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EXPLORATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND ETHNIC-RACIAL IDENTITY: A PHOTOVOICE CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This thesis analyzed photovoice, a type of community-based participatory research (CBPR), to explore its contribution to Black youth's ethnic-racial identity development (ERI). CBPR is a partnership that allows knowledge to be shared between researchers and community members to identify and address local public health issues. Photovoice aims to promote critical consciousness and empower youth through photography. Youth capture moments of health issues in their community and discuss them with peers and researchers. Photovoice was used in this case study to explore the causes and consequences of community violence among Black youth between the ages of twelve and eighteen. Researchers used the theoretical framework of critical consciousness to analyze the impact of photovoice on youth's perception of their own ethnic-racial identity. Longitudinal qualitative analyses were conducted on transcripts from the photovoice sessions to identify ERI development. Trajectory analysis was also performed to identify common themes and how they changed over time. Results indicated that the critical consciousness developed through photovoice had positive implications for Black youths' ethnic-racial identity development. Photovoice helped strengthen youth's pride in their self-image and racial history. The findings from this study inform future uses of photovoice as a health intervention and show how community-based participatory research can improve the development of ethnic-racial identity in Black youth.

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<u>**Chapter 1: Introduction**</u>

        Black American youth experience a disproportionate level of community violence.[1] For

this study, community violence is defined as an individual's personal experience with violent or

aggressive events in one's neighborhood.[1,2] Violent acts include instances of witnessing or

experiencing physical or verbal assault, homicide, rape, robbery, or any other intentional action

that harms members of a community.[1-2] An individual can be affected by community violence

through personal victimization or witnessing a violent act.[1,2] These negative experiences of

community violence are often compounded by racial microaggressions and other adverse

childhood experiences during childhood.[1,2] The lived experience of community violence has a

wide range of implications on one's mental, physical, and emotional health.[1,2] Black youth in

America are at an increased risk for a multitude of chronic conditions due to community violence

such as PTSD, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, etc.[1,3]

        Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is a research approach that involves the

collaboration of researchers and influential members of a community.[4] The partnership allows

for knowledge to be shared between researchers and community members to identify the

communal strengths and weaknesses, a better understanding of local public health issues, and to

promote equity.[4] This approach to research supports better understanding the effects of

community violence and developing solutions in partnership with those most impacted. For this

study, the process of photovoice, a type of CBPR, was analyzed to explore its contribution to

Black youth's ethnic-racial identity development. Photovoice was used to explore the effect of

community violence and racism through a collaborative process between Black adolescents and

researchers.[4] Photovoice aims to promote critical consciousness and empower youth.[4] Critical

consciousness refers to the ability to identify and analyze instances of inequality and propose

solutions to inequities.[5] In this study, photovoice was used to develop critical consciousness among youth and adult partners as they explored how institutions and systems perpetuate inequities related to community violence, build the motivation to change these inequities, and take action based on this new shared understanding.[4,5] The CC developed through photovoice can have positive implications on Black youth development of their racial identity.[5]

Ethnic-racial identity (ERI) represents youth's sense of belonging to their community and how they define themselves within it.[6] Five aspects of ERI affects youth's overall sense of wellbeing that follows them into adulthood.[6] These include a positive understanding of ERI; which is associated with improved physical health, mental health, academic outcomes, and overall self-esteem in minority populations.[6]

This thesis explores how the ERI of Black youth exposed to community violence changes while participating in photovoice, a qualitative research method that empowers individuals to facilitate social change.[7] As photovoice encourages the essential development of critical consciousness, it may influence ERI in the instances when photovoice encourages youth to reflect on race and ethnicity.[8] Photovoice may act as a vehicle for strengthening critical consciousness and this could also effect ERI, as it is a critical part of consciousness development for children of color.[9] This case study aims to explore this phenomenon among youth exposed to community violence who engaged in photovoice to better understand the intersection of community violence and racism and identify action steps for change.

General Statement of Problem

ERI can contribute to the psychological liberation and mental wellbeing of Black youth as they grow into adulthood.[8] Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is often seen as

an empowering tool that leads to the development of Critical Consciousness (CC), but little research exists of this effect on youth's understanding of their ethnic-racial identity (ERI). Also, little research exists on the specific aspects of photovoice that may contribute to ERI development. Critical consciousness (CC) is promoted through photovoice by encouraging an equitable partnership between researchers and community members to identify areas of public health concern in a community.[4] The reflective nature of photovoice can result in the development of ones' own critical consciousness.[4] This development of CC may translate to improved ERI by allowing children to self-reflect on their racial identity and suggesting photo assignments that encourage youth to take images that represent their ethnicity and community. To better understand how photovoice impacts ERI and the potential association of ERI's and critical consciousness among Black youth with community violence exposure, this study aims to explore youth's development of ERI as they engage in the photovoice process.

