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AIN'T I BLACK ENOUGH?: ANXIETY RELATED TO THE QUESTIONING OF ONE'S
GROUP MEMBERSHIP

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Science at Virginia Commonwealth
University

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Abstract

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During late adolescence and emerging adulthood, individuals undergo identity formation (Erikson, 1956). During this period, individuals may be insecure about their group memberships (Myers & DeWall, 2015). Subcategorizations have developed among Black people in America resulting from their traumatic history (Blair, Judd, Sadler, & Jenkins, 2002; Levingston & Brewer, 2002). This subcategorization creates in-group/out-group dichotomies. In order to increase one's self-image, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) poses that individuals attempt to enhance the image of their in-group. This study aimed to determine whether a person feels anxiety due to fear of rejection from the in-group when challenged on one's group membership. Participants were asked to rate their physical features and assess their adherence to

cultural norms and behaviors. They then completed a measure assessing their state anxiety. It was hypothesized that the fewer typical physical and cultural characteristics that one possessed, the greater their anxiety would be. Results from this study did not support the original hypotheses. However, research suggests that this is still an area worth exploring. Future directions are discussed.

Chapter I: Introduction

Recent events around race relations in America have rehashed conversations about Black identity. Rachel Dolezal, a woman who was the president of her local NAACP chapter, was exposed to have been falsely portraying herself as a Black woman. She upheld her identification as a Black woman by suggesting that she always felt connected to the culture (Bensley, 2015; Ford & Botelho, 2015). Essentially, she highlighted the idea that being Black is not merely a result of one's biological lineage. Another activist, Shaun King, who identifies as Black, was accused of falsely portraying himself as a Black man. King noted that although his familial history was a complicated one, he was Black and is of Black ancestry. Furthermore, he had been secure in his identity as a Black man since his teenage years. He made note of not only his lineage, but activities he participated in and groups of people with whom he associated (Rogers, 2015; Southall, 2015). Situations such as these allude to the complexities associated with Black identity.

There are a number of events in the past decade that have increased the identity exploration among Black individuals in America. For example, following the election of Barack Obama in 2008, racial identity exploration increased among African American undergraduates, especially for those whose racial identity was more important to their overall sense of self (Fuller-Rowell, Burrow, & Ong, 2011). While in many cases accounts of discrimination have been positively correlated with ethnic identity exploration (Pahl & Way, 2006) positive race-related events, such as the election of Barack Obama, have been shown to serve as encounter experiences related to further racial identity exploration. Centrality, or the significance of one's racial identity to their self-concept, also increased for these students immediately following the election (Fuller-Rowell, Burrow, & Ong, 2011).

At this point, it is important to note the difference between race and ethnicity. Race is a social construct developed to categorize the human species on the basis of physical characteristics and other hereditary traits such as skin color or facial features (Cokley, 2007; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; McKee, 1993). Ethnicity refers to a group of people who share a common ancestry and certain characteristics, such as cultural traditions and values, and language (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993; Cokley, 2007). Sellers and colleagues (1998) noted that due to the history of Black people in America, many Black people think of themselves in terms of their race (i.e., Black). For instance, when experiencing discrimination, Black Americans will likely not believe that the discrimination they experienced was due to their language or cultural values. Instead, they will attribute the discrimination to their physical characteristics (Brittian et al., 2015). Some researchers make the point that due to the history of enslavement and discriminatory practices in the United States, that race and ethnicity are not able to be separated for Black Americans (Schwartz et al., 2014).

Because of the complexities of this debate, it is important to explain the usage of terms throughout the remainder of this document. “Black” will be used to refer to those individuals belonging to the group of people of African descent including, but not limited to, African Americans living in America. The term “Black” appears to be more inclusive than the term African American, as some individuals who may self-identify as Black do not self-identify as African American (Agyemang, Bhopal, & Bruijnzeels, 2005). “Black” in the context of this study is not merely an indicator of one’s race as it is commonly used. Here, “Black” will be used in reference to one’s group membership. Therefore, when discussing threats to one’s identity, the term “group membership” will be used to include both racial and ethnic factors (e.g., discrimination due to skin color, values, beliefs, etc.) due to the complexity of these terms for

Black Americans. However, when discussing previous studies, the terms “African American” and “Black” will be used as the author intended in order to accurately present their findings.

A critical stage of development is the period of time during emerging adulthood when individuals strive to form solid identities (Erikson, 1956). During this period of development, individuals form their social identity. This social identity is related to his or her psychological well-being. Ghavami et al. (2011) conducted a study testing the relation of social identity to the psychological well-being of minority individuals. The conceptual model used to test the linkage between social identity and psychological well-being was formulated from the developmental models of identity formation (e.g., Erikson, 1968) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Ghavami and colleagues (2011) found strong support for their model, proposing that identity affirmation mediated the relationship between identity achievement and psychological well-being. In this study, identity achievement was defined as exploring and understanding the meaning of one’s identity. Identity affirmation was defined as developing positive feelings and a sense of belonging to one’s social group. Their findings suggest that a significant foundation for developing positive feelings toward and a strong attachment with a particular group involves the exploration and understanding of an individual’s identity as a minority group member (Ghavami et al., 2011). Once a secure attachment and positive feelings are developed, various psychological benefits, such as, higher self-esteem, a more positive self-concept, greater academic achievement, and fewer mental health problems (Greenberg, 1999; Schneider, Atkinson, & Tardiff, 2001; Ranson & Urichuk, 2008; De Wolff & van Ijzendoorn, 1997) are likely to develop. This study explores this concept among Black individuals specifically.

