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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, AFRICAN DESCENT WOMEN'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ETHNIC/RACIAL AND GENDER IDENTITIES, by WENDI SAREE WILLIAMS, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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ABSTRACT

AFRICAN DESCENT WOMEN'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF
ETHNIC/RACIAL AND GENDER IDENTITIES
by
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This qualitative study explored racial/ethnic and gender identities of African descent women. Specifically, 13 African descent women were interviewed about influences on their racial/ethnic and gender identities, the process by such identities developed in order to assess the applicability of current theories, and whether they perceive an interaction between their racial/ethnic and gender identities. Phase One, an initial focus group informed Phase Two of the study; individual interviews. Phase Three, a member-checking focus group, validated themes generated from data analysis. All focus groups and interview sessions followed a semi-structured format. Family, educational experiences, physical features, oppressive experiences, political movements, and religious/spiritual influences were found to shape racial/ethnic identity among participants. Gender identity was found to be influenced by family, motherhood, religion, and physicality. Current identity models were found to, in partially, describe racial/ethnic identity development. Womanist identity was found to most accurately describe the participant's gender identity development. Finally, an interaction between racial/ethnic and gender identity development was endorsed, however articulation of this relationship was difficult. Research and practical implications are discussed.

AFRICAN DESCENT WOMEN'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ETHNIC/RACIAL AND GENDER IDENTITIES

by
Wendi S. Williams

A Dissertation

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in
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in
the Department of Counseling and Psychological Services
in
the College of Education
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Chapter

1 AFRICAN DESCENT WOMEN'S IDENITY DEVELOPMENT …… 1

Introduction ……. 1

Review of the Literature …… 2

Research Implications …….....…. 16

References ……...……..... 20

2 AFRICAN DESENT WOMNE'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ETHNIC/RACIAL AND GENDER IDENITIES

Introduction…….....24

Method …… …….. 34

Results ……. 41

Discussion …….. 65

References ……... 77

Appendixes …….. 81

CHAPTER 1

AFRICAN DESCENT WOMEN'S IDENITY DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

In the struggle for civil rights, African Americans and women made great strides toward acquiring their civil liberties (Collins, 2000; Higginbotham, 1989, 1993). African Americans confronted disparities in housing, education, and legislative discrepancies, such as Jim Crow laws, that disadvantaged African Americans in the U.S. (Bennett, 1988). Similarly, the women's movement, while originating out of the demand for suffrage equality, expanded to issues of property ownership and equity in the workplace (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989). Since their inception, both movements have focused their attentions on issues of parity between European and African descent Americans, and between men and women. Thus a discrepancy in privilege and power was sought to be equalized between the two groups. While the intent of these movements was to attend to issues of fairness, power differentials within the movements (i.e., men over women, Whites over Blacks) concealed the reality of the privilege and power structure that existed within them (Collins, 2000). Consequently, African American men did not equalize their gender privilege and European American women did not address issues of racial privilege, ultimately perpetuating the oppression of African American women within social liberation movements (Collins, 2000, hooks, 1989). A similar pattern was seen in the psychological identity theory. Identity theory considers race/ethnicity and gender exclusively, while ignoring the unique experiences of African descent women

who simultaneously develop two marginalized identities in a hostile societal context (i.e., racism and sexism).

In this paper, African descent women's racial/ethnic and gender identity will be explored. Initial exploration into ethnic and racial identity theories of African Americans will be presented. Following, a review of gender identity theories are discussed. After consideration of current theories, review of empirical studies exploring the ethnic/racial and gender identities of African descent women follow. Finally, a discussion of research implications and future directions will be discussed.

Review of the Literature

Racial/Ethnic Identity

In 1971, Cross presented the first theoretical formulation of racial identity development. His early model (1971) and later revision (1991), which focused on the identity development of African Americans, are seminal pieces that have influenced later theoretical formulations of identity for other groups (e.g., women, Whites. etc.) (Boisnier, 2003). Cross' (1991) model is grounded in a two-factor theory which purports that self-concept are the sum of personal identity and reference group orientation. Personal identity is individual characteristics including, but is not limited to gender, age, sexual orientation, and class (Cross, 1991). Reference group orientation refers to the standards, routines, symbols, values, worldviews, and more that a group of people share (Burt & Halpin, 1998; Cross, 1991). Five stages describe the progression from primary identification with Whites to a resolved identification with African Americans (Cross, 1991). In the first stage, Preencounter, the African American idealizes White people and Whiteness, while denigrating Black people and Black culture. A behavioral manifestation

of this stage would be an African American person expressing disdain for the rhythm and blues music tradition because it is produced primarily by African Americans. During the Encounter stage, the persons reject White culture and begin to search for their Black identity. Individuals at this stage might express rejection for perceived White dominated cultural forms (e.g., country music) because it originates out of a White cultural tradition. As this is a transitional stage confusion and intense affect can accompany these behaviors. The next stage, Immersion-Emersion, is characterized by withdrawal into the "Black world." Throughout this stage the person embraces stereotypical images of Blackness and denigrates Whiteness. They may begin to speak in Ebonics or wear traditional African garb, as superficial outward expressions of their identification with African descent people. Following, the Internalization stage consists of an internally defined positive Black identity. In this stage the person's identity has transcended racism and reflects acceptance of positive aspects of White culture. Individuals at this stage embrace their ethnic/racial heritage and also appreciate non-Blacks, as well. The final stage, Internalization-Commitment, characterizes maintenance of interest in a sustained commitment to being Black. During this stage, individuals demonstrate internalization of their identity over time through cultural practices and involvements.

Guided by Cross' work, Helms (1994) presented the People of Color Racial Identity Ego Statuses model. She asserted that people of color develop racial identity in light of societal structures in which they are deprived of power and resources. Her model considers movement through dynamic, non-static statuses in which the individual shifts from externally to internally-defined racial self conceptions. There are five statuses with corresponding information-processing strategies (IPS) that assist the individual in

grappling with racial material. From these statuses a person develops schemata, which are the behavioral manifestations of the statuses. Movement through these statuses is sequential. However, if the individuals find that their dominant status is not effective in coping with certain racial material, they may regress to earlier ego statuses and schemata that allow for psychological survival of the racial situation (Helms, 1994).

According to Helms' (1994) model, the first status is conformity which is an external definition of self that includes the devaluing of one's own group and allegiance to White standards, without an awareness of socioracial groups or sociopolitical realities. During this status the individual employs selective perception and obliviousness to socioracial concerns information-processing strategies (IPS), such that they are ignorant of societal circumstances. The second status is dissonance which is characterized by ambivalence and confusion with regard to the individual's socioracial group commitment. The IPS used during this status is repression of anxiety provoking racial information because, denial alleviates the individual's psychic tension and discomfort. The following status, immersion-emersion consists of idealization of one's own socioracial group and denigration of the White socioracial group. During this status the individual uses external reference group definitions, ideals and activities for self definition, while vilifying Whites. The IPS characteristic of this status is hypervigilance toward racial stimuli and dichotomous thinking. The next status, internalization, includes a positive commitment to one's own socioracial group and the use of internally defined racial attributes. Additionally, the individual is able to assess and respond objectively to members of the dominant culture, such that they can identify balanced characterizations of their own and the White socioracial groups. The IPS characteristic of this stage is

flexibility and analytic thinking. The final status, integrative awareness, consists of the capacity to value one's own collective identities and empathize with members of other oppressed groups. Persons at this status use the IPS of flexibility and complexity.

While stage/status models of racial identity development have dominated the racial identity literature, other models of African American racial and ethnic identity among African Americans have been presented. Sellars, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous (1998) introduced the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) which proposed four dimensions of African American racial identity: salience, centrality, regard, and ideology. Salience refers to the extent to which a person's race is a relevant part of his/her self-concept at a particular moment or in a particular situation. Centrality is the extent to which individuals normatively define themselves with regard to their race. The regard dimension refers to the affective and evaluative judgment of one's race in terms of a positive or negative valence. This dimension has two sub-dimensions which refer to how they feel toward African Americans and being African American (i.e., private regard) and how they feel others view African Americans (i.e., public regard). The last dimension, ideology, refers to a person's beliefs, opinions, and attitudes (i.e. philosophies) as they relate to how the person feels other African Americans should act. Sellars et al. (1998) described four philosophies: nationalist, oppressed minority, assimilation, and humanist. Further, they proposed that these ideologies guide behaviors in four areas of life functioning: political/economic development, cultural/social, intergroup relations, and perceptions of the dominant group.

In their formulation, Sellars et al. (1998) addressed five assumptions inherent in their work. The first assumption is that identities are influenced by situations and are

stable properties of the person. Thus, for African American women's identification, it will be important to consider social context and experiences in which they identify strongly with being either or both African American and a woman. The second assumption is that a person has a number of identities that are hierarchically ordered. While there are several ways in which to be an African American woman, the order of the identity hierarchy significantly shapes the woman's self-concept. Demographic variables such as socioeconomic status (SES), class, religious or spiritual affiliations, ability status, and sexual identity are a few of the identities that can be salient for African descent women. Next, the MMRI assumes that the individuals' perception of their racial identity is the most valid indicator of their identity. Helms and Cook (1999) have discussed racial and ethnic salience for members of visibly racial/ethnic groups (VREG). Being African descent lends itself to an obvious social grouping; making it a significant part of identity. Fourth, the MMRI emphasizes the individual's perceptions of what it means to be African descent. Consequently, the meaning one makes about their racial/ethnic grouping informs their self-concept. MMRI assumes that the individual is an expert with regard to their perceptions of race-related experiences. Finally, the MMRI is primarily concerned with the status of an individual's racial identity as opposed to its development. While previously discussed formulations consider race with regard to development through stages/statuses (Cross, 1971, 1991; Helms, 1990a, 1994), the MMRI is concerned primarily with racial identity at any given point in time.

Similar to Sellars et al. (1998), Landrine and Klonoff (1996) presented a formulation African American identity that is much different from predominant stage/status theories. Rather than considering race as a primary indicator for identity

formation for African Americans, Landrine and Klonoff (1996) considered the process of acculturation. Acculturation for African Americans is conceptualized as circular in nature, comprising four acculturative levels: traditional, bicultural, acculturated, and neotraditional. At the traditional level, persons reflect and maintain the core identity of African Americans without outside influences by the dominant, European American culture. The bicultural level refers to either adding to or blending aspects of the traditional African American culture with aspects of the dominant European American culture. At the acculturated level the individual has abandoned nearly all aspects of the African American culture from their cultural-behavioral repertoire. And at the final level, neotradtional, the previously acculturated persons returns to valuing traditional values, practices, and beliefs to counter oppressive experiences related to their ethnicity.

Landrine and Klonoff (1996) offered four concepts that are integral to their model of African American acculturation: ethnic enclaves, duplicate institutions, parent group, and ethnic socialization. Ethnic enclaves refer to a geographically segregated collection of members of an ethnic minority group. Landrine and Klonoff (1996) indicated this segregation can be voluntary or involuntary. Further, they asserted that communication between African American ethnic enclaves assures consistency of cultural socialization as evidenced by similarities in behavioral and cognitive repertoires among African Americans in various regions across the U.S. Duplicate institutions refers to the existence of educational, religious/spiritual, media, and other institutions that exist within the individual’s ethnic enclave (e.g., Black bookstores), while also available in the mainstream community. Landrine and Klonoff (1996) described parent groups as being the members of the ethnic group with a familial history or legacy within the enclave.

These members' parents and/or grandparents were founders or long-time members of the community and garner power and authority within the enclave because they have never left and are considered keepers of the culture. The final concept, ethnic socialization, refers to the meaning applied to being African American, the status of African Americans in the dominant culture, experiences of discrimination and hostility toward African Americans, and the explanations for these experiences that are taught to other members of the ethnic group.

Similar to Landrine and Klonoff (1996), Semaj (1981) considered the role of culture in African American identity development. Semaj's (1981) formulation considers the level of Afrocentrism (i.e., centered in the experiences of African people) and Africanity (i.e., identification as a person of African descent). Semaj (1981) presented the African Extended Self Model to explain the extended component of identity; one's relationship with their reference group. The model consists of three stages: alien extended identity, diffused-extended, and collective identity. The alien extended stage, describes persons that adhere primarily to a Eurocentric worldview, are individualistic, and denigrate/deny their Africanity. Semaj (1981) explained that these persons are in constant pursuit of identification with the alien group (i.e., European American culture). In the second stage, diffused extended identity, the individual consciously and unconsciously tries to balance the Black and dominant group's worldviews. Finally, in the collective identity stage, individuals adhere to an Afrocentric worldview and are committed to the collective survival of Black people. Semaj (1981) characterizes these individuals as seeking consistency in their Africanity and attempting to achieve harmony and alignment with their body, mind, and spirit (Semaj, 1981).

African descent person's racial and ethnic identity theories have been abundant. The process by which African Americans develop a sense of their racial and/or ethnic selves has dominated the field relative to the study of other non-White racial/ethnic groups. Despite this focus, little is known about the relationship between gender and race/ethnicity on identity development of African descent women. Further, existing models suggest racial experiences, no matter their content, would similarly impact African descent men and women. This assumption is questionable as it is possible experiences of racism are moderated by gender (Collins, 2005). In light of this possibility, the focus will shift to a review of existing gender identity development theories/models.