Purpose of the Thesis

Various programs are tailored toward Black youth wellbeing but do not examine the current state of a youth's sense of critical consciousness and how the program affects their ethnic-racial identity development. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into how the critical consciousness development of Black youth exposed to community violence who participated in photovoice influenced their understanding of their own ethnic-racial identity. Examining this will improve our understanding of how community-based participatory research may serve as an intervention strategy that promotes wellbeing among minoritized youth as well as a research method.

Theoretical Framework

Critical consciousness is an in-depth understanding and awareness of oppressive ideologies and behaviors that impact a community.[5,9] Photovoice is used as a mechanism to develop CC and may relate to Black youth accepting and understanding their ethnic-racial identity.[5] The critical conscious theory was first introduced through Brazilian educator Paolo Freire.[5,9] He coined this theory through his desire to liberate oppressed communities through education.[5,9] Paolo Friere theorized with his theory of critical consciousness that a part of the oppressed community must lead the social liberation of disenfranchised communities. Additionally, he theorized that individuals must achieve critical consciousness; no one can force them to inhabit this mindset.[5] Critical consciousness was further conceptualized by Hope and colleagues to identify experiences of racism as a potential catalyst for social change. The authors suggested that the effects of racism in a community can lead to the development of critical conscious and eventually, the engagement in communal activism.[9] The study consisted solely of Black adolescents whose past exposure to racism was examined and found to correlate racial identity and critical consciousness.[9] The investigators concluded that discrimination led youth to engage in positive social action.[9] Their research suggested that racial stress may increase individuals' motivation to participate in local activism.[9]

Research Question

1. How does the critical consciousness development promoted in photovoice relate to ethnic-racial identity development among one group of Black youth exposed to community violence?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

  Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) can act as a vehicle for the positive development of critical consciousness.[4] The effects of critical consciousness have been studied mainly with minoritized populations as a crucial contributor to how the experience of discrimination or a traumatic event influences development.[4,9,10] The lived experience of trauma has the potential to inspire individuals to gain knowledge, analyze, and propose solutions prevent the occurrence of this trauma for anyone else.[4,5] This is also described in post-traumatic growth theory, which suggests that psychological response to trauma can lead to positive mental and physical health transformations.[11,12] We combine post-traumatic growth theory with the critical consciousness framework in this study to better understand youth's experience and response to community violence and racial trauma-psychological and emotional injury resulting from experiences of racism.[13] Notably, a pathway from racial trauma to critical action in the critical consciousness framework reflects post-traumatic growth. Therefore, for minoritized communities who experience racial trauma CC development may promote post-traumatic growth.[4] CBPR promotes critical consciousness by promoting partnerships between academic researchers and community members to develop new shared understandings of inequities in their society and formulate strategies to address them.[4] In CBPR research, this exploration occurs through collaborative learning and decision making to identify significant issues in a community and potential solutions.[4] Photovoice incorporates CC and could potentially serve as an intervention that promotes post-traumatic growth after exposure to racial trauma.

  While Black youth are the most at risk for discrimination, they are also the most likely to develop their CC through activism.[9,10] Youth are exposed to social issues in their community, including violence, through school and their neighborhoods at an early age.[1,2] Often, youth

witness injustices while simultaneously being suppressed from making any change.[9] Institutional racism prevents youth from transforming an unjust system that they live in by not giving them a platform to express communal inequities and methods to convert them.[5] Photovoice, allows youth to reflect, plan, and take action outside of the already familiar systems.[5] Photovoice can empower youth by giving them a voice to express and address inequities.[5]

Ethnic-racial identity is also involved in youth critical consciousness development.[5] Researchers have identified that youth ERI contributes to youths' responses to instances of racism.[5,9] Positive feelings of ERI is associated with positive mental health, low levels of aggression, antiviolence attitudes, and antidiscrimination attitudes. Ethnic racial identity acts directly on psychological functioning.[9] This study aims to explore how ERI and critical consciousness develop within photovoice using a case study design.

