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Donna Christine Bell
Sticks and Stones: The
Impact of Negative In-group
Interactions on African
American Racial Identity

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify any relations between African American persons' actual or perceived negative interaction with their racial group and their racial identity. The study worked to answer the question: Is the experience of self-reported negative interactions within the African American community predictive of the level of an individual's racial identity? The hypothesis of this study was that while the existence of these interactions may impact an individual's private regard, it would not impact the centrality of the individual's racial identity.

This was a mixed method study using an online survey to gather information from 174 participants. Racial identity was measured using the Centrality and Private Regard scales of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity. All the participants were required to self identify as African American to participate in this study. The age range was 18 to over 50. With 86.2% holding a bachelor's degree or beyond, the data sample was highly educated.

While this study did not show a significant group relationship between participants' racial identity as defined by the centrality or private regard dimensions, the individual participant's narrative showed that these negative interactions do have impact. Further study is required to understand the relationship between these negative interactions and identity development of African Americans.

STICKS AND STONES: THE IMPACT OF NEGATIVE IN-GROUP INTERACTIONS
ON AFRICAN AMERICAN RACIAL IDENTITY

A project based upon an independent investigation, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2007

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Cultural competency has been a part of social work practice since its beginnings with Jane Addams. In recent years there has been a renewed urgency regarding the importance of cultural competency in social work practice. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has identified this need by establishing NASW Standards for Cultural Competency in Social Work Practice (2001) and working to create measures to determine the level of achievement at which social work practitioners understand and implement these standards (2006).

A new understanding of the importance of identity groups in the development of the individual has spurred much of the recent cultural competency work. Understanding the history of inequities, exclusions, and trauma as a result of racism, social workers recognize the need to develop competencies in dealing with racial and ethnic identities and, -- with rapidly changing demographics in the U.S. -- they also recognize the urgency in doing so. According to population projections, non-Hispanic Caucasians will make up only 50% of the U.S. population as opposed to the almost 70% they occupy now (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Even though race has been defined as unscientific, arbitrary, and a social construction, in reality it is still used as a tool to oppress, exploit and exclude and it cannot be ignored.

This paper presents a study that examines the relationships between negative in-group racial interactions and an individual's racial identity. Racial identity is almost

universally understood to be an important factor in the development and identity of African Americans. Racial identity has been related to issues of class (Moore, 2005), academic performance (Davis, 1997), problem solving (Bagley & Copeland, 1994) and perceptions of discrimination (Ifantunji, 2005). Based on the concept that racial identity development is a process, the goal of this study is to better understand the changes or shifts in the individual, which are “the byproduct of a series of experiences, self-reflections, and moral decision making” (Thompson & Carter, 1997).

Racial socialization is part of this process of change. Carter (1995) states racial socialization imbues individuals with messages that determine their roles as racial beings:

I contend that race-appropriate roles are communicated through socialization. ... Social and personality development are intertwined with prevailing assumptions about race that are learned through imitation, and internalized and reinforced by a need to conform to racial norms and be accepted by society at large. As an individual matures, he or she develops a personality that is informed by social and moral attitudes, behaviors, and feelings. In general, personality is thought to be a constellation of attributes and characteristics of a person that are internally enduring and which guide his or her interpersonal behavior. (p.18).

Race is experienced as a set of “unspoken guidelines for daily interaction among persons defined as of different races...[and] sets the standards and rules for conduct, even though individuals may not be conscious of that fact” (Smedley, 1993, p.21). These guidelines apply not only to interracial interactions, but also intraracial interactions (Thompson & Carter, 1997). In racial identity work, racial socialization is usually defined as happening through negative out group interactions or positive in group interactions. The current study has examined relationships between negative in group interactions and an individual’s racial identity.

Some research has considered the relationships between racial identity and discrimination (Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, & Zimmerman, 2003; Hall & Carter, 2006; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006), known as negative out-group interactions, as well as the relationships between racial identity and positive in group interactions in the form of family socialization (Boyd-Franklin, 1989; Demo & Hughes, 1990; Stevenson, 1995). Little research has examined negative in-group interactions.

The purpose of the present study has been to identify any relations between African American persons' actual or perceived negative interactions with their racial group and their racial identity. For the purposes of this study, racial identity has been measured in terms of racial centrality and private regard. [Centrality is the measure of the importance or significance of racial identity to the individual. Private Regard is defined as the extent to which a person feels positively about his or her racial group (Sellers et al., 1997). Also understanding the "slipperiness" of race and naming, racial identity will also be defined as "a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group" (Helms, 1990, p.3). All participants will be asked to self-identify as African American since it is their sense of membership which would have a socializing affect. The study worked to answer the question: Is the experience of self-reported negative interactions within the African American community predictive of the level of an individual's racial identity? The hypothesis of this study was that while the existence of these interactions may impact an individual's private regard, it would not impact the centrality of the individual's racial identity.

The written presentation of this research study is organized in the following way: chapter two contains a review of the literature, which explores the development of racial identity measures; chapter three contains the methodology used to conduct this research study; chapter four contains all study findings; and chapter five contains the study discussion and conclusions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories of racial identity for African Americans can be traced back to the work of W.E.B. DuBois and his idea of double consciousness. DuBois described a racial identity where one is always “looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” and measuring one’s self by the standards of a contemptuous world (DuBois, 2007). In this world there is “no true self-consciousness” for an African American because there is always the need to also “see himself through the revelation of the other world.” In his model, Black identity was created in relation to White America. For DuBois this distinction was very important. He felt the existence of the double consciousness kept African Americans from full participation and citizenship. While there has been much commentary about DuBois’ ideas, this model of racial identity has not been tested.

According to Infatunji (2005) there are at least three paradigms relevant to a discussion of black racial identity theories. These are self-hatred theory (Infatunji, 2005), nigrescence theory (Cross, 1991; Cross & Fhagen, 2001), and dynamic-multidimensional theory (Sellers, Shelton, Cooke, Chavous, Rowley & Smith, 1997). In my review of existing literature, questions have been raised about the validity of the Clark studies (in Infatunji, 2005, which are the basis for the “self-hatred” paradigm; therefore, I will not include a discussion of that work here now. In this review I will discuss nigrescence and dynamic-multidimensional theory.

Nigrescence

William Cross developed the idea of the nigrescence in the 1970's to describe what he called the "Negro – to – Black conversion experience"(Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). The model was revised in the 1990's. While the model was increased from four stages to five stages and the emphasis became the "search for Afrocentricity", the nigrescence model still attempts to explain the cognitive process by which "*assimilated* Black adults, as well as *deracinated, deculturalized, or miseducated* Black adults are transformed...into persons who are more Black or Afrocentrically aligned (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001, 190)." While this model has been used to think about the racial development of adolescents by Beverly Tatum and Jean Phinney, it was originally designed to look at the racial identity development of adults (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001).

Cross' current model of nigrescence (Cross, 1991) has five stages: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. In the encounter stage, the individual has an identity formation where race is of little or no importance. This identity is a stable identity that is a product of early socialization and development. The stability of this identity is a necessary component of a healthy sense of self, which helps the individual deal with the chaotic external world. The individual is resistant to changing this identity and endangering this stability. Cross theorizes that a change in this identity can only come from some sort of impetus. The encounter stage is this impetus. During this stage, the individual experiences an event or series of events that makes him or her rethink previous ambivalent or negative perceptions of race. This event (s) does not need to be negative. During the next stage, immersion – emersion, individuals

make a commitment to change their ideas. As part of a re-education process (s)he immerses into a pro-black and / or anti-dominant culture ideology to emerge with a new sense of self. In the internalization stage, this new sense of self, which consists of a new stable identity where race has a greater level of importance, is internalized. Cross identifies four racial ideologies which correspond to the new role race plays in the identity of the “converted” individual. They are Black Nationalist, Afrocentrist, BiCultural, and MultiCultural. Once the new identity is internalized, Cross describes an additional step where the individual commits to a continued interest in “Black affairs” (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001, 220). This final stage seems to be characterized by not only a cognitive change but also behavioral expectations.

