Reasons I Care: Exploring Relationships Among Social Identities, Cultural Values, and Black Adolescent Males’ Pro-Social Behaviors

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This dissertation, REASONS I CARE: EXPLORING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SOCIAL IDENTITIES, CULTURAL VALUES, AND BLACK ADOLESCENT MALES’ PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIORS IN A URBAN SCHOOL CONTEXT, by JOHARI HARRIS, 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 and Human Development, Georgia State University.

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ABSTRACT

Black male students face a multitude of challenges that often lead to poor academic and social outcomes at school (Ferguson, 2001; Noguera, 2003). There is extensive research on the predictors of their problems, but far less on the factors that can lead to positive outcomes. Research has demonstrated Black males who are positive about their racial-ethnic identity have better academic and psychological outcomes than peers who have less positive feelings (Chavous et al., 2003). Less is known about how racial identity and other social-cognitive variables influence Black males’ pro-social behaviors, an important component of school success. To address this gap, this sequential, explanatory mixed-method study asked two main questions. First, do racial-
ethnic identity and gender identity predict Black males’ pro-social behaviors and, if so, is this done jointly or independently? Second, do moral reasoning and Afro-centric values predict Black males’ pro-social behaviors and, if so, is this done jointly or independently? One hundred thirty-one African American adolescent males completed quantitative assessments of these variables. Follow up focus groups were used to contextualize quantitative findings. Using regression analysis, this study found racial public regard, gender public regard, and gender private regard positively predicted participants’ pro-social behaviors. In addition, racial public regard moderated the positive relationship between racial centrality and pro-social behaviors as well as the positive relationship between racial private regard and pro-social behaviors. The two focus groups (one with the highest pro-social scores and another with the lowest) revealed three important themes. First, all participants valued respect more than acts of kindness. Second, all participants reported low levels of racial public regard, and this encouraged them to act in pro-social ways, contradicting quantitative findings. Participants in the low pro-social group described the social world in more racialized terms than those in the high pro-social group. Third, all participants asserted that race mediates justice. Overall, these quantitative and qualitative results demonstrate how important racial public regard is in understanding Black adolescent males’ pro-social behaviors. Findings suggest critical conversations concerning race and public regard should be included in social-emotional learning initiatives for these students.

INDEX WORDS: African American males, adolescents, racial-ethnic identity, gender identity, Afro-centric values, moral reasoning, pro-social behaviors
REASONS I CARE: EXPLORING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SOCIAL IDENTITIES, CULTURAL VALUES, AND BLACK ADOLESCENT MALES’ PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIORS IN A URBAN SCHOOL CONTEXT

by

JOHARI HARRIS

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology in Department of Educational Psychology, Special Education, and Communication Disorders in the College of Education and Human Development Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA 2018
DEDICATION

“I am what time, circumstance, history, have made of me, certainly, but I am also, much more than that. So are we all.”
– James Baldwin

This dissertation is dedicated to
Kimathi “Sekou” Harris
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This dissertation would not be possible without the continued support of so many different people in my life. I want to first thank my dissertation committee members. Dr. Hendricks, Dr. Kuperminc, and Dr. Patton-Terry; you have each provided invaluable guidance and support that extended far beyond the aims of this dissertation. Dr. Irving, I would not be at GSU if not for you! I am and will continue to be incredibly grateful for your continued support on professional and personal matters.

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Daddy, thank you for giving me a love of learning grounded in recognition and appreciation of the fact I am the result of the awesomeness and resiliency of Black people who continue to “illuminate the whole show.” I hope I made you proud.

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1 A REVIEW OF RACIAL-ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND HOW RACIAL-ETHNIC IDENTITY INFLUENCES AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENT PSYCHO-SOCIAL OUTCOMES

Identity is a highly complex construct that affects a range of psycho-social outcomes across the lifespan. Identities can be socially situated and highly dynamic. A plethora of research has explored the reciprocal relationship between one's social identity and psycho-social outcomes (Tajfel, 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). One social identity that has received much attention is racial-ethnic identity, with a significant amount of scholarship focusing on African Americans (Phinney, 1989; Quintana et al. 2006; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998).

It is impossible to define what it means to be African American considering the rich tapestry that represents the African American experience. There is no disagreement, though, that African Americans’ past and present is one marred by varying degrees of prejudice and discrimination (Alexander, 2012; Asante, 2003). Brought to America as slaves, African Americans fought against systematic dehumanization and oppression (Asante, 2003). Though slavery was abolished in 1865, African Americans continued to struggle against the threat of psychological and bodily harm to gain social and civil rights within American society (Alexander, 2012; Asante, 2003). Despite noted barriers, a legacy of intellectualism and activism within African American communities persisted. The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s marked the culmination of many of these efforts and resulted in critical legal and social successes for African Americans.
During this period, social and developmental psychologists also began to examine how African American people developed their racial-ethnic identity and how it affected their thoughts and behaviors (Cross, 1991). This paper will extend this research by first critically examining racial-ethnic identity theories with an emphasis on models focused on African Americans, then review scholarship concentrating on racial-ethnic identity’s relation to African American children’s and adolescents’ psycho-social outcomes.

**Social Identity**

"Social identity…is a key conceptual link between individual and society. When a person defines himself or herself regarding a category or group of somehow similar people, the person takes on shared meanings of the categorical label’s implication, as well as assuming elements of a common agenda for action" (Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi & Cotting, 1999, p. 91). Social identity theory examines how one’s membership in a social group influences one’s thoughts and behaviors across contexts. Often these identities are arranged by importance as a set of behaviors are attached to them; a person’s behaviors would ideally match the perceived shared values of their most important social identities (Stryker & Serpe, 1982; Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

One important social identity, considering the social, political, and economic implications often attached to it, is one’s racial-ethnic identity (Good, Dweck, & Aronson, 2007). Therefore, a large amount of scholarship has focused on how membership within this social group affects different psycho-social outcomes. Much of the research in this area has focused on racial-ethnic minorities. Tajfel (2010) asserts minorities’ racial-ethnic background is highly salient because they often face challenges ranging from subtle experiences with bias to outright discrimination.

---

1 This paper will primarily use the hybrid term *racial-ethnic* to talk about African Americans racial-ethnic identity development and related outcomes because it allows one to examine the racial implications of African American’s experiences while acknowledging ethnic factors such as cultural and demographic influences. When discussing theoretical models, this paper will use the terms utilized by theorists.
due to this identity. He goes on to suggest racial-ethnic minorities must think deeply about their group membership in order to develop a positive overall self-concept (Tajfel, 2010). Racial-ethnic identity theories draw from social identity theory to provide a framework for respective models. These theories examine either the process or content of one’s racial-ethnic identity. This paper will critically explore both approaches while determining similarities and differences between theories.

**Developmental-Stage Models of Racial-Ethnic Identity**

Erik Erickson (1968) and James Marcia (1967) are often understood to be the architects of identity development. Erikson asserted that, during adolescence, an individual develops a cohesive identity though two processes: exploration and commitment. An adolescent will first experience some type of crisis that will prompt him or her to explore different roles and the accompanying value systems critically. The adolescent will then commit to an identity and follow the prescribed expectations that often accompany that role in society. Marcia expanded Erikson’s theory by parsing out four statuses a person may occupy during the exploration and commitment process: diffusion, moratorium, foreclosed and achieved. A diffused individual has neither explored nor committed to any identity whereas a person in moratorium is continually exploring with no real effort towards commitment. Alternatively, a foreclosed individual has committed to an identity but did no exploration in the process. Lastly, an achieved individual did a healthy amount of exploration and committed to an identity. The following three developmental-stage models, Nigrescence, ethnic identity model, and ethnic identity scale are all derived from these foundational theories on identity development, and the most frequently utilized in work examining the process of racial-ethnic development (Cross, 1971; Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1989; Umana-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bamaca-Gomez 2004).
**Nigrescence**

The 1970s were a highly contentious period marked by deteriorating race relations. During this same time, however, social and cultural movements encouraged people to take pride in marginalized identities, such as one’s racial-ethnic background. Nigrescence was developed against this backdrop (Cross, 1971; DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Plummer, 1995; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990; Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, & Cross, 2001). Nigrescence, defined as the “process of becoming Black” was the first racial identity stage-development theoretical model for African Americans (Cross, 1991; Vandiver et al., 2001; Parham, 1989). The model consists of five stages: Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emmersion, Internalization, Internalization-Commitment.

Pre-Encounter, the first stage, consists of two identity clusters, Assimilation and Anti-Black. This stage is marked by low racial salience; the person gives little thought to being African American. An individual in the Assimilation cluster is content with his or her American identity and indifferent to his or her racial background. In contrast, an individual in the Anti-Black cluster endorses negative stereotypes about African American people and African American culture (Vandiver et al., 2001). Cross (1991) asserts Anti-Black sentiment is often a result of miseducation during the individual's K-12 school years, pointing to the political nature of the theoretical model. Ultimately, for Cross, one cannot divorce America’s oppression of African Americans from their racial identity development.

Pre-encounter is disrupted during Encounter, the second stage of Nigrescence. Encounter refers to an incident/situation that forces the person to confront race and the way it may control his or her life. The encounter could be intentional and offensive such as being called by a racial slur or accidental and simple, such as being the sole person of color in a setting. Regardless of
the exact incident, the person will either regress to remain in Pre-encounter or enter the Immersion-Emmersion stage.

During Immersion-Emmersion, a person will immerse him- or herself in African American culture and attempt to learn all they can about African American people and the social and political processes that have affected their existence. During this stage, an individual will grapple with feelings of pride and admiration for African American culture and anger and distrust towards Whiteness. While holding absolute views towards either racial group may be viewed as unhealthy and unrealistic, Cross (1991) argues that an unwavering positive outlook towards African American culture is crucial. It fosters a positive racial identity because the exploration process uncovers African Americans’ resilience, activism, and resourcefulness that is often ignored in popular American narratives. Furthermore, the apprehension towards White people is not unhealthy or pathological but an arguably reasonable response to learning of the oppressive systems and resulting racial disparities African Americans have been forced to endure (Vandiver et al., 2001). Despite gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of African American history and culture, the person’s mind is often tinged with sadness and possible anxiety because he or she is becoming more aware of the persistent inequity African Americans must grapple with (Cross, 1991; Vandiver et al., 2001). Therefore, the person has the challenging task of reconciling complex feelings towards African American and White culture that emerges during this period. If able to do so, he or she will move into Internalization.

During Internalization, one’s racial identity will now be highly salient. Cross argues that three viewpoints emerge during this stage: Black Nationalism, Bi-Culturalism, and Multi-Culturalism. These viewpoints shape a person’s thoughts and behaviors. On the one hand, a Nationalist is concerned with the empowerment of African American people even at the expense
of other groups. His or her racial identity supersedes any other socially-mediated identities. A Bi-Culturalist, on the other hand, recognizes and appreciates the other social identities he or she may hold, like nationality or gender, though race will often be more salient than the others. Similarly, a person with a Multi-Cultural viewpoint will appreciate his or her range of identities. The key difference between Multi-Cultural and Bi-Cultural identity profiles is that a Multi-Cultural person’s race will not always be his or her most salient identity. Research on Nigrescence has found most individuals remain in the Internalization stage. A small number, though, move to Identity-Commitment. Identity-Commitment represents a person who goes further than just committing to an identity on a cognitive level. The person will take tangible steps, in alignment with their viewpoint, to empower African American people on a social, political, or economic level.

Cross, Smith & Payne (2002) suggest that African Americans engage in unique, culturally specific actions that often align with their viewpoints. They outline five behavior profiles one engages in when “doing racial identity”: buffering, bonding, code-switching, bridging, and individualism (Cross at al., 2002; Cross & Strauss, 1998). Buffering protects African Americans when they are placed in a racially charged situation and caught off guard. Bonding refers to feeling connected to members of the larger African American cultural group, and code-switching refers to the ability for one to swiftly move between social norms while still maintaining his or her “Blackness.” Bridging is when the person connects with and learns from people of other racial-ethnic backgrounds, while sharing aspects or his or her African American culture. Lastly, individualism refers to a person’s ability to maintain a sense of identity separate from their racial identity. A person’s Nigrescence profiles will likely have an impact on his and
her behaviors. For example, a Black Nationalist may be less likely to engage in bridging than an individual who has a Multi- or Bi- Cultural profile.

Cross and colleagues developed and revised the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) to measure identity profiles within stages (Carter, 1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver et al., 2001). CRIS consists of 40 items measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The index measures seven attitudes: Pre-encounter, Assimilation, Pre-encounter Miseducation, Pre-Encounter Self- Hatred, Immersion-Emmerson Anti-White, Internalization Afri-centrism, and Internalization Multiculturalists-Inclusion. A sample item from the Pre-encounter Assimilation item would be “I am not so much a member of a racial group as I am an American.” CRIS has found strong empirical support concerning validity and reliability from the research community (Cokley, 2002; Vandiver et al., 2001; Worrell, Vandiver, Schaefer, Cross & Phagen-Smith, 2006; Worrell, 2008). A significant amount of research using Nigrescence and CRIS has focused on adults. Much less has used the scale and theory to examine adolescents’ racial-ethnic identity development (Gardner-Kitt & Worrell, 2007; Worrell, 2008). To address this gap, Jean Phinney’s developed the ethnic identity model (Phinney, 1989; Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Ong, 2006).

**Ethnic Identity Development Model**

Phinney pointed out that ethnic identity research in the late 1980s most often examined adults’ ethnic identity development or the ways in which young children understand ethnic labels. She argued that the lack of an ethnic identity model for adolescents prevented researchers from understanding how youth make meaning from an abstract concept that often has real-world implications in their day-to-day lives. Therefore, through interviews with a diverse group of 10th graders, she developed the following theory and scale.
Phinney used Marcia’s statuses to frame her theory of ethnic identity development (EID) while retaining focus on exploration and commitment. EID consists of three stages: Diffused/Foreclosed, Moratorium, and Achieved (Phinney, 1989). An adolescent in the Diffused/Foreclosed stage has done little to explore his or her ethnicity. Whatever views he or she may have regarding their ethnic background are likely gleaned from other people. These views can be positive, negative, or neutral depending on the adolescent’s family and community influences. An adolescent enters Moratorium when he or she begins exploring his or her ethnic identity. She argues that, unlike Nigrescence, this stage often occurs because of the adolescent’s cognitive growth and abstract thinking skills and a jarring incident is not necessary for this to occur (Mandara, Gaylord-Harden, Richards, & Ragsdale, 2009; Phinney, 1989).

During this stage the adolescent’s ethnic identity becomes much more salient and he or she become much more aware of prejudice and discrimination. Moratorium can be a challenging time for some adolescents as they must tackle views about their ethnic identity that may be unflattering or undesirable. Despite potential anxiety, this exploration is essential in creating a cohesive identity as it allows adolescents to “try on” different representations of their ethnic identity. Ideally, and in line with Marcia, Cross, and Erikson, this exploration would lead to a commitment and internalization of the individual’s ethnic identity. If this were to happen, the person would be classified as Achieved. Phinney posits the adolescent’s ethnic identity may not be highly salient in the Achieved stage and he or she may still hold negative views about his or her ethnic identity. Ultimately, what is most important is the commitment to a representation that leaves the person content in his or her ethnic membership (Phinney, 2009).

Phinney developed the Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) to measure the EID theory and the scale has enjoyed widespread use (Phinney & Ong, 2006). MEIM consists of
12 items measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Items such as “I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs” probe the adolescent’s levels of exploration whereas “I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group” examines commitment. Higher scores indicate higher levels of affirmation and commitment (Phinney, 1992). Cross et al. (2015) point out MEIM provides valuable information on positive, global feelings about one’s ethnicity. “The MEIM is very sensitive to any positive ethnic identity trend, regardless of the specific ethnic identity expression the trend is associated with…the MEIM sums across all expressions of ethnicity, or what we are calling High RS (racial salience)” (p.130).

Though this measure has shown strong reliability and captures salience, a key element in racial-ethnic identity research, Umaña-Taylor et al. (2004) argue that there is a disconnect between the theory and associated measure that must not be ignored. They point out the EID model asserts one does not have to hold positive feelings about his or her ethnic identity to be classified as Identity Achieved. In MEIM, though, to be classified as Identity Achieved, one must have positive feelings towards his or her ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004 address this issue and attempt to rectify this discrepancy with their Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS) (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004).

**Ethnic Identity Scale**

Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004 argue Phinney’s ethnic identity scale (MEIM) does not fully align with Erikson’s original conception of identity. According to the authors, the most important aspect of Erikson’s theory is the person exploring and committing to an identity, not feeling positive about said identity. MEIM’s emphasis on affirmation confounds our understanding of the person’s commitment to his or her ethnic identity. To fix this disconnect, the authors separate
Identity Achievement into two parts: Affirmation and Resolution. Affirmation reflects the positive feelings the person has towards his or her ethnicity whereas Resolution examines commitment (Schwartz et al., 2014; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). Additionally, in EIS, the person’s Affirmation scores are given a positive or negative label. This label is then applied to their status score. For example, someone who scored who scored high on Exploration and Commitment but low on Affirmation would be classified as Achieved Negative.

By parsing out Affirmation and Resolution, researchers may have a better understanding of the content of the stages and commitment levels. Additionally, authors argue, to understand ethnic identity’s relationship to various outcomes, Commitment, Resolution, and Affirmation should be examined as separate dimensions. Umaña-Taylor et al.(2004) assert “By developing a measure that independently assesses the three distinct components of ethnic identity formation and thereby allows for the classification of individuals into an ethnic identity typology, the framework through which ethnic identity is examined can be refined and can more clearly capture its variability” (p.13). The EIS is a 17-question scale scored on a 4-point Likert scale. Sample items include “My feelings about my ethnicity are mostly negative” (affirmation), “I have participated in activities that have taught me about my ethnicity” (exploration), and “I understand how I feel about my ethnicity” (resolution). Reliability and validity testing with a diverse group of high school students revealed strong reliability coefficients as well as strong construct validity. Thus demonstrating this scale has use for diverse populations. (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004; Yoon, 2011).

Conclusions

Ultimately, exploration and commitment are foundational to racial-ethnic identity development for developmental-stage racial-ethnic identity theories. An individual must engage
in these two critical tasks in route to a cohesive racial-ethnic identity. Differences between theories arise within the proposed stages for each model. For example, Phinney’s EID and EIS by extension, demonstrate higher levels of fidelity to Erikson’s and Marcia’s identity theoretical models than Nigrescence. EID and EIS, using the same terms as Marcia, emphasize the universal nature of one’s understanding of his or her racial-ethnic identity. Also, resolution occurs with commitment rather than feelings of affirmation and Phinney argued there is a high degree of fluidity between stages for her adolescent focused theory (Phinney, 1989). Nigrescence, alternatively, uses the distinct experience of African Americans as the backdrop of the theory and argues one must not only commit to his or her racial identity but also hold positive views towards being an African American to reach Internalization.

Both Nigrescence and EID suggest an individual’s stage will impact psycho-social functioning (Cross, Smith, & Payne, 2002; Phinney, 2008). Research has demonstrated that those with higher levels of positive feelings towards their racial-ethnic identity have better outcomes than those with less positive feelings about their racial-ethnic identity (Phinney & Ong, 2006). While Nigrescence, EID, and EIS are often used to understand African American youths’ ethnic-racial identity development and how it relates to outcomes, others have turned to an alternative understanding of racial-ethnic identity. Multidimensional models of identity closely examine the different dimensions racial-ethnic identity is comprised of to bring to light the nuances present within a person’s racial-ethnic identity.