Gender Identity Development

Gender identity development theory/models have focused primarily on women's identification with traditional or feminist gender notions (Downing & Roush, 1985; Hyde, 2002). Downing and Roush's (1985) feminist identity model is a five-stage model which parallels Cross' (1971) model of racial identity. It describes the process by which women transition from identification with traditional gender roles to endorsing a feminist ideology and lifestyle. The first stage, Passive Acceptance, consists of a lack of awareness or denial of individual, institutional, and cultural discrimination against women. In the next stage, Revelation, the woman has intense feelings of anger toward societal sexism and her role in its perpetuation through adherence to traditional gender roles and ideals. The woman then moves into the Embeddedness-Emanation stage. This two-part stage consists of the woman uncritically embedding herself into women's culture and company. Subsequently she shifts from a wholesale acceptance of feminist

ideology to a relativistic perspective in which she critically examines her feminist stance and seeks effective ways by which to affect social change. During the Synthesis stage, women's views of men become flexible as they evaluate men on an individual basis rather than in reference to sexist societal conditions. The final stage, Active Commitment, is characterized by women extending their feminism toward working for social change that will eliminate oppression for all people (Downing & Roush, 1985).

Similar to Cross' (1971) model, Downing and Roush (1985) placed a value on identification with more progressive notions of gender. While there are indisputable benefits to women being feminist and African Americans being pro-Black or Afrocentric, the possibility of an individual choosing pre-encounter racial notions or traditional attitudes at the identity resolution stages is plausible. It seems theories of identity development which focus on the development of a self-definition might provide a platform by which to understand the diversity of outcomes possible at the completion of the process. Helms' (1990b) conceptualization of Womanist identity development exemplifies this point.

Womanist was a term coined by Alice Walker (1976) to describe women (i.e., African American and later Women of Color) defining themselves according to their lived reality. Scholars have collectively defined Womanism as a worldview and identity that centralizes women's strengths and experiences and acknowledges the interconnection of race/ethnicity, gender class, sexual orientation, other dimensions of women's identity (Moradi, 2005). The assumption is that Black woman's realities varied greatly from their White counterparts and as such feminist movements and identities as outlined by White women did not make sense for the majority of Black women. For

example, a major thrust in the women's movement was securing the right for White women to work outside of the home. For African American women, the right not to work as hard as men and to have their femininity and humanity acknowledged would have been a more appropriate agenda in the movement, as their experiences in the U.S. have been in the context of enslavement and low wage strenuous labor (Brown, 1995). Later research has confirmed that Womanist identity is more descriptive of African descent women's identity compared to European descent women (Kiely, 1997; Parks, Carter, & Gushue, 1996).

Helms (1990b) presented the Womanist identity development model as an alternative to feminist identity models; acknowledging the power differential between White and Black women (later Women of Color) within this political movement and later the impact of this power differential on identity development. Similar to her racial identity model, this model consists of four levels of Womanist identity which mark the transition from externally to internally defined gender concepts for Women of Color (Parks, Carter, & Gushue, 1996). The first level, Pre-encounter, consists of acceptance of traditional sex roles and denial of societal bias. In the next level, Encounter, the woman begins to question and becomes confused about gender roles. Throughout this level she begins tentative exploration of solutions for role conflicts. During the Immersion-Emersion level, the woman adheres to an externally determined feminist stance. Notable during this level is the expression of hostility toward men, idealization of women, and formation of intense relationships with other women. In the final level, Internalization, the woman internally defines and integrates her female identity without undue reliance on either traditional roles or feminist viewpoints. Helms' formulation is thought to have

broader applicability to Women of Color for whom both traditional and feminist notions of gender identity have been limiting (Collins, 2000). It is important to note, however that Helms' models intends to describe the progression from external to internal self-definition and does not purport to address the issue of multiple identification and associated oppressions; a major tenet of the Womanist ideology and concern for African descent women (Greene, 2000).

Conceptualization of Ethnic/Race and Gender Identities

Empirical study on African descent women's ethnic and gender identities is limited. Researchers have explored the relationship between racial/ethnic and gender identity development processes (Martin & Nagayama, 1992; Parks, Carter, & Gushue, 1996), and the intersection of multiple identities and oppressions for African American women (Jackson, 1998; Martin & Nagayama, 1992; Reynolds & Pope, 1991). In as study exploring African American church women's attitudes toward feminism, Martin and Nagayama (1992) found that while the majority of women in their study endorsed the feminist movement, women with Immersion-Emersion attitudes aligned with more traditional gender ideals.

While the above study accessed a non-traditional representative sample of African descent women (i.e., a church population), there were a couple shortcomings. Most notably, the sample consists of only church goers which confound its findings. Additionally, all the participants were recruited from the same Black church, thereby limiting the ability to generalize the findings to members of other churches and spiritual leanings. Finally, the study relied on measures developed from models which were not informed from African descent woman's experiences. African descent women are

commonly represented as second-class in social science research (Collins, 2000). As the theories/models employed to describe their experiences have not directly consulted the community of African descent women in their research and development, these theories/models cannot definitively be said to describe them.

Parks et al. (1996) explored the relationship of racial and Womanist identity development. In this study they found support for a congruent yet non-simultaneous progression of racial and Womanist identity development among African American women. A significant relationship between Internalization racial identity attitudes, and Encounter and Enternalization Womanist identity development was presented. Parks et al. (1996) suggested that these relationships demonstrate the effects of progressing through racial identity development on gender identity development. Specifically, they proposed that the Internalization racial identity attitude renders the African American woman conscious about her gender identity. Consequently, she may question previously accepted notions of womanhood (i.e., Womanist Encounter) or independently internally define and integrate her gender identity. Parks et al.'s (1996) findings also support Sellars et al.'s (1998) MMRI formulation of racial salience for African Americans, as the women were in more advanced stages of racial identity development, indicating racial identity was more salient for African American women earlier.

Parks et al. (1996) findings suggest significant variations in Black and White women's identity development suggesting a possible interaction of race and gender which may influence African descent women's identity development differently. Despite these findings, there are concerns with the study. As typical for racial identity research, this study also used measures not informed by African descent women's experiences.

Furthermore, the researchers reported low reliabilities for the measures used. In one example, Parks et al. (1996) reported low reliability for measuring Encounter attitudes, however this scale contributed to a major finding of the study. Concerns with the sample were also an issue. The sample consisted of undergraduate students from a Midwestern university. While the study purports to describe African descent women's identity, the mean age of the women was 19, thus lending the results to describe only the dynamics of these variables as they manifest in young adulthood. Additionally, education and class confounds are also an issue, as the majority of African descent women do not attend college and the majority of participants in this study reported being middle class (U.S. Census, 2002).

As African descent persons and women are marginalized groups, African descent women's identity development occurs in the context of racial and gender oppression (Collins, 2000; Reynolds & Pope, 1991). In light of this, research investigating the nature of multiple oppressions on African descent women's identity development can contribute greatly to this area of study. Three studies considered the effects of racial and gender oppression have on the lives of African American women (Boisnier, 2003; Jackson, 1998; Martin & Nagayama, 1992). From a study discussed previously, researchers found that in a church population of African American women, racial identity development predicted beliefs in locus of control (Martin & Nagayama, 1992). Specifically, Encounter racial attitudes predicted belief in external locus of control, whereas Internalization racial attitudes were related to internal locus of control.

Similarly, Boisnier's (2003) study comparing feminist identity development between Black and White women yielded similar results. In this study it was found that

higher levels of gender and racial identity were associated with high self-esteem. As in the Parks et al. (1996) study, differences between Black and White women's gender identity development were found, further supporting the possibility of an interaction between racial/ethnic and gender identities in African descent women. In spite of these findings, methodological (i.e., measures) and sample (i.e., only 20% of the sample were African descent) concerns were also an issue for this study as well.

Finally, in a qualitative study, Jackson (1998) interviewed 13 African American women attending a predominately White college to explore the relationship between race and gender in identity development. Three themes emerged from the interviews: daily struggles, being a member of the African American community, and being an African American woman. With regard to daily struggles the women provided examples such as having to work harder than others to be successful, feeling the need to prove themselves, and fighting against negative stereotypes and racism. As it relates to the African American community, the women were conscious of their group membership and the ways they were perceived by their community and society at large, as a result of this membership. Finally, Jackson (1998) found that African American women formed their identity in light of their role as women; indicating adherence to traditional gender role expectations. Related to this finding the women acknowledged gender role expectations espoused by the university and expressed incongruence between these and their own self-definitions.

While the use of qualitative methodology provided an opportunity for greater depth in understanding African descent women's identity development, methodological and data analysis concerns compromised the validity of the findings. As the research question

related to experiences on a White college environment, only women in this setting were interviewed. However, the findings cannot be generalized to women in other predominately White environments, nor replicated in future studies because the demographics of the women were not reported. Additionally, the researcher screened in women with extreme scores (i.e., high and low) on racial identity measures, however did not provide the rationale for this decision. Also, as with the demographic data, the participant's scores on these measures were not presented. Finally, the data analysis strategy and validation procedures were not thoroughly explained.

Research Implications

African descent women's identity development as an area of research is in an infantile stage of development. As such, there is an opportunity to address concerns with current investigation on this topic and direct future study. Review of African descent women's identity development revealed concerns with theories/models used to describe the developmental process, methodological problems, and data analysis that compromise research quality.

Current studies of African descent women's identity development rely on widely used theories of racial/ethnic (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1990a) and gender (Downing & Roush, 1985; Helms, 1990b) identity that use stage/status models to describe identity development. As a consequence, several issues are apparent. As indicated through critique of current literature, the theories/models were not generated out of the experiences of African descent women. This concern, when considered in light of the absence of African descent women's voices in social science research, and these women's subsequent objectification, requires considerable attention. Collins (2000)

insists researchers engage the perspective of African descent women when seeking to describe their experiences. One way researchers may address this concern would be to conducting exploratory pilot studies employing both quantitative and qualitative methods that can inform their theories/models and consequent measures.

Another issue with the use of these theories/models relates to the construct of multiple identities. With the exception of Helms (1990b) theory of Womanist identity, the stage/status models do not address the development of multiple identities of women of African descent. While it is argued that salience for racial/ethnic identity predominates (Sellars et al., 1998), African descent women also have sexual, spiritual, disability, and class identities, which also influence their identity development process (Greene, 2000; Sellars et al., 1998). Furthermore, as women and African descent people have an oppressed status within the U.S. sociopolitical structure, multiple oppressions related to race, gender and sexuality also influence their self-conceptions (Greene, 2000; Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Current studies exploring African descent women's identity with popular models are not able to address the influence of these dynamics on the development process. A final concern with the use of existing theories relates to the use of the corresponding instruments to measure identity. Although these measures are used with regularity, psychometric concerns compromise faith in their reliability. Parks et al. (1996) indicated that reliabilities for the Black Racial Identity Attitudes Scale- B (Parham & Helms, 1985) and Womanist Identity Scale (Ossana, Helms, Leornard, 1992) were low. This is a significant issue with the research in this area as there is heavy reliance on these measures and theories to describe the identity of African descent women (Yanico, Swanson, & Toker, 1994).

Review of the current literature also revealed methodological concerns. Sample concerns presented a significant issue. Women sampled for these studies were usually undergraduate (mean age 20), middle class African descent women. Comprehensive assessment and description of African descent women's identity development processes are restricted with these samples as they reflect a limited proportion of African descent women. Studies seeking to gain insight into the identity development of African descent women will increase range and representativeness of age, education, and socioeconomic statuses.

A final shortcoming of the studies relate to the data analysis of those employing qualitative methodologies. As qualitative research quality and validity are carefully examined, researchers using these methods are encouraged to rigorously attend to research design and data analysis issues. The reviewed qualitative study did not clearly present procedural information. Additionally, the data analysis strategy was not clearly outlined. These issues are particularly important as it is recognized that qualitative methods have the potential to more thoroughly explore unfamiliar research topics in psychology; especially those topics focused on People of Color and women (APA, 2002).

Psychological study is beginning to consider the identity development experiences of African descent women. Burgeoning growth in this area provide opportunities to develop the field further. There are several areas apt for exploration. One of these is to test whether African descent women's perspectives of their identity development parallels existing formulations used to describe them. In this vein, research exploring the possibility of whether an interaction between racial/ethnic and gender identities exist in these women's self-conceptions will be important. Research in this area

exploring the intersection of multiple identities and the influence of corresponding oppression on the development of these identities will also be of interest. Finally, exploration into the above areas, can positively affect practice with African descent women through the development and testing of culturally relevant interventions and the implementation of these findings in practitioner training.

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CHAPTER 2

AFRICAN DESCENT WOMEN'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ETHNIC/RACIAL AND GENDER IDENTITIES

Abstract

This qualitative study explored racial/ethnic and gender identities of African descent women. Specifically, 13 African descent women were interviewed about influences on their racial/ethnic and gender identities, the process by such identities developed in order to assess the applicability of current theories, and whether they perceive an interaction between their racial/ethnic and gender identities. There were three phases in this study. Phase One was an initial focus group which informed Phase Two of the study, involving individual interviews with four participants. Phase Three was a member-checking focus group to validate themes generated from data analysis. All focus groups and interview sessions followed a semi-structured format. Family, educational experiences, physical features, oppressive experiences, political movements, and religious/spiritual influences were found to shape racial/ethnic identity among participants. Gender identity was found to be influenced by family, motherhood, religion, and physicality. Current identity models were found to, in part, describe racial/ethnic identity development. Womanist identity was found to most accurately describe the participant's gender identity development. Finally, an interaction between racial/ethnic and gender identity development was endorsed, however, articulation of this relationship was difficult. Research and practical implications are discussed.

