

**AFROCENTRIC CAPACITY BUILDING: BUILDING AGENCY IN THE AFRICAN  
AMERICAN COMMUNITY**

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A Comprehensive Project

Presented to the Faculties of California Baptist University

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Social Work

2022

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AMERICAN COMMUNITY

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# **AFROCENTRIC CAPACITY BUILDING: BUILDING AGENCY IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY**

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## **Chapter 1: Executive Summary**

African Americans face multiple inequalities in nearly every category tracked in society (Katz et al., 2005). Although many legal and formal barriers were dismantled by rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court and various acts of Congress, profound inequities continue to persist in the African American community due to systemic racism and racist social attitudes (DeGruy, 2017). In the wake of George Floyd's murder, this researcher has sought intentional, explicit, and effective ways to address these historic inequities in the inland region of Southern California, also known as the Inland Empire. As a social worker, this researcher has utilized the community-based participatory research (CBPR) model as a foundational research design due to its promising uses throughout the nation when addressing the needs of the African American community. Although CBPR is often seen as a tool to address health disparities, it is also a social change model that empowers communities to build political power and the capacity to address community needs (D'Alonzo, 2010). Therefore, this research project sought to empower African American organization executives by building their program or organizational capacity to build agency in the community through Afrocentric practices.

Through the utilization of best practices of CBPR and the Community Engagement and Social Innovation (CESI) model, this research found that African Americans have created partnerships to address community issues by adapting the CBPR model to develop long-term agency to address historical inequities through an Afrocentric CBPR (ACBPR) process. It also

identified critical capacity-building needs of the African American community, including the development of racial and ethnic identity (REI) as a vital component of the Afrocentric capacity-building model. Additional capacity-building needs include increasing knowledge of program development, conducting research, improving fundraising and grant writing abilities, strengthening business practices, and enabling access to and use of public data. Therefore, as a byproduct of these research findings, this researcher has chosen to focus on the dissemination phase of the CESI model by creating a five-module online training utilizing Google Classroom to facilitate easy access and affordability. Through this free online tool, the African American community will have access to the Afrocentric Capacity Building training as a self-paced and open-source tool for African American nonprofit leaders to strengthen REI and build program development, research, grant writing, business, and public data skills, as identified through a needs assessment.

This study strengthens the body of research regarding the empowerment of the African American community through the CBPR process by addressing two questions: (1) To what degree does an ACBPR project adhere to the traditional CBPR process? and (2) To what extent can an Afrocentric capacity-building tool effectively enhance the capacity and REI of its participants? The study hypothesized that an Afrocentric capacity-building tool does increase capacity and REI. To confirm the hypothesis, this study followed two African American-led partnerships that have created ACBPR projects to address critical community issues in California's San Bernardino and Riverside counties. ACBPR projects are CBPR partnerships initiated by African Americans, who lead every component of the CBPR process and use traditional African principles such as the Nguzo Saba as the theoretical foundation of their research. In addition, Afrocentric capacity building represents empowerment efforts grounded in

REI development while equipping African American organization executives with the knowledge and skills to build effective community institutions and collaborate with and leverage the resources of other African American-serving organizations to address historical inequities.

The social work profession has made dismantling inequality a priority through its Grand Challenges for Social Work initiative (American Academy of Social Work & Social Welfare, 2018). In its challenge to achieve equal opportunity and justice, the social work profession recognizes that access to quality education, affordable housing, and employment is still not available to all people in the United States due to prejudice, bias, and stigmatization (American Academy of Social Work & Social Welfare, 2018). To address these inequities, social workers are called to confront racial and social injustices, inequity, and other forms of unfair practices to ensure the full participation of marginalized groups throughout the nation. Therefore, the social work field naturally aligns with the priorities of the African American community. Before outlining the study and its results, a literature review provides context to the research and explains the gap this study sought to fill to build the agency of the African American community.

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## **Chapter 2: Problem Identification and Background**

### **Social Problem**

Many historic inequities persist in the African American community (Katz et al., 2005). These inequities exist in many categories, including health, education, housing, and criminal justice (DeGruy, 2017). The result is fewer opportunities for quality public education and lower college-going rates, livable wages, and wealth building (Hogan et al., 2011). Due to poor social determinants of health, African Americans have profound health inequalities that lead to poor mortality rates (Bell & Owens-Young, 2020; Paradies et al., 2015). Inequalities among African Americans can be seen at an early age. Racism causes African American children to grow up in more impoverished households, which prevents children from having greater access to quality education, health services, and healthy social environments (Trent et al., 2019). One of the most alarming health indicators is higher infant mortality rates. African American infants are less likely to survive and if they do, they are less likely to live as long as other ethnic groups (Bell & Owens-Young, 2020). Infant mortality rates are a crucial indicator in evaluating the health of a population (Fishman et al., 2020). By considering mortality rates, researchers examine the health and survival of infants as critical characteristics of the society in which they are born (Fishman et al., 2020; Hogan et al., 2011; Singh & Yu, 2019). African American women have one the highest rates, with 11.7 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to White women with a rate of 4.8 (Fishman et al., 2020). This can be traced back to racism as the foundation of the United States (Fishman et al., 2020; Hogan et al., 2011).

### **A History of Racism**

The body of research on racism is overwhelming. Racism is associated with poorer physical health and mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and psychological

stress (Sexton et al., 2020). Regardless of economic status, a consistent determinant of poor outcomes is toxic stress due to racism (Wright et al., 2020). Toxic stress is frequent, harmful, and cumulative exposure to stressors that overwhelms the mental and emotional ability to recover healthily (Weber & Harrison, 2019). Dr. Cheryl Grills and her colleagues (2016) illustrated the physical and emotional effects of racism by evoking the historic phrase, “I can’t breathe.” These were the last words of Eric Garner, a Black man choked to death by a White police officer in Staten Island, New York, on July 17, 2014, after being stopped for selling loose cigarettes. These words became the rallying cry for activists protesting a grand jury’s decision not to indict the officer who killed Mr. Garner (Grills et al., 2016). Due to the normalization of racist practices that serve as the foundation of the United States, many unwilling to acknowledge the historic and compounding legacy of physical, emotional, and social trauma often deny its existence (Wright et al., 2020).

Racism built America through the establishment of slavery, also called the *Maafa* by African American scholars (DeGruy, 2017). *Maafa* is a Swahili word used to describe the destruction of African people by separating them from their language, history, culture, and ancestry (Wells-Wilbon et al., 2008). The first recorded slave ship to come to the American colonies with the ancestors of African Americans was the Spanish ship San Juan Bautista from Angola in July 1619 (Kendi, 2017). Latin American slaveholders used the racist ideas of Africans to produce the permanent slavery of 250,000 people held in South America before the first enslaved people landed in the English colonies (Hannah-Jones et al., 2022). Racist views characterized Africans as inferior, lazy, and hypersexual. Leo Africanus wrote about the people of Africa in 1526 (Kendi, 2017). He described them as living a beastly life, unable to use reason, and prone to sexual indulgence (Kendi, 2017). Slaveholders used this classification to establish a

distinct type of slavery among Africans at that time and in subsequent generations (Bride, 2020). Enslaved people were treated as property with no human rights, and they could be treated and disposed of like animals (Bride, 2020; Kendi, 2017). This treatment continued for 246 years (DeGruy, 2017; Grills et al., 2016; Kendi, 2017). Those 246 years were devoid of any acknowledgment of their humanity and featured the denial of education, wealth building, and rights of any kind (DeGruy, 2017; Grills et al., 2016; Kendi, 2017). It is estimated that millions of Africans died en route to the Americas (DeGruy, 2017). Slavery was the initial impetus for continued violence, inhumane treatment, and inequities sanctioned, enforced, and upheld by law (Stevenson, 2021), therefore making racism systemic since the founding of the nation.

Upon the end of slavery in 1865, Southern states began to enact laws to drastically limit the rights of African Americans and enforce racial segregation (DeGruy, 2017; Stevenson, 2021). These laws were called the Black codes and limited African Americans' access to jobs, ownership of certain types of property, and legal protections (Stewart, 1998). In response to these laws, Congress enacted the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, requiring all states to adhere to equal protection under the 14th Amendment and allowing Black men to vote (Chin, 2004). During reconstruction, African Americans were protected by law through enforcement aided by federal soldiers. Black men participated in the political process and were the first Black members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate (du Bois, 1910). However, reconstruction only lasted until 1877, igniting another era of White supremacy and discriminatory laws (DeGruy, 2017; du Bois, 1910). The first discriminatory laws deprived African American men of voting rights by devising several hurdles to voting (Barreyre, 2011). African Americans submitted legal challenges to seek remedy, only to meet the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, determining that forced segregation did not violate the U.S. Constitution

(Medley, 2012). This systemically denied African Americans equal social, commercial, and legal opportunities, creating ongoing biopsychosocial inequities.

At the beginning of the 1880s, Southern states began an expansion of oppressive laws as White residents demanded additional legislation to limit the opportunities of African Americans (DeGruy, 2017). Jim Crow laws refer to an accumulation of state and local laws that further marginalized and oppressed African Americans (Hsuen et al., 2020). African Americans were forbidden to live in White neighborhoods or attend White public pools, hospitals, and schools. However, such laws were also found in Northern states (Purnell et al., 2019). Through segregation, African Americans received inferior housing, access to fresh foods, education, and health care. Violations of such laws were met with arrest, fines, jail sentences, violence, and death (DeGruy, 2017; Stevenson, 2021). In the 20th century, Jim Crow laws expanded through violence (Stevenson, 2021). Everyday violence occurred through lynching (Miller, 2005). The civil rights movement resulted in the removal of Jim Crow laws (Hall, 2005). Due to systemic racism, President Harry Truman and President Lyndon B. Johnson enacted laws that ended segregation and other forms of discrimination (Maslow & Robison, 1953). Such laws included the Civil Rights Act (1964), Voting Rights Act (1965), and Fair Housing Act (1968). Although marginalized and oppressive laws are unconstitutional, their social and systemic practice has continued (DeGruy, 2017; Grills et al., 2016; Kendi, 2017; Stevenson, 2021). The ramifications of continued racist practices can also be identified in the 21st century.