**Multidimensional Models of Racial-Ethnic Identity**

Multidimensional models focus on the content of a person’s racial-ethnic identity and are derived from structural identity theory (Stryker & Serpe, 1994) Structural identity theorists argue one holds many identities, which are often ordered according to importance; a person’s values
and behaviors often align with the salient identities. Additionally, structural identity theorists are much less interested in the stages of exploration and commitment. Rather, they examine the dimensions of identities at a single time point. They suggest identity’s influence on psycho-social outcomes are best understood by examining the saliency and content of identity (Stryker & Serpe, 1982). Joseph Baldwin, also known as Kobi Kambon, developed a multidimensional model which is built upon pan-African values to deconstruct the different elements of African American identity.

**African American World-View Paradigm**

Baldwin believes previous attempts to examine African American’s identity and other psycho-social processes incorrectly assumed African Americans’ process would mirror White Americans. When a disconnect between African Americans’ and White Americans’ psychological and behavioral processes emerges, African Americans are deemed deficient at best and pathological at worst (Baldwin, 1984; Baldwin & Bell, 1985; Baldwin & Hopkins, 1990). Baldwin (1990) argues this approach is misguided, inaccurate, and ultimately reinforces racism and oppression. Moreover, he posits racial-ethnic identity models focused on African American identity place too much emphasis on the racial challenges African Americans may face and ignore the African-centered mindset. He suggests instead one must view African American people from a paradigm dictated by "bio-genetic and social-environmental influences" that reflect their African heritage. Baldwin’s worldview paradigm is derived from Afro-centric values, a set of guiding African centered principles, that unpacks the dimensions that comprise African American racial-ethnic identity (Baldwin & Bell, 1985; Baldwin & Hopkins, 1990).

Americans’ identity and is biogenetically determined. The African self-consciousness component reflects both bio-genetics and environment influences, guides the African self-extension orientation, and is the conscious expression of a person’s African identity. Baldwin asserts the African self-consciousness component influences a person’s thoughts and behaviors. This component is comprised of four dimensions: (a) awareness and value of a person’s African identity and cultural heritage; (b) recognition of African American collective survival priorities; (c) participation in the development and self-appreciation of people of African descent while defending their worth; and (d) recognition and resistance of oppressive forces (Baldwin, 1981; Baldwin & Bell, 1985; Bhagwat, Kelly, & Lambert, 2012). Baldwin is primarily interested in how salient the different dimensions are within a particular person and asserts that the salience of dimensions will predict behaviors across domains.

Baldwin and colleagues developed the African Self-Consciousness scale to measure proposed dimensions of African self-consciousness. The 42-item measure includes items like “Blacks who trust whites are basically very intelligent people” and “It is good for Blacks in America to wear traditional African-type clothing and hair styles if they desire to do so.” Initial testing of the scale indicated high reliability and validity (Baldwin & Hopkins, 1990). Additional Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) testing indicates the multi-dimensional nature of African American identity (Bhagwat et al., 2012). This model is most often used when researchers are interested in how African cultural values influence the structure of African American identity. The majority of testing has been done with African American university students, making it difficult to extrapolate findings to African American adolescents. Currently, though, most research does not use the African-centered perspective when examining racial identity.
particularly with adolescents. Instead, research uses models that situate African-Americans in America’s social climate.

**Multidimensional Structure of Racial Identification**

Sanders-Thompson argues African American people may have fundamentally different views in understanding their African Americanness; therefore, it is too limiting to explore it on a stage continuum. In her multi-dimensional structure of racial identification model (MSRI), she shifts away from maintaining focus on an Afro-centric perspective to compartmentalize African American identity’s dimensions, arguing African American people who endorse American values are not necessarily suffering from psychological distress (Sanders-Thompson, 1995; Thompson, 1999; Thompson, 2001).

MSRI defines racial identity as the following: "Racial Identification refers to the psychological attachment to one of the several social categories available to individuals when the category selected is based on race or skin color and common history, particularly as it relates to oppression and discrimination due to skin color" (Thompson, 1995, p. 155). MSRI contains four parameters: physical, psychological, socio-political, and cultural. The physical parameter explores one’s feelings about African American physical features such as hair type and skin color, and the psychological parameter examines the individual’s connectedness towards his or her racial group, also known as salience. The socio-political parameter examines the individual’s commitment to addressing the African Americans’ social and political challenges. Lastly, cultural identity parameter examines a person’s awareness of African American peoples’ cultural history.

Sanders-Thompson designed the multidimensional racial identity scale-revised (MRIS-R) to measure the proposed factors. The scale consists of 30 items measured on a 4-point Likert-
scale. Sample items include “I am committed to the strength and cohesion of the African American family” to measure the psychological dimension and “African American’s often behave in ways I find offensive” to measure the socio-political dimension. Higher scores indicate higher levels of salience in a parameter. Sanders-Thompson believes the parameter’s salience for an individual will likely mediate their thoughts and behaviors. CFA suggests the measurement scale was consistent with the theoretical model, highlighting the strength of the MSRI (Sanders-Thompson, 1995). While she acknowledges developmental-stage models have value, she states MRIS and other structural models and measures provide better insight into the relationship between racial identity and psycho-social outcomes. For example, if someone behaves in a manner contradictory to one identity parameter, there is a likelihood those behaviors will correspond to a different identity parameter, thus succinctly capturing how feelings may relate to thoughts and behaviors.

**Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity**

The multidimensional model of racial identity (MMRI) is one of the most frequently used multidimensional models (Chavous et al, 2003; Seaton, Yip, & Sellers, 2009). Researchers in the mid-1990s who wanted to address theoretical gaps between racial-ethnic identity theories developed MMRI. The researchers argue theories addressing individuals’ understandings of their racial-ethnic identity can be placed into one of two categories: mainstream and underground. Mainstream theories, such as the EID model, are concerned with the cognitive and behavioral effects of race and ethnicity, without considering the unique cultural space they may occupy. When acknowledging the cultural space, the theories may be preoccupied with how a person lives with a stigmatized identity. Underground theories, on the other hand, concern themselves with the history and contexts that shape a racial or ethnic identity and are not as concerned with
the effect a stigmatized identity may have on an individual (Baldwin & Hopkins, 1990; Sellers et al., 1998). Often, apart from Nigrescence, underground theories are either ignored or underutilized within research (Sellers et al., 1998). MMRI addresses these gaps by bridging strengths of various racial-ethnic identity theories within a structural-multi-dimensional framework.

MMRI states African American racial identity is “the significance and qualitative meaning that individuals attribute to their membership within their African American racial group within their self-concepts” (Sellers et al., 1998, p.23). Four assumptions guide this theory. First, some racial identity components are stable whereas others are sensitive to situational cues. Next, a person will hold multiple identities, which are ranked in hierarchal order. Third, a person's understanding of his or her race is most valid (this assumption is in response to other theories that look to behaviors before the individual). Lastly, the theory places no value judgment on the content of one’s racial identity (Sellers et al., 1998).

MMRI proposes one’s racial identity contains four dimensions: racial identity, racial salience, racial centrality, regard, and racial ideology. Racial salience represents how a person's race may influence his or her feelings and behaviors within a situation or context. Racial centrality represents how much a person defines him or herself by their race alongside other identities. Racial centrality is much more constant than racial salience and racial centrality levels have been shown to moderate other dimensions’ relationships to outcomes (Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998). Racial regard contains two subsets, private and public regard. This evaluative dimension was included to examine how African Americans feel about living with a stigmatized identity. Public regard represents how the person thinks others view African Americans and private regard represents how he or she feels about being African American.
Ideology is comprised of four profiles; Nationalist, Assimilationist, Humanist, and Oppressed Minority, which examine a person’s beliefs about how members of his or her racial group should behave. Nationalists believe African American people should focus solely on African American issues and support African American people before all others. Oppressed Minorities, alternatively, believe all minorities face challenges that should be addressed collaboratively. Assimilationists focus on commonalities between African American people and other racial-ethnic groups. While they may be socially conscious and aware of pervasive racism, they believe in working within the system rather than against it. Lastly, Humanists are concerned with outcomes related to all people and believes justice is working for the greater good (Sellers et al., 1998). Humanist ideology is likened to colorblind ideologies as it emphasizes individual attributes over race.

Researchers developed the Multidimensional Inventory of African American Identity (MIBI) to measure dimensions. MIBI measures ideology, centrality, and regard; it does not measure salience because of the dimension’s specificity to situation. Sellers et al. (1998) argue it would be incredibly difficult to create an accurate measure for salience considering its highly sensitive nature. The 56-item self-report index has been normed for adults and a supplementary scale, the MIBI-T has been created for use with adolescents (Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyên 2008). Sample items for the MIBI include “I feel close to other Black people” to measure centrality “I feel good about other Black people” to measure private regard. Despite its widespread use, challenges have arisen when examining psychometric qualities of the measure. For example, the reliability of the different dimensions is lower than would be ideal, but this has been attributed to scale length rather than issues such as lack of internal consistency (Cokley & Helm, 2001; Vandiver, Worrell & Delgado-Romero, 2009).
Conclusions

The noted multidimensional models were all developed for African Americans and interested in the saliency of particular dimensions. Baldwin’ model is unique in the fact Afro-centric values are the foundation of the theory. Despite difference in foundations, Baldwin and MSRI both include dimensions representing African American’s social and political positioning as well as cultural awareness. MMRI examines these dimensions, though less directly, through the regard component. Additionally, while Baldwin and Sanders-Thompson examine salience of particular dimensions, MMRI directly measures the salience of a person’s racial identity through the racial centrality component. MMRI and MSRI alternately focus on African Americans’ experience within the American context. For example, MMRI identity profiles reflect profiles that would only likely emerge within the American context. Ultimately, all structural models stress that the complexity of African American identity is better illustrated with a content-orientated approach than process-orientated approach.

Multi-Dimensional and Developmental-Stage Models: Similarities and Differences

The aforementioned theories have been invaluable to research working to understand African Americans racial-ethnic identities. Fundamentally, structural models are concerned with the content of one’s identity at a given moment in time whereas developmental-stage models explore the process the individual goes through when coming to understand his or her identity. One should keep this difference in mind when determining what model to use and relevant questions. The examined multi-dimensional models incorporate African Americans’ specific racial-ethnic experiences into the models. Ethnic developmental-stage models, apart from Nigrescence, are applicable across racial-ethnic groups. Additionally, structural models do not attempt to make claims about positive or negative attributes related to salience of one’s racial-
ethnic identity while Nigrescence argue to reach the Internalization/Commitment stage, thoughts and feelings towards one’s racial-ethnic group should be positive. Despite differences, there are four themes that resonate throughout both approaches to understanding racial-ethnic identity: cultural mistrust, racial salience, racial-ethnic pride, and racial-ethnic ideologies.

**Cultural mistrust.** Cultural mistrust is the concern or apprehension an individual may have towards members of other racial-ethnic groups (Cross, 1991; Sellers et al., 1998). Within Nigrescence, cultural mistrust is quite evident during the Immersion-Emmersion stage when the person may be grappling with Anti-White sentiments. The person's feeling towards White people may range from wary to hostile. Vandiver et al. (2001) write, "Immersion-Emersion is an intense period of transition…the individual has behaviors synonymous with that of someone who has just discovered African Americanness as manifested by the correct ideology and world view…a tendency to denigrate White people and White culture” (p.159).

Though Phinney's stage model does not address cultural mistrust as explicitly as Nigrescence, interviews with participants in the Moratorium group reflected the concern of other people's treatment of their ethnic group. African American adolescents classified as Moratorium, were actively exploring their racial-ethnic identity and discussed their concern about and reservations towards White Americans and how they were troubled by the racial dynamics between Whites and Blacks (Phinney, 1989). These conversations suggest that African American people in the exploration phrase and dealing with cultural mistrust in both EID and Nigrescence are specifically wary of White Americans. This is not surprising considering the racially charged history between White Americans and African Americans.

Within MMRI, Nationalist and Oppressed Minority ideologies express wariness towards others’ intentions, particularly of White people. MIBI questions tied to the Nationalist and
Oppressed Minority ideologies illustrate this concern. These include items such as, “White people can never be trusted” and “The dominant society devalues anything not White male orientated.” Additionally, public regard items explore cultural mistrust with questions such as “Most people, on the average, consider African Americans to be more ineffective than other racial groups” and “African Americans are not respected by larger society.” These items point to the relevance of cultural mistrust in a person’s identity profiles and the ways he or she may view others beliefs about African Americans.

**Racial-ethnic salience.** Racial-ethnic salience refers to how connected a person is to his or her ethnic-racial identity (Brenner, Serpe, & Stryker, 2014). Salience is an integral part of all measures and an important predictor or behaviors. According to MMRI theory, one can understand how race may influence behaviors by examining racial-ethnic identity's salience amongst other essential identities. Sanders-Thompson uses the term "Psychological Connectedness" to explore how connected one feels to their African American culture. The psychological dimension with MRSI, like MMRI, examines how central a person’s racial-ethnic identity is to his or her psychological and behavioral processes. The African-American World View frame also focuses on salience by examining feeling connected to the eight dimensions outlined in Baldwin’s theory.

Nigrescence, EID theory, and EIS measures both assert Achieved/Internalization individual’s ethnic-racial identity will likely be highly salient and a key part of his or her overall identity during the exploration and commitment stages (Vandiver et al., 2001; Phinney & Ong, 2006). Cross (1991) points out those in the Pre-Encounter stage will likely have low levels of racial-ethnic salience. MEIM measures are a strong indication of racial-ethnic salience because the overall mean score represents connectedness/commitment to one’s racial-ethnicity.
Ultimately, salience is an integral part of understanding the content and process of ethnic-racial identity.

**Racial-ethnic pride.** Racial-ethnic pride encompasses the positive emotions and feelings one has towards his or her racial-ethnic group. All models examine racial-ethnic pride. The structural models neutrally examine how one feels about being African American. The MMRI private regard dimension represents a person's feelings of pride towards their race and examines this relationship with questions such as "I am happy I am African American" and "I feel good about African American people." The MSRI cultural identity parameter measures a person’s pride towards his or her race and the amount of knowledge they have concerning the significant accomplishments within the African American race, again focusing on the positive feelings one may derive from the accomplishments of belonging to the African American race. While Baldwin does not measure racial pride as explicitly as MMRI and MSRI, his theory’s focus on an appreciation and pride for African value systems demonstrates racial-ethnic pride’s importance in his theory (Baldwin & Hopkins, 1990).

Similarly, developmental-stage models argue racial-ethnic pride is a key function in the development of one’s racial-ethnic identity. In Nigrescence, one builds up his or her racial-ethnic pride during the Immersion-Emmersion stage as he or she immerses himself or herself in African American culture. This pride carries over to the Internalization stage. Phinney’s theoretical model asserts one does not need to have positive thoughts about his or her ethnic group to progress to the next stage. However, per the measurement, one must hold positive views about his or her racial-ethnic identity to be placed in the Identity-Achieved stage (Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bámaca-Gómez, 2004).
Identity profiles. Both developmental-stage and structural models discuss identity profiles with a focus on a Nationalist, Bi-Culturist, or Humanist perspective. A Nationalist, understood as someone who prioritizes supporting African American people over other racial-ethnic groups, is measured in Nigrescence and MMRI. Additionally, both theories assert that holding this profile will influence how the person makes meaning of a situation and how he or she engages with others of the same and different races. Additionally, MSRI and Baldwin’s measurements, which examine how likely an individual is to prioritize their African American culture over others, could arguably be manifestations of Nationalist ideology.

The Humanist or Bi-culture profile, in which a person balances a salient racial-ethnic identity with one or more other identities, is present in both structural and developmental-stage models. Though EID does not discuss profiles as explicitly as MMRI and Nigrescence, interviews with Achieved-Identity youth illustrate a Bi-Cultural mind-frame. Participants spoke of how they appreciated their racial-ethnic identity alongside other essential parts of self.

Nigrescence also has a Bi-Cultural and Humanist profile as well as a Nationalist profile. Similar to Nigrescence, MMRI treats Bi-culturalism and Humanist as identity profiles and examines them within the ideology dimension (Sellers et al., 1998; Vandiver et al., 2001).
Table 1

Similarities and Differences Among Racial-Ethnic Identity Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity profiles</th>
<th>Cultural Mistrust</th>
<th>Racial-Ethnic Pride</th>
<th>Racial-Ethnic Salience</th>
<th>Nationalist</th>
<th>Bi-Cultural</th>
<th>Multi-Cultural</th>
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<td>Ethnic Identity Model (Phinney)</td>
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<td>Ethnic Identity Scale (Umana-Taylor et al.)</td>
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<td>African American World-View Paradigm (Baldwin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-Dimensional Structure of Racial Identity (Sanders-Thompson)</td>
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<td>Multi-Dimensional Model of African American Identity (Sellers et al.)</td>
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</table>
Conclusions

With noted similarities and differences, all theories agree African American identity is dynamic and multifaceted (Cross, 1991; Phinney & Ong, 2006; Thompson, 1995; Sellers et al., 1998). Across all models, it is crucial for a person to give thought to their racial-ethnic identity, despite potential anxiety. Across disciplines, research has looked at race’s relationship to outcomes with psychology working to uncover racial-ethnic identity’s potential, protective abilities alongside its connection to psycho-social functioning (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). A significant portion of these studies have examined outcomes among African American adults, but there is growing interest in racial-ethnic identity’s relationship to outcomes during childhood and adolescence (Schwartz et al., 2014). The current research trends and findings are explored below.

**Racial-Ethnic Identity’s Relationship to Psycho-Social Outcomes for African-American Adolescents**

Adolescence marks the period where youth develop cognitive skills that enable them to think deeply about abstract concepts. Therefore, it is no surprise that they often begin to think about their identity during this developmental timeframe (Phinney, 1989). Studies have found adolescents actively explore their race-ethnic during middle school, becoming relatively stable during high school (French, Seidman, Allen & Lawrence, 2000; French, Seidman, Allen & Aber, 2006). This is no different for African American adolescents; they think about race early and often. Therefore, many studies have examined how this impacts their psychological, academic, and behavioral outcomes.
Psychological Outcomes

Research has found there is a high likelihood African American youth will grapple with some form of racial-ethnic bias from peers and adults during their development (Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006). Unsurprisingly, African American children and adolescents are more likely to report experiencing racial-ethnic discrimination (Seaton, Yip, & Sellers, 2009). With these startling statistics in mind, a plethora of research has examined the ways African-American’s racial-ethnic identity can act as a buffer to the psychological stress associated with racial-ethnic discrimination as well as its relationship to important constructs like self-esteem.

Dotterer and McHale-Crouter (2009) examined the ways racial-ethnic identity might moderate the relationship between school engagement and perceived school discrimination. They found racial centrality moderated the relationship between perceived discrimination and school motivation. African American adolescents with high centrality were likely to have higher school motivation despite experiences with discrimination. Other studies have found similar results. For example, African American youth who reported low levels of racial public regard and who experienced discrimination reported higher levels of psychological distress whereas African American adolescents with high levels of private regard and centrality were less bothered by perceived discrimination (Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006).

