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**Relations Between Prior Racial Microaggressions, Expat Motivation, and
Life Satisfaction Among African American Expat Women in Mexico**

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A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School at the University of Missouri -
St. Louis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of
Philosophy in Education with an emphasis in Counseling

May, 2024

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Abstract

Microaggressions refer to subtle forms of racism that occur in everyday interactions, often conveying hostile or demeaning messages. These experiences can have a negative impact on the psychological well-being and life satisfaction of African Americans. However, there is a lack of research that explores the relationship between microaggressions and the life satisfaction of African American women who have relocated abroad. Additionally, little is known of the contemporary motivations for expatriation of African American women. A review of African American historical migration, study abroad participation, and tourism lays the framework for examining recent expatriation. The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of African American women who have moved to Mexico and explore the relationship between their experiences of microaggressions in the U.S. and their current life satisfaction. The study utilized a correlational design. The sample included 111 African American women expatriates in Mexico. The research did not support the hypothesis linking prior racial microaggressions in the US to current life satisfaction after moving abroad. However, it did confirm correlations between racial microaggressions and numerous motivations for emigration. Importantly, the study also found that a longer duration spent outside the U.S. enhances life satisfaction among these expatriates. A discussion of these results; implications for counselors, and counselor educators; strengths and limitations of the study; and recommendations for future research are provided.

Keywords: African American women, microaggressions, psychological well-being, life satisfaction, expatriate, black travel movement, migration, immigrants, Mexico

Resumen

Las microagresiones se refieren a formas sutiles de racismo que ocurren en interacciones cotidianas, a menudo transmitiendo mensajes hostiles o despectivos. Estas experiencias pueden tener un impacto negativo en el bienestar psicológico y la satisfacción con la vida de los afroamericanos. Sin embargo, existe una falta de investigación que explore la relación entre microagresiones y la satisfacción con la vida de las mujeres afroamericanas que se han trasladado al extranjero. Además, se conoce poco sobre las motivaciones contemporáneas para la expatriación de las mujeres afroamericanas. Una revisión de la migración histórica afroamericana, la participación en estudios en el extranjero y el turismo sienta las bases para examinar la expatriación reciente. El propósito de este estudio fue investigar las experiencias de mujeres afroamericanas que se han mudado a México y explorar la relación entre sus experiencias de microagresiones en EE. UU. y su actual satisfacción con la vida. El estudio utilizó un diseño correlacional. La muestra incluyó a 111 mujeres expatriadas afroamericanas en México. La investigación no apoyó la hipótesis que vincula las microagresiones raciales previas en los EE. UU. con la satisfacción con la vida actual después de mudarse al extranjero. Sin embargo, sí confirmó correlaciones entre microagresiones raciales y numerosas motivaciones para la emigración. Es importante destacar que el estudio también encontró que una mayor duración fuera de los EE. UU. mejora la satisfacción con la vida entre estas expatriadas. Se proporciona una discusión de estos resultados; implicaciones para consejeros y educadores de consejeros; fortalezas y limitaciones del estudio; y recomendaciones para investigaciones futuras.

Palabras clave: Mujeres afroamericanas, microagresiones, bienestar psicológico, satisfacción con la vida, expatriada, migración, inmigrantes, México

Acknowledgment

I am grateful to my committee members, Dr. Angela Coker, Dr. Susan Kashubeck-West, Dr. So Rin Kim, and Dr. Mary Edwin, whose expertise and support have been invaluable throughout this long journey.

Dedication

Mom, Dad, I want to express my thanks to both of you for always believing in me, for instilling in me a strong belief in myself, curiosity, social change, and the power of education. Your support and consistent expectation of academic achievement have been my guiding light. Mom, although you're no longer with us physically, your love continues to inspire me every day. Dad, your presence, and encouragement mean the world to me. I love you.

I pay tribute to my late grandparents, Mary and William Oliver; Patricia Elder; their memories are carried in my heart, and this dissertation stands as a testament to their enduring legacy.

I am grateful for the love and encouragement of my family and friends, including my sisters, Vivian and Meghan, my brother, Jamar, and my cousins, Hasina and Keiara. Special thanks to my friend Solana's support throughout this process. I also acknowledge my friend and mentor, Michael, for his guidance.

I express gratitude to the faculty members at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Morris Brown College and Alabama A&M University, whose commitment to education enriched my personal and academic development. I extend my appreciation to all the black women before me who have supported and inspired me, exemplifying resilience, and excellence. To all those mentioned above and countless others who have supported me, I offer sincere thanks. Your belief in me and support have made a significant impact on my life, and I am forever grateful.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

African American Historical Migration Patterns and Motivations.

Racism and the search for safety, opportunity, and liberty have shaped the African American experience in the United States (Bleich et al., 2019). African Americans have faced brutality, inequalities, segregation, and discrimination due to a history of enslavement in the U.S. This search for a better life has led to domestic (Tolnay, 2003) and international migration (Craig-Henderson, 2017). African Americans' search to improve their futures extended beyond the confines of the United States. The contemporary relevance of this longstanding tradition of migration, driven by the pursuit of dignity, safety, and opportunity, remains evident in the present era (Craig-Henderson, 2017; Graham, 2022). Although anti-Blackness is prevalent globally, Black people's unique challenges vary in frequency, manifestation, and expression by location (Bashi, 2004). Nevertheless, these challenges inevitably lead to experiences of exclusion and marginalization.

The Great Migration represents a prominent episode in African American history, marked by the migration of African Americans from the oppressive conditions of the Southern United States to Northern urban centers (Tolnay, 2003). During the 1820s and 1830s, the US government proposed relocating African Americans from southern states to Liberia, West Africa or Central America (Everill, 2012). The purpose of this colonization movement was to address racial conflicts and the aftermath of slavery. It is important to note, however, that many African Americans, through their own will, chose migration beyond the borders of the United States. Their search for opportunity and

freedom reached countries such as Mexico, Canada, Europe, Brazil, Russia and the continent of Africa (Cornell, 2013; de Santa Pinho, 2008; Gaines, 2006; Rhodes, 2000; Salenius, 2016; Yankholmes & Timothy, 2017). For this research, I focus on the connection and relevance to Mexico. Numerous enslaved individuals, often considered 'fugitives,' actively sought acceptance and refuge in Mexico (Cornell, 2013). Mexico provided them with opportunities and safety that were otherwise inaccessible within the United States borders (Fikes, 2006). One such example is African American leaders who migrated to Mexico in the early 20th century, founding "Little Liberia" in Baja California, seeking freedom from inequality and self-sufficiency in a more promising land. Little Liberia faced challenges, including financial mismanagement, legal issues, and policy shifts by the Mexican government, leading to its disbandment by 1928 (Hooton, 2018). Nonetheless, the endeavor has left a legacy and highlights African Americans' ongoing struggle for civil rights and economic empowerment. It also illustrated the complexities of cross-border racial dynamics in the pursuit of economic opportunities, societal acceptance and equality. African American women continue this historical imperative and are part of the "new American migration." They seek better opportunities and a better quality of life abroad. These women lead the way for new possibilities beyond the US. (Girma, 2023).

The historical backdrop of African American migration provides a foundation for comprehending the underlying factors driving contemporary expatriation. Pursuing a better quality of life, greater opportunities, and escaping racial trauma and discrimination motivates African Americans to move abroad.

The act of expatriation, or moving outside one's home country, can offer African Americans the opportunity to explore new territories, confront constraints in their country of origin, and discover greater inclusion and recognition (Carew, 2015; Chapman, 2007; Graham, 2022; O'Reilly & Benson, 2009). Nevertheless, despite the potential for a new beginning, African American expatriates still confront various manifestations of discrimination and racism within their host countries (Bento, 2020; Dos Santos, 2020; Graham, 2022). Microaggressions, a manifestation of covert racism in modern society (Sue, 2008), is harmful to one's psychological well-being (Capodilupo et al., 2010; Knighton et al., 2022; Rose, 2022; Schmitt et al., 2014; Sue et al., 2008) and physical health (Nadal et al., 2017). The regular occurrences of these interactions characterized by malicious or derogatory content can contribute to feelings of invalidation, elevated levels of stress, and psychological distress (Szymanski & Stewart, 2010; Willis, 2015). Despite the inescapable reality of gendered racism for Black women, existing research is limited.

The existing body of literature on the experiences of African American women who have become expatriates and the impact of microaggressions on their psychological well-being is minimal, despite the significance of this subject matter (Davison & Punnett, 1995). The primary objective of this research was to address the gap mentioned earlier by exploring the microaggressions encountered in the U.S. by African American women who have relocated to Mexico. The study sought to explore how microaggressions affected the life satisfaction of African American women and their motivation to move abroad

(Watson & Henderson, 2023). Additionally, this research provides valuable insights to inform counseling interventions aimed at improving the well-being of African American women in the US and abroad (Coker, 2004).

Tourism, Study Abroad, and Expatriation.

Tourism. By understanding the historical context and current developments in Black travel, we can gain insight into the motivations and experiences of African American expats and the relationship of microaggressions on their psychological well-being. Historical inequalities have profoundly shaped the tourism industry (Torabian & Miller, 2017). Studies by Benjamin and Dillette (2021), Bento (2020), Carter (2008), Dillette and Benjamin (2021), Gill (2021), Graham (2022), and Phillip (1998; 2000) have shown that these inequalities have resulted in barriers, invisibility, and separation, which have made it challenging for African Americans to access and navigate the travel and leisure space (Arai & Kivel, 2009). However, despite these challenges, African Americans have managed to lead prosperous lives and have been actively involved in leisure and travel activities since the early 1800s (Foster, 1999). Notable figures like Frederick Douglass, an ex-slave, and abolitionist, paved the way for opportunities for leisure and travel along railroads within the United States and across Europe and Africa (Foster, 1999).

Further, in the 1960s, entertainers, artists, and writers (e.g., James Baldwin and Josephine Baker) moved to Paris to escape American racism. During the same time, a Back-to-Africa movement led by Marcus Garvey led many African Americans to move to Ghana (Harrington, 1993). These travel and

expatriate experiences offered temporary respite from the pervasive racism within the United States, providing relief and a sense of freedom from racial consciousness (Dunbar, 1968; Robinson, 2004).

The historical racialization of space has led to different travel patterns among African Americans due to ingrained anxiety and fear of racial discrimination (Alderman et al., 2022). Research suggests African Americans address these fears by conducting thorough destination research, adhering to a strict schedule, and traveling in groups (Philip, 1994,1998; Lee & Scott, 2017). These travel behaviors reflect survival tactics developed during the era of Jim Crow segregation and influenced by the collective memory of slavery. The Negro Motorist Green Book, known as the “Green Book” published between 1936 and 1963, aimed to provide safety advice for black travelers in the U.S. and abroad. The book compiled a list of venues and hotels hospitable to black travelers. Recent studies confirm that Black travelers still face racism, discrimination, and a lack of representation in various travel contexts (Dillette & Benjamin, 2021).

Furthermore, the travel and tourism industry has often disregarded the unique needs and concerns of racial and ethnic minorities, perpetuating their invisibility through predominantly White marketing strategies (Alderman & Modlin, 2013; Benjamin et al., 2016; Davis, 2018; Harrison, 2013). Duffy et al. (2019) have pointed out that even at heritage tourism sites that aim to educate people about the atrocities of slavery, there is a clear indication of the marginalization of Black travelers. These sites usually present a simplified version of history, where tourists are encouraged to imagine themselves as wealthy White plantation

owners. This approach prioritizes the admiration of the architectural grandeur of such sites over meaningful discussions of repentance for the wrongs that were done. Moreover, these sites are also marketed as wedding venues and corporate retreats, which further detracts from acknowledging the racial injustices that took place there. The Black Travel Movement (BTM) has emerged as a response to the neglect of Black travelers in the travel industry, seeking to increase their visibility and representation (Dillette, 2021). Through social media storytelling and sharing experiences, Black travelers have created a modern digital version of the "Green Book" (Green, 1949) that provides a platform for connection, information, offering advice, and sharing their stories. The black travel movement has not only increased interest in tourism, but also study abroad and expatriation among African Americans, opening doors for exploration and acceptance in different cultural contexts (Dillette et al., 2018; Peters, 2021).

In summary, historical racial inequalities and barriers have significantly impacted tourism for African Americans, resulting in unique challenges and experiences. However, the Black travel movement and social media have created new opportunities for connection, access, empowerment, and visibility, leading to a growing interest in travel, study abroad, and expatriation among African Americans (Dillette et al., 2018; Peters, 2021).

Study Abroad. Black students studying abroad account for only 6.5% of students (Institute of International Education, 2018). Most participants in study abroad programs are White women (Salisbury et al., 2011). European destinations are the most popular study abroad placements, and African

countries receive less participation (Green, 2017; Willis, 2012). Researchers found that education abroad participants experienced personal growth, cultural understanding, language skills, educational enrichment, independence, and intercultural development that positioned them as better applicants for advanced education or jobs (Dwyer & Peters, 2004).

The existing research on students of color abroad often are related to access (Comp, 2008; Penn & Tanner, 2009) and heritage seeking (Bush et al., 2022; Dillette, 2020; Morgan et al., 2002; Tolliver, 2000) failing to explore the intersectionality of race and gender in shaping the experiences of Black students abroad. However, Willis (2015) examined the microaggressions and intersectionality of Black women during their study abroad programs. According to Willis (2015), Black women who travel abroad face a set of challenges that are both positive and life-changing, yet still painful due to the climate. Willis' (2012, 2015, 2016) findings showed that host cultures and white peers from the United States often make racial and gendered microaggressions towards African American women. In both scenarios, the microaggressions committed by peers were as pervasive and distressing as those made by the host culture.

Research regarding access has shown that Black students are interested in study abroad programs (Kasravi, 2019; Lee & Green, 2016; Willis, 2012). However, based on financial constraints, and lack of travel exposure, students believe the programs are outside their immediate reach (Penn & Tanner, 2009). Black students are more likely to seek student abroad opportunities if there are heritage opportunities, specifically in Africa (Penn & Tanner, 2009). Black

students seeking heritage experiences expect an opportunity for self and cultural development during this emotional “homecoming” (Bender & Storms, 2017; Dillette, 2020; Talburt & Stewart, 1999). However, African American students face dissonance when seen solely as Americans rather than fully embraced for their racial and ethnic ties while studying abroad in Africa. The popularity of international studies will grow as global connectivity continues and as many students abroad participants envision a move out of the U.S. as part of their plans.

Expatriation: The Black Expat. Determining the exact number of American expats or first-generation immigrants is a challenging task due to the lack of comprehensive data. While the United States Department of State offers information on issued passports, this does not provide a complete overview. Research and statistical tracking have mostly focused on immigration to the U.S., leaving little attention to American emigration. Americans specifically white Americans have the privilege of not being associated with the racialized and class-based connotations that the category immigrant carries around the world (Benson, 2015; Christian, 2013). They are considered unproblematic, perhaps even desirable, and therefore included in very little official counting or discourse. African American expats have received even less scholarly attention, with only a few exceptions.

Although there is limited statistical documentation, specific indicators suggest a growing trend in the number of Americans choosing to emigrate (Springer, 2018). An example of such an indicator is the noticeable increase in

online travel sites and blogs focused on the expatriate experience (Peters, 2021). The increasing prevalence of these platforms indicates a growing interest in and involvement with expatriation (Dillette, 2020). Moreover, the rising accessibility and usage of international relocation services suggest a surging need for support when moving to foreign countries. Although these indicators do not offer exact numerical data, they indicate a probable increase in the number of Americans contemplating or deciding to expatriate (Craig-Henderson, 2015). According to recent research, the increasing emigration can be attributed to various factors such as changes in global landscape, advancements in technology and infrastructure, improved living standards in developing countries, and political polarization in the United States. (Clayton et al., 2019; Craig-Henderson, 2017; Yankholmes & Timothy, 2017).

Migration research generally conceives the motivations to leave/migrate as either "push" or "pull" forces (Lee, 1966). The framework is simple, but the distinction between push and pull is complex. For example, Mexican migrants arrive in the U.S., both pushed by a lack of economic opportunities and pulled by the hope for higher wages. A large, researched group of expats, White retired expats in Mexico, related to pull factors such as exotic locations, real estate bargains, low taxes, and easily accessible domestic help (Croucher, 2009a, 2009b; 2012a, 2012b; 2015). Research suggests that push factors like toxic American culture and racial microaggressions may influence African Americans to move abroad (Craig-Henderson, 2015). Recent events, such as the killings of Sandra Bland and Breonna Taylor, further incidents of police brutality, and the

#SayHerName movement, may also contribute to their decision to leave the U.S. The deaths heightened awareness that police brutality also carries a gendered dimension. African Americans who have experienced racial stressors and discrimination within their own country may see migration as a chance to leave behind these challenges and explore new environments with different racial dynamics. Moreover, the political tension in the United States after the last 2020 presidential election may be a possible factor that has led to an increased number of Americans contemplating or deciding to relocate to another country (Bleich et al., 2019; Clayton et al., 2019).

Research on Americans living abroad mainly focuses on how to adjust to their new environment (Hippler et al., 2014; Pustovit, 2020; Olsen & Martins, 2009; Sokro & Moeti-Lysson, 2018) and developing cross-cultural skills (France et al., 2019; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012; Takeuchi et al., 2005; Setti et al., 2022) in multinational corporations. This research distinguishes "corporate expats" from "self-initiated expats." The research on expatriates in organizational management and global staffing for "corporate" expats rarely considers race. There are currently a growing number of studies that examine "self-initiated" expats (Doherty, 2013) expats who relocate without a corporate sponsor and "lifestyle migrants" (Benson, 2012, 2013, 2015; Croucher, 2015; Hayes, 2014) who are seeking a better quality of life. However, there is a lack of literature on African Americans in all areas.

Nevertheless, one article specifically examined the experiences of African American women who are corporate expatriates. Crawley et al. (2009) conducted

a study on the role of mentoring in facilitating the success of African American expatriates in the global business workforce. Despite the challenges black expats face, only a few studies have examined their experiences (Craig-Henderson, 2015; Crawley et al., 2009; Dos Santos, 2020; Rose, 2022). Graham (2022) conducted qualitative research on African Americans living in Australia and found that their experiences often resulted in psychological distress due to the fetishization of white Australian settlers. However, Graham also found that African Americans living in Sydney, Australia reported feeling more physically safe than in the United States. The results highlighted the support and solidarity found between African Americans and Aboriginals. This lack of research on Black expat experiences leaves many questions unanswered.

There are some common experiences that expatriates may encounter regardless of their race or gender, such as difficulties with language or the everyday challenges of adjusting to a new environment. However, a study by Craig-Henderson (2015) found that the experiences of American expatriates are influenced by their social status within the United States and the cultural background of the host country they are residing. African Americans who live abroad are often recognized and treated primarily as "Americans," rather than solely defined by their racial background. This experience has given them a sense of belonging and acceptance. Due to their minority status in the United States, their transition to living abroad is often smoother, as they are better prepared for potential outsider status in foreign countries. Moreover, most African Americans have expressed that race is much less of an issue, which leaves them

feeling unburdened in new ways (Craig-Henderson, 2015). By comparison, White Americans, for example, in Asia or Latin America, undergo an identity shift and face the challenge of adapting to a new environment as an outsider and 'visible' minority for the first time in their host country.

It is interesting to note that African Americans who have chosen to leave the United States have reported similar experiences, regardless of whether they have relocated to Western or non-Western countries. African American women residing in Europe and Asia have shared their experiences of feeling a sense of uniqueness and greater comfort with their own identity, in contrast to their encounters in the United States. According to two separate studies, including Barlow et al. (2000), Black Americans often feel American but are not perceived as such by White Americans. This marginalization in the United States affects their experience as expatriates and makes it easier for them to adapt to being outsiders in foreign countries. James Baldwin, who wrote about his experience as a Black expat, described living in America as being "trapped in history" (Baldwin, 1950), emphasizing the connection between expatriation and an individual's status in America. Despite research demonstrating an easier transition and reduced racism, black women still face difficulties abroad. Bento (2020) found African American women experienced hypervisibility in Japan and South Korea, such as staring and touching, causing significant discomfort. Similarly, Dos Santos (2020) found workplace bullying and discrimination caused stress and burnout for African American educators in South Korea.

The experiences of American expatriates can differ depending on their group status within the United States and the cultural environment of the host country. African Americans often experience a strong sense of belonging as "Americans" abroad, whereas White Americans may encounter challenges adjusting to their identity as outsiders. Understanding these dynamics enhances our comprehension of the expatriation experience among various groups. The objective of the research was to improve the comprehension of the mental health and wellness of African American women in a global context by examining the encounters of African American expats, the difficulties faced by African American students studying abroad, and the history and contemporary context of Black tourism and travel.

Microaggressions and Psychological Well-Being. Microaggressions are subtle forms of discrimination characterized by everyday exchanges that convey hostile or demeaning messages and significantly impact individuals' psychological well-being. Lewis et al. (2013) define gendered racial microaggressions as subtle and everyday expressions of oppression based on the intersections of race and gender. Research has shown that experiences of racial discrimination among African Americans result in frustration, self-doubt, isolation, lower life satisfaction, feelings of powerlessness, and compromised integrity (Sue et al., 2007b). The clash of racial realities, the invisibility of unintentional bias and discrimination, the perceived minimal harm of microaggressions, and the catch-22 of responding are the four major psychological dilemmas created by microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007b).

Recipients of microaggressions often find themselves in a catch-22 situation, questioning the perpetrator's intentions and doubting their interpretations of the events (Sue et al., 2007b). On the other hand, perpetrators may see the events as causing minimal harm or being innocent, not understanding the emotional impact on the victims (Sue et al., 2008a). Chronic discrimination and exclusion lead to high stress levels, significant psychological distress, anger, depression, racial battle fatigue, and adverse health consequences (Franklin, 2016; Harrell et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2007; Stevens-Watkins et al., 2014).

Coping strategies play a crucial role in managing the stress caused by microaggressions. Research has shown that African American women who practice avoidance coping, which involves avoiding situations or people that may discriminate against them, tend to have higher life satisfaction and self-esteem (Utsey et al., 2000). Lewis et al. (2013) conducted a study that found that Black women used different strategies in response to gendered racial microaggressions. These strategies include confronting the perpetrator, engaging in self-protective strategies such as disengaging and avoidance, and seeking social support through collective strategies. The study also found that choosing when to respond to microaggressions is a deliberate decision-making process.

African Americans also utilize coping strategies such as healthy paranoia, sanity checks, empowering and validating self, and rescuing offenders to navigate their experiences (Sue et al., 2010a). These strategies involve maintaining a healthy suspicion of the motives and behaviors of the dominant

culture, seeking validation from like-minded individuals, interpreting racism for what it is, and considering the feelings of White individuals in certain situations (Sue et al., 2010a). Mental health professionals have also identified coping themes in response to microaggressions, including identifying key issues, self-care, spirituality, confrontation, support from White allies, documentation, mentoring, and collective organizing (Hernández et al., 2010). These coping strategies involve individually or collectively responding to microaggressions, seeking counsel and support, engaging in self-care activities, confronting microaggressions, documenting patterns of events, and participating in mentoring and collective action.

Racial microaggressions have a pervasive impact on various aspects of individuals' lives, delivering hidden demeaning messages and invalidating individuals as racial/cultural beings (Sue, 2010; Franklin, 2004; Solórzano et al., 2000). Although studies have identified different types of racial microaggressions experienced by different racial and ethnic groups, further research is needed to explore their impact fully. (Sue et al., 2007a, 2008a, 2008b; Rivera et al., 2010). Despite the impact of microaggressions, no studies have focused on the relationship between racial microaggressions, motivations and expatriation.

Racism-Related Stress and Life Satisfaction. Diener et al. (1985) defines life satisfaction is an important measure of overall well-being. For African Americans, this assessment is significantly influenced by experiences of racial discrimination. Studies by Broman (1997) and Utsey et al. (2000) confirm a strong negative correlation between experiences of racial discrimination and life

satisfaction. Harrell (2000) further details the concept of race-related stress, noting its significant impact on the mental health of African Americans, beyond daily stressors. Harrell's work emphasizes the enduring psychological consequences of racism-related stress, encompassing the chronic burden of living in a biased society. This connection highlights the deep impact of race-related stress on an individual's overall life satisfaction.

The level of satisfaction that one has with one's life has far-reaching implications and can affect one's health outcomes, mortality, and longevity. Studies by Moody (2022) and Lombardo et al. (2018) have emphasized the crucial connection between mental health and life satisfaction, stressing the importance of life satisfaction beyond just subjective well-being. Despite the differences in life satisfaction among different racial groups, with African Americans consistently reporting lower levels than Whites and African American women reporting the lowest life satisfaction (Crowe & Kim, 2020; Thomas & Holmes, 1992), the reasons for these disparities are not only due to sociodemographic factors but also related to stress-inducing factors such as financial problems (Krause, 1993), work-family conflict (Henderson, 2014), and emotional dependence (Erving & Thomas, 1998). Nevertheless, Barger et al. (2009) suggest that life satisfaction disparities can be narrowed. For instance, engagement in religious activities and family support are linked to higher life satisfaction among African Americans (Krause, 2003), pointing to potential resilience factors.

