 2019, Ospino & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2016). Thus, providing services in both English and Spanish to Latinx families regarding financial aid is warranted if legislators and Catholic schools seek democratic educational opportunities for all (Mavrogordato & Stein, 2016; Oliveira et al., 2021).

As demonstrated by Ospino and Weitzel-O'Neill (2016), successful communication between Latinx families and schools is paramount. Catholic schools should seek to provide workshops focused on informing parents and helping them complete forms with the aid of interpreters. Additionally, schools should use CCW affinity groups made up of parents who have already navigated this complex process to share their experiences and possibly even seek opportunities to serve as intermediaries between private schools seeking to educate Latinx children and the

Latinx families who may be cautious to enter this marketplace (Jenkins, 2016; Mavrogordato & Stein, 2016). Similarly, as diversity, equity, and inclusion coordinators initiate needed reforms for private schools, an additional focus of DEI efforts should be on liaising with parents.

Lastly, within Catholic schools, school leaders should make a concerted effort to increase the engagement of the Latinx community. A first step is recruiting Spanish speakers on the school staff (Simonds et al., 2022). Additionally, a key initiative must be ensuring Latinx representation within school committees, in leadership positions, and as school board members. Latinx community members can share valuable input and enact initiatives that directly address privilege and access. They can also provide representative *testimonios* for the Latinx community and what matters to them (Ospino & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2016). Ultimately, through a "spirit of protest," the Church must ignite a reawakening of Catholic education to create conditions favorable to the full participation of the Latinx community (Darder, 2016, p. 45).

Concluding Critical Thoughts

This research study questioned whether the narrative surrounding non-dominant participation in the neoliberal school marketplace is as good as it is being sold. Research indicates that education can have a powerful, transformational impact on students (Easton-Brooks et al., 2022); however, we found that Latinx families struggle navigating within the US privilege and access apparatus set up to enable a larger school marketplace that excludes them. Despite the grand intentions of Georgia's Qualified Education Tax Credit Scholarship program to assist families for whom private schools were inaccessible due to cost (Suitts, 2011, p. 8), the interviews indicate that for this mission to succeed, barriers to culturally and linguistically diverse communities must be dismantled (Valencia, 2010). Beyond merely listening to Latinx *testimonios* as active participants in Georgia's school choice marketplace, we observe these families pursuing the "American Dream" (Martínez, 2016; 2022). Their aspiration is to provide a better situation for their children than they themselves had or currently have. By acknowledging Latinxs' dissatisfaction with their districted public school(s), we recognize their participation in an institution initially created without consideration for their needs. Lower-income Latinx families have experienced exclusion from participating in Catholic schooling (Murname et al., 2018). Acritical theoretical lens of their systemic educational participation must use cultural democracy (Adams & Goldbard, 1995) and the Church proclamations offered by Pope Francis (Darder, 2016) to revolutionize the labor of the Catholic Church and Catholic education. Engagement with the pedagogical needs of Latinx communities can then start the transformation of the education of Latinx children within Catholic schools and other private entities (Darder, 2016). This is not a recipe or prescription for how emancipatory education (Gabriel et al., 2015; West, 1993; 2023) may look, but rather how all teachers, educators, scholars, and religious leadership can consider the culturally democratic dimension necessary for the structural changes required to provide educational justice for Latinx families and all students (Martínez et al.,2023; Darder, 2016). Therefore, beyond just sending "love and prayers" for Latinx families' oppressive educational experiences, "may you continue to have the strength and courage to bear witness to racial reality, bringing a piece of

heaven to this hellish world" (Matias, 2022, p. 8).

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Understanding & Dismantling Privilege

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All Black Lives Matter in the Borderland

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Abstract

In the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, Black Lives Matter has often been seen as a "northern issue." The borderland has been described as a bicultural, bilingual space where a majority of the community identifies as Mexican, Mexican American, or Latinx. This essay explores the issue of anti-Blackness in the Latinx community often rooted within our own families and broader community. Anti-Black ideologies are prominent along the U.S.-Mexico border; however, a community of activists, students, and elders are reshaping that narrative. On June 6th, 2020, the borderlands rose up in protest against white supremacy and the state sanctioned execution(s) of Black citizens. The purpose of this article is to document this historical moment of protest in the South Texas borderland region. Current and future scholar-activists can look back on the summer of 2020 as a concrete example of intergenerational and intercultural Black and Brown solidarity. They should know that All Black Lives Matter regardless of the geographic region.

Keywords: Latinx, Antiblackness, Borderlands, Black Lives Matter

Dr. Christian Ramirez's research engages the cross-cultural exchange and rebellions forged by Indigenous and African peoples in colonial Veracruz. Through his research, he examines the multiple ways Afro-Indigenous peoples institutionally and epistemologically carved out routes to freedom in the 17th and 18th centuries. These histories serve as the foundation for understanding contemporary social movements and coalition building among Latine/Latinx and other communities of color. Dr. Ramirez is a first-generation faculty member in the department of Psychology and Sociology at the Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi.

All Black Lives Matter in the Borderland

In 2020 in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, chants of Black Lives Matter bounced off of building walls and echoed in the spaces between palm trees. Near the city hall in Edinburg, Texas, some 400 people gathered to denounce white supremacy and the murdering of our Black relatives by state sanctioned violence. I use the term *relatives* intentionally. Blackness is not delinked or separate from the Latinx community; rather, it is deeply rooted in Latinidad throughout the Americas and within the borderland itself. A collective energy emerged among intergenerational border residents largely represented by Mexican, Chicanx, Latinx, and immigrant community. To date, there is limited data that explores the contemporary moment of racial uprisings that took place in Edinburg, Texas. This paper aims to open up a dialogue and to leave a historical bookmark on the most recent rebellions along the South Texas borderland.

It is imperative to state that the demographics for people of African descent in the Rio Grande Valley are deceptive. According to the census, Black residents account for just under one percent of the population in Hidalgo County, one of the southernmost counties in Texas, and the surrounding areas where the protest took place (census, 2019). The idea that a seemingly non-Black community would stand up for Black lives baffled some people. As one of the organizers of a local dialogue focused on Black Lives Matter on the border, I was asked by a Spanish language news reporter why we were focusing on Black lives when there where Latino children held in detention centers here in South Texas. This question was not surprising considering that Mexico is a short ten-minute drive south with detention centers aligned on the north side of the border.

His question, however, hierarchically placed a "Latinx" issue atop concerns for police brutality as if both issues were not interconnected. I reminded the reporter that both issues are results of systemic and institutional racism resulting in unjust violence against Black and Brown communities through differing state apparatuses. I restated that while family separation on the border is an important issue, so are Black families separated permanently at the hands of police officers. While we continue to fight for the abolishment of I.C.E. and other border issues, today is about Black Lives. These were my last words to him. Needless to say, this exchange did not satisfy the reporter nor make the evening news.