Black individuals in their late adolescence and emerging adulthood will be the focus of this study since this is the age in which identity affirmation occurs. By this age, individuals

should have gone through the identity versus confusion stage. Identity versus confusion is the fifth stage of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. It typically occurs between the ages of approximately twelve through eighteen, but can last until the late twenties (Côté & Levine, 1987; Myers & DeWall, 2015). During this time, youth are exploring their individuality and their sense of self begins to emerge. Due to this exploration, these youth may be insecure regarding their group membership and placement in society (Myers & DeWall, 2015). To have a strong identity, an individual needs to be able to undoubtedly define who he or she is and identify his or her values and goals in life. This person should have successfully explored his or her identity, be able to commit to his or her self-identity, and not succumb to an identity crisis, resulting in identity confusion or identity diffusion (Bronson, 1959; Marcia, 1980; Côté & Levine, 1987). Identity confusion, or diffusion, involves a lack of direction or the inability of an individual to define himself or herself. When this occurs, the individual has ineffectively explored his or her identity due to restrictions connected to prior unresolved psychosocial conflicts. When an individual is unable to yield a solid identity, he or she will be unprepared for later stages of adulthood (Côté & Levine, 1987).

Other important aspects to consider here are the core social motives that influence the social interactions with others. Because these social motives influence interactions, they also influence the formation of our social identities. One of these core social motives is belonging. Belonging to a group is a fundamental motive that serves as a base for all other core motives (Fiske, 2014). Belonging is particularly important because people need strong, steady relationships with others. The sense of belonging that comes from group membership allows individuals to survive both psychologically and physically (Fiske, 2014). Another social motive of importance is understanding. Human beings have a desire to understand their environment so

that they may predict what may happen in the future and also make sense of what has happened in the past. In regards to group membership, shared understanding is essential for survival and initiates the attraction to people who are similar and partiality or prejudice against those who are different (Fiske, 2014). Controlling, another core social motive, is a contingency between behavior and outcomes. It motivates people to feel effective at dealing with themselves and their social milieu (Fiske, 2014). Lastly, enhancing involves maintaining one's self-esteem or being encouraged by the opportunity for self-improvement. Enhancing is based simply upon the idea that people like to feel good about themselves (Fiske, 2014). The theory of social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) further explains and expands upon these core motives in regards to intergroup discrimination and serves as the foundation for the creation of this study.

Social Identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) poses that we increase our self-image and self-esteem by enhancing the image and status of the group to which we belong. There are three particular variables involved in the development of this in-group preferentialism. In-group preferentialism is dependent upon the following: how much an individual identifies with a particular group and internalizes that group membership as a part of their self-concept, how much the present and predominant context provides a foundation for comparing the in-group to an out-group, and how important the individual perceives the out-group to be. However, even before individuals develop in-group preferentialism, they must develop in-group/out-group dichotomies, which involves three processes (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The first is social categorization. Human beings categorize people in order to understand them which, as mentioned earlier, is a core social motive essential to survival. In order for people to effectively prepare for, understand, and deal with the various social aspects of everyday life, they utilize their fundamental social motives (Maner, Miller, Moss, Leo & Plant, 2012). Following social

categorization is social identification. After categorizing people into groups, individuals adopt the identity of the group to which they belong. Lastly, once individuals adopt an identity, they compare the group to which they belong to other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

While social identity theory was originally created to explain intergroup discrimination, this theory can also be applied to discrimination within Black group membership due to its complexity. Padilla (2008) examined the complexities of social identity theory as it relates to Latinos by considering factors such as the stigma associated with skin tone. Stigma related to physical features and other factors play a role when considering Black Americans. In some cases, Black individuals consider anyone who is partially Black as a member of the group (Ho, Sidanius, Leven, & Banaji, 2011). This is in part due to the historical rule of hypodescent and legal designations of Blackness in America. However, there is also the subcategorization of Black individuals based on physical features, such as skin tone or hair texture (Blair, Judd, Sadler, and Jenkins, 2002). Furthermore, Black individuals are judged on their adherence to cultural traditions as well (Tummala-Nara, 2007). The subcategorization among Black individuals may be explained by optimal distinctiveness theory, which suggests that people strive to achieve a balance between assimilation and uniqueness. In order to obtain this balance, they sometimes prefer inclusion into smaller groups and reject inclusion in a larger group (Brewer, 1991). Because of the diversity among individuals of African descent, there are various subcategories that can be made which yield in-group/out-group dichotomies within the group. These subcategories can produce social identity threat (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002) among Black group members.

Identity threat varies from situation to situation because one's membership to a particular group may be more salient in one context than another (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002).

Social identity threat is the realization that one may be discriminated against, judged, or marginalized based upon their particular identity or group membership (Steele et al., 2002). Social identity threat is often discussed in relation to negative biases attributed to a particular minority group. For example, when involved in situations where one's group can be perceived in a negative or discriminatory manner, an individual often performs lower than he or she would otherwise (Steele et al., 2002; Cohen & Garcia, 2008). Here, a similar phenomenon is proposed but from a different lens.