Two measurements were developed based on Cross’s theory of nigrescence. The Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS) was developed based on Cross’s original version of nigrescence by Thomas Parham and Janet Helms (Cokley, 2002, Helms & Parham, 1996). Three versions of the measure were developed: the RIAS-A, RIAS-B, RIAS-L. The RAIS-A was the first version, which transformed Cross’s pre-encounter, encounter, immersion, internalization stages into 30 attitude items measured on a five-point Likert-type rating scale. The second version, RAIS-B, was a product of factor analyzing several sets of data from the original version, maintaining significant items on a single factor for pre-encounter, immersion and internalization scales. Items on the encounter scale were maintained if they were significant in no more than two factors. The RAIS-L was created in order to increase the reliability of the various scales by adding additional items to the thirty items that made up the RAIS-B. The RIAS has been the focus of several studies that have raised questions about the validity of the measure linked to the encounter and

pre-encounter scales (Fischer, A., Tokar, D. & Serna, G., 1998; Ponterotto, J.G. & Wise, S.L., 1987; Yanico, B.J., Swanson, J.L., & Tokar, D.M., 1994).

The CRIS (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001) is a 40-item scale developed to measure attitudes corresponding to the model of Cross's revised theory on nigrescence. Testing of Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity, and Internal Consistencies has ruled this measure a valid and reliable instrument (Cokley, 2002; Vandiver, et al., 2001).

Dynamic Multidimensional

The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) (Sellers, Shelton, Chavous, Rowley & Smith, 1998) can be connected to ideas and assumptions of identity theory. Identity theory emphasizes the multidimensional nature of identity (Ifantunji, 2005). Thus, according to identity theory, racial identity is one of many identities that can make up a person's self-concept. Identity theory assumes that the hierarchy of these identities is impacted by situational variables and thus, at different times, in different situations, a certain identity becomes salient. Salience answers the question of when and why and identity role is primary to self-concept (Thompson, 1999). Salience is the dynamic property of racial identity.

The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton & Smith, 1997) was built on the assumptions of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) which include (1) African Americans have multiple, hierarchically ordered identities and (2) racial identity has both stable and situational properties. While the MMRI recognizes the theoretical importance of the situational properties, or salience, of racial identity, early empirical study shows salience to be

relatively constant across situations (Shelton & Sellers, 2000). Thus, while salience is part of the MMRI, it is not included in the MIBI.

The MIBI it defines racial identity through the three stable racial dimensions of the MMRI: centrality, ideology, and regard. Centrality is the measure of the importance or significance of racial identity to the individual. Ideology is the measure of a person's beliefs and attitudes with regards to how he or she feels a member of the racial group should act. Regard is a measure of how one feels about the racial group and also how one believes others feel about the racial group. The MIBI is an attempt to identify the constant variables against which situational variables can be related and understood.

The testing of the validity of this measure has had mixed results. Sellers et al., (1997), the creators of both the MMRI and MIBI, believe the MIBI is a reliable and construct valid measure of the MMRI and that the MIBI possesses predictive validity. They recognize a need to revise the Public Regard Subscale, which had been removed from the study. Cokley & Helm (2001) give partial support to the MIBI's construct validity. They considered the theorized factorial structure of identity apparently valid, but the definition of some of the constructs and thus the operationalization of these constructs seemed to them questionable. Cokely and Helm (2001) suggest that with further modification and revision the MIBI can become more than an "adequate instrument" for measuring racial identity. The Sellers et al. and Cokley & Helm studies just referenced cover the a broad range of geographical regions, but all use college or university students, which brings into question the generalizability of the results across different age and education levels. In the Cokley & Helm study, participant compensation and recruitment was not consistently applied, as participants were recruited

in a variety of ways, and some were offered compensation whereas others were not. It is not known what effects these variations may have had on sample composition.

Empirical Studies

Multiple empirical studies have been done regarding racial identity. Many studies use established measures like the RIAS (Stevenson, 1995; Munford, 1994; Carter, 1991; Brookins, Anyabwile, Nacoste, 1996; Coard, Breland, Raskin, 2001), the CRIS (Bagley & Copeland, 1994; Abrams & Trusty, 2004; Wade, 2002; Phelps, Taylor, & Gerard, 2001; Vandiver et al., 2001; Cokley & Helm, 2001) and the MIBI (Caldwell, Sellers, Bernat, & Zimmerman, 2004; Scott, 2003; Chavous, Bernat, Schmeelk-Cone, Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, & Zimmerman, 2003; Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, & Zimmerman, 2003; Sellers et al., 1997). Other studies have used alternate measures such as researcher developed measures (Harris, 1995; Thompson, 1999) or qualitative interpretation where participants responses were used to create definitions (Moore, 2005).

The majority of these studies used a quantitative method of some kind. The use of quantifiable measures allows researchers to isolate racial identity as an independent or predictor variable whose relationships with other phenomena can be empirically assessed. There is still much discussion and research concerning what is the best racial identity measure or how current measures can be improved.

While quantitative information has its uses, one of the weaknesses identified in these studies is a lack of qualitative information. Qualitative data can offer insight into the lived realities that quantitative data confirms. Moore (2005) includes qualitative responses in her study that offer a vivid description of how individuals experience their racial identity in relation to class and group issues. Davis (1997) uses qualitative

information to explore how African American women perceive the relationship between their racial identity and their academic performance. This qualitative information brings to life the meaning of racial identity in the lived experience of actual human beings in ways quantitative measures do not.

The majority of the studies mentioned above were also relational studies. Researchers have studied the relationships between racial identity and a range of phenomena including academic performance (Davis, 1997; Chavous et al., 2003, Neville, Heppner, & Wang, 1997), perceptions of racial discrimination (Sellers et al., 2003), Alcohol use amongst academically at-risk adolescents (Caldwell, et al., 2003), and perception of political events (Wade, 2002).

The majority of these studies were completed with student populations, ranging from 9th grade to graduate students, with few exceptions (Thompson, 1999; Moore, 2005). Since some racial identity measures recognize racial identity as a process of personal development (Cross, 1991) or socialization (Lesane-Brown, Brown, Caldwell, & Sellers, 2005), there is a possible problem with measuring racial identity amongst young people when developmentally their identities are so unstable. The results from studies that include graduate students (Phelps et al., 2001; Vandiver, Cross, Worrell & Fhagen-Smith, 2002; Bagley & Copeland, 1994) seem more reliable than those that measure the racial identity of adolescents (Caldwell et al 2004; Chavous et al., 2003; Scott, 2003). Caldwell et al. (2004) performed follow up interviews with the adolescent participants but did not re-evaluate participants for racial identity.

While some research has been done on the effects of discrimination, known as negative out-group interactions, very little research seems to have been done on the

effects of negative in-group interactions. In Clark (2004), the researcher studies the impact of perceived interethnic group and intraethnic group racism using as a measure a modified version of the 128 item Life Experiences and Stress Scale. The modification consisted of asking participants if anything they had experienced on the Life Experiences and Stress scale could be related to either interethnic or intraethnic racism. This study does not consider how the existence of “intraethnic racism” impacts individuals’ experience of self or of their racial group. Intraethnic racism, as described by the author (Clark, 2004) is a problematic idea and does not relate to the interpersonal socialization process this researcher has been interested in exploring.