Introduction

The American Psychological Association (APA, 2002) developed guidelines for multicultural education, training, research, practice, and organizational change for psychologists. The purpose was to address the diverse needs of individuals and groups historically marginalized or disenfranchised within and by psychology based on ethnic/racial heritage and social group identity or membership. As the psychology profession considers ways to address the unique needs of a diverse society, a more in-depth analysis of societal members is required. Women of Black/African heritage are one group whose experiences necessitate specific attention. African descent women face unique challenges to their racial/ethnic and gender identification because they have the developmental task of integrating at least two identities with corresponding intersecting oppressions in the context of a racist and sexist society (Collins, 2000, 2005; Greene, 2000).

While African descent women engage in a complex identification process with regard to accommodation of racial/ethnic and gender identities (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1993, 1989), the literature in this area tends to consider the development of these identities individually (Cross, 1971, 1991; Downing & Roush, 1985; Helms, 1990a, 1994). Cross (1971) initially conceptualized the racial identity development of African Americans with the Nigresecence model. Essentially, Cross' (1971, 1991) theory identified five stages of racial identity development through which African Americans progressed. In the first stage, Pre-encounter, the African American idealizes White people and Whiteness, while denigrating Black people and Black culture. A person in the Pre-encounter stage may, for example, demonstrate a preference for White health

professionals because he or she has a belief that Black health professionals are incompetent. The following stage, Encounter, is an emotionally charged and confusing stage in which the person rejects White culture and begins to search for his or her Black identity. An example of this might be a African descent male being followed in a clothing store, while other non-Black customers are not monitored. As a consequence, this person may develop negative feelings/attitudes related to society's treatment of Black men. The next stage, Immersion-Emersion, is characterized by withdrawal into the "Black world." Throughout this stage the person embraces stereotypical images of Blackness and denigrates Whiteness. Characteristic of this stage might be a college student who begins to identify with campus organizations with a pro-Black or Afrocentric ideology and wear traditional African garb despite these not being typical ways of presentation or self-expression. During the following stage, Internalization, the person develops an internally defined positive Black identity. An example of a person in this stage might be an artist who upon learning more about Black/African artwork makes an effort to explore African themes in her own work. Characteristic of this stage, the artist's motive generates from a genuine identification with African culture as well as an appreciation of the African aesthetic. In this stage the person's identity has transcended racism and reflects a balanced perception of White culture (i.e., positive and negative). The final stage, Internalization-Commitment, characterizes maintenance of interest in a sustained commitment to being Black. A person in this stage might be the artist from the previous example that continues her work, and later commits to teach art classes to community children so that they might also learn and appreciate the Black/African art tradition.

While Cross (1971, 1991) provided initial conceptualizations of racial identity development theory, other theorists have also explored racial identity. Helms (1994) used Cross' model to conceptualize race for African Americans and expanded upon it to conceptualize the racial identity of Whites, other People of Color, and women (Helms, 1990b, 1994). Helms' formulations differ in two ways. First, she focuses on the transition from external (i.e., adopting other's definitions) to internal (i.e., self-generated) self-definitions. Additionally, she conceptualizes the attitudes as statuses, not stages, that are more fluid and less linear than Cross'(1991) formulation. Alternatively, Sellars, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous (1998) developed a multidimensional model of racial identity (MMRI) that includes four dimensions of African American racial identity: salience, centrality, regard, and ideology. Salience refers to the extent to which a person's race is a relevant part of her self-concept at a particular moment or in a particular situation. Centrality is the extent to which a person normatively defines herself with regard to her race. The regard dimension refers to the affective and evaluative judgment of one's race in terms of a positive or negative valence. This dimension has two sub-dimensions: how they feel toward African Americans and being African American (i.e., private regard) and how they feel others view African Americans (i.e., public regard). The last dimension, ideology, refers to a person's beliefs, opinions, and attitudes (i.e., philosophies) as they relate to how she feels other African Americans should act. Sellars et al. (1998) described four philosophies: nationalist, oppressed minority, assimilation, and humanist. Further, they proposed that these philosophies manifest over four areas of functioning: political/economic development, cultural/social, intergroup relations, and perceptions of the dominant group.

Sellars et al. (1998) addressed five assumptions inherent in the MMRI. These assumptions have applicability to the identity development of African descent women. The first assumption is that identities are influenced by situations and are stable properties of the person. Thus, for Black women's identification, it will be important to consider social context and experiences in which they identify strongly with being either or both African descent and woman. The second assumption is that a person has a number of identities that are hierarchically ordered. Other demographic variables such as socioeconomic status (SES), class, religious/spiritual affiliations, ability status, and sexual orientation can have identity manifestations. Next, the MMRI assumes that individuals' perception of their racial identity is the most valid indicator of their identity; thus, being Black lends itself to an obvious social grouping, possibly making it a significant part of African descent women's identity. Fourth, the MMRI emphasizes the individual's meaning of race; therefore, she is the expert regarding her experiences as an African descent woman. Finally, the MMRI is primarily concerned with the status of an individual's racial identity as opposed to its development. While other theories consider race with regard to development through stages/levels (Cross, 1971, 1995; Helms, 1990a, 1994), the MMRI is concerned primarily with racial identity at any given point in time.

Multiple perspectives of racial identity have been presented to explain African American racial identity conceptualization (Cross, 1971, 1995; Helms, 1990a; Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Sellars et al., 1998; Semaj, 1981). Similarly, women's gender identity conceptualization has also been considered. Specifically, gender identity has been conceptualized in light of feminist ideology, and as developing within the context of racial/ethnic/cultural influences (Downing & Roush, 1985; Helms, 1990b). Downing and

Roush's (1985) initial formulation of feminist identity development outlines a woman's progression from traditional notions of womanhood to a feminist identity in five stages. Boisnier (2003) suggests that this stage progression mirrors the racial identity development process described by Cross (1971). Both models assume that ideal racial or gender identity development involves the cultivation of a pro-Black or Afrocentric or feminist identity and negation of a non-race salience or traditional gender roles. While both models attempt to define healthy, actualized notions of racial and gender selves, they deny self-determination of the individual to develop and define her own individual notion of self.

Also influenced by Cross' (1971, 1991) Nigrescence model, Helms (1990b) developed the Womanist identity model to describe the process by which Women of Color shift from externally to internally defined conceptions of their feminine selves (Parks, Carter, & Gushue, 1996). Helms' (1990b) Womanist model consists of four levels: Preencounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization. While similar to the Cross (1971) and Downing and Roush (1985) models, in that Womanist identity development progresses through stages, Helms (1990b) model culminates in a definition of womanhood determined by the woman based in her experiences. Helms' formulation is thought to have broader applicability to Women of Color for whom both traditional and feminist notions of gender identity have been limiting (Collins, 2000).

Women of Color's experiences as women are mediated by racial/ethnic group membership, which are different from conceptions of womanhood derived out of the experiences of White women (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989). Although Helms' (1990b) formulation provides a model to understand gender development for women of color, the

nature of the relationship between these identities is less clear. While theorist have acknowledged the task of multiple identity development management of African descent women (Collins, 2000; Greene, 2000), the nature of this relationship also continues to remain elusive. Whether African descent women's racial/ethnic and gender identities interact, thereby exerting a reciprocal action or effect remains to be confirmed. Moreover, the possibility that these identities integrate into a harmonious organizational unit also deserves exploration.

Research on African American women's ethnic and gender identities is breaking ground. Studies exploring parallel processing between the development of racial/ethnic and gender identity stages/statuses (Martin & Nagayama, 1992; Parks, Carter, & Gushue, 1996), or focusing on the intersection of multiple oppressions for African American women (Jackson, 1998; Martin & Nagayama, 1992; Reynolds & Pope, 1991) have began this work. Exploring African American church women's attitudes toward feminism, Martin and Nagayama (1992) found that the majority (85%) of the women in their study supported feminist ideals. However, women with Immersion-Emersion attitudes were more inclined to align with traditional gender notions.

Parks et al. (1996) found support for a congruent, yet staggered development of racial and Womanist identity development among African American women. They found a significant relationship between Internalization racial identity attitudes and Encounter and Internalization Womanist identity attitudes. Specifically, they concluded that the Internalization stage of racial identity renders the African American woman conscious about other identities such that she will be aware of and flexible about gender definitions (i.e., Womanist Internalization) or questioning previously accepted notions of

womanhood (i.e., Womanist Encounter). Parks et al.'s (1996) findings support Sellars et al.'s (1998) MMRI formulation of racial salience for African Americans, as the women were in more advanced stages of racial identity development, indicating racial identity salience for African American women.

African American woman identity development occurs within a cultural context in which both their race and gender are marginalized (Collins, 2000). The experience of intersecting multiple oppressions of African descent women necessitates that research attend to the influence of oppression on identity development of these women (Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Three studies considered the intersection of multiple (i.e., gender and racial/ethnic) oppression on the lives of African American women (Boisnier, 2003; Jackson, 1998; Martin & Nagayama, 1992). Martin and Nagayama (1992) found that in a church population of African American women, racial identity development predicted beliefs in locus of control. Specifically, Encounter attitudes predicted belief in an external locus of control, whereas women with Internalization attitudes identified with an internal locus of control. Similarly, Boisnier (2003) found that African descent undergraduate women at later stages of gender and racial identity development also had higher levels of self-esteem.

In a qualitative study, Jackson (1998) interviewed 13 African American college women to explore the relationship between race and gender on a predominantly White college campus. From her investigation, three themes emerged: daily struggles, being a member of the African American community, and being an African American woman. The women described daily struggles related to having to work harder than others to be successful, feeling the need to prove themselves, and fighting against negative

stereotypes and racism. With regard to membership in the African American community, the women were conscious of their group membership and the ways they were perceived by their community and society at large. Finally, Jackson (1998) found that African American women formed their identity in light of their role as women. The women indicated their identification with traditional gender role expectations. They also discussed their concerns regarding others' expectations of them as they related to the definition of womanhood endorsed by the predominately White academic institution. Jackson (1998) indicated that the women's self-definitions were incongruent with the definition of womanhood provided by the institution.

Although African descent women's identity has been discussed in the literature, African descent women are rarely active contributors to the information that is presented about them (Collins, 2000). African descent women have a unique identification process because they manage multiple identities and corresponding oppressions. Despite this fact, their voices/perceptions have not explicitly informed the literature (Collins, 2000). As a consequence, it is possible that current formulations designed to capture their experiences may not do so entirely, if at all. As this is an area in which little is known and exploration is needed, research employing qualitative methods are ideal (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996; Patton, 2002).

Moreover, APA (2002) encourages incorporation of research methods that complement the worldview and lifestyles of research participants. In this vein, Afrocentric and Black feminist theorists recommend the use of qualitative methods for the study of African descent women (Collins, 2000; Kershaw, 1992). Because these methods allow for a participatory process (Patton, 2000) and provide a means to

contribute to the empowerment of the participants (Kershaw, 1992), qualitative methods are endorsed by Afrocentric and feminist theorists (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Collins, 2000; Kershaw, 1992; Patton, 2002). Additionally, the qualitative approach can address Black feminist concerns regarding the objectification of African descent women in social science research because it provides a space for African descent women's voices to define their experiences (Collins, 2000; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Consequently, the women become the subject, not object, of study. In addition, qualitative inquiry encourages collaborative relationships between the researcher and participants such that the participants are made agents in the research process (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). Hence, African descent women can be respectfully engaged in the process of research.

The purpose of the current study was to explore the ways African descent women conceptualize their racial/ethnic and gender identities in their own words. Through focus groups and interviews, African descent women described the ways they consider their racial/ethnic and gender identities within the context of their lives. The following research questions guided the investigation.

1. How do African descent women conceptualize their racial/ethnic and gender identity development?
2. In what ways are their conceptualizations similar to and/or different from existing theories? Is a new formulation needed to more accurately describe this process for African descent women?
3. Is there an interaction between racial/ethnic and gender identity conceptualization?

Method

Participants

Participants were 13 self-identified African descent women ranging in age from 22 to 73 years with a mean age of 42. Four of the women were from Georgia, five were from other U.S. states (i.e., Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, and New York), two from African countries (i.e., Kenya and Mali), and two from Jamaica. Seven of the women were married/partnered, three were single, two were divorced, and one was widowed. Seven were parents. One of the women was bisexual, while the rest were heterosexual. Three of the women had a high school diploma, four completed 4-year college, and six completed graduate school. The annual income breakdown was as follows: 3 (0-19,999), 3 (20,000-39,999), 2 (40,000-59,999), 3 (60,000-79,999), and 2 (80,000 and up). Eight of the participants were Christian, two described their religious/spiritual beliefs as other, and three declined to reply. Four participants reported having a disability.

Procedure

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through flyer postings on-line and in various community locations (e.g., place of employment, social organizations, places of worship, grocery stores, laundries, etc.). Care was taken to ensure that postings were placed in a cross section of communities in a Southeastern United States metropolitan city. The communities varied with regard to socio-economic status and educational settings to increase the likelihood of recruiting women varying with regard to age and education

levels. Participants were asked to contact the researcher to complete the demographic questionnaire by phone or electronically.