Anti-Blackness in the Latinx community has taken shape in a variety of ways. The question posed by the reporter exemplified some of those ideas. Family members teach us which physical features are valued and preferred. Media images and narratives shape how Blackness is imagined in Latin America through archetypes. And demographics paint an incomplete narrative of the presence and contribution of Black communities along the Texas-Mexico border. The following sections examine Latinxs and their distancing from Blackness. While anti-Black attitudes are still passed down through cultural messages within our community, there is rising hope for a shifting of this paradigm. Latinx activists are educating themselves and the public to read their own history from a critical perspective that honors the historical and cultural relationship to and with Black diasporic communities in the Americas. These efforts, exposed through the uprising against police brutality in Edinburg, Texas

are a clear demonstration that All Black Lives Matter on *la frontera*.

On Anti-Blackness in the Latinx Community

Anti-Blackness in the Latinx community is all too common historically and contemporarily, and if unchecked will continue to be a norm within Latinx culture. Growing up in a Latinx community and a Mexican immigrant family, I have witnessed whiteness being praised and admired. It was not uncommon to hear phrases such as, "*Mira, salio bien bonita con ojos azules*." Translated this means, "Look, she came out pretty with blue eyes." Other times I would hear community members instructing their kids to not stay out in the sun so much to avoid becoming darker than they already were. Aura Bogado (2014) recollects, "When we begin dating, some of us are told that we have a duty as Latinos to '*mejorar la raza*' which means, 'to improve the race.' This was sometimes directly told to us but also inscribed in comments about other couples." These examples are a haunting reminder of Maria Elena Martinez's (2008) scholarship on Spanish racial genealogical projects. Specifically, Martinez addresses the ideology of "*limpieza de sangre*" or the cleansing of the blood through which Indigenous and Black families could generationally improve their social status if they married and procreated with European descendants. This is a historic example of how both anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity in colonial Latin America continues to be rooted in U.S. Latinx culture. The U.S. borderland is no exception to this colonial idea of "*limpieza de sangre*."

In an article published by the Spanish newspaper "El Mundo," Omar Hernandez (2019) asks, "*¿Porque muchas de las personas Mexicanas o Latinx marrones que conozco albergan tales pensamientos antinegros*?" He is asking, "Why do so many brown Mexican and Latinxs that I know harbor such anti-Black thoughts?" This is a question many younger Latinxs are asking of the older generation and among one another. While there are many answers to this question, it is important to follow the history and look to the inception of modern Latin America beginning with the colonial encounters between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Medalaine C. Cahuas (2019) posits that there is a persistent refusal to connect Blackness with Latinidad, which shapes Latinx societies in both Latin America and the diaspora in the United States.

For example, Cahuas (2019) points to the absence of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade as a key economic and social institution among Chicano studies curriculum. More specifically, she challenges Anzaldua's (1984) seminal work *Borderlands/La Frontera*, an all too habitually referenced piece of literature in Chicano Studies, as not adequately accounting for the experiences of Black Latinxs, Black Mestizas, or Afro-Latinxs. This means that invisibility of our Black relatives persists even in intellectual Chicanx circles. It is no wonder our *abuelitas*, *tios*, *tias*, *primos*, *primas*, brothers, and sisters struggle to see a linked history between the African diasporic communities and themselves.

For non-Black Latinxs, Bogado (2014) states, the anxiety over having difficult conversations is rooted in the contradiction that we can simultaneously be oppressed and be oppressors. Some of the anti-Black bias among non-Black Latinxs is driven by the misconception that Black people do not support the immigrant rights movement. This quid pro quo deficit thinking contributes to anti-Blackness, especially on

the border. It assumes that Black Latinx people do not exist or participate in immigrant rights movements. Hernandez (2019) makes an important point when he states, "*No hay Latinidad sin negrura en primer lugar*," or "There is no Latinidad without Blackness in the first place." This statement is unquestionable considering the multiple social contributions of the African diaspora in the making of Latin America and Latinidad.

Examining White Privilege among Latinxs

Anti-Blackness along the Texas borderland may be in part informed by an extension of white privilege that Latinxs and Mexicans have fought for and been afforded in the early to mid-20th century. For example, in 1929, the Mexican American organization known as the League of the United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was formed in my hometown of Corpus Christi, Texas (Dowling, 2014). According to Sociologist Julie Dowling (2014), their main efforts were to get "Mexican" removed from the 1930 census and replaced as white. In an interview with NPR, Dowling states:

> It worked against them in some ways, because they claimed segregation and discrimination, the parties being accused of discrimination could say, 'Well, no, you're white.' So, this history of claiming whiteness has been a strategy that Mexican Americans and other Latino groups have used to try to lobby for acceptance – claiming Americanness, claiming whiteness. (Demby, 2016)

In an attempt to reduce their own experiences of racial violence by claiming whiteness, they simultaneously distanced themselves from Indianness, from their mixed ancestry, and from Blackness.

Rarely are these histories interrogated outside of university settings or ethnic studies coursework. This leaves an absence of consciousness in relation to the racial ethnic struggles of Afro-descendants in Texas (Dowling, 2014). Latinxs and Chicanxs must do the difficult work to unlearn their racial biases, their historical privileges, and their proximity to whiteness in order to confront anti-Blackness within the community. One way to do this is to confront the issue of white privilege and anti-Blackness head on. Diana Lugo-Martinez (2017), for example, makes the point that calling out anti-Blackness in the Latinx community means acknowledging white privilege, calling out the internalized racism, prejudice, bigotry, hate, and violence that we perpetuate. She argues that the Latinx community has consciously and subconsciously played into the colonizer's plan to stand as far apart from Blackness and Brownness as possible (Lugo-Martinez, 2017). Without a sound understanding of colonial projects from Spain and the U.S., Latinx communities along the border will continue to have an unclear sense of relation to African diasporic communities.

Complicating Latinidad Through the African Diaspora

The existence of Afro-Latinos and the discrimination they face in the United States can be mystifying for many people in part because U.S. notions of Blackness primarily consist of English-speaking African Americans, writes Tanya Kateri Hernandez (2020). Her scholarship indicates that Latinxs who identify themselves as "Black" have lower incomes, higher unemployment rates, higher rates of poverty, less education, fewer opportunities, and are more likely to reside in segregated neighborhoods than

those who identify themselves as "white" or "other" (Hernandez, 2020). Latinidad is thus not a static or monolithic experience structurally or at the individual level. According to sociologist and race scholar Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2010), no one is immune to these realities.

In an essay written in The Afro-Latin@ Reader (2010), Eduardo recollects his own experiences with his family and how those social interactions were shaped by race. Eduardo, a Black Puerto Rican, recollects the many instances his lighter-skinned family members would denigrate the "Black" side of the family. He makes the point that his lighter- complexioned family members were also of African descent but that markers of whiteness, such as lighter eye color and skin tone, created a false sense of superiority among them. He writes, "As a child struggling for affection and identity, I remember how much I loved visiting my Black side of our family. They always welcomed me with open arms, whereas my White family members treated me in a more formal, distant manner. As I matured and recognized the racial roots of some of these family dynamics, I raised hell with my immediate family" (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, pp. 445). The internalization of racial ideologies creeps into even the most educated families even though people with less formal education are mistakenly used as a scapegoat for harboring such ideas.