McCleary-Gaddy and James (2020) explored how stigma consciousness, the anticipation of stereotyping, indirectly diminishes life satisfaction in African Americans. Their research, along with Driscoll et al. (2015) and Carter and Reynolds (2011), highlights that racism-related stress, from direct discrimination to cultural pressures, considerably lowers life satisfaction. Additionally, McKnight et al. (2002) posit that life satisfaction acts as a buffer between stressful life events and mental health outcomes in adolescents, highlighting its mitigating effect on race-related stress.

Key Constructs

African American/Black American/Black

African American, Black Americans, Black and will be used interchangeably. "These terms refer to American citizens of African descent but in differing ways that citizenship has been achieved. Black Americans is an older encompassing term for African Americans, and immigrants from the continent of Africa, the Caribbean, and other locations throughout the African diaspora. While 'Black' is a political identity that acknowledges an understanding of shared experiences of injustice, by extension of this identity, APA, MLA, AP and other format styles have slowly embraced the respect that should be given to various racial and ethnic groups and how they wish to be labeled." (Benjamin & Dillette, 2021).

Expatriate (Expat)

An expatriate, or expat, lives outside their native country (Green, 2009). An expat, or "expatriate," is a person who resides in a country other than their own, either temporarily or with a more lasting intention.

Life satisfaction

The study defines life satisfaction as an essential component of psychological well-being that is measured based on an individual's overall evaluation of their life. It centers on the persons judgment of importance. According to this study, life satisfaction involves comparing one's circumstances with an anticipated standard (Diener et al.,1985).

Racism

Racism is a belief in racial superiority and inferiority, manifested through individual behaviors, institutional practices, and societal policies (Jones, 1997).

Racial Microaggressions

Racial microaggressions encompass verbal and nonverbal insults that communicate subtle negative messages. They include microassaults (direct attacks conveying bias), microinsults (unintentional behaviors or comments demeaning racial heritage), and microinvalidations (statements or behaviors that dismiss the thoughts and experiences of people of color) (Pierce,1974; Sue, 2008).

Purpose of the Study

This research study aimed to investigate the relationship between the experience of racial microaggressions in the United States and the life satisfaction of African American women who migrated to Mexico. While previous studies have extensively examined the impact of racial microaggressions on individuals' psychological well-being, there is a lack of research focusing on African American women who have relocated abroad. The study aimed to understand the motivations behind their migration and the effects on their life

satisfaction. The research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by African American women.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between experiences of racial microaggressions in the US and current life satisfaction of African American women who have moved to Mexico?

Research Question 2a: Are racial microaggressions related to expat motivation factors to leave the US?

Research Question 2b: Are racial microaggressions related to specific types of motivation factors to leave the US?

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The prior experience of racial microaggressions in the US is negatively related to the current life satisfaction of African American women who choose to move to Mexico, while controlling for the amount of time since moving abroad.

Hypothesis 2a: Racial microaggressions experienced in the US are positively related to motivation factors for African American women choosing to move to Mexico.

Hypothesis 2b: More racial microaggressions experienced in the US are related to greater safety and political motivation factors for African American women choosing to move to Mexico.

Significance of the Study

The goal of counseling through advocacy, practice, and research is to facilitate the development of active, productive, and healthy members of society (American Counseling Association, 2020). This study addresses a significant gap in the existing literature by focusing on the intersection of racial microaggressions, life satisfaction and expatriation. While previous studies have examined the impact of racial microaggressions on various populations, insufficient attention has been devoted to African American expats from the United States, with only minimal exceptions. As such, it presented a compelling subject for investigation and analysis in the context of this study. By investigating the relationship between racial microaggressions and life satisfaction (Schmitt et al., 2014; Thompson & Neville, 1999) in this population, this study seeks to provide valuable insights into the decision-making, motivations, and experiences of African American women.

The findings may inform the interventions and strategies to promote well-being and address the mental health needs of African American women in the U.S. and internationally. The existing research on microaggressions has primarily focused on experiences within predominantly White universities (McCabe, 2009) resulting in a lack of diversity among participants and settings. This study aimed to examine racial microaggressions experienced by African American women while allowing for a broader range of perspectives and experiences. This

research can potentially inform additional interventions and competencies, especially considering the growing utilization of telehealth services.

Summary

This chapter provides an introductory overview of the context and purpose of the study, along with the research questions that guided the focus of the study, including a definition of terms. The following chapter provides an in-depth literature review of key constructs that guided the focus of this study.

Chapter 2: Review of Relevant Literature

African American Migration

An enduring theme of mobility and transition across historical periods has perpetually defined the African American experience. Movement, whether forcibly during the slave trade or by necessity during the great migration, is part of the African American story. The roots of African American migration are deeply entrenched in history, tracing back to periods well before the abolition of slavery in 1865. Great migration spanned nearly a century (1865-1970), with more than six million African Americans from the South to northern and Western regions. The Great Migration stood as an indictment of the deeply entrenched institutions of slavery, white supremacy, and the United States itself (Mathieu, 2009). The migration of African Americans was not merely a geographical shift; it was a response to the economic, social, and political climate, serving as a compelling testament to their exercise of agency and rights.

African Americans migrated to different places for various reasons. Some were in search of their family members who were separated by the slave trade and were living in countries like the US, Canada, or the Caribbean. Others

wanted to explore the newly-opened country, while many hoped to find jobs in labor-intensive sectors like steel, coal, and railroading, where their agricultural knowledge could be used to secure better wages. Due to the escalation of violence, racial tensions, and incidents of lynching in the late 19th century, many African Americans sought safety by seeking exile abroad. They immigrated to various destinations such as Canada, Europe, the Caribbean, Mexico, Russia, and Africa (Carew, 2015).

The U.S government was also looking for ways to resettle African Americans. President Abraham Lincoln had a scheme to relocate freed Black people to “their own land” in places like Liberia, Panama, and Haiti, but it was abandoned due to the distance. Before issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, he agreed to provide up to \$100 for each enslaved person who voluntarily chose to emigrate out of the country. Lincoln believed it better to 'export them all' to achieve peace between the North and South (Brown, 2022).

The black press had a significant impact on the migration of African Americans. It shaped their vision of life, facilitating dreams of success and possibilities in the U.S. and abroad. It portrayed leisure through letters and photography, which only fueled African Americans' desire for freedom, success, and entrepreneurship, allowing them to carve out their version of the American dream (Gordon, 2015).

Migration to Mexico. The Great Migration was a century-long quest driven by the need to escape various forms of racial violence, discrimination, and oppressive conditions (Mathieu, 2009). African Americans seeking meaningful

citizenship turned abroad when opportunities in the United States remained outside of their reach. Since the early 1820s, African Americans have considered Central and South America a potential destination for greater liberty and racial equality (Fikes, 2006). This sentiment continues today, as evidenced by the growing population of black expatriates (Craig-Henderson, 2015).

Although there is disagreement about the level of early support for African American immigrants in Mexico (Fikes, 2006; Vincent, 1997), evidence of efforts to improve their situations and escape racial violence is significant in the history of African American migration. Mexico officially abolished slavery in 1829, and by 1825, one-fifth of the emigrants from the United States were enslaved Black people from Texas. In 1832, an abolitionist paper made a passionate plea for Black immigration to Mexico, highlighting the stark contrast between the oppressive conditions in the United States and the prospect of a better life in Mexico, where all men were considered equal. Mexico's policy of refusing to discourage or return runaway enslaved Africans also fueled the dreams of many seeking freedom (Cornell, 2013). African Americans from Texas and Louisiana saw no reason to risk the long migration to the North, and by 1855 as many as 4,000 had risked life to arrive at the Mexican border (Tyler & Murphy, 1997, as cited in Fisk, 2006).

However, the journey to Mexico was not without its perils. Two enslaved African Americans were hanged in October 1837, accused of planning to run away to Mexico. White slaveholders took extreme measures to prevent African Americans from seeking freedom (Cornell, 2013). Despite the promises of

freedom, African Americans who fled the South to Mexico during the antebellum era still encountered discrimination. The dominant historical erasure narrative of Mexico portrayed freedom as an attribute predominantly embodied by White North Americans. However, by the 1960s, African Americans had established colonies throughout Mexico (Vincent, 1997).

The appeal of Mexico to African Americans was heightened by the welcoming attitude of Mexican authorities, particularly in contrast to the low regard Mexicans held for white Americans due to the US-Mexican War and subsequent border control policies. The treatment of Mexican nationals reinforced the distrust of white Americans, fostering political resentment and sympathy for African Americans (Douglas, 2018). During the Mexican revolutionary (1910-1917), African Americans actively participated and felt more welcomed in Mexico than in their native country. This led to cooperation between Mexican and Black communities. Mexico also became a haven for African American scholars seeking refuge from white supremacist policies, political persecution, and economic instability in the United States. While Paris is often cited as a popular expat destination, Mexico, too, attracted prominent figures such as Langston Hughes, Audrey Lord, Elizabeth Catlett, and William Willard Motley (Green, 2014; Douglas, 2018).

The migration of African Americans to Mexico during the early 20th century resulted in the establishment of communities, such as Little Liberia in Baja California (Hooton, 2018). This marked a significant yet often overlooked chapter in the narrative of African American migration, resistance and self-

determination. The migration was not just a geographical move, but a profound statement against the systemic racial oppression of the United States.

Starting around 1915, the movement gained momentum with the founding of the Lower California Mexican Land and Development Company in 1917. Visionary leaders, such as Hugh Macbeth, a Los Angeles attorney, spearheaded the cause. The period marked the beginning of an effort to establish an all-black farming community in Baja California, Mexico with the aim of settling at least 200 families initially (Hooton, 2018). The community began taking shape in 1919 and by 1921, it had expanded to over 20,000 acres, attracting attention and investment. In 1922, the organization had members from various parts of the United States, including entrepreneurs from Oklahoma who were affected by the Tulsa Massacre. The organization had expanded significantly and developed plans for African American and Mexican co-owned businesses, such as a sanitarium, a hotel, and a bank (Hooton, 2018).

They sought to leverage Mexico's history of offering refuge to those fleeing slavery and its relatively non-discriminatory stance towards African Americans as the foundation for a new beginning. However, due to a combination of legal issues, financial mismanagement, and changing policies by Mexican authorities, the community faced significant challenges. By 1928, the Mexican government began reclaiming land, leading to the disbandment of Little Liberia (Hooton, 2018).

Little Liberia was envisioned as a sanctuary where African Americans could thrive away from the suffocating grip of Jim Crow laws. The community

aimed to leverage agricultural and economic opportunities to build a self-sufficient community. This initiative was deeply inspired by the ideologies of Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey, emphasizing economic uplift, racial self-sufficiency, and the power of land ownership. The African American migration to Baja, California, and the establishment of Little Liberia were primarily motivated by the desire for economic independence, racial equality, and a life free from the systemic racism and social inequalities experienced in the United States. Additionally, they were drawn to the idea of establishing a community that symbolized freedom and the possibility of living in a non-discriminatory environment. Over time, the motivations behind African American migrations have changed, but the core essence of seeking better life conditions remains the same.

The migration of African Americans to Mexico has deep historical roots, driven by the search for liberty, racial equality, and a better life. The relationship between African Americans and Mexico has been complicated, with moments of cooperation and acceptance but also instances of discrimination and historical erasure. Nevertheless, African Americans found varying degrees of freedom and opportunity in Mexico, leading to the establishment of communities. This migration narrative remains an essential part of African American history. It reflects the complexity of navigating between spaces, cultures, and relationships for those who call Mexico their home (Vinson, 2006).

Study Abroad. As the world becomes more connected, more students are interested in studying abroad and envision their lives outside the U.S. (Craig-

Henderson, 2015). However, research on the experiences of African American women abroad is significantly lacking. It is important to explore their international journeys to connect their unique experiences and enrich cross-cultural discourse.

Recent data shows that approximately 333,000 American students participate annually in study abroad programs, and 6.5% identified as African American (Baer et al., 2018; Institute of International Education, 2018). It is well established that African American students encounter microaggressions in academic settings, which contribute to isolation, frustration, and additional burdens (Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano et al., 2000; Willis, 2015). Additionally, the extant literature on student abroad experiences outside of the U.S. further document qualitatively different racialized experiences of African American students (Hartman et al., 2020; Talburt & Penn, 1999; Willis, 2015). Goldoni (2017) and Willis (2015) demonstrated how racial microaggressions impact study abroad by creating a challenging learning environment and impeding local interactions. The microaggression experiences limited the development of social networks, resulting in reduced cultural and learning opportunities.

Studying abroad has many documented benefits for all students, including promotion of self-efficacy, critical thinking, language acquisition, cultural knowledge, and personal identity development (Boulden, 2022). Once completed with a study abroad program, students have identified the benefits of increased institutional engagement, social competence in unfamiliar environments, and critical perspectives of the U.S. African Americans receive the same benefits; however, there are experiential differences (Penn & Tanner, 2009). Willis (2015)

reported that in contrast to general study abroad literature, heritage seeking and access to heritage seeking destinations as important motivating factors for African American students to study abroad. Heritage destinations “are countries or regions where sojourners may have at least a perceived or distant if not tangible cultural, ethnic, or racial connection” (Willis et al., 2019, p. 3). African American students abroad report a greater understanding of global anti-blackness, empowerment, agency, cultural validation and a strengthened sense of personal identity (Boulden, 2022; Lott & Brundage, 2022; Jackson, 2006; Wicks, 2011). Lee and Green's (2016) research emphasized the unique advantages of African American students studying in Africa. The benefits for African American students included opportunities to discuss race, explore heritage, gain cross-cultural learning, and connect with their ancestors. They also experience personal growth and exposure to diverse learning environments, leading to feelings of gratefulness, tolerance, and patience. Bush et al. (2022) conducted the first study of an education abroad program for African American men. A study conducted in Senegal, West Africa, involved nine college students whose average age was 27 years. During the trip, the participants were provided with a secure environment in which they could be vulnerable. The study abroad experience had a significant impact on the participants' social, cultural, and racial identities. One of the participants expressed that "this trip defined my very existence and identity" and "I never felt truly African American until now" (Bush et al., 2022, p. 271). Furthermore, Green's (2017) dissertation explored this concept of identity building and found that Black female students who studied abroad with

other Black female students experienced a strong sense of self-discovery, which led to feelings of racial healing.

African American students who participate in heritage seeking study abroad opportunities benefit from identity development, a sense of purpose, and increased confidence (Bush et al., 2022; Jackson, 2006; Wicks, 2011; Willis, 2012, 2015). African Americans expect a connection and an emotional homecoming from their heritage destinations (Comp, 2008; Penn & Tanner, 2009; Wick, 2011). However, the students frequently experience dissonance based on how they are perceived. They are often seen solely or primarily as Americans by locals without acknowledgment of their ties to the host country. These are experiences of African American students who try to reconnect with their ancestral roots in "the Motherland." They grapple with mixed feelings and disillusionment when grouped in the same "foreigner" category as their White peers (Landau & Moore, 2011; Morgan et al., 2002).

Ernest Dunbar, an early writer of the Black expat experience, sheds light on the African American experience abroad as an opportunity to embrace one's existence beyond the constraints of race, nationalism, and ideologies (Dubar, 1968). According to him, he needed to see himself from others' points of view to understand what it means to be American. African American students who have traveled to African countries often find themselves confronted for the first time about being American, which is in contrast to their experiences in the United States, where being Black/African American is often the most salient identity.

Research examining gender issues, specifically African American women in student abroad research, is sparse (Talbert & Stewart, 1999; Willis 2012, 2015). Research has primarily centered on White, middle-class female students. Little research examines the factors that influence how African American students experience their time abroad. African Americans experience numerous participation barriers including financial constraints; lack of support from family, friends, and faculty; fear of the unknown; lack of programs of interest; and not seeing the career benefit (Willis, 2015). While most research on African American study abroad experiences centers around barriers to engagement and recruitment, M'Balia (2013) argues that this approach problematizes student participation based on race rather than addressing broader institutional issues related to study abroad. African American students' underrepresentation in study abroad programs reflect academic inequity and exclusion (Anyia, 2020). Several factors contribute to their concerns and anxieties beyond challenges related to socioeconomic status, family support, and mentorship participation. A significant concern revolves around the potential experience of race-based hostility, microaggressions, feelings of isolation, or a general sense of being "othered" as a minority within their study abroad cohort. Safety concerns also arise due to being far from home. These students may encounter new race-based stressors and need to develop new coping strategies to navigate unfamiliar stressors and lack of support. (Anyia, 2020; Murray et al., 2009).

Research about the international experiences of African American students can help us understand the role of race in their lives. Studying their

experiences abroad can give us a more personalized and contextualized understanding of racism and help us connect domestic and global struggles. Additionally, research on African American international experiences can provide insights into how race and a sense of belonging interact. The experiences of African American students can vary depending on their connection with host communities that share racial similarities or perceived cultural likeness. In 2017, Anya conducted an important study on African American language learners in Brazil. Her research used an ethnographic case study approach to explore Portuguese language learning among four African American college students. The study aimed to understand race-related issues for black students.

Anya's study in 2017 discovered that African American students' identification with their host culture, driven by shared historical, social, and cultural factors, played a significant role in their interest in learning new languages. While previous studies have shown that African American students often feel isolated and marginalized during their study abroad experiences, Anya's research highlights an opportunity to improve the presence and retention of African American students in study programs abroad. The study suggests that social experiences greatly contribute to engagement with the host culture, resulting in positive learning experiences and study outcomes. Anya's research provides valuable insights into how to create conditions that can enhance African American students' experience and benefits in study abroad programs. By emphasizing the voices of Black students, her research highlights the potential

for developing a sense of belonging, fostering positive experiences, and cultivating strong learning environments.

Talbert and Stewart (1999) conducted a study that revealed that an African American female student faced discrimination and sexualization while participating in Spain. This negative experience affected her cultural adjustment and made her hesitant to engage with the host country. Her situation was made worse by the fact that she was the only African American student in her U.S. cohort, which made her feel like an outsider among her classmates and in Spanish society. In 2006, Jackson conducted another study and found that participants found it easier to interact with host country nationals than with their White American U.S. peers, who exhibited racist and exclusionary attitudes. Davis-White Eyes' study in 2013 also found that American peers, not international hosts, reproduced negative narratives and representations. Interestingly, Jackson's study in 2006 also discovered that students of color who had previously negotiated cultural differences in the U.S. found it easier to adapt to their host communities abroad. This finding is consistent with expat adaptation research (Craig-Henderson, 2015).

In his 2017 ethnographic study, Goldoni utilized critical race theory to investigate the experiences of Albert, an African American undergraduate language student studying in Spain. The study examined how Albert struggled with racial discrimination, microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue, which had significant effects on his language learning and active participation in the program. Racial battle fatigue is defined as "the physical, psychological,

emotional, and cultural exhaustion that results from coping with racial microaggressions in a hostile or unsupportive environment" (Smith et al., 2007, p. 555). African American students encountered challenges due to stereotypes about Americans. They were surprised by how they were stereotyped based on their national identity (Day-Vines et al., 1998; Landau & Moore, 2001). In addition, Guy (2007) highlighted the media's significant role in shaping global perceptions of race and ethnicity. He studied the formation of stereotypes and their impact on intergroup perceptions, particularly in study abroad programs. Additionally, Krieger's work (1995), as cited in Goldoni's (2017) study, highlights the influence of well-established stereotypes about African Americans held by the host culture, greatly affecting the nature of their study abroad experiences.

Albert faced discrimination based on his attire, skin color, and presumed socioeconomic class. Albert, for instance, encountered police stops twice. Albert also experienced blatant racism when called a "runaway slave" by a Russian on the train (Goldoni, 2017). Albert was emotionally and linguistically unprepared to handle such experiences, which added to his sense of powerlessness and isolation. These experiences hindered his interactions with locals and strengthened his connection with fellow U.S. study abroad friends, negatively impacting his Spanish language development. However, Albert's counter space did not insulate him from the impact of discrimination, and his peer's lacked empathy for his experience as a black male. Albert was frustrated by his lack of language improvement and the social network he initially expected to find in Spain. The experiences fueled a desire to leave early and triggered guilt over his

family's financial support for his studies abroad, as he felt he was not meeting his learning outcomes. Racial battle fatigue depleted Albert's academic resources, accounted for his disengagement, and necessitated coping strategies for dealing with experiences of racism.

Existing research has shown the complexity of African Americans' study abroad experiences. The nature of their experiences depended on the study location, perceived racial and ethnic similarities with members of the host country, and the intersectional aspects of their identities. African Americans face similar types of harassment and discrimination in international settings as in the U.S., with varying effects based on the intersections of race, gender, and language ability. The experiences gained while studying abroad can be transformative, providing insights into oneself and the world. Goldoni (2017) emphasized the importance of providing support and tools for African American students to navigate racism while studying abroad, while also equipping them with the necessary skills to become global citizens in a diverse and multilingual society.

Willis (2015) also discussed similar racist and sexist microaggressions toward African American female students from locals in Spain and Italy and their American peers. The study investigated the experiences of 19 African American female community college students who participated in study abroad programs in the Mediterranean, West Africa, and the British Isles. Through qualitative interviews, the research explored the intersectionality of their gender, race, and socioeconomic class identities and their impact on their study abroad

experiences. The findings revealed that all 19 participants experienced microaggressions from U.S. peers or the host culture. Although the participants generally described their trip as positive, they also encountered disheartening and painful microaggressions. Specifically, microaggressions occurred in regions not typically associated with heritage destinations for African American students, such as the British Isles and the Mediterranean. Surprisingly, they also appeared where students anticipated feeling cultural connection, like Ghana, Nigeria, Morocco, and ethnic enclaves of African immigrants in the Mediterranean.

Willis's (2015) investigation found that African American peer interactions played a significant role in the experience of studying abroad for African American women. The racial demographics of the country and the dynamics of peer groups influenced the students' emotional responses and reactions during their time abroad. Similarly, Bender and Storms (2017) researched the service-learning experience of two African American women in Tanzania. While they did not experience racial microaggressions in Tanzania, they did experience "whiteness" from their peers and colleagues. "Whiteness" refers to a range of everyday strategies characterized by the unwillingness to acknowledge the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy, and other similar evasions (p.32). According to Bender and Storms (2017), they were sometimes viewed solely as Americans, just like the students (Lott & Brundage, 2022). Although some students formed deep friendships with White peers, all encountered racial microaggressions from

their U.S. peers or the host culture. These experiences caused discomfort, leading to feelings of isolation from both peers and the host culture.

Although Black female students experienced microaggressions in all regions, it was particularly striking in Spain and Italy (Willis, 2015). Gendered racism, which means intersectional discrimination based on gender and race, is evidenced in these experiences abroad (Smith et al., 2011). In Europe, many microaggressions, including nonverbal hostility like staring or rolling eyes and being denied service at restaurants despite the displayed hours, were observed. The participants also experienced perplexing microaggressions based on multiple aspects of their identity, such as being female and Black or related to sexual orientation and size. The participants described comments such as being grabbed and whistled at, catcalls such as "Chocolate" or "Morena," and increased sexualized attention based on skin color and hair texture. Although this attention may seem complimentary, it also led to feeling marginalized among their U.S. peers. The participants acknowledged that cultural norms vary regarding gender and were mindful of being treated differently based on gender (Willis, 2015).

In various contexts, multiple students faced alarming incidents of unwelcome advances, including inappropriate sexual behavior and physical contact that could be classified as sexual assault or harassment by U.S. standards (Willis, 2015). These experiences are consistent with the hypersexualized experience of African American women seen in literature in

Spain, who received more sexualized catcalls and vulgar encounters than white U.S. female peers (Talbert & Stewart, 1999).

In West Africa, microaggressions are experienced related to skin color and sexual orientation in combination with gender (Willis, 2015).

Microaggressions, often subtle and invisible to those who don't experience them, can significantly impact the mental well-being of their recipients (Pierce, 1974; Sue et al., 2007). Smith et al. (2011) further note that these experiences can drain valuable time and energy. African American women, when confronted with microaggressions, often turn to their peers for support (Willis, 2015). Despite these challenges, the participants in the study demonstrated remarkable resilience and personal growth during their study abroad experiences, describing them as transformative. African American students, like their white peers, achieved academic, personal, and intercultural growth with positive outcomes. However, it is essential to acknowledge the reality of microaggressions faced by these students and strive to improve access to higher quality study abroad experiences, particularly for marginalized students (Willis, 2015).

Lott and Brundage conducted a research study 2022 that included 14 students of color, including four African-American students, who were studying in Rome, Italy. The researchers used a critical race theory approach to analyze the experiences of these students while they were studying abroad. They found that race, gender, language, and nationality significantly impacted how the students navigated their study abroad experience.

The students participated in a three-week course on gender, multiculturalism, and education, comparing Italy and the United States. This program was unique because it approached these topics from a different angle than other pre-planning programs. Through their experiences, the students developed as critical global citizens by observing and empathizing with xenophobia in Italy. They also compared their experiences with the observations made in the United States, including the global anti-blackness phenomenon.