Racial-ethnic identity has also been connected to African American youths’ self-esteem. This is most often related to the racial-ethnic pride adolescents may hold; African American youth who feel positive about their racial-ethnic identity often have higher self-esteem than those who harbor negative feelings about their racial-ethnic identity (Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1989;
Street, Harris-Britt, & Walker-Barnes, 2009). For example, in a study with African American boys, Blash and Unger (1995) found a positive relationship between salient, affirmative racial-ethnic identity and self-esteem. African American males who felt positively about being African American coupled with high racial-ethnic salience had higher levels of self-esteem than peers with low levels of racial-ethnic salience. Buckley and Carter (2005) found similar results with 200 African American high school girls. Using canonical correlation analysis, results indicated girls who were in the Pre-Encounter stage had lower self-esteem than girls in the Internalization stage. Those in the pre-encounter stage had low racial-ethnic salience and an absence of racial-ethnic pride likely due to the lack of exploration during that stage.

When Belgrave, Chase-Vaughn, Gray, Addison, & Cherry (2000) examined the effectiveness of a culturally-based intervention program for African American girls, they found participants were more likely to be in the Internalization phase than peers who did not participate in the program, and Internalization scores were positively correlated with self-esteem. Likewise, Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, & West-Bey (2009) used structural equation modeling (SEM) to determine that racial-ethnic identity significantly and positively related to self-esteem. These aforementioned studies point to the buffering effects of racial-ethnic identity as well as its positive relationship with self-esteem. Considering the protective and supportive factors racial-ethnic seem to hold for African American youth, research has also examined if this extends to academic outcomes.

**Academic Outcomes**

Schools are often sites in which youth explore their racial-ethnic identity while simultaneously grappling with the biases towards African Americans embedded in the curriculum and school practices. Numerous quantitative and qualitative studies have examined how African
American youth understand their race within schools (Chavous et al., 2003; Ferguson, 2001; Nasir, McLaughlin, & Jones, 2009). One trend which emerged is that African American youth who feel good about their racial-ethnic background have better academic outcomes than those who do not (Blash & Unger, 1995; Smith, Levine, Smith, Dumas & Prinz, 1999). Oyserman, Harrison, and Bybee (2001) study used Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) to uncover a positive relationship between African American adolescents’ positive racial-ethnic feelings and academic self-efficacy. A particularly interesting finding from this study was the gender interaction that emerged. For African American girls, racial-ethnic identity had a longitudinal, protective effect against declining academic efficacy but that same relationship was much smaller for African American boys.

Chavous et al. (2003) examined which profiles of racial-ethnic identity led to long term academic outcomes. The longitudinal study examined African American high school students and the likelihood of attending college post-graduation. Cluster analysis determined students who had higher levels of racial public and racial private regard and centrality were more likely to attend college, suggesting it is important African American students feel good about being African American to ensure long-term academic success. This effect remains unchanged when looking at younger children; African American children with positive thoughts about their racial-ethnic identity have better academic outcomes than children with low levels of public and private regard (Oyserman, Harrison, & Bybee, 2001; Smith, Atkins & Connell, 2003).

Feeling good about being African American does not always lead to academic success, however, and racial public regard often moderates the relation between racial-ethnic identity and academic outcomes. African American youth who have low levels of public regard have poorer academic outcomes when compared to youth with higher levels of public regard (Tang, McLoyd,
BLACK BOYS’ PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIORS IN URBAN SCHOOL

When Harper and Tuckman (2006) examined how the content of racial-ethnic identity affected to academic achievement among African American high school students, three profiles emerged: Buffering Defensive (low public regard and high private regard and centrality), Idealized (high levels of centrality, private, and public regard), and Alienated (low levels public regard, private regard, and centrality). In contrast to previous studies, students in the Idealized group had lower academic achievement than students in the Alienated group. This outcome persisted across grade levels, leading researchers to suggest this outcome is reflective of the bi-cultural identity African American students must maintain within academic settings. Authors argued African American students must dissociate from their African American identity to be successful in academic schools. These quantitative findings align with qualitative studies exploring African American identity construction and outcomes within urban schools (Nasir et al., 2009; Ferguson, 2001).

When Way, Rogers & Hughes (2013) interviewed African American high school students, participants reported negative exchanges with teachers and administrators. Students attributed this conflict to their racial-ethnic identity. In a somewhat contradictory manner, participants coped with this by drawing on the success of the African American community to motivate them in the face of adversity, but simultaneously wanted to be viewed as race-less. This is likely a reflection of the cognitive dissonance they are experiencing while developing their racial-ethnic identity. Rogers and Way (2016) found similar results with an all-male sample of African American male high school students. Realizing they were contending with negative stereotypes within schools, participants either dissociated from their African American identity or embraced the stereotypes. This finding invokes research that suggests race-related behaviors are often borne out of dominant social imagery, whether positive or negative (Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012).
Overall, findings suggest there is far from a direct relationship between racial-ethnic identity and academic outcomes; often specific dimensions are more correlated than others. Racial-ethnic pride plays a vital role in African American students' academic achievement, but it may not be enough to withstand the negative stereotypes and low public regard. Despite some divergences, it stands to reason that positive feelings about being African American leads to better academic outcomes for African American students. Similar findings emerge when examining the relation of racial-ethnic identity to behavioral outcomes.

**Behavioral Outcomes**

Compared to academic and psychological outcomes, there is a currently scant research examining racial-ethnic identity's relationship to behaviors, although the research that has been conducted has found positive results. When examining racial-ethnic identity’s relation to other high-risk behaviors, studies have found African American adolescents are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors such as early smoking, drinking, or risky behavior when they feel good about being African American (Burlew et al., 2000; Townsend & Belgrave, 2000). Additionally, African American adolescents who have positive feelings about their racial-ethnic identity are less likely to engage in self-destructive behaviors and more likely to spend time with pro-socially orientated peers (Joyce, O’Neil, Stormshak, McWhirter, & Dishion, 2013, Rock et al. 2000).

When Belgrave, Nguyen, Johnson & Hood (2011) conducted an exploratory study examining the racial-ethnic identity profiles of African American adolescents and how it related to aggression and empathy, three profiles emerged; well adjusted, poorly adjusted, and low racial-ethnic identity. Well-adjusted participants held positive thoughts about their racial-ethnic identity. They also reported lower levels of aggression and higher levels of empathy. Similar findings emerged when Thomas, Townsend, and Belgrave (2003) examined the Afro-centric viewpoint in
tandem with racial-ethnic identity. They found children with positive thoughts about their racial-ethnic identity coupled with high Afro-centric values had lower teacher-reported behavioral issues. Similarly, Smith, Levin, Dumas & Prinz (2009) conducted a longitudinal study with children, using a cognitive-development lens and found that third grade children who reported positive thoughts about their racial-ethnic identity were much less likely to have negative behavioral reports from teachers.

African American adolescents who feel good about their racial-ethnic identity are also less likely engage in aggressive behaviors (McMahon & Watts, 2002). For example, Arbona, Jackson, McCoy & Blakely (1999) found that African American middle school students who had strong, positive feelings towards their racial-ethnic identity were more likely to resolve inter-personal conflict in non-violent ways. When DeGruy, Reid, Mizrahi & Cotting (2012) examined African American male adolescents who had witnessed a violent crime, a known predictor for violent behaviors, the study found the participants who had high levels of racial respect, which measured the degree the participant felt respected as an African American, were less likely to engage in violence amongst peers than participants with lower levels of racial respect. Again, despite the studies examining the positive relationship, there must be more done to understand the relation between racial identity and behaviors, particularly positive ones.

Conclusions

Overall, research suggests feeling good about being African American leads to positive psycho-social outcomes for African American youth. Different factors often mediate this outcome, however, such as levels of racial salience and context. Numerous empirical studies have been done exploring racial-ethnic identities’ relationship to different outcomes critical to African
Conclusion and Future Directions

Methodology

A crucial issue in work on racial-ethnic identity slowly being addressed is the population of focus. Due to convenience sampling, a significant portion of the research exploring racial-ethnic identity has focused on emerging adults attending universities. Considering research has found African American youth are thinking about their racial-ethnic identity much earlier in their development, it is important to shift the age of focus for research (French et al., 2006). As Schwartz et al. (2014) point out, considering the barriers that African American youth face to obtain a four-year degree, findings from this subgroup are not likely representative of the overall population. This limitation threatens the generalizability of racial-ethnic identity’s relationship to outcomes for African American youth and emerging adults. Furthermore, variety in stage-development instrument could be beneficial for African American youth. EID is often utilized for examining racial-ethnic identity development among youth of color, but research has found Nigrescence and the accompanying scale, CRIS, is valid for adolescent populations. Some suggest it may be the better choice for process outcomes with African American youth because it examines the qualitative meaning specific to African Americans at each stage and considers African American youths’ unique context (Gardner-Kitt & Worrell, 2007).

Racial-ethnic identity does not develop in isolation. The use of more advanced statistical analyses will create a clearer picture of racial-ethnic identities’ relationship on outcomes. Methodologies such as hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) create a deeper understanding of how...
factors such as neighborhood or schools relate to racial-ethnic identity. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) can highlight the different pathways racial-ethnic identity can operate through, revealing more about the construct itself and how it affects outcomes. Schwartz et al. (2015) suggest the utilization of Latent Profile Analysis may better capture some of the within-group variability of racial-ethnic identity. Along this same vein, it is important to conduct more longitudinal research beginning in early adolescence to understand better how racial-ethnic identity develops and changes over time. Lastly, by developing more mixed-method studies, we can gain a more nuanced picture of African American youths’ racial-ethnic identity. Qualitative methods help situate quantitative findings within the dynamic cultural landscape of America and give African American youth an active voice in our emerging understanding of racial-ethnic identity research.

**Contextual Influences**

Studies have found specific events can prompt the exploration process and affect the content of one’s identity (Way, Santos, Niwa & Kim-Gervey, 2008). A plethora of racially-charged events and exchanges occur in the American context and these need to be explored in relation to racial-ethnic identity. With the advent of technology, African American youth have unprecedented access to these events, which may prematurely prompt their exploration process. In the current social climate the time is ripe for studying how increased media access to events affects African American youth’s racial-ethnic identity development. Considering how racial public regard, for example, moderates the many relations between racial-ethnic identity and psycho-social outcomes, a better understanding of what factors may shape racial public regard can provide new, exciting data for the field.
Unfortunately, few studies have examined how racial-ethnic identity operates in conjunction with other identities. Phinney (2008) points out how group identities related to class, gender, and race can be equally salient to the adolescent. The adolescent often must reconcile different, potentially negative, stereotypes of their social identities when developing their sense of self. Experiences associated with these identities are likely happening simultaneously rather than additively as much of the research suggests. Intersectionality, a theoretical perspective and method, addresses this issue. Intersectionality argues social identities develop in response to the power structures and inequalities they exist within, and we must understand them in unison rather than separately (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Crenshaw (1991) succinctly addresses this with the following statement:

“How do we understand identity politics today…Does that mean we cannot talk about identity? Or instead, that any discourse about identity has to acknowledge how our identities are constructed through the intersection of multiple dimensions? A beginning response to these questions requires that we first recognize that the organized identity group in which we find ourselves in are in fact coalitions, or at least potential coalitions waiting to be formed” (p. 1299).

Some studies have demonstrated African American youth outcomes have been influenced by their gender (Osyerman, Bybee, & Terry, 2003). Unfortunately, there has been significantly less research on gender identity among African American youth when compared their racial-ethnic identity; a troubling reality considering their outcomes are often predicated on their race and gender (Rogers, Scott & Way, 2015; Skinner, Perkins, Wood, & Kurtz-Costes, 2015).

Therefore, it is essential for research to examine the intersection of these multiple identities. This may be done through studies that examine the content, rather than process, of multiple identities.
Advancement of this area will give more insight into how people grapple with diverse, sometimes opposed identities constructed under oppression.

Finally, studies demonstrate the need for a better understanding of stereotypes on racial-ethnic identity development. More specifically, how racial-ethnic stereotypes impact the content and process of African American youths’ racial-ethnic identity. While there is much information about negative stereotypes targeting the African American community, less is known about how it impacts racial-ethnic developmental processes, which would be invaluable for those trying to understand racial-ethnic identity among minorities.

**Measured Outcomes**

Lastly, research should vary the outcomes examined in relation to racial-ethnic identity among African American adolescents. There has been a plethora of research on racial-identities relation to psychological functioning but much less exploration in other areas. For example, few studies are examining how racial-ethnic identity relates to physical health or work outcomes among African American youth. Also, much research exploring racial identity with African American youth examines how they cope with living with a stigmatized identity. Less has focused on positive youth development among African American youth such as pro-social behaviors. Afro-centric values, common in many African American families and communities, encourage values that such as commonality, respect for self and other also warrant further inquiry (White-Johnson, 2015).

Research has found promising results concerning the relation between racial/ethnic identity, specific cultural values and positive youth development outcomes, such as pro-social behaviors among other ethnic minority youth (Brittian et al., 2013; Calderón-Tena, Knight, & Carlo 2011). Similar findings may emerge with African American youth who endorse Afro-
centric values. This requires researchers to have a better understanding of specific African American cultural values to develop studies that adequately capture their relation to racial-ethnic identity and positive outcomes. Though potentially more difficult, the benefits and challenges derived from the results will far outweigh the challenges. More of a focus on positive outcomes will provide tools and resources to families, and communities need to support African American children and adolescents.

**Conclusion**

Racial-ethnic identity is complex. EIS, EID, and Nigrescence provide explanations for its processes while MMRI, MSRI, and Baldwin’s model offer theories for the content of African American identity. Despite the differences, themes of racial salience, positive racial regard, cultural mistrust, and ideologies resonate across models illustrating commonalities in understanding racial-ethnic identity.

Studies exploring African American’s racial-ethnic identity as related to outcomes is also far from straightforward. Most research suggests, however, feeling good about being African American often leads to both positive psychological and behavioral outcomes. This experience, however, is influenced by context. Moreover, African American youth must sometimes configure their racial identity with other critical social identities such as gender. Therefore, future research should use advanced and mixed methods to examine racial-ethnic identities’ indirect pathways in a range of contexts. Ultimately, despite substantial gains towards racial-ethnic equality within American society, race and ethnicity colors, in positive and negative ways, the way people relate to one another. With this in mind, research must continue to examine how this incredibly salient, continuously evolving, identity affects African American youth.
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2 REASONS I CARE: EXPLORING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SOCIAL IDENTITIES, CULTURAL VALUES, AND BLACK ADOLESCENT MALES’ PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIORS IN A URBAN SCHOOL CONTEXT

Introduction

During adolescence, youth have the challenging task of developing a cohesive identity (Erickson, 1968). This is accomplished by exploring and assigning meaning to messages from multiple contexts and then, ideally, committing to an identity which will help inform their choices and behaviors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Erickson, 1968; Marcia, 1967). This complex process is comprised of and impacted by many different factors. It is a dynamic interplay between self and society, and an individual's social positioning will influence the identity he or she may form. This is especially true for individuals grappling with systematic, continuous oppression across contexts (Asante, 2003; Spencer, 2006).

African American males are one such group that must construct a positive sense of self in the context of cultural messages of dehumanization (Asante, 2003). A plethora of research has noted the challenges they face as various forms of oppression emerge in their immediate and distal contexts. As Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model points out, the multiple-layered dynamic system a person exists within has direct and indirect effects on a range of psycho-social outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The ecological model is particularly relevant to young African American males because they contend with a variety of risk factors, many unavoidable and primarily out of their control.

For example, due to historical discriminatory housing practices coupled with limited job opportunities, African American youth are more likely to live in communities of concentrated poverty than White counterparts (Barbarin, 1993; Shinn & Tooley, 2003). The stressors that often
accompany poverty can have a deleterious effect on development and interpersonal relationships. Unsurprisingly, many predominantly African American communities report high levels of violence. Young African American males are particularly susceptible to these aggressive acts; they are more likely to be victims or perpetrators of gun violence than any other racial-ethnic group (Alexander, 2012). Furthermore, economic security does not protect against noted issues as one might assume. Middle-class African Americans often live in communities geographically and culturally connected to low-income communities. Research has found these fluid boundaries mean middle-class African Americans youth are negotiating with the same stressors and challenges as their low-income counterparts (Anderson, 2000; Coates, 2017; Pattillo, 1999).

In addition to confronting the challenges of poverty, African American men have the added burden of dealing with the United States justice system. Michele Alexander (2012) has detailed the ways African American males are subjected to unfair treatment from the police force and legal system. Targeted policing policies, in which police place an inordinate amount of attention on a group of people, disproportionately focus on African American males, including adolescents, are especially prevalent in low-income, predominately African American neighborhoods. Jones (2014) found this “proactive policing” of predominately African American and poor neighborhoods has a detrimental effect on African American adolescent males' development. This constant, aggressive police presence within their neighborhood leads many young African American males to believe masculinity and power are synonymous with physical force and aggression (Jones, 2014). In line with these findings, Elijah Anderson's (2000) study of African American male adolescents and emerging adults in urban environments found participants often used aggression and violence to assert control over their bodies and communities in the face of police.
Proactive policing practices, alongside other predatory practices within the legal system, lead to alarmingly high and disproportional incarceration rates for African American males. Upon release, African American males must grapple with potential issues of disenfranchisement and unemployment. With these formidable challenges, it is important to identify contexts that can potentially provide support in the face of adversity.

Schools have the potential to support young African American males’ psycho-social development (Fultz & Brown, 2008). As children become older, they spend increasingly more time in school (Dowd, 2016). Moreover, researchers have suggested schools can provide young African American males with the socio-emotional and intellectual tools to be successful in college or career (Fultz & Brown, 2008; Noguero, 2003). By middle school, teachers and peers begin to wield considerable influence on how adolescents see themselves, playing a major role in the construction of adolescents’ burgeoning identity (Wigfield, Eccles, MacIver, Reuman & Midgley, 1991).

In schools, African American students’ racial-ethnic identity is highly salient for both the student and faculty members. This reality can lead to negative outcomes for African American students, for example, when teachers and administrators often implicitly or explicitly endorse racial-ethnic stereotypes (Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Nasir, McLaughlin, & Jones, 2009). Moreover, school policies often perpetuate larger social inequalities through initiatives like student tracking or zero tolerance that disproportionality affect African American boys. These practices are particularly harmful to African American boys.

For example, upon entering pre-school African American males are more likely to be suspended or expelled than White counterparts for similar or identical infractions, and this pattern of unequal discipline practices continues in elementary school and through high school (Cyphert.
2015; Skiba, 2014). Additionally, African American males are more likely to be placed in special education programs, less likely to be put in gifted programs, and have poorer academic outcomes overall when compared to White and female counterparts (Cyphert, 2015; Skiba, 2014). These experiences lead many African American males to believe they must dissociate from their racial-ethnic identity to be successful in schools while others may embrace these negative racialized-gender stereotypes and disengage from the learning process altogether (Ferguson, 2001; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Nasir, McLaughlin, & Jones, 2009).

Despite the challenges, research has linked racial-ethnic identity to a range of positive school-based outcomes. When African American youth feel good about their racial-ethnic background they have higher grades, better peer and teacher relationships, and better long-term academic outcomes (such as attending a four-year college) than peers who harbor negative feelings about their racial-ethnic identity (Belgrave, Nguyen, Johnson, & Hood, 2011; Chavous et al., 2003). These findings point to racial-ethnic identity’s protective nature, a potential life-saver for young African American males.

The empirical studies linking racial-ethnic identity to positive psycho-social and academic outcomes have been valuable in determining how to better support African American youth. However, most studies have examined racial-ethnic identity’s relationship to psychological and academic outcomes and fewer have focused on behavioral outcomes. The work that has considered behavioral outcomes has examined anti-social behaviors such as fighting or aggression, and this contributes to a deficit-based depiction of African American males. Therefore, research should examine positive behaviors African American youth may engage in. Pro-social behaviors, such as cooperation, generosity, and support, are critical components of
academic and social success in schools (Wentzel, 1993). Therefore it is essential to identify factors which may predict those behaviors within a school settings.