Purposeful sampling seeking maximum variation was used as the purpose of the study was to obtain an in-depth understanding of many types of African descent women's experiences (Mugo, 2006; Patton, 2002).This sampling method permitted the ability to capture and describe the central themes related to racial/ethnic and gender identity development for African descent women, as well as provided for the possibility of illuminating unique and/or diverse variations of this process (Mugo, 2005; Patton, 2002). As the current study endeavored to unearth a comprehensive definition of African descent women's identity process, women with maximum variance on educational level and region of origin were recruited. The screening questionnaire was used to select participants using maximum variance as criterion for inclusion.

Initial recruitment for the study yielded 38 participants. All participants were invited to participate in FG1. Six of these women were selected for FG1 in based on their schedule availability. Four other women were selected for individual interviews. Maximum variance in age, SES/educational level, and underrepresented identities (i.e., sexual identity and ability status) were the criteria used to select participants for the interviews and FG2. While initially, five participants committed to participation in FG2, only three actually participated. Incentives were provided for each level of participation. Participants in FG1 received light food and beverages and a gift bag (a $10 value). Participants selected to interview received a $25 bookstore gift certificate and gift bag (a $10 value). Women participating in FG2 received a $15 bookstore gift certificate. Participants completed informed consent (Appendix A) at time of data collection.

Instruments

Screening demographic questionnaire. Potential participants completed a screening questionnaire (Appendix B) prior to being selected to participate in the study. The questionnaire requested the following information: age, gender (i.e., female or transgender), marital status, parenting status, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual affiliation, socioeconomic status, and ability status. Participants were asked to identify which, if any, socio-political ideology (i.e., feminist, Black feminist, Womanist, African-centered/Afrocentric) they subscribed and were provided space to write in options not included. Finally, participants responded to the following sentence stem as it related to their racial/ethnic and gender identities: "I am _____."

Primary investigator. Research is influenced by the researcher from formulation of the initial research question to the process of data collection and analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As such, discussion of researcher characteristics is critical. The researcher self identifies as a woman of African descent. As sociopolitical realities of African descent persons and women are relevant for the researcher, she identifies as an African-centered Womanist. The researcher acknowledges the following two assumptions with respect to the current study. She expected the study participants to endorse an interaction between their racial/ethnic and gender identities. Additionally, she predicted that the participant's identity development process would, in part, conform to the framework of existing racial/ethnic and gender identity theories.

In an effort to remain mindful of the potential effects of her bias on the study, the researcher kept a journal throughout the data analysis portion of the study. In addition, the researcher sought assistance from a diverse data analysis team. Finally, the

researcher adopted a co-researcher model in which she collaboratively engaged the participants to explore their identity (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). In this process, the participants corrected and challenged the researcher's knowledge of the phenomenon. Participants also provided a member check of data analysis and interpretations.

Research team. Two Ph.D.-level (i.e., two Counselor Educators) and three MA-level (Counseling Psychology doctoral students) researchers assisted with the data analysis. All researchers have completed course work and have research experience with qualitative methods and analysis. One of the researchers was South Asian, two were of European descent, and two were African descent. One of the researchers was male, three were heterosexual, one was gay, and one was bisexual. Ideologically, two researchers identified as feminists and two as Black feminists. Racial/ethnic and gender attitudes were not formally measured. As a consequence of their various backgrounds and experiences, members of the research team possessed assumptions that may have had an impact on their interaction with the data. All members of the team assumed that an interaction would be found between the participants racial/ethnic and gender identities. Four assumed that the interaction would be harmonious, while one assumed there would be conflict. Regarding existing theories, three assumed existing theories would adequately describe the women's identity development while two assumed current theories would not be sufficient.

Focus Groups

FG1. Six women participated in a 90-minute focus group facilitated by the principal investigator. The proceedings took place in a classroom on the campus of a university located in an urban center in the Southeastern U.S. FG1 was audio recorded

and facilitated by the study PI. Participants were asked to respond to three initial prompts: (1) What does being a woman mean to you?; (2) What does being Black/African descent/African American mean to you?; and (3) In what ways, if any, do your ethnic/racial and gender identities effect one another? Additional prompts were generated in a priori in order to provide further assistance with group facilitation (Appendix C). Responses from focus group participants were used to generate follow-up questions for subsequent individual interview sessions.

FG2. Three women participated in a 90-minute member-checking focus group following data collection and analysis of FG1and all interview sessions. The purpose of this group was to validate interpretation of the data and check accuracy of themes. A master's level researcher facilitated the focus group in which participants responded to six questions (Appendix D) derived from the data analysis.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Following the FG1, an independent sample of four women was interviewed over three sessions (Session 1: 45 minutes; Session 2: 30 minutes; Session 3: 45 minutes). All interview sessions were audio recorded and transcribed by the primary researcher. An alternate form of Siedman's (1991) phenomenological interviewing procedure was used. This process consisted of asking about three aspects of the participants' experiences with regard to race/ethnicity and gender over three interview sessions in which one aspect was the focus. The researcher first asked the participants to reflect on early experiences related to school, family, friendships, their neighborhood/community, work, and any other experiences that have been relevant to their identification as an African descent woman. The second probe focused on the details of specific experiences. In this portion,

the participants shared details of salient stories and/or experiences that they considered relevant to their experiences and identity as an African descent woman. Finally, the researcher asked the participants to reflect on the meaning of their life experiences as they related to their identity conceptualization and development.

Seidman (1990) developed this series of prompts for interviewing individuals over three 60-minute sessions. Each prompt is meant to generate many ideas and themes that are relevant to African descent women. In addition, the probes provide a structure for the interview sessions that relies on the participants to define the meaning of these constructs from their life experiences (Seidman, 1990).The current study employed an alternative form of this procedure in order to limit time commitment. One barrier to participation in the study was participant availability as they managed employment and childcare obligations. Consequently, the interview sessions were shortened to three sessions lasting either 30- or 45- minutes. As researcher bias is a concern with this study, structure at the level of data collection serves to preserve the voice of the participants and minimize the influence of research bias on data collection. The following three interview foci developed by Siedman (1991) were used to guide the semi-structured interviews: a) Focused life history, b) Details of particular life experience, and c) Reflection on the meaning of life experiences as they relate participant's identity as an African descent woman.

The study employed a recursive and emergent research design with several strengths that support the fidelity of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). For example, data were drawn from multiple data sources and informants in order to increase the depth and validity of the findings. Additionally, preceding points of data

analysis informed the process and direction of subsequent sessions. Further, formal member checking procedures were utilized to further verify the trustworthiness of the data. Finally, the data collected and analyzed earlier in the study informed later data collection. For example, FG1 data informed the development of prompts for interviews. Similarly, data from earlier interviews informed the process and content of interviews occurring later.

Analysis

Data collected from FG1 yielded 34 pages of transcript. The average length of individual interview transcripts was 14 pages per interview session. A total of 175 pages were examined. A total of 55 codes were used to code the data. The codes, their definitions, and their frequencies are presented in Table 1. From these data, several themes and patterns were identified related to African descent women's identity conceptualization. These will be discussed with regard to their relation to the research questions.

Data analysis for this study was on-going and occurred on four levels. The first level consisted of completion of a contact summary form (Appendix E) by the primary investigator following the FG1 and all interview sessions to summarize salient themes and unanticipated directions that informed the following contacts with participants. Reflection data collected on the contact summary guided subsequent interviews. Based on current identity development literature the PI developed an a priori codebook of 22 codes. Using this initial codebook she coded all the transcripts from FG1 and individual interviews. While coding, additional codes were generated to describe quotations. This process led to the development of 32 additional codes and revision of the initial

codebook. Using the revised codebook, two research assistants (Ph.D. and MA level) analyzed portions of the data (Assistant I: FG1 and Participant 001 (Sessions 1-3), Participant 002 (Sessions 1-3), Participant 024 (Sessions 1, 2), Participant 025 (Sessions 1, 2); Assistant II: Participant (1-3). After coding, the PI and research assistants came to consensus on codes and developed the final codebook through a series of meetings. Consensus criteria required a minimum of two rater agreement in order to designate a quote per quotation. Using the final codebook (Appendix F), two other research assistants coded the transcripts for themes/patterns. These coders then discussed their findings noting points of conversion, diversion, and non-confirmation in consensus meeting while the PI was a silent observer. Following consensus, these themes/patterns were then presented to participants at FG2 to test their reliability. Feedback led to further development of existing codes and elucidation of the themes.

Results

The purpose of the current study was to directly question African descent women regarding their own ideas of their identity as being both African descent persons and women. Results are presented in the order of the research questions. Regarding the results for the first research question, it is important to note that while it focused on the participant's conceptualization of their identities, their responses were of the sources of influence on these identities. The women in the study described several influences on their identities. While there were some shared influences, differences between racial/ethnic and gender conceptualizations were observed; therefore they will be discussed separately.

Racial/Ethnic identity

The women in the study indicated several sources of influence on their racial/ethnic identity. Family, educational experiences, historical facts/figures, peers, physical features, oppressive experiences, political involvements/ideologies, and religious/spiritual themes were presented. A discussion of these themes, relevant patterns, and some examples from the data follow.

Family

The women made thirty-one references to the role of their families in shaping their racial/ethnic self concept. Their references described both explicit and implicit influences which were imparted primarily by the men in their families. One focus group participant described the positive influence of her grandfather.

> Right, but I am just proud of being Black because my great grandfather, I mean he was [as] Black as the ace of spades and taught us [the children in the family] about who we were. He would read to us and told us about the Marcus Garvey movement.

Similarly, one of the women interviewed attributed her knowledge and thoughts regarding racial/ethnic identity to her father's influence, "So what I knew about Blackness is what my dad had taught me…" In response to a participant's questions and struggles with racial/ethnic subject matter, her father depended on historical facts and figures to serve as examples to educate her regarding race relations.

> "Daddy why do Black people have to do this to their hair?", "Why does mommy have to react this way?" That's when my father taught be about Nelson Mandela and this was like 1972, 73. Nelson Mandela. My father told us about Steven Biko. And then he told us about Haile Salaissee and Bob Marley, the Rastafarian movement and the resistance.

While not as common, the participants also described implicit familial influences on their identity development.

> So it was more like a back handed way of saying Black was better, Black is important, without really saying it. But putting the points down.

There is a definite influence of family on the racial/ethnic identity conceptualization of African descent women. These influences, while imparted by the family in general, were primarily shared by fathers and grandfathers. The strong influence of the family is exemplified by one interviewee's comment. She said, "We come from a family very determined values and prejudices and systems in place that is just incredible," further emphasizing the influence of her family on her racial/ethnic identity development.

Educational experiences

Experiences in educational context were also identified as influential in conceptualizing racial/ethnic identity among the women in the study. For some, school teachers were intentional regarding their socialization of African descent children, especially regarding preparation for potential future experiences of racism.

> When I was coming up in school we had all Black teachers and all Black students in the school…But my second grade teacher told us, she said, "The reason I am so hard on you is because you have so much more to prove when you get out into the world. So I'm going to educate you. I am not going to push you through, and then when you have to go out there and really compete, you will be prepared."

Potential discrimination due to race/ethnicity fueled the above teacher's commitment to educating her students. She deemed it necessary to equip the students in her class with the tools that would make them competitive in an effort to counter the effects of racism in limiting their opportunities. Pedagogical focus on the experiences of African descent people was also considered as important in the educational experiences. Unfortunately, some participants could not rely on their educational experiences to provide lessons about their racial/ethnic heritage.

> In my nine years on the island we were taught everything about the Netherlands and Europe. I knew more about them than I did about the 13 or 14 parishes that existed in our country (Jamaica). What I know about them is what I learned here in the states that I have chosen to learn because in the states I am not taught that in school.

This participant realized the lack of content related to African descent persons in her classes and compensated by taking initiative to learn about historical facts and figures about African descent people on her own. Many of the women in the study discussed the need to seek educational experiences outside of the traditional school setting in order to learn about the history of African descent persons. Adult educational experiences were one possibility.

> So we were at this Baptist church on Saturday morning, but what is so memorable is that it was winter time. My God we didn't have any heat and we would sit in the class just freezing in our over coats wanting to learn at least me wanting to learn about Black history. Black slavery days, what it meant. You know what I'm saying and the love, the slavery, the transporting of slaves and the sweeps and imprisonment. Oh. And separating them. You know what I'm saying separating them all over the place. Have one group over in Michigan, have one group over in North Carolina, have one group in Texas. And out of all of that came the underground movement with Harriet Tubman as a way feeding information and messages to folk. You know what I'm saying. And folk were like, "God, I believe a word I heard from my sister Lily, I heard from my cousin, yada yada boom." The matter of separatism, separating people from their roots, from their background. All this I'm learning. It's exciting.

Educational experiences related to race/ethnicity were considered important and clearly impacted identity development, as the women described the transformation experienced as a result. Peer relationships within the educational context were also seen as being especially influential. In the following quotation, the participant shared the influence of her friend on her racial/ethnic identity while attending school.

> And it is and was through his association with me that I learned; you know all that opened up. And I'm very appreciative of that because he was a

> very learned young Black man that I met in my life in that part of my journey. And he opened up that part of academia to me.