During their study abroad experiences, the students had the opportunity to explore various aspects of ethnicity, culture, and language through four main themes: Understanding issues through a global perspective, Experiencing Anti-Blackness, Understanding American privilege, and Experiencing global anti-Blackness. The students' individual social identities and environmental contexts greatly influenced their learning and experiences throughout their journeys. The students showed a heightened awareness of local and global injustice and inequality within the theme of Understanding issues through a global perspective. They gained a more comprehensive understanding of systems of oppression, particularly regarding the intersection of power and identity. For instance, when visiting the Vatican Museum, the students noticed the historical dominance of male Popes. This observation prompted them to reflect on power dynamics and their societal impact.

Through their exploration of social issues on a global scale, the students demonstrated a heightened awareness of both local and global injustices and inequalities. Their experiences led to an expanded understanding of power and

identity intersections within systems of oppression. For example, while the students were already familiar with the history of white men serving as U.S. presidents, their visit to the Vatican Museums revealed the extensive historical influence wielded by male Popes. This experience prompted further reflections on power dynamics. The students also observed parallels between xenophobia in Italy and the United States, specifically Italy's focus on the European refugee crisis and its impact on predominantly African migrants. This provided a backdrop for examining the complexities and similarities of xenophobic sentiments in different countries, such as Mexican immigrant rhetoric in the U.S. (Lott & Brundage, 2022).

The study uncovered the presence of global anti-Blackness. Italian news media often portrays Black individuals as poor, uneducated, and unsophisticated, echoing similar stereotypes in the United States. This highlights the widespread opposition and hatred towards Black people internationally. Another notable discovery was related to American privilege. The students noticed that they received distinct treatment when identified as U.S. citizens, which was often positive and not typically experienced by people of color in the United States. This American privilege became evident during their time abroad. The positive attention and treatment they received as Americans contrasted with the marginalization they often faced in the United States as people of color. This realization raised awareness of the privilege of being American, particularly in an international setting.

Lott and Brundage's (2022) study revealed intense experiences that students have had during interactions with law enforcement. For instance, one African American male student was stopped by heavily armed militarized police officers with machine guns in a popular tourist area in Rome, causing him great distress. Another African American male student reported a similar experience in Italy (Goldoni, 2017). This encounter went beyond a routine stop and evoked a familiar feeling, highlighting the reality of racial profiling in the United States.

The students' study abroad experiences were transformative, allowing them to engage in critical global citizenship and gain valuable insights into topics such as racism, privilege, and identity negotiation within an international context. As a result, it is important to prioritize climate concerns and ensure that staff and faculty are adequately prepared for study abroad programming, particularly with diverse student populations. Institutions must take action to address microaggressions and promote inclusivity if they want to provide empowering study abroad opportunities to all students, regardless of their racial and gendered backgrounds. The research findings emphasize the importance of a proactive approach to ensure students' well-being and readiness for their study abroad experiences. The literature also suggests the significance of exploring peer interactions and experiences to better understand the under-examined aspects of Black women's study abroad experience. The racial demographics of the countries and the dynamics of peer groups significantly influenced their feelings and reactions during their time abroad. In some instances, students formed deep

friendships with peers, while in others, they faced racial microaggressions and isolation from peers and the host culture.

Black Travel Movement. Black travel has a significant historical context (Phillip, 1994; Foster, 1999). However, it is only in recent times that a small body of literature (Benjamin & Dillette, 2021; Dillette et al., 2018; Dillette, 2021; Dillette & Benjamin, 2022; Sutherland, 2019) has emerged, discussing the racism faced by African American tourists (Lee & Scott, 2017). African Americans have suffered from segregation, discrimination, and racism for centuries, and unfortunately, the travel and tourism industry is no exception (Chio et al., 2020). During the time of racial segregation, racial barriers such as "No Negroes allowed" and "We serve Whites only" were well-documented. Although African Americans gained more travel opportunities in the 1940s, they were still denied access to leisure activities, lodging, restrooms, and restaurants. However, the mass production of cars improved safety and decreased reliance on segregated railways, which eventually led to some improvement in this area.

African American travelers are a fast-growing segment in the travel industry, driven by social media and black travel communities. Despite contributing a substantial \$109.4 billion to the U.S. travel market (MMGY, 2020), the tourism and hospitality sector has yet to focus on catering to the needs of African American tourists (Dillette et al., 2018). Recently, the rise of social media platforms and the thriving network of black traveler communities have fostered a surge in black travel and expatriation. According to the Mandala Research Firm (2020), around 17% of African Americans take one or more international trips

and travel locally more than six times each year. Despite this growth, the tourism and hospitality industry avoids specifically targeting African Americans (Dillette et al., 2018). The domestic and international tourism industry has adopted a 'white male gaze' that obscures the experiences of African Americans while also perpetuating racist stereotypes (Alderman, 2013; Buzinde et al., 2006; Buzinde & Almeida Santos, 2008; Gordon, 2015; Martin, 2004; Mellinger, 1994). The tourism industry 'socially sorts' visitors to define who is culturally most acceptable (Small et al., 2008), and whiteness largely dominates the representation in travel advertisements (Burton & Klemm, 2011; Davis, 2018). Research indicates that African Americans often appear in service or entertainment roles when represented in advertisements (Buzinde et al., 2006; Burton & Klemm, 2011). Black-owned travel companies and blogs have emerged as a response to the gaps in the traditional tourism industry. Social media has also played a role in providing visibility, resources, and counternarratives for the often overlooked Black travel experiences. This growth of alternative offerings confirms that the Black travel experience is distinct from that of White travelers, rooted in the history of race and racism in America (Martin, 2004).

Between 1896 and 1954, African Americans faced severe threats of violence, humiliation, and harassment while traveling due to legalized discrimination and segregation during the Jim Crow era. They were often refused access to hotels, parks, beaches, restaurants, and restrooms (O'Brien, 2007). Despite these obstacles, *The Negro Motorist's Green Book* by Victor Hugo Green

provided a solution. Green's (1949) guidebook helped Black travelers navigate hostile, racist "sundown towns".

The Green Book was an annual guidebook, published from 1936 to 1966, that helped African American travelers and motorists navigate parts of the United States and eventually abroad. The guidebook provided information on safe rest stops, stores, hotels, cities, resources, advertisements, and preparedness tips. For African Americans, leisure travel required compromise and courage due to the denial of access to public services. Sometimes, they had to carry extra supplies like buckets, food, or gasoline to ensure their safety and comfort while on the road (Foster, 1999).

African Americans faced many challenges in their quest for travel experiences. Despite this, they continued to seek out opportunities to explore new places. As early as 1911, *The Crisis*, a magazine published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), featured an article by Virginia Wright called "The Congo Express," in which she shared her experience of traveling to Africa to connect with her roots (Foster, 1999). For African Americans, heritage tourism is an essential aspect of travel and study abroad. A study conducted by Boone et al. in 2013 examined the impact of a study abroad trip to Ghana on students' perceptions of race, heritage, and identity. Visiting the slave forts and castles of West Africa is a popular heritage destination for both black and white students traveling to Ghana. However, African American students perceived more of a disconnect with Africans than expected, even though both groups reported an emotional connection to the

slave trade because of touring slave castles. This experience resulted in some students feeling like a different person. Dillette (2020) examined the increasing popularity of roots tourism, also known as heritage tourism, in Ghana. The research explored the relationship between roots tourism, African American identity, and the pursuit of social justice. The study discovered that the travel experience resulted in a form of double consciousness and a heightened commitment to social justice among the tourists.

The historical discrimination and marginalization of African Americans in the tourism industry still have an impact today. Though there is only a small amount of research on African American travelers, some studies are important in understanding their travel choices and behaviors (Philip, 1994; Carter, 2008; Lee & Scott, 2017). Both Carter (2008) and Philip (1994) conducted research on the difference between African American and White travelers using household travel survey data. They found that African Americans remain apprehensive towards tourism and tend to rely on travel behaviors that were established during the Jim Crow era, both consciously and unconsciously. According to Carter (2008), there are distinguishable differences in travel behaviors between African Americans and Whites. Carter's (2008) study found that African American travelers tend to travel in larger groups for a sense of community, safety or belonging and rely more on recommendations from friends and family when choosing destinations. They also generally prefer group travel, spend significant time researching destinations, follow strict itineraries, and are less likely to explore unfamiliar places. Visiting friends and family is a common travel pattern among African

Americans. In contrast, White participants preferred spontaneous stops, used air travel more frequently, participated in outdoor recreational activities, spent extended periods away from home, and actively sought novel destinations and accommodations (Carter, 2008; Philip, 1994). Johnson (1998) argued that African Americans' aversion to participation in certain nature-based destinations is possibly linked to a collective memory of slavery, sharecropping, and lynching. Lee and Scott (2017) found that African Americans' travel choices are significantly impacted by racism, including racial discrimination, fear of encountering racism, and compliance with safety instructions.

The emergence of social media has created a platform for black travelers to connect and exchange information. Social media provides a chance to join groups with similar interests, with membership ranging from public to private to invite-only. These communities are often viewed as safe spaces for marginalized individuals to share their experiences with oppression (Sutherland, 2019). Social media has proven to be a powerful activism and political engagement tool. The use of hashtags, a modern form of resistance, according to Dilletta et al. (2018), has significantly impacted the Black Travel Movement (BTM) in the United States. The Black Travel Movement is a group of Black travelers who have come together to dispel misconceptions and encourage travel among Black individuals (Park et al., 2022). They have created a counter public narrative which is a form of discourse that actively resists hegemonic power, contests majoritarian narratives, engages in critical dialogues, or negotiates oppositional identities (Hill, 2018, p. 287).

The Black Travel Movement began in the early 2010s, with communities sharing their travel experiences on social media using hashtags such as #BlackTravelMovement, #TravelingWhileBlack, and #BlackAndAbroad. This led to the development of organizations like Nomadness Travel Tribe, Travel Noire, Black Travel Movement, and Black Girls Travel Too, which cater to the needs of Black travelers and increase accessibility (Park et al., 2022; Peters, 2021). Dilletta (2001) summarizes the purpose of these organizations as “to provide safe spaces for Black people, and allies of Black people, to make connections with each other while traveling to destinations around the world” (p. 43). Hashtags have also played a role in “Blaxit,” the movement of African Americans leaving the US. Twitter dubbed “Black Twitter” is a popular platform for African Americans to discuss issues, raise awareness related to Black travel and build community (Robinson, 2021). However, despite their eagerness to see the world, African Americans still do not feel safe, as demonstrated by communities formed around hashtags like #sundowntowns and #travelingwithblack.

The most popular hashtag, #travelingwhileblack, often is used to share personal stories, advice, and travel resources (Dilletta et al., 2018). The hashtag is often a place to share experiences where race and racism intersect for African American travelers. People share positive experiences to empower the community, while negative experiences are collectively processed and serve to inform future travelers. Since the tourism industry largely underserves African Americans and is under-researched in academics, online travel communities have served as a primary asset. Social media, travel forums, public or private

Facebook groups, blogs, and other online communities act as a form of resilience to empower African American travelers (Dillette et al., 2018; Park et al., 2022).

Social media communities and users find representations of African American travelers that counter the typical profile of the international traveler. The rise of online communities like influencers, travel bloggers, and digital nomads has flooded social media with images and videos of Black travelers engaging in non-traditional activities such as skiing, hiking, surfing, and staying in luxurious 5-star accommodations. (Peters, 2021). The representation, not often found in media, has increased African Americans' comfort to travel further and more often. The exchange of information, connection, and lived narrative has led some to suggest that social media is a modern digital version of the Green Book (Crier, 2023).

Dillette et al. (2018) analyzed over 300 tweets from black tourists using the hashtag #travelingwhileblack through a critical race theory lens to reveal three themes: racism, awareness of being Black while traveling, and meaningful experiences traveling while Black. Twenty seven percent of the tweets contained instances of racism, and seven percent discussed racist destinations. For example, travelers shared being denied on @airbnb with the hashtag #travelingwhileblack. "Just got instantly denied on @airbnb. I wonder why?! #travelingwhileblack." This aligns with recent studies showing that Airbnb hosts accept traditional White names sixteen percent more than African American names (Cheng et al., 2018; Edelman et al., 2016).

The tweets sadly paint a picture of African American travel that occurrences of racism are not a thing of the past but an ever-present issue for African American travelers, including experiences of interrogation, access barriers, racial profiling, discriminatory remarks, and microaggressions. Dillette et al. (2018) findings provide evidence supporting the concept advanced by critical race theory, which asserts racism is ingrained within our societal structure and perpetuated by officers of the law (immigration officers) who engage in profiling people of color as criminals based on perceived notions of suspicion, out of place. (Delgado & Stefanic, 2023). Consequently, these perpetuate stereotypes held by locals and other travelers, resulting in a continuous cycle of racism experienced by African American travelers (Dillette et al., 2018). However, the study also reveals a theme of transformation and liberation among Twitter users, as many African American travelers experienced a perspective shift due to stepping out of their comfort zone and learning about new cultures.

Sutherland's (2019) study explores how autonomous spaces on social media have evolved from the original concept of 'safe spaces' in LGBTQ+ bars, into realms of empowerment and liberation. For African American travelers, these Facebook Groups designed as safe spaces typically require that members self-identify as Black, where one can be free from the oppressive powers of whiteness and white supremacy. The study shares early findings of risk and safety-sharing practices among the Black Travel community in autonomous social media spaces. The study focused on two categories of social media

communities closed Facebook groups and Twitter hashtag communities, specifically #travelingwhileblack #greenbook and #sundowntowns.

According to Crier (2023) and Sutherland (2019), social media is the modern equivalent of the Green Book. Sutherland (2019) discovered many similarities between how African American travelers currently use Black Travel Movement social communities and how they used the Green Book in the past. One exception is that BTM Facebook groups do not allow advertising. However, the need to access trustworthy information for African American remains the same today. Communities share legal information, safety tips, preparedness advice, and recommendations for various Black-owned businesses including hotels, restaurants, and hair salons around the globe.

One common theme discussed in safe spaces is how African American travelers feel like a spectacle in predominantly white areas in the US and abroad. This is often a topic in social media communities where travelers share tips on how to prepare for being stared at and even photographed, especially in Asian countries (Dillette et al., 2018; Sutherland, 2019). The discussion varied within the group discussions, with some accepting the curiosity of those unfamiliar with darker skin and others feeling treated like zoo animals (Sutherland, 2019).

Another significant finding was the ability to openly discuss concerns about safety and racism, particularly in the case of the Twitter hashtag community (Sutherland, 2019). A regular issue addressed by Black travelers is the expectation that they will encounter racism as a global issue. Black Twitter has ingeniously transformed the platform into a liberated space using coded

language and hashtags to communicate global racism in plain sight (Sutherland, 2019). Racism continues to demand the need for resourcefulness for safe passage for African Americans. These studies demonstrate that African American travelers use social media to create self-governing and secure environments as a form of liberation practice (Crier, 2023; Dilletta et al., 2018; Park et al., 2022; Sutherland, 2019). The digital safe spaces can also turn into in-person meetups for Black women in the same area. This takes the autonomous digital space and creates real-life communities. This research indicates that African American travelers are moving towards liberated spaces, ideas, and actions within the social media communities. The growing entrepreneurial efforts around travel are one strong example of creating services and accommodations in response to the needs growing out of the Black Travel Movement (BTM). Safe spaces empower Black travelers to create solutions for "travelingwhileblack," including group trip coordination, travel review sites, and inclusive lodging platforms like Inclusive and NoirBnB (Sutherland, 2019).

Dilletta and Benjamin (2022) investigated the BTM as a catalyst for social change through nine semi-structured interviews with BTM leaders. Each leader was a founder and owner, and their companies had been in business between four and nine years—five leaders identified as women and four as men. Eight companies offered domestic and international group trips, while the ninth company was a home-sharing service. All leaders identified as Black and were between ages 30 and 50 years old. The businesses each target different markets. They focus on millennials, adventure, luxury, women's group travel,

African destinations, and lodging services. Their social media following ranged from 28,000 to 161,000.

The interviews revealed that the leaders' collective action led to social change, which, in turn, led to three themes: a catalyst to self-efficacy, awareness leading to consciousness-raising, and community activation leading to resource mobilization (Dillette & Benjamin, 2022). The leaders shared stories of barriers, including discrimination, structural racism, and lack of accessibility and representation. One leader stated, "White power structures of the US do not want Black people to move around, they do not want Black people to connect, to build...because that results in power, that results in change" (Dillette & Benjamin, 2022, p.469). In this research, the leaders shared their experiences in various contexts, including being approached at airports in the first-class lines and facing assumptions of being out of place. One significant story involved a discrimination case against Airbnb, where the police were called on a BTM leader and his friends while staying at a rental property, falsely reporting a robbery. This incident sparked outrage on social media, resulting in the hashtag #Airbnbgingwhileblack, with others sharing similar experiences. Leaders discussed the divisive climate in the US, worsened by the Trump administration and the COVID-19 pandemic (Edelman et al., 2017; Clayton et al., 2019). They encouraged Americans to assert their status for mobility and passports. Due to systemic racism and police brutality, some suggested moving abroad to escape state-sanctioned violence. This research focuses on extending the study on travel as a means of escape for

African Americans seeking freedom from racism at home (Brown, 2022; Gill, 2019, 2021).

The leaders of BTM engaged in a consciousness-raising exercise by sharing their collective experiences of trauma associated with inequality and a lack of representation for travelers of color. They acknowledged the power of social media as a tool for creating counternarratives, given the inadequate representation of African American travelers in mainstream media. For example, they provide exclusive experiences to their members, African American business owners who have traditionally faced barriers to accessing such resources. This support is provided through community activation, leading to resource mobilization (Dillette & Benjamin, 2022). However, an executive order implemented by former US President Donald Trump banned travel and negatively impacted people of color. This sparked discussions about the implications for African American travelers living abroad. As a result, the leaders of BTM engaged in deeper conversations about becoming expatriates. The recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has added a layer of racialized bias. The belief is that this collective trauma might lead to social change in the tourism industry (Dillette & Benjamin, 2022).

Benjamin and Dillette's (2021) investigation used counternarrative stories from BTM leaders, White workshop participants, and personal experiences to create a collective story of racism, discrimination, and inhospitable experiences for BTM leaders within tourism research. The study also highlights how the tourism industry perpetuates systemic racism (Dalmage, 2018). Researchers

used critical race theory and whiteness studies to collect interviews from BTM leaders and direct quotes from predominantly White workshop participants, creating a collective story titled 'Unpacking the Tourism Conference.' The story portrays the racial microaggressions and issues Black travel leaders face in the tourism industry (Benjamin and Dillette, 2021).

In the first part of the collective story, known as the stock story, workshop participants depict defensiveness and reluctance to acknowledge racism and discrimination (Benjamin and Dillette, 2021). Throughout the stock story, their responses to the discussions about Black travel and racial issues reveal a lack of awareness, defensiveness, and reluctance to address systemic racism. They question the significance of Black travelers' contributions, "why should we care about black people traveling when they only make up 13% of the population...and only contribute 109.4 billion, not that much compared to the total gross product," showing a lack of awareness of the deeper issues at play. The second part, called the composite counter-story, shares stories of discrimination, hurdles, and the need for better representation and understanding within the industry, as experienced by BTM leaders.

The workshop participants were mostly White and from the tourism industry, including travel agencies, tour operators, destination marketing organizations, and academics. Their influential roles in decision-making impact the tourism landscape. The collective story illustrates the need for critical conversations about race and racism in the industry. Unexamined assumptions can lead to biased and segregated perceptions, perpetuating inhospitable

experiences for Black travel leaders. The research calls for greater awareness and action to address systemic racism in tourism.

Americans Abroad. A 2012 Gallup poll showed that 11% of Americans would consider permanently leaving the US, but it is unknown how many actually followed through (Torres & Dugan, 2013). There is a long history of African Americans leaving America — voluntarily. Black writers, artists, scholars, and revolutionaries (e.g., James Baldwin, Marcus Garvey, Maya Angelou, Stokely Carmichael, Nina Simone and others) sought refuge in other countries that allowed them to explore their identities beyond America's color line (Brown, 2022). Girma's (2023) article introduces the concept of a "new American migration," focusing on Black professional women who are seeking a better quality of life and opportunities by leaving the US. The article shares stories of women relocating to countries like Mexico, Portugal, and South Africa. One interviewee noted, "I think Black women have discovered that the American dream is not necessarily possible in America." Black women have migrated to other countries due to economic inequality and racial discrimination. According to Girma (2023), they have reported an improved quality of life in their new homes, but they also face challenges such as cultural differences and language barriers. This trend is part of a larger movement where Black Americans are exploring opportunities abroad, showing a growing interest in the Black Travel Movement and an increasing number of African Americans leaving the US to live overseas.

The modern decision for African Americans to expatriate cannot be isolated from the prevailing social climate in America. Democracy appears to be

undergoing a collapse, and the nation seems to grow more precarious for African Americans. This climate includes a resurgence of White nationalism during the tenure of former U.S. President Donald Trump, contentious protests surrounding Confederate monuments, the violent incident in Charlottesville, Virginia, issuance of the first NAACP travel advisory for a U.S. state, the Black Lives Matter protests triggered by the killing of Breonna Taylor of her bed, George Floyd by Minneapolis police in May 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the insurrection on the U.S. Capitol on January 6. In the same year, self-professed white supremacists targeted African Americans in places of worship and grocery stores, intensifying anxiety during ordinary tasks.

The death of George Floyd in 2020 was perhaps a turning point for many. In recent years, more African Americans in the US have wanted to leave due to systemic oppression. Online platforms show a growing community sharing narratives of "Blaxit," suggesting African Americans are leaving the US, although an official count is unavailable. Nonetheless, African Americans decided to move abroad even before the pandemic, George Floyd's tragic death, and the tumultuous period of the Trump administration (Clayton et al., 2019). This fact reminds us that the choice to seek alternatives abroad has been a part of African American history beyond recent circumstances.

Craig-Henderson's work (2015) explored the decision-making process of Americans who emigrated from the US. The study involved conducting eleven in-depth interviews of 30 Black and White American expatriates living in different countries such as Japan, Taiwan, South Africa, Australia, Israel, and France. The

main objective of the research was to identify the cultural, psychological, and political factors that played a role in their decision to emigrate. The participants cited reasons such as love, marriage, and professional opportunities as motivation for moving abroad. The study's findings shed light on the significance of personal identity in adapting to a new country. The literature points to common experiences expatriates share, such as daily adjustments to a new area and subsequent experience of getting lost, and the philosophical considerations about what it means to be a "newcomer or, in some cases a perpetual outsider" (Craig-Henderson, 2015, p.107). Craig-Henderson (2015) points to the difference in experience based on the identity expats take with them abroad. For White Americans, a considerable adjustment in identity occurs (Hayes, 2015). White Americans forfeit the privilege and comfort of having a historically superior status relative to American ethnic and racial minorities. The analysis that distinguishes itself involves the differences discussed at the in-group level. The research indicates that decision-making and experiences abroad may vary based on individuals' racialized identities, histories, and social positions.

The differences in experiences of African American women living in Taiwan and the Czech Republic and those living in the US are mainly due to their racial identities. According to Craig-Henderson (2015), African American women living in Taiwan and the Czech Republic felt more comfortable and relaxed in their skin than in the US. One person shared a personal experience of dealing with discriminatory neighbors in the US, which made it difficult for them to live there. Some expats who choose to live and work abroad are pushed to do so because

they are disenchanted with the US and current affairs. Although the Taiwan participant acknowledged that race is a visible issue, she had never experienced racism abroad. Her frustration with the US led her to want to leave, saying, "I just wanted to get out of the US." The participants compared how they were treated in the US to their treatment as foreigners in Japan, where their American identity was emphasized over their race. One African American male participant shared that residing in a mostly black city in Johannesburg, South Africa, was a positive and comforting experience for him. While many African Americans have positive experiences while living abroad, some do face difficulties. For instance, one female participant who lived in Japan shared that she experienced aggressive behavior from men, including shouting from cars.

The White American expats in Japan faced unique challenges that African American participants did not. They had to confront the reality of relinquishing their identity as a dominant majority and becoming part of a visible minority (Craig-Henderson, 2015). Since they did not speak the language and were not Asian, standing out was a difficult task. As a result, they were required to stretch themselves in unnecessary ways, which was not the case for their African American counterparts (Craig-Henderson, 2015).

Americans in Mexico. After Mexico gained independence, many U.S. citizens started living there due to affordable real estate, low property taxes, sunny weather, in-home help, and hospitable hosts. However, push factors such as the high cost of living in the United States, especially for healthcare and prescription drugs, and the difficulty of living on Social Security or meager

retirement pensions also motivated some to migrate (Croucher, 2009; Rojas et al., 2014; Sunil et al., 2007). While much research on Americans in Mexico focuses on retirees and second homeowners in their mid to late 60s, the experience of African American expats and their motivating factors in Mexico remain unstudied. Economics plays a central role in Americans' decision to migrate to Mexico, as evidenced by the many retirement and travel articles and books written about the country by Americans (Croucher, 2009b). The concept of push and pull factors remains a prominent scholarship on migration, although it can be complex. Political, economic, historical, and sociocultural factors lead to migration. O'Reilly (2000) suggests that decisions are often justifications created after the fact, based on the new context in which they find themselves. People may feel a sense of liberation after migrating, even if it was not their primary motivation.