African American employment, health, and housing disparities were again thrust into the nation's discourse due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From the onset of the pandemic, public health agencies began to see profound mortality rates of African Americans due to contracting the virus (Kim & Bostwick, 2020). "Compared with non-Hispanic White people, African

American people have higher rates of COVID-19 cases (2.6 times higher), hospitalization (4.7 times higher), and death (2.1 times higher)” (Maness et al., 2020, p. 18). With continued analysis, public health experts attributed the high mortality rates to social vulnerabilities (Kim & Bostwick, 2020). These vulnerabilities refer to the social, economic, demographic, and geographic components that determine how vulnerable a group of people is to economic or natural disasters and how well the group can persevere, respond, and recover from the catastrophe (Kim & Bostwick, 2020). These social vulnerabilities include living conditions, access to health insurance, job benefits, and access to fruits and vegetables (Kim & Bostwick, 2020). For instance, since the landmark U.S. Supreme Court desegregation case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), African Americans have continued to wait for equal access to quality education (Maness et al., 2020). More than half of African American children continue to go to school with the highest poverty concentrations, compared to only 5% of White children (Maness et al., 2020). Continued academic disparities persist in test scores that follow children into adulthood (Maness et al., 2020). Lower college enrollment and bachelor’s degree attainment contribute to continued income inequalities (Maness et al., 2020). Regarding economic mobility, systemic racism has contributed to anemic wealth building that perpetuates cycles of poverty (Maness et al., 2020). Barriers involve employment, hiring practices, pay housing discrimination, and the criminal justice system (Maness et al., 2020). African Americans are more likely to be unemployed, even with the same education and experience as their European counterparts (Maness et al., 2020). One foundation of health outcomes is housing. Due to the historical practices of redlining by the government and private sector, the social conditions of African American communities were severely impaired (Maness et al., 2020). African Americans are disproportionately exposed to unhealthy living conditions such as small living quarters, toxins,

chemicals, and filth due to the lack of local, state, and federal investments over time (Maness et al., 2020). The criminal justice system has also devastated the African American community (Maness et al., 2020). Through targeted policing, pretrial detention, sentencing, parole, and postparole disparities, African Americans are 5 times as likely to receive longer sentences than other groups creating weakened community assets across generations (Maness et al., 2020; Stevenson, 2021). Data have revealed interactions (particularly deadly ones) with law enforcement as a public health issue (Maness et al., 2020; Stevenson, 2021). These factors have created disruptions in family structures, financial instability, and mental health illnesses (Maness et al., 2020). Due to historical injustices in health care delivery, African Americans are less likely to use health services. When they do, providers are more likely to engage in implicit bias while performing diagnosis, treatment, pain management, and referrals (Maness et al., 2020). The result is perpetual chronic morbidities such as high blood pressure, obesity, asthma, and cancer from one generation to the next (Maness et al., 2020).

### **Intergenerational Trauma**

Current generations of African Americans have historical inequities due to intergenerational trauma. This trauma is an accumulation of biopsychosocial historical trauma (Nutton & Fast, 2015), in which the first generation experiences prolonged trauma resulting in the development of unhealthy coping mechanisms that are passed down from one generation to the next. It is a legacy of numerous, prolonged, and continued traumatic events of a particular community (ethnicity, nationality, and religious affiliation). This trauma is often triggered in subsequent generations due to ongoing trauma and stress passed on by the preceding generation (Barron et al., 2016). As Gail Jardine (1996) explained, “It is not merely the synergism of blackness and consciousness in America that yields rage; it is also the triangulation of these



forces with masculinity in the American tableau that spans the most formidable, unyielding rage of all” (p. 386). Therefore, the cycle continues. The most common way trauma is transmitted from one generation to another is by projection and identification (Dekel & Goldblatt, 2008). Posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms such as the inability to contain emotions, aggression, shame, detachment, and isolation can be projected and internalized by the victim’s children. Other research suggests that symptoms of trauma and stress present in posttraumatic stress disorder or posttraumatic slave syndrome can be transferred through DNA, representing a physical memory of trauma (DeGruy, 2005, p. 101). This research has profound consequences for generations of Black people throughout the diaspora.

### **Contributors to Intergenerational Trauma among Descendants of Enslaved Africans**

Historical trauma through enslavement and slavery, civil and domestic violence, sexual abuse, and extreme poverty can be transferred to subsequent generations (Reid et al., 2005). Gilda Graff (2017) summarized the tangible sources of trauma inflicted by America since the first enslaved people arrived in 1619. These sources include the chronic trauma of slavery and the secondary trauma of unfulfilled promises of reconstruction. Following reconstruction, the oppression of Jim Crow (a rigid pattern of racial segregation), lynching, disenfranchisement, sharecropping, unequal educational resources, terrorism, racial caricatures, convict leasing, as well as various forms of consistent dehumanization and brutality has made it virtually impossible for African Americans to fully recover from their enduring trauma. America’s hegemony can be traced to well before the first Africans were forcibly brought to the shores of Virginia. It was first utilized to harm “Indigenous peoples motivated by imperialism and cultural hegemony that began many generations ago from the earliest contact between immigrants from Europe and the Indigenous populations” (Nutton & Fast, 2015, p. 839). Like the Indigenous populations, African

descendants were forcibly taken from their traditional land and stripped of their history, culture, religion, and language, which has proven to have had devastating consequences for future generations (DeGruy, 2005, p. 96; Nutton & Fast, 2015). This oppression is still seen today in the country's culture and social and political institutions. Lydia Hogewoning (2012) provided a clear definition of oppression, stating that "Lena Dominelli (2002), a leading social work theorist, defines oppression as 'relations that divide people into dominant or superior groups and subordinate or inferior ones. This relation of domination consists of the systematic devaluing of the attributes and contributions of those deemed inferior, and their exclusion from the social resources available to those in the dominant group'" (p. 8). Exclusion, which ultimately results from oppression, is a significant concern for social workers (Hogewoning, 2012). Oppression in our public education system systematically devalues the attributes and contributions of Black children. Because Black behavior is deemed to be inferior, school punishment (sometimes referred to as discipline) strives to force Eurocentric conformity thinking that teaches that the dominant group has all the answers. This devaluing has labeled the cries of pain and suffocation as defiance and aggression. Therefore, instead of providing healing practices or care for these children, the system uses exclusionary punishment to push them toward the school-to-prison pipeline (Strier, 2006). Thus, the social work profession considers anti-oppressive social work practice as a remedy (Strier, 2006).

Not only has historical trauma and hegemonic oppression been transmitted by intergenerational trauma, but racism continues to linger as an aftertaste of European imperialism throughout the world (Kendi, 2017). However, African Americans continue to fight racism without understanding the lies of Black inferiority and White superiority. The enslavement of African Americans in the United States ended more than 400 years ago. Many laws designed to

atone for this great sin have been passed. However, the lie of Black inferiority created 400 years ago continues to thrive (Grills et al., 2016). These lies create fear, disrespect, hostility, and discrimination (Grills et al., 2016).

### **Social Work Relevance**

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that everyone has the right to participate in their government's political process and engage with their government directly or through elected representatives (O'Regan, 2018). The declaration affirms that the people are the source from which government derives its power (O'Regan, 2018). After the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1953 (Hevener, 2019). The convention asserted that women have the right to vote in all elections, are eligible to run for political office, and are entitled to hold public office without discrimination (Hevener, 2019). Given women's continued oppression and marginalization worldwide, empowerment programs are essential in ensuring these rights are observed worldwide. To secure and maintain such rights, empowerment practices are frequently called on. In 2001, the International Federation of Social Workers (2012) adopted a new definition of social work:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being.

Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. (para. 3)

Therefore, the ideals of empowerment and liberation are central to the social work profession as it promotes social change and problem solving to enhance the human condition (Hare, 2004).

Social workers understand empowerment to mean the process in which individuals and groups increase their personal, interpersonal, or political power to take action to improve their quality of life (Hare, 2004). Empowerment practices are mainly used to address the needs of marginalized and oppressed populations (Hare, 2004).

Paulo Freire is perhaps the most influential authority on empowerment theory (Freire et al., 2020). As a prestigious Brazilian educator, Freire made conscientization a central focus of empowerment work (Freire et al., 2020). This refers to the introduction of a critical praxis to ensure individuals can perceive social, political, and economic contradictions to subsequently take action against unjust systems or practices (Freire et al., 2020). Therefore, a core outcome of empowerment work is to give people the power to overcome oppressive social conditions (Freire et al., 2020). Due to the historical oppression and marginalization that have produced gross inequities in the African American community, empowerment theory is a foundational theory to Afrocentric capacity building to enhance the well-being of the target population. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defined well-being as:

a state of successful performance throughout the life course integrating physical, cognitive, and social-emotional function that results in productive activities deemed significant by one's cultural community, fulfilling social relationships, and the ability to transcend moderate psychosocial and environmental problems. Well-being also has a subjective dimension in the sense of satisfaction associated with fulfilling one's potential.

(Pollard & Davidson, 2001, p. 11)

Therefore, from an international and global perspective, African Americans fall within the human rights framework that warrants increased attention in ensuring their rights and freedoms as declared by the United Nations.