Bonilla-Silva concludes his essay by speaking directly to Afro-Latinxs who have migrated to the new racial landscape of the United States. He warns that there will be moments of shock and realization that in the U.S. you may be considered Black first and Latinx second. "Be prepared," he states, "Afro-Latinos must resist the temptation to participate in the game of racial innocence that their families play. That is, we must learn our histories and not repeat the nonsense we hear in our communities, such as the idea that racism is just a U.S. problem and that we do not have racial problems back home" (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 447). Bonilla-Silva demonstrates the role of our family units in passing on anti-Black attitudes and values.

Our families are often the first social institutions where anti-Black values are learned and passed down. It is also a place where many of us can begin to undo centuries of learned behavior that devalues Black lives. Educating our kin on the racism that exists within our own families may not have an immediate result, but it begins to uproot the misinformation about our Black relatives in the Americas and beyond.

Anti-Blackness in the Media

In Mexico, there are many photographic, theatrical, and multimedia representations that emphasize and exaggerate features of Afro-descendants (González, Jackson, Pellicer, & Vinson III, 2010). For example, the infamous Latin American (specifically Mexican) cartoon, *Memín Pinguín*, (figure 1) reflects the author's perspective on the subject but creates an overall inaccurate and stereotypical picture of Blackness (González, Jackson, Pellicer, & Vinson III, 2010). Paloma Fernandez Sánchez (2015) reflects on the racial ideology *mestizaje* and its whitening discourse in the *Memín Pinguín* comic series. She notes that Black characters, exclusively represented by Memín and his mother Eufrosina, are portrayed as physically and intellectually inferior with no agency.

Their characters' actions are contrasted against their white compatriots and authority figures. Those authority figures judge the two Black characters' actions as mostly

illogical or incorrect (Sánchez, 2015). First published in the 1940's, these characters were a source of entertainment for an entire generation, perhaps two, in 20th century Mexico. It is Mexico's version of Black face in comic form. The damaging, inaccurate images of *Memí Pinguí* are yet another example of anti-Blackness in Latinx culture. These images and ideas, however, are not limited to the Mexican side of the border, as many of these same comics make their way to South Texas. These images played a role in shaping the perspectives of a post-World War II generation of Mexican immigrants moving to the agricultural citrus farms of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Historian Enrique Krauze explains the phenomenon related to *Memin Pinguin,* "people identified with *Memin Pinguin* because he was poor and he suffered because he was poor, not because he was Black. As a matter of fact, I do remember one story of *Memin Pinguin*, the only story when he really suffers because of his color" (Ludden, 2005). He goes on to state that the only place Memin suffered was when he traveled to the United States. This particular viewpoint from the Mexican perspective perpetuates the narrative that racial conflicts are American or "northern" issues. This idea is passed along the border wherein Black issues are considered to only be relevant in metropolitan areas with sizable Black communities. Thus, issues pertaining to Black community members along the border are seen as distant and unrelated to the broader Mexican immigrant and Chicanx community.

A Shifting Borderland Paradigm

To date, the literature on the African diaspora in Texas primarily takes on early colonial encounters between Indigenous, Spanish, and African communities in the 17th and 18th centuries (Chambers, 2016). There is also special interest in the history of the North African Moor *Esebanico,* who traversed the Gulf of Mexico and interiors of Texas (Rodriguez, 2021). These histories are important to the development of race in the South Texas region. However, there is an absence of data or analysis that focuses on the contemporary moment and racial uprisings of 2020. For these reasons, it is important to document the actions of young people working to dismantle white supremacy through organized rebellions in the 21st century.

Young activists who protested for racial justice in 2020 demonstrated a turning point of consciousness against anti-Blackness in the Rio Grande Valley. The murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, captured through a cell phone video recording, generated an uprising of rebellions throughout the United States (Boone, 2020). These rebellions, oftentimes misjudged as riots, demanded an end to state sanctioned violence against the Black community. Protests reached as far down as the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, a predominantly Mexican and Latinx community living in a developing urban and agricultural region on the U.S.-Mexico border. With an estimated 90% of its residents identifying as Latinx, the Black Lives Matter protests in this area looked more racially homogenous than it did in some of the larger metropolitan cities across the country. A young, energized generation stood in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement on June 6th, 2020 in Edinburg, Texas (Lopez, 2020).

Misael Ramirez, founder of the activist group Craft Cultura, hosted a community dialogue promoted as "Black Lives on the border" on social media platforms. When asked why he felt the need to organize this

event, he states, "We have a history of violence here on the border. We know what is to suffer at the hands of white supremacy. Police brutality. These aren't riots going on, these are conscious rebellions" (Wilson, 2020). The conversation among the 60 attendees centered on the idea that we all have a role to play in educating our families and communities that have internalized the idea that Blackness does not exist in Mexican and Latinx culture. Community dialogues such as the one that took place in Edinburg, Texas have been powerful tools for Latinx community members who are often working on social justice issues individually or within institutions.

For example, most of the people who attended the community conversation were working professionals. As different community members took turns to speaking at the gazebo, (figure 2) they provided insight of how racist anti-Black ideologies are embedded in the medical field, in law enforcement, in schools, in mental health facilities, and in other spaces. Many times, these experiences happen in isolation and are difficult to confront in professional settings. The community dialogue allowed people to express their frustrations with institutional racism and anti-Blackness while identifying a common experience that validated their observations.

Figure 1

Black Lives on the border community dialogue, Edinburg, Texas, June 2020

Also present at the community dialogue were college aged students and local artists. Their presence and participation led to a conversation on using local community art as a form of cultural resistance with the broader border community. In short, this gathering was steeped in the activist tradition of the region. In the middle of the 20th century, borderland activism has focused primarily on access to education and agricultural farmworker labor rights (Martinez, 2019; Villagrán, 2020). These intersecting issues continue to be important issues on the border. In 2020, these social issues intersected with the Black Lives Matter social movements of the last decade. Political consciousness is thus embedded into the memory of borderland residents (Anzaldua, 1984).

The following day, on Sunday June 7th, a protest took place in front of the City of

Edinburg Municipal Building about a block from where the community dialogue took place the day before. Upon arrival, a small group organized themselves to offer water and hand sanitizer. Rarely, if at all, was anyone not wearing a mask throughout the protest. Signs and posters varied in their descriptions of racial injustices. However, it is worth noting that Black Lives Matter was centered as the core issue rather than an amalgamation of other social issues experienced by non-Black people of color. Elders in the community drove by honking their horns and giving enthusiastic thumbs-up to the pool of protestors. It was refreshing to see community members give signs of appreciation and encouragement considering the deep-rooted anti-Black values that are too often expressed within the Latinx community.

Both the protests and community dialogue on the border serve as examples of a new generation of thinkers, community members, activists, professionals, elders and students working to create a new more just way of being on the border. These moments were the beginning of the long-term internal work of unlearning anti-Black attitudes and the long-term struggle for institutional change. Border activists and residents, however, are creative and are familiar with what it means to create culture that is not defined by the broader U.S. While there remains work to be done, the borderlands are a community of people who authentically live and express the meaning of All Black Lives Matter.