Peer relationships within the educational context were also a source of stress and confusion. Participants processed the difficulty they experienced in mediating friendships with non-Black students. The following quotation ends a particularly distressing story of one participant in grade school. During this portion of the interview, she talked about befriending a White girl and feeling pressured by the African American girls in her school to end their friendship, or otherwise be excluded from their group. Especially striking about this instance is the interconnectedness of family influence on peer relations, as her decision making was strongly influenced by her father.

> I remember distinctly one day being outside at recess and playing with her and then it's like the whole group came over. And of course the leader she says to me, "Why are you hanging out with her?" and I say, "That's my friend and I'm playing with her." "But why?" you know, and I said, "Because I like her and she said, "Well you're going to have to decide, either you are going to hang out with her or you're going to hang out with us." And I looked at my friend who was just standing there and I looked at the group here and I'm thinking, she's White, they're Black, and I think this may be where I started hearing my dad or something. Like "You gotta' choose. You know White people aren't whatever".

A testament to her father's influence, the participant terminated her friendship with her White friend in order to preserve the security her father indicated would be found in relationships with other Black people. While the above quotation described a poignant example of the impact of race in school, other examples are more benign. Many of the participants attended schools in which they were a numeric minority. The following quotation was representative of these experiences. "And I grew up and I went to a private school and I was the only person of color, only Black person in my classes as I progressed through and I never really thought about being Black." For some of the women, racial differences were noticed however, its presence did not have a striking

effect.

Physical features

Physical features of African descent women strongly influenced their racial/ethnic sense of self. The women described the profound effects of White standards of beauty on African descent women's.

> I still know that for a lot of African woman and Caribbean women it's appropriate to "fold your lips on under, big fat lips, fold them under". And so I grew up, like I said, I am in my late 40's, I grew up with that culture being very prominent…so they can look more White. I mean what else White do we want. And when are we going to wake up and stop subscribing to their idea of beauty.

Despite these negative effects on some women's ideals of and relationship to beauty, participants in the study were also able to develop accepting ideals regarding their physicality.

> So I feel that my self worth in terms of my Africanity, my embracing my Blackness, my accepting my thick lips, my big nose, my dark skin and all of that. That came from what the Rastas promoted that made me feel that nothing was wrong with me. I do not have to go through life apologizing for being Black. For having thick lips or having a big nose or whatever. You know. A big nose means I get better oxygen and more oxygen.

Finally, the participants acknowledged the diversity within African descent persons with regard to skin color. One participant described this variety as it existed within her family.

> Because we are the spectrum of the rainbow in terms of skin color. My family is everything…Their pure black, mulatto, Creole, everything.

For the African descent women in this study, physical features was far more than skin color, but included, the size and shape of their noses, eyes, lips, and the texture of their hair. Accepting all of these aspects within a society that continues to promote White

beauty ideals strongly influenced their identity development.

Oppressive experiences

Experiences of racial/ethnic oppression have taken shape in a variety of ways for the women in this study. Vicarious and direct oppressive experiences have shaped their concept of themselves and their responses to it. Participants encountered oppression at all stages of life. "I remember one time when I was probably in I don't know, second grade someone called me nigger." Another example occurred for a participant in early adulthood.

> When I came to the United States I was about 18 and the first incident of racism came about the very first day when I landed in Miami. Actually we had a lay over and I walked around and I saw restaurants. I went into the restaurant and you know I selected a table right in the front and I was politely told that I could not sit at that place in the restaurant. I had to sit elsewhere in the back.

Many of the women also discussed current instances of oppression they experienced most of which occurred within the workplace. One woman stated, "I feel like as a Black woman we don't all the time get equal treatment in our environment like in the workplace." She and others spoke to White male privilege as a force promoting disparities in the workplace. The following quotation addresses the issue of the enforcement of this privilege structure by her supervisor, a White woman.

> My point was White people think they can do whatever they want to do to you just because they're White. It's just. I don't know.

White privilege appears to be influential on the lives of African descent women as significant psychic and physical energy is siphoned to equalize opportunities. One strategy employed was presented. "It's more important because of the system of things.

Black folks always have to go an extra mile or an extra two miles to prove themselves. Where other folks a lot of times they have an entitlement."

The women in the study also discussed historic instances of oppression that have significantly influenced them. The following quotation exemplifies this point.

> Of course there were things even before I came here that existed. And that had to be pretty painful in terms of the lynching and the beating and the shifting around of families. You know the slavery time. You know what I mean shifting of families, the calculated [effort] to split people apart. You know what I am saying.

Political Movements/Religion and Spirituality

Reference to the political and spiritual Rastafari movement in Jamaica from one participant necessitated the simultaneous presentation of both these areas in this section. The following quotation captures the nature of this relationship.

> And then I asked him about the Rastafarian movement. And he was pro the Rastafarian movement in that he felt that it was a Black love movement.
>
> Rastafarian culture and religion had been birthed and flourishing and it brought a level of Black consciousness to the island that hadn't been there as much prior to that because although Marcus Garvey had initialized some of it… they were good people although our culture was saying they are bad and they are nasty and they don't comb their hair and they don't want to go to school. And now you know they did not want brainwashed education. They did not want their children to go to systemic schools and that kind of thing.

Political movements and ideologies also influenced the lives of these women. As one participant proudly stated, "I was radical." Participants expressed pride and joy as they recalled the race conscious political activities of their youth.

> In terms of the political part of things I got swept up into it. In terms of wanting to learn more about the politics of the things, and they, my children, being Black Americans, being born here. You know so like the

> times of Angela Davis and the soul brothers coming out of California. That was heavy duty stuff. (Laughs) You know the persecution. I hate to say this, but in a way it was exciting times. It was exciting in the sense to see the movement and people coming together.

Religion and spirituality were also associated with Black/African heritage. In addition to reference to Rastafarian spirituality, participants discussed the role of the Black church in providing spiritual and race affirming space.

> Especially my experiences in the Black church and all the traditions in the Black church. Like the gospel music, and the well, preaching and…I was going to say the fire and brimstone and all this kind of stuff, all the people catching as you say getting the spirit and all this kind of stuff.

And while the Black church can be affirming, this is not true for all of its members. One participant described her struggle with finding affirmation of her racial and sexual identities within the Black church.

> I have ventured out and visited other churches that felt closer to what I am looking for, but the other part then when I get the tradition that I am looking for in terms of my religious background, then the whole acceptance of me as a bisexual woman is missing.

For the women in this study, racial/ethnic identity developed from relationships with family and peers, within the context of religious and education institutions and political movements, oppressive experiences, and reactions to their physicality. These influences did not occur in isolation; rather they overlay one another informing the women's lives.

Gender Identity

African descent women's gender identity was also explored. The formation of gender identity was largely influenced by their mothers/grandmothers, although other familial and societal influences were apparent. Motherhood, religion, and physical

development also contributed significantly to the participants' gender concept.

Family

The role of mothers and grandmothers was apparent throughout the women's descriptions of gender identity. Starting early, the women described hearing messages from the women in their families. The following quotation is one woman's account of her mother's and grandmother's reaction following the onset of menses.

> That's when I realized I was a woman because my mother and grandmother started being very cautious, and careful, and concerned and watchful. Okay now you are going to have to be a little lady. That's when the drilling started. Up until then I was a tom boy extraordinaire and I ran, and I could get my hands dirty and all this stuff. At that point you know okay now you have to sit proper.

The influence was not always explicit, as the women also described learning about gender expectations through observation and imitation of the women in their families.

> And so I learn to cook by the time I was nine I could cook because I was right next to the pot where grandma was putting the chicken in or the bananas or whatever. So being at her side constantly I learned a lot about being in the kitchen and the home cooking and then by the time I was 11 or 12 I could cook, clean, iron, what everything my grandmother could do I could.

Aside from learning practical aspects of womanhood, the women also described a generalized influence from members of their families regarding their role as a woman.

> My family looks at me as if I am making a choice a lot of them think that I do not want to have kids. You know because you are supposed to get pregnant in the first year and it has been five years now since I have been married. So I guess for me at this time in my life being a woman means having a lot of pressure; just carrying the load having to please family members and having to explain myself constantly.

Gender role expectations were also challenged. Participants identified the conflict between traditional notions of womanhood and contemporary economic realities that

impact the home. For instance, one participant stated, “I would not mind taking on all these roles, but since we are both going to work it needs to be 50-50.” Another participant discussed advice she received from her cousin regarding strategies to equalize expectations in her marriage by abstaining from implementing traditional patterns.

> the best piece of advice I got came from one of my older cousins she’s in her mid-fifties and she said “Baby, if you don’t want to keep it up, don’t start it” and I was like, “Let me listen to this”.

A major theme regarding gender identity was the need for balance. As the women struggled with the traditional gender role expectations, they simultaneously accommodated contemporary ideals that make sense for their lives. The following quotation is an example.

> So to me, both aspects of mommy and mama gave me a balance in my sense of being a woman. I’m a nurturing person, I can do the laundry, and iron your clothes, and pack your suitcase for you to go in and out of town. And I’m the same person that can go out there and help you fix the car and what have you and I can lay on the couch and you can pamper me. But she taught me how to live with all aspects of my sexuality, but not force any of them to be queen.

Religious/spiritual influences were also considered in the balance between traditional and contemporary gender ideals. One participant discussed the negotiation in the following ways.

> And then I have to put myself in check from a Christian stand point, the male is to be the head of the household and I am to take a submissive role but I ask myself if that is the way it is supposed to stay then I should be able to stay home and not have to go to work.

Motherhood

The code for motherhood was applied 48 times in analysis. Motherhood appeared to be an important role to the women in the study and contributed significantly to their gender concept. Some quotations that demonstrate this point follow: "I feel like a woman as far as a mother. I feel like I've been a superb mother," and "Motherhood really has helped me to identify with being a worthwhile woman". Even for women in the group without children, the role of motherhood was a major signifier of their gender. As two participants stated, "…a lot of it has do with bringing children into the world," and "Like everyone spoke on, we're the one's that populate the world…"

Above all the role of mother seemed most influential because of the modeling the women provided for their children. Consequently, their own personal growth was inspired by their desire to be the type of person they wanted their children to become. One participant shares this process through lessons she teaches her children about honesty and communication.

> But I know that is how I taught them to communicate so I am not hostile to it when it comes back to me because to me it's like, "Okay this is exactly what I want". Because I see them as people's husbands and wives and I want them to be able to advocate for those families. And if I am depriving them of the ultimate opportunity to advocate then what kind of advocacy skills will they have as a man whose family is suffering who needs a raise to stand up to his boss, as a woman who recognizes that her spouse is abusive to her child and wants to assert herself. How does she stand up to her spouse? So to me I have to teach them, even to the people that you love, you have to look them in the eye and stand up to them because a lot of the times we perpetuate monsters because our love takes away our tongue, takes away our ability to say the truth.

Participants also discussed how their identity as African descent women shaped their role as a mother.

> And I don't know if it's because I don't have to deal with raising and the struggle like I did when they were younger, but bear in mind, I do believe that once you're a parent, and a Black parent, you'll always be a parent. At least that's how it stands with me. In that whatever I learn, and if it is positive, I need to share it and change it because here's something I realized, that eventually life ceases. My life ends and so it's important for me to learn and say here, this is the thing. You know take it and share it and enjoy it and embrace while we have each other.

Despite the importance of the role of motherhood in the lives of the participants, one mother was also aware that motherhood was not the defining role of womanhood. She said, "As far as that goes that doesn't make you more of a woman to have a child or less than a woman to not have one."

Religion

The participants described the effects of their religious/spiritual beliefs on their ideas of women and women's roles and responsibilities. One participant identified the description of women that she learned, stating, "They [church authorities] say that everything that happens wrong that was initiated by a woman started from Eve." Biblical references to woman's inherent immorality have been influential on gender identity development. The women also identified explicit messages from church services regarding gender role expectations for women. One participant remembered prescriptions for women's sexuality influenced by religious beliefs. She shared these messages were focused on "... how a woman should conduct herself, a lot of messages around women at church [have dealt] more with sex. [In terms of] how a woman should carry herself…" Another participant discussed the issue of her sexual identity and the challenges she faced when attempting to integrate her sexual and spiritual identities within her church.

In the following quotation she talks about how members of her church reacted to issues of same sex relationships.

> But I heard people say, we kind of wonder the message this gives to our children, and they're just standing up and acknowledging that this [same sex relationships] is okay and all this kind of stuff. And the pastor, he acknowledged [it when] I went and had a conversation with him. [He] is working on being open and he's still struggling with that.

Physicality

For many of the women in the study, their physical development through adolescence and adulthood differentiated them from males, accentuating their identity as women. Clear references like the following are examples: "but there are certain things that are pretty basic. Like once a month when my cycle comes (group laughs). That's because I am a woman", "Once my period started, all this woman stuff kicked in", and "Hence, menstrual cycle then you switch back over to mommy." Also, women's adult physical development into motherhood was also associated with a reassertion of their womanhood. One woman said, "It clued me in you know for some reason when I gave birth to my first daughter…"

Development of gender identity for the women in this study was generated out of experiences with family and religious institutions, their role as mother, and their physical development. Family and religious institutions imparted notions of womanhood in alignment with traditional gender role expectations. The participants appeared to be in continuous negotiations regarding balancing external definitions of their gender with internally derived ideals. This struggle is consistent with Helms (1990b) Womanist Identity model. Motherhood was a salient identity, influencing the participant's identities, whether they were currently mothers or not. Essential to this identification

were the physical changes and developments during puberty and child birth which increased awareness of womanhood for the participants in this study.