Lesane-Brown, et al. (2005) created the Comprehensive Race Socialization Inventory to try to capture the components of racial socialization. This model focused on socialization received from family, friends, and other caregivers with a focus on socialization’s ability to protect the individual from the effects of discrimination and racism. These socialization messages would be seen as positive in-group interactions.

The literature reviewed for this study clearly indicates several conclusions. Racial identity has been studied extensively with multiple racial identity measurements as the outcome. These measurements have made it possible to isolate racial identity as an independent or predictor variable whose impact on other developmental phenomena can then be gauged. While there is agreement that racial identity is a product of socialization, the kind of socialization studied thus far is the impact of out-group racial discrimination (Sellers & Shelton, 2003) and positive socialization from an individual’s intimate circles (Harris, 1995; Lesane-Brown et al., 2005; Thompson, 1994, Demo & Hughes, 1990). While there have been studies regarding negative out-group interactions, there have not

been studies of the impacts of negative in group interactions. The study of negative in-group interactions on racial socialization will this add new perspective to the current understanding of racial identity development. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology used to complete this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Study Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to identify any relationships between African American persons' self reported experiences of negative interactions within their racial group, and specific dimensions of their racial identity. Centrality and Private Regard are two scales of the multidimensional racial identity measure created by Robert Sellers et al. called the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity. These two scales will be used to quantify the racial identity variables used in this study. This study's aim is to answer the question: Are an individual's self-reported experiences of negative interactions within the African American community predictive of the centrality or private regard dimension of an individual's racial identity? The hypothesis of this study is that while the existence of these interactions may impact the level of the private regard dimension of their racial identity, it will have little to no impact on the centrality dimension of the individual's racial identity.

Research Method and Design

Since this study is an attempt to understand the relationship between distinct phenomena and variables, this study will utilize a relational cross-sectional design. The goal of this design is to develop observational information about phenomena and postulate possible theoretical explanations for the reality (Anastas, 1999). The research methodology will be fixed with the phenomena and relationships being derived from the

relevant literature. While this format cannot demonstrate causation, it can help show any systematic relationships between the studied phenomena and variables (Anastas, 1999).

Type of Data Collection

The study was a mixed method design including both qualitative and quantitative measures. The following demographic information was collected: race, age, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, and highest level of education completed.

In this study, racial identity was measured by two dimensions of the revised version of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) (Sellers et al., 1997). The MIBI is an operationalized measure of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) (Sellers et al., 1997), which defines racial identity through three stable racial dimensions: centrality, ideology, and regard, with regard being represented by two sub-categories: private regard and public regard. For this study, I will be using the Centrality and Private Regard scales to measure racial identity. Centrality is the measure of the importance or significance of his or her racial identity to the individual. Private Regard is defined as the extent to which a person feels positively about his or her racial group (Sellers et al., 1998). The MIBI measures have been tested to be adequately reliable and valid for this purpose (Sellers et al., 1997; Cokely & Helms, 2001). A complete copy of the Centrality Scale and the Private Regard Scales as used in this study is contained in Appendix A.

A researcher-developed measure was used in the current study to measure perceptions of in-group negative interactions. Since there seemed to be no published research measures in this area, there were no pre-existing assessments that could be used in this instance. Using currently available measures of discrimination did not seem

appropriate, though their recognition that self reported experiences are important was a useful part of those measures that has been emulated. The purpose of this measure was to establish the existence of the phenomena of negative interactions amongst the participants. For example, the measure asked participants if other Black people had made fun of them, insulted them, or made them feel bad about personal aspects of themselves. They were asked if they have been threatened or physically attacked by other Black people. These questions were measured on a Likert scale (often, sometimes, seldom, never).

The measure also included four questions where participants were asked to qualify their perception of the impact of these self-reported experiences. Three of these questions asked if the self-reported experiences made the person feel differently about themselves, differently about other Black people, or had impact on their sense of closeness to other Black people. The fourth question asked the participant about their current sense of inclusion with or exclusion from the Black community. A complete copy of the measure of negative in-group interactions is contained in Appendix B.

In hopes of getting an in-depth qualitative understanding of the impact of these experiences, two open-ended questions were also included in the study. Participants were encouraged to share any additional details about their experiences of negative interactions and were also encouraged to share anything else they thought would be relevant to the research or researcher. The qualitative information gathered from these questions should give insight into the lived experience of the reported phenomena.

Sample

This study included persons who self-identify as African American and were eighteen years old or older. Participation was solicited through the researcher's circle of friends/family/colleagues, current Smith School of Social Work students, and Smith School of Social Work alumni. The solicitation for participation was distributed as an email, which included a request that recipients forward the original email within their personal circles. Copies of the email solicitations are included in Appendix C, D, and E. The resulting data derived, therefore, from a non-probability sample of convenience. The current sample type does not allow for generalizing the results to a large population, but does offer information about the nature of the phenomena studied for the participants who responded to the email invitation.

Data Collection Methods

Data for this study were collected by means of an electronic survey online. Participants completed the survey at the online site at their leisure. Participants were able to read and electronically sign the informed consent before taking the survey. In order to proceed through the survey, participants had to show they consented to taking the survey by choosing an electronic link that said "I consent." If they did not choose "I consent" or chose "I do not consent," participants were exited from the survey. Participants were also exited from the survey if in the demographics section of the survey they did not identify as African American and were not at least 18 years old.

Participants filled out the survey in three sections: demographics, racial identity scale, and negative in-group interactions. Participants could discontinue filling out the survey and exit at any point. Once the data were submitted at the online site, the

researcher downloaded the responses for analysis. Informed consents and survey data did not contain any identifying information. Once data had been collected, the researcher created a codebook, coded the collected data and sent it to the Smith College statistical analyst for analysis.

The strength of this method was its ability to reach a much large number of people quickly and with limited expense. Participation was easy and convenient for those individuals who decided to participate. A possible disadvantage but also a potential asset was that the online format drastically cut down on the personal interactions participants had with me as a researcher.

Among the disadvantages of this method is that the use of an online survey had the potential to limit access for some potential participants. While the assumption was that many people have access to Internet services, this did not mean that the access available was in a private enough location so that participants would be comfortable completing the survey. No provision was provided in the current study for individuals to participate off line.

This survey only examined the experiences of individuals who identify as African Americans. Others, who might also identify as Black, such as African or Caribbean U.S residents, could have had similar experiences as they are phenotypically experienced as Black in the US, but there are historical and sociological variables that could make their understanding of these experiences quite different (Phelps, R.E., Taylor, J.D, & Gerard, P.A., 2001). Another, broader study would need to be done to include these perspectives.

Data Analysis

Since this was a relational cross-sectional designed study, descriptive data analysis was the primary analysis method used. A combination of descriptive and differential statistical analysis was used to process the study data. Frequencies were run to quantify demographic data and calculate scores on the Private Regard and Centrality scales. One-way Anova's were run to see if there were significant differences on the Private Regard or Centrality Scales and the 15 identified negative interaction variables. Where significant differences were found, post hoc testing was performed to show where the differences lay. Pearson's correlations were also run on the data to determine the level of significance in the relationships between the two identity scales and the 15 identified negative interaction variables. A T-test was run to identify any differences that might exist for males and females.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify relationships between the self-reported negative interactions of African Americans with their own racial group and their racial identity. For the purpose of this study, racial identity was a measure of racial centrality and private regard. Centrality is the measure of the importance or significance of racial identity to the individual. Private Regard is defined as the extent to which a person feels positively about his or her racial group (Sellers et al, 1998). This study was designed to answer the question: Are the experiences of negative interactions within the African American community predictive of the level of centrality or private regard of an individual's racial identity? The hypothesis of this study was that while the existence of these interactions may impact an individual's private regard, it would not impact the centrality of the individual's racial identity.