Conclusion

This article fills an important gap in the contemporary literature on anti-Blackness on the border. There has been little documentation of the racial uprisings in South Texas outside of newspaper articles and local media outlets. It is imperative to leave an academic account of 21st century social movements along the borderlands that were explicitly articulating a rejection of anti-Blackness. The South Texas borderland is a sight where racial and colonial violence has resulted in racial segregation and land dispossession (Orozco, 2010), the separation of children from their families (Teicher, 2018), and the historic lynching of Mexicans and Chicanxs (Carrigan & Webb, 2003; Wills, 2019). Yet, local activists and youth along the border are linking these historic struggles with Black liberation movements across the U.S.

Cultural exchange between Chicanxs and Black diasporic peoples continues to occur through a shared struggle and experience with and against white supremacy. It is efforts such as the ones being formulated in the Rio Grande Valley that give hope to an anti-racist culture within the Latinx community. Internalizing messages of self-hate has had a profound impact on Latinx families. It has produced a thick shell preventing many Latinx people to see themselves as oppressors to other racial and ethnic communities, particularly to our Black relatives. As an educator, I take on the responsibility to unlearn these deeply embedded anti-Black ideologies and challenge my students to think about the interconnected social and cultural relations between our communities. Pedagogy is a serious endeavor towards liberation. In the words of the late scholar Max Monroy-Miller, “We have to educate, escalate, until we liberate.” All Black Lives Matter in the borderland.

Figure 3
Black Lives Matter protest in Edinburg, Texas June 2020

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Understanding & Dismantling Privilege

The Official Journal of The Privilege Institute

Professional Counselors Working with BIPOC-Identified Males: The Integration of Hip Hop in Counseling Practice

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Abstract

This study used a narrative inquiry to examine how Professional Counselors working with BIPOC-identified male can integrate Hip-Hop in their counseling practices to address issues of privilege and power. The results of the study suggest Hip-Hop offers *modes of communication* and a sense of self useful in counseling practice and in the training of future counselors. Practical implications for the use of Hip-Hop in counselor counseling sessions are explored.

Keywords: Creativity, Hip-Hop, Healing, Privilege

James Norris received his Master of Arts in Existential-Phenomenology Psychology degree in 2009 from Seattle University and PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision from the University of the Cumberlands' CACREP accredited doctoral program in 2022. He is an Assistant Professor at the University of the Cumberlands. He is a licensed mental health counselor in the state of Washington and has worked in a variety of clinical settings since 2009. Also, he is a licensed professional counselor in the state of Arizona and California. Dr. Norris has served in administration and leadership in the community mental health clinic he developed in 2012 in Seattle, Washington and he has been teaching in higher education for the past two years. Dr. Norris has been in private practice since 2018, where he discovered that most of the traditional counseling approaches lacked the cultural nuance and relevance to connect with communities of color. This has inspired him to pursue and develop a framework specifically designed for effectively working with marginalized groups through Hip Hop and creativity. His primary research interests are in Hip Hop, creativity, and counseling theories. Dr. Norris has published and presented on the integration Hip Hop in Counselor Education for BIPOC identified-males, Hip- Hop and Counseling practice, multicultural cultural issues in counseling.

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Ian Levy is an Associate Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Counseling & Therapy at Manhattan College, rapper, and former High School counselor. His research explores preparing school counselors to use Hip Hop based interventions to support youth development. Dr. Levy's work has been featured in the New York Times, CNN, and is documented in a variety of academic journals. His research monograph, Hip Hop and Spoken Word Therapy in School Counseling: Developing Culturally Responsive Approaches, is published with Routledge.

In 2019 the American Counseling Association released a report indicating that 81% of counseling professionals identified as White. This lack of diversity within the counseling profession has symbiotic relationships with professional associations around the treatment of cultural diversity that ultimately impacts services provided to diverse populations (Levine et al., 2022). Also, the lack of representation creates the potential for issues of racism and privilege to continue to be perpetuated within our profession, which will negatively impact marginalized groups seeking services (Levine et al., 2022). Research has shown that the counseling profession has looked to address issues of racism and privilege through the multicultural and social justice counseling competencies (MJCCs; Ratts et al., 2016; CACREP, 2016).

While the one required multicultural course in Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP] is intended to meet the social and cultural diversity standards (Hilert & Tirado, 2018), but that is less effective than integrating multicultural and social justice content the curriculum (Hilert et al., 2022). The lack of understanding of issues of racism and privilege can be detrimental to the therapeutic relationship and the effectiveness of services. Therefore, the counseling profession has to expand the ways they address cultural issues in their practice. One solution is Hip-Hop, which is a creative and culturally relevant way to understand the lived experiences and cultures of underrepresented groups of people.

Levy's (2019) work, Hip-Hop spoken word therapy, provided a process to integrate Hip-Hop culture into the counseling process through writing, recording, and performance of the individual emotional experience through a Hip-Hop mixtape (p. 2), to make counseling accessible and equitable for BIPOC-identified males. Hip-Hop culture provides a platform for BIPOC-identified males to express their emotional experiences and challenge male gender norms (Levy & Keum, 2014). Hip-Hop spoken word therapy provides individuals with increased self-awareness, coping skills, catharsis, reflectivity, and self-image (Levy, 2019). Levy's (2019) Hip-Hop spoken word therapy study wherein writing, recording, and performing Hip-Hop mixtapes are used to express emotional experiences to decolonize the counseling and education profession.

Scholars have analyzed the integration of Hip-Hop culture into the counseling and educational professions for BIPOC-identified males to express their emotional experiences (Levy, 2019; Levy et al., 2018) or address social justice issues in counseling (Washington, 2018). There are no instances of counselor education scholars discussing the integration of Hip-Hop culture to move BIPOC-identified males to a place of healing. In essence, this type of scholarship embraces the idea of counselors or counselor educators integrating this practice when working with BIPOC-identified males and provides the possibility of moving them from hope to healing in their counseling or educational practices.

Mental Health Disparities and Privilege

The Minority Health and Health Disparity Research and Education Act of 2000 established the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities to respond to growing health disparities in the United States (Snowden, 2012). The goal of the Act was to develop a national health

research agenda across disciplines that could identify potential risk factors for the myriad health outcomes in minority and underserved communities (Snowden, 2012). This initiative noted that the Black population's physical health problems are disproportionately worse than those of other groups, which negatively impacts their mental health (HHS, 2001). The Black community has a greater need for mental health and general health care. The Black population and other minority ethnic groups have a higher chance of having a mental illness-induced disease burden than White Americans (HHS, 2001).

Although the lack of quality mental health services in the Black community creates disease, other factors create mental health disparities. Poverty is one of the most consistent factors that impacts mental health disparity (Maura & Weisman de Mamani, 2017). The economic imbalance in our society contributes to this disparity. Another factor contributing to mental health disparity is sociocultural factors, such as racism and discrimination. Sociocultural factors could influence the lack of engagement and attrition for the severely mentally ill in the Black community (Maura & Weisman de Mamani, 2017). Also, the disengagement in the Black community around mental health includes "stigma, mistrust in the behavioral health system, familial support, religiosity/spirituality, and cultural belief" (Maura & Weisman de Mamani, 2017, p. 198). These issues play a role in the health disparities between predominantly Black and predominantly White communities, but even improving attitudes around mental health will not completely solve the problem. Issues of access, quality of care, improvements in healthcare among racial and ethnic groups (Smedley et al., 2003) has gotten attention from researchers. In the end, mental health disparities in our society impact the Black community and other communities of color disproportionately.