Impact of Community Violence & ERI on Black Youth

Psychological trauma has been shown to impact humans socially in the early stages of life.[6,17] Views on race and ethnicity can be altered with the first exposure to an adverse or traumatic experience.[6] From infancy, youth can develop a sense of awareness of their ethnic-racial makeup and how those around them can perceive it. This means parental influence, community influence, and lived experiences of a racial embodiment can cultivate a child's ethnic-racial identity early.[6] Community violence has a psychological impact on youth that follows them throughout life. Due to systemic racism that marginalizes communities of color, Black youth are more likely to experience community violence[16,17] putting them are at a greater risk for impacted psychological development.[1,2,3] Experiences of community violence can lead to negative outcomes including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, suicide, and many more

mental disorders which occur higher within Black youth than other races or ethnicities.[16] The onset of these disorders can occur due to early exposure to community violence and lead to chronic mental health conditions throughout life.[6] In addition community violence occurs within the context of racism. This burden of racism hinders resilience among youth exposed to community violence.[17] Thus identifying interventions that address trauma, including racial trauma, are critical to promoting health and well-being among Black youth exposed to community violence.[17]

Ethnic Racial Identity (ERI) is defined as an individual's attitudes and behaviors towards one's race and ethnicity.[6] Ethnic Racial Identity most significantly impacts youth and adults of color.[6] ERI comprises one's private regard (i.e., positive feelings towards one's racial group) and public regard (i.e., the extent to which others view the Black race positively). A youth's ERI development can affect their well-being throughout adolescence and into adulthood. Positive views of one's own ERI are associated with more vital mental, physical, and psychological health.[6] Youth with a greater sense of pride in their ethnicity have a healthier response to instances of trauma.[15,16] Thus, ERI has the potential to buffer the negative impact of community violence exposure in the context of racism on Black youth's health and well-being.

Critical Consciousness Theory Framework
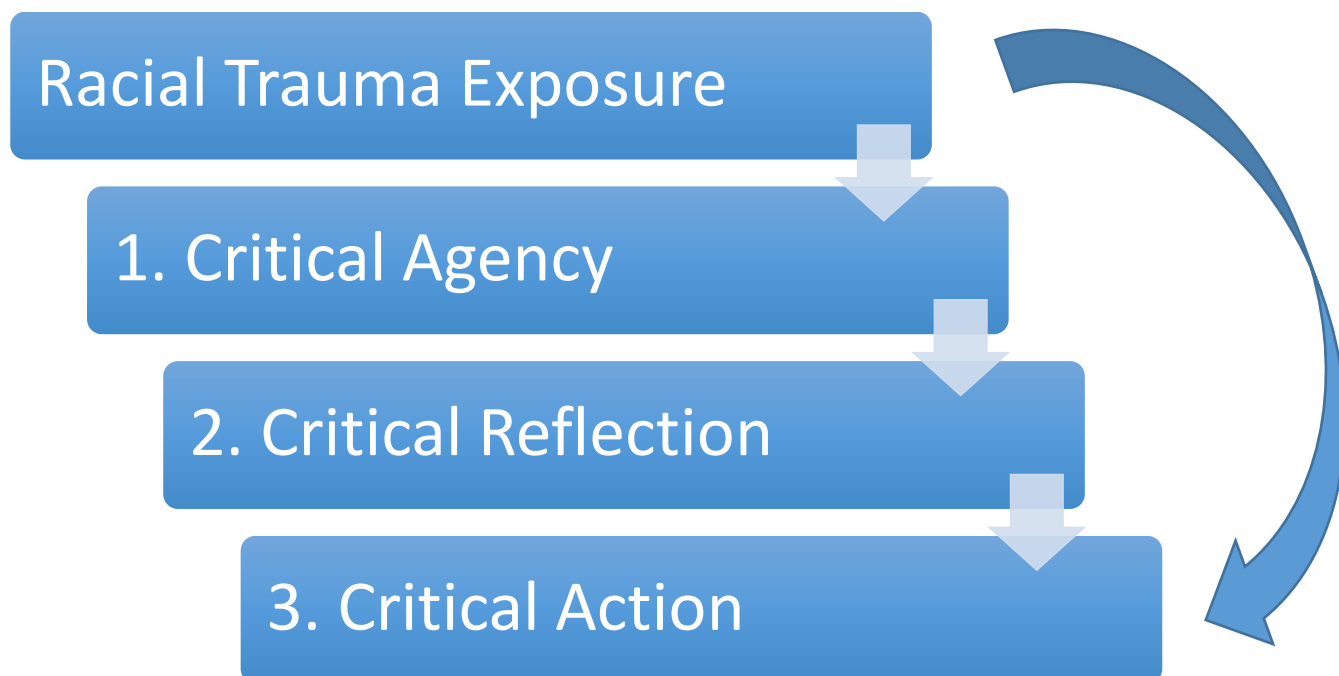
To study ERI development among Black youth who participated in photovoice, we rely on the Critical Consciousness framework model by Hope and colleagues. [9,10] The theory was used to understand how individuals or groups are empowered to address inequities through the analysis of socio-political systems that they reside in.[9] CC's potential effect on ERI is explained by three dimensions of critical consciousness: Reflection, Agency, and Action.[5,9,10] These aspects are combined to promote development of CC and potentially influence ERI development.