Croucher (2009b) interviewees describe the pull of cultural differences to escape the rat race, warmth, and friendliness of the Mexican people—the opportunity for more leisure, warm and sunny climates. In contrast to popular media depictions, safety is a factor drawing American migrants away from the stressful and consumerist culture of the United States in search of a better quality of life in Mexico. Contradictorily, although the culture is one factor pulling Americans to Mexico, research shows white American migrants assimilate very little with Mexican culture and have limited intercultural connections. The expats typically interact with Mexican upper-class professionals, real estate law, and tourism. American interactions with Mexicans involve little beyond serving and

being served (Banks 2004; Croucher 2009b). For example, only some retirees are fluent in Spanish, with less than 6% describing their Spanish as good or fluent (Migration Policy Institute, 2006). Some American retirees select popular, established Gringo enclave cities where English allows them to get by without learning Spanish (Croucher, 2009b; Goss, 2019). They report experiencing ambivalence and regret for remaining primarily within a Gringo bubble. Still, they attribute it to the closed nature of Mexican culture, where trust outside the family is limited. Moreover, simultaneously, the close-knit nature of foreign communities in Mexico ranks high among the factors that attract them to the country (Croucher, 2009a, 2009b; 2012a, 2015). The 'new American migration' of African Americans to Mexico may differ culturally from the typical White retiree in Mexico that has been well researched (Varma et al., 2021). African American expats may include younger employed individuals with differing motivations. This study aimed to contribute to the understanding of this new American cohort in Mexico.

In 1999, the most official effort to comprehensively count Americans residing overseas resulted in a count of 3,784,693. The Department of State estimate hinted at a potential range of 3 to 6 million Americans living abroad. However, by 2016, the agency's projection indicated a staggering 9 million U.S. citizens residing outside the country's borders. It is important to note that these statistics are subject to significant contention due to their often-unverified nature and the potential for rapid changes (Wennersten, 2008). The top 10 countries in which a substantial number of American expatriates resided in 2016 included Mexico, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Israel, Italy, the Philippines,

Australia, France, and Spain, with Mexico accounting for a remarkable portion of approximately 1 million expatriates (Association of American Residents Overseas, 2006). Although there is no official record of African American expatriates, there are several established communities in cities like Mexico City, Merida, Lisbon, Cartagena, Panama City, Puerto Viejo, Medellin, Dubai, Bali, and Bangkok. These communities have been identified through magazine articles, expat networks, and Facebook groups (Diakite, 2021).

Social science literature has not extensively examined the experiences of expats. Research on Americans abroad is more common in leisure studies, tourism, migration, organizational management, global staffing, and gerontology studies, which use varying and overlapping terms. People who live and work abroad are commonly referred to as "expats" (Harrison et al., 2004). Factors such as culture, race, ethnicity, and nationality influence the decision of first-generation immigrants to relocate and impact their perspectives on their identity as "exiles," "expats," or long-term visitors abroad (Boller & Halbert, 2015; Harrison et al., 2004). Americans, particularly white Americans, resist being labeled as immigrants due to the negative racial and class associations that do not align with their self-image (Croucher, 2009a; Koutonin, 2015). They prefer terms like "expat" or "American abroad," which still convey cultural, political and racial implications (Croucher, 2009a, Leinonen, 2012; Wennersten, 2008). The immigration discourse is generally negative and associated with problem-oriented people from the Global South. Conversely, a privileged passport welcomes Americans abroad, symbolizing a cultural, political, high-status global

language, and economic superpower. Generally, their presence is perceived unproblematically, given that their immigration is rooted in 'acceptable' reasons like marriage, employment, retirement, and education (Croucher, 2007; Leinonen, 2012).

Research on migration scholarship often neglects upper-class "white" immigrants, leading to the default portrayal of Americans abroad as middle-class and white (Benson, 2014, 2015). Whiteness is perceived as a normative and dominant marker of superiority, often referred to as invisible immigrants when moving to European countries (Bento, 2020; Leinonen, 2012). Immigrants are only visible in certain contexts, where hierarchy based on class, race, nationality, and language intersect to produce varying degrees of visibility for different groups (Bento, 2020; Koutonin, 2015). For example, An African American basketball player left Finland because of racial harassment by skinheads stating he no longer had the courage to be in the city and did not feel safe, further highlighting how immigrant visibility is tied to nationality, class, and race. Leinonen (2012) notes that even within the Black community, hierarchies exist based on nationality. For instance, the media covered the African American basketball player while ignoring the experiences of Somali refugees facing racism in Finland. In a predominantly white European population, Americans of white origin can blend in and become invisible while remaining visible and privileged. However, nationality can also impact the experiences of American travelers abroad, with their treatment often influenced by US politics like wars or elections (Leinonen, 2012).

Blackness associated with immigrants is linked to being a refugee or asylum seeker. The term "immigrant" is racialized to refer to people from poor, non-white areas seeking residence in rich Western countries. Croucher (2009) stated that the term creates an image of a person from a Third World origin, stigmatized as desperate, dirty, and Brown. Race, class, and nationality are all at play in the meanings attached to the term. Consequently, the term is seldom applied to Americans living abroad, either by members of the whole society or by Americans themselves. In her ethnographic study on White Americans in Mexico, Croucher (2016) discovered that they did not identify as immigrants, but rather as "just an American living in Mexico" (p.18). This exemplifies the social stigma attached to the label "immigrant" and the privilege that certain groups of migrants have to reject it. Leinonen (2012) also identifies language as a privilege, as it is acceptable for Americans not to become fluent in the language of their host country, whereas it is unacceptable for immigrants from poorer countries. Americans belonging to the global mobile elite rarely experience the othering associated with immigrants of lower social status, and there appear to be two forms of othering: exclusive others who are marginalized and viewed as threats, and inclusive others who are seen as part of the desired identity but still different. Othering is rooted in unequal relationships and denies the possibility of complete belonging.

African American Expats. African American expat literature is scarce. Most expat literature pertains to the corporate domain, with virtually no articles on African American corporate expats or discussions of race. This research aimed

to address a lack of migration literature examining the African American experience in Mexico.

Dos Santos (2020) conducted qualitative research with 18 Black expatriate professionals in secondary schools and universities in South Korea, including teachers (61%), nurses (22%), and counselors (17%). The participant group comprised 66% female and 44% male, with geographic representation from North America (44%), Africa (28%), Oceania (17%), and Europe (11%). The study aimed to understand their experiences and opinions, examining the relationship between stressors such as social bias and workplace bullying and their impact on suicidal behaviors and turnover decisions. The study revealed that African American professionals in South Korea face discrimination based on skin color and nationality.

The study found that all 18 participants experienced discrimination and social biases in South Korea's community, leading them to leave their school or region at the end of the academic term. Participants reported instances of discrimination based on skin color, impolite behavior, and feeling hated. Parental behavior also contributed to stress and burnout, with all participants experiencing verbal harassment due to their skin color, and some parents even refusing to have their children in the same classroom as teachers of different nationalities.

In the qualitative interviews, teachers discussed instances of discrimination from parents where they were asked to clean toilets. The teachers highlighted the link between social biases and professionalism. The participants frequently experienced stress from interactions with parents, coworkers, and

administrators, sometimes resulting in tears. Additionally, they were given extra coursework and felt the workload contributed to workplace bullying. Participants experienced internalized distress and verbal abuse from school administrators, including being referred to as a "black monkey" in front of parents. Black education professionals attributed stress and burnout as reasons for leaving their careers.

Dos Santos (2020) pointed out that South Korea's high suicide rates stem from unbalanced social expectations of residents and international professionals. During teacher training, participants frequently experienced unwelcoming attitudes. One teacher shared that colleagues would ask when they were leaving and accuse them of taking jobs from Korean professionals. They frequently faced hostility from South Koreans outside of work, including racial slurs, assumptions of illegal status, mocking, being called a gorilla, and being denied service at stores. Immigration officers even refused to touch documents without gloves. This research showed that Black professionals' workplace stress, mental health, and career outcomes in South Korea are impacted by internal and external factors, including blatant racism, harassment, discrimination, and microaggressions.

Bento (2020) also explored Asia, specifically South Korea and Japan, but approached it from a different perspective. The study focused on the common experience of hypervisibility among African Americans, who often become involuntary 'spectacles' while traveling (Dillette et al., 2018). Bento (2020) conducted a content analysis of 405 blog posts documenting the experiences of

African American women travelers visiting Japan, expats teaching English, and students studying abroad in South Korea. These bloggers came from various regions in the U.S. and were college-educated. The research aimed to understand how African American women in Japan and South Korea managed to constantly be in the public eye while living in a foreign country. These women often faced discrimination and unwanted attention, such as being stared at, touched, photographed, mocked, or made to feel uneasy. These encounters with citizens of the host country signaled their “other” status. Discrimination against foreigners in housing and workplaces is prevalent in these countries due to strict immigration laws. African Americans in Japan and South Korea face social challenges based on nationality, race, occupation, and gender, which leads to increased stigmatization, especially for those who are not imagined as white (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Moreover, African American women face hypervisibility and hypersexualization, resulting in even greater marginalization and stigmatization compared to other U.S. citizens.

The analysis of blog posts revealed that African American women frequently face uncomfortable and marginalizing racial encounters, leading to psychological distress. These encounters include inquiries about the U.S. military, staring, and unwelcome touching. In response, some of these women have found ways to cope, such as staring back, turning it into a positive interaction, or downplaying the stigma to protect their psychological well-being. Some participants have taken on the role of racial ambassadors, representing African Americans positively. One participant stated, "I represent not just myself,

but also my family and the black race." The language barrier has served as a buffer for some women, allowing them to dismiss negative comments due to not understanding the language. Interestingly, some participants found the discrimination experience in Asia not necessarily worse than in the United States. Overall, the study shed light on how these African American women navigate their hypervisibility and respond to encounters in Japan and South Korea (Bento, 2020).

Graham (2022) conducted a research study that explored the experiences of five African American expats residing in Sydney. The study used scholarship on settler colonialism to analyze the solidarity between Black and Indigenous groups and scrutinize various forms of political solidarity between African Americans and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia. The research explored black identity and solidarity among groups with different colonial histories. The study participants were recruited from Facebook groups of African Americans in Sydney and Sisters in Australia and New Zealand. The interviews focused on their self-perception and daily experiences as African Americans in Australia—the interviewees were three women and two men with prestigious employment and postgraduate-level credentials. Most participants moved to Australia for better professional opportunities and work-life balance (Graham, 2022). All of the participants in the study agreed that Australia offers a better quality of life compared to the United States, primarily due to better access to healthcare. During the study, it was discovered that there was a common trend of commodification of their racial and national identity among the participants. This

caused them to express their transnational identities differently depending on their social circle. For example, a hip hop-themed 'Biggie night' organized by white settlers with a quota for Black and Brown attendees is a clear example of white settler violence through white possession and spatial management. White possession is a notion used to describe the strategies of control, exclusion, and bias enacted, specifically the racial composition of spaces (Graham, 2022).

A common theme in African American travel literature is how differences are made visible, "the spectacle of other" as a dehumanizing attraction. African American male participants discussed the psychological toll of sexual fetishization, including instances of groping and non-consensual fondling (Graham, 2022). The participants also described white female coworkers as overly friendly. They described feeling used as a means of social capital to be popular instead of forming genuine friendships. These experiences, seen as acts of white possession, led to decreased emotional and psychological safety, causing them to become guarded. As previously stated, African American expats in Sydney reported a higher level of physical safety than in the United States; however, they reported psychological distress from experiences of white possession by Australian settlers and a high level of racial fetishization.

African Americans living in Sydney coped with racialized ideological violence of white possession by building community, utilizing social media, and alliances with other people of color, mostly Black people and Asians, including Polynesian descent. The interviewees wanted to educate themselves about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander political issues to demonstrate gratitude and

build personal solidarity (Graham, 2022). The author notes that these attitudes contrast attitudes of possession, the air of patrimony, and entitlement inherent in recently arrived White settlers/expats (Graham, 2022). The interviewees all talked about the shared experience of colonial history. The interviewees recognized that being African American in this context was "the right kind of Black" and was an isolating experience. They believed any racism and discourse denying Indigenous Australians' sovereignty also threatened them.

Ghana, the first sub-Saharan African nation to achieve independence from colonial rule, has attracted African American expatriates since the late 1950s civil rights movement (Gaines, 2006). Despite its status as an emblem of black empowerment, it has received scant recent academic focus. An important exception is Gaines' (2006) research, which examines the narratives of African Americans in Ghana during the civil rights era. While tracking American expatriates presents challenges, initiatives like "The Year of the Return" significantly influenced. In 2018, President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana inaugurated the Year of the Return to mark the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved African Americans in Virginia, extending an invitation to the African American diaspora to visit or resettle in Ghana, framing it as a homecoming. This event was a poignant symbol for the global African American family, underlining Ghana's historical significance. With Ghana's enduring expatriate community and its prominence in travel literature for those seeking cultural heritage, further study into the lives of current expatriates is warranted.

Yankholmes and Timothy (2017) research focused on the social distance between Ghanaian locals and African American expats in the context of slavery-based heritage tourism in Ghana. The study used in-depth interviews to analyze the narratives of 12 African American participants who had relocated to Ghana for reasons related to filial piety. These participants were educated professionals residing in Accra, Cape Coast, and Elmina, with seven women and five men in their early 40s on average, most of whom had lived in Ghana for at least 25 years.

The experience of African American root seekers in Ghana often falls short of their expectations. They hoped to be welcomed as family but are often treated like tourists. While African American expats feel strongly connected to sites associated with slave heritage, many local Ghanaians do not share the same emotions. The existing emotional disconnect clearly emphasizes contrasting perspectives on historical sites, resulting in a sense of estrangement (Yankholmes & Timothy, 2017).

Microaggressions and Psychological Well-being.

Acknowledging the history and centrality of racism and discrimination is essential to comprehend the daily lives of African Americans. Empirical studies have been conducted to explore the impact and manifestation of microaggressions in the lives of African American women (Burke et al., 2023; Lewis et al. 2013; Sue et al., 2008; Donovan et al., 2013; Willis, 2015).

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights or insults, whether unintentional or intentional, that communicate a negative message to the recipient (Sue et al., 2008). Microaggression theory was

originally introduced in 1969 by Harvard psychiatrist Chester Pierce (Pierce, 1969). Pierce and his colleagues have since defined racial microaggressions as "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal" exchanges which are 'put downs' of blacks by offenders" (Pierce et al., 1978, p. 66). Pierce et al. (1978) provided the seminal marker and conceptualization of microaggressions:

Almost all black-white racial interactions are characterized by put-downs done automatically, preconsciously, or unconsciously. These minidisasters accumulate. It is the total of multiple microaggressions by whites to blacks that has a pervasive effect on the stability and peace of this world. (p. 515)

Davis (1989) subsequently defined microaggressions as "stunning, automatic acts of disregard that stem from unconscious attitudes of white superiority and constitute a verification of black inferiority" (p.1576). Sue (2003) defined microaggressions as verbal and nonverbal insults that communicate a subtle negative message. Sue's definition is most frequently cited and builds on the definition of racism. Racism is a belief in racial superiority and inferiority enacted through individual behaviors and institutional and societal practices and policies (Jones,1997). Most racism is associated with White supremacy type of blatant and overt acts of discrimination (Sue & Sue, 2008). The expression of "old-fashioned racism" (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000, p. 318) has evolved into a more ambiguous, implicit, and subtle form, perhaps due to people's belief that overt racism is unjust and "politically incorrect" (Dovidio et al., 2002, p. 90). "Overtly racist acts may have decreased in the past two decades, [whereas] covert racist acts (or racial microaggressions) may have increased" (Nadal, 2008, p. 22).

This modern manifestation has been labeled aversive racism (Dovidio et al., 2002), symbolic racism (Sears, 1988), modern racism (McConahay, 1986), and colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Aversive racism is a form of subtle and unintentional racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000) manifested in individuals who unconsciously hold anti-minority feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and actions yet assert egalitarian, nonprejudiced values (Nelson, 2006). Moreover, colorblind racism refers to the conception that race is no longer a relevant issue affecting lives in the United States. Colorblind racism is expressed outside of consciousness in the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors; it is considered acceptable and even commendable by well-meaning White individuals (Constantine et al., 2008). Sue (2003) stated that most White Americans believe discrimination is only related to hate crimes and White supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. Therefore, it is on the decline and has a minimal effect on the lives of people of color.

Racial microaggressions are a common form of attitudinal, aversive, or colorblind racism. Racial microaggressions are similar to unconscious racism, but they are broader and describe a dynamic interplay between perpetrator and recipient and their everyday active manifestations (Sue et al., 2007). Racial microaggressions include statements such as "I don't think of you as Black" (Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 61) or "My grandparents came here with nothing, too, but they worked hard to get ahead in life" (Gallagher, 2003, p. 51).

Sue et al. (2007) defined microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether intentional or

unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults that potentially have a harmful or unpleasant psychological impact on the target person or group" (p. 273). Microaggressions may be perpetuated against people of color, women, lesbians/gays/bisexuals/transgender (LGBTs), those with disabilities, class, and religious minorities (Sue, 2010). Solórzano et al. (2000) proposed that they are often enacted automatically and unconsciously and contain an underlying hidden message (conflict between hidden and expressed message), which is often unrealized by the perpetrator but is clearly communicated to the target. Microaggressions are often delivered as "subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones" (Sue et al., 2007b, p. 273). Some people claim these messages to be harmless (Sue, 2010). However, they frequently result in the communication of denigration (Solórzano et al., 2000) small slights (Hinton, 2004), which have a powerful cumulative effect on the victim's psychological and physical health (Abdullah et al., 2021; Brondolo et al., 2008; Lewis et al., 2016; Swim et al., 1995; Swim et al., 2001; Watson & Henderson, 2023; Williams et al., 2018; Williams & Lewis, 2019), education (Bell, 2002), employment (Alleyne, 2005), sleep (Erving et al., 2023) and health care (Sue & Sue, 2008).

Taxonomy of microaggressions. Sue et al. (2007) developed an original typology of racial microaggressions in everyday life. He identified three categories: microassaults, microinsult, and microinvalidation at the interpersonal and environmental levels.

Microassault. The authors defined a microassault as an explicit verbal, nonverbal, or environmental attack intended to convey biased and discriminatory sentiments through name-calling, consciously and purposeful discriminatory actions, or avoidant behaviors (Sue et al., 2007). "Microassaults are most similar to what has been called 'old-fashion racism' conducted at an individual level" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 274). Microassaults are intended to hurt or injure, requiring no mental guesswork or causal deciphering. Referring to someone as "colored" or "Oriental," displaying swastikas, and using racial epithets are examples (Sue et al., 2007, p. 274). Microinsults and microinvalidations, however, tend to operate unconsciously, are unintentional, and generally outside of the level of conscious awareness (Sue et al., 2007). They are consistent with the research literature on implicit racist attitudes and beliefs (Banaji, 2001; DeVos & Banaji, 2005).

Microinsult. Microinsults are unintentional behavior or verbal comments that "convey rudeness or insensitivity or demean a person's racial heritage or identity" (Sue et al., 2007b, p. 274). These are outside conscious awareness and are characterized by an insulting hidden message (Sue & Sue, 2008). For example, when an employee of color is asked, "How did you get your job?" the underlying message (theme) is twofold: (a) people of color are not qualified, and (b) as a minority, you must be an affirmative action hire (Sue et al., 2007b). Microinsults can also occur non-verbally, such as when a White supervisor seems distracted or uninterested during a conversation with an African American employee by avoiding eye contact or turning away (Hinton, 2004).

Microinvalidation. Microinvalidations are characterized by statements or behaviors that deny, negate, exclude, dismiss, or make invisible the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of persons of color (Sue & Sue, 2008). Like microinsults, they are unintentional and usually outside of awareness. An example would be when an African American person is told, "I don't see color" or "We are all human beings," the effect is to negate their racial/cultural experiences (Helms, 1992).

Microaggression themes. Sue et al. (2007) identified microinsults and microinvalidations with corresponding themes. The microinsults themes are: (a) ascription of intelligence (assigning high or low intelligence to a racial group); (b) criminality/assumption of criminal status (presumed to be a criminal, dangerous, or deviant based on race); (c) pathologizing cultural values/communication styles (notion that values and communication styles of people of color are abnormal); (d) second class status (treated as a lesser being or group). Furthermore, the microinvalidations are as follows: (a) alien in one's own land (assumption that racial minority citizens are foreigners); (b) color blindness (denial or pretense that one does not see color); (c) denial of personal racism or one's role in its perpetuation; (d) myth of meritocracy (success in life is due to individual effort and not race); (e) denial of individual racism (a statement made when Whites deny racial biases); and (f) environmental (macro-level; racial assaults, insults, and invalidations that are manifested on systemic and environmental levels).

Gendered Racial Microaggressions

Gendered racism describes a form of oppression based on the simultaneous experience of racism and sexism (Essed, 1991). Extant literature on gendered racism focused on African American women's experiences with the intersection of race and sexism. According to Crenshaw's (1989) research, Black women do not encounter racism simply because of their race or sexism solely because of their gender. Rather, they face oppression at the intersection of their identities. An intersectional approach deepens the understanding of how these oppressions intersect and multiply on each other. Empirical evidence supports an association between gendered racism and negative mental health outcomes (Moradi & Subich, 2003; Thomas et al., 2008; Szymanski & Stewart, 2010).

Lewis et al. (2013) definition of gendered racial microaggressions draws on Sue et al.'s (2007) research on microaggressions and Essed's (1991) concept of gendered racism. Lewis et al. (2013) define gendered racial microaggressions as "subtle and everyday verbal, behavioral, and environmental expressions of oppression based on the intersections of race and gender" (Lewis et al., 2013, p.51). Lewis et al. (2013) studied gendered microaggressions with a focus group of 17 Black women who were undergraduate, graduate, and professional students of coping strategies to handle gendered microaggressions. The study found that Black women utilize a range of techniques to respond to gendered racial microaggressions. These techniques include confronting the perpetrator, self-protective strategies such as disengaging from the stressor and avoidance, and collective strategies such as leaning on social support. The study also found

that deciding which battles to fight is a thoughtful decision-making process for addressing microaggressions.

Lewis et al.'s (2016) study, uncovered common themes of gendered microaggressions involve stereotypes, such as the hypersexualized "Jezebel" and the expectation of the "Angry Black Woman." The study also revealed experiences of being silenced and marginalized. These themes are often related to assumptions about their style and beauty and were frequently subjected to negative remarks about their natural hair, complexion, and facial features. These experiences of marginalization and silencing were found to occur even in professional settings, with assumptions being made about their speech and abilities. Lewis and Neville (2015) developed the Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale (GRMS), an intersectional measure, to measure Black women's experiences of gendered racial microaggressions, which was used for this study. Lewis and Neville (2015) found that greater experiences of gendered racial microaggressions were significantly related to greater psychological distress.

Lewis et al. (2017) used an intersectional framework to explore the influence of gendered racism on health outcomes using a biopsychosocial model of racism. The study involved 231 Black women aged between 18 and 78, with an average age of 37. Majority of the respondents self-identified as middle class and held graduate or professional degrees. They found that Black women who experience gendered racial microaggressions are more likely to suffer from negative mental and physical health outcomes. The study also found that

disengagement coping mechanisms, such as substance use, self-blame, self-distracted, denial, or behavioral disengagement, partially mediated the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and negative mental and physical health outcomes in Black women. The study suggests that having a stronger sense of gendered racial identity can safeguard against the harmful mental and physical effects of gendered racial microaggressions. However, a previous study by Szymanski and Lewis (2016) found that identity centrality only played a moderating role in the link between gendered racism and psychological distress through detachment coping without actually buffering psychological distress.

Williams and Lewis (2019) conducted a survey involving 231 Black women to investigate the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions, gendered racial identity (intersection of one's racial and gender identities), coping mechanisms, and depressive symptoms among Black women. The study examined how coping strategies mediate the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and depressive symptoms. They also tested a moderated mediation model, with gendered racial identity's public and private regard as moderators of the association between gendered racial microaggressions and depressive symptoms through disengagement coping. Disengagement coping was found to be a mediator as gendered racial microaggressions increased, leading to more depressive symptoms. Gendered racial identity private regard was a significant moderator of the indirect association of gendered racial microaggressions and depressive symptoms

through disengagement coping. The study found that how Black women feel about their own gendered racial identity (private regard) can affect how they cope with gendered racial microaggressions and how those coping strategies impact their mental health. The study found that Black women who had lower private regard were more likely to use disengagement coping strategies when facing gendered racial microaggressions, which was associated with increased depressive symptoms. Black women with higher public regard used less disengagement coping and had fewer depressive symptoms. Interestingly, the study did not find evidence that how others perceive (public regard) participants gendered racial identity affects their coping strategies or mental health (Williams & Lewis, 2019).