## **Grand Challenges for Social Work**

In 2013 the American Academy of Social Work & Social Welfare launched the Grand Challenges for Social Work initiative to utilize the collective impact of the social work profession to solve society's most significant problems (Cederbaum et al., 2018; Rodgers & Lopez-Humphreys, 2020). Overall, the 13 grand challenges strive to (a) promote individual and family well-being, (b) strengthen the social fabric of our society, and (c) create a just society. By adopting the grand challenges, the profession attempts to create a unifying focus, highlight social work science, promote strong collaborations, and garner additional resources that can be leveraged to achieve collective impact (Cederbaum et al., 2018). Through national and regional conferences, academic journals, and white papers, the grand challenges have been promoted with the help of the Council on Social Work Education, National Association of Social Workers, and Society for Social Work and Research (Cederbaum et al., 2018). Relevant to this paper, the social work profession has made dismantling inequality a priority through its Grand Challenges for Social Work (American Academy of Social Work & Social Welfare, 2018). In its challenge to achieve equal opportunity and justice, the social work profession recognizes that access to quality education, affordable housing, and employment is still not available to all people living in the United States due to prejudice, bias, and stigmatization (American Academy of Social Work & Social Welfare, 2018). Since the inception of American society, there have been marginalized and oppressed populations, the first being Native Americans and African Americans (Calvo et al., 2022). Due to the hegemonic practices of government and society, past and current prejudice and injustice have prevented access to education, health care, employment, housing, and economic stability (Calvo et al., 2022). To address these inequities, social workers are called to confront racial and social injustices, inequity, and other unfair practices to ensure the full

participation of marginalized groups throughout the nation. Therefore, the social work field naturally aligns with the priorities of the African American community. This paper outlines a study conducted to identify capacity building and the development of REI as critical components of agency development in the African American community of Southern California's Inland Empire as an additional recommendation for achieving the aforementioned grand challenge.

### **Christian Worldview**

God calls us to be servants who uplift the voices and concerns of the most vulnerable and marginalized people of our society. He also calls us to bring justice to the poor, oppressed, widows, orphans, and all his children. Reflecting on the history of the social work profession reveals God's work in action. This can be seen in the creation of Jane Addams. Not only one of the pioneers of the settlement movement in the United States, she also helped organize historic organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Mapp et al., 2019). Other pioneers worldwide include Eglantyne Jebb of the United Kingdom, the author of the first Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1923 (Mapp et al., 2019). These historical figures of the profession exhibit the lesson that Jesus taught his disciples; he came into this world not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (Luke 22:24-27, English Standard Version. (2016). YouVersion. <https://www.bible.com/bible>). This paper also argues that capacity building to build the agency of the African American community to strengthen itself is also consistent with the Christian worldview. The book of Isaiah proclaims that God gives power to those who are weak and strength to those with no power (Isaiah 40:29, New International Version. (2011). YouVersion. <https://www.bible.com/bible>). Researchers would be hard-pressed to identify a group of people in the United States that needs greater power

than African Americans. When discussing agency, this paper encompasses both individual agency (possessing the power to shape one's environment and life trajectory) and collective agency (the harnessing of a group's knowledge, skills, and resources to act together to shape the future; Bandura, 2018). Therefore, agency is the most significant power a social worker can assist historically marginalized and oppressed peoples in obtaining to improve their conditions. Building such agency in the African American community is intended to correct the historical wrongs of slavery, oppression, and marginalization. Isaiah 1:17 calls on readers to learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, bring justice to the fatherless, and plead the widow's cause. In other words, we must right the wrongs that have been committed against others and ensure that everyone is heard and their needs are addressed. Therefore, Christian social workers must be encouraged to be the hands of God and fulfill his will on Earth.

### **Chapter 3: Community Engagement**

The first step of the CESI process model is to observe the environment and analyze available data to determine the appropriate target population of a social innovation. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), California has the fifth largest African American population. In addition, Southern California's Inland Empire is home to approximately 4.5 million African Americans (12% of the region's population). Thus, Inland Empire boasts the second largest African American population in California. Therefore, it is critical that researchers and practitioners seeking to address issues in the African American community pay increased attention to this region as a growing number of African Americans continue to migrate from Los Angeles County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). By focusing on this population in the Inland Empire, researchers could gain valuable information regarding the universal and regional needs of the people in California, subsequently informing local, county, and state policies and resource allocations to address social determinants of health. Given the valuable data they can provide to inform additional research, this study focused on African American organization executives in Southern California's Inland Empire.

#### **Community-Based Participatory Research**

CBPR is a community engagement method used by researchers to address health disparities (D'Alonzo, 2010). CBPR is a collaborative process that ensures every partner's equitable participation in the research process and utilizes the unique strengths of each person or organization (D'Alonzo, 2010). CBPR falls under the category of action research. The genesis of action research began with Kurt Lewin, a social scientist, who developed the method in the 1940s to use research to ignite social change (Holkup et al., 2004). CBPR is broken into three stages: (1) defining the community (engaging the community, community needs assessment,



identifying the research question); (2) design and hypothesis testing (roles and responsibilities in the conduct of the research); and (3) analysis, which involves interpreting and presenting the results of the data analysis and ensuring the dissemination and further use of the research findings (Hacker, 2017). This process has been utilized to engage the African American community in hospice access, HIV testing, blood pressure reduction, and obesity (Berge et al., 2009; Coughlin & Smith, 2016; Rhodes et al., 2011; Zoellner et al., 2011). Prior research revealed that capacity building is an essential component of the CBPR process due to its ability to empower participants to increase their ability to address community issues and longstanding inequities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's REACH 2010 program in South Carolina is an example of the successful implementation of capacity-building efforts (Airhihenbuwa & Liburd, 2006). These efforts focused on health education programs sponsored by the REACH 2010 program in South Carolina. Although this program specifically addressed the building of diabetes self-management skills, it also increased participants' capacity to address issues in other areas of their life (Airhihenbuwa & Liburd, 2006). Two years after the conclusion of REACH 2010, African Americans in Charleston and Georgetown, South Carolina, engaged in more physical activity, received better health care, and had almost eliminated the disparity in diabetes testing between African Americans and Whites (Airhihenbuwa & Liburd, 2006). Research has suggested that an applied capacity-building program can effectively develop CBPR partnerships to achieve health equity (Coombe et al., 2018). CBPR is not only a process to address health disparities but also a social change model that can give greater agency to marginalized communities (D'Alonzo, 2010). By strengthening capacity-building components in the CBPR process, community partners can create healthier communities after the research is complete (Seifer & Sisco, 2006).

## **Engagement Efforts**

This study utilized best practices of the CBPR process to engage effectively with the target population. The first practice implemented in the study calls for researchers to utilize existing relationships in the community (Minkler & Hancock, 2003). To fulfill this action, the researcher searched for existing African American coalitions or collaboratives in the region to approach and begin the relationship-building process. The researcher prioritized groups with significant regional representation in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. It was imperative that the researcher was not seen as an “outsider” who was looking to take advantage of the community but rather an ally and collaborative partner to assist the community in addressing its priority issues. Second, the study engaged in partnerships with the understanding that such relationships would be designed in such a way that produces long-term and sustainable collaborations (Minkler & Hancock, 2003). To meet this requirement, the researcher prioritized groups with which he would naturally engage and had existing long-term relationships. The third practice calls for researchers to be good neighbors. Thus, the researcher committed himself to participating in community projects and activities beyond the study (Minkler & Hancock, 2003). To follow through with such a commitment, the researcher reserved time in his weekly calendar to assist community partners on request. Therefore, the researcher participated in the steering committees of both groups and volunteered to help with various other activities. For instance, he served as the partnership facilitator for one group that convened weekly or bimonthly. In another group, he served on the body’s committee to determine and propose guiding principles for broader consideration. Last, the researcher committed to ensuring that the needs of African American organizations originated from participants (Minkler & Hancock, 2003). Therefore, the researcher conducted a needs assessment and provided opportunities for group members to rank

their priorities according to their specific needs.

Given the identified best practices of the community engagement process, two existing African American partnerships in the Inland Empire were selected. These groups were uniquely positioned due to their strong leadership structure, diversity in demographics (age, geography, job responsibilities), diversity in mission statements, and numerous years of operation. Both groups also had naturally formed ACBPR models, which assisted them in institutionalizing their process while increasing their community's agency. ACBPR partnerships are defined by four components derived from a review of the literature and experiences that have led to partnership success: (a) both groups had researchers who adhered to the principles of the CBPR process; (b) both groups activated community members to engage in research and assist in building the capacity of their members; (c) both groups had built partnerships that increased the REI of participants; and (d) both partnerships naturally adopted historic African principles as the guiding foundation of their overall values and outcomes.

Such values including the seven principles of the Nguzo Saba. Maulana Karenga, chair and professor of Black studies at California State University, Long Beach, created Kwanzaa in 1966 to help African Americans celebrate their African heritage. Based on traditional African harvest festivals, *Kwanzaa* means "the first fruits" in Swahili. Karenga developed seven principles of Kwanzaa, the Nguzo Saba, to be highlighted during the 7-day celebration (Mayes, 2010). The seven principles of the Nguzo Saba are: (a) *Umoja* (unity), (b) *Kujichajulia* (self-determination), (c) *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility), (d) *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics), (e) *Nia* (purpose), (f) *Kuumba* (creativity), and (g) *Imani* (faith; Harvey & Rauch, 1997, p. 34).

The definition of Umoja, or unity, calls for individuals and the collective to do whatever

can be done to practice and encourage others to ensure harmony and togetherness in the family, neighborhood, and larger African American community (Lateef & Anthony, 2018). In African philosophy, unity is the foundational concept that African Americans must commit themselves to and practice to support the building and improvement of the self and community (Lateef & Anthony, 2018). This can be achieved by connecting with and supporting social and political networks that uplift the community. It is also a commitment to respect others, not hold grudges, build friendships, and look out for the well-being of others to achieve positive community development for everyone.

The second principle of Kujichagulia calls for self-determination. African Americans are called to take hold of and shape their life, image, and culture to achieve liberation with dignity and respect (Lateef & Anthony, 2018). This can only be done through looking inward to understand our true identity, where we come from, and everything we are destined to be (Lateef & Anthony, 2018). The principle of self-determination in the Nguzo Saba challenges African Americans to embrace their cultural expressions and values without shame rather than conform to America's view of beauty, professionalism, and other Eurocentric perspectives (Lateef & Anthony, 2018).