Critical Reflection

Critical consciousness is an in-depth understanding and awareness of oppressive ideologies and behaviors that impact a community.[5,9] Critical reflection is acknowledging and being aware of the oppressive structure that one exists in.[9] It also includes increased knowledge of one's own ethnic-racial identity.[5] During critical reflection multiple aspects of discrimination are identified and analyzed. Critical reflection in Hope and colleagues model is separated into two reflection in two categories: inequalities & egalitarianism. The former consists of perceived

instances of discrimination identified in expressed behavior or beliefs.[9] The latter is defined as acknowledging equality among all races/ethnicities.[9] Both aspects of critical reflection lead to a positive development of critical consciousness and influences ERI.[9]

Critical Agency

Critical agency refers to one's capabilities to produce effective change.[5,9,10] Essentially, it is an analysis of how able a community or individual is to combat oppressive systems that have been embedded within society.[9] This attribute of critical consciousness is an analysis of an individual's motivation to address inequities that they identify through critical reflection.[9] Past studies have attempted to measure critical agency through response scales questions such as; "I am motivated to try to end racism and discrimination."[5] This focus of the critical agency to improve racial and ethnic inequities in oneself and the community[9] may promote ERI development.

Critical Action

Critical action refers to the behaviors by an individual or collective that inhibit change at a sociopolitical level.[5,9] For critical action to be defined, one must identify the mechanism of oppression within critical reflection and critical agency.[5] Action usually occurs as a product of reflection and agency; which can be affected by racism and violence exposure.[5] Occurrences of racism and violence can act as a catalyst for social activism. The lived experience of these traumas inspires individuals to combat the very trauma that they face.[5] It is measured through participation (or perceived participation) in any form of social activism.[5] Critical action can occur either inside or outside the sociopolitical sphere where the discrimination occurred.[5]

Participants can also fulfill this aspect of critical consciousness through support for social causes.[5] Direct-explicit action does not have to take place for critical action to be expressed. Advocating for social causes can also represent critical action.[5]

Using Theory to Examine CC Impact on ERI

Photovoice is a mechanism to develop critical consciousness.[4] In photovoice, all dimensions of critical consciousness can influence one another. For example, youth participating in photovoice assignments have the opportunity to gain awareness of inequities and develop agency.[7] Photovoice acts as a medium for youth to explore injustices in their community and develop an action plan.[7] Photovoice for Black adolescents exposed to community violence in the context of racism has the potential to directly affect CC development.[5] Exploring this process can determine specific instances of CC development and how they impact youth's understanding of their ethnic-racial identity.[5]

Chapter 3: Methodology

Project Description

This case study focuses on a photovoice study was conducted to examine racism and community violence as intersecting public health issues from the perspective of Black youth living in an urban Midwestern community. Photovoice has historically been a community-based participatory research (CBPR) method that enlists participants to define, reflect upon, and enhance their community through photography and action.[5] For this Emory IRB approved study, THRIVE lab researchers recruited youth between the ages of 13-18 from a community-based organization in Kansas City, Missouri Youth Ambassadors (YA). Youth Ambassadors is a non-

profit educational employment program with the goal of empowering disenfranchised youth with the support of adult mentors. All youth included in the photovoice study identified as Black or African American. The study aimed to explore community violence and racism as intersecting public health issues impacting Black youth. Recruitment strategies included digital flyers, recruitment videos, orientation/promotional sessions, and word of mouth. Researchers worked with representatives from YA to identify youth who were interested. Once potential participants were identified, researchers contacted the child's parents and obtained informed consent from both the parent and student. Youth were eligible for the study if they identified as Black/African American, were between 13-18, and had been exposed to community violence. Demographic information was collected for the study, including sex, gender, grade, housing situation, and GPA.