Impact of Privilege

Privilege is a social advantage that benefits and supports some individuals' status within a society and this privilege exists at the expense of others (Duplan & Cranston, 2023). Therefore, privilege is based on where you are geographically located and spaces you are connected to (Ley, 1995; Mitchell, 1997; Ong, 2006). Therefore, privilege impacts how counseling is offered and how individuals of color are assessed due to their lack of racial privilege. Most of the instruments used to assess individuals of color, were normed on samples of primarily white middle-class individuals (Balkin et al. 2014). The lack of diversity within the instruments used in counseling practice, which leads to misdiagnosis within counseling practice (Balkin et al. 2014; Liang et al., 2016) and further highlights the value of having privilege when looking to get help through counseling.

Mental Health Challenges with BlPOC-Identified Males

Although mental health disparities impact BIPOC communities, it appears that BIPOC-identified males are struggling the most of any racial/gender identity. BIPOC-identified males disproportionately suffer violence and experience increased depression and suicide (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2013; HHS, 2006). Black or other males of color are commonly labeled as violent, disruptive, or angry instead of being seen as having mental health challenges. Researchers have typically framed aggressive behaviors as ways to cope with stressful situations that create frustration or impede goal

achievement (Berkowitz, 1989). For example, "Aggressive ideation might be best understood as cognitions, beliefs, or attitudes related to carrying hostile, injurious, or destructive behaviors with or without the intention to follow through" (Thomas et al., 2015, p. 369). Therefore, one aspect of Black males' aggressiveness and frustration connects to mental health challenges they have not been able to work through and therefore lack the coping skills to manage. Moreover, there is limited research focusing on the cognitive aspect of Black males' aggression and its connection with coping strategies (Thomas et al., 2015).

Racial Identity and Trauma

Trauma in Greek means "wounded," which is an appropriate descriptor of the African-American experience (Webb, 2004). Trauma creates harmful, high-intensity, or severe physical, physiological, or emotional energy that impacts the functioning of people (Bloom & Farragher, 2013). The primary source of the trauma for Black people started in the 16th century with the transatlantic slave trade. Black males' mental health connects to the original trauma of slavery. Trauma can create unfavorable outcomes, negatively impacting an individual's functioning in developmental domains: mental, emotional, spiritual, biological, and physical (Wilson & Keane, 2004). Historical and current traumas that Black males experience impact their mental wellness and the other developmental domains, which counselors could overlook if they do not consider this aspect of the Black experience.

Intergenerational trauma in the Black community and the vicious legacy of slavery causes Black males to struggle with racial identity, including masculinity. Trauma shapes the developmental trajectories of Black males along with their beliefs about themselves and the world (Wilson & Keane, 2004), which highlights the impact of race-based trauma on the mental health of Black males. "Racial identity has been associated with the mental health trajectory and other social outcomes of African Americans" (Thomas et al., 2015, p. 370). Counselors must take a historical standpoint when looking at the effects of trauma on Black males. Eurocentric frameworks can knowingly or unknowingly retraumatize, creating harm and pain for Black males. An example of what Black Americans experience in the country is captured by a participant in a study who explained, "Pain and fear Black Americans live with daily because of feeling ostracized, treated unjustly and traumatized which consequently may not yield the best developmental outcome" (Range et al., 2018, p. 285). For that reason, counseling professionals have to consider racial identity and racial oppression as a source of the mental health challenges of Black males.

Hip-Hop culture (knowledge of self)

The fundamental elements of Hip-Hop are b-girling/boy, emceeing, graffiti, and DJing, but there is a fifth element which is knowledge of self (Love, 2016). Love (2016) stated that knowledge of self through Hip-Hop serves as an anchor of the sophistication and indigenous communal practices, which are foundational to self-determination and resistance within the culture. Therefore, knowledge of self through Hip-Hop is important to the production of Hip-Hop Pedagogy when it comes to helping black and brown youth survive (Love, 2016), but this holds true as well when helping these same youth heal in counseling practices. Although knowledge of self through Hip-Hop can be vital in the development of black and brown youth it is

rarely implemented in counseling and educational practices.

Hip-Hop and Counseling

Hip-Hop culture could be an entry point for counselors and counselor educators to begin their work with Black males; however, counselor education has yet to acknowledge its validity. Part of the resistance to using this approach is the misogyny and lewd language connected to Hip-Hop culture (Rose, 2008), which if moved, reveals the level of vulnerability that the artists display in their lyrics (language). Levy and Keum (2014) suggested that Hip-Hop is an avenue that could help men of color discuss their emotional experiences and challenge gender norms that often suggest men should hide their emotions, preventing their learning of the process of describing their emotional experiences. Levy and Adjapony (2020) claimed that the traditional counseling profession has a colonized nature due to the Eurocentric framework of institutions in the United States. Hip-Hop spoken word therapy has been a framework used to decolonize the counseling profession for BIPOC communities (Levy, 2019).

For these reasons, Hip-Hop approaches have been introduced as naturally aligned with the core humanistic counseling tenants (Levy & Adjapony, 2020). For example, Hip-Hop practices like lyric writing for emotional disclosure are evidenced as helping clients share authentic narratives (Viega, 2018), that allow listeners (i.e. counselors) to empathize with the content shared (Levy & Adjapony, 2020). To support actively listening to clients' stories/rhymes, reflecting lyrics offers counseling professionals an opportunity to process their own biases and prevent judgements about client's expressions (Levy & Emdin, 2021). When invited to share authentic and emotionally laden narratives, via Hip-Hop, to counselors who are ready to hear them, research suggests that clients are able to form authentic relationships with helping professionals (Kobin & Tyson, 2006; Author, 2020). The current study seeks to add to this body of literature by investigating how counselors may currently utilize Hip-Hop in their practice.

Purpose of the Study

This study is a narrative inquiry to examine how BIPOC-identified male counselor educators integrated Hip-Hop in their counseling practices to promote healing. While researchers have explored the use of Hip-Hop interventions with clients, scholars have not engaged in direct conversation with counselor educators about the potential of Hip-Hop. Thus, the researchers' interviews with counselor educators sought to answer one research question:

How do BIPOC-identified male counselor educators make meaning and understanding of BIPOC-identified males' social-emotional experiences through integration of Hip-Hop?

Methods

Participants

This study's population consisted of six BIPOC-identified male counselor educators from the United States. Participants' ages ranged from 25 to 40 years. The pseudonym names for the participants to protect their identities are Dave East, B Dot the God, Big K.R.I.T., Kendrick Lamar, Dom Kennedy, and Nipsey Hussle. The selected pseudonym names are Hip-Hop artists who have been influential within Hip-Hop culture and were chosen to represent the influence each

counselor educator is making on the field. Inclusion criteria for study participants include holding a doctoral degree in counselor education, identifying as a male who is BIPOC, and having experience integrating Hip-Hop into counselor education and practice or having published on Hip-Hop in the counseling profession.