In this study, the role of anxiety is examined when an individual who self-identifies as Black is challenged on their group membership. Furthermore, it will be examined whether one's phenotype (i.e., skin tone, nose width, lip fullness, etc.) and social characteristics (i.e., beliefs, interests, activities, etc.) will play a factor in producing this anxiety. This study seeks to examine these concepts in a younger population due to the significance of identity formation during this developmental period. Three hypotheses are proposed in this study. First, participants who described a time when they were challenged about their group membership will display a higher state anxiety than those who were not. Second, there will be a negative relationship between the centrality of one's Black identity and their state anxiety. Last, how well one aligns with stereotypical and traditional markers of Black identity will predict subsequent state anxiety. These factors include physical characteristics, cultural traditions, and socioeconomic status.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Identity Development

Emerging adulthood, the period from one's late teens to the mid- to late twenties, is a tremulous time as it consists of multiple identity crises and instability (Arnett, 2007a; Arnett, 2007b). Erikson (1956) described this stage of development as a period of identity crisis. However, a particular important factor of the identity development of young adults is being clear on one's group membership and becoming committed to that group. This particular process, known as "resolution" (Erikson, 1968), is critical for healthy development and proper psychological functioning. If an individual's identity is not solid and coherent, he or she is likely to experience higher anxiety levels. This state of a weakened sense of identity is known as identity diffusion (Bronson, 1959). Those who are firm in their knowledge of who they are and to which group they belong, are less likely to be negatively impacted by threats or challenges to their identity (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997). However, a prolonged stage of identity diffusion can lead to difficulties during social interactions (Bronson, 1958).

Typically, being in college allows individuals to interact and have experiences with a diverse group of people (Arnett & Tanner, 2006). This diversity is usually more than what they may have been exposed to during their adolescence, with most interactions occurring with people from their school or neighborhoods (Locks, Hurtado, Bowman & Oseguera, 2008). The increased frequency of interactions with a more diverse group of people creates a number of positive and negative experiences and allows space for further identity exploration (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990).

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity

An individual's social identity is defined as an individual's self-concept as a member of the larger society. It is generally meaningful to a person for others to have a sense of their group membership (Fiske, 2010). While some social identities are so significant to an individual's identity that they are constantly salient, it is important to note that one social identity can be viewed as positive in one context yet negative in another. An identity's positivity or negativity is dependent upon whether that particular identity is compared well or disapprovingly to another group or groups in that same context (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje, 2002). Although the literature often intertwines one's social identity with how strongly an individual identifies with a particular group, it is also possible for an individual to be strongly committed to a particular group despite membership to that group having a negative perception. Therefore, it is important not to equate one's group membership with their commitment to that group (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje, 2002). In this study, one's level of commitment and not their self-identification alone, is hypothesized to be of great importance. Thus, an individual's group membership will be defined only by one's self-report that they belong to a particular group. Their level of commitment to that group will be measured separately.

Importance of social belonging

The need for belonging is a core social motive, meaning that it is an important, underlying process that influences how individuals think, feel, and behave during social interactions (Fiske, 2010). Therefore, it is problematic when uncertainty about belonging develops from the stigmatization of a particular group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; MacDonald & Leary, 2005). When individuals do not believe they have sufficient social supports, their physical and mental health is less likely to suffer (Bolger, Zuckerman, & Kessler, 2000).

For example, in the academic arena and the workplace, Black Americans may often see that they are racially under-represented. They may also experience overt and covert prejudicial acts and receive lower grades or salaries (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Harber, 1998; Grodsky & Pager, 2001; Steele, 1997). When encountering these experiences, these individuals may believe that their fellow group members (i.e., other Blacks) are able to succeed in these establishments by masking their group identity (Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Pronin, Steele, & Ross, 2004).

When young adults from underrepresented groups do not see an adequate number of people that look like them, they may suffer an intellectual achievement disadvantage (Walton & Cohen, 2007). They may also perceive members of their own racial or ethnic group succeed in these arenas by modulating their group identity (Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Pronin, Steele, & Ross, 2004). In contexts such as these, members of underrepresented groups may become sensitive to the quality of their social connections. These events that convey an absence of social connectedness can lead to belonging uncertainty (Walton & Cohen, 2007). The importance of connectedness in social relationships helps to explain why anxiety can be produced when an individual is questioned about their group membership.

Furthermore, the expectation of discrimination based on an individual's status as a minority can have damaging consequences on the well-being of an ethnic minority (Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002). For example, there has been evidence of higher levels of depressive symptoms (Hall, Cassidy, & Stevenson, 2008; Pieterse, Todd, Neville, & Carter, 2012; Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, and Zimmerman, 2003). However, the development of a solid ethnic identity has been shown to serve as a buffer against

discrimination and lessen the effect of various depressive symptoms (Torres, Yznaga, & Moore, 2011).

There has also what is known as the “rejection-identification” effect, coined by Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje (1999). The rejection-identification effect proposes that experiencing what one perceives to be ethnic discrimination can lead some individuals to more strongly identify with their ethnic group. This stronger identification helps buffer against various negative psychological effects. They found that, for African Americans, perceptions of ethnic discrimination and negative attributions to experiences of discrimination had a positive relationship with one’s affiliation to their ethnic group. Ethnic identification was also shown to have a positive relationship with higher self-esteem and fewer negative emotions.