Procedure

Photovoice consisted of four sessions that spanned over the course of four weeks. Youth attended sessions online through zoom and consented to have their discussion recorded for research purposes. After the orientation session, every session began with a photo-assignment question generated from a group discussion about the intersection of racism and community violence. The youth spent the week using either their camera phones or regular cameras loaned to them to capture aspects of their everyday lives that they felt represented the photo-assignment for that week. Youth shared photos during the next session as researchers lead a facilitated discussion on what was captured. Youth decided on one image to be a trigger for discussion. The group discussion that followed was facilitated using a process called SHOWED.[18] It is an acronym used for photo discussion that asks: 1 – What do you see here? 2 – What's happening

here? 3 – How does this relate to our lives? 4 – Why does this problem or strength exist? 5 - How can our new understanding empower us? 6 – What can we do about this? Each photovoice session generated a variety of themes through this process.[18]

Data Analysis

The purpose of this case study was to gain insight into how the critical consciousness development of one group of Black youth exposed to community violence and racism who participated in photovoice influenced their ethnic-racial identity development. Specifically, this study explored changes in Black youths' racial centrality, private regard (i.e., positive feelings towards one's racial group), and public regard (i.e., the extent to which others view Black people positively) during photovoice as well as changes in critical reflection, agency, and action. Changes in these constructs were analyzed through a deductive coding process that used these pre-defined codes of CC and ERI to identify instances of each phenomenon throughout the three photo-discussion sessions of photovoice (sessions 2-4). A codebook was developed that included the code, a definition, an example, and inclusion criteria. All photovoice sessions were transcribed and uploaded into MAXQDA.   Original audio recordings were deleted once transcriptions are complete and verified for accuracy. Eighteen codes fell into the three dimensions of critical consciousness proposed by Hope and colleagues (2020) with various codes reflecting indicators of ERI proposed by Marks and colleagues (2020). Longitudinal qualitative data analysis was performed on transcripts from photovoice sessions with qualitative data management software, MAXQDA.

A trajectory analysis was conducted to identify changes in ERI across the three sessions of photovoice over time. Following this approach, data was analyzed from photovoice session

transcripts, researcher field notes, and youth photographs. Once data was coded, matrices were used to identify the prevalence of each code during each session. Changes in ERI and CC were identified through both frequencies of and type of ERI and CC codes in each session transcript, subsequent field notes, and session photographs according to these matrices. Changes in the frequency and type of ERI and CC over three weeks were identified through the use of matrices.

Chapter 4: Findings

The following results were identified through trajectory analysis, producing themes related to ERI development over the course of this photovoice study.

Trajectory Qualitative Analysis of Photovoice KC sessions

Themes	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
Critical Reflection leads to Pride in History and culture	Acknowledgment of traumatic attributes of ethnic-racial history	Awareness of cultural appropriation throughout history. More positive instances of reflecting on history	Strong emphasis on the importance of history and culture and empowering others in their community through ethnic-racial knowledge
Pride in self-image	Acknowledgement of discrimination toward Black bodies.	Acknowledgement of appropriation led to further pride in self image	Identification of Pride in self image through ERI

			socialization in their respective families
Awareness of Public regard	Moderate reflection on public regard.	Heavy increase in awareness of public regard	Reflecting on the minimal impact public regard can negatively affect their ERI development.
Critical action to promote ERI development	Youth advocate for increase in ERI knowledge in schools.	Reducing appropriation and eliminating stereotypes of the Black body.	Preserving ethnic racial identity through media

Themes 1: Pride in self-image through critical reflection

Cultural and ethnic appropriation were recurring talking points throughout the sessions. Youth described their behavioral experiences with ERI development in response to appropriation issues. Youth participants discussed the consequences of appropriation on one's self-image in the early sessions in the focus group. As sessions continued, participants mentioned more instances of appropriation that they experienced. Interestingly enough, even though youth discussed the consequences of appropriation, not one participant expressed that appropriation affected their self-esteem negatively impacted their ERI and instead offered words of encouragement and pride. For example one participant shared:

"So until we really accept who we are, we can't expect other people to accept who we are because (we're) continuing to try and be something we're not, then how can we tell someone else to look at us as this if we're not even looking at ourselves as that."

Reflecting on experiences of appropriation resulted in increases in youth pride about one's self-image. As youth shared perspectives about how they think about their physical features, later sessions revealed the origin of this pride in their physical appearance developed as a reaction to the historical mistreatment of Black bodies. There was a significant focus on hair and the power that it has. They described black hair as being powerful and ancient. Toward the end of the sessions, youth maintained their high levels of self-esteem but seemed to have a greater appreciation for how their ethnic heritage contributed to their positive ERI socialization.