The third principle of the Nguzo Saba is Ujima (collective work and responsibility). Karenga (1989) defined this principle as committing to actively maintaining our communities, making our community members' problems our problems, and working together to solve them (pp. 56–61). The principle of Ujima affirms that social and community progress cannot be achieved without collective action. Ujima is the acknowledgment that no one exists without the collective. Therefore, no individual success or upward mobility is recognized without the upward mobility of the greater community (Karenga, 1989). When the Nguzo Saba is fully realized,

individuals and families will work together to address historical inequities and reshape a better future for the community and all of humanity.

The fourth principle of the Nguzo Saba is Ujamaa, or cooperative economics. It calls on African Americans to build their businesses, take control of the economics of their community, and then share all of its resources (Karenga, 1989, p. 61). Ujamaa promotes self-reliance among the most economically disadvantaged members of the community and gains an understanding of the importance of sharing accumulated wealth (Lateef & Anthony, 2018). When this principle is practiced, African Americans prioritize the patronage of local businesses in the community so that initiatives can be launched to support and invest in the sustainability of the community. It is an African philosophy that wealth belongs to the community (Lateef & Anthony, 2018).

The fifth principle of the Nguzo Saba is Nia (purpose). Nia declares that it is everyone's job (collective vocation) to work together to ensure that our family and community will thrive now and into the future (Lateef & Anthony, 2018). When this principle is fully realized, families and communities will have eliminated historical inequities and produced positive outcomes. Nia connects individual efforts that translate into agency development, which assists in the positive development of all people (Lateef & Anthony, 2018).

The sixth principle of the Nguzo Saba is Kuumba (creativity). Karenga (1989) echoed one of the most ancient responsibilities of a people by calling on members of the current generation to leave their community and world more beautiful and healthier than when they inherited them (pp. 67–70). Kuumba calls us to sharpen our gifts and passions in a way that not only uplifts us but also improves our community (Lateef & Anthony, 2018).

The last principle of the Nguzo Saba is Imani, or faith. Imani is to “hold firmly to our faith in a higher spiritual power and our people, parents, teachers, and leadership, and to value

our struggle for freedom and the well-being of our communities” (Lateef & Anthony, 2018, p.8). The principle calls us to believe in a spiritual power larger than ourselves. Imani is the assertion that all people have inherent self-worth (Lateef & Anthony, 2018). These principles not only serve as the lens with which ACBPR partnerships address community issues but also as an acknowledgment of their individual and collective responsibility to their community.

## **Consultation with Stakeholders**

### ***Community Partners***

The researcher invited representatives from two partnerships to participate in this study to assess the fidelity of the Afrocentric capacity-building model and participant-reported experiences. The first partnership was the Sani Mgbawwe rites of passage partnership in the Inland Empire. As a result of heightened consciousness and urgency ignited by the Black Lives Matter movement, African American practitioners of Afrocentric rites of passage programs convened through social networks to explore ways to expand interventions for Black children nationwide. Sani Mgbawwe was created to ensure that the next generation of African American children has the skills and power to break the cycle of inequities and be liberated from the lie of Black inferiority. Sani Mgbawwe has adopted a global or pan-African lens that incorporates the wisdom and traditions of the African diaspora. Participating organizations include the following:

- The University STEM Academy is a community collaborative that provides an academic learning environment that supports, encourages, and facilitates academic success. Specifically, its mission is to provide a math, science, engineering, and technology curriculum for sixth- to ninth-grade African American children and their parents or guardians in the Inland Empire. The academy strives to create a healthy and active learning environment designed for individual development and committed

to increasing academic skills and performance, infusing educational values, and developing participants' leadership skills.

- The Riverside County Black Chamber of Commerce is committed to empowering and inspiring African American entrepreneurs. By providing business support services, networking opportunities, and services to the African American community in Riverside County, the chamber partners with like-minded individuals, companies, and nonprofit organizations to achieve its mission. Its leaders believe that cooperation and collaboration with industry provide the most significant opportunity to empower and inspire minority communities and businesses.
- Empower You Edutainment is a nonprofit organization featuring educators who use their performing arts background to provide theatre, dance, and music to increase resilience, empowerment, and wellness for youth and young adults. Its mission is to break down socioeconomic barriers, empower, educate, and transform the lives of the voiceless through song, interpretive dance, spoken word, music, improvisation, and theater. The organization has provided the Inland Empire with community theater that focuses on social issues.
- Dat Yoga Dude is a health and wellness organization providing yoga and mindfulness services to individuals, schools, and community organizations throughout the region.

The second partnership was the Black Equity Initiative. As a byproduct of the George Floyd movement of 2021, foundations throughout the nation committed to appropriating more significant financial resources to Black-led community-based organizations, including throughout the Inland Empire. To facilitate the disbursement of the funds, the initiative formed an ACBPR process to determine the needs of San Bernardino and Riverside counties' African

American communities and what investments would have the most significant long-term impact.

It also developed a grant-making process to disseminate approved funds. Participating

organizations include the following:

- Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement is a nonprofit faith-based organization established by a core group of pastors. Its mission is to train and develop the capacity of religious and lay leaders in congregations and across the Inland Empire to protect and revitalize the communities in which they live, work, and worship. The formation of the organization was an outgrowth of a listening campaign with African American clergy, lay community, and community outreach ministry members in San Bernardino and Riverside counties seeking meaningful change in their communities.
- BLU Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization that addresses the higher education challenges faced by families with limited income and limited opportunities in California's Inland Empire (Riverside and San Bernardino counties). BLU manages several education and civic engagement programs that create a comprehensive approach to building productive communities.
- Youth Action Project provides youth and young adults with opportunities and professional development training, career coaching, and paid work experience that enables them to find their passion and develop marketable skills. Their work centers on providing youth in underserved communities with a path to careers with sustainable incomes through facilitating academic achievement, access to higher education, and vocational training, awareness of in-demand job sectors, soft-skills coaching, and entrepreneurial aspirations.



- Young Visionaries Youth Leadership Academy is a nonprofit organization that provides services and resources to more than 35,000 community youth. Services include training in academic development, violence prevention, employment development, leadership and life skills development, and teen pregnancy prevention.

### ***Community Involvement***

This study collaborated with the two ACBPR partners to determine their fidelity to the CBPR process and need to create effective community-based organizations in the African American community. Results showed that the ACBPR partnerships strongly adhered to CBPR principles. On average, 81.6% of respondents stated they believed to a great extent or mostly that their process adhered to CBPR principles. This average was derived from questions regarding five key CBPR processes: (a) Overall, does the academic research team have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to interact effectively with the community research team?; (b) Does this project build on resources and strengths in the community?; (c) Does this project facilitate equitable partnerships in all phases of the research?; (d) Does this project help all partners involved to grow and learn from one another; and (e) Does this project balance research and social action for the mutual benefit of all partners? The results also identified the capacity-building needs of ACBPR partners (see Chapter 5).

### **Implications and Potential Impact**

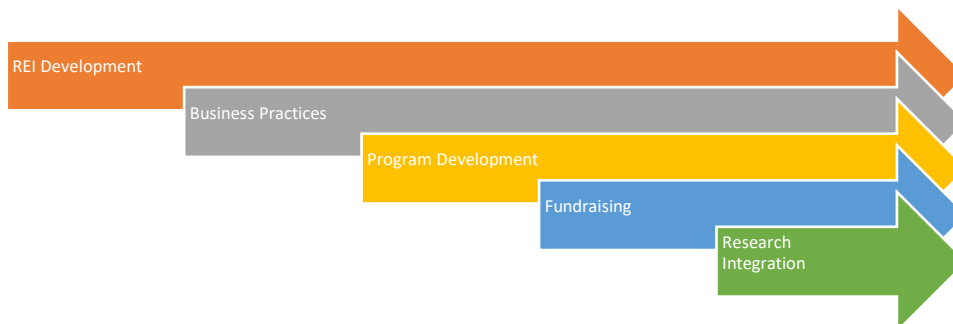
Once the capacity-building needs were identified, the researcher began identifying the most effective social innovation to address these needs to increase the agency of African American-led organizations. Following the development of a social innovation prototype (see Chapter 4), the ACBPR partners will be invited to participate and evaluate its effectiveness. To evaluate the prototype, each partner will receive a questionnaire featuring close-ended and open-

ended questions to collect quantitative and qualitative data to determine its strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the questionnaire will seek to assess its usefulness and whether it increased the capacity of participating organizations. The results will be analyzed utilizing Qualtrics and shared with ACBPR members.

## Chapter 4: Conceptual Model

A conceptual model was developed to build agency in the African American community to address historical inequities. The model consists of five components necessary to empower the African American community, with each element building on the others (Figure 1). These components include REI development, which serves as the model's foundation, followed by developing and strengthening business practices. Business practices include organizational structures, financial management, human resources, and budget development to ensure the proper functioning of the organization. Without mature business practices, organizational leaders will likely struggle meet the necessary requirements to acquire local, county, state, and federal resources. The third component is program development. Many African Americans form organizations based on a program created to serve a particular population or address an issue of interest. The program development component assists participants in understanding foundational program elements and practices that ensure they are research based or informed and led by public data. Participants are empowered to research and identify best practices as the foundation of their programs. The fourth component is fundraising development. With this component, participants are exposed to various funding sources and strategies and how to leverage current resources to obtain new resources. This component includes relationship development strategies that can be used to secure additional funding. The final component is research integration. This component informs participants about how organizations can access the research literature to identify best practices and gain a deeper understanding of their subject matter. Participants also have an opportunity to learn about data collection and collaboration with researchers. Each component is grounded in theoretical approaches that guide the conceptual model.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Afrocentric Capacity Building



### Human Agency

Throughout history, people have developed the capacity to overcome and shape their environment, allowing them to chart their life course (Bandura, 2018). Due to the development of cognitive capabilities, language, discourse, and other forms of communication, people enhanced their capacity to perceive and invent new ways to improve their quality of life (Bandura, 2018). Human agency is the ability to act on goals and shape the future, as opposed to a passive existence (Alkire, 2005). Human agency is conducted at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels (Alkire, 2005; Bandura, 2018). It is an intrinsic value of humankind to have the ability to improve and shape one's condition and impact the lives of other members of society (Alkire, 2005). Thus, the manifestation of human agency can be observed through the ability to influence political processes, legal structures, and democracy, in addition to increasing the awareness of self and others (Alkire, 2005). Bandura (2018) divided human agency into three distinct modes: individual, proxy, and collective. The individual mode relates to elements that are personally controllable. Proxy agency acknowledges that many social conditions and institutional practices are beyond the individual's direct control. Therefore, the individual must have the agency to influence others with resources, knowledge, and means to help them act on their behalf to get what they want (Bandura, 2018). The last mode of agency reflects the story of Nehemiah. Upon

learning that the wall of Jerusalem was still in ruin, he did not attempt to build a wall alone but instead galvanized the people to restore the city of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:17-19, New International Version). This biblical story is an example of collective agency. Through collective agency, people harness their collective knowledge, skills, and resources in a united and synergistic effort to shape their future and environment.