Quantitative Findings

Demographic Data Survey

This study included 174 participants. Self-identifying as an African American and being 18 or older were inclusion criteria for participating in this study. Presented below is a representation of the demographic make up of the study participants.

Age. The largest number of participants was in the age group 30 – 40 years old (45.4%). The next most prevalently represented age group was 25 – 30 years old (17.8%), followed closely by the 40 – 50 year old age group (16.1%) and the 50+ age

group (11.5%). The group with the smallest representation was the 18 – 24 year old age group (9.2%). (See Table 1)

Table 1

Age Group Frequencies of Sample

Age Groups	N	Percent
18 – 24	16	9.2%
25 – 30	31	17.8%
30 – 40	79	45.4%
40 – 50	28	16.1%
50 +	20	11.5%
Total	174	100%

Gender. In terms of gender, the majority of the participants were female (75.9%). One hundred and thirty two women participated. Forty-one men participated, representing 23.7 % of the sample. One participant chose not to disclose gender. No participants identified as transgendered or other.

Sexual Orientation. The majority of the sample identified as heterosexual (87.9%). Other sexual orientations represented were as follows: homosexual (7.5%), bisexual (3.5%). One participant identified his or her sexual orientation as “other” and one participant did not disclose sexual orientation.

Religion. The majority of the sample identified as Christian (75.3%) with the next largest representation being “Other” (20.7%). One participant identified as Buddhist and one participant identified as Hindu. Five participants did not disclose a religious orientation.

Education. The largest percentage of the sample reported education at the master’s degree level (41.4%) with the next largest representation being those at the bachelor’s degree level (27%). The PhD/MD/JD level represented 17.3% of the sample, followed in size by the high school level of education (8.6%) and the associate’s degree level (5.2%). One participant did not identify an education level. (See Table 2)

Table 2

Educational Level Frequencies of the sample

Educational Levels	N	Percent
High School	15	8.6%
Associates Degree	9	5.2%
Bachelor’s Degree	47	27.0%
Master’s Degree	72	41.4%
PhD/JD/MD	30	17.2%
Total	174	100%

Racial Identity Scales

To measure racial identity in this study, the researchers used the Centrality and Private Regard scales from the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) (Sellers et al., 1997) were used. The Centrality scale is a measure of the importance or significance of racial identity to the individual. The Private Regard scale, which is a subscale of the Regard scale, is a measure of how one feels about one’s self-identified racial group. Since the MIBI is based on a multidimensional conception of identity, each scale was designed as an independent measure. As noted earlier, the MIBI measures have been tested to be adequately reliable and valid for this purpose. (Sellers et al., 1997;

Cokley & Helm, 2001). The results of the Centrality and Private Regard Scale for this sample are presented in Table 3 below. For these scales, a lower score equals a higher level of agreement on the scale.

Table 3

Mean and Median Scores on the Centrality and Private Regard Scales

Scale	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Centrality	2.7455	2.7500	.98544
Private Regard	1.6361	1.5000	.56250

In order to determine if there were differences in either the Centrality or Private Regard scales by gender, t-tests were run. The t-tests showed there were significant differences in both centrality ($t(154) = -2.078, p=.039$) and private regard ($t(154) = -3.180, p = .002$). In both cases, women had lower mean scores than men (see Table 4).

To determine if there were differences in the mean scale scores by education level, a one-way analysis of variance was run. These tests showed a significant difference on the centrality scale ($F(2,153) = 3.228, p = .042$) but when post hoc tests were run no significant differences between education groups were noted. No significant difference was found between education groups on the Private Regard scale. A one-way analysis of variance was also run between the scales and age categories. It showed a significant difference on the centrality scale by age ($F(4, 152) = 2.515, p = .044$). Post hoc testing showed the difference to lie between the 30 – 40 year old group ($m = 2.6036$) and the 50+ group ($m = 3.4028$). There were no significant differences in Private Regard between age groups.

Table 4

Mean Scores on the Centrality and Private Regard Scales by Gender

	Gender	N	Mean
Centrality Scale	Female	118	2.6507
	Male	38	3.0296
Private Regard Scale	Female	118	1.5537
	Male	38	1.8781

Impact of Negative Interactions on Racial Identity

The main question of this study was to determine if reported experiences of negative interactions within their racial group have any relationship to the centrality or private regard dimensions of racial identity for participating individuals. For the purpose of this study, the researcher identified fifteen negative interaction types. Two pertinent scales from the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI), Centrality and Private Regard, were used as measures of racial identity.

Centrality Scale Findings

A one-way analysis of variance was utilized to determine if there were significant differences in the mean scores of participants on the centrality scale related to their reported frequencies of experiencing negative in-group interactions. Study participants were asked to reveal the frequency with which they had experienced any of the identified negative interactions on a scale of never, seldom, sometimes, and often. For the purpose of the one-way anova, those four categories were collapsed into three categories: never,

seldom/sometimes, and often. The one-way anova found significant differences for two of the fifteen identified variables: School/ Work Performance and Physical Threat (see Table 5).

Table 5

One-way Analysis of Reported Negative Interactions and the Centrality Scale

Categories	F	df	Sig
Hair	2.038	2, 151	.134
Skin color	.408	2, 150	.666
Facial features	.133	2, 151	.875
Speech	.261	2, 150	.771
Clothes	1.465	2, 150	.234
Music	.588	2, 150	.557
School/Work performance*	3.283	2, 149	.040
Friends / Significant others	1.432	2, 149	.242
Residence	1.466	2, 149	.234
Derogatory names	.850	2, 151	.430
Racial insults	.988	2, 151	.375
Rumors / Gossip	2.307	2, 150	.103
Ostracized / Excluded	.119	2, 150	.888
Physical threat	2.208	2, 151	.113
Physical attack*	3.271	2, 150	.041

Items marked with an “*” have significant differences

For all significant variables found through the one-way analysis, a Bonferroni post-hoc test was run to show between which groups the differences lay. For School/ Work performance, even though the one-way analysis showed significant difference, the

post hoc test showed no significant difference between groups. For the Physical attack variable, the Bonferroni post hoc test showed a significant difference between the sample who said they were seldom or sometimes attacked ($m = 2.4557$) and the sample who said they were never physically attacked ($m = 2.8769$).

In addition to the one-way analysis of variance to determine whether there were differences in the Centrality scale and each of the fifteen identified variables, a Pearson correlation was also run to measure if there was an association between the scale and the identified variables. For this analysis, the variables were left as 4-point scales. There were no significant correlations with the Centrality scale and any of the fifteen identified variables.

A Pearson correlation was also run to measure if there was an association between the scale and the four questions where participants were asked to qualify their perceptions of the impact of these self-reported experiences. There was a significant but weak correlation between the Centrality scale and the item: These experiences made me feel closer to other Black people ($r = .311, p = .000$). There was a significant (moderate) relationship between the Centrality scale and the item: I feel accepted and included in the Black Community ($r = .412, p = .000$). There were no significant correlations between the Centrality Scale and the other two questions.