Pride in an individual’s ethnicity has been associated with a reduction in depressive symptoms among African American youth (Gaylord-Harden, Ragsdale, Mandar, Richards, & Petersen 2007). There are a number of studies that suggest that ethnic pride and ethnic identity affirmation is a factor in upholding mental health among African American youth and is particularly important in the relationship between perceived discrimination and various mental health issues (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Sellers Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006). While the direction of the relationship is sometimes unclear, developmental theory suggests that ethnic identity resolution aids in the pathway to ethnic identity achievement. This achievement can yield pride in one’s ethnic group and possibly fewer depressive symptoms (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

A study by Anglin & Wade (2007) found that the only factor of racial identity that was associated with positive college adjustment was an internalized multicultural racial identity. The internalized multicultural racial identity is described as an individual’s embracing of their own

Black identity, as well as a sense of connectedness with other cultural groups. This study suggests that individuals with this stronger sense of identity are better able to handle the social and academic aspects of college life (Anglin & Wade, 2007). Results from this study also suggested that students who hold a negative view of their Blackness may suffer during their college transition, both academically and socially (Anglin & Wade, 2007). Furthermore, there has been a link drawn between social exclusion and physical pain. Although further research needs to be conducted, it leads to the idea that social exclusion may be linked to other physical reactions (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). In this case, anxiety. Among African American adolescents, aspects of ethnic and racial identity, particularly positive feelings about one's ethnicity or race, have been shown to be associated with decreased participation in risky behaviors and positive academic and psychosocial outcomes (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014).

The theory

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) was originally created to explain the psychological underpinning of intergroup discrimination. The theory proposes that an individual's perceived group membership creates an in-group/out-group dichotomy that involves the positive differentiation of the in-group from the out-group. Belonging to a group creates a sense of belonging and is a reason for self-worth. In order to increase our self-worth, we enhance the rank of the group to which we belong and illuminate negative characteristics of the out-group. By placing people into categories, we exaggerate not only the differences between one group and another, but also the similarities among members within a particular group.

According to Tajfel & Turner (1979), there are three variables that play a part in the development of in-group preferentialism. The first variable is how much an individual identifies with a particular group in order for that group membership to be internalized as a part of their

self-concept. The second variable to consider is how much the present and predominant context provides basis for comparing the in-group to the out-group. Lastly, the perceived importance of the out-group plays an important role. This is determined by both the relative and absolute status of the in-group. Therefore, when an individual's self-identified group membership is important to their overall self-concept and the juxtaposition of the in-group to the out-group has significant meaning, that individual is likely to demonstrate a preference for the in-group. Based on this theory, it can be assumed that the categorization of an individual as Black is a significant part of his or her self-concept. If this identification is challenged, the individual would feel threatened and want to defend his or her group membership. This threat would likely produce anxiety. The addition here is that among Black individuals, there is a subcategorization often based on one's skin tone and other physical features (Hochschild & Weaver, 2007). It can be assumed that the processes involved in social identity among Black individuals are strongly influenced by one's physical and cultural characteristics. Because of the separation of Black group members by skin tone and cultural factors, it can be presumed that group members' Black identity will vary based on their categorization. Also, the idea that lighter skin tones and certain physical features are associated with more European ethnicities (Blair, Judd, & Fallman, 2004) suggests that the less stereotypical these physical characteristics are, the greater the threat becomes when challenged. Additionally, people tend to over-exclude individuals who possess less stereotypical characteristics of a particular group in order to protect the identity of said group (Rubin & Paolini, 2014). Therefore, those individuals who do not adhere to traditional cultural values and do not look like stereotypical members of the group are at a higher risk for exclusion.

Identity Threat

Because different social situations and contexts have the ability to shift issues of identity, Ellemers and colleagues (2002) further examined the intersection of commitment and context across situations where various identity concerns are produced leading to different responses from the individual. While the differences between each of these situations are not absolute, they suggest likely responses from the individual.

No threat is likely to be seen when individuals are mainly focused on forming accurate impressions or making sense of their own group identity. This is true for those with both low and high commitment to their respective groups. Commitment level begins to play a part when analyzing situations where a threat to the individual likely stems from the relationship between that individual and the larger group. When commitment to the group is low, it can be threatening for someone to be included. However, when the commitment is high, the idea of exclusion from that group is more threatening. On the group level, the concern when commitment is high is the distinctiveness of one's group (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002).

The focus of this study is the individual-directed threat when commitment level is low compared to that threat when commitment level is high. When the commitment level is low, being categorized as a member of a particular group may actually threaten one's self-identity. For example, although a person may be considered a member of the Black community based on appearance, he or she could still psychologically view the Black community as an out-group. There are a number of reasons that this rejection of group membership may occur. One possibility is that it may be particularly important for the individual to establish their own uniqueness. Another reason is that the individual believes that the categorization that is being discussed is not, or should not, be relevant in a certain context or during a certain situation. If a categorization is being viewed as being the only important categorization, an individual may

reject that categorization because other categorizations should be addressed as well. For example, imagine that a person believes that he or she is being accepted to an academic group solely because of their membership to the Black community. That person may reject being categorized as Black because other social identities such as being a scholar or a leader are being ignored. In other words, while the individual may not be able to deny being a part of the Black community based upon their physical appearance, they may resist being identified as Black exclusively and attempt to demonstrate more personal uniqueness by emphasizing additional identities or group memberships. Another possible cause of the rejection is the resentment that develops due to a loss of control when others force a particular categorization on someone (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002).