Procedure

Once IRB approval for this study was ascertained, purposive sampling was used because it facilitated "identification and selections of individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interest" (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2). Once inclusion/exclusion criteria for this study were confirmed, the PI located participants through researching counselor education programs for BIPOC-identified males who integrate Hip-Hop into their practices. This recruitment was done primarily through snowball sampling by asking interested participants to identify other qualified individuals to obtain a nonprobability sample (Handcock & Gile, 2011). The six participants each engaged in 60–75-minute individual interviews with the researcher, the content of which was used in subsequent data analysis.

Data Collection

The data collection sources for this study were interviews, autobiographical writings, and Hip-Hop artifacts. When using narrative inquiry, the data collection process is not linear or procedural but fluid due to the relational aspect of the method and the participants' stories that direct the research data collection process (Clandinin, 2013). The focus of this study was on BIPOC-identified male counselor educators telling, retelling, and reliving their stories of experiences in integrating Hip-Hop in their practice and teaching. Additional foci were the potential of Hip-Hop as emotional healing and making meaning for BIPOC males, which required multiple methods (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 2006) to expand the researcher's understanding of the participants (Sheperis et al., 2017).

Interviews

Narrative inquiry uses interviews as a starting point to tell stories (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). In this study, the PI led 60–75-minute semi-structured interviews with BIPOC-identified male counselor educators addressing the integration of Hip-Hop into counseling and counselor education, as well as its contribution to emotional healing for BIPOC-identified males.

Autobiographical Writing

Narrative inquiry uses autobiographical writing, which captures "a story or part of it that refers in one way or another to one's life history" (Brockmeier, 2001, p. 247). During this study, the participants independently engaged in autobiographical writing about their initial connection with Hip-Hop and their journey of realizing the impact Hip-Hop had on forming their identity and practice as a counselor educator and clinician.

Hip-Hop Artifact

Embedded in the narratives are artifacts, which create meaning and value to the human experience (Venkataraman et al., 2013) and can shape and provide value to human stories (Venkataraman et al., 2013). During the study, participants were asked to submit one Hip-Hop artifact (e.g., syllabus, Hip-Hop content, videos) used in their

practice as an educator or counselor that offered insight into the application of Hip-Hop in their own work, its value to the profession and/or the healing nature of Hip-Hop.

Data Analysis: Narrative Inquiry/Thematic Analysis

After all data sources were collected (i.e., interviews, autobiographical writing, and artifacts), the interview data was transcribed from audio and video Zoom recordings. To support a narrative inquiry, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis was performed on all data sources: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, and searching for the themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report of the findings. Thematic analysis identifies patterns of meaning throughout the data to formalize into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Additionally, the scrutiny technique was used to identify similarities and differences among participant experiences (Ryan & Bernard,2003). Finally, the analytical tools of broadening, burrowing, storying, and re-storying were used to integrate stories among participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Research Team

The authors of this paper are two assistant professors and one associate professor of counselor educators, specializing in clinical mental health and school counseling respectively. The first author identifies as a Black man who is intentional about using his research and platform to create change. He pulled from prior scholarship and practice to show how pedagogical practices that integrate Hip-Hop can create healing for BIPOC-identified males in the counseling profession. The second author is a Black female. Her research focus is on testing the effect of culturally based interventions to improve counseling experience and to increase cultural awareness for counselors in training. Her experience derives from working with marginalized communities for over ten years in mental health settings. The third author identifies as a White, cishet, man who constantly grapples with his privilege as a researcher. He holds a range of prior experience as an assistant professor, school counselor and emcee, specializing in the use of Hip-Hop and counseling practices to support clients and graduate students. His previous scholarship and practice informed his participation in data analysis and report writing. However, there was effort made to acknowledge bias and exposure due to his requisite knowledge.

Reflexivity & Trustworthiness

In this study, the researchers ensured trustworthiness (Guba, 1981) through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). The study promoted credibility through triangulation and member checking. Triangulation involved using multiple and different data collection sources (i.e., interviews, autobiographical writings, and Hip-Hop artifacts) to provide corroborating evidence to highlight themes or perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Member checking occurred through the researchers checking in with the participants to ensure the data reflects their intended meaning after collecting and analyzing data (Lincoln & Guba,1985). Through purposeful sampling, a form of nonprobability sampling, which considers the participants' characteristics to connect to the research questions (Devault, 2019), was how transferability came through in this study. Dependability and

confirmability were maintained through an audit trail (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) which in this study was through written notes that demonstrated the process and decisions throughout the analysis in this study. Lastly, researchers reflected and processed their own bias and relationship to the culture and effects of Hip-Hop culture to ensure the participants' voices were true to their experience and not that of the researchers.

Results

The findings of this study are organized by general dimensions and first-order themes in accordance with thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To elaborate on the first-order themes and general dimension, the authors include quotes of exemplary moments from transcripts that reflect *BIPOC-identified male counselor educators make meaning and understanding of BIPOC-identified males' social-emotional experiences through integration of Hip-Hop*. The first general dimension was modes of communication with the first-order themes that are knowledge and social justice (injustice and trauma). Each of these first-order themes were represented with all data sources (interviews, autobiographical writing, and artifacts) and speaks to how BIPOC-identified males make meaning and understanding of their social-emotional experiences through Hip-Hop. The second general dimension was sense of self with the first-order themes being identity and authenticity.

Modes of Communication

The findings revealed that modes of expression were an overarching theme for BIPOC-identified males who make meaning and understanding of their social-emotional experiences through Hip-Hop. In modes of communication, there were two themes: a) Knowledge and b) Social Justice (Injustice & Trauma).

Knowledge

Within *modes of communication*, was a first-order theme of *knowledge*. Analysis of interviews, autobiographical writing, and artifacts help define knowledge as the way counselor educators can develop the insight of making meaning and understanding social-emotional experiences of BIPOC-identified males through Hip-Hop. For example, B Dot the God stated in his interview, "Hip-Hop and spoken word can help preserve indigenous knowledge, which includes long-standing practices that help preserve and communicate culturally specific wisdom and teachings." Big K.R.I.T. shared in his Hip-Hop artifact that, "Music is a universal multicultural experience that can serve as a bridge to enhanced cultural humility and cultural opportunity to explore a client's worldviews and community needs." Nipsey Hussle said,

> For school counselors, fostering therapeutic relationships with Black boys and other racialized student groups means deeply appreciating how grossly miseducated most are about the experiences of Black people domestically and globally. Having to eventually grapple with the realities of how racism, anti-Blackness, and settler colonialism have altered the trajectory of Black people will certainly constitute a source of anxiety, discomfort, and perhaps anger for many White school counselors; those emotions cannot be allowed to derail conversations that desperately need to occur.