Private Regard Scale

A one-way analysis of variance was utilized to determine if there were significant differences in the mean scores of the Private Regard scale differentiated by the reported frequencies of experiencing negative in-group interactions. Study participants were asked to reveal the frequency with which they had experienced any of the identified negative

interactions on a scale of never, seldom, sometimes, and often. For the purpose of the one-way anova, those four categories were collapsed into three categories: never, seldom/sometimes, and often. The one-way anova found significant differences for seven of the fifteen identified variables: Music, School performance, Friends / Significant others, Derogatory names, Racial insult, Ostracized / Excluded, and Physical threat (see Table 6).

Table 6

Oneway Analysis of Reported Negative Interactions and the Private Regard

Categories	F	df	Sig
Hair	.388	2, 151	.679
Skin color	1.426	2, 150	.243
Facial features	1.751	2, 151	.177
Speech	1.933	2, 150	.148
Clothes	1.859	2, 150	.159
Music *	5.762	2, 1150	.004
School/Work performance *	8.258	2, 149	.000
Friends / Significant others *	7.796	2, 149	.001
Residence	2.699	2, 149	.071
Derogatory names *	5.668	2, 151	.004
Racial insults *	4.918	2, 151	.009
Rumors / Gossip	1.014	2, 150	.365
Ostracized / Excluded *	7.111	2, 150	.001
Physical threat *	5.227	2, 151	.006
Physical attack	2.627	2, 150	.076

Items marked with an “*” have significant differences

For all significant variables found through the one-way analysis of variance, a Bonferroni post-hoc test was run to show where amongst the groups the differences lay. A significant difference was shown between the sample who experienced negative interactions around music often ($m = 1.9314$) and the sample who said they never experienced this ($m = 1.4746$), as well as between the sample who said they sometimes / seldom experienced this ($m = 1.7039$) and the sample who said they never experienced this ($m = 1.4746$).

A significant difference was shown between the sample who experienced negative interactions around school / work performance often ($m = 2.1786$) and the sample who reported never experiencing this ($m = 1.5446$), as well as between the sample who reported experiencing this seldom / sometimes ($m = 1.6214$) and those reporting experiencing the phenomenon often ($m = 2.1786$).

A significant difference was also shown between the sample who reported experiencing negative interactions around their choice of friends or significant others often ($m = 2.1429$) and the sample who reported never experiencing this phenomenon ($m = 1.5000$), as well as between those who reported experiencing the phenomenon seldom/sometimes ($m = 1.6417$) and those who reported often experiencing this ($m = 2.1429$).

A significant difference was shown between the sample who reported experiencing feeling ostracized or excluded often ($m = 2.0294$) and those who reported never experiencing this phenomenon ($m = 1.4048$), as well as between those who reported having experienced this seldom/sometimes ($m = 1.6346$) and those who report experiencing it often ($m = 2.0294$).

A significant difference was also shown between the sample who reported having been physically threatened often ($m = 2.4167$) and those who reported never experiencing this phenomenon ($m = 1.5498$), as well as between those who reported experiencing this phenomenon seldom/sometimes ($m = 1.6751$) and those who reported experiencing it often ($m = 2.4167$).

While one-way analysis of variance showed significant differences for those who were called racially derogatory names or felt they were racially insulted, the post hoc tests showed no significant difference between groups.

Along with oneway analyses of variance to determine if there was a difference in the Private Regard scale and the fifteen identified variables, a Pearson correlation was also run to test if there was an association between the scale and the identified variable. The Pearson correlation showed a very weak, negative association with the variables of speech ($r = -.187$, $p = .02$, two-tailed), being called racially derogatory names ($r = -.176$, $p = .029$, two-tailed), and being racially insulted ($r = -.182$, $p = .024$, two-tailed). The Pearson correlation showed a weak, negative association with music ($r = -.253$, $p = .002$, two-tailed), school performance ($r = -.236$, $p = .001$, two-tailed), friends / significant others ($r = -.264$, $p = .001$, two-tailed), being ostracized ($r = -.290$, $p = .000$, two-tailed) and being physically threatened ($r = -.251$, $p = .002$, two-tailed).

A Pearson correlation was also run to measure if there was an association between the scale and the four questions where participants were asked to qualify their perception of the impact of these self-reported experiences. The Pearson correlation showed a weak, negative association between the Private Regard scale and who in the sample reported the negative experiences made the person feel differently about him or herself ($r = -.239$, $p =$

.003, two-tailed) and those in the sample who reported the negative experiences made them feel differently about other Black people ($r = -.295$, $p = .000$, two-tailed). The Pearson correlation showed a weak, positive association between the Private Regard scale and the negative experiences making the individual feel closer to Black people ($r = .218$, $p = .000$, two-tailed). The Pearson correlation showed a moderate, positive association between the Private Regard scale and whether the individual reported feeling accepted or included in the Black community ($r = .431$, $p = .000$ (?), two-tailed).

Qualitative Findings

Along with the quantitative items, two qualitative items were included in this study. Participants were asked give open-ended answers to the following questions:

1. Are there particular examples of a negative in-group experience that you feel comfortable sharing? What happened? How did it make you feel? 2. At the end of this survey, is there anything you would like to share with the researcher?

Of the 174 participants who completed the demographic information, only 154 went on to complete the racial identity scales, the negative in-group interactions items, and the impact items. Of those 154 participants, 60 participants (40%) chose to respond to the first question. Fifty-three participants (34%) chose to respond to the second question. Thirty-one participants (20%) responded to both questions.

The participants' reflections recorded in these responses fall into three categories: personal reports of negative in-group interactions, responses to these interactions, and protections from or mitigation of these negative interactions.

Personal Reports of Negative In-group Interactions

Participants reported many of the same items as were listed in the study. Twenty-three (26%) of those who responded reported having negative interactions with other Black people about the way they speak. Participants reported being accused of “talking white” or feeling judged for speaking “standard English.”

Thirteen participants (16%) reported dealing with being called derogatory names. Respondents reported being called oreo, coconut, uncle tom, zebra, white boy, burnt, skillet, high yeller, high yellow, high yellow heffer, black Barbie doll, dirty red, red bone and white people’s trash. Oreo was the most frequently mentioned name. One respondent explains her experience this way, “During my first two years of high school, I was called ‘Oreo,’ ‘coconut’ and ‘disgrace to your race’ by some other kids in my grade... I didn’t fully identify with black kids, because we didn’t share the same pop culture interests. Even so, it still hurt me.” Some of these names seem to imply some visible characteristic of the individual while other names call into question the very blackness of the individual, questioning his or her membership in the group.

The next highest reported negative interactions were regarding skin color, with eleven reports (13%) and school/work performance with ten reports (12%). More respondents reported negative interactions around skin color due to being considered “light skinned,” though there were also reports of “dark skinned” negative interactions. Respondents who reported specifically dealing with negative interactions around their work performance reported being called a “sell-out” or having questions raised about how they had gotten to where they were, implying methods other than personal achievement.

Some respondents reported experiencing negative interactions in ways that were not defined in the study items. Six respondents (7%) describe their behaviors or hobbies as the root of negative interactions. In the examples, the hobby or behavior is defined as white or not black. “I am an environmentalist and I recycle. Often, other [black] people tell me that recycling or environmental stewardship is a white community thing.” One respondent reports, “Mainly when I came out as lesbian my family ascribed that to having white friends... .” Her lesbianism was not connected to her sexuality but to the influence of having white friends. Another respondent describes the response to the sports she played in school, “My blackness has been questioned due to the sports I played in high school – swimming and tennis.” One respondent reports how having these sorts of hobbies or behaviors have had an isolating effect, “...few [blacks] in my area share my interest and hobbies. I find myself the only [black] in a group more times than I wish.” Similarly, respondents introduced the idea of acting white. Many different actions can be included in acting white (speech, dress, work/school performance, hair..., etc.) What is implied is that an individual is taking on behaviors that include them into the white identity group and not the black identity group.

