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The Relationship Between Racial/Ethnic Identity and Sexual Sensation Seeking Among Freshmen Women of Color

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Title: The Relationship Between Racial/Ethnic Identity and Sexual Sensation Seeking Among Freshmen Women of Color

Introduction: Researchers have documented high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among women of color. For example, 20% of all HIV/AIDS cases are among Latina women, and since 2005, 49% of new cases of HIV were among African American women (Seth et al., 2011). Lastly, 42% of Asian women have been diagnosed with HIV as of 2001 (Nemoto et al., 2004). Additionally, STI rates are increasing among college age women of color (Roberts & Kennedy, 2006). Sexual sensation seeking which is the need to explore a variety of new experiences has been found to be associated with STIs among African American, Latina, and Asian women (Nguyen et al., 2012). Given the negative outcomes associated with sexual sensation seeking, researchers have begun to investigate factors that may be protective against these outcomes. For example, among African American women having a positive racial/ethnic identity was protective against sexual sensation seeking (Espinosa-Hernández & Lefkowitz, 2009). As such, the current study seeks to examine the relationships between ethnic/racial identity and sexual sensation seeking among a sample of African American, Latina, and Asian women who are also college freshmen.

Method: The sample for this study was taken from a larger ongoing study about self-identified college freshmen's sexual and general health behaviors. The participants were enrolled in introductory psychology classes at a large Southeastern university in the U.S. The sample included 69 freshman women of color of whom 50.7% identified as African American, 29.0% as Asian, 14.5% as Hispanic/Latina, and 5.8% as Biracial/Multiracial. These students ranged in age from 18 to 43 ($M = 19.68$ years of age, $SD = 4.95$). Data for the current study is still being collected.

Hypothesis: It is hypothesized that aspects of racial identity (i.e, racial centrality, racial private regard, and racial public regard) will be associated with and predictive of sexual sensation seeking. More specifically, higher centrality, higher private regard, and lower public regard will be associated with lower sexual sensation seeking behavior. Also, racial identity will be predictive of sexual sensation seeking.

Results: Results will be discussed.

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