What Nipsey Hussle is alluding to in the quote above is that issues of race, privilege, and anti-blackness can be barriers to gaining a deeper understanding of BIPOC communities and Hip-Hop can be a way to break through the discomfort of race and colonial mindset.

Social Justice (Injustice & Trauma)

Social Justice is the second first-order theme within modes of communication. Across data sources, participants suggested that Hip-Hop offers counselors and counselor educators the insight to make meaning and understand BIPOC client's social-emotional experiences with the racial injustice and trauma they have experienced. For example, Nipsey Hussle stated in the Hip-Hop artifact that "Hip-Hop sensibilities are something that Black boys rely on to work through the American social political and cultural spaces where anti-Blackness is present." B Dot the God stated in his autobiographical writing: "My demonstration is also an act of social justice, as I also show the many ways cultural competency can be manifested." This quote highlights how counselors and counselor educators must be trained to understand that social justice is an action not just a concept. Big K.R.I.T. stated in his interview, "If the counseling profession were to become more culturally competent via understanding Hip-Hop culture, then perhaps counselors would be more proficient in implementing culturally appropriate interventions, cultural development, and meeting the needs of a diverse clientele." The quote above offers how Hip-Hop can be used to break through the cultural barriers that perpetuate stigmatization and marginalization of BIPOC communities.

Sense of Self

The findings revealed that modes of expression were an overarching theme for BIPOC-identified males who make meaning and understanding of their social-emotional experiences through Hip-Hop. On the topic of Sense of Self, there were two themes: a) Identity and b) Authenticity.

Identity

Within *sense of self*, was a first-order theme of *identity*. Analysis of interviews, autobiographical writing, and artifacts help define identity as the way counselor educators can develop the insight of making meaning and understanding social-emotional experiences of BIPOC-identified males through Hip-Hop. Dom Kennedy stated in the autobiographical writing, "This was the first time where I ventured into the realm of not just exploring the self—but actively cultivating the self and my identity as a clinician. The idea of staying true to myself echoed throughout my practices as a clinician and counselor educator. It's a part of the identity." Nipsey Hussle stated in the Hip-Hop artifact, "Rap and Hip-Hop are connected to the Black community, opening access to share their experiences with the entire world. Hip-Hop highlights a breakdown of Black (and Brown) vernacular, styles, dress, political/social views, economic struggles and successes." Therefore, Hip-Hop has always been a vehicle for members of BIPOC communities to vocalize and express their lived experience in the face of racism and anti-Blackness along with understanding one's identity. Big K.R.I.T. stated in the interview, "I realized it once I noticed Hip-Hop was infused in everything about me; the way I dressed, the way I spoke, the materialistic things I bought, and the dancing and environments I wanted to place myself in."

Authenticity

Authenticity is the second first-order theme within the sense of self. Across data sources, participants suggested that Hip-Hop offers counselors and counselor educators the insight that authenticity is a key element to making meaning and understanding BIPOC client's social-emotional experiences. B Dot the God stated in the interview,

> So, rather than to try to integrate Hip-Hop, I think, I think by BIPOC counselors and counselor educators should or should be encouraged to be authentically themselves and know that their authenticity, does not dilute their ability to be professionals, serious professionals and counselor educators, or the profession should recognize that authenticity is universal, not just in terms of the client, but also in terms of the counselor educator, which trickles down to the practitioner.

Dom Kennedy stated in his autobiographical writing, "During my time in Mexico this album was on repeat and was heavily influential in my decision to return to America and pursue my education/athletic career. Even looking at the album cover I remember thinking "I can't JUST be an athlete." Big K.R.I.T. stated in the interview, "From the way I dress, the way I talk, the things I enjoy watching and listening to" and added, "It is kind of like a way of life for me."

Discussion

This study sought to explore the experiences of the integration of Hip-Hop into counselors and counselor educators practice among BIPOC-identified male counselor educators to make meaning and understand the social-emotional experiences of BIPOC-identified males. Two themes answered this research question: modes of communication (containing first-order knowledge and social justice (Injustice and Trauma) and sense of self (containing first-order themes of identity and authenticity) The modes of communication and sense of self through Hip-Hop promoted healing when integrated by BIPOC-identified male Counselor Educator in their practices.

Modes of communication illustrated the potential for Hip-Hop to be used with BIPOC- identified male clients. Specifically, *knowledge* demonstrated that Hip-Hop offers BIPOC-identified males the information or process to communicate their lived experience in counseling. The multicultural and social justice competencies encourage counselors to be aware of how their power and privilege can impact how clients communicate their lived experience (MJCCs; Ratts et al., 2016). This finding supports prior literature that found Hip-Hop helpful in creating an environment for expression along with communicating and challenging gender norms that suggest that males shouldn't express their emotions (Author, 2014). The second first-order theme *social justice* demonstrated that Hip-Hop integrated by BIPOC-identified counselor educators in their practice can address social justice issues that BIPOC-identified males face. The counseling profession stresses the importance of social justice advocacy in counseling practice due to the impact that oppression has on a client's mental health (Daniels et. al, 2011). For example, a counselor educator in his practice can have a client write or record about the injustice he has experienced as a way to communicate his lived experiences. Washington (2018) encourages counselors to develop a working knowledge of Hip-Hop culture and rap music due to its vitality

when integrating social justice practices in your counseling.

Sense of self illustrated that it is a vital piece when BIPOC-identified counselor educators are helping BIPOC-identified males to a place of healing, meaning-making, and understanding of their social-emotional experiences. Incorporating Hip-Hop allows the BIPOC-identified males to connect to their most authentic self. Specifically, *identity* demonstrated how Hip-Hop is a way of being in the world, not just music. The finding supports prior literature that found Hip-Hop helpful when it came to identity development in creating an environment where the use of lyrics and creative expression, allow for exploration and articulation of lived experiences which, leading to a greater sense of self (Jones, 2015). Singh et al. (2020) discussed the need for counselors to utilize Crenshaw's (1989,1991) theory of intersectionality, to offer approaches that support clients in navigating their authentic identities when it comes to the intersection of power and control. The second first-order theme *authentic* revealed that the integration of Hip-Hop in practice allows BIPOC-identified male counselor educators and BIPOC-identified males to be authentic to who they are, which creates healing and meaning in their lives. The concept "Real Recognize Real" in Hip-Hop promotes this authenticity and realness (Author, 2020; Viega, 2018), which creates room for healing and meaning-making for BIPOC-identified males that came through in the study.

In conclusion, the results section highlights how the integration of Hip-Hop in the counseling practice can address and provide a pathway for multicultural and social justice to be present in a counselors practice with clients. Also, the use of Hip-Hop can balance the inherent power structure and privilege in the counseling relationship, so the client can be seen and respected despite the cultural identity and how they navigate in the world.