Another negative in-group interaction reported by multiple participants was a sense of not feeling or being perceived as “black enough.” Not being “black enough” also seems to be connected to displaying behaviors that were not defined as black, much like the earlier findings around hobbies/behaviors and “acting white.” Below are some of the personal accounts of this experience.

As a high achieving high schooler I was treated badly and ostracized, even threatened...In college, as a Black person from a uncommon/nontraditional state (NM), many peers felt that I was not Black enough and had not had a relevant

black immersion as I spoke very differently – with an accent – and had different mannerisms, traditions, cuisine, spirituality and childhood experiences, and so did not belong. (1)

I was often made to feel that I was not “black enough” by some of my peers in college (at an HBCU). Fortunately, I did have lots of friends so that I did not feel isolated. It only made me disgusted with those that would have all blacks speak, think, and act the same as themselves. (2)

People telling me that I was not ‘black enough’ because I did not join black organizations, and did not have all black friends. (3)

Reports of the Impact and Responses to Negative In-group Interactions.

Along with describing specific experiences of negative in-group interactions, respondents also shared their personal responses to these negative interactions. Some participants reported how some of these experiences were mitigated by other variables in their lives. For example, one participant describes how living in a black community might have mitigated her experience of negative in-group interactions “I didn’t develop negative feelings towards black people. I think that would have been different if I didn’t live where I did. I was raised in a predominantly [black] neighborhood.” The participant who reported experiencing a negative response from her family to her coming out, also reports, “[because] I came out in a supportive black lesbian community I never felt a sense of rejection from black people, just a segment of the community.” In both cases the existence of a community that the participant experienced as supportive is reported to have had a buffering or protective impact on her response to that negative interaction. In another case, a participant’s socialized self-esteem and internal locus of identity seems to be the mitigating variable, “My identity is based in who I believe I am. Self-esteem as a black woman was taught to me as a young child in Mississippi. I value myself and carry

myself with pride, therefore I expect[ed] and normally received positive feedback from others.”

One response that was shared amongst multiple participants was a sense of being “In between.” The state of being “in between” seems to consist of existing without full membership in the Black community, but also not feeling full community elsewhere.

Below are reports of this phenomenon from respondents.

During my freshman year at a black university, I was somewhat ostracized by other black people because I had grown up around majority white people. In high school, I wasn't “white enough,” but in college I wasn't “black enough” – all based on the way I spoke, dressed and choice of music. (1)

I remember feeling ostracized at the time, and pissed off that other kids would try to hold me back/expect me to hold myself back academically to “be more black.”...And it hurt my feelings and made me lonely that they thought I was spending time with white people because I preferred to, not because we had things in common like class and sports. I was angry they did not see I had to deal with racist white kids too, and try to “represent” the best aspects of black people to these stupid privileged white kids who didn't want to be my friend anyway just because I was black. (2)

I am multi-racial – white mom / black dad. Not accepted by either group but embraced by both when I accomplish good things... (3)

I am a dark skinned woman who grew up in the hood but went to a private all white girls' school in the richest zip code in the area. I was never really accepted by the girls in the hoo[d] because I talk “white” and never really accepted by the whites either. I had a lot of insecurities that I [had] to work through because of my experience. (4)

Other participants report how these negative in-group interactions caused them to change behaviors to mitigate the impact of these interactions. One participant reports, “These experiences have made me feel rejected at times, but also forced me to stand up for myself and say ‘this is who I am.’” This participant found the ability to feel the rejection, and this rejection pushed her/him to stand up for her/his self. To avoid

interactions described as hostile, threatening and occasionally physically abusive, one participant explained, “I had a very quiet demeanor and tried to be even more quiet to avoid attention....” This participant tried to disappear in the face of the negative interactions she reports experiencing. One participant describes how she changed the way she thought about other black people as a protective measure, “I missed the camaraderie that many shared with other black students but found I took on a very condescending manner to self protect. The only way to not let their comments and actions scar me was to buy into the belief that they were beneath me and therefore their opinions were obsolete.” Multiple participants, who are quoted below, described how they changed behaviors in order to not feel excluded or criticized.

I felt a lot of self-imposed pressure to stand out academically and in my non-athletic extracurriculars, because I felt too many black kids were involved in sports and not committed to getting good grades. But the stress got to be too much, and I came close to attempting suicide twice. (1)

When I was in college, I stopped relaxing my hair. The transition was difficult and wasn't always pretty. During one of my sorority's key weeks of campus events, I was asked not to attend if I was going to wear my hair “that way.” I started using relaxers again and continued using them through graduation. (2)

As a teenager, I was made fun of by other black girls because of the way I talked and the fact that I had a lot of white friends. They said that I acted and talked “white”. They also called me an “oreo.” As a result, I did what I felt I should do to be perceived as “black” as a way of gaining their acceptance. (3)

They made me feel less than black because I didn't know or enjoy the music [Rap Music]. It caused me to lie and pretend I was into it when I wasn't. I even bought CD[s] and Tapes of rappers that I only listened to when other blacks were around or brought with me when I [k]new I was in the company of those who didn't understand or who I thought would criticize. (4)

Protective or Mitigating Factors

Participants also shared how they overcame, mitigated or coped. Some participants described how what Boyd-Franklin (1989) would describe as traditional racial socialization through family, community and church, served as a mitigating variable. One participant reported, “I use to feel that I had to always apologize for the way that I looked. My grandparents and parents gave me such a sense of greatness until I was able to overcome this obstacle or feeling at a relative young age.” Another participant reported, “Having grown up in a black neighborhood and attending a black church, I felt fairly secure in my identity.” Another participant describes how his participation in sports acted as a mitigating variable in his experience of negative in-group interactions, “I felt that I was judge[d] because I did not actively speak slang or dress in a way that was similar to my African American peers. Since I played sports the transition was a bit easier but I can only imagine the difficulties if I did not have an outlet such as sports to build these relationships with my Black peers.”

Other respondents reported that finding like-minded people with whom to build community helped to mitigate the effects of previous experiences. The understanding of racial identity as defined from within and not without was also listed as a mitigating development. One respondent reported, “I realized in college that my blackness was dictated by me not others... I also surrounded myself with like-minded black people.” Another participant reported, “...as I have gotten older, I have learned not to apologize for who I am and I know that talking properly and having friends of other races doesn’t make me any less black.” Another participant describes how his achievement has served as a mitigating variable after experiencing earlier negative interactions, “Most other black

people look up to me [because] there aren't so many black MD's out there." Other participants, like the person who supplied the following quote, found positive experiences could mitigate past bad experiences, "Most of my negative experiences as a black female within the black community took place during my childhood and adolescent years. I have had positive experiences within the black community as an adult. And, I appreciate my blackness more as an adult than I did as a child or teenager."

Summary

The findings suggest that there are some relationships between individuals' Centrality and Private Regard scale dimensions of their racial identity. These relationships are not very strong and are more frequent with the Private Regard scale dimension. Participants confirmed the reality of these experiences and shared the individual impacts of these experiences on them in particularly vivid comments about them. The following chapter will discuss the implications of these findings.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to identify any relations between African American persons' actual or perceived negative interaction with their racial group and their racial identity. The study worked to answer the question: Is the experience of self-reported negative interactions within the African American community predictive of the level of an individual's racial identity? The hypothesis of this study was that while the existence of these interactions may impact an individual's private regard, it would not impact the centrality of the individual's racial identity.