To address the gap in investigations of pro-social behavior and identity, I examined how gender and racial-ethnic identities are related to African American adolescent males’ pro-social behaviors and whether the two identities function independently or jointly. Young African American males' experiences are linked to their race and gender; therefore, research must use an intersectional lens to understand how these social identities may be linked to outcomes.

In addition to identity, I investigated the relationship of moral reasoning and cultural values to African American males’ pro-social behaviors. Research on youth of color has found that adolescents who endorse their group’s cultural values of kindness and generosity report more pro-social behaviors than other peers from the same racial-ethnic group (Brittian et al., 2013). Afro-centric values, a value system grounded in African principles of community and generosity, may lead to similar outcomes for African American males. Moral development, as measured by changes in reasoning about moral judgements, has also been examined for its connection to pro-social behaviors (Carlo, Fabes, Laible, & Kupanoff, 1999). Research has used Lawrence Kohlberg's moral development theory as a framework for examining moral reasoning abilities’ relationship to behavioral outcomes (Eisenberg, Morris, McDaniel, & Spinrad, 2009). Cultural values and moral reasoning are often explored in isolation, and little work in either area has concentrated on young African American males. Therefore, in this study I measured Afro-centric values, a racial-ethnically oriented value system, and moral reasoning ability, that reflects a gender-oriented cultural value system, to determine their independent or joint relationship to African American boys' pro-social behaviors.
Theoretical Perspectives

Phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory.

The phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory (P-VEST) is an identity-centered ecological model (Spencer, 2006; Spencer, 2008). P-VEST is a bi-directional, recursive explanatory framework for development. The theory asserts that it is critical to integrate contextual influences into one’s understandings of developmental outcomes, particularly among marginalized youth. When research ignores how macro-level issues, such as racism and poverty, play out on the micro-level and affect an individual’s outcomes, it inadvertently blames the individual for any negative outcomes and subsequently contributes to deficit-based research. Moreover, rather than labeling actions or outcomes as positive or negative, a person’s responses are context dependent; a behavior deemed maladaptive in one setting may be appropriate and adaptive in another. Therefore, instead of focusing solely on consequences, research should examine the pathways through which outcomes emerge. As Spencer (2006) writes,

Emphasizing the ‘how’ of development is very different from the traditional and linear acknowledging of the ‘what’ (i.e., individuals’ patterned outcomes), and demands the introduction of a new framework that can help illuminate the phenomenological quality of individual-context interactions (pg. 698).

P-VEST argues there is a constant feedback loop between an individual’s experiences with others and how he or she comes to understand him or herself. These direct and indirect messages from micro- and macro- contexts ultimately influence the person’s burgeoning sense of self. For example, societal messages about African American males which suggest they are violent and aggressive may be internalized and later performed by a young African American male because he believes these behaviors represent his emerging identity as a young Black male.
This feedback process, also known as self- and reflected- appraisals, is an integral part of P-VEST and shapes the person’s self-concept and will guide a range of outcomes (Spencer, 2006).

P-VEST is comprised of five components: net vulnerability, net stress engagement level, reactive coping mechanisms, emergent identity, and stage-specific outcomes (Spencer, 2006; Spencer, 2008). The net vulnerability level represents individuals’ overall vulnerability. P-VEST argues everyone is vulnerable, and what mediates and moderates the expression of this vulnerability are risk and protective factors. Everyone has protective and risk factors, however, the balance between the two will look different depending on context. For example, African American male adolescents’ low-income communities would be a potential risk, but living in a two-parent home will serve as a protective factor. For an individual living in a high-income community, a two-parent home may not be as protective, considering they are not dealing with the stressors which accompany living in poverty. Consequently, these risk and protective factors work in tandem to create the person’s net- or total vulnerability.

The next level, net stress engagement, is the person's experience with stress. Swanson, Spencer, Dell’Angelo, Harpalani, & Spencer (2002) write, “Where risk and protective factors denote potential entities within the environment, stress and support refer to actual manifestations of these entities- experiences in context” (p. 232). An example of this would be proactive policing policies’ impact on young African American males. A young African American male's negative experience with a police officer would represent a concrete, direct challenge. The way his parents address this experience, if done productively, would be considered support for the adolescent. The balance of challenges and supports produces an overall net engagement with stress.

Reactive coping mechanisms, the third component, represent the adolescent’s response to stress. P-VEST asserts that adolescents’ cognitive abilities lead to a mental interrogation of
stressful situations to rectify the dissonance created by their experience. This attempt to gain peace or control will lead to positive or negative outcomes. For example, as noted in previous research, young African American males often display hyper-masculine attitudes to earn respect within their communities (Anderson, 2000; Spencer, 2006). Within many urban environments, hyper-masculinity can serve to protect the young man from emotional and physical threats and has the potential to be an adaptive coping mechanism. However, displaying hyper-masculine behaviors, such as bravado and aggression, in a school setting can be considered maladaptive as these behaviors are often strongly discouraged.

These responses, when produced repeatedly and consistently, begin to be incorporated into the person’s emerging identity. One’s racial, gender, or sexual identity are all examples of emergent identities. This emergent identity, the fourth component, represents the ways persons see themselves across contexts. Using the example above, if an adolescent exhibited hyper-masculinity in every context, he would have incorporated a context-specific coping mechanism into his abstract, cross-situational identity. These new identities include a composite of reactive coping responses and guide the thoughts and behaviors in the fifth level, stage-specific outcomes. At this level, whatever coping mechanisms a person has integrated into their emerging identity will create either unproductive or productive outcomes in relevant domains.

Overall, P-VEST provides an in-depth understanding of how African American youth, particularly young African American males, develop under social, economic, and political constraints. It provides a comprehensive theory to understand the development of young African American males, considering the unique set of challenges they face because of social, political, and economic inequalities (Swanson, Cunningham & Spencer, 2003; Spencer, 2004). The P-
VEST emphasis on identity calls for the use of an intersectional framework to more deeply understand how certain identities are developed under the strain of layered oppression.

**Intersectionality.**

Intersectionality examines how various types of oppression operate jointly rather than independently to create a compound rather than an additive experience for specific groups of people (Collins, 2000; Richardson & Taylor, 2009). As Cole (2009) writes, "Categories such as race, gender, social class, and sexuality do not simply describe groups that may be different or similar; they encapsulate historical and continuing relations of political, material, and social inequality and stigma" (pg. 173). Moreover, Richardson and Taylor argue it would be naïve to believe social identities, such as race, gender, and class which are developed by and predicated on social positioning, could be examined independently from one another. As such, one must look at the ways "axes of oppression" intersect to understand a person's experience better.

Intersectionality’s roots can be traced back to the 1800s with Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I A Woman?” speech. Her pointed critique of the anti-slavery and women’s movement brought to light African American women’s simultaneous struggle with racism and sexism that was overlooked by social activists of the period. At the Combahee River Collective (1977/1995), a group of African American feminists came together to discuss and address the numerous challenges African American women face. A manifesto emerged from the meeting which included another early form of intersectionality. "We . . . find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously" (Combahee River Collective, 1977/1995, p. 234). While notions of intersectionality have emerged over generations, it was not until the early 1990s that Kimberlee Crenshaw coined the term
intersectionality during her exploration of the ways race mediates justice for women who are victims of domestic or sexual violence.

At its core, intersectionality examines how social positioning of socially mediated identities, like race, gender, and class, interact to create a person’s experiences. Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) argue current intersectionality research does one of three functions: explore intersectional dynamics or experiences, uses intersectionality as a methodology or theoretical perspective, or uses an intersectional lens when unpacking public policy and discourse. Weber and Parra-Medina (2003) also point to the different approaches inherent in intersectionality. They argue people often look downstream and upstream in intersectional research. On the one hand, downstream research examines outcomes related to an individual’s group membership. Upstream research, on the other hand, examines the social institutions that reinforce persistent inequality. This important distinction should guide research questions attempting to use intersectionality as a theoretical tool.

Downstream intersectional research is appropriate for understanding African American adolescents’ psychological processes and related outcomes. While intersectionality has primarily examined social groups grappling with multiple points of disadvantage, (i.e. poor African American woman), it also supports research on individuals who hold privileged social identities alongside disadvantaged ones and the compounded experience which may be created (Cole, 2001). African American men occupy a complicated role position. While their gender affords them a level of privilege within America’s patriarchal society, they are simultaneously subjugated by America’s particularly virulent strain of racism.
Scholars across disciplines agree racism is interwoven into the fabric of America (Asante, 2000, Coates, 2015). African Americans have experienced the brutality of this reality across generations. Coates (2015) writes,

…the plunder of black life was drilled into this country in infancy and reinforced across its history, so that plunder has become an heirloom, an intelligence, a sentience, a default to which, likely to the end of our days, we must invariably return. (pg. 111)

African American males are no strangers to the picture Coates paints; as noted throughout the paper, their experiences are marred by dehumanization, discrimination, and violence. It would be incorrect to assume these experiences are solely a result of the clash between their race and American’s systematic racism. Their gender and race together create a particular experience. This is especially true when it comes to informal and formal, state-sanctioned actions that try to control their bodies. African American males’ bodies are socially charged and have been subject to legally sanctioned subjugation. When Coates (2015) writes to his son “And you should know, if you did not before, that the police departments of your country have been endowed with the authority to destroy your body” (pg. 9), he highlights this very phenomenon.

One dominant narrative used to justify the policing of African American male bodies is the argument they are inherently immoral, antisocial beings (Howard et al., 2012; Ferguson, 2001; Coates; 2017). This idea, which has persisted since the middle passage, is often justified by pervasive imagery, often disseminated though popular media, which depicts African American males as savage thugs (Howard et al., 2012). This is then reinforced by social institutions, such as schools, which are known to be "socializing agents for youth in that they communicate, replicate, and reproduce the norms of dominant society" (Jacobs, 2016, p. 225).
Research in schools has noted African American males are often rated as more aggressive than White counterparts, are more likely to engage in anti-social behaviors such as fighting, and more likely to be victims or perpetrators of violent crime (Alexander, 2012; Skinner, Perkins, Wood & Kurtz-Costes, 2015). However, research regarding African American males, without a thorough understanding of social context, systematic oppression, and bias predicated on their race and gender, only reinforces a narrative that justifies their dehumanization. Additionally, only focusing on negative outcomes creates a type of confirmation bias in scholarship on African American males. To counter this, there must be a focus on what factors in African American males’ lives lead to positive outcomes. Using intersectionality and P-VEST as a theoretical framework, this study looked deeply at the relationships among Net Vulnerability (specifically the potential protective factors), Emergent Identities, and a Stage Specific outcome in African American males’ outcomes.

**Stage Specific-Outcome: Pro-social Behaviors**

Pro-social behaviors are an important stage-specific outcome to examine as they contribute to social competence and have a considerable influence on a range of outcomes (Flynn, Ehrenreich, Beron, & Underwood, 2015). Pro-social behaviors are broadly known as voluntary behaviors that benefit another person (Hart & Fegley, 1995). These behaviors range from comforting a peer or adult in distress, sharing goods or material, or helping others (Eisenberg, Fabes & Spinrad, 1998). Pro-social behaviors often increase with age; adolescents are more likely to engage in pro-social behaviors than younger children (Fabes, Carlo, Kupanoff & Laible, 1999). This is the result of the individual becoming invested in their social networks alongside a growth of perspective-taking skills (Barr & Higgins-D’Alessandro et al., 2009; Kanacri et al., 2014).
These behaviors are a result of both internal and external processes. Perspective-taking skills and empathy, two important cognitive abilities, have been consistently linked to pro-social behaviors (Fabes et al., 1999). Empathy, a cognitive and affective response, is one of the biggest contributors to pro-social behaviors among adolescents. Additionally, youth with perspective taking skills, the ability to take another person’s point of view into account, are more likely to engage in pro-social behaviors. As adolescents develop the ability to consider another person’s perspective, they began to better understand another’s emotions, and this can lead to altruistic behavior. Another cognitive process that has been connected to pro-social behaviors is moral reasoning skills. Moral reasoning is the thinking and decision making process a person undertakes when faced with a problem with multiple solutions. Importantly, research has found individuals with advanced moral reasoning skills engage in more pro-social behaviors than peers reasoning on lower levels. Additionally, higher reasoning adolescents are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviors like aggression and cheating (Carlo, Koller, & Eisenberg, 1998, Taylor & Walker, 1997).

External factors like schools and peer groups have also been linked to pro-social behaviors. Scholarship has demonstrated peer groups are a strong, albeit indirect, determinant of pro-social behaviors among adolescents. Schools can also engender pro-social behaviors among adolescents. While transitions into middle and high school can be a challenging and isolating time for adolescents, research has revealed schools that encourage cooperation and cognitive engagement can foster pro-social behaviors among students (Carlo et al., 1999). Another external factor found to be related to pro-social behavior is the adolescents’ culture and ethnicity.

Racial-ethnic background and nationality have been found to be related to pro-social behaviors. For example, Knight et al. (1995) found Mexicans are more likely to engage in
cooperative behaviors than White Americans. Similarly, research found adolescents from different western European countries varied in motivations for engaging in pro-social behaviors and the frequency of those behaviors (Boehnke, Silbereisen, Eisenberg, Reykowski, & Palmonari, 1989). These findings suggest socially mediated factors influence pro-social behaviors. Despite the aforementioned findings, there has been little work examining the factors that related to pro-social behaviors among people of color in American society. The work that has been done has primarily focused on Mexican-American children and adolescents. These studies have found Mexican-American youth who feel good about and are highly connected to their racial-ethnic background engage in pro-social behaviors at higher levels than White American peers (Brittan et al., 2013).

Because much of the scholarship on pro-social behaviors has focused on how internal processes, specifically empathy, self-regulation, and perspective taking skills predict pro-social behaviors, we know little about socially mediated factors (Belgrave et al., 2011). While the three aforementioned internal processes are undoubtedly important, one would be remiss to overlook the influence social factors such as cultural values or racial-ethnic identity may have on pro-social behaviors. The promising findings regarding Mexican-American adolescents demonstrate racial-ethnic background matters when investigating pro-social behaviors. Additionally, moral reasoning deserves more attention considering its connection to pro-social behaviors. Ward (1995) argues moral development and identity formation are two crucial developmental tasks for adolescents, thus when trying to engender positive youth outcomes among African American adolescents, one must “engage African American teens on a cognitive and affective level” (p. 183). To investigate the factors that predict African American males’ engagement in pro-social behaviors, an important
stage specific outcome, this study examined their emergent identities of race and gender, as well as, the potentially protective factors of moral reasoning and cultural values.

**Emergent Identities: Race and Gender**

Much research has examined how a person’s identity is related to psycho-social outcomes. Often identity theories are content- or process- orientated. Content oriented theories, also known as structural models, are concerned with the different dimensions that comprise one’s identity (Styker & Serpe, 1982). Process oriented models, most often focusing on exploration and commitment, examine the how a person develops his or her identity (Erickson, 1968; Marcia, 1967). While much of the research in these areas have examined adult and emerging adult populations, research has taken notice on how these social identities affects psycho-social outcomes for children and adolescents.

Race becomes salient for African American youth at a very early age. Beginning as early as preschool African American children are aware, if only on an elementary level, what being African American means and the ramifications that may accompany it (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996). African American children often passively adopt dominant norms and values related to their racial-ethnic identity. During adolescence, however, African American youth begin to think more deeply about their racial-ethnic identity. Their ideas about race are shaped by the new, positive and negative, experiences that accompany their growing independence. These experiences shape their racial-ethnic identity, which will, in turn, influence various outcomes.

African American adolescents who feel positive about their racial-ethnic identity are more likely to have high self-esteem, high academic self-efficacy, and better long term and short term academic outcomes than peers with less positive feelings about their racial-ethnic identity (Blash & Unger, 1995; Buckley & Carter, 2005; Chavous et al., 2003; Ferguson, 2001; Nasir et al.,
2009). Other research has examined racial-ethnic identity’s relationship to behavioral outcomes. African American adolescents who have positive feelings about their racial-ethnic identity are more pro-social with peers and report higher levels of empathy than do peers with less positive feelings towards their racial-ethnic background (Joyce, O’Neil, Stormshak, McWhirter, & Dishion, 2013; Belgrave et al., 2011). Additionally, they are less likely to engage in aggressive, anti-social, or self-destructive behaviors than peers harboring negative feelings about their racial-ethnic identity (Arbona, Jackson, McCoy, & Blakely, 1999; Burlew et al., 2000; DeGruy, Kjellstrand, Briggs, & Brennan, 2012; McMahon & Watts, 2002; Rock, Cole, Houshyar, Lythcott, & Prinstein, 2000; Townsend & Belgrave, 2000).

While research on gender identity in adolescence has often focused on role behaviors, scholarship has begun to use a multidimensional framework to understand the different components of gender identity and how these dimensions inform ones overall self-concept and relate to psycho-social outcomes. (Corby, Hodges & Perry, 2007; Egan & Perry, 2001). Egan and Perry (2001) assert one’s gender identity is comprised of five components: membership knowledge, gender typicality, gender connectedness, intergroup bias, and felt pressure to conform to gender roles. Membership knowledge or self-identification refers to the person's identification of being a male or female. Gender typicality denotes the degree to which the person believes he or she represent a typical member of his or her gender category, and gender connectedness refers to the degree of happiness a person has towards his or her assigned gender. Felt pressure represents the pressure the person feels to perform in gender-stereotypical ways, and intergroup bias is the extent the person may feel their gender is better than the other gender category (Egan & Perry, 2001; Carver et al., 2003). During childhood, the only salient dimension is membership knowledge. Upon entrance into adolescence, the other four components become relevant and have
been linked to various psycho-social outcomes. (Corby et al., 2007; Steensma, Kreukels, Vries, & Cohen-Kettnis, 2013).

Galambos et al. (1990) found male and female adolescents are more likely than children to engage in socially sanctioned gender roles and this increases over time. Additionally, when males and females engage in stereotypically masculine behaviors they are less likely to report depressive symptoms in adolescence (Priess, Lindberg & Shibley-Hyde, 2009). Adolescent girls are more likely to report lower self-esteem than male peers, although adolescent males are more likely to engage in physical and verbal aggression with same sex peers than girls (Perry & Pauletti, 2011). Studies have found adolescents who have high levels of gender typicality and gender connectedness have positive feelings of self-worth (Carver, Yunger, & Perry, 2003; Smith & Leaper, 2005).

Research with children and adolescents has found, alternatively, high levels of felt-pressure or low levels of gender connectedness and/or gender typicality is connected to higher depressive symptoms, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of anxiety and externalizing behaviors (Carver et. al, 2003; Smith & Juvonen, 2017). Lurye, Zosuls, & Ruble (2008) found a similar relationship in their study of adolescents’ gender typicality and gender centrality with one caveat. Gender centrality moderated the relationship between felt pressure and self-esteem; adolescents with low gender centrality and high felt-pressure were more likely to have lower self-esteem. Ultimately, feeling good about one’s gender identity and feeling less pressure to adhere to gender norms is linked to positive psycho-social outcomes. Research has begun to examine how racial-ethnic identity may interact with gender identity when affecting African American adolescents psycho-social outcomes.
For example, a significant gender interaction emerged in the study of racial-ethnic identity’s relationship with academic self-efficacy. While African American students with positive feelings towards their race had higher levels of academic self-efficacy, this association was much stronger for African American girls than African American boys. In a study by McCledon & Wigfield (1998) of African American adolescents’ academic self-efficacy, they found African American males were more likely to believe they could be successful in math and science and have had overall academic self-efficacy than African American female peers. The ways gender can moderate outcomes extends to behaviors.