### **Narrative Theory**

Narrative theory is a theoretical underpinning guiding many Afrocentric interventions (Cherrington et al., 2015). Narrative theory acknowledges the power of the stories that we tell and organize our lives around (Roscoe et al., 2011). The conceptualization of the human experience allows individuals to frame their lives in a story format, making it possible to interpret and give meaning to their experiences (Carbajal, 2020). Our narrative view of the world conditions us to see what is possible, our role in society, who we are, and where we come from (Grills et al., 2016; Winston et al., 2004; Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999). The story allows us to see what we have experienced, the choices we made, and how to interpret those experiences (Carbajal, 2020). Those who engage in narrative theory help individuals and groups rewrite their stories to increase their protective factors and decrease destructive behaviors (Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999). From an Afrocentric perspective, narrative theory is used to dismantle the lie of Black inferiority—the lie that Black people are not as beautiful, lovable, capable, valuable, and worthy as White people (Grills et al., 2016).

Storytelling or narrative is foundational in African and African American culture (Amoah, 1997). It imparts wisdom across generations and serves as a powerful voice of resistance, critical thought, and an affirmation of humanity (Amoah, 1997). Stories are also a means of survival in an oppressive and racist society (Amoah, 1997). By utilizing narrative,

African Americans can broadcast their stories and images to reclaim their voices and assert their valued existence (Amoah, 1997). Through traditional storytelling, the African diaspora can reconnect to its past and ancestors while giving power to its present voice (Amoah, 1997). The tradition is a recognition that we are an accumulation of the experiences of our ancestors. Therefore, our life experiences will one day serve as the foundation for those yet to exist (Amoah, 1997). Utilizing a narrative model also helps African Americans with ethnic identity formation, giving them a sense of membership and associated attitudes and pride (Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999). Critical aspects of narrative interventions include film, personal storytelling, and role-play (Goddu et al., 2015). When individuals engage in a narrative, they are more likely to accept its messages, generating a significant impact on their attitudes and beliefs (Goddu et al., 2015). Cultural embeddedness is included at the mezzo level, incorporating characters, experiences, and language. This theory has produced successful outcomes for African Americans with diabetes in Chicago's South Side (Goddu et al., 2015). The theory guided the Diabetes Empowerment Program, a culturally informed patient empowerment intervention designed to improve self-efficacy, diabetes self-management, and healthy outcomes (Goddu et al., 2015). Goddu et al.'s (2015) study found that utilizing narrative theory contributed to the personal implementation of diabetes-related behavior changes.

Researchers have used the Larkey and Hecht model to implement narrative theory, incorporating a sociocultural approach (Goddu et al., 2015). Researchers recognized that dominant narrative models that practitioners use are grounded in how an individual personally interacts with their narrative (Goddu et al., 2015). However, Larkey and Hecht incorporated the collective narrative shared by a group to create an effective, culturally informed health program (Goddu et al., 2015). With engagement and cultural embeddedness, behavior change can be

achieved through transportation, identification, and social proliferation (Goddu et al., 2015). Transportation describes a state in which individuals are lost or immersed in the story, making them more likely to agree with the story's premise (Goddu et al., 2015). Identification occurs when individuals begin to see themselves in or relate to the characters. They begin to like the characters or imagine the possibility of interacting with them (Goddu et al., 2015). Identification allows individuals to learn from and adopt the characters' behaviors (Goddu et al., 2015). Last, social proliferation involves the discussion of the stories, reinforcing the story's messages and jointly sharing and modeling the desired behaviors as a group (Goddu et al., 2015). Therefore, culturally tailored interventions are essential in reducing disparities among people of color (Goddu et al., 2015).

### **Empowerment Theory**

As individuals and groups recreate a more positive story for themselves, marginalized and oppressed groups must acquire the skills and power to achieve self-determination (Peterson, 2014). Considered the father of empowerment theory (Turner & Maschi, 2014), Brazilian educator Paulo Freire addressed oppressed people's needs and declared the necessity to empathize with them (Freire, 2016). He further posited that the school curriculum was insufficient in addressing the social and cultural barriers of discrimination that marginalized and oppressed people face (Hipilito-Delgado & Lee, 2007). Gutierrez (1990) provided practitioners with vehicles to increase personal, interpersonal, and political power to rectify the social vulnerabilities of marginalized populations. Empowerment theory is helpful in understanding institutional aspects of power and its effects on historically marginalized and oppressed persons (Woronecki et al., 2019). For instance, empowerment can be seen through the enhancement of poor or marginalized people's capacity to influence government institutions that affect their lives

(Alkire, 2005). As a critical component of capacity building and agency development in the African American community, empowerment theory ensures that a critical analysis of historic inequities is not only addressed at the micro or mezzo level but also involves an institutional and structural (macro) analysis (Woroniecki et al., 2019). Effective strategies to address empowerment can be implemented at the psychological, organizational, and community levels (Speer et al., 2019). Empowerment is manifested at the community level through increased democratic functioning (Speer et al., 2019). At the psychological level, individuals engage in critical awareness, political participation, and local decision-making (Alkire, 2005; Speer et al., 2019). A vital component of this study can be found at the organizational level, which is designed to ensure that the African American community has the capacity to make meaningful social change and supports leadership development in the community (Speer et al., 2019). Empowerment interventions have been successfully utilized with African Americans to produce positive behavior change (Tang et al., 2010). For example, African Americans with type 2 diabetes in Ypsilanti, Michigan, participated in a 6-month empowerment-based diabetes self-management support intervention (Tang et al., 2010). During the control period, participants received weekly educational newsletters, after which they participated in weekly empowerment groups. During the groups, participants received experiential learning and learned coping, problem-solving, self-care, and goal-setting skills (Tang et al., 2010). The findings suggested that an empowerment-based intervention holds promise to improve or maintain diabetes-related health (Tang et al., 2010).

### **Racial and Ethnic Identity**

As a part of building a personal narrative, research shows that REI is the cornerstone of our existence (Altschul et al., 2006). It tells us who we are, how we got here, how to stay



healthy, where we need to go, and how to survive (Fogelin & Schiffer, 2015). It gives us the lens through which to see ourselves and our role in the world (Fogelin & Schiffer, 2015). Without this endless accumulation of knowledge and wisdom over thousands of years, people can begin to develop negative biopsychosocial outcomes (Yip et al., 2019). Although the terms *racial* and *ethnic* have clear distinctions, when used together, they exemplify the dynamics of how ethnicity, culture, race, and oppression are experienced in everyday life (Yip et al., 2019). Based on Erikson's (1968) ego identity development model, Jean Phinney (1992) described the exploration of self-identity, including activities and behaviors used to understand one's overall identity, and the commitment to a positive affirmation of REI and understanding of its role in self-concept (Yip et al., 2019). Four REI development statuses can be identified by combining exploration and commitment to REI. These statuses are "low exploration, low commitment = diffused; low exploration, high commitment = foreclosed; high exploration, low commitment = moratorium; and high exploration, high commitment = achieved" (Yip et al., 2019, p. 1275). It is generally understood that identity development begins in adolescence (Yip et al., 2019). During this period, people have low levels of exploration and commitment, which subsequently progresses over time (Yip et al., 2019). With low exploration and low commitment, individuals have a lower ability to cope with or buffer trauma and discrimination, thus producing negative outcomes (Yip et al., 2019).

Conversely, when they have high levels of REI, individuals experience better biopsychosocial outcomes by shielding the impact of historic inequities caused by discrimination (Yip et al., 2019). Yip et al. (2019) described the "assumption is that individuals who have not yet grappled with the meaning of ethnicity/race may not be sociocognitively equipped to cope with the stress of discrimination based on an unexamined social group. This may be especially

true for individuals who live in a context such as the United States where issues of ethnicity and race are highly salient in everyday life” (p. 1275). Discrimination has detrimental effects on REI development (Yip et al., 2019). Research has shown that REI development confers protection against discrimination (Yip et al., 2019). REI development also produces healthier mental health outcomes and decreases risky health behaviors (Yip et al., 2019). To identify REI, researchers have used the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Yip et al., 2019). Strong Black identity is correlated with positive responses to statements such as “Being Black is important to my self-image,” “I am proud to be Black,” and “In general, other groups view Blacks in a positive manner” (Yip et al., 2019). Other REI assessment tools include the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale, the Collective Self-Esteem Scale, the Cross Racial Identity Scale, and the Ethnic Identity Scale (Yip et al., 2019). As individuals and groups build REI by recreating a more positive story for themselves, marginalized and oppressed groups must acquire the skills and power to achieve self-determination and agency (Peterson, 2014). However, it is critical to note the impact of an individual who remains in the exploration stage and does not advance to the commitment stage (Yip et al., 2019). Researchers have warned of adverse outcomes when an individual’s overall identity is still being formed and explored (Yip et al., 2019). In other words, the negative impacts of discrimination can be mitigated by having a well-developed sense of self as a member of an ethnic or racial group (Yip et al., 2019).