"Our hairstyles because our hairstyles literally come from the beginning of time before our ancestors were even taken from Africa, dreads, braids, cornrows, like literally all of that was made before we were ever taken over here."

Participants identified the importance of high self-esteem for their ERI development. Positive self-image was identified by youth to be a significant attribute when combatting racial trauma.

Theme 2: Historical and cultural knowledge as significant parts of ERI development

History and culture were important topics of each session. Photovoice allowed youth to explore their personal history through discussion questions and share them. The photovoice sessions allowed youth to express their ethnic-racial history, thus inciting a sense of pride that

participants had for their ethnic background. As the sessions continued, the youth went from acknowledging and describing the trauma their people have endured to determining ways to empower youth through historical and cultural knowledge that went beyond those traumas.

"if we don't remember these things, like all we will remember is the oppression of Black people instead of the good things about our history."

Youth identified more of the historical traumas their ancestors faced as the photovoice sessions progressed. This contemplation often led them to associate the historical enslavement of Black people to the marginalization of their own ethnic/racial group today. The youth also pointed out that typically Black history is discussed only through a lens as an oppressed people. Participants wanted to learn more about Black history outside of the slave trade. They expressed the importance of highlighting Black achievements.

"Yes, because like all of Black history, yeah, it's good things but it's about fighting back for, you know, fighting back instead of the things like Black people that invented things or the Black people – like those histories. Like we don't ever learn about that. All we learn about is fighting back." – (in regards to Black history education in schools)

The recollection of historical traumas and the need for a greater emphasis on Black strengths and achievements contributed to youth's expression of pride in their history over the course of photovoice sessions. While youth shared and received from their peers' reflections on the suffering each other's families went through, through photovoice discussions a new shared

understanding of the depth of Black strengths and achievements developed a sense of pride in their resiliency as a community.

> *"I guess by knowing like this is who I am and this is where I come from and if my people can go through what they went through back then and still, you know, not necessarily come out on top because we're still climbing that ladder but come out successful with what we did accomplish in that short amount of time, then I'm unstoppable 'cause if they can do all that, then you can't touch me."*

Over the course of the photovoice sessions youth engaged in critical reflection of historical trauma among the Black community opening up space and recognition of strengths and resiliency which enhanced ERI.

Theme 3: Critical Action & Agency stimulating advocacy & communal awareness of ERI

Ideas for critical action appeared as the sessions progressed. Youth began to explain more ideas they had to improve racial socialization through activism. Also, as sessions went on, ideas for advocacy and areas in their community for potential social change were identified. An in-depth exploration of youth's ideas for social action caused them to realize the potential their community had to promote effective change in race relations. This development of critical consciousness resulted in enhanced ERI and wanting to share their racial pride with others outside their own racial group/community.

" I think a fun way we can educate people is like – like he said, a fund raiser, but not really a fundraiser, like an event that where we can educate people that's not a part of our culture and we can like show them what each things means and why it means this and where it came from."

Every session provided a new opportunity for participants to identify problems they saw in their community along with potential solutions. Photovoice allowed youth to explore the cultural aspects of their community, thus, inciting advocacy and action plans for improving injustices building on community strengths. One of the action plans expressed by youth involved the sharing of one's own ERI. They stressed the importance of educating Black youth and other races about Black ethnic-racial identity. In the last session, the youth proposed that barriers and facilitators to strong ERI identified in the previous sessions be taught about through an educational program. For example, one youth shared:

"When we educate like the other generations and stuff about how our hair is our culture and stuff and how it expresses our true thoughts, I feel like we should tell them, don't let anyone try to force you into doing something that you may regret in the future around your hairstyle or the way you act and stuff."

Participants suggested that this impact will lead to more unity in their community and decrease instances of discrimination and appropriation.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The theories discussed in the literature review are reflected through the results of this qualitative analysis. Post-traumatic growth theory (PTG) and critical consciousness framework are exhibited through the photovoice case study as youth's perception of their ethnic-racial identity developed in reaction to the racial injustice they identified. Photovoice appeared to positively impact youth's development of ERI through the pathway of critical consciousness. The participants reflected on all three steps; however, the photovoice process mainly caused youth to engage in critical reflection with 56.5% of all codes falling under the parent code of critical reflection.