While individuals with low commitment feel threatened when they are categorized in a way in which they do not agree, individuals with high commitment are threatened more by the lack of acceptance within the targeted group or exclusion from that group. If an individual is highly committed to a group and is rejected by that same group, that individual may try many attempts to gain acceptance into that group. Also, highly committed group members may look for security in the group in order to make up for individual inadequacies. Those with a perceived marginal status may be more concerned with being accepted than acknowledging the possibility of rejection (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). For example, marginal group members with high commitment may perceive higher in-group homogeneity which may be their attempt to feel more included (Jetten, Branscombe, Spears, & McKimmie, 2001). When these group members shift to more marginal positions in the group, personal self-esteem has been shown to increase. When the shift is made to more prototypical positions in the group, collective self-esteem tends to increase. This suggests that movement towards marginal group membership could reflect a

reduction in commitment to the group (Jetten, Branscombe, & Spears, 2001). Another consequence of marginal positions in a group is that the motivation for acceptance can outweigh similarity-attraction principles (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). Schmitt & Branscombe (2001) found evidence that highly committed men who were told that they were uncharacteristic of their gender were more likely to value the prototypical man even more but like men similar to themselves even less than when their group membership was not threatened. A marginal status within a group may also lead group members to participate in activities and display behavior that is characteristic of group members, particularly when in the presence of group members. One of these behaviors include increased biases against out-group members. Essentially, members who have a high commitment to a group but are threatened by exclusion may try to emphasize their inclusion by perceptually viewing their group as more homogeneous. Additionally, they may experience negative affect when threatened with exclusion and therefore try to conform to the group by exhibiting prototypical behaviors (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002).

Essentially, individuals try to focus on maintaining characteristics and behaviors of their in-group that uphold its positive social identity. Therefore, members of the in-group will hold strong negative views of those members who display deviant behavior. These views vary in accordance to the threat to the overall group identity (Pinto, Marques, Levine, & Abrams, 2010). When individuals are presented with negative information about an in-group that is important to them, the information is processed critically and defensive thoughts are formed. Furthermore, defensive motivation has been shown to occur in response to threats to the individual self, as well as threats to the collective self (de Hoog, 2013). Therefore, it is likely that Black members who hold membership to this group in high regard will become defensive, or anxious, when challenged about their identity.

Complexities of Black Group Membership

Ethnic versus racial identity

According to Erikson (1956), the exploration of one's ethnic identity is developmentally appropriate for emerging adults. One's ethnic identity develops from a sense of belonging to a particular group and is comprised of a number of factors, such as values, traditions, and beliefs (Cokley, 2007; Phinney & Ong, 2007, Quintana, 2007). Because one's ethnic identity is a social identity, it involves not only one's membership to a particular ethnic group but one's self-identification of that particular group as well (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bámaca-Gómez, 2004).

As stated earlier, it is important to note that racial identity and ethnic identity are two separate entities. However, due to America's history of enslavement and the loss of a number of cultural practices (Sellers et al., 1998), African American individuals tend to think of themselves in regards to their race rather than their ethnicity. Because of this, they may attribute discrimination to their race rather than their ethnicity. For instance, when experiencing discrimination, Black Americans will likely not believe that the discrimination experienced was due to their language or cultural values (Brittian et al., 2015). There are others that would argue that due to the history of enslavement and discriminatory practices in the United States, that race and ethnicity are not able to be separated for Black Americans (Schwartz et al., 2014).

Slavery was traumatizing for enslaved Africans and has had lasting effects on the psyche of people of African descent. Enslaved Africans were socialized to value Eurocentric ideologies, perceptions, and worldviews over their own. This socialization led to the internalization of negative attitudes among the descendants of enslaved Africans. The value of lighter skin over darker skin leading to skin bleaching is evidence of this (Charles, 2003).

Colorism describes the prejudice against people of color who have darker skin and the preference for people with lighter skin. Although skin tone is often the most salient when discussing colorism, it can also involve nose width, hair texture, and lip fullness (Blair, Judd, Sadler, & Jenkins, 2002). This phenomenon dates back to slavery when slaves with lighter skin held more desirable positions, such as being in the house, whereas slaves with darker skin worked in the field. During and after the abolishment of slavery, light-skinned African Americans were able to receive educational and economic benefits in comparison with their dark-skinned counterparts (Russel, Wilson, & Hall, 1992). It has been shown that people tend to respond more positively to those African Americans with less Afrocentric features than those with more characteristic Afrocentric features (Levingston & Brewer, 2002). One possible explanation for the preference of light-skinned African Americans over dark-skinned African Americans is that they possess features that are more similar to European Americans (Levingston & Brewer, 2002). Despite society's general outward preference for lighter skin tones, subconscious turmoil may exist among lighter-skinned individuals. Slaveholders would often brutally rape their slaves, resulting in biracial, or mulatto, children (Khanna, 2010). It is possible that lighter skinned individuals have a physical representation that reminds them more of the forceful rape of their ancestors. Due to this painful and traumatic history resulting in internalized racism, people of African descent tend to go through a process of self-hatred to self-love during the course of embracing their Black identity.