### **Social Learning Theory**

Bandura et al. (1961) first posited social learning theory by incorporating aspects of classical and operant conditioning theory. By including learning processes of imitation and identification, Bandura emphasized the role a person’s environment plays in learning behaviors. This theory is often used to understand the motivation for violence by a person or in an

environment. As it relates to the African American community, the family environment exposes children to various attitudes and behaviors that are carried into adulthood and passed on to the next generation. This includes intergenerational trauma, poverty, social affiliations, and views of self and the world. Social learning theory can also explain the continued belief in Black inferiority and infusion of Eurocentric culture and practices that exacerbate Black inequities. Therefore, to break the cycle, this paper argues for the need to reset the social environment by exposing African Americans to African culture, language, and perspectives at the micro and mezzo levels. The social environment can serve as a positive or negative influence. Therefore, increasing social connectedness from an Afrocentric perspective can produce positive outcomes. Social connectedness is a measure by which people convene and interact with one another. At the micro level, social connectedness measures the quality and quantity of connections with others through family, friends, and community.

### **Summary**

By reviewing the literature, researchers and practitioners have developed a greater understanding of the profound inequities in the African American community. Research has suggested that narrative and empowerment theories can be utilized in the CBPR process to create greater human agency through capacity-building components, including training and REI development. These components manifest a culturally specific capacity-building approach to addressing community issues when infused with African principles. This Afrocentric capacity-building prototype is intended to provide insights into the promising nature of this approach.

## Chapter 5: Social Innovation

To address the African American community's capacity-building needs and increase its agency, an online, self-paced Afrocentric capacity-building training will be developed at no cost to the community. The five-module training will use Google Classroom as the disseminating medium to facilitate easy access and affordability. This will establish the Afrocentric capacity-building training as a self-paced and open-source tool for African American nonprofit leaders to strengthen REI and build program development, research, grant writing, business, and public data skills as identified through a needs assessment. The specific innovation of this training involves establishing the reconnection and building of African culture and strengthening the REI of participants not only as a component of Afrocentric capacity building but as the foundation of its outcomes and equal to traditional empowerment elements through the capacity-building process. It is not only capacity-building skills that produce agency but also the cultural worldview imbued in participants that ignites actual change. This paper argues that necessary change occurs when there is clarity of priorities, goals, and outcomes at the community and organization level, not at the individual level. Through the development of REI, participants gain clarity regarding what it means to be healthy, prosperous, and worthy at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. It also establishes what should be expected from their government, society, and community to restore the African American community to its traditional greatness. Through this lens, participants can utilize traditional capacity-building skills in a way that fundamentally changes how historic inequities are addressed in a culturally specific manner.

Once participants build their REI, they will receive the specific capacity-building tools necessary to grow and build power in the community so that organizations have the agency to address historical inequities and build a leadership pipeline. Through leadership development,

historic inequities can be addressed across generations, as understood through African traditions. Participants are expected to be between the ages of 25 and 70 and serve at the midlevel or executive management level of an African American-led organization. Most often, these individuals will be the manager, coordinator, director, vice president, executive director, chief operating officer, or chief executive officer in their organization. However, the training will not assume that every individual will originate from an organization with a multilevel leadership structure. It is possible that many organizations that participate will be in their infant stage or have a small group of team members taking on various functions.

In many cases, this is the norm. Therefore, the training will allow participants to visualize what a mature organization might look like and the critical functions that must be in place for the organization to be an effective part of community-level change. The training will also establish the necessity for participants to identify the role that they will play in community change and the need to collaborate with other organizations to create the necessary ecosystem to build synergy and leverage resources to implement a shared agenda. Therefore, the pilot will consist of five modules consistent with its theory of change. Each module will have a pre and post assessment to document learning comprehension.

## **Training Modules**

### ***REI Development***

Although REI development is usually associated with adolescence (Quintana, 2007), this model will engage participants after this life stage. Therefore, the challenge of this module will be to expedite the transition of participants from the exploration stage of REI development to the commitment stage, where positive outcomes are realized. This training module will aim to reconnect participants to African culture through a meaning-making system of five elements:

philosophy and theology, customs and traditions, collective history, communication and language, and family and community structure (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012). The module will utilize the internalization commitment stage of Cross's nigrescence model as its objective, which describes a person who has formed a strong Black identity on a personal level and now seeks to join others in the community to engage in long-term struggles to solve Black historical inequities (Smith, 2001). It cannot be overstated that the desired outcome of this module will not be achieved at the individual level. It will be fully realized at the community level as the individual makes community coordination and achievement the measurement of success. In the tradition of the African diaspora, the module will rely heavily on storytelling to allow participants to see themselves as a continuation of their ancestry.

In the category of philosophy and theology, participants will be introduced to African beliefs of existence, knowledge, and values. This will include examining ideas of truth and justice and other life concepts from the lens of various African tribes such as the Wolof, Akan, Yoruba, and Makonde and the ancient civilization of Kemet. Other principles, values, or characteristics will include an examination of righteousness, harmony, balance, order, generosity, honor, respect, and benevolence. In addition, African thought regarding God as the creator and a personal connection with God and the world will be explored. All this will be done to help participants understand and explore their purpose in life and individual and collective role in the family, community, and world through an Afrocentric lens.

In the customs and traditions category, participants will be introduced to traditional African daily habits to be practiced in various circumstances. The category will include rituals such as Kwanza, libation ceremonies, naming ceremonies, and rites of passage. Because African cultures are steeped in symbolism, African symbols such as bi ka bi, the scarab, the kente cloth,

and Sankofa will be introduced to help participants understand what it means to be healthy and balanced at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Various meanings of color will also be presented to build on African thought and symbolism.

The collective history category will educate participants about the shared African experience through an examination of the roles Africans have played in the areas of civilization building, medicine, science, and architecture to dispel the lie of Black inferiority and put the African people back in their rightful place as one of the architects of modern civilization, such as the Kemetic and Nubian civilizations of upper Egypt and their understanding of a virtuous life and enduring contributions to the building of advanced civilizations. Participants will also examine the Moors' medical, educational, and artistic contributions and their influence on European societies. In addition, an examination of the ancient Aethiopians will be included to understand the character and global reputation of ancient Africans before the invention of racism. A reading list will also provide a self-guided exploration of history and customs.

In the category of communication and language, participants will be introduced to a body of words used by various African peoples, such as the Nguzo Saba and other Swahili words, the Xhosa language, Egyptian words, and words used by Nigerian tribes. Such terms will include *Ujamaa*, *yibambe*, *Jambo*, *Maat*, and *Sankofa* to immerse participants in the African world and allow them to see themselves as a part of the diaspora.

Finally, the family structure category will present the meaning of being a member of the family organization, its key components, and the relationships among individual family members. The African philosophy of Ubuntu will serve as the anchor of this section.

The philosophy of Ubuntu is an ancient and enduring concept that is found in most African traditions across the continent (Van Breda, 2019). First used in writing in 1800, Ubuntu

refers to personal connections to the greater family, community, nation, and race (Van Breda, 2019). It is a recognition that no one exists alone. There is no such thing as individual achievement or existence, but an extension of humanness shared by all (Van Breda, 2019). Therefore, Ubuntu is practiced with a profound sense of interconnectedness and recognition of personal responsibility to the diaspora. This includes the relational roles of elders; the roles of various tribal members such as warriors, scribes, healers, and leaders; and the unique contributions each provides in relation to the others. This section will stress the relationship and contributions to the collective above the individual. It can also be argued that individual action is nonexistent if done outside of the collective (Van Breda, 2019). The module will impress on participants the need to commit to the African worldview of Ubuntu as a critical component of creating enduring institutions that serve as the backbone of community change and biopsychosocial outcomes. After the REI module, participants will transition to essential business practices necessary for building community institutions.

### ***Business Practices***

In this module, participants will be introduced to fundamental and advanced business and leadership practices used by the nation's most successful and influential nonprofit organizations. The most crucial business practice is the establishment of strong financial management controls that will meet the standards of expected funding sources. This includes the utilization of a bookkeeping system such as QuickBooks, the development of an annual budget, and the ability to produce financial statements. The other sections of the module will be taken from the books *Forces for Good* (Crutchfield & Grant, 2012) and *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001) to give participants concrete examples of how their organizations can function and the type of leadership styles they can adopt to increase the capacity of their organizations. Regarding *Forces for Good*,



participants will be encouraged to incorporate six practices of the most influential nonprofit organizations in the nation: (a) working with the government and advocating for policy change, (b) utilizing the business market and partnering with businesses, (c) creating lasting experiences for supporters to turn them into evangelists for the organization, (d) participating in and building nonprofit networks to create allies not competitors, (e) creating a nimble organization that can adapt to a changing environment, and (f) sharing leadership to empower others in the organization (Crutchfield & Grant, 2012). The module will use the various case studies found in the book so participants can visualize themselves implementing these practices. Case studies will include the story of the Girl Scouts, self-help, Habitat for Humanity, environmental defense, and others. Regarding the book *Good to Great*, participants will focus on leadership skills and styles that will help them turn their organizations into institutions (Collins, 2001). In some cases, participants will learn their leadership style and how to sharpen those skills. In other cases, participants will be encouraged to adopt a different style to achieve their overall objectives. Participants will then learn how to identify the necessary team members to strengthen and grow the organization. Through this module, leaders will be challenged to redefine success for themselves and their organization according to the best practices of the prevailing literature while adapting them to an Afrocentric perspective.

### ***Program Development***

The program development module will have two objectives. The first objective will be to ensure that participants understand the essential components of creating effective community programs utilizing the Rural Health Information Hub (2017) toolkit. The first component of developing effective programs is to ensure that the program is grounded in evidence-based and promising practices. Too often, practitioners believe that they must create a program from the

ground up without indicating its potential success. By utilizing evidence-based or promising models, participants can prevent harmful practices and ensure that the program has a solid foundation. Second, participants will be encouraged to incorporate community engagement strategies to collaborate with various community stakeholders in the program to build community support. Third, participants will be encouraged to resist seeing other organizations as competitors but rather as partners in achieving mutual goals. Partners can leverage resources and expertise to maximize desired outcomes by developing strong partnerships with other organizations. Potential partners could include schools, city and county departments, and nonprofit organizations. Fourth, participants will be challenged to ensure that their programs are sustainable financially and operationally. Sustainability may include securing multiple income streams, establishing a strong succession plan, cultivating leaders in the organization, and acquiring organizational assets (e.g., land) to leverage. Fifth, evaluation planning will be incorporated into the training so that practitioners can prove that their program works.