Two primary themes reflected positive ERI development through the photovoice process. Participants described pride in self-image and Black history through their critical reflection on photo assignments. Youth's private regard was a constant attribute in the development of critical consciousness, as discussions on Black trauma led to surges in pride in history. This reflects the post-traumatic growth theory in the literature of the potential of trauma inciting pride in identity.[5,6] It is crucial to note, however, that post-traumatic growth is not a direct result of trauma, but rather a youth's psychological trajectory of how they cope with such trauma. This reinforces the need to explore interventions such a photovoice and processes such as critical consciousness development and ERI development that can facilitate healthy coping, and, in turn, resilience and healing among trauma-exposed Black youth. Through the current analysis, photo-discussion sessions led primarily to critical reflection as youth became more aware of the racial and ethnic history and this promoted ERI development, particularly private regard. This ERI development was a collective experience with youth influencing each other's sense of pride. One participant's explanation of a trauma they experienced caused another to share the amount of strength they had to survive that trauma. Youth were not discouraged by instances of cultural or

institutional racism that they viewed in their community. They were motivated to find a solution to these issues. This directly reflects the pathway toward critical consciousness proposed by Hope and colleagues as well as the collective strength component of the historical trauma-post traumatic growth (HT-PTG) framework proposed by Ortega-Williams and colleagues that highlights how collective resilience can facilitate post-traumatic growth among historically-marginalized youth.[11,12]

Critical agency and action were also essential for youth's ethnic-racial identity development. Photovoice allowed youth to explore the opportunities in their community for social activism and psychological liberation. Once the mechanism is identified, the participants understand how their cultural norms can contribute to their implementation of social action. Youth responses in the photovoice session reflected the framework of the development of critical consciousness over time. As sessions progressed, the amount of time they spent critically reflecting decreased as they began to engage in critical agency and action. By the last photovoice session, they began defining action plans to address the issues they identified in previous sessions. Nearly 30% of codes identified in session 4 highlighted their youth's action plans. This indicates that photovoice encourages youth to engage in critical action over time. The participants provided credible ideas for social change based on past instances of discrimination that they identified. This resulted in a surge in pride in one's community for many of them, further enhancing their private regard. Education was also a large part of their social action plan. As youth increased their awareness of the importance of their ethnic-racial identity, they felt it essential for other races to become familiar.

Positive development of ethnic-racial identity can be credited to the pathway of critical consciousness and the post-traumatic growth theory proposed by Ortega-Williams and

colleagues. The framework suggests that historical and cultural trauma leads to a social transformation in a target population where individuals experience surges of pride and resiliency. This study reveals that critical reflection can promote social change, as expressed in the PTG theory. The theory was reflected in youth's passionate response to exposure to racial trauma in their community.[11] As the theory suggest, youth were motivated to come up with action plans after discussing past instances of racial trauma exposure.[11,12] Post-traumatic growth theory was reflected by the youth throughout the photograph discussions. They exhibited multiple attributes of post-traumatic growth; with photo discussions highlighting the collective experience of relating to their ancestors and culture, as well as exploring new possibilities for social change, supporting youth growth and healing from trauma through finding creative solutions.[11] As photovoice promoted the path to critical consciousness and ERI development, it caused participants to exhibit attributes of post-traumatic growth.

Current Mental Health Studies on ERI Impact

The literature surrounding mental health interventions for Black youth is extensive. Psychological interventions have been conducted both inside and outside the clinic.[19,20] Many interventions have used aspects of the ERI lifespan model to guide their intervention. For example, researchers developed the RECAST (Racial Encounter Coping Appraisal Socialization Theory) theory to build resistance to racial trauma through parent racial socialization.[18] Theories such as RECAST promote improved self-efficacy in response to racial and ethnic discrimination.[18] While theory has implications for applying racial socialization as an approach to reduce suffering from racial trauma[20], additional traumas such as community violence are not a primary focus. Phipps et al. proposed addressing multiple traumas including historical and

cultural traumas through adapting cognitive-behavioral therapy[20]. This can occur through integrating cultural practices into cognitive-behavioral therapy.[20] Outside of these interventions, there are limited interventions that specifically address racial trauma in conjunction with other traumas.[20] As there can be a multiplicative effect of race-based traumatic stress on survivors of other forms of trauma, interventions that address racial trauma in addition to other traumas are greatly needed.[21] This study suggests photovoice may be a viable intervention to fill this gap.

Limitations

The sample size of the population limits generalizing results from this study to other populations. The photovoice group analyzed only had six participants. An increase in sample size would yield more diverse and thorough results, improving the amount of external validity. Due to the sample size, future research is needed to more conclusively support improvements in ERI result from photovoice. This study supports future examinations with larger samples to examine this question.