Comparison to Models and Theories

Comparing the experiences voiced by the African descent women to current theories used to describe them was a major focus of this study. The second research question sought to explore the points of convergence and divergence of these theories to the women's experiences in an effort to assess their applicability. In this section the women's responses are considered in light of the aforementioned racial/ethnic and gender identity theories. Presentation of aspects of African descent women's racial/ethnic and gender identity development that are inadequately or not incorporated in these theories will follow. Examples from the data will be presented to elucidate these points.

Racial/Ethnic Identity Models

Racial/ethnic identity models have been used to describe the experiences of African descent women's identification with their racial/ethnic group. In the current study, aspects of both stage/status and multidimensional models of racial identity were apparent. Regarding stage/status models, the women in the current study described Encounter and Integration attitudes. One participant described her racial Encounter attitudes following a confrontation in graduate school.

> I guess before I really didn't attend to it. Of course I know I'm Black but it's not like I thought about it as I walked around or interacted in different things. But after that incident where I was challenged around my racial identity, I started being aware and opening my consciousness for that. I'm Black and it didn't seem to feel the same after that.

Other participants' Encounter experiences occurred in their adjustment to new racially different experiences. One participant's childhood experience visiting a pool demonstrated this point.

> [While] going swimming in public pool in Africa [a] White child got out of the pool and [said] it was dirty because I entered the pool.

Integration attitudes were observed in the participants expressing resolution regarding racially salient experiences. One participant expressed Internalization attitudes in acceptance of her Black/African physical features.

> So I feel that my self worth in terms of my Africanity, my embracing my Blackness, my accepting my thick lips, my big nose, my dark skin and all of that…I do not have to go through life apologizing for being Black, for having thick lips or having a big nose or whatever. You know.

The racial identity development for the women in the study also aligned with Sellars et al. (1998) Multidimensional model. Their comments were characteristic of the salience and regard dimensions. Salience was demonstrated in one participant's conceptualization of her racial/ethnic and gender identities.

> And I prefer to put my Blackness in front of my womanness. Sometimes I am more proud [of] being Black than I am of being a woman because we always have to compromise ourselves.

Similarly, the regard dimension also emerged. The women's expressions characterized both public and private regard sub-dimensions. The following quotations were examples of public (i.e., others reactions to people of African descent) and private (i.e., feelings toward self and other African descent people) regard, respectively.

> But when I am out there on the street and there is a cop going by he just sees a Black person. He doesn't see a Kenyan, he doesn't see someone from this part or that part. And they will treat me just as badly as they

> would treat anybody else who was born here.
>
> I am also feeling resentful of the stereotyping. I hate the fact that I take the time to look nice, to be articulate, and to be professional and then I have another sister who does not mind looking a mess, does not mind being loud, does not mind sounding ignorant and just acting belligerent. It bothers me that I sometimes have to be grouped into that same category.

Gender Identity Models

For the women in the study, there was a definite tension between traditional and contemporary notions of womanhood. As described in a previous section, a need to balance contemporary ideals and realities were tempered by role expectations imparted by their families and religious norms. The need to reconcile both value sets in an individualized definition of womanhood was sought; thus a Womanist model more closely described their experience. Specifically, the participant's conceptualizations appeared to oscillate between Encounter and Internalization Womanist attitudes. The following quotation exemplifies an Encounter attitude.

> It blows my mind, even now that I am a mother, how she can go that far with him. So I'm thinking, while I am seeing this that I am going to break the cycle with my son.

An expression of the Internalization Womanist attitudes, participants exercised their autonomy in choosing to ascribe to traditional feminine ideals.

> Like you know I'm going to be more conscious of how I look and things like that, but it's coming from a place of because I want to and I just feel good when I do it versus feeling like I have to or I should do it. And so I might be more concerned about how I choose to style my hair, or the kinds of clothes I choose to wear. Or maybe feeling like if I really want to look a certain way or extra nice I might put on a skirt and some heels or something like that.

Other Important Factors

While African descent women's identity can, in part, be described using existing models, aspects of their identification process remain outside of these definitions. Review of the transcripts yielded three unexplored areas. The affective experience of identity development, the need for role models, and the caretaker identification were recurrent themes.

Affect. Participants in this study included affective responses in recounting their identity development experiences. Both negative and positive affective expressions were identified. For the women, negative affect was associated with identity confusion and sadness related to various experiences. The women described instances of crying, being frustrated, and feeling shame. The following quotations demonstrate this point.

> I always feel like this word confusion. It's like you know this idea that it's still developing and I have been thinking about stuff between meetings.

> So you know I really didn't know the answer to that at the beginning, I was like wow, I didn't think about all this stuff. And again talking about the shame, I should think about this stuff more. But you know talking to you I am like dang, I don't want to talk about this stuff.

Alternatively, the women in the study also described positive affect regarding their identity development. Acceptance and joy related to their growth and evolution was evident in several quotations. The following is an example.

> That's very important to me. I had a lot of personal struggles with my identity know who I was or what I'm doing so that it now recently I said to my eldest daughter, who's now in her 50's I said, "You know I'm having the greatest time of my life at this time. And she says, "Yeah moms, what do you mean." And I said, "Oh God, now I know and own it. But I don't have to be afraid to make my choices even if they're wrong. I know how to admit it. Admit it and then I can make it better." And I say "Oh, my goodness, gracious, it's a joy

Role models. The women in the study also discussed the importance of role models for their racial/ethnic and gender development. One participant explains.

> But I think there might be very little originality in what I have come up to be because I really think that I've been really influenced by a lot of really different people and although that's what I've accumulated to become if we pull it all apart, it's not original, it’s pieces that I got from a lot of different people that I apply.

The women acknowledged the importance of role models and also processed the challenges to their development when there is a lack of examples to model the integration of their multiple identities. One participant shared her experience.

> And there aren’t many people that are available, at least that I found to be able to talk about this stuff. To help me to further define what it means to be a Black and I put it on the sheet too, an African American, bisexual woman. Because those are the things that are most salient for me and there are not many people that I have been able to find to talk to [and] kind of help me to integrate all those identities into one.

Caretaker. Identifying with the role of caretaker was a recurrent theme throughout contacts with participants. Viewed as an inherent part of their identity, caretaking was described as role specific to African descent women having both positive and negative implications. This role was also characterized in the context of resistance to injustice and the participant’s responsibility to her community. Finally, the women discussed the manifestation of the effects of caretaking on their relationships. Caretaking was described several times as a role specific to African descent women. The following quotations demonstrate this point.

> I see the two meeting up because as a woman I see the need to care, that is why I am in the profession that I am in and as a caregiver I think it is important for me to be nice to people. Especially if I am in some type of

> service industry like a restaurant, I feel especially the need to say thank you and to show that I am appreciative so that they don't think that I look down on them. And I think with my Blackness because a lot of Black women have been perceived as the angry Black female.

In light of assuming the caretaking role, the women identified its ineffectiveness in their relationships with others. "I think I try to nurture everyone I am in contact with and it just doesn't work."

For women in the study, resisting injustice was also a form of caretaking for others. One participant described feeling the responsibility to give voice to racial concerns in the workplace, "And then always having to be the one to bring it up, to talk about it, to kind of make people aware of it." With regard to caretaking for others, the women also discussed their responsibility to the Black community and related feelings. As one woman said, "I do feel guilty about things that I should be doing. For example, man these kids, I don't even know what to do they are so out of control …" For this woman, and others, their responsibility to the community, while demonstrating a connection, also makes them feel guilty or shameful that they are not able to do as much as they believe is expected. Moreover, many women discussed "giving back to my community", not acknowledging the overwhelming needs of the community, which ultimately left many feeling guilty because of their limitations with regard to fulfilling this task.

Finally, the women discussed the impact of their caretaking role and the resulting imbalance in their relationships and the desire for a shift in role expectations for African descent women. The following quotation clearly describes this dynamic.

> I think though in terms of bridging the gap between the sexes, I think in a lot of ways women doing just because we've been put in the position where we have to be the providers of the family. We would like to share that role, but sometimes we just don't have that other half that's taking

> care of us. I think it is almost like a defense mechanism so that we feel alright about being the woman that is making the money. I think it comes from both sides, but it definitely comes from the female side.

Interaction Between Racial/Ethnic and Gender

All but one woman in the study acknowledged an interaction between their racial/ethnic and gender identities. Race/ethnicity and gender were conceptualized as inseparable from one another and/or component parts to be included amongst other identifications which make up the comprehensive identity. The following quotations are representative of the inseparability and component parts conceptualizations, respectively.

> They're one and the same. I can't separate my womanhood from my Africanity. I just can't. I'm an African woman.

> You know when I walk into a classroom I am there as a student, but I am also there as an academic, as a woman, somebody who is passionate about bringing justice into this world. I mean all these other things. And so I can't just be one thing. I can't just bring part of me to any discussion even when I am talking with White women in the department for example about issues related to being a woman. I'm still very much conscious that I'm African as I am speaking to them. You know we have certain shared experiences but I always bring like a different angle or different perspective. And so I would just say in everything. In every aspect of my life they're both combined.

While the women in the study claimed an interaction between their racial/ethnic and gender identities, articulation of this interaction was difficult. For example, when asked to explain how these identities interact, the women struggled to provide a response and/or declared the inseparability of the identities. Despite this difficulty some of the participants were able to describe the interaction of their identities. Through their interactions with others, conceptualizing the identities as reciprocal mediators, and in the adoption of a caretaking role, the women in the study described the interaction of their

racial/ethnic and gender identities. The women in the study used the meaning they make of other's reactions to them to describe the interaction of their racial/ethnic and gender identities. The following is an example.

> I was going to say that my Blackness and my womanhood meet when I want to fix everything, when I want to nurture, when I want to take interviewees to the side and say look here, get yourself together before you go on your next interview. When I want to pull this child to the side and say hey, get your education do this and do that. I think that is the time when my Blackness and my womanhood meet.

The above represents the meaning made in relating with a representative of the larger society; however meaning was also made from interactions with other African descent women. Specifically, the women in the study identified awareness of the interaction between their racial/ethnic and gender identities through their relationships with other African descent women; whether included or excluded. The following are examples of inclusion and exclusion, respectively.

> in how we get together at my aunt's house and talk while my cousin is getting her hair done; how it happens in the kitchen. I don't think other women from other groups experience their woman hood in the same way. There is a unique way that Black women are together.

> Maybe that is why I don't think of myself first as Black because I've been rejected so by the Black female.

Racial/ethnic and gender identities were also characterized as reciprocal mediators. In their quotations the women expressed the belief that their being African descent shaped their experiences as women, and vice versa. The following example illustrates this point.

> So I don't feel that being a woman, being a woman has been as oppressive to me as being a Black woman has. If I was a White woman I would have experienced some degree of oppression, okay, but I think that being a Black woman has certainly intensified it.

While also expressed, the alternate perception was posed less frequently. The following is an example. “I get a pass with police because I am a woman, compared to Black man.”

Finally, with regard to the caretaker role, the study participants indicated a strong association between their combined identities as African descent women and their responsibility to provide care for others. Through previously presented quotes, the participants indicated a sense of obligation and responsibility to protect, guide, and support both members and non-members of their racial/ethnic community. While a particularly significant responsibility to other African descent persons was expressed, the participants indicated ambivalence. As the association was experienced as both a source of connection to their racial/ethnic group, while at the same time being a burden for the unrealistic nature of the expectation the women grappled with the duality of this relationship. Additionally, the participants acknowledged that their identification with the caretaker role was both voluntary and assigned by others.

Although the majority of the women identified an inherent interaction between racial/ethnic and gender identities, two participants disconfirmed the existence and/or naturalness of this interaction. In both instances, the women accommodated a third salient identity (sexual orientation and ability status, respectively). The following quotation from a participant that identified herself as “Black female and blind” speaks to her inability to equally identify with being Black because of the pervasiveness of her blindness.

> Well, I don’t think the two of them go together. I think it is so separate and so big until you gotta fight against all of them. Now as far as Black, I’m just going to tell you the blind is so big I just don’t have time to think about the Black part. Because I would just devastate myself if I let all of it be an issue. When I think about discrimination, or when I think about missed opportunity it’s always about blindness. Because that’s always

> number 1 in my case. And I think that once people see past that they see me. And no matter if that is a Black me or a whatever me, but that blind thing is huge. It is.

For this participant, her blindness supercedes racial/ethnic identification. As she states, attempting to grapple with the issues related to her racial/ethnicity and disability would be overwhelming and therefore she had to limit her focus. In response to a question regarding an interaction between her identities she responds, “You know what I think a lot of times I don’t let them [interact].”

Identity interaction and integration was also found to be a challenge for a bisexual woman in the group. While the blind participant above actively compartmentalized her racial/ethnic and disability identities, this woman acknowledged the interaction of these identities within, and the struggle she faced in attempting to integrate them. She recognized external pressures and perceptions that influenced her.