African American boys in preschool have been found to engage in more pro-social behaviors than female and White peers but, by the time they reach elementary school and secondary school, they are rated to be more physically and verbally aggressive than counterparts (Osterman et al., 1994; Richman, Berry, Bittle, & Hitman, 1988). Corby et al.’s (2007) study found that African American preadolescents reported higher levels of felt pressure than White peers. Moreover, there were few connections between African American participants’ gender identity and social adjustment measures when compared to White peers; only gender connectedness was positively related to self-esteem for African American adolescents (Corby, Hodges, & Perry, 2007). These findings, particularly the ones concerning behaviors, suggest African American males’ behavioral outcomes are affected by race and gender jointly rather than independently.

Protective Factors: Cultural Orientations

P-VEST asserts, through the net vulnerability level, cultural orientations can be protective and lead to positive stage specific outcomes. Research has long noted that culture influences adolescents’ development and associated outcomes (Rogoff, 2003). Culture can be viewed as “a
perceived similarity in beliefs, norms, and experiences among individuals that distinguishes those individuals from other groups of individuals” (Carlo et al., 1999, pg. 139). Brittian & Humphries (2015) argue it is incredibly important to make use of cultural orientations when trying to understand pro-social behaviors as it recognizes psycho-social outcomes are socially situated and often positively influenced by cultural traditions and practices. These cultural orientations affect both internal and external processes. One internal process suggested to have a particular cultural orientation is moral reasoning.

Moral Reasoning. On one hand, morality, as discussed among philosophers, is viewed as a system of ethics that reflects the particular society’s values. Moral reasoning, on the other hand, is viewed by developmental psychologists as an internal, cognitive process with universal, invariant stages. Moral development scholars are interested in how a person’s moral reasoning develops over time and looks to the person’s justification of moral judgements to determine his or her moral reasoning stage.

Lawrence Kohlberg developed one of the most comprehensive developmental models for moral reasoning (Gibbs, Basinger, Fuller & Fuller, 2013; Kohlberg & Hersch, 1977). His model is comprised of three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional with two sub-stages in each level. In pre-conventional, the person is primarily concerned with maintaining his or her self-interest by avoiding punishment and obtaining extrinsic rewards. At the conventional level, social relationships become paramount, moving from placing emphasis on personal relationships to using established laws and societal norms to guide thinking. In the post-conventional level, an individual’s right to justice and freedom becomes paramount, and laws are effective to the degree they protect these abstract concepts.
Moral reasoning development is of interest during adolescence because youth are undergoing cognitive changes that permit new, more complex levels of thinking. Additionally, they are while spending an increasing amount of time in environments where social contracts, such as peer relationships, become much more important (Eisenberg, Cumberland, Guthrie, Murphy & Shepard, 2005). Another cause for interest is the fact moral reasoning levels have been related to behaviors. For example, Bredemierer (1985) found boys with lower moral reasoning levels were more aggressive than male peers with higher moral reasoning skills. Alternatively, high levels of moral reasoning are linked to pro-social behaviors (Carlo, Koller, Eisenberg, Da Silva, & Frohlich, 1996; Eisenberg, Sheffield-Morris, McDaniel, & Spinrad, 2009).

Kohlberg and others have argued this cognitive-development model is universal in nature and not affected by cultural influences or context (Baek, 2002). While there has been some support of the universality of pre-conventional and conventional level, studies have found certain social-cultural groups are unable to progress to the post-conventional level (Snarey, 1985). For example, Snarey (1985) discovered, in a review of cross-cultural moral reasoning literature, participants from non-western countries were virtually absent in the post-conventional level. Carol Gilligan, a prominent critic and former colleague of Kohlberg, argued his model was far from universal and instead orientated towards the thought processes and value systems of the theory’s original participants, White privileged males. She suggested this “justice orientation” was gendered and not fully representative of moral development and proposed another perspective that valued care and interpersonal relationships (Gilligan, 1977). In her “Ethics of Care” model, a theoretical response to Kohlberg’s theory, the emphasis is on interpersonal relationships rather than individual rights and has often been described as the woman’s perspective on moral reasoning.
Researchers examining African American moral systems argue both orientations hold value. For example, Snarey and Walker (2004) theorize African Americans’ moral reasoning is a function of justice and care. They argue that notions of justice are inherent in African Americans’ experiences, since their existence has been a continued fight for justice and equality. This struggle for equality and justice was not done in isolation, however. These experiences are intertwined with models of care that have existed within African American families and communities across generations. Ward (1995) extends this argument when she writes

…traditional codes of caring in African American communities have tended to encompass a political agenda of social activism. Black service providers and community activists alike have long held that their own destiny was inextricably linked to the destiny of other Black folks, and that in forging ties of mutual support, collective survival and racial progress would be achieved. (p. 176)

This suggests that when attempting to understand African American moral reasoning and how it may relate to behaviors, one needs to simultaneously examine a value system that privileges interdependence over individualism. One way to do this is through the use of Afrocentric values.

**Afro-centric Values.** Afro-centric values are a facet of Afrocentricity, an epistemological perspective in which “phenomena are viewed from the perspective of an African person” (Asante, 1991). Afrocentricity scholars argue that giving primacy to Africans’ perspective shifts African American roles from secondary characters in Eurocentric narratives to main actors in their experiences and outcomes. Boykin (1986) extends this conversation by arguing most African Americans do not operate in an either-or manner. Instead, they operate within a triple quandary, navigating mainstream, minority, and cultural realms. Mainstream is a Eurocentric space,
minority is an oppressed space, and the cultural realm represents value systems unique to African Americans. Despite the fact that many African Americans are several generations removed from living on the African continent, studies have found parallels between African American cultural values and those from the African continent (Baldwin & Hopkins, 1990).

Scholars have agreed Afro-centric values can be represented by nine interrelated dimensions: spirituality, affect, communalism, orality, verve, social time perspective, harmony, movement, and expressive individualism (Jagers, Smith, Mock, & Dill, 1997). Such a system is rooted in interpersonal relationships as the person’s very existence is predicated on relationships with others, as illustrated in the famous African proverb, “I am because we are.” Many suggest these values guide African Americans’ interactions with others as well as their thought processes within America. Additionally, studies have argued an Afro-centric values system mediates moral reasoning among African Americans (Humphries & Jagers, 2000).

Metz and Gaie (2010) outline how an African ethic of morality, with an orientation towards relationships and care, in many ways is merged with Kohlberg’s moral development theory. They contend the African ethic encompasses justice because the value system also values universal principles of human rights. They write,

Traditional African societies have often thought of human life as having a dignity that implies recognition of certain universal human rights…For instance, despite the moral prominence given to their community, indigenous sub-Saharan societies are well-known for having welcomed a stranger to their villages, giving them food and shelter…they tended to view all humans as parts of an ideal family. (p. 283)

This assertion aligns with studies that have found a relationship between Afro-centric values and moral reasoning. Humphries, Parker & Jagers (2000) found African American
adolescent males with high levels of communalism also had high levels of Kolbergian moral reasoning. Similarly, Woods & Jagers (2003) found African American adolescents with an Afro-centric orientation had higher moral reasoning skills than African American adolescents with a Euro-centric orientation. While noted research uncovered the link between moral reasoning and Afro-centric values, research has also found relationships between Afro-centric values and social competencies including pro-social behaviors.

For example, Thomas, Townsend & Belgrave (2003) studied 106 African American children and found participants’ Afro-centric values were positively correlated with self-esteem. Likewise, Grills et al. (2016) found African American who endorsement of Afro-centric values positively predicted pro-social behaviors. Unfortunately, there is currently a dearth of research on Afro-centric values’ relationship with pro-social behaviors among African American youth. Much of the work exploring the influence of cultural values and racial-ethnic identities on pro-social behaviors focused on Latino communities (Brittan et al., 2013). Moreover, no studies to date have examined how moral reasoning and Afro-centric values may relate to pro-social behaviors among African American adolescent males.

**Current Study**

There are significant gaps in research examining the factors that contribute to African American males’ pro-social behaviors within schools. Research has thoroughly noted the academic and behavioral challenges young African American males face in urban schools (Chavous et al., 2003; Skiba, 2014). While the information uncovered has been valuable in discovering what factors influence African American males to intellectually disengage or to engage in aggressive behaviors, it is of equal importance to determine what predicts their positive
behavior choices within the school context. Developing social-emotional competencies is of critical importance for personal and professional relationships within the school and beyond. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the social and cultural factors that are related to pro-social behavior. In line with prior research, the present exploratory mixed-method study focused on specific pathways and components to answer research questions (Cunningham et al., 2002; Spencer, 2004).

The first part of the study used quantitative measures and analysis to explore the relationships among identity, cultural values, and pro-social behaviors. To provide more insight into the meaning of the quantitative findings, the second part of this study used focus groups to explore participants’ definitions of pro-sociality and how their identities and values related to it. Howard et al. (2012) noted failing to put student narratives at the forefront of the conversation efficiently supports the dominant discourse and will not serve to "represent non-mainstream stories that can represent other truths and other experiences that directly refute hegemony" (p.97).

**Question 1**

Emergent identities, such as race and gender, influence a person’s behaviors. Research has already highlighted how feeling confident about one's racial-ethnic identity can lead to positive outcomes such as academic achievement and high levels of self-esteem (Buckley & Carter, 2005; Chavous et al., 2003). To extend that knowledge, this study examined the relationship between African American males’ racial-ethnic identity and pro-social behaviors, a P-VEST stage-specific outcome. Additionally, little research has explored how gender identity influences pro-social behaviors. As intersectionality theory suggests, gender and race may operate in tandem to influence behavioral choices for young African American males (Cole, 2009). Therefore, this
study also examined how gender identity related to pro-social behaviors and if this relationship was independent of racial-ethnic identity or functioned jointly with it.

**Question 2**

Cultural values are a potentially significant influence on pro-social behaviors (Brittain & Humphries, 2015). Per P-VEST, identities and behaviors are filtered through important cultural value systems at the net vulnerability stage. Afrocentricity is one example of a value system important to many African American communities. Afro-centric values, which emphasize collectivism and personal responsibility, have been tied to African American youth’s pro-social behaviors and positive psychological functioning (Grills et al., 2016). Another system found to be related to pro-social behaviors is moral reasoning as measured by Kohlberg’s moral development model. While Kolhberg has suggested this cognitive model is universal in nature, others have argued it is orientated towards justice and individual rights. Furthermore, studies have found collectivist-oriented cultures are more likely to remain at the lower levels of moral reasoning than more individualist-orientated cultures (Snarey, 1985). This discrepancy suggests that the cognitive-developmental model *is* culturally laden and lead scholars to refer to it as an “Ethics of Justice” model (Gilligan, 1977). Researchers have argued African Americans may operate under a moral code that emphasizes both justice *and* interpersonal relationships (Ward, 1995). It is essential to look more closely at how and if both Afro-centric values and moral reasoning (either independently or jointly) relate to pro-social behavior among African American male adolescents.
Methods

Research Design

This study used a sequential, explanatory mixed-method design. In this design the quantitative data are collected and analyzed first and then qualitative analysis is used to further clarify quantitative findings. Creswell et al. (2003) write, “…the purpose of the sequential, explanatory design is to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a primarily quantitative study” (p.227). Thus, this dissertation was primarily interested in quantitative findings and used qualitative findings to deepen our understanding of what quantitative findings uncovered. First, I collected quantitative data and ran several regression models to answer the research questions. Next, I conducted focus groups to acquire qualitative data to contextualize quantitative findings. More specifically, focus groups explained, contested, or validated the quantitative findings using participant voices (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Suizzo et al., 2016). Ultimately, while keeping in mind the theoretical and methodological issues important within each method, mixed methods were complementary and uncovered themes and trends that may otherwise have been overlooked (Bogdan and Bilken, 2007).

Participants

One hundred-thirty-one 9th and 10th grade males who identified as Black or African American volunteered to participate in this study. One hundred-eight participants (N=55 in 9th grade; N=53 in 10th grade) completed the survey in Spring 2017 and twenty-three participants (N=17 in 9th grade and N=6 in 10th grade) completed the survey in Fall 2017. Twelve participants total were interviewed in two separate focus groups with six participants in each group (N=2 in 11th grade; N=6 in 10th grade; N=4 in 9th grade) in Fall 2017.
Participants’ median age was 15 years. Research has found adolescents actively explore race during middle school and early high school, and their ethnic-racial-ethnic identity status and content remain stable for some time afterward (French, Seidman, Allen & Lawrence, 2006; Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Seaton, Neblett, Upton, Hammond & Seller, 2011). By sampling 9th and 10th grade students, it was expected participants had given thought to their racial-ethnic and gender identities.

**Research Site**

The study took place at College for All (CA)\(^2\), a public charter school operating within a large metropolitan school district, in the South-Eastern region of the United States. Over 98% of students attending CA identify as Black or African American. College for All is located in a low-income area, and the school is classified as Title 1, a federal designation for schools with more than 40% of the students living at or below the poverty line. Additionally, all students attending CA qualify for free lunch, meaning their family incomes are at or below 130% of the national poverty level; to meet this criterion, income for a family of four is $31,980 or less (GDE, 2016). CA is one of 18 public charter schools within the city’s public school district. Public charter schools differ from traditional public schools because they, although publicly funded, operate independently from the school districts in which they are located. Over the past 15 years, there has been an explosion of charter schools throughout the United States (Ravitch, 2016). These schools are often concentrated in low-income areas and serve students of color, students with poorer academic outcomes than White peers. Proponents of charter schools and the associated school choice movement believe charter schools' freedom to try new, innovative ideas will bring academic success to under-performing students (Ravitch, 2016). College for All was one of the

\(^2\) A pseudonym
many schools created from this movement and operates under the auspices of a national charter network, Success for All (Ravitch, 2016).

Success for All (SA)\(^3\) is the most extensive charter school network within the United States. There are elementary, middle, and secondary schools operating under its purview. Most of these schools are in economically depressed areas, and students live at or below the poverty line. SA is most recognized for students' academic gains. These schools usually have higher test scores and higher middle school and high school graduation rates as compared to traditional public schools in similar areas and/or serving similar student populations and are often looked to as the model of excellence for the education for low-performing students (Davis & Heller, 2017). These academic gains are achieved through a rigorous academic program, often referred to as No Excuses, coupled with extended school days, high expectations, and required parental involvement. The “No Excuses” model translates into a highly rigid code of conduct for students, which includes an emphasis on respect for authority and conformity. CA endorses the overall “No Excuses” approach and has a handbook that lays out, in explicit detail, the expectations the school has for the students. For example, students are expected to maintain an academic posture during class, meaning they should not be slumped, should track and make eye contact with the speaker throughout the period, and respond to questions at the appropriate volume. These rules extend to behaviors outside the classroom; the handbook outlines how one should engage in hallways, the cafeteria, and other non-academic spaces.

To deal with behavioral infractions, CA has a three-tiered system. Most infractions begin with verbal redirects and, depending on escalation or severity, students may face discipline methods from restorative justice to parent-teacher calls to in and out of school suspensions.

\(^3\) A pseudonym
Students’ behaviors are tracked with a "Warrior in Good Standing." system. WIGS has three levels: College Ready, representing the exemplary students; In Good Standing; representing students at the baseline or above; and On Probation, not meeting CA expectations and in need of additional consequences or reinforcements. Negative behaviors are tracked by and reported to grade level teachers. At the end of the week, students meeting or exceeding expectations can dress down whereas students on probation face additional consequences. CA states these detailed procedures are in place to create a respectful and orderly environment, optimal for student learning.

While it is hard to determine if this behavioral management system is directly linked to a more optimal school environment, an unintended consequence of the College for All discipline policies is an out of school suspension rate that is higher than the state average (GDE, 2016). Moreover, male students attending the school are more likely to be suspended than female peers (GDE, 2016). Considering the school is more than 98% African American, one can surmise the majority of male students facing suspension are African American. This finding suggests, despite academic successes, African American males are more likely to face disciplinary action than female peers within CA for engaging in behaviors deemed anti-social by school policies. Unfortunately, there is no official tracking system of positive behaviors students may engage in, so one is unable to know for sure how frequently young African American males attending the school demonstrate kindness to those around them.

The CA “No Excuses” approach to behaviors is highly rigorous. While one may argue the intensity of this approach may take away from the generalizability of the present study, many schools, traditional and charter, are implementing variations of "No Excuses” in classrooms in hopes of improving student academic outcomes. As such, there is a high likelihood that the
experiences of CA students are more similar than dissimilar to students attending traditional schools. Additionally, research has noted schools are becoming increasingly racially and socioeconomically segregated, so the lack of diversity in the CA student body reflects the demographics of the high schools many American students attend (Finley, 2015). Thus, despite limitations, CA provides valuable insight into the school experiences of young African American males.

**Measures**

**Racial Identity.** The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Teen (MIBI-T) measured racial-ethnic identity (Scottham, Sellers & Nguyên, 2008). Adapted from the MIBI, the MIBI-T includes measures for three dimensions: centrality, regard, and ideology. This study used the centrality and regard (private and public) scales. Each scale has three items, and all items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree). The centrality measure ($\alpha = .67$) contains three items that measure how central race is to a person’s identity. A sample question is, “I feel close to other Black people.” The private regard measure ($\alpha = .93$) examines how the person feels about being Black. The scale contains items such as “I am happy to be Black.” Public regard measure ($\alpha = .80$) investigates how the person feels others think about Black people and contains items such as “People think Black people are as good as people from another race.”

Higher scores for regard indicate more positive public and private regard and higher centrality score indicates higher levels of centrality. The measures often have lower than ideal reliability statistics, although research suggests this may be attributed to the brevity of the measure rather than internal consistency issues (Cokley & Helms, 2001).
**Gender Identity.** In line with prior research on African American adolescent males’ social identities from an intersectional perspective, this study adapted items from the MIBI-T to examine gender identity (Roger et al., 2015). Participants’ gender centrality and gender regard were examined. *Male* replaced the word *African American* on each item on the three measures. For example, a centrality item was adjusted to “I feel close to other males.” While the gender private regard measure ($\alpha = .88$) indicated strong reliability, gender public regard measure ($\alpha = .66$) and gender centrality measure ($\alpha = .48$) reliability reports were less than ideal. Again, this is more likely linked to the limited items rather than the items themselves. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*).

**Afro-centric Values.** The Afri-centric Scale was developed to examine cultural value levels (Grills & Longhorn, 1996). The items were created to correspond to seven principles: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. Sample items include "African Americans should make their community better than it was when they found it" and "My family's needs are more important to me than my own needs." The measure contains 25 items endorsed on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate higher endorsement of Afro-centric values. Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = .77$) indicated adequate reliability.

**Pro-social behavior.** The Pro-social Behavior Scale was created by the Developmental Studies Center (Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps, & Lewis, 2000). The nine-item scale measures participants’ frequency of pro-social behaviors on a 5-point frequency scale (1 = *never* to 5 = *more than ten times*) in the last semester. Higher scores indicate higher engagement in pro-social behaviors. Sample items include “Helped your classmate with homework” and “Tried hard
not to hurt someone’s feelings.” Cronbach’s alpha for the scale ($\alpha = .83$) indicated good reliability.