Major Findings

The results seem to support the hypothesis of this study. There were some significant differences on both the Centrality and Private Regard Scales predicted by self-reported negative in-group interactions. Seven of the negative in-group interaction variables predicted a significant difference on the Private Regard Scale, while only two variables predicted significant difference on the Centrality Scale. While the one-way analysis of variance showed significant differences for some of the variables and the two identity scales, the Pearson correlations found no correlations with the Centrality Scale and weak or very weak correlations with the Private Regard Scale.

Participants' responses to the question regarding their sense of inclusion or exclusion in the Black community had a moderate positive correlation for both the

Centrality Scale and the Private Regard Scale. The more included participants reported feeling, the higher were their scores on both the Centrality and Private Regard scales.

While the quantitative group data showed little to no relationship between the two racial identity dimensions and the negative in-group interaction variables, the personal reflections by the participants in the qualitative questions showed that, on the individual level, these interactions could be very painful experiences. While most participants reported experiencing these interactions while young through college age, many still reported experiencing negative interactions as adults -- especially with respect to work performance and hobbies or behaviors. Many participants shared how they mitigated or coped with these negative interactions with such things as learning to define their identity internally, understanding how internalized racism functions, new or wider experiences of the world and or the Black community, and finding a peer group where they felt accepted. But as social workers, who are also interested in the functioning of the individual, we cannot ignore the experience of participants like this one:

Growing up I was called [an] Oreo, black on the outside, white in the middle. I have always felt timid around black people for fear that they will ostracize me and tell me I am not black enough....So I am still nervous when it comes to being around all [Black people].

Some individuals are still trying to find ways to mitigate and cope with these experiences, experiences that feel current and compelling in their worldview. Even those who have found coping mechanisms for themselves report the discomfort they feel as they have to watch family members or other people close in their lives deal with similar issues.

Through use of the use of Internet solicitation, a large number of participants could be recruited, and 154 participants completed the entire survey. There was a good

diversity in age in the study population. With 27% having bachelor's degrees, 41.4% having master's degrees, and 17.3% having a PhD/MD/JD, according to the 2006 US census population numbers this study sample is highly educated¹. This level of education and achievement could have had protective properties for this group. The data sample was also overwhelmingly Christian and heterosexual, two very normative identity groups. This study done with more marginalized populations in the Black community could produce different results.

Participants in the study also raised the issue of how regional environments would impact individuals' experiences. While some participants disclosed their geographical locations, the survey did not collect regional information as part of this study. Participants also discussed how they sometimes felt these interactions occurred along class lines. No doubt, further study about the relationship between individuals' racial identity and class identity, and the relative prevalence of negative in-group as well as out-group interactions could be useful.

Another issue that could be addressed in a different study is how these dynamics are experienced by bi-racial or multi-racial people. With race currently being largely defined by visible characteristics, people who identify with the larger Black community but who are "seen" as not being part of the group have an extra obstacle to deal with when trying to negotiate their racial identity. As one participant reported, "Most often other [African-Americans] are not sure if I am [African American] and will question if I am... This is always a disappointing and hurtful interaction that I have on a regular basis."

¹ www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/education/cps2006.html

Conclusion

The goal of good culturally competent social work with individuals in the African American community is to be able to come up with interventions that “neither deny, minimize, nor exaggerate their race-related afflictions” (Thompson & Carter, 1997, p. 1). The goal of this study was to increase the existing knowledge about the experiences of African Americans to help make the creation of such interventions more attainable. While this study did not show a significant group relationship between participants’ racial identity as defined by the centrality or private regard dimensions, the reports of individual participants show that these negative interactions do have impact. What remains is to understand the nature of the impact and how and when individuals have access to mitigating and coping mechanisms. The nature of race and how it should be understood theoretically continues to be debated. The outcome of these debates may make all these questions irrelevant as race comes to be understood differently or is even totally disassembled. For now, as we work with clients who have lived experiences which include racial identity, we must continue to try to understand those experiences, and intervene to promote clients’ optimal well being.

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Appendix A

Demographic Information

Race: I consider myself to be African- American (please check one).

Yes

No

Age: (any age 18 or younger excluded)

Gender (please check one):

Female

Male

Transgender

Other

Sexual Orientation (please check one):

Heterosexual

Homosexual

Bisexual

Other

Religious Affiliation (please check one):

Christian

Muslim

Buddhist,

Hindu

Jewish

Other

Highest Level of Education Completed (please check one):

Grade School

High School

Associates

Bachelor

Master's

PhD

Racial Identity Scales:

The following questions will be used to measure your level of racial identity using the Centrality and Private Regard Scales of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers, 1998), a racial identity measure. The Centrality scale measures how important being Black is to you as an individual and the Private Regard scale measures your level of positive or negative feelings towards being Black. Permission for the use of these scales was granted by one of the authors, Robert Sellers.

<i>Centrality Scale (Please check one box for each question)</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself.							
2. In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image.							
3. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people.							
4. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.							
5. I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people							
6. I have a strong attachment to other Black people							
7. Being Black is an important reflection of who I am.							
8. Being Black is no a major factor in my social relationships.							
<i>Private Regard Scale (Please check one box for each question).</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9. I feel good about Black people.							

10. I am happy that I am Black.							
11. I feel that Blacks have made major accomplishments and advancements.							
12. I often regret that I am Black							
13. I am proud to be Black.							
15. I feel the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society.							

Negative In-Group Interaction Scale:

These questions have been designed by this researcher to measure your experience of negative interactions with people or groups in the Black community and your perception of the impact of these experiences.

<i>Negative Experiences (Please check one box for each question.)</i>	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
1. I have made fun of me, called me names, or made about me by other black people about:				
▪ My hair				
▪ My skin color				
▪ My facial features like my nose or mouth				
▪ The way I speak				
▪ The clothes I wear				
▪ The music I listen to				
▪ My performance at school or work				
▪ My choice of friends or significant other				
▪ Where I choose to live				
2. I have been called racially derogatory names by other Black people				
3. I have been racially insulted by Black people.				
4. I have had rumors or gossip spread about me by other Black people.				
5. I have felt ostracized or excluded by other Black people.				

6. I have been threatened physically by other Black people.				
7. I have been physically attacked by other Black people.				

<i>Impact (Please check one box for each question)</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. These experiences made me feel differently about myself.							
2. These experiences made me feel differently about other black people.							
3. These experiences made me closer to other black people.							

	Strong Sense of Inclusion	Some Sense of Inclusion	Neither Included nor Excluded	Some Sense of Exclusion	Strong Sense of Exclusion
4. I feel accepted and included in the Black Community.					

Are there particular examples of a negative ingroup experience that your feel comfortable sharing? What happened? How did it make you feel?

At the end of this survey, is there anything you would like to share with the researcher?

To complete this survey and submit your responses, please click the submit button below.

Thank you for submitting completing this survey and submitting your responses. I appreciate you help in this project. I will be posting my findings at http://docs.google.com/Doc?id=dgdz2vfd_3c2jbv8 after my thesis is complete. You can download the findings chapter from this address if you are interested. Thank you again!

Appendix B

April 11, 2007

Donna Bell
512 Whitaker Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27156

Dear Donna,

Your revised materials have been reviewed. All is fine except for one thing. In the Informed Consent please say that this is for your thesis and for possible presentation and publication. In the letters, please tell people this is for your thesis. We can't figure out why everyone is in love with saying "submitted in partial fulfillment" which doesn't really mean anything except when on the front page of a completed thesis.