> Yes, but when everything outside of me keeps saying, “No it can’t happen”, then something in the inside of me starts to say, “Well are you being overly optimistic”. Or just talking to friends in the past and them saying, “Look you have to give up one or the other; you’re not going to be able to meld the two together.”

Acknowledging her struggle to integrate her racial/ethnic, gender, and sexual identities, she recognized the necessity of assistance in navigating this portion of her identity development. While African descent women face unique challenges in their identification, the addition of other salient identities, can complicate and intensify this process. Some responses have been either to compartmentalize identities for manageability, or grapple with integration without the support of models and/or widespread acceptance.

Discussion

The results of the study reveal that African descent women's perceptions of their racial/ethnic and gender identity both conform to existing conceptualizations of racial/ethnic (Cross, 1971, 1991, 1995; Helms, 1990a, 1994) and gender identity (Downing & Roush, 1985; Helms, 1990b; Moradi, 2005). With regard to the first research question, the participant's conceptualization of their racial/ethnic and gender identities was expressed as contextual sources of influence. This contextual frame is consistent with existing literature (Collins, 2000; Walker, 1983). The sphere of this frame can be best understood using Brofenbrenner's ecological theory (Brofenbrenner & Morris, 1998) as the participants described individual, familial, community, and sociopolitical influences as having shaped their identification process.

Although racial/ethnic and gender identification shared common sources of influence, differences were observed. Specifically there were differences in the process of influence. For example, while the participants identified their families as shaping their racial/ethnic and gender identity development, male family members imparted racial/ethnic guidance, while female family members (especially mothers and grandmothers) provided gender socialization. While logical associations can be made between women's roles in gender socialization, less is clear regarding men's roles in racial/ethnic development. As the mean age of the participants was 42, the men in their families (fathers and grandfathers) may have experienced had adult experiences of racism and discrimination during the 1940-70's; a time of turbulent race relations. As a result, generational effects may influence the data. I t would be interesting to compare the results of this study with a sample of participants whose attitudes were influenced by

men living during the post-Civil Rights era. Consequently, an obligation to prepare their children for race realities may have been a priority.

Differences were also observed with regard to the sources of influence. For example, racial/ethnic identity was uniquely influenced by educational experiences, oppressive experiences, and political movements, while motherhood represented a distinct influence of gender development. These findings provide interesting insight into the inability of the feminist identity development model to fully define the gender development process of African descent women. A major component of the feminist identity model is the experience and identification with gender oppression. The women in the study did not indicate gender oppression as informing their gender identity. While there is no question African descent women experience gender oppression, these experiences were not considered influential. Scholars have indicated that race salience may overshadow the experiences of gender oppression for African descent women, thus lending them to identify more with their racial identity and corresponding political movements (Collins, 2000; Sellars et al., 1998). Consequently, African descent women may not be primed to identify instances of gender oppression that would initiate progression through the feminist identity development stages.

The second focus of this study regarding applicability of existing racial/ethnic and gender identity theories was addressed with the second research question. The data suggest support for current racial/ethnic and gender identity theories, while also illuminating aspects of the development process. Regarding racial/ethnic identity development, stage/status and multidimensional models were partially descriptive. Specifically, the women in the study described both Encounter and Internalization

attitudes about their racial/ethnic identity. While it is likely the African descent women experience various stages of the racial identity model, it is possible that in their descriptions of life events that have shaped their development, Encounter experiences were noteworthy. Characteristically striking and noticeable occurrences, Encounter experiences may have been significant and thus more easily recalled by the participants. Furthermore, these instances because of their intensity may have been more influential in shaping identity. Internalization racial identity attitudes were also observed. Unlike previous studies in which college samples have been used, the current study sampled a wider age range. Consequently, older participants informed the results possibly attributing to the Internalization racial identity attitudes, indicating maturity and resolution of previous identity crises (Moradi, 2005). Alternatively, Internalization attitudes can also be indicative of participant social desirability needs.

As the stage/status models were only partially descriptive, it is curious that other stages/statuses were not represented. Specifically, Pre-encounter and Immersion-Emersion attitudes were not expressed. Characteristics of the study may partially explain the lack of representation of persons expressing Pre-encounter attitudes. As study participants self selected themselves for involvement, participants that consider their racial/ethnic and gender identities important may have been drawn to the project, while those with Pre-encounter attitudes may not have perceived the study as relevant to them. Regarding the Immersion-Emersion attitudes, it is possible that these attitudes were not represented as a consequence of the focus of the interviews. Interview questions focused on specific experiences that shaped identity. If instead the focus was on observable

behaviors participants exhibit as an indicator of their racial/ethnic and gender identities, it is probable Immersion-Emersion attitudes would have been expressed.

The multidimensional model was also descriptive of the participant's racial/ethnic identity development. Particularly, the salience and regard dimensions of Sellars' et al. (1998) multidimensional model were observed in the participant's accounts. Many of the women stated that their racial identity was more salient for them compared to gender. The tendency for African descent women to have a primary identification with their racial background has been discussed (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989; Williams, 2005). While the historical push for African descent women to choose either affiliation with racial/ethnic or gender socio-political movements explain the issue of salience, it is partial. From the perspective of the study participants, oppression occurs not only because they are women, but because they are African descent women. For them, an additional layer of race shapes their gendered experiences. As women of African descent continue to balance the in-between space regarding race/ethnicity and gender identification, in this study they overwhelming demonstrated salience for their race/ethnicity. A possible rationale for this tendency may be that socialization regarding racial oppression earlier in their development makes their racial identity more apparent. The regard dimension was also endorsed. Sellars et al. (1998) indicate two types of regard (i.e., public and private) to describe an individual's processing regarding other's reactions to and their own personal feelings toward their racial identity/group. For the women in the study, references to both types of regard were observed. "I am because we are", a saying of the Xhosa people of South Africa, captures the essence of this dimension and explains identity development among African descent persons. For the

women in the study, racial/ethnic identity developed out of the meaning they made from intrapersonal and interpersonal (within and outside their racial/ethnic group) interactions. Identification as African descent was essentially extended beyond their personal identity, but was connected to their relationship with other African descent persons (Nobles, 1991; Semaj, 1981).

As with the stage/status models, the multidimensional model was also partially endorsed; the centrality and ideology dimensions were not observed. Similar to the stage/status models, this pattern may be explained by the nature of the interview questions. Centrality, a manifestation of identity salience, is not a construct that can be assessed through exploration of the participant narratives. Rather, through behavior monitoring or self-report of past behaviors, participants could directly report the identity with which they normatively define themselves. As it relates to the ideology dimension, it is also possible this dimension was not indicated because it was not explicitly assessed. It may that to measure the adequacy of the models, future studies should explicitly target specific behaviors and cognitions representative of the stage/status or dimension of the model.

Gender identity development models were partially descriptive of the experiences of African descent women. From the experiences shared by the participants, there appeared a tension between adhering to traditional gender role expectations, while appreciating the contemporary context in which they live as women. The Womanist identity development model most closely approximated the experiences of the women because its self-defining paradigm accommodates individualized definitions that incorporate traditional values with contemporary notions of womanhood. Similar to

racial identity attitudes, the women in the study described Encounter and Internalization Womanist attitudes, which are more than likely, as stated above, indicative of the palpable nature of Encounter experiences and the age maturity associated with Internalization and resolution of identity crisis (Moradi, 2005). While the Womanist model explained the gender identity development of African descent women more adequately, further development of this model is needed. Specifically, the process by which African descent women (and other Women of Color) negotiate the intersection of their racial and gender identities requires exploration. Further investigation into the process by which Women of Color navigate these intersections as well as those of other salient identities (e.g., sexuality and disability) will enhance the Womanist model's applicability for describing the identity development process for Women of Color. Additionally, a comprehensive model of gender development for Women of Color will also consider affective responses related to the identity development process, especially as it relates to integration of conflicting identities (e.g., race, religion/spirituality, and sexuality). Furthermore, a comprehensive model will address the need for and importance of role models to support resolution of identity crises. Finally, models will address the prevalence of the caretaker role and the positive and negative implications for mental health and well-being for African descent women, and possibly other Women of Color.

The final focus of the study considered the interaction between race/ethnicity and gender for women of African descent. The women described the relationship as inseparable and/or as component parts to be included amongst other salient identities (e.g., sexual identity, disability status). When discussing the interaction the participants

described examples that indicate a reciprocal mediation between the identities. Consequently, race/ethnicity shaped the experiences the women and others had of their gender, and inversely gender influenced their race/ethnicity. This relationship was most notable in the context of the caretaking role, as the women expressed they (African descent women) were expected in most all interactions to provide care and comfort to others (Black and non-Black). Collins (2000) discussed the historical and contemporary "mammification" of the Black woman; the quintessential caretaker. While a relationship was clear, the nature of the inseparability was difficult to articulate. Williams (2005) suggests that African descent women may internalize compartmentalized, rather than integrated, concepts of their racial/ethnic and gender identities provided by their environment (e.g., media, other's perceptions). She contends this may lead to an inability to process the intersections of their identities, and thus they may require assistance in drawing these connections. Identity integration presented a particular difficulty for participants attempting to accommodate salient conflicting identities (Greene, 2000). Similar to persons from mixed racial backgrounds these participants described confusion and frustration related to the process with disowning part of their identity being the only viable resolution (Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

Implications

While research has begun to explore the identity development and conceptualization of African descent women, this area of study remains in its infantile stage and warrants further development. The current study has highlighted several practical and research implications to be considered.

The current study illuminated several practical implications which inform therapeutic work for clients grappling with identity concerns, while also shedding light on cultural dynamics in the therapeutic relationship and the effectiveness of the group process for this population. Women in the study faced challenges integrating their multiple identities. As it has been suggested that this is due to internalization of compartmentalized conceptions provided by the environment (Williams, 2005), these concerns may be pervasive amongst African descent women, possibly without their consciousness. These concerns are further exacerbated by the inclusion of multiple conflicting identities (Greene, 2000). As such, it is imperative that mental health practitioners working with African descent women develop awareness and sensitivities to these identity dynamics. Specifically, practitioners will educate themselves on the identity development process of African descent women and the psychological manifestations that occur when this development is arrested. Additionally, in accordance with their social justice and advocacy obligation, mental health practitioners will foster experiences in and outside of session which promote client awareness of the intersections of race, gender and other relevant identities they integrate, while simultaneously developing coping resources to manage distress.

Finally, through PI observations and participant feedback, the focus group format may inform interventions for African descent women and for the processing of identity concerns. In the groups, participants were engaged and cathartically shared their experiences regarding issues of race and gender oppression, and other issues (e.g. parenthood, family functioning, relationships, career/work stress). The women

acknowledged a need and expressed a desire to continue these types of interchanges with one another. For a diverse group of African descent women, group therapies, especially support formats, may prove ideal. Groups can provide a nurturing and supportive environment in which the women's inclinations toward caretaking can benefit others, and feedback to them. Further, the group can underscore the universality of many concerns faced by African descent women, widening the sense of community, decrease the sense of aloneness, provide opportunities for role modeling, and possibly minimize the stigma associated with seeking mental health services for this population. Finally, the group modality is less expensive, thus providing an opportunity for a wider range of participation at various economic levels. Provided the positive implications of the group modality, it will be important to empirically validate these perspectives to ensure maximum clinical benefit.

The current study also drew attention to concerns with the research in this area. Of primary concern is the etic perspective in which current theories were developed, in which the validity of the identity process lies disproportionately with researchers and not with the women studied. As a consequence, the current models do not comprehensively, nor adequately describe the identity development and conceptualization of African descent women. Empirical studies which have used measures that correspond to existing theories report low reliability statistics regarding the stages/statuses of racial and gender identity (Parks, 1196; Yanico, Swanson, & Toker, 1994). It is possible that these low reliabilities are, in part, due to the fact that the initial development of these models did not employ emic approaches grounded in the experiences of African descent women, thus strengthening the predictive ability of them. Qualitative studies exploring the

identity development of African descent women and other populations may ameliorate the discrepancies found between the theories and individual's lived realities.

Additionally, the current study illuminates questions that may be addressed within clinically focused empirical studies. Specifically, studies exploring client and therapist intrapsychic and interpersonal perceptions of one another is a potential area of focus. Since cross-cultural therapeutic relationships obligate the client and therapist to negotiate these relational dynamics, it is important to investigate patterns that facilitate the therapeutic relationship. Furthermore, due to the cross-cultural dynamics inherent in same race interactions, exploration of these dynamics in counseling relationships in which the therapist and client share a racial background is also important. Particularly, studies exploring the caretaker role and its manifestation in within the therapeutic alliance of African descent women therapist and client pairs would also contribute.

Finally, research in the area of multiple identities requires further development. Whereas, Helms (1990b) initiates the discussion by addressing the unique experiences of African descent women and Women of Color, expansion of the theory to explore the intersection of multiple identities and the process by which the identities are integrated are absent. The intersections of race, gender, and sexuality, for example, generates significant intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict among African descent women and presents challenges with regard to integrating these three salient identities in the context of a racist, sexist, and heterosexist society (Collins, 2005; Greene, 2000). Moreover, as was relevant to one participant in the current study, the additive effect of spiritual/religious belief systems incongruent with these identities heightens the matter. In light of these facts, a theory purporting to describe the process of identification for

African descent women must also incorporate the concepts of intersection and integration of several identities within a antagonistic social context.