Black Racial Identity Theory

There are multiple models of racial identity that address the development of racial identities among Black individuals. One well-known theory is the theory of Nigrescence developed by William Cross (1971). The original model described the negative to positive

transition of one's self-concept through five stages. This model was then adapted by Cross (1991) and Cross, Parham, and Helms (1991). The new model incorporated more flexibility such that it allowed varying attitudes within the stages of the model and varying strengths of the racial identity types. Individuals in the pre-encounter stage hold attitudes about their racial group that range from low significance to neutral to anti-Black. These individuals do not view race as having played an important factor in their development and typically hold Eurocentric ideologies (Cross, 1991). The pre-encounter stage is followed by the encounter stage, where the individual experiences a positive or negative event that has a significant impact on their worldview and ignites a change in that individual. The immersion-emersion stage consists of a committal to change by the individual as he or she begins to shed their previous worldview. During this stage, individuals are able to view their Black identity through a different lens. Next follows internalization where the individual struggles with the issues of developing a new identity. They place an important emphasis on how they view themselves instead of how others view them. By critically thinking about how their Black identity has shaped their development, these individuals are then able to embrace their Black identity. Finally, internalization-commitment describes the period when the individual has internalized the concerns and goals of their racial group and has committed to the interests of their racial group long-term (Cross, 1991). Another well-known model is the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, and Smith, 1998). The MMRI is based upon three dimensions (i.e., centrality, regard, and ideology). Centrality is how much an individual views race as a part of his or her self-concept. Regard refers to an individual's personal feelings and evaluative judgment of his or her racial group. This dimension includes both public and private regard. Ideology refers to an individual's viewpoints, attitudes, and beliefs about how members of their racial group should

behave. Within the ideology dimension, there are four types of racial ideologies: (1) the nationalist, (2) oppressed minority, (3) assimilationist, and (4) humanist. The nationalist ideology emphasizes the uniqueness of people of African descent. The oppressed minority highlights the similarities between African Americans and other oppressed group. Viewpoints that emphasize the similarities between African Americans and broader American society are described in the assimilationist ideology. The emphasis on the commonalities among all humans align with the humanist ideology.

Afrocentric Features & Physical Markers of Blackness

Afrocentric features is a term used to describe the physical features that can be perceived as characteristic of people of African descent, such as having a darker skin, a wide nose, and full lips (Blair, Judd, & Chapleau, 2004). Just as Afrocentric facial features have been used to stereotype individuals between racial groups, they have been used in similar manners within racial groups. Blair and colleagues (2002) found that across groups, various stereotypical characteristics associated with Black Americans, such as being a criminal or athletic, were assumed to be more true of individuals who possessed more Afrocentric facial features. Although some factors associated with racial stereotyping are able to be suppressed, stereotyping based on Afrocentric features is often unable to be controlled as people are often unaware of them (Blair, Judd, & Chapleau, 2004). It is not uncommon to judge people based upon their physical features because this is often the initial information we have about someone and it allows us to determine the various behavioral affordances that can be attributed to that individual. Physical characteristics serve as a key role in stereotype formation as it allows us to categorize others and help us determine which character traits they are likely to possess (Blair, Judd, Sadler, & Jenkins, 2002). However, forming initial judgments based upon physical

characteristics can lead to problematic overgeneralizations and misconceptions (Friedman & Zebrowitz, 1992, Zebrowitz & Collins, 1997, Langlois, Kalakanis, Rubenstein, Larson, Hallam, & Smoot et al., 2000). We may not be consciously aware that we are making these incorrect judgments and associations (Blair, Judd, & Fallman, 2004). If someone encounters a man with characteristic Afrocentric features (e.g., dark skin, thick or kinky hair, wide nose, etc.), the concern about that person's criminal behavior may be attributed to that person specifically instead of the stereotype associated with being Black or African American (Blair, Judd, Sadler, and Jenkins, 2002).

Rule of Hypodescent

Historically, mixed-race individuals in the United States, especially Black/White biracials, have been strongly influenced by a rule of hypodescent. This refers to the assignment of individuals of mixed race to the subordinate group. This is more commonly known as the "one-drop rule." Generally, this rule defined individuals with one drop of "Negro" blood as Black. Because of this, biracial individuals were subject to the various discrimination practices in place at that time (Ho, Sidanius, Levin, & Banaji, 2011). This rule continues to influence legal designations even today. Although individuals can, in part, choose how they will be identified socially, they may still be classified in a certain racial group dependent upon legal classifications.

Biracial individuals, with one Black parent and one White parent, have been shown to be categorized as more Black than White. In comparison with quarter-Asian/three-quarter-White individuals, quarter-Black/three-quarter-White individuals were categorized as more minority. Evidence suggests that hypodescent applies more strongly to individuals who are partially Black. This is the case even more so for male individuals (Ho, Sidanius, Leven, & Banaji, 2011). Furthermore, Black/White individuals are more likely than their Asian/White counterparts to

identify as monoracial, or Black, than they are biracial (Townsend, Fryberg, Wilkins, & Markus, 2012).

Optimal Distinctiveness Theory

While in some cases individuals of African descent utilize the “one-drop rule” previously mentioned when categorizing individuals, they also categorize themselves based upon various characteristics, such as the shade of their skin or texture of their hair (Blair et al., 2002) or other cultural factors. Optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991) suggests that people prefer to obtain a balance between assimilation and uniqueness and therefore reject assimilation into larger groups and will likely prefer inclusion into smaller groups. In addition to the historical background, this theory may provide evidence for the divisiveness among Black individuals based on physical features, such as skin tone and hair texture, and cultural aspects that have become increasingly salient in recent years. This further individuation may occur more in those individuals who are less committed to the larger group (Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1999).