Moody and Lewis (2019) surveyed 226 Black women online from across the United States and found that the greater frequency of gendered racial microaggression was significantly associated with greater traumatic stress. Thomas et al. (2008) study of over 300 African American women explored the construct of gendered racism and its relation to psychological distress and coping styles among Black women. They found a significant positive relationship between experiences of gendered racism and global psychological distress. They found that emotional debriefing (e.g., distancing oneself from a stressful event) partially mediated the relation between gendered racism and psychological distress for Black women.

Watson and Henderson (2023) also examined the connection between gendered racial microaggressions, resilience, self-esteem, and traumatic stress

for Black women. The study included 402 participants ranging from 18 to 77 years old, with an average age of 35. The majority of participants identified as cisgender women and heterosexual, and over half held master's degrees. They discovered that personal self-esteem played a role in how microaggressions affected traumatic stress. Resilience was also linked to lower traumatic stress and higher personal and collective self-esteem. Furthermore, resilience influenced the effect of microaggressions on membership identity/esteem.

Racism is still a real and relevant concern in society, and travel and international environments are no exception. Microaggression experiences require emotional and cognitive energy, a topic commensurate with Harrell's (2000) scholarship on racism-related stress. Microaggressions are stressful because they are insidious and, therefore, less difficult to name, identify, prove, and act on. Despite President Obama's election being viewed by some as a step forward towards a post racial society in the United States (Pettigrew, 2009), a disturbing trend of 'white backlash' has emerged. A growing number of white individuals now assert that they are victims of discrimination and oppression, pointing to laws and policies they believe to be racially biased. They are demanding immediate action to address what they perceive as an injustice (Hughey, 2014). Roger Hewitt (2005) defines the white backlash as: "Negative reactions within white communities to (1) the proximity of black communities following migration, or (2) the potential acquisition of new power and/or status by blacks, or (3) the fashioning of policies or legislation to bring about greater

equality between “racial”/ ethnic groups, or (4) the enforcing of such policies or legislation (p. 5).”

The current political climate, police brutality, and racial tensions have prompted African Americans to seek refuge abroad (Hjelmgaard, 2020). Although most scholars would generally agree that considerable advances in race relations have been made since the civil rights and Black power movements, racism continues to erode U.S. society (Pettigrew, 2009; Sue, 2003). There is little agreement among the general public about the reality of racial equality (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Data from a national survey focusing on people's perceptions of race-based problems in the United States found that 34% of White people believed racial equality had already been achieved, and another 18% had the opinion it would soon be achieved (Bobo et al., 2001). In contrast, the seminal work by Landrine and Klonoff (1996) found that 98.1% of African American participants had a recent racial encounter in the last year, and 100% had an experience in their lifetime, most commonly with strangers. This empirical evidence suggests that encountering regular racist interactions is truly an everyday experience for African Americans.

Many scholars have theorized that the difference in racial perceptions is due to the end of Jim Crow racism (e.g., series of anti-black laws) and that, therefore, perceptions are based on less blatantly hostile incidents (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Sue, 2003; Sue, 2008). Racism is revealed in the powerful cumulative effect on victims' psychological and physical health (Constantine, 2007; Swim et al., 2001) and in disparate outcomes in education (Bell, 2002), employment

(Alleyne, 2005), housing (Sue, 2010), health care (Sue & Sue, 2008), and rates of incarceration (Alexander, 2010).

Research has shown that African Americans' women's experiences of gendered racial discrimination result in frustration, self-doubt, isolation, feelings of powerlessness, and loss of integrity (Spates et al, 2020). According to Sue et al. (2007), Whites engaging in microaggressions believe they act without bias. Therefore, victims are placed in the position of questioning the perpetrator's intentions and doubting themselves (e.g., "Did I misread what happened?"), which results in psychological dilemmas. Sue et al. (2007b) identified four major psychological dilemmas created by microaggressions: (a) the clash of racial realities; (b) the invisibility of unintentional bias and discrimination; (c) the perceived minimal harm of microaggressions; and (d) the catch-22 of responding. As such, the perceptions held by the dominant group differ significantly from society's marginalized groups. The question becomes, "Whose reality is the true reality?"

Moreover, the recipients of microaggressions are frequently placed in a catch-22 of responding to microaggressions. They are left with numerous questions: "Did what I think happened really happen?" "Will it do any good to bring it to the perpetrator's attention?" "How will it affect my relationship?" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 279). Sue et al.'s (2008) research with focus-group participants reported a sense of powerlessness derived from White people defining the Black racial reality. Furthermore, the catch-22 " creates a stressful condition about how to resist

oppression versus when, where, and how to accommodate to it" (Pierce, 1988, p. 27).

Research has indicated that African American women frequently experience gendered racial discrimination, which can lead to negative emotional outcomes such as frustration, self-doubt, isolation, feelings of powerlessness, and loss of integrity (Spates et al., 2020). Whites who engage in microaggressions often do not recognize that their behavior is biased, which can lead the victim to question their perception of events and create psychological dilemmas (Sue et al., 2007). Sue et al. (2007b) identified four major psychological dilemmas created by microaggressions: (a) the clash of racial realities, (b) the invisibility of unintentional bias and discrimination, (c) the perceived minimal harm of microaggressions, and (d) the catch-22 of responding. This suggests that the dominant group's perceptions differ significantly from those of marginalized groups, leading to questions about whose reality is true. Additionally, recipients of microaggressions may be hesitant to respond, as they may question whether their perception of the event was accurate, whether it is worth confronting the perpetrator, and how this could affect their relationship with the perpetrator (Sue et al., 2007). Research by Sue et al. (2008) revealed that focus-group participants felt powerless as White people were defining the Black racial reality, creating a stressful condition about how to resist oppression versus when, where, and how to accommodate it (Pierce, 1988).

According to Sue et al. (2008), perpetrators of discrimination and exclusion often view their actions as harmless or innocent, leading them to

question why their victims may be upset, "overreacting," or not "letting it go." However, chronic discrimination and exclusion lead to high levels of stress (Pierce, 1995). Racism and racial/ethnic discrimination cause significant psychological distress (Fang & Meyers, 2001; Krieger & Sidney, 1996), anger (Franklin, 1999; Pierce, 1988), depression (Thompson & Neville, 1999), racial battle fatigue (physiological and psychological energy lost dedicated to coping with racial microaggressions and racism) (Smith et al., 2007), and negative health consequences (Harrell et al., 2003). Researchers have coined the term "racism-related stress" to describe the interactions between individuals or groups and their environment that result from the dynamics of racism and threaten well-being (Harrell, 2000, p.44).

Utsey et al. (2000) studied coping strategies used by African American college students to manage stress caused by racism. The study included 213 participants, 137 women and 76 men, from different regions across the United States. The average age of the participants was 21, and 93% were single. Utsey et al. (2000) study showed that avoidance coping (e.g., avoiding people or places where discrimination is likely to occur) for African American women was the best predictor of life satisfaction and self-esteem. Utsey et al. 2000 research also found that African Americans who reported frequent encounters with racial discrimination reported lower self-esteem and overall life satisfaction. Further, it suggests that coping skills can be self-empowering and are best suited to handle race-based stressors to sustain self-efficacy and maintain well-being.

In Sue et al.'s (2010) study, African American participants identified coping strategies to handle these perceptual clashes. They classified four major coping themes: healthy paranoia, sanity check, empowering and validating self, and rescuing offenders. Healthy paranoia refers to the "healthy suspicion of the motives and behaviors of members of the dominant culture" resulting from a social reality plagued with discrimination and prejudice (Sue, 2010, p. 74). Sanity check is conferring with same-race and/or like-minded people about the experiential reality of microaggressions. Empowering and validating self refers to interpreting racism by "calling it what it is" (Sue, 2010, p. 74). Rescuing offenders refers to "considering the White person's feelings in the situation before one's own" verbally or non-verbally (Sue et al., 2008, p. 332). For example, a participant described "Inside an elevator, a closed space, being very conscious if there is a White woman, whether or not she's afraid, or just sort of noticing me, trying to relax myself around her so she's not afraid" (Sue, 2010, p.332).

Constantine et al.'s (2008) work identified coping strategies employed to handle microaggressions in academic settings by Black faculty. The common strategies identified were seeking social support from friends, family, and colleagues, and "choosing one's battles carefully" (i.e., making deliberate decisions about confrontation to address microaggressions; Constantine, 2008, p. 354), prayer, interpersonal or emotional withdrawal from faculty that exhibit microaggressions, and resignation that academic environment will always contain subtle racist treatment. These "offensive mechanisms" (Pierce, 1969, p.

303) experienced by Black faculty lead to emotional pain, self-blame, disenchantment, and self-doubt (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000).

Researchers have suggested that the unintentional nature of microaggressions allows them to exist outside the conscious awareness of perpetrators, thus infecting institutional procedures and practices, social policies, and interracial interactions (Franklin & Boyd, 2000; Hinton, 2004; Sue, 2003). Perpetrators of microaggression often misinterpret their actions as innocuous and accuse persons of color of being paranoid or oversensitive; however, their impacts are well documented (Thompson & Neville, 1999; Williams et al., 2003). Researchers have found overt and covert discrimination affect (a) mental health (Sue et al., 2008b); (b) self-esteem (Brondolo et al., 2003); (c) quality of life (Thompson & Neville, 1999; Utsey et al., 2002); (d) stereotype threat (e.g., the threat of possibly being judged and treated stereotypically, or of possibly self-fulfilling a stereotype), (Steele et al., 2002); (e) identity formation (Steele et al., 2002); (f) physical health (Clark et al., 1999); (g) campus climate (Solórzano et al., 2000); (h) work productivity (Alleyne, 2005; Hinton, 2004); (i) problem solving (Dovidio, 2001); (j) locus of control (Franklin & Boyd, 2000) and (k) trust (Sue, 2010).

Disturbingly, research indicates racial microaggressions have been found to affect all areas of one's life (Sue, 2010). In all environments, microaggressions deliver hidden demeaning messages with a harmful and cumulative effect (Sue, 2010). These indignities assail one's sense of integrity, exhaust psychic and spiritual energy, and impose a false reality, invalidating people as racial/cultural

beings (Franklin, 2016; Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2008a). Research related to coping with microaggressions demonstrate that strategies can be multifaceted and unclear within each environment. As the myriad effects of the different manifestations of microaggression accumulate in an environment of African American women, the resulting impact on emotional, psychological, and physical well-being can be significant.

Racism-Related Stress and Life Satisfaction

There has been limited research on how racism-related stress affects the life satisfaction of African Americans. However, current studies suggest that individual, cultural, and institutional race-related stress can have distinct impacts on mental health (Harrell, 2000). Carter & Reynolds (2011) found that cultural race-related stress was associated with greater self-reported negative mood, indicating a daily burden and chronic stressor. Lombardo et al. (2018) established a "fundamental association" between mental health and life satisfaction, suggesting that poor life satisfaction is strongly linked to poor mental health and vice versa.

According to Harrell (2000), stress caused by racial discrimination, known as racism related stress, affects mental health more than the usual daily stressors. It is a result of daily interactions between individuals and their surroundings and is based on the individual's personal experience of discrimination. Therefore, racial discrimination and racism related stress are interconnected, yet distinct concepts (Driscoll et al., 2015).

In 1992, Thomas & Holmes conducted a study to determine the factors that affect life satisfaction among Blacks and Whites. The study considered various independent demographic, social, religious, and socioeconomic variables. The results of the study showed that there were both similarities and differences in the way both groups assessed life satisfaction. The quality of significant relationships, especially parental ones, had a greater impact on life satisfaction compared to religion or socioeconomic status, for both Blacks and Whites. Black women reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction compared to any other gender and racial group. Religion was found to be a more significant factor in producing satisfaction for Black participants, while socioeconomic status was more important for Whites.

Broman (1997) examined the race-related factors of racial discrimination, racial context, and having white friends and their impact on life satisfaction. The study found that African Americans who attended predominantly White schools had higher life satisfaction, suggesting that exposure to White environments may help prepare them to cope with racially discriminatory situations. However, having White friends was not related to life satisfaction.

Barger et al. (2009) conducted a comprehensive study to explore the relationship between race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), health, social relationships, and life satisfaction. The study involved two representative samples of 350,000 adults in the US. The researchers found that Black and Hispanic participants were less likely to be very satisfied with their lives when compared to Whites. However, when considering the factors such as health,

SES, and social relationships, the disparities in life satisfaction were lessened or eliminated. The combined effect of health and SES accounted for 12-15% of the variation in life satisfaction, while social relationships accounted for an additional 10-12%.

McCleary-Gaddy and James (2020) conducted a study to examine whether being aware of negative stereotypes, or stigma consciousness, had an adverse effect on the mental health and life satisfaction of African Americans. They conducted a survey of 780 African American adults and found that an increase in stigma consciousness indirectly predicted negative effects on both outcomes, even though there was no direct correlation between skin tone and life satisfaction or psychological distress.

Driscoll et al. (2015) conducted a survey of 247 African American adults to explore the link between discrimination based on race-related stress and life satisfaction. The results of the survey showed that race-related stress was significantly correlated with lower life satisfaction. Furthermore, the study supports the notion that life satisfaction may act as a mechanism through which stressful events (e.g., microaggressions) affect mental health outcomes.

In 2011, Yap et al. conducted a survey with a community sample of 161 African Americans. The study investigated the mediating role of belongingness and discrimination in the relationship between racial identity and life satisfaction. The study found that belongingness played a mediating role in the impact of racial identity centrality and private regard on life satisfaction. This mediation effect was stronger for African American women. Moreover, the study revealed

that the association between public regard and life satisfaction was mediated by the perception of discrimination, particularly among women who reported lower perceived discrimination with higher public regard. Therefore, African Americans who regarded their identity as important, held positive views towards African Americans, or believed that others viewed African Americans more positively, reported higher levels of life satisfaction. The study emphasizes that a positive perception of one's racial group can significantly improve the well-being of African American women in a given environment.

In 2020, at the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, Moody (2022) conducted a study on a community sample of 1252 individuals. The aim of the study was to investigate the vicarious experiences of major discrimination among Black and White adults. The results of the study suggested that Black individuals are more likely to be exposed to vicarious experiences of major discrimination. Additionally, the study found that Black adults who experience discrimination, either personally or vicariously, report lower overall life satisfaction. However, this effect was not observed among White adults. These findings align with documented racism based traumatic stress responses (Carter et al., 2019).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Participants

Participants in this study were African American women living in Mexico. To be eligible to participate in the study, participants reported information confirming the following criteria. First, they self-identified as Black/African American women. Second, participants had to be older than 18 years of age at

the time of participation. Finally, participants had to be currently living in Mexico. The survey was provided in English. For sample size determination, the G*Power software was used. The basic criteria were a medium effect size (.15), an alpha level of .05, and a power level of .80. Using five predictors, the needed sample would be 92 African American women. For 10 predictors, the needed sample would be 118 women. Recruitment of the participants depended on snowball and convenience sampling, using online social media platforms and expatriate networks with a link to the online survey. Organizations (e.g., Expat network, Travel Noire, various Black in Mexico groups) to which African American expat women have contact were contacted.

Table 1 displays the demographic information of the participants. A total of 111 African American women were included in the data analysis. Most (79.3%) were heterosexual and 40.5% had at least one child. The mean age of the participants was $M = 46.93$. Socioeconomic status ranged from under \$20,000 annual income (5.4%) to \$200,000+ (3.6%) with the median annual income of \$75,000. Eighty-two percent had at least a bachelor's degree with 7.2% having also earned a doctoral degree. Most participants were single (48.6%), followed by married/partnered (25.2%). Most participants were self-employed (44.1%), followed by retired (20.7%) and employed full-time (20.7%). All but one (99.1%) were US citizens.

The average years living in Mexico was $M = 2.91$, and the number of times returning to the United States to visit each year was $M = 2.34$. Almost all (95.5%) had traveled internationally at some point and 18.0% had studied abroad. Thirty-

three percent ($n = 37$) lived outside of the US in a total of 72 other countries with the most common being Thailand (12.5%), China (4.2%), and Spain (4.2%). The typical respondent had traveled to $M = 12.98$ countries. Most respondents described themselves as either an expat (74.8%) or an immigrant (22.5%). On a five-point scale, the mean Spanish proficiency was $M = 2.46$ (see Table 1).

Measures

Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale.

The Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale (GRMS) was used in order to measure the microaggression experience of African American women. The Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale was developed by Lewis (2013) to apply an intersectional framework of oppression faced by Black women based on their gender and race. The scale is grounded in the frameworks proposed by Essed (1991) on gendered racism and Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2017) on racial microaggressions. The GRMS assess both the frequency and stress appraisal of microaggressions and consists of 26 items. Participants respond to each item by rating the frequency of microaggressions they have experienced on a scale ranging from 0 ("Never") to 5 ("Once a week or more") and rate the stress appraisal associated with each microaggression on a scale from 0 ("This has never happened to me") to 5 ("Extremely stressful"). The measure includes four subscales, each targeting specific aspects of the participants experiences. The first subscale is Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification consists of 10 items, and a sample item is "Someone has made me feel unattractive because I am a Black woman." The Silenced and Marginalized subscale includes 7 items

like “My comments have been ignored in a discussion in a work, school, or other professional setting.” The Strong Black Woman subscale consists of 5 items, participants respond to items such as “I have been told that I am sassy and straightforward.” Lastly, the Angry Black woman subscale consists of 3 items and a sample item is “Someone accused me of being angry, when I was speaking in a calm manner.” For this study, the 26-item scale was prefaced with modified instructions to ensure participants specifically think about their experiences as an African American woman while they lived in the US. This modification aimed to narrow the scope of participants reflections and gather more data on the experiences of African American in the US aligning with the studies research objectives and geographical focus.

Development of the GRMS involved two separate studies (Lewis, 2012; Lewis & Neville, 2015). Both studies included samples of women from a local African American community-based organization, chosen to ensure the generalizability of the items to a diverse range of Black women in terms of age, socioeconomic background, education, and occupational status. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 77 years. The majority of participants identified as heterosexual, with the remaining identifying as lesbian, bisexual, questioning, or queer. Additionally, a significant portion of participants self-identified as middle class, with about 17.5% having at least a bachelor's degree and about 47.5% having at least a master's degree. The participants came from diverse geographical regions of the U.S., with the majority identifying as Christian.

In Study 1 (Lewis, 2012), an exploratory factor analysis was conducted with 259 Black women, leading to the identification of the GRMS's four-factor structure. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the GRMS factors in were as follows: (a) Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification: $\alpha = 0.89$, (b) Silenced and Marginalized: $\alpha = 0.88$, (c) Strong Black Woman: $\alpha = 0.74$, and (d) Angry Black Woman: $\alpha = 0.79$, for both frequency and stress appraisal scales. The total GRMS reliability coefficients were 0.92 for the frequency scale and 0.93 for the stress appraisal scale.

Study 2 (Lewis & Neville, 2015) employed a confirmatory factor analysis with 210 Black women, further validating the four-factor model for both frequency and stress appraisal scales. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the GRMS factors were as follows: (a) Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification: $\alpha = 0.86$, (b) Silenced and Marginalized: $\alpha = 0.85$, (c) Strong Black Woman: $\alpha = 0.81$, and (d) Angry Black Woman: $\alpha = 0.77$, for both frequency and stress appraisal scales. The total GRMS reliability coefficients were 0.92 for the frequency scale and 0.93 for the stress appraisal scale.

To establish construct validity, the GRMS was positively correlated with the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS) (Nadal, 2011) and the Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE) (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995). Additionally, higher levels of perceived gendered racial microaggressions were associated with increased psychological distress, as measured by the Mental Health Inventory 5 (MHI-5). The four factors of the GRMS accounted for nearly half of the variance in Study 1 (Lewis, 2012) for both frequency and stress appraisal scales, with the

factor structure providing a good fit of the data in Study 2 (Lewis & Neville, 2015). GRMS was significantly related to psychological distress, such that greater perceived gendered racial microaggressions were related to greater levels of reported psychological distress (Lewis & Neville, 2015). (see Appendix F for survey). Items are summed and means calculated for subscales and total scores for Stress Appraisal and Frequency, it is noteworthy that exploratory factor analysis revealed that 25 items of the Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale accounted for approximately 49% of the variance in the Stress Appraisal dimension, while 23 items of the GRMS accounted for approximately 49% of the variance in the Frequency dimension. These scoring procedures and factor analyses ensure the reliability and validity of the GRMS in assessing gendered racial microaggressions in the specified contexts. (see Appendix F for survey) Table 3 shows the reliability of the subscales and total scores for the GRMS for this study.

Life Satisfaction (SWLS)

One instrument was used to measure a construct of psychological well-being. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985; see Appendix F) measure consists of five items assessing life satisfaction from various dimensions. An example statement is, "In most ways, my life is close to my ideal" (Diener et al., 1985, p. 72). Participants were asked to rate the statements on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Total scores range from 5 (*low satisfaction*) to 35 (*high satisfaction*). After conducting a pilot study with 176 University of Illinois undergraduate students,

Diener et al. (1985) reported that the scale had a favorable level of internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .87 and item-total correlations ranging from .57 to .75. This suggests strong agreement among the scale's items, indicating its reliability. Diener et al. (1985) also reported positive correlations between the SWLS and measures of happiness, life satisfaction, and self-esteem, indicating construct validity (Diener et al., 1985; Robitschek & Kashubeck, 1999). The correlational analysis results also indicate that individuals who report high life satisfaction also report high general adjustment and mental health (Diener et al., 1985). The initial development of the SWLS did establish validity or reliability for different racial groups. One relevant empirical study utilizing the SWLS with African Americans (n= 213) was conducted to assess racial discrimination, coping, life satisfaction, and self-esteem. The study established internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .82 (Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000). Empirical research exploring the association between race and life satisfaction is limited (see Appendix G for survey). The Cronbach Alpha of the SWLS for this study is .78 (see Table 3).

Expatriation Motivation Scale

The Expatriation Motivation Scale (EMS) was used to measure the motivations for expatriation. The Expatriation Motivation Scale is an author-created scale designed to assess the motivations of African Americans moving abroad. The survey consists of 25 items and aims to explore the various factors influencing individuals' decisions to relocate to another country. The Expatriation Motivation Scale was developed after a comprehensive literature review, consultations with

subject matter experts in social psychology and migration studies, and a pilot study with 5 expatriates (Robinson, 2023). Item wording was refined for clarity, and item selection aimed to effectively measure expatriate motivation. The EMS covers six distinct categories of motivational factors, including Work/Career, Education, Lifestyle, Family and Relationships, Financial Considerations, and Safety and Political Factors. Participants are asked to rate their motivations using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scale is designed to be completed in approximately 5 minutes. As there is currently no existing motivation scale for moving abroad tailored specifically to African Americans, the EMS fills this gap in the literature. However, it's important to note that no information about the scale's psychometric properties currently exists.

The study conducted a factor analysis to explore underlying factors that may explain correlations between items. This exploratory factor analysis provided insights into the construct validity of the EMS. Furthermore, internal reliability consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which measured the scale's internal consistency and reliability. These psychometric assessments helped establish the validity and reliability for the purpose of this study.

The Expat Motivation Scale (EMS) employed a systematic scoring and analysis process. Subsequently, individual item scores are totaled for each participant, resulting in a total score ranging from 20 to 100, which reflects their motivation level. To better understand specific motivational categories, scores are summed within each category. The "Work/Career" category includes 2 items, items 4 ("I moved abroad for work/career opportunities") and 15 ("I moved

abroad to pursue entrepreneurial ventures or business opportunities"). The "Education" category is comprised of two items 5 ("I moved abroad for educational opportunities") and 10 ("I moved abroad to learn or use a new language"). The "Lifestyle" category includes 8 items 2, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, and 24, capturing motivations related to lifestyle improvement, exploration, nature access, slower pace of life, quality of life, cultural immersion, stress reduction, and health-related reasons, respectively. "Family and Relationships" explores motivations associated with 2 items 3 ("I moved abroad to be with family members or improve family dynamics") and 8 ("I moved abroad to be with a partner or explore new relationships"). The "Financial Considerations" category comprises 2 items 1 ("I moved abroad for financial reasons") and item 11 ("I moved abroad for retirement purposes"). Finally, "Safety and Political Factors" includes 8 items 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23, assessing motivations tied to personal safety, political factors, safe living environment, sexism, racism, escaping conditions, and cultural climate dissatisfaction.

Factor analysis was conducted to explore potential underlying factors that explain item correlations, thus enhancing the scale's construct validity. Additionally, the scale's psychometric properties were thoroughly examined, encompassing assessments of content validity, face validity, and internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha. These comprehensive psychometric evaluations aimed to establish the validity and reliability of the author-created EMS within the context of this study. The EMS gained insight into the complex decision-making processes behind moving abroad and aims to provide a

comprehensive understanding of the motivations driving African American expatriates. (See Appendix H for Expat Motivation Scale). Table 3 shows the reliability of the subscales and total score of EMS for this study.