Limitations

To begin with, several aspects of the research process may have created instances in which the participants felt pressured to respond in a specific ways. The racial/ethnic background (African descent) and physical appearance (dark complexion, natural hair) of the interviewer may have influenced participant response. Additionally, the focus group format may have influenced participant responses and possibly silences some of the women from offering perceived unpopular viewpoints. Finally, the focus of the study on African descent women may have also served as a subtle, yet obvious indicator of response suitability.

Another limitation of the study is the sample. The sample size of thirteen women represents the view of a small proportion of women. Additionally, the sample, while representative of age and income level did not have women with less than a high school education represented. Furthermore, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer, and disabled participants were in the minority as well. This is an especial loss considering the findings regarding the influence of these other salient identities on the findings. Future studies exploring the impact of multiple salient identities on the development of African descent women will be valuable in the developing this area of research.

Conclusions

As this study was exploratory in nature, it yielded rich, in-depth information about African descent women's identity development. The richness of the results demonstrated the value of qualitative methods for addressing subject areas regarding

marginalized members of our society (APA, 2002; Moradi, 2005). Further, this study empowered African descent women through creating a forum in which they could give voice to their experiences, thereby informing scholarly work and practice; an expression of research as activism which makes this project especially meaningful. Collins (2000) stated the importance of returning voice to African descent women to accurately and adequately describe their experiences and lives to inform scholarly endeavors. While for years this work has been relegated to the artistic expression in literature and music of African descent women, the opportunity now exist for African descent women's accounts of their experience to be accepted as valid in and of themselves within the context of the academy. The current study is one attempt to amplify the voices of African descent women psychological literature with the hope other silenced groups will have such opportunities to be heard.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Consent Form

Georgia State University

Department of Counseling and Psychological Services

Informed Consent Form

Title: Study on Identity Conceptualization of African American Women

Principal Investigator: Wendi Williams, MA

Sponsor: N/A

I. Introduction/Background/Purpose

You are invited to participate in a research study to investigate the identity among African American women. The current study is designed to investigate the identity among African American women. Specific interest in the ways that African American women think about their racial/ethnic and gender identities will be explored. The purpose of this study will be to compare African American women's expressed thoughts about their identity to current research on identity development for women and African Americans.

Participation in the study is voluntary and can occur in one of three parts. In the first part of the study, one focus group of about 8 African American women and the primary researcher will meet or 90 to 120-minutes. In the second part, individual interviews with 4 or 5 women who were not in the focus group will meet with primary researcher over four 30 or 45-minute sessions. In the third part of the study a final focus group will be held.

II. Procedures

Participants will complete a screening questionnaire to determine eligibility for the study. Selected participants will be phoned and invited to participate either the focus group or individual interview phase of the study. All proceedings will be audio recorded. The focus groups will be held in a reserved classroom area on the Georgia State University campus. Individual interviews will be held at locations to be arranged by the interviewee and interviewer based on interviewee convenience.

III. Risks

Participants will vary with regard to various educational background and may feel some discomfort communicating with one another. In addition, they may also experience discomfort in discussing personal matters with strangers.

IV. Benefits

There are both direct and indirect benefits for involvement in this study. Participants involved in the focus groups will receive a small gift b
ag (i.e., $5-10 value), in addition to light snacks and beverages. Individual interviewees will also be given a gift bag and a $25 gift certificate. In addition to the above benefits, participants will benefit from the knowledge that their participation in this exploratory study will contribute to the paucity of work focused on the unique needs of African descent women.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or discontinue participation at any time.

VI. Confidentiality

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. We will use your initials rather than your name on study records where we can. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

VII. Contact Persons

The faculty advisor, Dr. Y. Barry Chung should be contacted at 404-651-3149 if you have questions about this study.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner of the Institutional Review Board, Georgia State University in Atlanta, GA at 404-463-0674.

VIII. Copy of Form to Participant

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research please sign below.

Participant	**Date**
Principal Investigator	**Date**

Appendix B

Screening Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Please Read. Please answer the following questions, which will be used to select African/Black women to be in a research study. If you are not chosen to participate, it is because a person similar to you in the following ways has already been selected. Study records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate.

Age: _____

Gender: Female Transgendered

Sexual Orientation: Lesbian Bisexual Heterosexual

Marital Status: Single Married Divorced Widowed

Parental Status: Do you have any children? Yes No If yes, how many? ___ _____

Region of Origin: Are you from Atlanta, GA? Yes No

If no, what is your home city and state? _____ _____.

Highest Level of education completed: Elementary School Middle/Junior High

High School Vocational School Junior College 4-year College/University

Graduate School Professional Degree (JD, MD, etc.)

Annual Household Income: 0-19,999 20, 000-39,999 40,000-59,999

60,000-79,999 80,000-above

Religious/Spiritual Affiliation: Muslim Buddhist Atheist Agnostic

Christian (Circle one): Baptist Methodist Episcopalian African Methodist Catholic
Other: _____

Ability Status: Do you have a condition/illness/injury that is visible or invisible that limits your ability to move about without restriction?
Yes No If yes, what is the condition? _____
_____

Please circle if you identify as any of the following:

Afrocentric/African Centered Feminist Black Feminist Womanist

African Womanist Other: _____

Please complete the following sentence as it relates to your identity.

I am _____

Appendix C

Follow-Up Questions

1. **Life History:** Thinking back on your entire life, what experiences influenced your identity as an African American woman?
2. **Meaning:** What meaning have these experiences had on your identity as an African American woman?

- Follow-up questions to be asked to elucidate participant comments.
- It is not expected that each participant respond to each question necessarily. Facilitator will probe for responses that vary in theme, content, etc.

<u>Additional Follow-up Questions</u>

Life History:

1. How do you connect that experience to your identity?
2. What are things that you learned about your self through this experience that informed (taught you about) your identity?
3. When did you realize you were a woman? Who told you? How did you know?
4. When did you realize that you were African American/Black? Who told you? How did you know?
5. Prompt for experiences during life transitions (e.g., moving away from home for the first time, new school, moving to new neighborhood, making new friends, getting married, getting divorced, etc.)

Meaning:

1. What does it mean to be African American/Black? What roles/expectations?
    i. Political activism
    ii. Leadership
    iii. Subservience
    iv. Obligations? Special responsibilities
    v. Social expectations- myth of the “strong black woman”
    vi. ????
2. What does it mean to be a woman? What roles/expectations?
    i. Political activism
    ii. Motherhood
    iii. Obligated to be strong?

1. stronger than white women

3. Family values
4. Societal expectations/roles
5. How do you experience being a woman in your life?
6. How do you experience being African American/Black in your life?

Appendix D

Focus Group Two- Member Checking

July 29, 2005

1. Women in the study reported that their gender identities were shaped by their families (namely mothers/grandmothers) and motherhood?
    a. Would you agree that these were the sources for your own identity as a woman?
    b. Are there other areas of your life that contributed to your identity as a woman?

2. Women in the study reported that their ideas about their racial ethnic group were influenced by their families, school, and political and historical facts?
    a. Would you agree that these were the sources for your own identity as a Black person?
    b. Are there other areas of your life that contributed to your identity as a Black person?

3. Is there a relationship between being Black and a woman?
    a. Do these exist separately? What does that look like (story/example) or
    b. Are they connected? What does that look like (story/example)?
    c. Is one more important/relevant than the other?

4. When you think of your role as a Black woman, what thoughts come to mind?
    a. Please state three to five words/ideas.

5. How would you describe the process by which you came into knowing that you are a Black woman?

6. If you were to go to another planet and had to describe what it means to be a Black woman, what would you say to give the most comprehensive picture?

Appendix E

Contact Summary Sheet

Contact Type

- ☐ Focus Group
- ☐ Interview
  - ☐ In Person
  - ☐ Phone

Site: _____

Contact Date: _____

Today's Date: _____

1. **What are the main issues or themes that struck you in this first contact?**

2. **Summary Information (or lack thereof) on the following target questions?**

Question/Information

a) **Being woman?**

b) **Being Black/African descent?**

c) **Interaction?**

3. **Anything other salient, interesting, illuminating or important aspects of contact?**

4. **New (or remaining) target questions to consider in future contacts.**

Appendix F
Codebook

Code: ACCULT

Description of acculturation.

Code: AFFECT

Emotional expression related to identity or reference group membership.

Code: AFRICA

Reference to the continent of Africa or African traditions/ways; comparisons between Africa(n) and American Africa(n) experiences and/or persons.

Code: AGING

Reference to process of aging.

Code: BALANCE

Reference to seeking/finding balance between conflicting entities; examples, femininity vs. strength, hip hop vs. being a African/Black woman, time, roles, responsibilities.

Code: BLACK

Expression of what it means to Black/African; characteristics which typify racial/ethnic identity.

Code: CARE

Reference to caretaking role, expectation or responsibility.

Code: CLASS

Reference to class distinction as it relates to racial/ethnic or gender identity.

Code: COMGEN

Reference to a comparison made between men and women.

Code: COMRE

Reference to comparison made between Blacks/Africans and non-Blacks/Africans.

Code: CONNECT

Reference to connection/bond with other members of the same reference group or lack of a connection.

Code: CONTEMPO

Reference to contemporary ideals related to racial/ethnic and/or gender ideals.

Code: COPING

Reference to coping strategies in response to oppressive experiences/conditions.

Code: CULTURE

Expression of cultural mores/practices; related to being African/Black.

Code: DEVPROC

Reference to identity development process; coming into awareness of self; confusion regarding self-concept.

Code: EDUGEN

Reference to gender identity development influenced by or occurring within the context of an educational setting/experience.

Code: EDURE

Reference to racial/ethnic identity development influenced by or occurring within the context of an educational setting/experience.

Code: EQUALGEN

Reference to an equal power relationship dynamic between men and women.

Code: FAMGEN

Reference to gender identity development influenced by or occurring within the context of the family.

Code: FAMRE

Reference to racial/ethnic identity development influenced by or occurring within the context of the family.

Code: GUILT

Expression of unfulfilled responsibility/obligation with regard to membership in racial/ethnic or gender group.

Code: HISGEN

Reference to historical facts/information about women which influence gender identity development.

Code: HISRE

Reference to historical facts related racial/ethnic group which influence racial/ethnic identity development.

Code: HUMANIST

Reference to more global notions of connectedness; valuing a connection with others outside of racial/ethnic or gender boundaries.

Code: INDGEN

Expression women's independence/empowerment.

Code: INTERACT

Reference to an interaction between racial/ethnic and gender identities.

Code: MEDIA

Reference to media influence on identity development.

Code: MOTHER

Reference to influence of motherhood on identity development.

Code: OPPGEN

Reference to oppressive experiences due to being a woman.

Code: OPPINT

Expression(s) in which the participant attempts to isolate or identifies divisions between self and other members of her reference group.

Code: OPPRE

Reference to oppressive experiences due to being Black/African.

Code: OTHER

Reference to the perceptions of others.

Code: PARTNER

Reference to spousal partnership as it relates to identity development.

Code: PEERGEN

Reference to gender identity development influenced by or occurring within the context of a peer/social group or organization.

Code: PEERRE

Reference to racial/ethnic identity development influenced by or occurring within the context of a peer/social group or organization.

Code: PHYGEN

Reference to physical developments indicative of female maturation; examples include, puberty, menstrual cycle, pregnancy, menopause, etc.).

Code: PHYSIO

Reference to physical features (physiogonomy) characteristic of persons of African/Black heritage; some examples include, skin color, nose shape, lip shape, hair texture, body shape, etc.

Code: POLGEN

Reference to gender identity development influenced by political ideology or occurring within the context of involvement of political involvements.

Code: POLRE

Reference to racial/ethnic identity development influenced by political ideology or occurring within the context of political involvements.

Code: PRIDE

Expression of pride/joy related to identity with reference group membership.

Code: PRIVWH

Reference to instances of White privilege or experiences of this phenomena which shape racial/ethnic identity.

Code: RELGEN

Reference to gender identity development influenced by or occurring within the context of religious/spiritual institutions/experiences.

Code: RELRE

Reference to racial/ethnic identity development influenced by or occurring within the context of religious/spiritual institutions/experiences.

Code: RESILIENCE

Reference to resilience or experiences in which obstacles/struggles are overcome.

Code: RESIST

Expressions of resistance to oppressive conditions and other-generated concepts of Black/African womanhood.

Code: SALIENCE

Reference to the importance or lack of importance of her racial/ethnic or gender identity.

Code: SEX

Reference to identity influenced by or occurring within the context of sexual experiences or in relation to participant's sexual self concept.

Code: SOCIAL

Reference to identity development influenced by or occurring within the context of socialization processes.

Code: STEREOTYPE

Reference to racial/ethnic or gender identity development influenced by stereotypes.

Code: STRUGGLE

Reference to identity developing within the context of struggle.

Code: SURVIVAL

Reference to survival in relation to gender or racial/ethnic identity.

Code: VOICE

Reference to the importance and expression of the African/Black woman's voice.

Code: WOMAN

Characteristics attributed to being a woman.

Code: WORKGEN

Reference to gender identity development influenced by or occurring within the context of the workplace, or related to the participant’s career.

Code: WORKRE

Reference to racial/ethnic identity development influenced by or occurring within the context of the workplace, or related to the participant's career.