**Moral Reasoning.** The Socio-Moral Reflection Measure-Short Form is an 11-item measure assessing moral reasoning per Kohlberg’s theory (Basinger, Gibbs, & Fuller, 1995; Gibbs et al., 2013). The scale measures Kohlberg’s first five stages as described earlier: obedience and punishment orientation, instrumental-relativist, social consensus, authority and social order, and social contract. Participants were given 11 short lead-in questions and then asked to evaluate and justify their responses to each item. The justifications were then scored using the SMRM-SF scoring manual. Sample items include “In general, how important is it for people to tell the truth?” and “In general, how important is it for people to obey the law?” Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was ($\alpha=.79$) indicating adequate reliability. A developmental psychology doctoral student and I determined inter-rater reliability. We familiarized ourselves with the SMRF-SF coding manual and completed practice guides provided within the manual. I first independently coded 26 participants scores representing 21% of the entire sample. A fellow graduate student coded the same 26 participants at a later date. I entered both set of scores into SPSS to test for interrater reliability. SPSS determined Cohen’s Kappa to be 0.67 indicating adequate inter-rater reliability.

**Focus Groups.** I conducted two focus groups to explore further research questions and contextualize quantitative findings. One focus group was conducted with participants who reported the highest levels of pro-social behaviors, and the second focus group was conducted with participants who reported the lowest levels of pro-social behaviors. Scores were determined by participants’ mean pro-social score from self-report survey. The focus groups followed a semi-structured protocol: there was a list of questions\(^4\) for each group but if the topic strayed to relevant

\[^4\] List of questions located in Appendix F
subject matter the participants were not re-directed. Focus groups were audio recorded and later transcribed.

Findings were interpreted through the lens of intersectionality and critical race theory (CRT). Intersectionality, which has been previously discussed, unpacks the ways webs of oppression create a compounded experience for marginalized groups. Intersectionality guided the interpretation of focus groups by examining how their emergent identities, specifically their race and gender, shapes their experiences and vulnerability to bias. CRT focus on how racism, at multiple levels and in various forms, affects peoples’ experiences (Leonardo, 2012).

Critical race theorists tend to start with race/racism. This does not blind us to other forms of exclusion and we surely have as much right as any other critic to begin with the issue that—for us—touches us most deeply and which generates our most important experiences and ambitions for change. (Gillborn, 2015, p. 284)

While intersectionality is more focused on more multiple axes of oppression, for critical race theorists, race is the primary concern (Gillborn, 2015). CRT has long held that American education systems sustain white hegemony through school practices that reinforce inequality and disenfranchise students (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Leonardo, 2012; Wallace & Brand, 2012). Often, instead of being democratic spaces which support and encourage all students, schools perpetuate racism though policies such as zero tolerance and student tracking, and young African American males often face the worst ramifications of racism in schools (Leonardo, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Therefore, while intersectionality and CRT both focus on ramifications of oppression, CRT’s exclusive focus is on race. Ultimately, by drawing upon CRT and intersectionality theory, issues of race, gender and power are not overlooked but are central to understanding participants’ outcomes.
Modified Induction Analysis. The study used modified analytical induction when coding qualitative data (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In modified analytic induction, prior findings and/or hypotheses are used to create codes (Suizzo et al., 2016). Modified induction analysis is derived from analytic induction (Bogdan and Boykin, 2007; Gilgun, 1995). Analytic induction, unlike other qualitative methods, begins with a pre-existing theory or hypothesis. Therefore, the qualitative coding and analysis that takes place does not start from a blank slate but instead builds from a pre-existing finding or framework. For the present study, the research questions and quantitative results guided the questions posed in the focus groups as well as the focus of analysis. Subject matter discussed in the focus groups that was not related to the research study was ignored.

In this study, the constructs measured in the self-report survey acted as initial descriptive codes (i.e., racial private regard, racial centrality, racial public regard, pro-social behaviors). The descriptive codes were applied line by line, when applicable, to focus group data. Next, the quotes coded with the aforementioned descriptive codes, were examined and linked together to create interpretive codes. For example, when participants were prompted to provide examples of pro-sociality (a descriptive code), an interpretive code, acts of generosity, was applied to quotes like “I bring her her favorite snack” as it represented a generous act towards peers. Utterances that had no relationship to the descriptive codes or research questions were not analyzed or given interpretive codes. When a topic or idea was not one of the descriptive codes but was discussed quite frequently and related to the research question, it was given a descriptive code derived from participants' language. For example, respect was a topic not measured in the quantitative analysis but was a central focus of the focus groups, so respect became an interpretive code. Lastly, related interpretive codes were connected and given an overarching theme. For example, interpretive
codes respect, acts of generosity, and deference were connected under the theme pro-social behaviors & respect as all interpretive codes were related to the participants’ feelings regarding pro-social behaviors. Table 2 reflects the various codes developed in the coding and analysis process.

Table 2

Qualitative Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Codes</th>
<th>Interpretive codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial Centrality</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Pro-social Behaviors and Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Public Regard</td>
<td>Care</td>
<td>Race Matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Private Regard</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Race Mediates Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Centrality</td>
<td>Intersectionality</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender Public Regard</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Private regard</td>
<td>Acts of Generosity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-centric values</td>
<td>Acts of Deference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Reasoning</td>
<td>Feeling bad about Race</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pro-social Behavior</td>
<td>Individuality</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Feeling good about Race</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiences with discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling good about gender</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acts of Kindness</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I coded the data with another graduate student using the mixed method coding software Dedoose (Dedoose Version 7.0.23, 2016). We first independently coded the first focus group, participants with low pro-social behaviors, with descriptive codes. We then used Dedoose to determine out interrater reliability. The software calculated strong interrater reliability, Kappa=0.84. After confirming interrater reliability, we independently coded the first and second focus groups with interpretive codes. Prior to independently coding groups, we discussed research questions and overall themes to ensure interpretive code terms were related to constructs measured. We then came together to discuss findings, review codes, and determine themes which
linked them together. When we had differences in interpretive codes or themes, we discussed the divergences and came to an agreement about the best code for the particular quote.

Procedures

The Institutional Review Board at Georgia State University approved all procedures. All participants were recruited from weekly advisory periods. College for All has weekly, single gender, advisory sessions for students. These periods are held on Wednesdays and Thursdays for 50 minutes and act as a space for students to have fellowship and receive guidance from a teacher of the same gender. On one Wednesday, I visited each 9th and 10th grade advisory classes, explained the aims of project, and handed out parental permission forms to all interested participants. I returned to each advisory period the following day to collect any signed forms and hand out additional forms. Initial recruitment took place over two weeks. At the beginning of the third week, students with signed parental permission began to participate. Parental permission forms were still being collected and additional forms were passed out at this time.

The location where the participants completed the quantitative surveys varied; some completed them in their advisory classroom while others completed them in spaces such as the cafeteria or library. Regardless of the location, the process for completing the surveys remained the same. First, participants read assent forms and were given an opportunity to ask questions or share any concerns. Next, participants who assented were given a sheet of paper containing a website address that would take them to the Qualtrics surveys along with a laptop computer provided by the school. After typing in the website address, they were instructed to complete surveys independently and direct any questions or concerns during the surveys to the proctors, which were either myself or a fellow graduate student assisting with the project. Qualtrics counter-balanced the surveys. Upon completion, participants gave computers back to proctors.
After I confirmed completion on my personal laptop through the Qualtrics website, participants were given ten dollars, informed they might be invited to participate in a focus group later, and instructed to return to class.

The focus groups were completed approximately four months after quantitative data collection due to students going on summer vacation. The participants for focus groups were determined from quantitative data analysis as follows. The six participants who had the highest pro-social scores and the six students who had the lowest pro-social scores were invited to participate in the focus groups. All those invited elected to participate. The first focus group was conducted with participants who reported highest levels of pro-social behaviors, and the second was conducted with participants who reported the lowest levels of pro-social scores. The order of groups was not by design but rather determined by school logistics. The focus group sessions took place after school in a separate, quiet room in the administrative section of the school. Participants were provided a snack during the session. After the completion of the session, participants were given ten dollars.

**Results**

Results are reported in two sections. The first section focuses on the quantitative data beginning with the preliminary and descriptive data and then main analyses. Multiple regression analyses were used to examine the relations among predictor variables and pro-social behaviors. The second section focuses on the qualitative data.
Quantitative Results

Preliminary Analyses. Descriptive statistics for racial identity, gender identity, Afro-centric values, moral reasoning, and pro-social behaviors are presented in Table 3. The skewness and kurtosis of racial private regard and gender private regard suggested there was a non-normal distribution, and further analysis indicated that both variables were negatively skewed. While this was concerning, research has noted regression analysis with Likert scales using ordinal data is highly robust to issues of non-normality (Carifio & Perla, 2008; Norman, 2010).

Descriptive statistics demonstrate participants overall report high levels of racial centrality and they hold positive feelings (private regard) towards being African American and being male. Gender is less central to their overall identity than race based on the difference in those two scales, although this difference was not tested statistically. Their scores on racial and gender public regard are neutral (in the middle of the possible range of scores). Their Afro-centric value scores were 2.93 out of 5.00, which indicates, on average, participants’ did not agree with the values probed in the Afro-centric value scale. The pro-social behaviors score suggests that on average participants reported engaging in pro-social behaviors 3-5 times in the last semester. The moral reasoning score indicated on average the participants were scoring in the instrumental-relativist stage, meaning they were primarily concerned with getting their needs meet and avoiding punishment.

The measures were examined for missing data. Participants may not have answered questions because they ran out of time or they were dealing with technical issues. As noted earlier, Qualtrics counterbalanced surveys. Therefore, if a participant ran out of time, the section of the survey that was incomplete varied across participants. Therefore, missing data can be
viewed as MCAR or MAR. Except for the SMRM-SF, none of the scales had greater than 4.5% missing data. The SMRM-SF had no more than 8% missing data.

To deal with missing data this study used list-wise deletion. To maintain adequate power in multiple regression analysis, it is suggested one has at least 15-25 participants for each predictor (Austina & Steyerberg, 2015). This study, when using list wise deletion, had at least 120 participants for each regression model. The largest regression model contained three predictors, which would call for a minimum of 90 participants. Therefore, when the regression models utilized list-wise deletion, power was not likely affected. While there has been concern list wise deletion may bias parameter estimates, Graham (2008) asserts bias is often minimal, especially for multiple regression.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial Centrality</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Private Regard</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Public Regard</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Centrality</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Private Regard</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Public Regard</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-centric Values</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Reasoning</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Social Behaviors</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 reports bivariate correlations. Most of the identity variables were positively interrelated. Afro-centric values were significantly, positively correlated with both racial centrality ($r = .30, \rho < .01$) and racial public regard ($r = .29, \rho < .01$) but there was no relationship with racial public regard. It was also significantly correlated with gender private regard ($r = .23, \rho < .01$). Moral reasoning was significantly, positively correlated with racial...
private regard ($r = .22, \rho < .05$). There was a marginally significant positive relationship between moral reasoning and Afro-centric values ($r = .18, \rho < .06$). Pro-social behaviors were significantly, positively related to racial public regard ($r = .30, \rho < .01$) as well as gender private regard ($r = .17, \rho = .05$) and gender public regard ($r = .18, p < .05$).
Table 4

Bivariate Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Racial Centrality</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Racial Private Regard</td>
<td>.69**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Racial Public Regard</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gender Centrality</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gender Private Regard</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.17†</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gender Public Regard</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Afro-centric Values</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Moral Reasoning</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.18†</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Pro-social Behaviors</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05; ** p < .01, † p < .06
Main Analysis. This study examined the predictive relation between racial and gender identity variables and pro-social behaviors. This study also examined if there was an interaction effect between race and gender with regard to their relation to pro-social behaviors. Lastly, the study examined the predictive relationship Afro-centric values and moral reasoning had with pro-social behaviors and if the variables were related to pro-social behaviors jointly or independently.

Racial Identity. All assumptions of multiple regression were met. Predictor variables were mean-centered to avoid issues of multi-collinearity. The predictors included racial centrality, racial private regard, and racial public regard regressed on pro-social behaviors. The overall model, model 1, accounted for 10% of the participants' pro-social behaviors ($R^2=.10$, $F[3, 123]=4.39, p < .05$). The contribution of racial centrality and racial private regard to participants' pro-social behaviors were not significant, but the relation between racial public regard and pro-social behaviors was significantly different from zero ($B=3.05$, $\beta = .22$, $t[126]=3.11, p < .05$). Thus, for every unit increase in racial public regard for a participant with average racial public regard, there is a predicted 0.22 unit increase in reported pro-social behaviors. Results are reported in Table 5.

Table 5

Model 1: Racial Identity’s Relationship to Pro-Social Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>95%CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>[2.90,3.11]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Centrality</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>[-0.09,0.37]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Private Regard</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>[-0.33,0.19]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Public Regard</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>[0.08,0.36]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05; ** p < .01
Research has found a measured racial identity variable may moderate an otherwise non-significant relationship between a different racial identity variable and measured outcome (Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998). As noted above racial public regard was the only variable that had a significant relationship with pro-social behaviors. Racial public regard was positively, significantly correlated with racial centrality and racial private regard, however, indicating the inter-relatedness of the constructs. Therefore, two additional models explored whether racial public regard moderated the relationship racial centrality or racial private regard had with pro-social behaviors. Model 2 included racial centrality and racial public regard along with an interaction term between the two variables. The set of predictors explained a significant amount of variance ($R^2 = .14$, $F [3, 123] = 6.75, p < .05$). A statistically significant interaction was found between racial centrality and racial public regard ($B=3.01 \beta = .17, t (126) = 2.59, p < .05$) as reflected in Table 6.

| Model 2: Interaction Between Racial Public Regard and Racial Centrality |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| **$\beta$** | **95%CI** |
| Constant | 3.01 | [2.86,3.16] |
| Racial Centrality | 0.19* | [0.02,0.38] |
| Racial Public Regard | 0.21** | [0.07,0.34] |
| Public X Centrality | 0.17* | [0.04,0.30] |
| $R^2$ | .14 |
| $F$ | 6.75 |

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

To probe the interaction effects between racial public regard and racial centrality, I calculated three levels of racial public regard and three levels of racial centrality using standard deviation scores with the following estimated regression equation:
Pro − Social Behaviors′ = 3.009 + .209PublicRegard + .196RacialCentrality + .170RacePublicRegardXRacialCentrality. Results indicated the relationship between racial centrality and pro-social behaviors was moderated by the racial public regard levels. For a participant with average racial centrality and public regard, as racial public regard levels increased, the effect racial centrality has on pro-social behaviors became larger. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Interaction between Racial Public Regard and Racial Centrality

Model 3 examined the relationship between racial private regard and racial public regard with an interaction term between the two variables. These set of predictors also explained a significant amount of variance ($R^2=.17$, $F[3, 123] = 8.01, p < .01$) and the interaction term between racial private regard and racial public regard was statistically significant ($B = 2.97, \beta = .27, t(126) = 3.42, p < .01$). The findings are reflected in Table 7.
**Model 3: Interaction Between Racial Public Regard and Racial Private Regard**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>95%CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>[2.81,3.12]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Private Regard</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>[0.09,0.62]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Public Regard</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>[0.08,0.35]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public X Private</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>[0.04,0.30]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>8.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05; ** p < .01

To examine the interaction effects between racial public regard and racial private regard, I calculated three levels of racial public regard and three levels of racial private regard using standard deviation scores with the following estimated regression equation: \( Pro - Social\ Behaviors' = 2.973 + .214PublicRegard + .356PrivateRegard + .265PrivateRegard \times PublicRegard \). Again, results indicated the relation between racial private regard and pro-social behaviors is moderated by racial public regard levels. For a participant with average to high racial private regard and racial public regard, the increase in racial public regard levels magnified the positive effect between racial private regard and pro-social behaviors (see Figure 2).
The aforementioned results indicate racial public regard affects pro-social behaviors independently and jointly with racial centrality and racial private regard. That is, the perception that other people think positively about one’s race, leads to a more frequent enactment of pro-social behaviors. Additionally, the greater the racial public regard perception is, the larger the predictive, positive effect racial centrality and racial private regard has on pro-social behaviors.

**Gender Identity.** Next, I examined the predictive capabilities of gender centrality and gender regard variables. Predictor variables were mean-centered to avoid issues of multicollinearity. All assumptions of multiple regression were met. The overall model accounted for 5.3% of the model variance but was not significantly different from zero ($R^2=0.05$, $F (3, 124) = 2.30, p < .05$). Additionally, none of the predictor variables were significantly different from zero as reflected in Table 8.
To further, probe the significant, positive correlations gender public regard and gender private regard had with pro-social behaviors, two regression models were run with each as a predictor variable. For the first model, which included gender private regard as a predictor variable, all assumptions of linear regression were met. The overall model was significant ($R^2=0.04$, $F[1,126] = 4.56, p = .04$). For every unit increase in gender private regard, there is an expected .23 unit increase in pro-social behaviors accounting for 3.5% of variance in pro-social behaviors ($B=1.10, \beta = .23, t(127) = 2.14, p = .04$). Similarly, the second model including gender public regard was significant ($R^2=0.03$, $F(1,126) = 4.0008, p = .047$). Thus, for every unit increase in gender public regard, there is an expected .17 unit increase in pro-social behaviors ($B=2.41, \beta = .17, t(127) = 2.00, p = .047$).

Additional models were run to examine if there was an interaction between gender identity terms. First, an interaction term between gender public regard and gender private regard was probed. The model, predictors, and interaction term were not significantly different from zero ($R^2=0.052$, $F[3,124] = 2.253, p > .05$). Next, I examined if gender public regard moderated the relationship between gender centrality and pro-social behaviors. The model and predictors,

### Table 8

**Model 4: Gender Identity’s Relationship to Pro-Social Behaviors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>95%CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>[0.56,2.76]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Centrality</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>[-0.15,0.29]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Private Regard</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>[-0.05,0.40]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Public Regard</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>[-0.06,0.30]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$
including the interaction term was not significantly different from zero ($R^2 = 0.036, F [3, 124] = 1.529, p > .05$). Likewise, the model testing the moderating capabilities of gender private regard on gender centrality relationship with pro-social behaviors revealed a non-significant relationship ($R^2 = 0.039, F [3, 124] = 1.687, p > .05$).

**Interactions between Race and Gender.** To examine potential interactions between gender and race, variables measuring the same dimension were paired in a multiple regression model. For example, racial centrality and gender centrality were included as predictor variables in multiple regression model alongside an interaction term. Variables were mean-centered to avoid potential issues of multicollinearity. I first examined the relation between racial and gender centrality. The model was not significant, ($R^2 = 0.03, F [3, 123] = 1.30, p > .05$). Additionally, the predictor variables and interaction term were not significantly different from zero as reflected in Table 9.

Table 9

**Model 5: Interaction Between Racial Centrality and Gender Centrality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>[2.10, 3.25]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Centrality</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>[-0.30, 0.14]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Centrality</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>[-0.15, 0.25]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender X Race</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>[-0.09, 0.32]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05; ** p < .01

The next model examined the relationship between racial and gender private regard and pro-social behaviors. The model was not significant ($R^2 = 0.05, F [3, 123] = 2.22, p > .05$) and no significant interaction emerged as reflected in Table 9.
Table 10

**Model 6: Interaction Between Racial Private Regard and Gender Centrality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>95%CI</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>[2.92,3.24]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Private Regard</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>[-0.18,0.37]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Private Regard</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>[-0.024,0.21]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender X Race</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>[-0.30,0.05]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05; ** p < .01

The final model examined racial public regard and gender public regard’s predictive relation with pro-social behaviors, as well as a potential interaction between the two variables. The overall model was significantly different from zero, ($R^2=.097, F (3, 123) = 4.39, p < .05$). The only predictor variable that was significantly different from zero was racial public regard (B=3.02, $\beta = .201, t(126) = 2.71, p < .05$). Thus, for every unit increase in racial public regard, a participant with average racial public regard will have a .20 increase in pro-social behaviors. Neither the interaction term nor gender public regard was significantly different from zero as reflected in Table 11.