Demographics.

African American women were asked to provide demographic information to better understand the characteristics of the participants. The questions included age, ethnicity/race, gender, sexuality, relational status, parental status, socioeconomic status (income levels), employment status, education level, country of residence, duration in Mexico, home ownership, language proficiency, social media usage, travel experience, study abroad experience, therapy utilization abroad, integration within the host country, daily experiences of discrimination, sense of belonging, community involvement, and future plans (see Appendix E for demographic questions).

Procedure

After obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, participants were recruited for voluntary participation through online platforms and expatriate networks (See Appendix C &D). The recruitment was based on snowball and convenience sampling. A link to the online survey was included in social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, & TikTok) used to reach eligible participants. Participants were limited to African American women, at least 18 years of age and currently living in Mexico. All questions in the survey were written in English. The link on social media directed to an informed consent on Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com). Participants were asked if they are willing to

participate in the study and share their experiences related to racial microaggressions as part of a voluntary research study.

Participants were not offered any compensation for their participation. Participants were self-selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. All participants were provided a brief explanation of the research and were asked to complete the survey, which required 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Prior to the survey, all study participants were presented with an informed consent form to sign, including the research purpose, risks involved, voluntary nature of participation, time commitment, and how confidentiality was maintained (See Appendix A). Inventory questions were separated into three sections: microaggression experiences, motivations to move abroad, and psychological well-being (see Appendix F-H). Participants were informed that if they are interested in the results of the study, they could contact the investigator in 6 to 8 months to inquire about the findings. The length of data collection was six weeks based on reaching the survey target and author deadlines.

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative correlational design, utilizing survey research methodology. Surveys were administered in English to women who were at least 18 years old, currently living in Mexico, and self-identified as African American. The key variables of interest included frequency and appraisal of microaggressions, life satisfaction, and the motivational factors that influenced

their decision to move to Mexico. Participants were selected through non-random methods, targeting all eligible participants who met the study's inclusion criteria.

The advantage of using a correlational design is that it enables researchers to collect a large sample of data and determine the relationships among key variables. This design also allows researchers to generalize the findings to a broader population of African American women who have migrated to Mexico. Correlational studies are especially valuable in the preliminary stages of research for identifying variables that merit deeper investigation and for understanding the intricate relationships that may inform subsequent, more focused studies.

Data analysis

Upon the completion of data collection, responses to research questions were analyzed using SPSS software; correlational, and multiple linear regression analyses were computed and analyzed. The first step of data analysis involved conducting descriptive statistics to understand the participants of the study. Next, Spearman rank-ordered correlations were utilized to explore the relationships between selected and outcome variables, specifically testing Hypothesis 2a by identifying the correlation strength between microaggression and motivational factors. Subsequently, Multiple linear regression models incorporating bootstrapping were developed. For Hypothesis 1 and 2b, these models assessed the relationship of racial microaggressions to life satisfaction and safety and political motivational factors, respectively. This step was aimed at examining the data to investigate complex relationships. Assumption testing was conducted for

the multiple linear regression models to ensure the validity of the analyses. To detect outliers, four different methods were employed: casewise diagnostics, Cook's values greater than 1.0, leverage values greater than 0.20, and standardized deleted residuals within ± 3 standard deviations. The process involved running the models, identifying outliers and other influential points, removing these outliers and influential points, and then rerunning the model. This step was repeated for seven iterations until the sample size was reduced to $n = 65$. After observing the significant reduction in the dataset due to outlier identification, it was decided to proceed with the original sample size of $N = 111$. However, bootstrapping was added to the multiple linear regression models to provide confidence intervals around the parameter estimates, accommodating for the initial reduction in data.

Chapter 4: Results

This study investigated the relationship between the experience of racial microaggressions in the U.S., motivation factors, and life satisfaction of African American expat women who choose to migrate to Mexico. While previous research has extensively examined the impact of racial microaggressions on individuals' psychological well-being, there is a lack of literature explicitly exploring microaggressions and life satisfaction in the context of African American women who have relocated abroad. The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of racial microaggressions on the life satisfaction of African American women who migrated. The research aimed to gain a better understanding of the experiences and motivations of African American expatriate

women while exploring the correlation between racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. The study utilized a total of 111 participant surveys.

Preliminary Analysis

Data cleaning

The number of responses recorded in the Qualtrics' online survey website was 145. The sample was reduced to 120 after excluding those who did not answer every question. Further, nine participants were removed – five who were not currently living in Mexico and four who were not Black/African American, leaving a final sample size of $N = 111$. Assumption testing was done for the multiple linear regression models.

Normality was examined using Normal Q-Q plots for the four primary scale scores (satisfaction, safety and political motivation factors, gendered racial microaggression total-appraisal, and gendered racial microaggression total-frequency). An ideal Q-Q is where all the data points are on the diagonal line. The best examples of that are total-appraisal and total-frequency.

With that, a decision was made to use the sample of $N = 111$ in testing the multiple linear regression hypotheses (Hypotheses 1 and 2b) bootstrapping methodology was applied because the dependent variables of the two hypotheses (i.e., satisfaction, safety and political factors) were not normally distributed. For Research 2a, Spearman correlations were used.

The number of predictors was established post data collection through Spearman rank correlation analyses that compared key demographic variables with the life satisfaction score, the dependent variable. Demographic variables,

specifically the duration of years spent outside of the United States, which demonstrated a significant positive correlation of moderate strength (0.30) with life satisfaction, were subsequently incorporated into the multiple linear regression model.

Descriptive statistics

African American expat women live in 15 out of Mexico's 32 states. The Yucatan region had the highest concentration of participants, with 42.3% residing there, followed by Quintana Roo and Jalisco. The study found that only a small percentage of participants owned property in Mexico, with only 11% reporting property ownership. The survey results indicated that community engagement was high among the respondents. 35.1% of them participated in local groups, while an even larger 78.4% engaged with expatriate groups. The study also revealed that 75% of respondents were already aware of an African American expatriate community in Mexico before they moved there. Moreover, over half of the respondents (50.5%) stated that the existence of the African American expat community influenced their decision to relocate, highlighting the significance of social support networks in the expatriation process. The survey also showed that regular community engagement was quite high among the respondents, with two-thirds attending group events at least once a month, indicating a strong sense of community involvement.

The survey found that 92.8% of expats use social media for support while living abroad. Additionally, 27% of the participants seek professional help through online therapy or counseling services, highlighting the need for such services

among expats. Among those seeking therapy, 60% were based in the US, while 40% were from other countries. Although 27% of the respondents were open to returning to the US, most of them felt accepted in their new community. In fact, 99.1% of the participants felt welcomed in Mexico.

The 26 microaggression frequency statements were sorted by the highest frequency, and these ratings were based on a five-point metric: 1 = *Never* to 5 = *A few times a month*. The most frequent microaggressions were Item 16, I have been assumed to be a strong Black woman ($M = 3.81$), and Item 18, I have felt unheard in a work, school, or other professional setting ($M = 3.33$). The 26 microaggression statements were sorted by the stress appraisal, and these ratings were based on a six-point metric: 1 = *Never happened* to 6 = *Extremely stressful*. The highest stress appraisal microaggressions were Item 14. I've been disrespected by people at work, school, or other setting ($M = 4.47$), and Item 22. I have felt someone has tried to "put me in my place" in a work, school, or other professional setting. ($M = 4.36$) The respondents reported that microaggressions were common in the US, with the "strong Black woman" stereotype and feeling unheard in professional settings being the most frequent occurrences. These microaggressions caused significant stress, with disrespect in professional settings and patronization being the most stressful. These findings highlight the negative effect of microaggressions on the well-being, particularly those related to professional disrespect and undermining of authority.

Regarding day-to-day experiences in Mexico, it was found that experiences of discrimination in day-to-day life in Mexico, whether due to being a

foreigner, race, skin color, or gender, were reported as infrequent events by a significant majority (81%) of the participants. Specifically, preference based on American nationality occurred infrequently, with 42.3% of participants experiencing this less often than yearly. Discrimination for being a foreigner or American was reported by 74.7% of the respondents as happening less than once a year. Similarly, race discrimination was reported at a similar rate of 82.9%. Discrimination based on skin color and gender was reported as a less-than-annual event by 81.1% and 85.6% of respondents, respectively. These statistics highlight the fact that discriminatory events faced by the African American women expatriates in Mexico were relatively rare, reflecting their unique experiences as both favored and marginalized individuals in a new cultural context.

Table 2 displays the 24 motivational reasons why they moved to Mexico. These ratings were based on a five-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Agree* to 5 = *Strongly Disagree*. The most agreement was for Item 24, I moved abroad for an overall improvement in my quality of life ($M = 1.26$), Item 7, The desire to explore and seek new experiences led me to move abroad ($M = 1.32$) and Item 16, Dissatisfaction with the cultural climate of the US played a role in my decision to move abroad ($M = 1.43$) (see Table 2).

Table 3 displays the psychometric characteristics for the 18 summated scale scores. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients ranged in size from $\alpha = .27$ to $\alpha = .93$ with the median sized alpha of $\alpha = .805$. Five of the coefficients were less than the general Cronbach standard of $\alpha = .70$ (Field, 2007).

Regarding the motivations for relocation, the decision to relocate was not driven by career advancement or family ties, as both factors scored relatively low, with an average mean score of 2.60 out of 5. On the other hand, lifestyle changes appear to be the main motivating factor, with a high average mean score of 4.25. This illustrates a strong desire for an improved quality of life, which seems to be a key driver behind the decision to migrate. Financial factors were also a consideration for those who moved to Mexico. While they were not the most important factor, they still held some level of importance for the participants. However, safety and political factors were more significant concerns, with a mean score of 4.12 reflecting their importance in the decision to relocate to Mexico. This suggests that African American women were looking for a safer and more stable living environment and a more favorable political climate (see Table 3).

The assessment of racial microaggressions is an undeniable part of the reality of the lives of the African American participants. The total microaggression stress appraisal score has an average of 3.41 mean, meaning a moderate level of stress due to these experiences. It is striking that the highest stress is associated with being 'silenced and marginalized.' This is evidenced by the highest subscale mean score of 4.15, which suggests that feelings of exclusion and marginalization are particularly impactful. Additionally, the total frequency of microaggressions has a mean of 2.67, indicating that while these experiences are not exceedingly frequent, they are certainly present. The microaggressive stereotype of the 'strong black woman,' in particular, has the highest frequency

mean score of 3.12, implying that this specific type of microaggression is the most commonly experienced (see Table 3).

The survey results indicate that the expatriates in Mexico have a high level of life satisfaction. On a scale of 1 to 7, the mean score for life satisfaction is 5.71. This suggests that the expatriates have found fulfillment and contentment in their lives in Mexico (see Table 3).

The study's results reveal high levels of satisfaction among African American women residing in Mexico. Their decision to relocate is contextualized by the microaggressions they frequently experience in the US, such as the stress-inducing feeling of being negatively stereotyped, silenced, and marginalized. The findings highlight a story of African American women for a better lifestyle and safety, as well as an environment where the burden of racial microaggressions is lessened, although not eliminated (see Table 3).

The 24 motivation reasons were entered into a principal components factor analysis model to determine the components. In Figure 1, the scree plot for eigenvalues found two components were “above the elbow.” These were kept as the components for this study. Using a varimax rotation on the model, the two-factor solution was 1 = *Escape* (including Safety and Political motivations) (34.1% of the variance), 2 = *Enrichment* (11.3% of variance) (see Table 4).

Hypothesis Testing

As stated above, Spearman correlations were used to test the Hypothesis 2a and multiple linear regression with bootstrapping for Hypothesis 1 and 2b because of the numerous outliers and influential points found in the dataset.

Cohen (1988) suggested some guidelines for interpreting the strength of linear correlations. He suggested that a weak correlation typically had an absolute value of $r = .10$ ($r^2 =$ one percent of the variance explained), a moderate correlation typically had an absolute value of $r = .30$ ($r^2 =$ nine percent of the variance explained) and a strong correlation typically had an absolute value of $r = .50$ ($r^2 =$ 25 percent of the variance explained). With this sample size of $N = 111$, a small correlation of $r = .19$ (only 3.6% of the variance accounted for) is significant at the $p < .05$ level. Also, given the hundreds of correlations between the scale scores with the 65 demographic variables, a researcher would expect many correlations (five percent of the total correlations) to be statistically significant ($p < .05$) simply due to random fluctuations in the data (Fields, 2007). Therefore, for the sake of parsimony, this Results Chapter will primarily highlight those correlations that were of at least moderate strength ($|r_s| = .30$) to minimize the potential of numerous Type I errors stemming from interpreting and drawing conclusions based on potentially spurious correlations.

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between experiences of racial microaggressions in the US and current life satisfaction of African American women who have moved to Mexico? The related hypothesis **was Hypothesis 1: The** prior experience of racial microaggressions in the US is negatively related to the current life satisfaction of African American women who choose to move to Mexico, while controlling for the amount of time since moving abroad. To analyze and test Hypothesis 1, Table 5 displays the results of the bootstrapped multiple linear regression model. This model includes three

predictor variables: the number of years lived outside the US, the appraisal of microaggressions, and the frequency of microaggressions, and life satisfaction as the outcome variable. After a 1,000 iteration bootstrap process, the full model was significant, $F(3, 107) = 2.71, p = .049, R^2 = .071$. Inspection of the individual unstandardized regression coefficient found that years outside of the United States was related to higher life satisfaction ($B = 0.05, p = .009, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.02, 0.10]$). However, appraisal-total ($B = 0.08, p = .497, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.16, 0.29]$) and frequency-total ($B = -0.15, p = .403, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.56, 0.20]$) did not relate to satisfaction (see Table 5). Therefore, hypothesis one was not supported.

Table 5

Bootstrap Multiple Linear Regression Model Related to Life Satisfaction for Research Question 1 (N = 111)

Variable VIF	Bootstrapping Results							<i>r</i> _{ab.c}
	<i>B</i>	Bias	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>		
Intercept	5.64	0.03	0.38	.001	4.92	6.42		
Years Outside US	0.05	0.00	0.02	.009	0.02	0.10	.26	1.01
Appraisal-Total	0.08	0.00	0.12	.497	-0.16	0.29	.05	2.39
Frequency-Total	-0.15	-0.01	0.19	.403	-0.56	0.20	-.07	2.39

Note. Full Model: $F(3, 107) = 2.71, p = .049, R^2 = .071$. Durbin-Watson = 2.25.

Research Question 2a: Are racial microaggressions related to expat motivation factors to leave the US? The related Hypothesis 2a stated that racial microaggressions experienced in the US are positively related to the motivation factors for African American women choosing to move to Mexico. To answer this

question and test this hypothesis, the study initially focused on the frequency of microaggressions, correlating the nine motivation scores (comprising of seven subscales plus the two factor scores) with the five microaggression frequency scores. Out of the resulting 45 correlations, nine were found to have moderate strength based on Cohen's (1988) criteria (see Table 6). The phase aimed to understand how often these negative experiences occurred and their direct influence on the motivations.

Subsequent to examining microaggression frequency, the study analyzed appraisal of microaggressions—participants' subjective evaluations of the perceived stress—and correlated these perceptions with the same motivational factors. As a result, the nine motivation scores were again examined (seven subscales plus the two-factor scores), this time correlated with the five microaggression appraisal scores. Ten of the 45 resulting correlations were of moderate strength, again employing Cohen's (1988) criteria (see Table 7). This step examines the emotional impact of these experiences, providing insight into how the severity of perceived microaggressions influenced motivation.

The analysis revealed significant correlations that offer insights into the factors influencing African American women's decision to move abroad. The data showed a parallel between the frequency of certain microaggressions and the motivation for lifestyle changes, suggesting a link without asserting causation. Specifically, microaggression experiences related to assumptions of beauty and sexual objectification, as well as feelings of being silenced and marginalized, were associated with greater lifestyle motivations. The frequently of African

American women encountering demeaning stereotypes or were made to feel invisible was correlated with an increased inclination towards changing their living situation.

Additionally, the data presents a correlation between the financial motivations to move, and experiences associated with the 'angry black woman' stereotype. This specific microaggression, when encountered more frequently, was directly associated with financial motivations to migrate, suggesting a relationship between economic considerations and the necessity to escape negative stereotyping.

On the other hand, the desire for safety and political stability seems to be closely related to how distressing or demeaning these microaggressions are perceived to be, rather than how often they occur. The stronger the appraisal of stress to being silenced and marginalized, the greater the pull towards seeking safety and political stability in a new country. This distinction highlights that it's not the quantity but the quality of these negative microaggressive experiences that drives the desire to relocate.

Tables 6 and 7 illustrate the moderate yet significant relationships between the microaggressions experienced by African American women in the US and their motivations to move to Mexico. These results highlight the impact that both the frequency and severity of racial microaggressions have on African American women's decisions to emigrate, with a clear link to motivations for lifestyle changes, financial considerations, and concerns for safety and political stability. By exploring both the frequency and appraisal of microaggressions, we

uncover a comprehensive picture of how these experiences shape the motivations to expatriate. The frequency tells us “how often,” providing a measure of environmental hostility, while the appraisal reveals “how bad,” offering a window into the psychological toll. These correlations reveal the impact of racial microaggressions on significant life decisions such as emigration. The data reinforces the view that these are not isolated incidents but rather experiences that compound over time, influencing major life choices. The combination of findings provided support for the research hypothesis 2a (see Tables 6 & 7).

Table 6

Spearman Correlations for the Motivation and Microaggression Frequency Scores for Research Question 2a (N = 111)

Motivation Scores	Frequency Scores				
	1	2	3	4	5
Work/Career	.00	.12	-.01	-.07	.01
Education	.23	.26	.20	.12	.07
Lifestyle	.31 *	.34 *	.37 *	.06	.01
Family and Relationship	.09	.17	.05	-.12	.11
Financial Consideration	.25	.20	.24	.14	.31 *
Safety and Political Factors	.25	.30 *	.31 *	.00	-.03
Total Score	.29	.34 *	.34 *	.03	.07
Escape Factor	.26	.28	.30 *	.02	.01
Enrichment Factor	.16	.22	.17	.00	.04

Note. Frequency Scores: 1 = Total Score; 2 = Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification; 3 = Silenced and Marginalized; 4 = Strong Black Women; 5 = Angry Black Women.

* $p < .001$.

Table 7

Spearman Correlations for the Motivation and Microaggression Appraisal Scores for Research Question 2a (N = 111)

Motivation Scores	Appraisal Scores				
	1	2	3	4	5
Work/Career	.05	.11	.00	.07	-.01
Education	.24	.25	.21	.27	.07
Lifestyle	.32 *	.26	.40 *	.25	.11
Family and Relationship	.14	.20	.01	.12	.10
Financial Consideration	.20	.15	.22	.13	.28
Safety and Political Factors	.39 *	.31 *	.43 *	.29	.17
Total Score	.36 *	.32 *	.38 *	.28	.17
Escape Factor	.33 *	.26	.37 *	.23	.17
Enrichment Factor	.20	.21	.17	.22	.05

Note. Appraisal Scores: 1 = Total Score; 2 = Assumptions of Beauty or Sexual Objectification; 3 = Silenced and Marginalized; 4 = Strong Black Women; 5 = Angry Black Women.

* $p < .001$.

Research Question 2b: Are racial microaggressions related to specific types of motivation factors to leave the US? The related hypothesis was

Hypothesis 2b: More racial microaggressions experienced in the US are related to greater safety and political motivational factors for African American women choosing to move to Mexico. To analyze this hypothesis, Table 8 displays the results of the bootstrapped multiple linear regression model associating safety and political motivations scores, controlling for gender discrimination in Mexico as a covariate.

After a 1,000 iteration bootstrap process, the full model was significant, $F(3, 107) = 11.54, p = .001, R^2 = .245$. Inspection of the individual beta weights found that while controlling for the level of gender discrimination (which reflects experiences after moving to Mexico), it connected to safety and political motivation scores ($B = 0.29, p = .002, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.10, 0.46]$). Furthermore, the total perceived stress from microaggressions, referred to as Appraisal-total were associated with greater safety and political motivation scores ($B = 0.25, p = .020, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.05, 0.45]$). However, frequency-total ($B = 0.23, p = .181, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.10, 0.58]$) did not connect to the safety and political motivation scores (see Table 8).

In simpler terms, the analysis revealed a significant relationship between experiences of gender discrimination in Mexico (utilized as a control variable) and the cumulative stress from racial microaggressions. Specifically, higher reported levels of gender discrimination in Mexico were linked with a stronger motivation to move due to safety and political reasons. This indicates that the experiences of gender discrimination are associated with the overall context in which racial microaggressions relate to motivational factors. Similarly, the total

perceived stress from microaggressions, referred to as 'appraisal-total', was also positively related to safety and political motivations. This means that the more stress African American women felt from microaggressions, the more motivated they felt to seek new surroundings for reasons related to safety and politics.

Interestingly, the frequency of microaggressions, while initially thought to be a connected, it did not significantly relate to the motivation to move due to safety and political factors. This reveals that the frequency of these incidents is less influential than the intensity of the stress they provoke when it comes to making the decision to relocate (see Table 8). Therefore, hypothesis 2b was supported, but with the important clarification that gender discrimination is considered in the model as a factor to control for, not as a direct motivator for relocation.

Table 8

Bootstrap Multiple linear Regression Model for Safety and Political Score for Research Question 2b (N = 111)

Variable VIF	<i>B</i>	Bootstrapping Results					<i>r</i> _{ab.c}
		Bias	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
Intercept	1.08	-0.02	0.65	.091	-0.23	2.31	
Gender discrimination	0.29	0.00	0.09	.002	0.10	0.46	.35 1.01
Frequency-Total	0.23	0.00	0.17	.181	-0.10	0.58	.12 2.40
Appraisal-Total	0.25	0.00	0.10	.020	0.05	0.45	.19 2.39

Note. Full Model: $F(3, 107) = 11.54$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = .245$. Durbin-Watson = 1.91.

Summary

In summary, the study included 111 participants and examined the relationship between the experience of racial microaggressions in the U.S. and life satisfaction of African American expatriate women in Mexico. In summary, the study included 111 participants and examined the relationship between the experience of racial microaggressions in the U.S. and the life satisfaction of African American expatriate women in Mexico. The study used multiple linear regression analyses to test Hypothesis 1, which suggested a relationship between microaggressions and life satisfaction. However, the results did not support this hypothesis. Hypothesis 2a, which proposed a relationship between microaggressions and various motivation factors, was analyzed using correlational analysis and was found to be supported. Hypothesis 2b, which proposed a relationship between microaggressions and safety and political motivation factors, was also supported using multiple linear regression analysis. In the final chapter, findings were compared to the existing literature, conclusions and implications were drawn, and a series of recommendations were suggested.

Chapter 5: Discussion**Summary of the Study**

The first aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between the experience of racial microaggressions in the U.S and the current life satisfaction of African American expat women who migrated to Mexico. The second purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between racial microaggressions and expat motivation factors to leave the US. The third and final purpose of the study

was to examine if racial microaggressions were indicated a tendency for safety and political motivations for emigration. The findings confirmed two of the three hypotheses proposed in the study: (1) The hypothesis that prior experience of racial microaggressions in the US would have a negative relate to on the current life satisfaction of African American women who choose to move to Mexico while controlling for the amount of time since moving abroad, was not supported by the findings. (2a) Racial microaggressions experienced in the US are positively related to motivational factors to leave. (2b) Racial microaggressions experienced in the US are related to greater safety and political motivation factors for moving to Mexico. The findings of the study provided support for Hypotheses 2a and 2b. The study utilized a correlational design with 111 African American expat women participants living in Mexico. The findings are discussed below.

Discussion of the Findings

This study investigated the relationship between racial microaggression, life satisfaction, and motivations to expatriate. The key findings of this study are (1) that a longer duration outside of the US is associated with improved life satisfaction; (2) that racial microaggressions have a positive relationship with motivations to leave the US; and (3) that racial microaggressions experiences are associated with a higher likelihood of safety and political motivations factors to emigrate from the US. The results of this study indicate a complex navigational process used by African American women to cope and improve their lives (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Benson & Osbaldiston, 2016).

Although this study is the first to explore microaggressions, motivations and life satisfaction of African American expats, it is consistent with scholarship on the impact of microaggressions and other racism-related stressors (Utsey, 2000). The study's findings are discussed in relation to the following research questions:

Research question 1. Is there a significant relationship between experiences of racial microaggressions in the US and current life satisfaction of African American women who have moved to Mexico?