Participants will be encouraged to collaborate with researchers or other institutions that can assist with developing and implementing an evaluation tool. Once data are collected, outcomes must be publicized and shared with community leaders and funders. By anticipating challenges and being prepared to implement solutions, practitioners increase their resilience and the likelihood of sustainable growth and long-term impact.

The second objective of the program development module will be to ensure that participants adopt an empowering community settings framework (Maton, 2008). This framework calls for micro, mezzo, and macro practitioners to create a participatory developmental process in which both process and outcomes components empower marginalized or oppressed individuals and groups to increase control over their lives and environment and

secure desired resources and civil rights and liberties to achieve important life goals while reducing marginalization (Maton, 2008). Participants must practice active and sustained engagement at multiple community and systems levels to implement this framework. If successful, they will achieve political, economic, and psychological empowerment at the individual and collective levels (Maton, 2008).

### ***Fundraising***

The fundraising module will assist participants in creating a financial sustainability model. Most successful nonprofit organizations can secure diverse income streams from government grants or contracts, fees for service, donations, and foundation grants (Besel et al., 2011). Participants will receive a list of resources to identify funding sources to diversify their income. In addition, participants will be informed about preliminary items that must be addressed to qualify for many funding sources and be considered a reliable organization. These qualifications include various government numbers, accounting documents, and administrative paperwork. Participants will be introduced to the various forms of documentation and receive assistance in meeting these minimum qualifications. Finally, participants will receive grant writing tips to increase the rate at which they achieve positive funding outcomes.

### ***Research Integration***

The research integration module will explore how nonprofit organizations can participate in the research process and contribute to the body of research in their field. As the foundation of this module, participants will be introduced to the CBPR model and review case studies that identify how nonprofit organizations have utilized the CBPR process to produce positive outcomes in the community. The objective of the module will be to provide participants with confidence in participating in or conducting research so that it can be integrated into their

operations and strategic planning. Finally, participants will learn how to engage with community organizations and institutions to assemble the necessary components needed to successfully implement research integration in a way that strengthens rather than distracts the organization.

### **Rationale**

Based on a review of the literature and with guidance from the aforementioned theoretical foundations, providing a free, self-paced, and open-source capacity-building training is the most practical approach to address the needs of the African American community for many reasons. First, African Americans must have access to best practices that lead to building effective institutions in their communities regardless of financial means. In most cases, individuals would have to pay a fee associated with receiving professional development training. This could restrict access to many potential participants. Therefore, creating an open-source option is the optimal choice. Second, African Americans rarely receive professional development training whose pedagogy is Afrocentric. Traditional training is Eurocentric in its approach as opposed to delivering its material in a culturally affirming way. By making REI development the underlining foundation of this training, African American participants will receive capacity-building assistance as requested. Finally, this Afrocentric capacity-building training can be conducted in a manner that is convenient for each participant. Participants can receive the information at their own pace and a location of their choosing. However, it is recognized that meeting these needs also can be achieved by providing the training in an in-person environment where participants can engage in dialogue and learn from the experiences of other participants. Additionally, participants would be able to ask questions that assist them in the learning process. Although this would be the most optimal delivery of the material, it would also add to the cost associated with obtaining a venue, providing refreshments, and providing copies of the materials.

In addition, this format would be limited in the ability to scale the availability of the training to a larger population. Therefore, this social innovation process emphasized the ability to conduct an extensive dissemination strategy rather than having it available to only a few.

### **Community Engagement and CESI Alignment**

This Afrocentric community-building project aligns significantly with the CESI process. The first step of the CESI model requires researchers to observe the community or environment in which the research is focused. This project adhered to this step by reviewing population data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the literature regarding the African American community. Once a thorough understanding of the African American community was achieved, the project identified the specific target population. This study focused on African Americans in the Inland Empire region of Southern California. Therefore, a search for existing African American coalitions or collaboratives in the region occurred. The researcher prioritized groups with significant regional representation in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Upon selecting the ACBPR partnerships, the researcher began integrating into their partnerships and engaging them in the research process. Step 5 of the CESI process requires researchers to engage in a needs assessment process to ensure that the focus of the project is based on self-identified needs that can have tangible results that improve the target population's environment. The assessment was conducted as a formative and quantitative design with data analyzed through SPSS. After analyzing the results, a social innovation was created to address the specific needs identified by the partnership members. Once the prototype is completed, a qualitative and quantitative assessment tool will be designed for partnership members to determine how effectively the social innovation meets the needs of the African American community. Upon analysis of the evaluation, appropriate revisions will be made and disseminated regionwide as a free and open-

source resource designed to build the capacity of the African American community to collectively address historical inequities. The initial domination phase calls for existing African American executive collaboratives or partnerships to distribute the innovation to their members and host professional development sessions to inform their membership of the resource. The second phase calls for the training to be made available at various professional conferences and events.

### **Biblical Principles**

The book of Nehemiah tells the story of God giving Nehemiah and the people of Judah agency to rebuild their homeland (TK). The book of Nehemiah begins in the Persian city of Susa in 444 BC. The Jewish people are marginalized as Nehemiah travels to Israel, leading the third of three returns by the Jewish people following their 70 years of exile in Babylon. Through King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah is empowered with the physical and political power necessary to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the city's walls. The king gives Nehemiah letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates to ensure safe passage to Judah. King Artaxerxes also provides him with a letter to Asaph to procure all the wood he will need to make beams for the gates of the citadel, the city wall, and a house. The king also gives this marginalized person army officers and cavalry. Upon inspecting the state of Jerusalem, Nehemiah goes to the Jews, priests, nobles, and officials and declares, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." Nehemiah and other marginalized members of his people were empowered and galvanized their community to rebuild their city and fight against their enemies. Building the agency of marginalized and oppressed populations fulfills the word of God.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Although the project sought to ensure that the social innovation is trauma informed, there may be some risk or discomfort related to participation because it may trigger adverse emotional reactions due to intergenerational trauma through a review of the historical oppression faced by African Americans. The literature regarding REI development is clear; when an individual is found to have low exploration and low commitment, they are likely to have a lower ability to cope or buffer against trauma and discrimination, thus producing adverse outcomes (Yip et al., 2019). Therefore, adverse consequences may occur. To mitigate potential negative effects, the REI module will encourage participants to develop high levels of REI to ensure that they experience positive biopsychosocial outcomes by shielding the impact of historic inequities caused by discrimination (Yip et al., 2019).

## **Chapter 6: Evaluation, Methodology, and Results Summary**

Through a formative approach and quantitative research design, this study sought to determine: (a) to what degree an ACBPR project adheres to a traditional CBPR process and (b) to what extent an Afrocentric capacity-building tool can effectively enhance the capacity-building and REI of its participants. A close-ended questionnaire containing 19 Likert-scale questions was used to assess the group's fidelity to CBPR principles and changes in REI and capacity. The survey was adapted from the University of New Mexico Center for Participatory Research questionnaire (Sandoval et al., 2011) and the Project STRIDE study (Meyer et al., 2018). The purpose of the survey was to collect demographic information to understand the characteristics of the respondents and determine how they assess their impressions and attitudes regarding the ACBPR process and their capacity-building needs. This study was approved by the California Baptist University Institutional Review Board.

Once the instrument design was complete and uploaded to Qualtrics for electronic distribution, the researcher contacted the leaders of the two partnerships to gain permission to include them in the study. The study sought to recruit 30 African American respondents to produce statistically significant data. To recruit the respondents, the researcher participated in a scheduled meeting of each partnership via Zoom to introduce partnership members to the study and answer any questions. After the introduction, a Qualtrics link to the data collection instrument was placed in the chat function of the Zoom meeting. Reminders that included the Qualtrics link were sent via email for 2 weeks. Through these recruitment efforts, the study acquired 25 respondents.

### **Data Collection**

An ACBPR instrument was constructed as a close-ended questionnaire containing 19



Likert-scale questions to assess the group's fidelity to CBPR principles as the independent variable and changes in REI and capacity as the dependent variables. The survey was adapted from the University of New Mexico Center for Participatory Research questionnaire (Sandoval et al., 2011) and the Project STRIDE study of 2004–2005 (Meyer, 2016). The purpose of the survey was to collect demographic information to understand the identities of the respondents and determine their impressions and attitudes regarding the three study variables.

### **Adherence to the CBPR Process**

For the independent variable, the instrument assessed each respondent's perception of CBPR principles such as core values, perceptions of group dynamics, and working relationships among members. The questions addressed five key CBPR processes with the following items: (a) "Overall, does the research team have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to work well with the community research team?"; (b) "This project builds on community resources and strengths"; (c) "This project facilitates equitable partnerships in all phases of the research"; (d) "This project helps all partners involved to grow and learn from one another"; and (e) "This project balances research and social action for the mutual benefit of all partners." Respondents were asked to rate each question using a Likert scale: 1 (*not at all*), 2 (*very little*), 3 (*somewhat*), 4 (*mostly*), and 5 (*to a great extent*). By analyzing the results of these questions, the researcher determined how closely the groups adhere to CBPR principles.

### **REI Development**

To assess the REI development of participants, the questionnaire asked (a) if respondents felt very close in their ideas and thinking of the African American community, (b) if respondents wanted to learn more about their African identity, and (c) if the ACBPR process strengthened their African identity. Respondents were asked to rate these questions on a scale ranging from 1

(*very close or strongly agree*) to 4 (*not at all close or strongly disagree*). By asking these questions, the study intended to understand the extent to which respondents viewed REI as important to their lives and to what extent ACBPR furthered their development of REI.

### **Capacity-Building Assessment**

To assess the capacity-building needs of the respondents, they ranked what capacity-building subjects were most beneficial to them on a scale from 1 (*most important*) to 6 (*least important*). Respondents could choose among program development, research, fundraising, business practices, youth development, and African culture. By understanding the needs of partnership members, group facilitators can meet the needs of their members while increasing the agency of the African American community.