The study was also limited by the number of researchers included in the data analysis process. Only one researcher conducted a qualitative analysis which can potentially introduce bias to the coding and analysis process. Internal validity could be improved if two or more researchers code data in the data analysis process.

Another limitation of the study exists within the nature of analyzing group qualitative data. There are moments during the SHOWED discussion where a couple of students consist of all of the dialogue on the photo assignments. Participants who could have potentially had

differing opinions may not have had the space to express them due to the other youth perspectives taking up most of the discussion.

Implications for Public Health Research

The findings from this study show how community-based participatory research can improve the development of ethnic-racial identity in youth. There is not much literature on ERI development in children that shows how it changes over time in a health intervention. Community-based participatory research can be used to understand the community further and uplift its members through the development of critical consciousness. The findings provide insights on tailoring programs to target ERI development in youth.

This study also implicates future uses of photovoice. This study revealed that photovoice is not just a research method but also a potential health intervention. ERI, a profound attribute of one's mental health, was improved in photovoice sessions. Primary themes from this study can support the development of future health interventions targeting Black youth's ethnic-racial identity. Self-image and youth's history were a significant part of their ethnic-racial identity that they reflected throughout photo-discussion sessions. As researchers and practitioners explore strategies to promote critical conscious and positive ethnic-racial identity in a community, they can use the themes from this study to develop a curriculum. This study shows how photovoice inspires the development and nurturance of ERI in Black youth and what aspects of their ERI identity promote post-traumatic growth.

Appendices

Codebook

Code	Sub-code	Definition
Critical Reflection		
	Pride in Culture/Race/Ethnicity	Expression of pride (both at the individual and community level) in Black culture
	Pride in History	Expression of pride in Black history
	Fear of one's Community	Negative of fearful thoughts about one's own ethnic-racial community
	Pride in one's community	Positive thoughts about one's own ethnic-racial community
	Pride in self Image	Positive feelings about one's positionality in their own race. High

		feelings of self esteem.
	Low self esteem	Negative feelings about one's positionality in their own race. Self-stereotyping. (i.e, negative thoughts about one's own race, physical makeup, language, or feelings of belonging to their own race/ethnicity).
	Discrimination	Discussion of personal experiences of discrimination, including micro aggressions
	Appropriation	Discussion of personal experiences of appropriation

	Lack of racial and ethnic awareness/knowledge	A lack of knowledge and awareness of ethnic racial makeup and history.
	Racial and Ethnic awareness/knowledge	Knowledge and awareness of ethnic racial makeup and history. Awareness of diverse ethnic-racial experiences
	Public Regard	Judgments concerning how other races and ethnicities view Blacks
Critical Agency		
	Positive ERI socialization in community	Personal instances of positive socialization in one's own ethnic racial community.
	Positive ERI socialization with Individuals	Discussion of importance of building relationships

		with individuals. Includes personal benefits of mentor relationships, individuals they identify as mentors, personal experiences they have had with mentors
	Positive educational Experience	Instances of positive ERI development within the educational system.
	Negative Educational Experience	Instances of negative ERI development within the educational system.
	Potential social change	Other instances were youth talk about an aspect of the communities potential for social change.

Critical Action		
	Advocacy	Suggestions for potential strategies to facilitate activism
	Action	Instances were youth have participated in some form of activism

Data Analysis

Primary Codes CC

	Session 2: How does living in fear affect how we see the world?	Session 3: What is something that shows change and how racism is evolving for the better?	Session 4: How does cultural appropriation affect you or the community?
Critical Reflection	25	46	25
Critical Agency	23	20	2

Critical	6	12	18
Action			

ERI Subcodes

	Session 2: How does living in fear affect how we see the world?	Session 3: What is something that shows change and how racism is evolving for the better?	Session 4: How does cultural appropriation affect you or the community?
Appropriation	1	14	8
Discrimination	1	7	0
Pride in culture/race/ethnicity	1	9	8
Positive ERI Socialization in Community	1	3	1
Pride in History	2	3	7
Public Regard	3	5	0
Potential Social Change	4	8	0

Negative ERI Socialization in School	5	1	1
Advocacy	6	6	5
Negative ERI Socialization in Community	7	7	0
Fear of One's Community	7	0	0
Racial and Ethnic Awareness/knowledge	10	0	2
Pride in One's Community	0	1	0
Positive ERI Socialization in Schools	0	1	0
Action	0	6	13
Pride in Self Image	0	7	2

x

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