Your materials are approved as soon as you send copies to Laurie with these minor corrections.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain signed consent documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your study.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee
CC: Gael McCarthy, Research Advisor

Appendix C

Dear Friends

As you may know, I am currently a candidate for a Master's in Social Work at Smith College. I am writing to ask you to complete a survey for the thesis research project I am conducting in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's in Social Work from Smith College. I am looking for participants who are 18 years old or older and who consider themselves to be Black, African American, or of African Descent. Please take a moment to read about my project to see if you would be willing to participate and / or pass on this request to someone else who would be interested in helping me in this process. I appreciate any help you could offer.

I am conducting a research study to examine potential relationships between negative interactions within one's racial group and one's racial identity. The importance of racial identity in the psychological health and development of African Americans has been strongly supported by current research. Also, the need for increased cultural competency has been identified as an important skill in social work practice. The data gathered for this study will be included in my thesis and possibly used in publications and presentations. I hope that answers you provide will increase the collective understanding of racial identity amongst African American raise questions for further study.

I am writing to invite anyone who is 18 years old or older and who consider himself or herself to be Black, African American, or of African Descent to take 15 minutes to fill out the online survey linked below. The survey is completely anonymous. The link to the survey does not retain email addresses or ask that you give your name and no specific answer can be traced back to any particular respondent.

To participate in this study, click the link below. To help me recruit others, please forward this to as many people you know who qualify and would be willing to participate in my study. Forward this to your book club, sorority/fraternity group, family, friends, colleagues, etc. As long as they have the link below they can participate.

Insert Survey Link Here

Thanks so much for taking the time to help me complete this academic journey. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Donna Bell
Smith 2007
dbell@email.smith.edu
(919) 681.1760

Appendix D

Dear Classmates

Hope you are having a good year! I am writing to you about the thesis research project I am conducting in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's in Social Work from Smith College. I am looking for participants who are 18 years old or older and who consider themselves to be Black, African American, or of African Descent. Please take a moment to read about my project to see if you would be willing to participate and / or pass on this request to someone else who would be interested in helping me in this process. I appreciate any help you could offer.

I am conducting a research study to examine potential relationships between negative interactions within one's racial group and one's racial identity. The importance of racial identity in the psychological health and development of African Americans has been strongly supported by current research. Also, the need for increased cultural competency has been identified as an important skill in social work practice. The data gathered for this study will be included in my thesis and possibly used in publications and presentations. I hope that answers you provide will increase the collective understanding of racial identity amongst African American raise questions for further study.

I am writing to invite anyone who is 18 years old or older and who consider herself or himself to be Black, African American, or of African Descent to take 15 minutes to fill out the online survey linked below. The survey is completely anonymous. The link to the survey does not retain email addresses or ask that you give your name and no specific answer can be traced back to any particular respondent.

To participate in this study, click the link below. To help me recruit others, please forward this to as many people you know who qualify and would be willing to participate in my study. Forward this to your book club, sorority/fraternity group, family, friends, colleagues, etc. As long as they have the link below they can participate.

Insert Survey Link Here

Thanks so much for taking the time to help a fellow Smithie complete this academic journey. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Donna Bell
Smith 2007
dbell@email.smith.edu
(919) 681.1760

Appendix E

Dear Smith Alumni

In hopes of joining your alumni ranks, I am writing to you about the thesis research project I am conducting in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's in Social Work from Smith College. I am looking for participants who are 18 years old or older and who consider themselves to be Black, African American, or of African Descent. Please take a moment to read about my project to see if you would be willing to participate and / or pass on this request to someone else who would be interested in helping me in this process. I appreciate any help you could offer.

I am conducting a research study to examine potential relationships between negative interactions within one's racial group and one's racial identity. The importance of racial identity in the psychological health and development of African Americans has been strongly supported by current research. Also, the need for increased cultural competency has been identified as an important skill in social work practice. The data gathered for this study will be included in my thesis and possibly used in publications and presentations. I hope that answers you provide will increase the collective understanding of racial identity amongst African American raise questions for further study.

I am writing to invite anyone who is 18 years old or older and who considers herself or himself to be Black, African American, or of African Descent to take 15 minutes to fill out the online survey linked below. The survey is completely anonymous. The link to the survey does not retain email addresses or ask that you give your name and no specific answer can be traced back to any particular respondent.

To participate in this study, click the link below. To help me recruit others, please forward this to as many people you know who qualify and would be willing to participate in my study. Forward this to your book club, sorority/fraternity group, family, friends, colleagues, etc. As long as they have the link below they can participate.

Insert Survey Link Here

Thanks so much for taking the time to help a future Smith Alumna complete this academic journey. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Donna Bell
Smith 2007
dbell@email.smith.edu
(919) 681.1760

Appendix F

Informed Consent

Dear Participant

My name is Donna Bell and I am a Master's of Social Work Student at the Smith College School for Social Work. I am conducting a research study to examine potential relationships between negative interactions within one's racial group and one's racial identity. The importance of racial identity in the psychological health and development of African-Americans has been strongly supported by current research. The data gathered for this study will be included in my thesis and possibly used in publications and presentations. I hope that answers you provide will increase the collective understanding of racial identity amongst African American raise questions for further study.

In order to participate in my study, you must be at least 18 years old and self identify as African-American. The survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete and includes demographic questions such as your gender and education level, questions about your experiences with other people in your racial group, as well as questions to measure your level of racial identity. You must read and electronically sign this informed consent form by clicking on the "I consent" option below before being able to proceed with the survey. If you choose to consent, please print off this page and keep it in your records. If you click on the "I do not consent" option below, you will immediately be exited from the survey. During the survey, you may decline to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. You have the right to exit this study at anytime prior to pressing the "I submit" option at the end of the survey.

My survey will be conducted completely online and the software utilized is designed so that **participation is completely anonymous** and no specific answer can be traced back to any particular respondent. The link to the survey does not retain email addresses or ask that you give your name. The Software program collects and initially compiles the data for further research and the researcher is given this compiled data in aggregate form. Only my research advisor, the Smith College School of Social Work statistical analyst and this researcher will have access to these materials. All research data will be kept secure in a locked location for three years, as mandated by federal law. After three years, I will continue to keep the materials secure or destroy them if they are no longer needed. You have the right to exit this study at anytime prior to pressing the "I submit" option at the end of the survey.

Although minimal risk from participation is anticipated, you may experience some distress from thinking about past negative experiences. The very process of filling out the questionnaire regarding these experiences could be stressful. Listed below are three national counseling referral websites and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline that are available to you in the event you feel you need help in processing this experience.

1. www.helppro.com/aspdocs/naswbsearch1.asp
2. <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases/default.asp>
3. <http://therapist.psychologytoday.com/nmha/>

Compensation will not be provided for participation in this study. You may benefit from being part of a study that offers new insights into the relationships between racial identity status and negative experiences with a self-identified racial group for the selected group of survey respondents. Sensitivity to the potential impact of such experiences may enhance the ability of clinicians and others to provide meaningful information and support for group members. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher will post the results of the survey online where participants can review them anonymously. Participants will be given the location of the results at the end of the survey.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may decline to be involved in this study without repercussion. I welcome your questions and comments. I can be reached by email at dbell@email.smith.edu or by phone at my workplace at (919) 681-1760. I hope you will decide to participate in this study.

YOUR CLICKING THE “I CONSENT” BUTTON INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE ABOVE INFORMATION; THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Please print a copy of this page for your records so you can contact me later or use the referral numbers!