### **Data Analysis**

Twenty-four participants and one researcher completed the survey ( $N = 25$ ). The data were entered into SPSS 27.0.1 for frequency and descriptive statistical analysis. The results were examined to identify any unique patterns that would inform the hypothesis.

### **Results Summary**

The results of the analysis provide a greater understanding of ACBPR partnerships and their key components. Of the 25 respondents (Table 1), 13 (52%) were from the Black Equity Initiative and 12 (48%) were from the Sani Mgbawwe partnership. The respondents consisted of 13 (52%) men, 11 (44%) women, and 1 (4%) nonbinary or other gender individual. Respondents represented a cross-section of age groups: 25–34 ( $n = 4$ , 16%), 35–44 ( $n = 6$ , 24%), 45–54 ( $n = 7$ , 28%), 55–64 ( $n = 6$ , 24%), and 65–74 ( $n = 2$ , 8%). In addition, 23 (92%) respondents identified as Black and two (8%) identified as mixed race.

Table 1. Overall Demographic Characteristics of ABCPR Participants ( $N = 25$ )

	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Affiliation</b>		
Black Equity Initiative	13	52.0
Sani Mgbanwe Partnership	12	48.0
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	13	52.0
Female	11	44.0
Nonbinary or other gender	1	4.0
<b>Racial and ethnic origin</b>		
Black	23	92.0
Mixed race	2	8.0
<b>Age group</b>		
25–34	4	16.0
35–44	6	24.0
45–54	7	28.0
55–64	6	24.0
65–74	2	8.0

### ***Fidelity of the CBPR Process***

Upon completion of the initial study, results show that the ACBPR partnerships strongly adhered to CBPR principles (Table 2). On average, 81.6% of respondents believed to a great extent or mostly that the process adhered to CBPR principles. This reflected the average of five

key CBPR process evaluation questions regarding whether: (a) the academic research team has the overall knowledge, skills, and confidence to interact effectively with the community research team; (b) the project builds on resources and strengths in the community; (c) the project facilitates equitable partnerships in all phases of the research; (d) the project helps all partners involved to grow and learn from one another; and (e) the project balances research and social action for the mutual benefit of all partners.

Table 2. Fidelity to the CBPR Process ( $N = 25$ )

	<i>n</i>	%
Academic team interacts effectively with community team		
To a great extent	9	36.0
Mostly	9	36.0
Project builds on resources and strengths		
To a great extent	17	68.0
Mostly	6	24.0
Project facilitates equitable partnerships		
To a great extent	14	56.0
Mostly	7	28.0
Project helps all partners to grow and learn from one another		
To a great extent	13	52.0
Mostly	8	32.0
Project balances research and social action for mutual benefit		
To a great extent	10	40.0

Mostly

9 36.0

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### *Capacity-Building Needs*

Results indicate that African American leaders of local programs and organizations need capacity-building training to increase the agency of the community to address historic inequities throughout the Inland Empire. Through a close-ended questionnaire, ACBPR participants ranked what capacity-building subjects would be most beneficial to them. Results show that participants in the ACBPR process selected as their first or second choice learning about their African culture (40%), program development (32%), how to conduct research (24%), how to improve their fundraising and grant writing (20%), how to strengthen their business practices (16%), and how to access and utilize public data (8%). Therefore, an innovation is needed to meet the needs of this target group. To guide the innovation, the dissemination evaluation will explore whether an Afrocentric capacity-building curriculum would increase levels of REI and lead to an increase in community capacity to address historical disparities. It is hypothesized that the social innovation will lead to increased capacity and higher levels of REI.

To evaluate the expected impact on the target population, the advisory committee will assess the prototype training curriculum by utilizing an open- and close-ended questionnaire. From the inception of the qualifying and comprehensive exam process, all data and innovations have been derived from the CBPR process. The evaluation plan will continue to include ACBPR participants as an extension of its capacity-building focus. With proper saturation and participation in the training, the African American community will have the agency necessary to improve biopsychosocial outcomes.

## Research Gaps

As a leading authority of CBPR, Israel et al. (2001) set the foundation for empowering African American communities through a research process to address health and policy issues in their environment. This research affirmed the intent and desired outcomes of the CBPR process. For instance, CBPR stresses the need for researchers to spend significant time with the community to understand the target population's culture and history. It also emphasizes capacity-building components as a best practice. However, Israel et al. (2001) fell short of recognizing the importance of REI development as a capacity-building component when empowering African Americans to increase their agency in addressing issues in their community. This research found that both ACBPR groups explicitly chose the principles of the Nguzo Saba as the lens through which they viewed and addressed community issues. In the wake of George Floyd's murder, African Americans are yearning to reconnect with their African history, ancestry, and culture, which can lead to significant positive biopsychosocial outcomes, therefore suggesting that any CBPR process that engages with the African American community would greatly benefit from embedding increased capacity-building components. Specifically, components that address African cultural learning, program development lessons, and research skills development components would help ensure the community can continue addressing issues when a formal research study is complete. As a result, this research filled a critical gap in the CBPR and capacity-building process when engaging African American communities.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion and Implications**

This study focused on how African Americans in the Inland Empire region of Southern California adapted the CBPR process to create an Afrocentric model to empower their communities to increase agency and address identified issues. This study asked two questions to understand this ACBPR process: (1) To what degree does an ACBPR project adhere to a traditional CBPR process? and (2) Does engaging in an ACBPR project affect capacity building and REI? The study hypothesized that an ACBPR project adheres to the traditional process and increases capacity building and REI.

### **Key Findings**

The study results show that the hypothesis was correct. African American communities such as the Sani Mgbabwe partnership and the Black Equity Initiative naturally adopted a process that strongly adheres to CBPR principles, allowing them to institutionalize their partnership to preserve their long-term operation. Therefore, the work of this African American community is worthy of research and can serve as a best practice worldwide for the most marginalized and oppressed populations.

Findings also suggest the importance of REI development when empowering African Americans to increase their agency in addressing issues in their community. As a foundation of REI development, both groups explicitly chose the principles of the Nguzo Saba as the lens through which they viewed and addressed community issues. In the wake of George Floyd's murder, African Americans are yearning to reconnect with their African history, ancestry, and culture, which can lead to significant positive biopsychosocial outcomes.

In addition, these findings suggest that any CBPR process that engages with the African American community would greatly benefit from embedding increased capacity-building

components. Specifically, components that address African cultural learning, program development lessons, and research skills development components can ensure the community continues addressing their issues when a formal research study is complete.

### **Research Implications**

Social workers and other CBPR practitioners can incorporate the aforementioned theoretical approaches by examining the study's research questions and findings. Practitioners now have an ACBPR model to utilize with the African American community that participants can leverage to create more significant long-term change. The model offers concrete enhancements that social workers and CBPR practitioners are encouraged to implement when engaging the African American community. By incorporating these enhancements, African Americans can rewrite their individual and communal narratives free from the lie of Black inferiority, thereby expanding their understanding of what is possible in addressing historical inequities. In addition, the findings support the importance of reconnecting African Americans to their ancestry and culture through REI development as a critical capacity-building component of the CBPR process to enhance the community's ability to identify critical culturally specific issues and healthy, culturally responsive solutions to their problems. CBPR practitioners also have promising empowerment components that call for more robust capacity-building assistance to enhance community agency so African Americans can increase their personal, interpersonal, and political power. Finally, African American leaders can utilize this model to institutionalize their community-change efforts and authentically tell their stories as they add to the body of research.

### **Limitations**

Although the study results are promising and provide concrete enhancements to the



capacity-building process when engaging the African American community, additional quantitative and qualitative research is needed with a statistically significant sample to further understand the Afrocentric capacity-building process and to what extent effective incorporation of African principles and REI development strengthens a partnership's research.

### **Recommendations**

To ensure the African American community has the agency to collectively address its historical inequities, researchers and practitioners must not ignore the Maafa. Doing so would not be a trauma-informed practice. Therefore, interventions must address historical trauma and implement measures that reconnect African Americans to their native culture. In addition, interventions are encouraged to empower communities and institutions to build their capacity and commitment to collaborate, leverage resources, and build synergy that can yield the power necessary to affect their environment and collective future. Future research is needed regarding additional dissemination practices that can yield effective capacity building that is accessible to more African Americans. Researchers must also examine the various components of a person's African identity and how it affects their identification of community issues and solutions. Foundations and public agencies are encouraged to fund such initiatives to ensure sustainable empowerment initiatives. In addition, significant attention must be given to California's Proposition 209, which prohibits affirmative action measures to achieve equity and reverse adverse outcomes created by the Maafa. Proposition 209 could limit systemic investments in Afrocentric empowerment research and initiatives in California.

### **Next Steps**

Once the prototype is completed, a qualitative and quantitative assessment tool will be created for partnership members to evaluate the effectiveness of the social innovation. An

assessment will seek to determine the efficacy of the Afrocentric capacity-building training and the level of increased skills and REI development that will meet the needs of the African American community. Upon analysis of the evaluation data, appropriate revisions will be made and disseminated regionwide through ACBPR partners and other community institutions. As stated previously, the training will be a free and open-source project that will build the capacity of the African American community to collectively address its historical inequities.

### **Conclusion**

African Americans have experienced profound historical inequities and social vulnerability that must be addressed. Due to systemic racism and other forms of marginalization throughout American history, the African American community lacks the person and communal agency necessary to address these inequities. Through an ACBPR model, African American partnerships have identified the necessary capacity-building components needed to build power that can transform their environment and biopsychosocial outcomes. Utilizing REI development as the foundation of its social innovation, this study created an Afrocentric capacity-building program to build capacity to create community institutions that can collaborate with other African American-serving organizations and collectively address historical inequities. The study further posits that ACBPR and Afrocentric capacity building are credible interventions that social workers, practitioners, and researchers can use and further study. Furthermore, African American partnerships would greatly benefit from capacity-building components, including increased REI development, training, and research implementation.

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