Table 11

**Model 7: Interaction Between Racial Public Regard and Gender Public Regard**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>[2.863,3.183]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Public Regard</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>[-0.08,0.29]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Public Regard</td>
<td>0.20**</td>
<td>[0.05,0.35]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender X Race</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>[-0.08,0.19]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05; ** p < .01
**Afro-centric Values and Moral Reasoning.** The last set of models examined the relation Afro-centric values and moral reasoning may have with pro-social behaviors. Assumptions for multiple regression were met. The multiple regression model included moral reasoning and Afro-centric variable as predictors alongside an interaction variable. The overall model was not significant ($R^2=0.02$, $F[3, 114] = 0.82, p >0.05$). Additionally none of the predictors were significantly different from zero as reflected in Table 12.

Table 12

**Model 8: Moral Reasoning and Afro-Centric Values Relationship to Pro-social Behaviors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>[.28,12.30]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Reasoning</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>[-.38,0.15]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-centric Values</td>
<td>-1.02</td>
<td>[-3.07,1.03]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral X Afro-centric</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>[-0.36,1.44]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05; ** p < .01

**Summary of Quantitative Results.** The quantitative analyses uncovered a number of statistically significant relationships. First, racial public regard has a strong, positive predictive relationship with pro-social behaviors and moderates the relations racial centrality and racial private regard have with pro-social behaviors. Second, gender public regard and gender private regard predicted pro-social behaviors. Gender centrality was not related to pro-social behavior. Additionally, there were no interactions between gender constructs that predicted pro-social behaviors. Interactions between gender identity constructs and racial identity did not predict pro-social behaviors. Finally, Afro-centric values and moral reasoning did not have a statistically significant relationship with pro-social behaviors jointly or independently.
Qualitative Results

As noted above, in a sequential, explanatory design, the qualitative results are supplementary to the quantitative findings. Using modified induction techniques, focus groups analyses were focused on participants’ responses concerning pro-social behaviors, race-ethnic and gender identities, moral reasoning, and Afro-centric values. The first group was comprised of participants who had the highest self-report pro-social behaviors scores ($M = 4.5$). There were six participants, two of whom were 11th graders and four were 10th graders. The participants completed the quantitative measures at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. The focus group took place in Fall 2017, therefore participants had moved into the next grade. The second focus group represented participants who reported the lowest levels of pro-social behaviors ($M = 1.8$). There were six participants, including four 9th graders and two 10th graders. The 9th grade participants had completed the survey at the beginning of the 2017 school year.

I acted as the facilitator and note taker for both groups, which will be referred to as high and low pro-social groups respectively. Both groups were audio recorded. Due to recorder failure in the high pro-social group, a repeat focus group was conducted in order to tape-record the session. The repeat session included all but two of the original focus group participants. In line with modified inductive analysis technique noted earlier, constructs from quantitative analysis were used as descriptive codes. Next, quotes that covered the same concept were classified as interpretive codes, which were then grouped into themes. The resulting three themes are explored below. Themes are representative of both groups unless otherwise noted.

Pro-social Behaviors and Respect: “I Don’t Like You, but I Respect You”.

The scale for pro-social behaviors has been used with African Adolescent males in previous research and had good reliability ($\alpha=0.83$) (Lozado et al., 2016). However, due to the limited scholarship on
African American boys and pro-social behaviors, the focus groups first explored participants’ thoughts and feelings about this stage specific outcome. Participants in both groups were asked to provide definitions of pro-social behaviors in schools. Initially, the responses were broad representations of being kind. For example, George, a slight teen who spoke softly with focused eyes stated “Kind is when you nice to everybody, and you just---you just not mean to nobody. You just nice to everybody. Just a good person.” When further probed, participants gave examples of giving or helping beyond what was expected of them. Jared and Kenny discussed how they were kind to other students at their school:

   Jared: “Just on a day to day basis, opening the door for anybody- just hold the door.”

   Kenny: “Matter afact, just earlier I just gave someone a dollar because he asked me for a dollar…if you need help I got you.”

Ultimately, for participants in both pro-social groups, being kind reflected being generous to others. For participants this could be an act of physical generosity, like opening a door, or financial generosity, such as giving someone money. These same principles applied to teachers. The participants spoke of how they would be pro-social by bringing a teacher or administrator a favorite snack. While participants tied generosity to pro-social behaviors, respect was the foundation of their pro-social behaviors.

   In both groups, respect was one of the first words participants used to describe pro-social behaviors. When asked to expand upon that idea, participants stated being respectful was different from being kind. In their eyes, one is often prompted to engage in pro-social behaviors with another person because of respect for them. Kindness, or even liking another person, was not required to give or receive respect. Among peers at school, respect was an understanding of physical and emotional boundaries. Bobby shared,
Like, I don't like you but I respect you as a man. You see someone getting picked on, or you see- if you see an incident going on...like a fight. The person he got a big presence and like, ‘Nah man I ain’t gonna fight you.’ I respect you. Don't mean we tight. That don't mean we cool, but I respect you for being a bigger person...I respect you as a man, but that don't mean we got any type of friendship, or anything. I just respect you. For participants, respect in many ways was an understanding of boundaries. As Kenny succinctly put it, "Respect is people knowing what I tolerate and what I don't tolerate."

In schools, participants showed respect to peers, teachers, and administrators through acts of deference. Participants often cited incidents of acquiescing to a teacher’s or administrator’s demands without complaint or comment even if they did not understand or agree with the request as examples of respect. Zion stated “Respect is like if she tell you to be quiet, just be quiet. Don’t talk back.” Similarly, with peers, participants showed other students respect by not engaging in or escalating a potentially volatile situation out of respect for another person. When asked about which they valued more, respect or kindness, all participants stated respect. Participants felt it was incredibly important to be respected across contexts. They stressed a nice person who did not show them respect was essentially worthless. Respect was also tied to other important relationship factors like trust and dependability.

While respect’s relationship to pro-social behaviors emerged across groups, the high pro-social group stated another essential element needed to be present for them to engage in pro-social behaviors: vulnerability. When summarizing their feelings about being kind, one participant stated one should be kind but not too kind and another quickly added one shouldn't be vulnerable. When asked to elaborate, students expressed concerns about being too generous or
too vulnerable because someone may take advantage of it. Kenny and Jared used a hypothetical situation to illustrate their point,

Kenny: Let’s say I come—we come to school every day and I give you a dollar every day. You be like thank you, thank you the first time I give you a dollar. If I constantly keep giving you that dollar you gonna expect me to did not giving you that dollar.

Jared: Then that one day you don’t give them a dollar!

Kenny: Then they are gonna get mad at you, "Where’s my dollar?!" I’m like “Yo dollar?! What you mean?! I gave it out my heart, my kindness."

They went on to explain their identities as African American males made them more susceptible to being taken advantage of or unfairly tested. This caused them to lock down their feelings to ensure others would not see them fail. When probed about vulnerability's connection to kindness they informed me that the few people they are unconditionally kind to are the people with whom they are most vulnerable. Participants in the high pro-social group stated they are most vulnerable with their mothers, and they are the ones most likely to be recipients of their kindness and respect. As one participant told me, "My mom, that's all I need in this world." They went on to state certain contexts afforded vulnerability such as a sports game or graduation but generally, they were very protective of their feelings, which influenced the ways they engaged with others.

**Race Matters: "Blessed and Highly Favored."** Quantitative race and gender variables were significantly correlated to each other. The qualitative results confirmed these findings regarding the interrelation of the two identities. Participants were asked to independently describe their feelings towards their race and towards their gender respectively. Most had
answers readily available when it came to their race but when probed about their gender, their responses reflected their experiences as African American men. When I asked if the experiences they were sharing were based on their gender or race, all participants stated it was a combination of both, and they could not separate the two identities.

The qualitative findings confirmed descriptive statistics on racial-ethnic identity variables. Being African American was important to participants and all participants stated they are very happy about their African American identity (high private regard and high centrality). Participants used words like “blessed” and “talented” to describe feelings about their race and cited African Americans’ resilience as a source of pride for them. In both focus groups, participants spoke of historical trauma African Americans have had to overcome and the ways they continue to shine. Their responses on how other people viewed their race (racial public regard), however, were mostly negative.

Participants in both groups used words like “dangerous” and “fearful” when describing other peoples’ feelings and opinions about African American people and African American males. When they thought others perceived their race in a positive light, it was related to stereotypes about African American men. In both groups, participants stated the two areas in which they were positively perceived by others were in their athletic abilities and their sexual natures, two common stereotypes about African American males (Howard et al., 2012). For example, when Michael proudly stated, “White girls love us,” all other participants vigorously agreed. These findings provide a more nuanced view of participants’ racial public regard than the quantitative findings, because the racial public regard statistics were low, but these focus groups illuminated some high public regard, albeit related to stereotyping.
The quantitative findings also found racial public regard was positively, significantly related to pro-social behaviors. Additionally, racial public regard moderated the positive, significant relationship between racial private regard and pro-social behaviors and between racial centrality and pro-social behaviors. When asked about how their feelings about their African American identity affected the ways they engaged with others, most gave general answers across groups. Some said they were raised to be generous and African American people, in general, are very giving. Others stated there was no relationship between the pro-social behaviors and racial-ethnic identity.

Considering the quantitative data found racial public regard positively predicted pro-social behaviors, I asked participants to think deeply about instances when they were treated a particular way because others perceived their race in a positive or negative light and how that affected their behaviors. The majority provided real life examples though some provided hypothetical examples. The hypothetical examples they provided reflected situations where someone acted in a discriminatory manner towards them because they harbored negative feelings about the participant’s race. In these examples, both groups stated they would respond in a neutral or positive way to disprove the other person’s negative opinion about African Americans. Some even stated it motivated them to be successful with hope the person would later see the error of their ways. Zion and Ashad, from the low pro-social group, describe a hypothetical situation with a woman who may lock the doors upon sight of them or another young African American boy.

Zion: “Okay..so that moment you walk by the car and she lock the doors so you—that makes you wanna go harder so 10 years later you a successful black man. She lookin at
the TV. She see your name pop up and she say, “Oh that look exactly like the Black boy that walked by my car and I locked the door on him”.

Ashad: “I think if they lock the doors, the next day come say something to her. Say something nice to her. Don’t try to act aggressively, and keep doing that. Then eventually, she’ll feel stupid for even trying to treat you like a threat or something.”

These responses contrast the quantitative findings, which suggest participants with low public regard are less pro-social. Focus group participants expressed quite the opposite; others’ negative feelings about their race motivated them to be pro-social rather than deterred them. Despite the similarities between the groups on this point, an important difference regarding race emerged between the low pro-social and high pro-social group.

Every person in the low pro-social behavior group volunteered a negative experience they believed was predicated by their racial-ethnic background. Also, low pro-social group participants frequently used the term they when referring to others who may be treating them negatively because of their race. When asked who they referred to, one group member stated White people while the others nodded in agreement. When asked to elaborate, Michael looked into my eyes and firmly stated, "Look at our president. He not here for us…He try and take everything Obama made to help us out…He's not for us.” Tony quickly agreed and referenced the recent gentrification of Atlanta as evidence of the challenges between African American and Whites. Zion put it in starker terms and proclaimed, "It’s about like Black versus Whites. It's like a war between us to who's better or who can get the job done." The group went on to state these opinions were formed as they "got bigger" and learned more about the world and their positioning within it.
The high pro-social group had a different perspective on the matter. First, only three of six people in the high pro-social behavior focus group reported experiences of perceived discrimination based on their racial-ethnic identity. They also used the word *they* very frequently but when probed further about it, participants stated they could refer to anybody. Kenny explained “I see it everybody the same. It’s just that’s what they see, what they perceive the world as and what you see it as because so many people see the world in their own type of way.”

Jay went further and stated “Some people, and I’m not even gonna label them as White people, just they cool people, I’m not gonna be like, ‘Oh that’s a White person over there’ I’m trying to get past that.” They had a much more post-racial attitude towards other racial-ethnic groups than the low pro-social group. While participants in both groups stated others’ feelings about them did not affect how the participants engage with them, these findings demonstrated that the low pro-social participants see world in a more racialized way than the high pro-social participants.

Ultimately, participants felt others viewed African Americans in general, and African American males specifically, with low regard. They also stated they were unbothered by others’ low opinions. They had come to expect it from conversations they had with others regarding race and from experiences with discrimination. Only a few participants expressed frustration over negative experiences they had based on their social positioning as young African American men. Additionally, while quantitative findings found a positive relationship between pro-social behaviors and the belief that others have positive feelings about participants’ racial-ethnic identity, participants’ spoken opinions complicate that relationship. These focus group responses suggest it is the belief that people have negative views that motivated participants to engage in pro-social behaviors.
Race Mediates Justice: “Was He Black Though?” Neither moral reasoning nor Afro-centric values were related to pro-social behaviors in the quantitative analysis. However, the two constructs were marginally, positively related to each other \((p = .056)\) in bivariate correlations. Therefore, focus group questions further explored this relationship. Considering Afro-centric values and moral reasoning are complex models, for the purposes of time and clarity I focused on the overarching themes from each value system when discussing them among participants. Afro-centric values were discussed as communal values and relationships while moral reasoning was discussed in terms of individual rights and justice.

I began the conversation by asking them their thoughts about justice. As soon as I brought up the word justice, I received heated reactions in both groups. There was an urgency to inform me that the U.S. justice system systematically targets African American males and is unfairly tilted to the advantage of White people. As one participant stated, "Justice is for and by the White man." Critics of Kohlberg's theory have pointed to its over-emphasis on individuality over relationships (Gilligan, 1977; Snarey & Walker, 2004). Afro-centric values in contrast are relational and value community over the individual. To probe the tension between community and individualism as it relates to justice I asked participants to share their thoughts on an ongoing social movement where professional athletes kneel during the national anthem to show solidarity with the African American community. All but one participant stated they would kneel regardless of the consequences and spoke of the importance of supporting and having the support of their communities as it relates to justice. Jacob explains:

Say if you came from the neighborhood—you were brought up in the neighborhood.

They see you standing up. That's the opposite of what they think—you know that's the
opposite. If you know that's the wrong thing to do, and you still do it you gonna lose respect. They not gonna feel for you anymore. They not gonna support you.

To further examine this relationship between the two constructs, I proposed Kohlberg’s Heinz scenario to participants. In this dilemma, Heinz has to decide what to do when a drug that will save his wife’s life is priced beyond his means by a local pharmacist. I asked what they thought about Heinz’s decision to steal the drug. In the high pro-social group, one participant asked after a few seconds, said “Was he Black though?” He went on to explain that the race of the pharmacist would change the outcome altogether. If the pharmacist were African American then he would have “looked out for Heinz”, negating his need to steal it in the first place. As the others nodded in agreement, the participants began to discuss the ways the African American community looks out for its own. The responses were similar in the low pro-social group. Race and cultural values that emphasized community over the individual were again salient. These responses suggest that, for these young African American men, justice is filtered through the lens of race and community.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this mixed method sequential, explanatory design study was to explore what factors may influence African American boys’ pro-social behaviors in schools. The study’s first set of questions examined how African American adolescent males’ thoughts and feelings towards their race and gender predicted pro-social behaviors. The second set of questions examined the relationships among Afro-centric values and Kohlberg’s moral reasoning and pro-social behaviors.

In the quantitative portion of the study, racial identity, gender identity, moral reasoning, and Afro-centric values were each regressed against pro-social behaviors to determine their
predictive effect. Additional models were run to determine if racial-ethnic identity moderated gender identity’s relationship with pro-social behaviors and if Afro-centric values moderated moral reasoning’s relationship with pro-social behaviors. The quantitative analysis determined racial public regard had a statistically significant, positive predictive relationship with pro-social behaviors and moderated the relationship racial centrality and racial private regard had with pro-social behaviors. Gender public regard and gender private regard also predicted pro-social behaviors. Lastly, while Afro-centric values and moral reasoning were not predictive of pro-social behaviors, they were marginally, significantly related to each other. The qualitative section of the study used focus groups to better understand quantitative results as related to research questions. The focus groups uncovered three important themes related to research questions and quantitative findings: (1) pro-social behaviors and respect; (2) importance of race; (3) race mediates justice. Together, the quantitative and qualitative findings paint a vibrant picture of how the examined P-VEST components guide African American males’ behaviors.

**Stage Specific Outcomes: Pro-Social Behaviors & Respect**

While the primary goal of this study was not to determine measurement reliability, it was critical to use participant voices to unpack their definitions of pro-social behaviors in schools. Quantitative analysis demonstrated the scale had good reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha of (a=.83) however, in line with critical race theory, it is important to give participants an opportunity to provide a counter-narrative. The focus group participants’ use of examples of generosity and empathy aligned with the quantitative measure examples of pro-social behaviors. Thus, it was an appropriate measure for study participants but limited because respect emerged as a more important stage-specific outcome.
When talking about pro-social behaviors, some participants’ said vulnerability was an important part of interpersonal relationships and pro-social behaviors. They also stated they felt were unable to be vulnerable with peers and teachers as their positioning as young African American males leave them open to challenges. It seemed participants were alluding to the very rigid expectations of African American males’ behaviors to embody a “cool pose” disposition in which high levels of bravado are combined with apathy and disengagement (Cunningham & Meunier, 2004). This performance is enacted because of social and physical repercussions that may occur in its absence. Thus, participants’ understanding of the fundamental elements of social relationships was constructed through their understanding of themselves as African American men.

Stevenson (2004) asserts these performances leave African American males in a hyper-vulnerable position. While endorsing problematic notions of Black masculinity to maintain physical and emotional safety, these young men are often in desperate need of deep emotional connection. They need space to be vulnerable to make sense of their tenuous existence within American society. P-VEST has framed hyper-masculinity (a frequent manifestation of this hyper-vulnerability) as a reactive coping mechanism among African American males and explored its relationship to stage-specific outcomes like academic achievement. Participants’ responses about protecting themselves from vulnerability suggest one should also look at how African American males’ hyper-masculine attitudes may mediate pro-social behaviors in schools.

Another significant finding from both focus groups was all participants’ emphasis on respect. Respect was vital to participants’ interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, they suggested respect encouraged them to engage in pro-social behaviors. Participants’ emphasis on
respect likely reflects their frustrations about their social positioning that lays them bare to different forms of disrespect. African American males must often develop their identities in an environment that continuously “disrespects” their independence and individuality across contexts. Stevenson (1997) writes.

The salient images of African American youth upon the American media landscape are glaring and stark. Both young men and women fight these images as much as they internalize them. Too often, these images misrepresent and misinterpret the unique cultural expressions of Black youth (i.e., missed) and disrespect their very existence by failing to present positive aspects of their cultural essence (i.e., dissed), (p. 37)

The lack of power African American males may have in responding to perceived disrespect from macro-level sources and authority figures is likely why respect is held in such high esteem. Moreover, this helplessness against higher authorities may be why young African American males respond in violent, anti-social ways against peers who may have disrespected them. For example, African American youth are six times more likely to commit friend-acquaintance homicide than white peers (Children’s Defense Fund, 2000). This suggests much more research should be done to examine African American males’ respect for themselves and others as a stage-specific outcome and its relationship to emergent identities such as race and gender.