Limitations

There are a few notable limitations for this study. It was challenging to find six BIPOC-identified male counselors who had produced scholarship around Hip-Hop or used it in their counseling practice. Due to the limited number of BIPOC counselor educators and a smaller number of them using Hip-Hop in their scholarship or counseling practices, the researcher took a significant amount of time to find participants in the counseling profession to participate in the study. Still, the researcher didn't need to broaden his demographic because enough BIPOC-identified male counselors in the counseling profession were found.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

Although there has been growing research around the integration of Hip-Hop into the counseling profession to create emotional expression, bring voice to social justice issues, and use Hip-Hop with conventional theories in BIPOC communities (Elligan, 2000; Author, 2019; Rose, 2008; Tyson, 2002; Washington, 2018), more research is needed examine the use of Hip-Hop Practices while working with clients. More quantitative studies, such as randomized-controlled trials, would be beneficial to evaluate the outcomes of the integration of Hip-Hop in counseling for BIPOC-identified clients as compared to other creative modalities. Similarly, more research is needed to understand how creative modalities, such as Hip-Hop, can

support BIPOC-identified males in their educational journeys to counselors and counselor educators. Lastly, the use of Hip-Hop in research and practice can be used to disrupt privilege and the eurocentric framework of counseling.

Conclusion

There are many ways that counselor educators can create culturally relevant and anti-racist environments in their practice, but we must expand our clinical practice beyond the MSJCC. The MSJCC is a starting point to create a safe environment for BIPOC-identified males, but the integration of Hop Hip is one way to create a decolonizing environment to change the Eurocentric framework that dominates how counselors view and conduct their clinical practice. Therefore, counselors need to continue to develop creative ways to practice and serve BIPOC-identified male in the counseling setting and Hip-Hop offers a solution to address the privilege embedded in the counseling relationship when working with BIPOC-identified males.

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Oh Umma, we're not in the 80's anymore... A Transracial Adoptee's Reflection

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Abstract

Asian American, transracial adoptee, Aimee Brayman, shares a short reflection on her upbringing and racism in the 1980's vs. today. Written from her first-hand experience, readers are given a descriptive snapshot of how racism has colored her life while remaining hopeful.

Keywords: AAPI, racism, transracial adoption

A dedicated advocate for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, Aimee Brayman has worked for five years bringing impactful leadership as an executive leader in Washington State. A graduate of Gonzaga University, Brayman's personal journey as a transracial adoptee from Korea, raised in a White family, profoundly shapes her commitment to fostering inclusive environments. Through her scholarly and professional contributions, Brayman endeavors to advance understanding and action in the realms of social justice and cultural diversity.

I can taste my childhood. I can smell it. I remember it in vivid flashbacks of my white-seated, turquoise bicycle with rainbow streamers and afternoons spent on Old Joe, the neighbor's Appaloosa, galloping through alfalfa fields until dusk. It was summers on slip'n slides, homemade concord grape juice from our small grapevine in the orchard and picking cherries and raspberries at grandma and grandpa's house until our fingers and lips bore berry-stained kisses that lingered for days. It was running to the school bus on gravel roads, a yellow lunchbox featuring Snoopy & Woodstock lazily lounging atop an A-framed doghouse, and white patent leather shoes with bows on the toes worn with ruffled fold-over socks and dresses, all set to a soundtrack of Whitney Houston asking us how we'd know if he *really* loved us. And…

It is the taste of salt through tear-soaked eyelids, the thundering roar of white noise in my eardrums, and the feeling of my fists as they created a beat of fury against a classmate's body as they called me a flat face, a pan face, a China-man, a ching-chong, and told me to "go back to your own country." This exists. It is found in rural America on the Washington/Idaho border town of Newman Lake, Washington where I grew up and across the country in the cacophony of metropolitan areas of Manhattan, New York.

I remember each of my three physical fights as vividly as the raspberry perfumed berry-stains on my hands. *These* memories though, left lasting stains on my heart, not hands. As a transracial adoptee in a White family, the experiences of racism that have colored my life have been difficult *at best* to describe and a lens through which I see that I'm unable to explain fully. Let's talk about racism. Let's say the word that so many are afraid to look squarely in the eye and humbly accept that there's a course of it running through many of us. Let's sit with it and feel ugly in it and feel our unworthiness and squirm. Because *that* is what it takes for change to happen.

These snapshots of racism-fueled incidents hang on the same strings of my heart that also share moments of furious happiness, acceptance, unconditional love, and recognition – they cannot be erased and hold equal weight. I was raised by a schoolteacher and two military veterans; people who were educated and progressive, while sharing conservative core values. My mom spent many years in the classroom teaching units on cultural diversity and awareness with the "why" always centering around the fact that she had an adopted, Korean daughter. In those early days of the 1980's, this notion of acceptance and diversity and the celebration of differences delivered to the innocence of elementary school children seemed so simple. We ended that unit with a party where every child dressed up in some representation of their unique heritage – *all* of us – Black, Hispanic, Latinx, White, Asian, and Native American children, colorfully dancing in our classroom, sharing different snacks and cups of juice to *celebrate* our uniqueness.

For as much as my encounters with racism happened as a child, it is easier to offer forgiveness for the ignorance and parroting that I can only imagine were the culprits of those encounters. After all, we are but sponges soaking up what we hear and see vs. understanding the impact of words at such young ages. This is not a justification for the actions of those children, but rather, a reflection of a forty-year-old woman who has the hindsight in seeing adolescence as just that.

But we're not in the 80's anymore. And racism has continued to pepper my life, as pervasive as ever, if not more abundant, given the senseless scapegoating of the AAPI community in the wake of COVID-19. I've been spat toward on the street, called a "fuckin' Chinese" in an elevator (I'm Korean, BTW), and felt genuine fear after the attacks and murders of Asian Americans simply living their lives. After the shooting in March of 2021 that left 8 Asian Americans dead in Georgia, I booked an appointment to change my hair color. I wanted to be less. I wanted to blend in. I wanted to be invisible. What a juxtaposition to the celebrations of culture as a child….

My family sat quietly and listened as I told them I felt unsafe and afraid to be who I was. My mom asked me if changing my hair color would really bring me a sense of safety and I remember saying that if from behind I could be passed off as White woman with brown hair and caramel highlights, that I'd take it – because maybe that would allow me an additional minute to run and hide if someone was looking to murder an Asian woman that day. My mom thought I was silly. No one in Spokane, Washington was going to attack me. Well, I'm sure that's what everyone thinks of their town – nothing *like that* ever happens here – until one day, it might.

After sharing my unease with my family, my sister texts me. She apologized for the fear I was feeling and told me that while she didn't know what it felt like to be me, she understood the need to feel anonymous to find some sort of psychological safety. It was comforting.

I am not Black and I do not pretend to understand the racial inequity and injustice that our Black brothers and sisters have endured; however, I sit in solidarity and understanding with the impassioned words of author Kimberly Jones when she noted that this world is fortunate in that Black people are seeking equality, not revenge.

Let those words soak in:
Equality, not revenge.
Equality.
Not revenge.
Equality. Not. Revenge.

So, I move one foot in front of the other. I walk with caramel and blonde highlighted hair through the streets of my downtown and I pray that I will be *seen,* but *not* seen. I raise my voice through typed words, and I go to work as a Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion advocate, to push for human dignity and social justice of the marginalized and under-represented. And every time I eat summer raspberries, I taste the celebration of what I hope will come to be.

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