The findings suggest a nuanced understanding of the factors contributing to life satisfaction among African American women who migrated to Mexico. The research examined the relationship between experiences of racial microaggressions in the US and current life satisfaction among African American women who have relocated to Mexico. It was hypothesized that prior experience of racial microaggressions in the US would be negatively related to the current life satisfaction of African American women who choose to move to Mexico, while controlling for the amount of time since moving abroad. A bootstrap multiple linear regression model revealed a significant overall relationship. Remarkably, the number of years spent outside the United States emerged as a positive correlation to life satisfaction, indicating that longer duration abroad is associated with higher satisfaction levels. However, the appraisal and frequency of microaggressions did not significantly relate to satisfaction, suggesting that the mere occurrence and perception of microaggressions did not determine life satisfaction for African American women in Mexico; therefore, the hypothesis was not supported. This suggests that while such experiences may have

influenced their decision to move or their perceptions of life in the US, they do not play a major role in how they feel about their lives in Mexico. The results indicate that African American women's experiences are complex and cannot be fully understood by examining microaggressions alone. A detailed discussion of each relationship is provided below.

Racial Microaggressions and Life Satisfaction

Microaggressions are a type of racism-related stress that is pervasive and continuous. The results of the multiple linear regression did not support the hypothesis of a significant relationship between microaggressions and life satisfaction. These findings are inconsistent with established research that indicates a negative association between life satisfaction and by racism-related stressors (Broman 1997, Utsey et al. 2002). However, this study revealed that living abroad can improve life satisfaction. This corresponds with the concept of "lifestyle migration," which proposes that individuals seek to break free from their previous limitations and find a more fulfilling life outside the United States (O'Reilly & Benson, 2009). However, it is important to note that the current lifestyle migration research does not often include race, which is a critical factor to take into account.

Interestingly, while many previous studies have demonstrated the pervasive impact of racial microaggressions on psychological well-being and life satisfaction (Cénat et al., 2021), the analysis in this study revealed that neither the frequency nor the appraisal of racial microaggression experiences in the US significantly related to current life satisfaction. The insignificant correlational

effects of racial microaggressions on a mental health outcome such as life satisfaction, found in this study, are inconsistent with the results of well-documented research (Broman 1997; Utsey et al., 2002). It is possible that the experience of African American women living abroad is could be impacted by various factors that contribute to their resilience and overall well-being. For instance, social support networks in Mexico, perceptions of discrimination, safety and security, environmental elements, or other socio-cultural dynamics in the host country could significantly enrich their experience. Yap et al. (2011) found that a sense of belonging, and discrimination associated with the life satisfaction of African Americans. Their study highlighted that African American women with a strong racial identity and who experience less discrimination tend to report greater life satisfaction. This could explain why African American women in Mexico report higher life satisfaction, which may be attributed to welcoming environment that supports their sense of belonging and with lower levels of discrimination. Finally, the pursuit of personal growth also stands out as potential contributors to the overall well-being and life satisfaction of these expatriates (Erving & Thomas, 2018).

Research Question 2a: Are racial microaggressions related to expat motivation factors to leave the US?

The study investigated whether racial microaggressions are related to expat motivation factors for African American women to leave the US. It was hypothesized that microaggressions experienced in the US would be positively related to motivation factors for African American women who chose to move to

Mexico, and the analysis revealed significant correlations. The results supported Hypothesis 2a, demonstrating a significant relationship between racial microaggressions and various motivational factors for relocation. Specifically, Spearman's rank correlation coefficients demonstrated moderate relationships between the frequency of microaggressions—assessed using five microaggression frequency scores—and nine motivation scores (see Table 6), with nine of these relationships proving to be moderately correlated. Lifestyle motivation was especially correlated with the frequency of microaggression occurrences, suggesting that the regularity of these experiences may relate to the desire for lifestyle changes.

Similarly, assumptions of beauty and sexual objectification, as well as feelings of being silenced and marginalized, were moderately associated with lifestyle motivation. Financial motivations also showed a connection with microaggressions, specifically the 'Angry Black Woman' stereotype. Furthermore, safety and political factors, as well as broader escape motivations, were correlated with experiences of being stereotyped and marginalized.

In a parallel analysis, the appraisal of microaggressions—participants' subjective evaluations of the perceived stress—was also examined. This analysis showed that ten correlations related to the appraisal of microaggressions had moderate strength (see Table 7), reinforcing the relationship between the psychological impact of microaggressions and expatriation motivation.

These results highlight the distinct yet intersecting associations between the frequency and stress of racial microaggressions and African American

women's decisions to emigrate, with a clear link to motivations for lifestyle changes, financial considerations, and concerns for safety and political stability. Exploring both the frequency and appraisal of microaggressions offers a comprehensive picture of how these experiences are related to the decision to expatriate, with frequency indicating 'how often' microaggressions occur and appraisal indicating 'how bad' they are perceived, thus reflecting the environmental hostility and psychological toll. These findings underscore the role of racial microaggressions in the migration decision-making process for African American women and provide evidence for the significant relationship between both the occurrence and perception of these experiences.

This understanding of how frequency and appraisal are independently and collectively associated with motivation factors for leaving the US suggests a complex interplay of factors in the decision to emigrate. The data indicate that these experiences are not isolated incidents but part of a compounded experience over time, which is related to major life decisions. The combination of findings provides robust support for Hypothesis 2a (see Tables 6 & 7).

Given the lack of existing research examining migration motivations and microaggressions, the study uniquely contributes to the understanding of how racial microaggressions influence the motivations of African American expatriate women. The analysis revealed significant correlations between microaggressions and various motivations including as lifestyle changes, financial, safety and political considerations. A discussion of each motivation factor for African American women is presented below.

Lifestyle Motivation

The findings of this study support the push-pull theories of migration (Lee, 1966; O'Reilly, 2000). They suggest that African American women choose to move abroad due to both push factors, such as escaping negative aspects of life in the U.S., and pull factors, including the appeal of positive opportunities like cultural enrichment and a better quality of life (Croucher, 2009). Researchers have demonstrated that 'everyday microaggression,' stereotype threat and racial battle fatigue are distinctive stressors for African American women due to the psychological impact of navigating racialized contexts (Franklin, 2016; Harrell et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2007, Steele et al., 2002). Correlations from this study confirmed that African American women who experienced microaggressions more frequently, especially those related to beauty standards and sexual objectification, or being silenced and marginalized, were more likely to cite lifestyle changes as a motivation for moving to Mexico. These correlations were found to be moderate and significant, with specific microaggression items correlating with the aforementioned motivations, indicating that the frequency of such experiences has a substantial connection with the decision to pursue a different lifestyle abroad. The findings reveal a significant link between beauty and sexual objectification microaggressions and the motivations for African American women to move to Mexico. Assumptions of beauty and sexual objectification refer to microaggressions that specifically target Black women's physical appearance, such as hairstyles, facial features, and body size, embedding gendered racial stereotypes that subject them to undue scrutiny and

objectification. These experiences not only add a layer of stress but also influence broader life decisions, including the search for environments where their identity and safety are respected, free from the confines of reductive and objectifying stereotypes. Moreover, the findings indicate that African American women are driven to pursue a new lifestyle in Mexico in response to adverse experiences in the US, seeking respite and a thriving environment that offers the promise of an enhanced quality of life.

Marrow and Klekowski von Koppenfels (2020) measured migration aspirations before any migration took place, utilizing survey data to analyze American migration aspirations. Their research focused on the impacts of various types of capital (cultural, financial, social), race, and national identity on these aspirations. The study found significant racial influences on Americans' migration preferences, with white Americans showing a preference for Western Europe, Australia, or New Zealand, suggesting that individuals from other racial backgrounds might have different aspirations due to cultural ties or perceptions of acceptance.

Marrow and Klekowski von Koppenfel's (2020) study further noted that non-white individuals who aspire to live abroad are more likely to be interested in Latin America as a destination. They are also 2.7 times more likely to prioritize joining a partner and 2.1 times more likely to consider retirement as a motivation for living abroad. However, they are 3.1 times less likely to cite exploring as a motivation. The study found that Americans have diverse motives for living abroad, including a significant interest in exploring new cultures and seeking

adventure. This interest is more prominent among those with higher levels of capital.

Varma et al. (2018) quasi-experimental study of expatriate demographics and host country national support, involving 117 Latin American participants, found that host countries in Central and South America tend to offer more support to African American expatriates as they share cultural similarities, as well as shared personal and social values, and a common history of marginalization within the US. They generally hold more positive attitudes toward African Americans than toward White Americans, leading to increased trust and support due to perceived similarity. Also, the study indicated that such support might contribute to a sense of community and belonging, which are key elements in the decision to migrate and in enhancing life satisfaction post-migration. Building upon Varma et al.'s (2018) findings, which highlight the favorable support African American expatriates receive in Central and South America due to perceived shared cultural similarities and historical experiences of marginalization within the US by the host country, this study found that almost all (99.1%) of the African American women reported feeling welcomed in Mexico based on survey responses. Perhaps this sense of being welcomed contributes to the findings, as factors such as the number of years lived outside the US were found to be related to higher life satisfaction.

The data presented also highlights the importance of considering the interplay of racial and gender dynamics in migration. Moreover, 43% of the participants experienced a preference because of their American nationality,

which indicates a positive reaction that sharply contrasts with their experiences in the United States. Although these women faced discrimination on various grounds, such as being a foreigner/American (74.7%), race (82.9%), skin color (81.1%), and gender (85.6%), such incidents were rare, and most of them occurred "less than once a year" or "never." In contrast, a Landrine and Klonoff (1996) found that 98.1% of African American participants had a recent racial encounter in the last year in the US, and 100% of them had experienced such encounters at some point in their lifetime, with 95% finding the event stressful. The data presented emphasizes an important aspect of migration for African American women. Specifically, African American women find Mexico to be a less hostile and racially charged environment compared to the United States. The frequency and intensity of discrimination is lower in Mexico, which makes it an attractive destination for African American women seeking an improved quality of life. These experiences highlight the pull factors that contribute to the decision to migrate to Mexico. Furthermore, they illustrate the significant association between reduced racial hostility on their day-to-day lives and its correlation with overall life satisfaction. This emphasizes the importance of understanding migration through the lens of racial and gender dynamics.

Financial Consideration Motivation

The study's findings align with the historical movement of Black Americans migrating to Mexico, known as "Little Liberia." This community movement was motivated by financial and racial reasons that date back to 1917 (Hooton, 2017, 2018). The study found that microaggressions that are associated with the

stereotype of the 'angry black woman' were specifically linked to financial motivations. Spearman's rank correlation coefficients showed that this particular stereotype was moderately correlated with financial motivations when considering the frequency of such microaggressions experienced by participants. The study's results support various propositions that align with our understanding of how racial stereotypes can adversely affect African American women's employment opportunities[(Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). These microaggressions can lead to unfair treatment, hostile working conditions, missed promotions, and pay disparities (Alleyne, 2005; Lewis & Neville, 2015; Lewis et al., 2016; Seiler, 2023; Sue, 2010). These outcomes illustrate how frequent encounters with such stereotypes can propel African American the move to Mexico not only for better economic conditions but also escaping environments where stereotypes undermine their perceived professional capabilities.

The decision to move to Mexico can be seen as a proactive step towards creating environments where they have more control over their economic futures, free from the constraints of stereotypes that limit their earning potential in the U.S. This ties into broader discussions on migration as a form of resistance to systemic inequalities and as a pathway to economic empowerment (Collins, 2000; Shorter-Gooden, 2004) and response to socio-economic pressures that are unique to African American women position at the intersection of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). According to previous research (Croucher, 2009; Hayes, 2014), financial reasons have been the primary motivation for expats who move to Mexico for retirement. However, the average age of the

study's participants is 46, which is younger than the typical mid to late 60-year-old retired expat. For this new cohort of younger African American expats, the motivation to relocate may center more on seizing financial opportunities rather than merely reducing expenses, emphasizing the desire for economic advancement and autonomy.

Moreover, while the frequency of stereotypes shows a moderate correlation with financial motivations, the study indicates that the psychological toll of being subject to the 'angry black woman' stereotype has a significant connection to the motivation to relocate, suggesting that the emotional toll of these experiences also drive the decision-making process. The move to Mexico involves not just a change in location but also the integration into new communities that may offer more supportive environments for starting businesses, freelancing, or remote work—options that allow African American women to work in spaces free from the stereotypical constraints encountered in the U.S.

Safety and Political Factors Motivation

Motivations related to safety, and politics have a significant correlation with microaggressions linked to beauty standards, sexual objectification, and being silenced and marginalized. Spearman's rank correlation coefficients indicated that the stress and frequency of these specific microaggressions had a moderate and significant correlation with safety and political motivations (see Tables 6 & 7), suggesting that the rate and psychological toll of these experiences is influential in the decision to relocate. The feeling of being

undervalued due to beauty standards and sexual objectification, coupled with being silenced, pushes African American women to seek environments that offer not only safety and political stability but also respect and freedom from the pervasive racial and gender stereotypes experienced in the US (Brown, 2022; Craig-Henderson, 2015). Their pursuit is not merely about finding new surroundings, but also about places where they are genuinely valued, seen, and heard (Collins, 2022).

Additionally, the frequency of microaggressions related to these themes was also correlated with safety and political motivations, although to a lesser extent than appraisal, highlighting that both the regularity and intensity of these experiences contribute to the motivation to emigrate (see Table 6). The decision to migrate reflects a profound personal response to microaggression experiences and the need to escape environments that frequently marginalize, misrepresent, and undervalue African American women.

On the other hand, Von Koppenfels (2014) surveyed 864 American migrants or expats living in France, Germany, and the UK and found that the top reasons for Americans moving abroad were to join a partner or family, for study or research, and the desire for adventure or travel. Only a small percentage cited dissatisfaction with social, cultural, or political developments in the US as their reason for moving abroad. This contrasts with the findings from the current study where safety and political dissatisfaction due to racial microaggressions significantly factored into the decision-making process for African American women emigrating to Mexico.

Research Question 2b: Are racial microaggressions related to specific types of motivation factors to leave the US?

It was hypothesized that experiences of racial microaggressions in the US would be associated with increased safety concerns and political motivations among African American women opting to leave the country. This hypothesis was supported. Through a bootstrapped multiple linear regression model, it was confirmed that gender discrimination, reflecting post-relocation experiences in Mexico, significantly related to these motivational factors. Additionally, the subjective appraisal of microaggressions emerged as significantly related, indicating that the perceived impact of microaggressions carries greater weight in shaping motivations for emigration than their frequency. The significant association between gender discrimination and safety and political motivation factors reflects the effects of post-relocation experiences within Mexico on African American women's perceptions. Experiences of gender discrimination after relocating to Mexico shape their perceptions of safety and political engagement within the new environment.

The study's findings highlight that the quality of microaggression experiences, rather than their frequency, is significant in influencing emigration decisions. This distinction is critical for understanding the psychological processes that underpin the decision to relocate, emphasizing the significance of the subjective experience and perception of racial microaggressions and how they shape expatriation motivations. The principal components factor analysis model explained a significant portion of the variance in motivations related to the

'Escape' dimension ($R^2 = .245$), encompassing factors such as racism, personal safety, and dissatisfaction with the cultural climate of the US (see Table 4). These findings reflect the strong relationships that safety and political motivations have on the decision to emigrate. A continued discussion of motivation factors for African American women is presented below.

Safety and Political Motivation Factors and Microaggressions

The study indicates that African American women's decision to leave the US is largely influenced by the level of stress they feel due to microaggressions, rather than their frequency. These results suggest that racial microaggressions play a significant role in African American women's decision-making process regarding relocation to Mexico. Microaggressions are small but significant forms of discrimination that can have a lasting impact by shaping individuals' perceptions of themselves and their surroundings. They are harmful actions, words, or gestures that reflect oppressive worldviews and systems, fostering marginalization and leading to negative impacts on various areas of an individual's life, including economic, financial, social, educational, physical, and psychological well-being. These effects, well-documented in research, can be detrimental to an individual's well-being (Bleich, 2019). Discriminatory experiences can increase stress and vigilance, leading to altered decision-making processes that prioritize safety, acceptance, and well-being. Individuals, especially those from marginalized communities, may therefore seek out environments where they expect to encounter fewer discriminatory incidents.

These impacts significantly influence important life decisions like relocation or career choices (Craig-Henderson, 2015; Lewis et al., 2013).

Additionally, the findings suggest that the consideration of gender discrimination experienced by African American women, both in the US and potentially in Mexico, informs their decision-making regarding living abroad. Specifically, a heightened awareness of gender discrimination intersects with motivations related to safety and political reasons. This intersectionality amplifies the difficulties and issues faced by African American women, intensifying the challenges they encounter. Even after crossing borders, the persistent effect of combined experiences of discrimination persists and can influence their ability to adapt, their sense of safety, and overall well-being in the host country. Consequently, the drive to escape the stress caused by racial microaggressions coupled with the desire to find an environment with less gender discrimination—or where it is perceived differently—can be a significant factor motivating these women to move abroad.

The findings highlight the significant role that microaggressions experienced by African American women in the US play in their decision to relocate, indicating that safety concerns and the political climate are crucial factors in their migration considerations. This aligns with the broader socio-political climate, including the era marked by Donald Trump's presidency, escalating violence, rising racial hostility, the strengthening of White supremacist groups, an insurrection at the State Capitol, and the first NAACP travel advisory for a US state (Clayton et al., 2019). The Black Lives Matter protests and

'spillover effects' on mental health due to exposure to police killings further punctuate this climate, as noted by Bor et al. (2018).

A participant directly cited the "George Floyd incident" as a pivotal factor in their decision to move to Mexico. This statement highlights how racial inequality and political unrest in the United States have a significant impact on people's sense of safety and well-being. It prompts them to search for environments that are perceived as more secure and accepting. This emphasizes how sociopolitical factors and personal safety play a crucial role in deciding to move to a new country. It shows that specific events can trigger a deeper reflection on one's living situation, leading to the pursuit of a new life abroad.

The qualitative insights from participants' motivation statements provide a deeply personal and layered understanding of the motivations behind moving to Mexico, enriching the quantitative data. For instance, statements such as "Better life for my children," highlight familial considerations, while frustrations with economic barriers are evident in remarks about the inaccessibility of homeownership. Expressions such as "For the mental health of my black son. In Mexico, he can just exist and be a kid," point to the pursuit of a safer, more accepting environment, free from systemic constraints. The longing for freedom and a shift in lifestyle is encapsulated by sentiments like "I've always desired to live outside of the US since I was a child... I'm now living the dream in my retirement." The correlations found in the study may not only reflect pre-migration motivators but also post-migration realizations that influence ongoing expatriate

experiences, as captured in participants' revelations like "I didn't initially come thinking that I was going to move here but I did over time realize that this is where I prefer to be, so my answers reflect a realization over time not initial driving factors," which demonstrates the evolution of their motivations. These quotes, among others, illustrate the intricate interplay of personal, economic, and socio-political motivations, offering a comprehensive view that extends beyond categorizations into the profound personal realities driving the decision to relocate.

In discussing the motivations and experiences of African American expats in Mexico, it is striking to parallel findings from a study on African Americans in Australia, which echo a similar quest for physical safety and a reduction in racialized threats. According to Graham (2022), all interviewees reported feeling a higher level of physical safety in Australia compared to the United States, largely attributed to the absence of pervasive gun culture but also a reduced threat of violence linked to racial prejudice. An increased sense of safety, not only from physical violence but also from racial threats, is an important factor that influences the relocation decisions of African American expatriates. They seek environments that offer both physical security and a reprieve from the intense racial scrutiny experienced in the United States (Graham, 2022). This analysis provides valuable insights into the reasons why African Americans choose to move abroad, shedding light on the combination of personal, social, and economic factors that influence such decisions. With the rise of racial tensions and political polarization in the US, many African Americans feel vulnerable, and

moving can be seen as a response to the systemic issues that affect their daily lives and well-being. This framework helps to explain why these motivations are particularly strong for African American women as they navigate the unique vulnerabilities at the intersection of systemic racism and sexism.

Implications for Counseling Professionals and Counselor Educators

The findings of this study highlight a relationship between racial microaggressions, expat motivation factors and the life satisfaction of African American women who have chosen to move to Mexico. These insights are critical for counseling professionals and educators. The results amplify the obligation to comply with the American Counseling Association's (2014) ethical guidelines by enhancing the understanding of multicultural dynamics and social justice, particularly as they pertain to the African American diaspora (Ratts, 2011; Ratts et al., 2016). An essential part of this understanding is recognizing the unique pressures related to gender and race that affect African American women, particularly how microaggressions influence their life decisions and quality of life. Counselors must develop a richer understanding of the psychological impact of racial microaggressions to offer more effective support to this demographic (Plummer & Slane, 2006). This includes acknowledging that these experiences can have a lasting influence on life satisfaction. A proactive approach in counseling is required, one that expands the scope of international counseling to address the specific needs of American expatriates and considers the mental health issues and barriers they face domestically and abroad.

The rise of telehealth utilization has made the familiarity with counseling African American women abroad even more crucial. It is also important for counselors to advocate for legislative reforms that enhance mental health service accessibility for Americans overseas, including expanding licensure and service options. Engagement with international counseling organizations, such as the International Association for Counseling, and pursuing international certifications can provide counselors with a broader perspective that benefits clients globally. It is important to establish referral systems and networks that cater to the unique needs of African American women living abroad. This will ensure that they have access to culturally sensitive mental health services. Counselors should make referrals and build relationships with other professionals and organizations that serve this population. This will ensure seamless transitions and continuity of care for the patients. Moreover, counselors can collaborate with community organizations and advocacy groups to create support networks and resources for African American expatriates. To foster a sense of community and belonging, innovative approaches such as peer support groups, online forums, and virtual workshops can be used. These will allow African American women living abroad to connect with others who share similar experiences.

Counselor educators are encouraged to integrate these findings into their teaching to enrich the curriculum on international and multicultural counseling. This curriculum integration would prepare counselors to effectively support the well-being of African American women living abroad, addressing not just the challenges of cultural adaptation but also the continued effects of racial trauma

(Carter, 2007). The counseling profession often overlooks the implications of racism-related stressors during the counseling assessments and treatment planning. Current intake forms typically lack the specificity needed to address the complex experiences of microaggressions (and other racism related stressors) faced by African American women. This omission is a critical gap in counseling practice. To address the gap, counselors should add targeted questions in forms and assessments that ask about experiences of racial microaggressions, safety concerns, and other environmental stressors. These questions should inquire about how racism-related stressors affect different aspects of an individual's life, such as their mental health, relationships, career, and overall well-being.

Counselors should recognize how microaggressions, perceived discrimination, and safety concerns affect the mental health of African American women, which is crucial for fostering life satisfaction and well-being. This study underlines the pervasive and detrimental effect of racial microaggressions on their life satisfaction within the United States, suggesting microaggressions, along with safety and political concerns, are significant motivators for their relocation. This migration is not just a change of geography but a profound assertion of autonomy and a strategic response to the systemic racial stressors that pervade their daily lives in their home country.

Recognizing the decision to move abroad as a valid response to systemic injustice is an important step towards reclaiming agency. Counselors can play a key role in validating clients' experiences and choices. By acknowledging and supporting these decisions, the counseling profession can play a crucial role in

addressing the deep-seated racial injustices that drive such migrations. This ultimately contributes to a more equitable and understanding society. To achieve this, counselors need to reframe migration as a strategic response to systemic oppression and support clients in asserting their rights and advocating for their needs. Counselors can use broaching to actively discuss systemic issues of power and identity. This helps to strengthen the therapeutic relationship, increase credibility, and address sociopolitical factors that influence the clients' concerns (Day-Vines et al., 2021). Furthermore, the study highlights the need for tailored interventions that consider the various effects of stressors on the psychological well-being of African American women. These findings have significant implications, laying the groundwork for future research and informing the advancement of counseling practices in a multicultural and global context.

Strengths of the Study

The study is the first to examine the connection between racial microaggressions, motivations, and life satisfaction in African American women living abroad. The focus of this study is unique and addresses a gap in existing research by shedding light on the complexities of experiences in a global context. The study's extensive demographics and the participation of individuals from different regions played an active role in enhancing the depth of the findings. The study emphasizes the significance of acknowledging racial microaggressions as a continuous source of stress that can affect significant life choices. This perspective is essential for counseling practices and contributes to the discussion on cultural competencies, social justice, and the empowerment of

underrepresented communities. By bringing attention to these issues, the study contributes to the internationalization of counseling and a broader comprehension of the experiences of African American women in various settings.

This study has important implications for counseling African American women in the United States who are dealing with racial microaggressions and how they affect their life satisfaction. The study provides useful insights for counselors working with individuals affected by racial microaggressions. It offers a unique perspective on the effects of these experiences on mental health and overall well-being. The study's global insights make it even more relevant for counseling professionals worldwide. By addressing specific challenges, the study contributes to more effective and culturally sensitive counseling practices that can support African American women in the U.S. as they manage the difficulties of racial microaggressions in their daily lives. This study expands our knowledge of life satisfaction in African American women, an under-studied area in counseling.

This study enriches the existing literature by providing valuable insights into the relationship between life satisfaction and microaggressions experienced by African American women. It has practical implications for improving counseling practices by emphasizing the importance of acknowledging the experiences of African American women in the context of racial microaggressions. Regardless of the frequency of these experiences, addressing their appraisal and perception is crucial while devising counseling strategies to

promote well-being and personal agency. These findings expand our knowledge of these concepts and emphasize the need for culturally sensitive approaches in the counseling field.

