I'M BLACK AND I'M STRONG: THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF DISCRIMINATION AMONG BLACK MEN IN METROPOLITAN SEATTLE [1]


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Research and viral videos have repeatedly confirmed what Black men have been exclaiming since the beginning of American history: that they frequently experience multifaceted forms of discrimination (and adversity) throughout their lifespan – everywhere and anywhere. These frequent experiences can have negative effects on their mental, physical, and physiological health and explain much about the persistence of race-patterned health disparities in the US. The goal of this dissertation research is to determine if resilience modifies the health effects of discrimination among Black American men. And if so, through what psychosomatic pathways and in which direction (beneficial or harmful)? This relationship will be explored using interdisciplinary methods to survey perceived racism and discrimination, mental and emotional well-being, resilience, and their overall stimulus on the physiologic responsivity, and self-reported mental health of self-identified Black men living in Seattle, WA. In order to measure these relationships, this research endeavor proposes an alternative and more efficient method to collect and measure hair cortisol in extreme short-length Afro-textured hair. It then utilizes this method to answer the questions of focus. Given the overlapping consistency of a body of research findings which intersect the construct of resilience, discrimination, as well as mental, physical, and physiological health markers, the research hypothesizes that: 1) A history of discrimination will be significantly associated with mental and emotional well-being (Stress, Depression, and Anxiety) among Black men, but this relationship will be weakest for those reporting high resilience; and 2) that a history of discrimination will be significantly associated with hair cortisol concentrations among Black men, but this relationship will be associated with lower cortisol concentrations among those reporting high resilience. Accordingly, this dissertation encompasses three main chapters, each of which will serve to address the proposed hypotheses.