In summary, identity development is characteristic of a late adolescent or emerging adulthood time period (Erikson, 1956). Of the multiple social identities that one possesses, it is likely that race and/or ethnicity is of particular importance for individuals of African descent. For those individuals who view their race as important to their identity but are not yet solid in their identity, being challenged about their group membership can likely produce significant levels of anxiety. Because of the physical component associated with race, those individuals who display more atypical Afrocentric characteristics are likely to be more anxious when challenged than those who display more typical characteristics. Additionally, due to the cultural aspect of Black group membership, those who do not adhere to traditional cultural norms are also more likely to experience higher anxiety levels when challenged.

Rationale for the Study

The period of identity development is crucial regarding subsequent social development among individuals (Hope, Hoggard, & Thomas, 2015; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Among racial minorities, a sense of belonging to their racial group is of particular importance (Charmaraman & Grossman, 2010; Santos & Updegraff, 2014). The inability to form a solid sense of self can have adverse effects on one's mental health and social adjustment (Phinney & Ong, 2007). During this identity formation stage, it can be difficult to form a solid sense of self if one is questioned on their membership to a particular group based upon various characteristics (Brittian, Umaña-Taylor, & Derlan, 2013). Black individuals have historically been classified based on their physical features. There are also cultural beliefs and practices that have become characteristic of Black individuals. If one does not fit into this categorization of what is typically Black, they can be viewed as not being fully or authentically Black. If being Black is something that an individual has or is beginning to deem important to their identity, it can be damaging to not be viewed as such (Tummala-Nara, 2007). This study explores the anxiety that is produced when an individual who does not possess features and/or characteristics that are typical of people of African descent is challenged on their group membership.

Hypotheses

Participants who described a time when they were challenged about their group membership are predicted to display a higher state anxiety than those who did not.

H1: State anxiety among those who respond to a prompt about racial group membership will be higher than the state anxiety observed in the control group.

There will be a positive relationship between the centrality of one's Black identity and their state anxiety.

H2: Individuals whose Black identity is more central to their self-concept will produce higher levels of state anxiety than those with lower levels of centrality.

Individuals who do not endorse typical racial characteristics will display a higher state anxiety in comparison with those who endorse more common physical and cultural characteristics of being Black.

H3: Physical characteristics, social status and cultural values will predict subsequent state anxiety.

Chapter III: Methodology

Participants

Data from 65 individuals, ages 18-23, were used in the analyses for this study. Participants were removed who did not meet age and race requirements, as well as those who did not complete the study. Participants were collected via MTurk and through an urban, public university in the mid-Atlantic United States. The current study included individuals who self-identified as Black or as an individual of African descent. Participants were asked to choose their race/ethnicity from the following choices: Black or African American, White, Hispanic or Latino/a, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or Other. In order to capture individuals who may be biracial or multiracial, participants were allowed to select all that apply. Due to the purposes of this study, those individuals who did not identify as Black/African American were excluded from analyses.

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire

Participants were asked to answer a demographic questionnaire to aid in identification of their group membership, as well as to provide other supportive information such as gender, age, social class, physical characteristics, etc.

African American Acculturation Scale-Revised

Participants responded to a series of questions assessing their cultural beliefs, cultural interests, and cultural behaviors known as the African American Acculturation Scale-Revised (AAAS-R; Landrine & Klonoff, 2000). The dimensions of the AAAS-R are as follows: traditional African American religious beliefs and practices, preference for African American things, interracial attitudes, family practices, traditional African American health beliefs and

practices, cultural superstitions, racial segregation, and family values. Participants rate a total of 47 items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1= I totally disagree to 7=I strongly agree. Scores are obtained by adding the participant's ratings on each item within a subscale for individual subscale scores, and summing all items to obtain an overall score. The scale and subscales demonstrate good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .67 to .89 (Landrine & Klonoff, 2000). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale was .91, with Cronbach alpha values for the subscales ranging from .57 to .86. At the lower end of reliability for this study were the subscales for family values ($\alpha = .57$), family practices ($\alpha = .60$), and health beliefs ($\alpha = .68$).

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity

The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers et al., 1997) was used to measure each participant's black identity. This measure was developed to measure three dimensions of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI, Sellers et al., 1998) in college students and adults. The three dimensions are centrality, ideology, and regard. The survey consists of 56 items that comprise three scales (i.e., centrality, ideology, and regard). The ideology scale is broken down into four subscales (nationalist, assimilation, minority, and humanist). The regard scale is broken down into two subscales (private regard and public regard). Participants rate items on a scale from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. Scores are only obtained for each individual subscale. Due to the multidimensionality of black identity, a full composite score is not valid for this measure. The MIBI scale and subscales demonstrate good internal consistency with Cronbach's alphas for the subscales ranging from .60 to .79 (Sellers et al., 1997). The Cronbach's alphas for this study ranged from .75 to .85. For the purposes of this study, the centrality scale ($\alpha = .80$) was focused on to gauge the importance of

one's Black group membership to their overall self-concept (Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyễn, 2008).

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory

To assess participants' level of anxiety following the completion of the prompt, the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, 1983). The measure was given to both groups after responding to the prompt. The STAI is a commonly used measure that assess state and trait anxiety. It contains twenty items to assess trait anxiety and twenty items to assess state anxiety. This study only utilized the state anxiety scale. Items are rated on a 4-point scale ranging from Almost Never to Almost Always. Higher scores on this measure indicate higher anxiety. The measure has good internal consistency with coefficients ranging from .85 to .95. Test-retest reliability coefficients have ranged from .65 to .5 over a period of two months (Spielberger et al., 1983). The Cronbach's alpha for the state anxiety scale used in this study was .89.