Limitations of study

When interpreting the results of this study, several limitations must be considered. A significant limitation arose from an inadvertent clerical error in the survey design, the Gendered Racial Microaggression Scale was designed using a 5-Likert scale instead of the original 6-Likert scale. This error, particularly in the 'frequency' scoring section, may have affected participant responses, introducing potential bias. Despite this, the scale demonstrated good reliability, which should be considered when evaluating this limitation.

The expat motivation scale, a central element of the study, also presented issues. When discussing the relationship between racial microaggressions and motivation, it's important to consider the limitations identified in the factor analysis. The factor analysis of the motivation scale, was a key component of this research, indicated two primary factors 'Escape' and 'Enrichment,' accounting for 34.1% and 11.3% of the variance respectively. Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha values revealed concerns about the internal consistency of the motivation subscales, specifically, the 'Family and Relationship Motivation' ($\alpha = 0.27$) and 'Financial Consideration Motivation' ($\alpha = 0.42$) subscales. This suggests that the identified motivational factors and subscales may not fully or accurately represent the motivations for relocation among African American women expatriates, possibly due to the low number of questions within the subscales. The study

sample size of 111 participants, which is adequate for the three predictors used, but a larger sample would have helped to enrich the factor analysis, particularly in refining the construction of the expat motivation scale. This discrepancy between the conceptual structure and the factor analysis results, coupled with the low reliability of some subscales, highlights the need for further research to refine the motivation scale with higher validity and reliability.

The study's sample size may not represent the broader population, and its focus solely on women limits its generalizability. Recruitment of participants for the study through social media might have led to selection bias (Coker et al., 2009). The sample may have consisted of individuals inherently likelier to report higher life satisfaction due to personal characteristics that motivated them to move abroad (Ivlevs, 2015). As a result, the findings of the study may not be representative of African American women who experience microaggressions in the US. Additionally, the study may not fully capture the experiences due to its quantitative nature. The use of self-reported instruments may have resulted in subjective biases, and the cross-sectional design used in the study may not have accurately captured the dynamic process of how past experiences of microaggressions affect current life satisfaction over time or life satisfaction prior to leaving the US. Also, the lack of comparative data limits the ability to directly attribute changes in life satisfaction in Mexico to the move itself or the absence of US-based microaggressions.

Furthermore, it is possible that both adaptation and resilience effects influenced the study results. The participants might have developed coping

mechanisms, felt more accepted, and had access to supportive communities, all of which may be associated with a heightened sense of satisfaction. Additionally, Mexico's new cultural, social, and environmental context might have provided a more positive experience for African American women, thus overshadowing the impact of previous microaggressions. Lastly, relying on participants' recollections might result in inaccuracies due to retrospective bias, potentially underreporting the impact and frequency of microaggressions.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between racial microaggressions, life satisfaction, and motivations for emigrating. To broaden the scope of these findings, subsequent studies could address the present limitations. Incorporating a broader gender demographic would strengthen the generalizability of the outcomes. This improved diversity would include expanding the research to include additional countries where African American expatriates might encounter varying experiences, thereby providing researchers with a more comprehensive understanding of the subject and aiding the development of more effective counseling practices and strategies for an international audience.

It would be helpful for future research to explore motivational factors that have not been previously studied, such as personal growth. Also, a longitudinal study could be conducted to understand the dynamic nature of microaggression experiences and their ongoing influence on life satisfaction. To complement these approaches, a qualitative or mixed-methods research design could provide

a richer investigation into the life satisfaction, experiences of microaggressions, and the underlying motivations of African American expatriate women. It would be valuable to center Black women's voices using Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory. A critical examination of racial identities and consciousness is also essential, as some individuals might be hesitant to acknowledge or confront racial issues.

Moreover, it could be valuable to investigate the relationship between adaptation, and life satisfaction. According to research conducted by Jurásek & Wawrosz in 2023, individuals with high levels of cultural intelligence are more likely to successfully adapt to new cultural settings and feel content and satisfied with their lives abroad. The participants in their study were well-traveled, indicating that their ability to understand and adapt to different cultures played a pivotal role in their adjustment process and overall happiness.

Finally, it would be beneficial for future research to focus on the psychological well-being and mental health outcomes of African American women living in Mexico. This will help us understand the cumulative psychological impact of racial trauma and gain insights into its long-term effects on mental health. Moreover, it is important to explore the broader aspects of psychological well-being in the context of racial microaggressions and life satisfaction. Further studies could also investigate microaggressions or discrimination experienced by African Americans Mexico. It is worth noting that only 27% of African American women in the study sought therapy while residing in Mexico, which is below the national average in the US. This discrepancy could

indicate a difference in the needs or access that warrants further investigation (Coker, 2004). These areas of research will build upon the current study and pave the way for more in-depth and impactful future investigations, while also providing invaluable implications for counseling with African American women.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent**University of Missouri–St. Louis****Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities**

Project Title: Relations Between Prior Racial Microaggressions, Expat Motivation, and Life Satisfaction Among African American Expat Women in Mexico

Principal Investigator: Patricia Keller

Department Name: Department of Counseling and Family Therapy

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Susan Kashubeck-West

IRB Project Number:

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore subtle racism in the U.S. and its relationship to life satisfaction for African American women living abroad.

Your participation will involve completing surveys which will take between 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The online surveys will include a demographic questionnaire and three short surveys that explore your experiences with racism, life satisfaction, and motivation to move abroad. Your responses will be anonymous – we will not ask you for identifying information.

There are no known risks associated with this research other than the potential for mild boredom or fatigue. However, questions about racism are sensitive and may result in uncomfortable feelings or memories. There is no confidentiality risk associated with this research.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate in this research study or withdraw your consent at any time. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or withdraw. There is no compensation for your participation.

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this study. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection) that would lead to disclosure of your data as well as any other information collected by the researcher.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Patricia Keller, 616- 516-4956 or Dr. Kashubeck-West, susankw@umsl.edu. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the University of Missouri–St. Louis Office of Research Compliance, at 314-516-5972 or irb@umsl.edu.

Appendix B: PARTICIPATION RECRUITMENT

As a Black woman living abroad, I am personally interested in studying other women like me who have chosen to live in Mexico. My research, under the supervision of Dr. Angela Coker and Dr. Susan Kashubeck-West, focuses on exploring African American expat women's experiences with subtle racism in the U.S. and its effect on life satisfaction.

The research project will include surveys which will take about 10-15 minutes to complete. If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to fill out a demographic form and three surveys exploring your experiences with racism, life satisfaction, and motivation for moving abroad. The surveys will be completed online.

Thank you.

Appendix C: Sample Social Media Recruitment Post

mx Calling all Black women living in Mexico! 🗣️

Are you a Black woman living in Mexico? We want to hear from you! 🌍 ✨ mx

As a fellow Black woman living abroad, I am personally invested in understanding the experiences of women like us who have chosen to live leave the US. Join me in this research project, supervised by Dr. Angela Coker and Dr. Susan Kashubeck-West, to explore African American expat women's encounters with subtle racism in the U.S. and how it affects life satisfaction. 🗣️💬

📄 What's involved? It's super easy and will only take 10-15 minutes of your time!

You'll be asked to complete an online survey on your experiences with racism, life satisfaction, and motivation for moving abroad. Your insights will help us gain valuable knowledge about the challenges and resilience of African American women. 📝 mx

Join the conversation and be a part of this empowering study! Your voice matters, and your participation will make a difference.

Click the link below to get started and share your story with us. ✨🗣️

https://umsl.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/previewId/361ff449-23c8-4740-a59d-dce148d375be/SV_1M8LKOrUHnzYXFY?Q_CHL=preview&Q_SurveyVersionID=current

Thank you for being a part of this important research! ❤️🙏 #ResearchStudy

#BlackWomenAbroad #EmpoweringWomen #ShareYourStory #Blackexpat

#BlackinMexico

Appendix D: Social Media Recruitment Flyer

**STUDY OF BLACK EXPAT
WOMEN IN MEXICO**
**RACISM IN THE U.S & LIFE
SATISFACTION IN MX**

Volunteers Needed
10-15 minute online survey

Participants must:
Black/AA women
Live in Mexico &
at least 18 years old

pkvdb@umsystem.edu



UMSL | University of
Missouri - St. Louis

Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions:

1. Age: _____ (years)

2. Gender:

_____ Female

_____ Male

_____ Trans Female

_____ Trans Male

_____ Nonbinary

_____ Other (please specify: _____)

3. Race/Ethnicity:

_____ Black/African American

_____ White/Caucasian

_____ Latino/Hispanic American

_____ Asian American/Pacific Islander

_____ American Indian or Alaska Native

_____ Other(s) (please specify: _____)

4. Sexual Orientation: (Check all that apply)

_____ Heterosexual

- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual/Pansexual
- Prefer not to share
- Other(s) (please specify: _____)

5. Relationship status: (Check all that apply)

- Single
- Married/Partnered
- In a relationship
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Other(s) (please specify: _____)

6. Do you have children?

- Yes
- No

If "YES," please type in how many children you have _____

7. Do you own a home in Mexico?

- Yes

_____ No

7. Employment status: (Check one)

_____ Employed full time

_____ Employed part time

_____ Student

_____ Stay at Home Parent

_____ Unemployed

_____ Retired

_____ Self employed

8. Socioeconomic class/Annual family income levels: (Check one)

_____ Less than \$19,999

_____ \$20,000 - \$34,999

_____ \$35,000 - \$49,999

_____ \$50,000 - \$79,999

_____ \$80,000 - \$99,999

_____ \$100,000 - \$149,999

_____ \$150,000 - \$199,999

_____ \$200,000 - \$299,999

_____ \$300,000 - \$499,999

_____ \$500,000+

9. Education level:

Please select the highest level of education you have completed:

_____ Less than high school

_____ High school diploma/GED

_____ Associate's degree

_____ Bachelor's degree

_____ Master's degree

_____ Doctoral degree

10. Country:

Do you currently live in Mexico?

_____ Yes

_____ No

What state do you live? _____

How long have you lived in Mexico? _____

11. Citizenship:

Are you a US citizen?

_____ Yes

_____ No

12. How many times per year do you visit the United States? _____

13. How do you refer to yourself as someone living outside of the United States?

(Check one)

_____ Expat

_____ Immigrant

_____ Exile

_____ Refugee

_____ Migrant

_____ American living abroad

_____ Other(s) (please specify: _____)

Memberships:

14. Are you currently a member of any LOCAL groups, clubs, or community organizations in this area?

_____ Yes

_____ No

15. Are you currently a member of any EXPAT groups, clubs, or community organizations in this area?

_____ Yes

_____ No

16. Community:

How often do you attend a group event with other African Americans in this country? (Almost every day/At least once a week/A few times a month/A few times a year/Less than once a year/Never)

17. Travel History:

Did you travel internationally before deciding to move to this country? (Yes/No)

Please list any countries you have traveled to:

18. Study Abroad History:

Did you study, intern, or participate in a formal study abroad program?

(Yes/No)

Please list any countries where you have studied abroad:

19. Language Proficiency:

Please rate your proficiency in the following languages (scale: 1-5, 1 being lowest and 5 being highest):

- English: _____

- Spanish: _____

- Other language(s): _____

20. Previous Residences:

Have you lived in any other countries before moving to Mexico? If yes, please list the countries: _____

How many years have you lived outside of the US? _____

21. Social Media:

Were you aware of an African American expat community when deciding to move abroad? (Check one)

_____ Yes

_____ No

22. Did the presence of a community influence your decision to move abroad?

(Check one)

_____ Yes

_____ No

Optional: Please share how social media influenced your decision, if applicable

23. Do you currently use social media groups for support and community while abroad? (Check one)

_____ Yes

_____ No

24. Therapy Utilization:

Have you utilized therapy since moving abroad? (Check one)

_____ Yes

_____ No

If yes, is your therapist currently practicing in the US or abroad? _____

25. Future:

Do you plan to return to the US to live permanently in the future?

_____ Yes

_____ No

26. In your day-to-day life, how often have any of the following things happened to you in the country in which you now live?

(Almost Every Day/At least once a week/A few times a month/A few times a year/Less than once a year/Never/Don't Know)

- You experience discrimination based on your race.
- You experience discrimination based on your gender.
- You experience discrimination based on the color of your skin.
- You experience **discrimination** because you are a foreigner/ American.
- You experience **preference** because you are an American.

Belongingness:

27. Do you feel welcomed in Mexico?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Additional Comments:

Is there anything else you would like to share or any additional comments you would like to provide? (Optional)

Appendix F: Gendered Racial Microaggression Scale

Dr. Jioni Lewis

Directions. Please think about your experiences as a Black woman living in the US. Please read each item and think of how often each event has happened to you in your lifetime. In addition, please rate how stressful each experience was for you. Stressful can include feeling upset, bothered, offended, or annoyed by the event. Rate Frequency 0 to 5 (e.g., Never Less than once a year, A few times a year, About once a month, A few times a month, Once a week or more). Rate Stress Appraisal 0 to 5 (This has never happened to me, Not at all, Stressful, Slightly stressful, Moderately Stressful, Very stressful, Extremely stressful)

Based on my experiences as a Black woman when I was living in the US...

1. Someone accused me of being angry when I was speaking in a calm manner.
2. Someone assumed that I did not have much to contribute to the conversation.
3. I have been told that I am too independent.
4. Someone has made me feel unattractive because I am a Black woman.
5. In talking with others, someone has told me to calm down.
6. My comments have been ignored in a discussion in a work, school, or other professional setting.
7. I have been told that I am too assertive.
8. Someone has made a sexually inappropriate comment about my butt, hips, or thighs.
9. I have been perceived to be an "angry black woman."

10. Someone has challenged my authority in a work, school, or other professional setting.
11. Someone made a negative comment to me about my skin color/skin tone.
12. Someone made me feel exotic as a Black woman.
13. Someone has imitated the way they think Black women speak in front of me (for example, "g-i-r-l-f-r-i-e-n-d").
14. I have been disrespected by people in a work, school, or other professional setting.
15. Someone made me feel unattractive because of the size of my butt, hips, or thighs.
16. I have been assumed to be a strong Black woman.
17. Someone has assumed that I should have a certain body type because I am a Black woman.
18. I have felt unheard in a work, school, or other professional setting.
19. I have received negative comments about my hair when I wear it in a natural hairstyle.
20. I have been told that I am sassy and straightforward.
21. Someone objectified me based on my physical features as a Black woman.
22. I have felt someone has tried to "put me in my place" in a work, school, or other professional setting.
23. Someone assumed I speak a certain way because I am a Black woman.
24. I have felt excluded from networking opportunities by White co-workers.
25. I have received negative comments about the size of my facial features.

26. Someone perceived me to be sexually promiscuous (sexually loose).

Appendix G: The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The SWLS is a short, 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive.

judgments of one's lives. The scale usually requires only about one minute of respondent time. The scale is not copyrighted and can be used without charge and without permission by all professionals (researchers and practitioners). The scale takes about one minute to complete and is in the public domain. A description of psychometric properties of the scale can be found in Pavot and Diener, 1993 Psychological Assessment.

Survey Form

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 7 - Strongly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly disagree

____ In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

____ The conditions of my life are excellent.

____ I am satisfied with my life.

____ So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

____ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

- 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied
- 26 - 30 Satisfied
- 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied
- 20 Neutral
- 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied
- 10 - 14 Dissatisfied
- 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied

Appendix H : Expat Motivation Scale (EMS)

Instructions: This survey aims to understand the motivations behind your decision to move abroad. Please rate the following factors based on how influential they were in motivating you to move abroad.

1 - Strongly Agree

2 - Agree

3 - Neutral

4 - Disagree

5 - Strongly Disagree

1. I relocated abroad due to financial considerations.

2. I moved abroad to access better medical care or for health-related reasons.

3. I chose to move abroad to be with family members or improve family dynamics.

4. My decision to move abroad was driven by work/career opportunities.

5. Educational opportunities motivated my move abroad.

6. I moved abroad to improve my lifestyle.

7. The desire for exploration and seeking new experiences led me to move abroad.

8. Being with a partner or exploring new relationships influenced my decision to move abroad.
9. Immersing myself in a different culture was a motivation for moving abroad.
10. Learning or using a new language played a role in my decision to move abroad.
11. Retirement purposes influenced my decision to move abroad.
12. Access to nature or outdoor activities was a motivating factor in my decision to move abroad.
13. I moved abroad to experience a slower pace of life or a more relaxed environment.
14. Escaping high levels of stress or pressure motivated my move abroad.
15. Pursuing entrepreneurial or business opportunities influenced my decision to move abroad.
16. Dissatisfaction with the cultural climate of the US played a role in my decision to move abroad.
17. Concerns for personal safety and security influenced my decision to move abroad.
18. I moved abroad seeking an overall improvement in my quality of life.
19. Political factors or ideologies played a role in my decision to move abroad.

20. Escaping specific conditions or situations in the United States was a motivation for moving abroad.
21. Sexism in the United States influenced my decision to move abroad.
22. Racism in the United States played a role in my decision to move abroad.
23. A safe living environment was a motivating factor for my move abroad.
24. I believe I have more opportunities to reach my full potential abroad than I did in the United States.
25. Are there any additional factors that motivated your decision to move abroad?

TABLES

Table 1*Demographic Description of the Sample Population (N=111)*

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	88	79.3
	Lesbian	7	6.3
	Bisexual	8	7.2
	Queer	5	4.5
	Other	3	2.7
Do you have children?	No	66	59.5
	Yes	45	40.5
Socioeconomic Status/Annual Family Income USD\$ ^a	Under \$20,000	6	5.4
	\$20,000-\$49,000	37	33.3
	\$50,000-\$99,000	43	38.7
	\$100,000 to \$199,000	21	18.9
	\$200,000+	4	3.6
Education Level ^b	Some college 2 year degree/Associates degree	11	9.9
	4 year degree/Bachelors degree	9	8.1
	Professional degree/Masters degree	39	35.1
	Doctorate	44	39.6
		8	7.2
Are you a United States citizen?	No	1	0.9
	Yes	110	99.1
Have you lived outside of the US before Mexico?	No	74	66.7
	Yes	37	33.3

Countries Lived in (Multiple Responses- <i>n</i> = 72)	Thailand	9	12.5
	China	3	4.2
	Spain	3	4.2
	Brazil	2	2.8
	Morocco	2	2.8
	Colombia	2	2.8
	South Africa	2	2.8
	South Korea	2	2.8
	Kuwait	2	2.8
	Germany	2	2.8
	France	2	2.8
	Netherlands	2	2.8
	Italy	2	2.8
	Malaysia	2	2.8
	Czech Republic	2	2.8
	Jamaica	2	2.8
	Panama	2	2.8
Other countries mentioned once	27	37.5	
Traveled internationally	No	5	4.5
	Yes	106	95.5
Studied abroad	No	91	82.0
	Yes	20	18.0

^a Income: *Mdn* = \$75,000.

^b Education: *Mdn* = 4 year degree / Bachelor's degree.

Table 2*Motivation: Reasons to Move to Mexico Sorted by Highest Agreement*

Motivation	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I moved abroad for an overall improvement in my quality of life.	1.26	0.76
The desire to explore and seek new experiences led me to move abroad.	1.32	0.61
Dissatisfaction with the cultural climate of the US played a role in my decision to move abroad.	1.43	0.91
I moved abroad to improve my lifestyle.	1.46	0.87
I moved abroad to escape from high levels of stress/pressure.	1.47	0.91
I moved abroad to escape certain conditions or situations in the United States.	1.50	0.99
I moved abroad to experience a slower pace of life or a more relaxed environment.	1.59	0.86
I moved abroad to immerse myself in a different culture.	1.62	0.74
I believe I have more opportunities to reach my full potential abroad than I did in the U.S.	1.68	0.88
A safe living environment was a motivation factor for my move abroad.	1.68	1.14
Racism in the U.S influenced my decision to move abroad.	1.69	1.10
Concerns for my personal safety and security influenced my decision to move abroad.	1.72	1.14
I moved to abroad due to political factors or political environment in the US.	1.80	1.16
I moved abroad to learn or use a new language.	2.08	0.95
I relocated abroad due to financial considerations.	2.33	1.27
I moved abroad for better access to nature or outdoor activities.	2.55	1.20
Sexism in the U.S influenced my decision to move abroad.	2.98	1.29
I moved abroad to access better medical care or for health related reasons.	3.01	1.35
Retirement influenced my decision to move abroad.	3.19	1.45
I choose to move abroad to be with family members or improve family life.	3.22	1.43
I moved abroad to pursue entrepreneurship/business opportunities.	3.24	1.28
My decision to move abroad was driven by work/career opportunities.	3.55	1.30
I moved abroad to be with a partner or explore new relationships.	3.58	1.23
I moved abroad for educational purposes/opportunities.	3.84	1.06

Note. Ratings based on five-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Agree* to 5 = *Strongly*

Disagree.

Table 3*Psychometric Characteristics for the Summated Scale Scores (N =111)*

Scale Score	Items	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
Life Satisfaction ^a	5	5.71	0.92	-1.28	2.60	.78
Work/Career Motivation ^b	2	2.60	1.11	0.43	-0.45	.66
Education Motivation ^b	2	3.04	0.80	0.17	0.01	.41
Lifestyle Motivation ^b	8	4.25	0.58	-1.81	4.52	.81
Family and Relationship Motivation ^b	2	2.60	1.01	0.11	-0.65	.27
Financial Consideration Motivation ^b	2	3.24	1.08	-0.05	-0.76	.42
Safety and Political Factors Motivation ^b	8	4.12	0.90	-1.38	1.20	.90
Total Motivation Score ^b	24	3.76	0.57	-0.93	0.91	.88
Appraisal-Total ^c	25	3.41	0.93	-0.36	0.16	.93
Appraisal-Assumptions of Beauty or Sexual Objectification ^c	10	2.88	0.99	0.35	0.21	.85
Appraisal-Silenced and Marginalized ^c	7	4.15	1.26	-0.74	-0.12	.91
Appraisal-Strong Black Woman ^c	5	3.15	0.96	0.12	-0.20	.73
Appraisal-Angry Black Woman ^c	3	3.94	1.25	-0.36	-0.48	.80
Frequency-Total ^d	23	2.67	0.61	-0.38	0.06	.90
Frequency-Assumption of Beauty and Sexual Objectification ^d	10	2.23	0.63	0.21	-0.68	.81
Frequency-Silenced and Marginalized ^d	7	3.08	0.92	-0.30	-0.25	.90
Frequency-Strong Black Woman ^d	3	3.12	0.84	0.07	0.16	.54
Frequency-Angry Black Woman ^d	3	2.78	0.90	0.54	0.08	.78

^a Ratings based on five-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

^b Ratings based on five-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*.

^c Ratings based on six-point metric: 1 = *Never happened to me* to 6 = *Extremely Stressful*.

^d Ratings based on five-point metric: 1 = *Never* to 5 = *A few times a month*.

Table 4*Rotated Component Matrix for the Two-Factor Solution (N = 111)*

Motivation Statement	1	2
Racism in the U.S influenced my decision to move abroad	0.89	
Concerns for my personal safety and security influenced my decision to move abroad.	0.88	0.21
Dissatisfaction with the cultural climate of the US played a role in my decision to move abroad.	0.88	
I moved abroad to escape certain conditions or situations in the United States.	0.87	
A safe living environment was a motivator for my move abroad.	0.82	
I moved to abroad due to political factors / political environment in the US.	0.80	
I moved abroad for an overall improvement in my quality of life.	0.79	
I moved abroad to escape from high levels of stress/pressure.	0.74	
I moved abroad to experience a slower pace of life or a more relaxed environment.	0.69	
I moved abroad to improve my lifestyle.	0.60	
I moved abroad for better access to nature or outdoor activities	0.58	0.37
I believe I have more opportunities to reach my full potential abroad than I did in the U.S.	0.56	
Sexism in the U.S influenced my decision to move abroad.	0.54	0.41
I moved abroad to access better medical care /health related reasons.	0.43	
I relocated abroad due to financial considerations.	0.38	
I choose to move abroad for my family members or improve family life.	0.32	0.23
Retirement influenced my decision to move abroad.	0.25	
I moved abroad for educational purposes/opportunities.		0.75
My decision to move abroad was driven by work/career opportunities.		0.65
I moved abroad to pursue entrepreneurship/business opportunities.		0.63
I moved abroad to learn or use a new language.		0.58
I moved abroad to immerse myself in a different culture.		0.55
The desire to explore and seek new experiences led me to move.		0.47
I moved abroad to be with a partner or explore new relationships.	0.21	0.38

Note. Varimax rotation with loadings sorted by highest loading. Loadings less than 0.20 were removed to enhance clarity.

Note. Component names: 1 = Escape (34.1% of the variance), 2 = *Enrichment* (11.3% of variance)

FIGURE

Figure 1

Scree Plot for Principal Components Analysis (N = 111)