Participants’ definitions of respect were also an important finding. When asked to elaborate on what respect looked like and felt like to them, the participants provided examples of deference. This view of respect as unquestionably yielding to authority mirrors the way social policies across contexts attempt to control their Black bodies. This is frequently seen in schools serving predominately African American communities; these schools privilege obedience over individual agency. These school policies often prepare African American youth in general, and
African American males in particular, to blindly obey authority figures and laws that are not often working in their best interest. This is just one example of the ways systematic racism within schools and communities work to subjugate young African American males (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Alternatively, one may argue this emphasis on deference may be seen as protective in P-VEST. While the reasons behind the social institutions’ emphasis on deference may be insidious, learning how to obey could arguably be a matter of life and death for African American males. In 1955, 14-year-old Emmett Till was brutally murdered after being falsely accused of whistling at a white woman, a sign of utmost disrespect during that time. In 2012, when Jordan Davis, a 17-year-old African American male, didn’t defer to the wishes of Michael Dunn to lower his music, he was shot ten times by Dunn and subsequently died. These incidents, generations apart, illustrate African American young males’ deference can be linked to their survival.

**Emergent Identities: Gender Matters but Race Matters More**

Gender private regard and gender public regard positively predicted pro-social behaviors among participants; when participants felt good about being male and thought others viewed males positively, they were more likely to engage in pro-social behaviors. Additionally, racial public regard predicted pro-social behaviors and moderated the relationship racial centrality and racial private regard had with pro-social behaviors. High racial public regard predicted pro-social behaviors and made the contributions of racial centrality and racial private regard to pro-social behaviors stronger. This quantitative finding confirms P-VEST’s assertion that emergent identities will influence stage-specific outcomes.

Focus groups illuminated these pathways even further, mainly related to racial public regard. Racial public regard is a type of reflected appraisal; how you view me will affect how I
view myself. P-VEST posits reflected appraisals are an important part of the developmental process, particularly for emergent identities like race and gender. Participants in both focus groups expressed relatively low levels of public regard and stated they are motivated to excel or be pro-social when others are negative. Participants in the low pro-social group, however, viewed experiences through a highly racialized, negative lens, primarily as White versus Black people. While they spoke of engaging in pro-social actions to combat negative appraisals, the quantitative analysis suggests they are behaving in quite the opposite manner; their low public regard reduces the frequency of pro-social behaviors. These findings demonstrated the importance of reflected appraisals on African American adolescent males’ thoughts and behaviors. P-VEST argues perceptions are a crucial part of identity formation and this study’s finding that racial public regard influences, not only behaviors, but other dimensions of identity such as racial private regard and racial centrality, supports that assertion.

The focus groups’ results also speak to the complexity of the relationship between behaviors and socially mediated identities. For example, participants who reported engaging in the highest frequency of pro-social behaviors asserted that vulnerability was a major motivator of their decision to engage in pro-social behaviors. However, their positioning as young African American men made them wary of being perceived as “too vulnerable” and risk dealing with emotional or physical ramifications. Therefore, even for African American males engaging in high levels of pro-social behaviors, their emergent identities are dictating and limiting the frequency and recipients of their pro-social actions. Additionally, while both focus groups stated they would meet others’ negative regard for African Americans with kindness, the two groups divergent feelings regarding America’s race relations and the thoughts and motivations of
different racial-ethnic groups speak to immediacy of race in some of the participants interactions with others.

The low pro-social group stated their low-public regard was a motivator for engaging in pro-social behaviors and provided examples of when someone may have been treating them in a discriminatory manner. These responses were coupled with participants’ beliefs White people were inherently at odd with African Americans; thus, one could surmise the perpetrator in their scenarios was White. While the low pro-social group stated they would respond in pro-social ways to “prove them wrong”, this may only apply to White people in racial charged situations. In their day-to-day lives, participants’ lack of pro-social behaviors may be a coping mechanism to deal with their perceived powerlessness in addressing issues of racism and discrimination within the American context. P-VEST points out these reactive coping mechanisms, which are informed by larger social forces, are often incorporated into emergent identities.

Scholars have noted that African American males must develop an identity in a terrain in which they are simultaneously “desired and despised” (Cooper, 2013; Stevenson, 1997). As Boykin and W.E.B. Dubois point out, African Americans must often create a double consciousness to survive within America (Boykin, 1986; Dubois, 1994). Participants’ responses suggest many are in the process of building this very consciousness as it relates to their emergent identities, which, in turn, dictates their behavior choices. Indeed, they may, unwittingly, incorporate society’s negative attributes about their race into their burgeoning identities (Stevenson, 1997). These results seem to confirm this as participants made no explicit connections between how society’s poor treatment of them may motivate them to respond similarly or may lead them to shut down possibilities of emotional connections and hide their vulnerability from others.
The focus groups also uncovered the intersectional nature of participants’ identities. While quantitative analysis suggested race and gender did not interact when affecting pro-social behaviors, participants stated their positive and negative experiences and responses were predicated on race and gender. In both groups, participants explicitly stated that they move through the world as African American males and could not privilege one identity over another. Their responses reflect intersectionality’s position that axes of power create compounded rather than isolated experiences for marginalized groups. At the same time, though, these findings also support the CRT assertion about the primacy of race in certain experiences. The participants’ emphasis on race in the qualitative and quantitative results indicate race was highly salient in their enactment of pro-social behaviors.

**Protective Factors: Cultural Orientations**

Kohlberg’s moral reasoning and Afro-centric values were examined as potentially protective aspects within a participant’s net vulnerability, which could lead to the stage-specific outcome of pro-social behaviors. Quantitative analysis found no relationship between the two constructs and pro-social behaviors. The lack of relationship between Kohlberg’s moral reasoning and pro-social behaviors is not unsurprising. While research has found links between moral reasoning and pro-social behaviors, some studies have found no direct relationship between the moral reasoning and behavioral outcomes (Pozzoli, Gini, & Thornberg, 2016). The lack of relationship between Afro-centric values and pro-social behaviors was more surprising though. The limited scholarship previously conducted has found a relationship between Afro-centric values and positive behavioral outcomes (Grills et al., 2015).

Considering the lack of a direct relationship, it may be that Afro-centric values and Kohlberg’s moral reasoning are affecting pro-social behaviors indirectly. One may want to
examine how the two constructs may mediate the relationship other dimensions of P-VEST may have with pro-social behaviors. For example, research could examine the mediating effects of Afro-centric values on experiences of perceived racial discrimination and if it has the potential to act as a buffer for African American males. Although not a research purpose in the present study, it should be noted that Afro-centric values were positively, significantly correlated with racial centrality and racial private regard. Lastly, the way one answers a pencil and paper test of any kind may have little relation to behaviors in the complex drama of everyday life.

While the two constructs were not related to pro-social behaviors, in the quantitative analysis, they were marginally, positively related to one another, and participants’ responses in focus groups demonstrated they were interrelated. Participants shared that race often mediates issues of equity and fairness in their world. They believed that the race of an actor in a moral dilemma would change the outcome of the scenario. This aligns with previous research done with Kohlberg’s moral reasoning scale with college students that found changing the race of one of the actors changed the African American participant’s justification (Moreland & Leach, 2001). The fact that participants’ responses mirror this finding confirms the P-VEST argument that social context mediates individual’s thought processes.

It is quite unsurprising that race, in particular, would play such a huge role in participants’ ideas about justice. They are confronted with the ramifications of the “hyper-incarceration” of African American males and must contend with the threat to their rights on a daily basis. Therefore, it would be naïve to expect their ideas about justice could be aligned with a legal system that is continuously biased towards them. Alongside participants’ distrust for the justice system was an emphasis on community and interpersonal relationships. Within both focus groups, participants said community support was an important motivator in decisions they may
make: preserving relationships was paramount. This aligns with many of the values of Afro-
centrism; thus, the moderate mean on the Afro-centrism scale may have more to do with the
scale’s validity than participants’ endorsement of Afro-centric values.

Many of the short answer responses to items probing legality and justice on the SMRM-
SF included comments about disparities in the US justice systems. There were also responses
that focused on maintaining interpersonal relationships. These responses led to lower scores for
participants per guidelines of the scoring manual but suggest that the SMRM-SF may not be the
most suitable tool for measuring African American males’ moral reasoning levels.

Future Directions and Limitations

While this study uncovered valuable information about African American males’ social
identities, cultural values, and pro-social behaviors, some limitations should be taken into
consideration. First, as noted in the results, the high pro-social group was conducted twice
because of recording issues. Though the questions remained the same, the repeat group may have
afforded a level of familiarity that led participants to share more than they would have otherwise.
Because the low pro-social group was not repeated, there may have been some similarities or
differences that did not emerge because of this discrepancy. Additionally, my social positioning
as an African American woman may have affected focus group participants’ responses.
Participants’ responses may have been tailored to fit what they thought I might want to hear.

Another critical issue that should be addressed in future research is the lack of normality
with the identity variables. For both the race and gender private regard and centrality variables,
participants’ self-reports were negatively skewed. Though Norman (2010) found evidence that
non-normal data does not interfere with significance testing, it is important to take into
consideration the best methodological approaches for dealing with such data. While transforming
data is an often utilized to address issues of non-normality, that implies that participants’ responses are not symmetrically distributed. Using a sample that is all African American and male, the present study finds that African American adolescents feel quite good about being African American and it is a central part of their overall self-concept. It may be presumptuous or even misleading to try to fix or normalize the data. Another potential issue was the use of parallel items in the measurement of racial and gender identities. Parallel items have been used before in research examining intersectional identities, and they were the best option available for this study. However, the near identical questions may have been the cause of the high correlations between gender and racial-ethnic identity variables.

Another important limitation is the school site. The school site was a charter school, and students were accepted through a lottery system that their families applied for. Once accepted, families and students had to sign a contract where they consented to longer school days and increased family involvement. This process and associated expectations may have discouraged families from applying, and only a certain number of students could be selected in the lottery. Therefore, the generalizability of the study could be limited.

Despite limitations, the study’s findings have pointed us in new, exciting directions in research on adolescent African American males. Importantly, this study has shown the value of using P-VEST to understand pathways and outcomes for youth of color within their social contexts; the quantitative and qualitative results confirmed P-VEST’s theorized pathways though identity to outcomes. One critical finding was the importance of respect to participants’ understandings and relationships. Future research should use a P-VEST approach to examine the function and development of respect. Considering how vital the construct is to African American adolescent males’ interpersonal relationships, in and out of schools, research should further
unpack what factors affect respect, how it emerges as a value, and how it influences future outcomes.

Reflected appraisals have also emerged as an important area for further analysis. In the present study, the most important indicator of race’s relationship with behavior was how participants thought others viewed their racial-ethnic group. This suggests that racial public regard is one area that could benefit from further exploration both quantitatively and qualitatively with a particular appreciation for context. The should be much more exploration on racial socialization practices impact on racial-ethnic identity dimensions and how that, in turn affects psycho-social outcomes. While there has been a fair amount of research on how processes like racial socialization affect a person’s racial-ethnic identity and outcomes, this is often done with parent-child dyads. Upon entering adolescence, an individual receives messages about race from a range of different actors, like media and peers, yet there is much less research on how these socialization agents influence one’s racial-ethnic identity and subsequent outcomes. Additionally, little research has explored how schools’ racial socialization practices affect racial-ethnic identity and subsequent outcomes. Considering this research that has demonstrated the importance of reflected appraisals, it is important to look more closely at the aforementioned socialization agents.

The results of the present study suggest there should be a concentrated effort to develop measures more appropriate for African American males as well as the importance of mixed-methodologies. Focus groups revealed discrepancies between quantitative surveys and student’s thoughts and feelings. Moreover, it provided participants the opportunity share, in richer detail, what does and doesn’t matter when it comes to pro-social behaviors. For example, the low Afro-centric values levels did not seem to reflect participants’ expressed feelings about the issue of
collectivism and interpersonal relationships. Likewise, while they were defined pro-social behaviors in the same manner as the pro-social quantitative scale, respect was a much more important factor for participants. Additionally, quantitative measures designed to measure intersectional identities will be invaluable to help us understand how these identities affect outcomes. Future research should also use higher level modeling techniques like structural equational modeling (SEM) to create profiles of participants. The ability to create identity profiles of African American adolescent males who engage in pro-social behaviors will help us better understand an incredibly complex concept.

Ultimately, many different factors affect how African American adolescent males engage with others at school. While this study demonstrated the intersections of race and gender as well as the complexity of cultural values, it, more importantly, demonstrates the impact of other people’s opinions on African American adolescent males’ development. Despite social advances for African American communities, in many ways young African American males still struggle to have their humanity acknowledged. Thus, research must use a socially critical lens when trying to understand any of their psycho-social outcomes. There is too much at stake not to.
References


Dedoose Version 7.0.23, web application for managing, analyzing, and presenting qualitative and mixed method research data (2016). Los Angeles, CA: SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC


## Appendices

**Appendix A**  
**MIBI-T Racial Identity Measure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Identity Survey</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 I feel close to other Black people <em>(Racial Centrality)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 I have a strong sense of belonging to other Black people <em>(Racial Centrality)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things I would say is that I’m Black <em>(Racial Centrality)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 I am happy that I am Black <em>(Racial Private regard)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 I am proud to be Black <em>(Racial Private regard)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 I feel good about Black people <em>(Racial Private regard)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Most people think that Black people are as smart as people of other races <em>(Racial Public regard)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 People think that Blacks are as good as people from other races <em>(Racial Public regard)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 People from other races think that Blacks have made important contributions <em>(Racial Public regard)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix B

## Adapted Gender Identity Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Identity Survey</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 I feel close to other males (Gender Centrality)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 I have a strong sense of belonging to other males (Gender Centrality)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things I would say is that I’m a male (Gender Centrality)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 I am happy that I am a male (Gender Private Regard)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 I am proud to be a male (Gender Private Regard)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 I feel good about males (Gender Private Regard)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Most people think that males are as smart as females (Gender Public Regard)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 People think that males are as good as females (Gender Public Regard)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Females think that males have made important contributions (Gender Public Regard)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

The Africentrism Scale
Grills and Longshore

Directions
For each of the following items, we would like you to tell us how much you agree or disagree with the statement. There are no right or wrong answers. The best possible answer is how you personally feel about each statement. On a scale of 1 to 4 with:
1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree and 4=Strongly agree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My family’s needs are more important to me than my own needs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. African Americans should make their community better than it was when they found it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. People should make the world better than it was when they found it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The problems of other African Americans are their problems, not mine. (R)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The problems of other people are their problems, not mine. (R)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The unity of the African race is very important to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I am more concerned with reaching my own goals than with working for the African American community. (R)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am more concerned with my own goals than with helping other people reach theirs. (R)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I have very little faith in African American people. (R)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. I owe something to African Americans who suffered before me. 1 2 3 4

11. I owe something to those who have tried to make things better for me. 1 2 3 4

12. African Americans need to stop worrying so much about “the community” and take care of their own needs. (R) 4 3 2 1

13. People need to stop worrying so much about the world around them and take care of their own needs. (R) 4 3 2 1

14. I am doing a lot to improve my neighborhood. 1 2 3 4

15. The success I have had is mainly because of me, not anyone else. (R) 4 3 2 1

16. I have more confidence in White professionals, like doctors and teachers, than in African American professionals. (R) 4 3 2 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. African Americans should build and maintain their own communities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I must do all I can to restore African Americans to their position of respect in the world.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I make a point to shop at African American businesses and use African American-owned services.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. It hurts me when I see another African American person discriminated against.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. It hurts me when I see a person like me discriminated against.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. It is important that African American people decide for themselves what to be called and what their needs are.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Different racial groups should decide for themselves what to be called and what their needs are.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. The African American community would be better off if people just work on their own goals. (R)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Society would be better off if people just work on their own goals. (R)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Pro-Social Behavior Scale

CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT,
SCALES FROM STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE,
©1998-2005 Developmental Studies Center-
Items

During the past semester, about how often:

1. have you helped or gotten help for someone who was hurt?
2. have you stood up for someone who was being picked on?
3. have you comforted someone who was hurt or feeling sad?
4. have you donated money, toys, clothes, or other things to a charity?
5. have you shared your lunch with someone who didn't have any?
6. have you helped a classmate with homework?
7. have you tried hard not to hurt someone's feelings?
8. have you offered to look after a neighbor's pets or small children, without being paid for it?
9. helped carry things for someone you didn't know?

Response scale:
1 = never, 2 = once or twice, 3 = 3-5 times, 4 = 6-10 times, 5 = more than 10
Appendix E

Sociomoral Reflection Measure-Short Form SRM-SF

Items

1. Think about when you’ve made a promise to a friend of yours. How important is it for people to keep promises, if they can, to friends? Circle one:

   very important  important  not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT (WHICHEVER ONE YOU CIRCLED)? (This format is also used for the remaining questions.)

2. What about keeping a promise to anyone? How important is it for people to keep promises, if they can, even to someone they hardly know?

3. What about keeping a promise to a child? How important is it for parents to keep their promises to their children?

4. In general, how important is it for people to tell the truth?

5. Think about when you’ve helped your mother or father. How important is it for children to help their parents?

6. Let’s say a friend of yours needs help and may even die, and you’re the only person who can save him or her. How important is it for a person to save the life of a friend?

7. What about saving the life of anyone? How important is it for a person (without losing his or her own life) to save the life of a stranger?

8. How important is it for a person to live even if that person doesn't want to?

9. How important is it for people not to take things that belong to other people?

10. How important is it for people to obey the law?

11. How important is it for judges to send people who break the law to jail?
Appendix F

Focus group questions

1. I want to learn about what your experiences as young Black men. Can we start off today’s conversation by you guys sharing with me your experiences as a young Black male attending an urban charter high-school and the positives and negatives that you guys may experience.

2. Now I want to keep taking about your how you may respond to situations but shift gears a little bit and talk about being kind to others.
   a. How do you define being kind to another person? How about another person showing kindness
      i. How does your context (ie school vs. home) change the way you demonstrate kindness?
   b. Can you think back over the past couple months and share a times you showed kindness to another person.
   c. How do people’s feelings about your race influence your treatment of them?

3. Let’s keep thinking about being young Black men in America. I want to ask each of you to think for a minute about 3-4 words that come to mind when you think of yourself as a Black person.
   a. How do these feelings about your race affect how you engage with others?

4. Now, a slightly different question, what 3-4 words that come to mind when you think of yourself as a male.
   a. How do these feelings about your gender affect how you engage with others?

5. And as a Black male?

6. I want to learn more about your perceptions of other people’s views of your race and gender. Can you guys share with me 3-4 words that you think come to other people’s mind when they see young Black males.

7. Can you think back over the past year and tell me about experiences where you feel you have been negatively viewed and/or treated because of your race.
   a. How did you respond to these experiences?

8. Now a slightly different question, can you share a time where you feel you have been viewed/treated positively.
   a. How did you respond to this experience?

9. Can you think back over the past year and tell me about experiences where you feel you have been negatively viewed and/or treated because of your gender
a. How did you respond to these experiences?

10. Now a slightly different question, can you share a time where you feel you have been viewed/treated positively.
   a. How did you respond to this experience?

11. The last topic I want us to talk about is justice and community.
   a. What 3-4 words come to mind when you think about justice.
      i. What does it mean to do what is right? Who decides what is right?
   b. Can you give me some examples of how justice is represented in your home or school community.
   c. Is there any difference between kindness and justice? How so?
   d. How does your race influence your ideas about justice?
   e. How does your gender influence your ideas about justice?
      i. How about race and gender?