Procedure

The study was approved by the university's institutional review board. Participants for this study were recruited using two methods. One source of recruitment was through a crowdsourcing website known as Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Individuals, or "workers," complete various online tasks, or "Human Intelligence Tasks" (HITs). These tasks are typically done in exchange for monetary compensation. "Workers" must be at least 18 years of age in order to create an account. After opening the HIT in MTurk, interested participants were given a link to complete the survey via Survey Monkey. They then received information regarding consent and the details of the study. Individuals over the age of 23 were excluded from collection. Also, a filter was applied to restrict participation in this study to those living in the United States. Participants were also informed that in order to receive compensation for participation in this study, they needed to answer the survey in its entirety. Upon successful

completion of the study, participants received \$0.45. In order to receive this compensation, they were asked to enter a six-digit code. In order to ensure that there were no duplicate entries from participants, IP addresses were collected but were removed from the dataset after quality was assessed.

Participants were randomized to one of two conditions and thusly responded to one of two prompts. Those in the experimental condition received the following prompt: “People sometimes attribute meaning to various physical characteristics of people in the Black community, including facial features, skin tone, and hair texture. For example, having kinky hair or fuller lips is associated with being more authentically Black. Additionally, terms, such as “Black card,” have been used as a method of deciding whether someone is truly a member of the Black community by evaluating one’s interests, beliefs, behaviors, etc. Describe a time when someone questioned your membership to the Black community.” Participants in the control condition were asked to respond to the following prompt: “When it comes to relationships, some people say ‘birds of a feather flock together,’ while others believe that opposites attract. Which do you believe? Explain your reasoning.” Directly following the prompt, participants completed demographic questions, which included physical characteristics and the AAAS-R. Following these measures participants completed the state version of the STAI, followed by the MIBI. After the completion of the survey, each participant was informed about the true purposes of this study and was provided the contact information of the primary investigator and student researcher in the event that they have any concerns. In addition, the participants were provided information to relevant counseling resources.

Undergraduate participants were also recruited through a secure online research system. Interested undergraduate students received information regarding consent and the details of the

study. Upon providing consent, participants were granted access to complete the survey following the same format discussed previously.

Chapter IV: Results

Preliminary Analyses

Before analyses were run, the data set was screened and cleaned. During screening ineligible cases (n=87) were removed from the sample. Ineligible cases included those participants not fitting the race and age criteria. Additionally, those who did not complete the survey were removed. To account for missing data values on the Hollingshead Index, an expectation maximization was conducted using SPSS Missing Values Analysis (MVA; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were met across all variables.

Assumptions for Analysis. When assessing normality of the data, scatterplots were utilized to identify skewness and kurtosis. Furthermore, the statistics for skewness and kurtosis of each variable was examined. The Ideology scale of the MIBI violated this assumption with a kurtosis value greater than one. It was determined there was a single outlier in the data and the case was removed, leaving a total of 65 valid cases. In order to assess for univariate outliers, guidelines described by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) were used and the standardized scores of each variable was examined. Mahalanobis distance variables were reviewed to assess for multivariate outliers. All assumptions were met. Scatterplots were used to assess linear relationship of variables. This assumption was also met. Multicollinearity was examined by assessing correlations of variables. The assumption was met for those variables used in the analyses of this study. Lastly, homoscedasticity was assessed by checking for even distribution of residuals, for which the assumption was met.

Demographics

Data was collected from 65 men and women who self-identified as Black, with ages ranging from 18 to 23 years old ($M = 20.48$, $SD = 1.382$). While all participants self-identified as Black, 21.6% of the sample reported a multiracial identity. Physical characteristics were assessed by asking participants to rate three features (i.e., skin tone, lip fullness, and nose width) on a scale of 1-5. Majority of participants rated themselves as having a medium skin tone (44.6%), with 27.7% ranging from very light to light and the remaining 27.7% ranging from dark to very dark. Nose width followed a similar trend with 52.3% of participants rating a medium nose with, 12.3% indicating a very narrow to narrow nose width, and 35.4% indicating a wide to very wide nose width. As for lip fullness, 32.3% of participants indicated a medium fullness, 13.8% indicated very thin to thin, and 53.8% indicated having full to very full lips.

Primary Analyses

To investigate differences in levels of state anxiety between the control and experimental groups, an independent t-test was ran to observe mean differences in state anxiety between those who completed the group membership challenge and those who did not. Generally, participants in the control group averaged about the same levels of state anxiety ($M = 38.92$, $SE = 2.05$) as those in the experimental group ($M = 38.76$, $SE = 1.71$). These results were not significant $t(63) = .061$, $p = .952$.

The second hypothesis was assessed using a linear regression where the participant's level of centrality was entered as a predictor variable. The dependent variable was the participant's state anxiety. Only those participants who responded to the prompt on group membership were used in this analysis. The results did not support the hypothesis that a significant portion of the variance in state anxiety would be predicted by centrality, $F(1, 32) = .094$, $p = .761$, $R^2 = .003$.

Last, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictors of state anxiety. Three predictors were simultaneously entered into the model: total acculturation score, physical characteristics, and socioeconomic status. Acculturation was determined by the participant's total score on the AAAS-R (Landrine & Klonoff, 2000). Physical characteristics ratings were obtained by averaged the participants' selections regarding skin tone, lip fullness, and nose width on the demographic phone. Socioeconomic status was estimated using the Hollingshead index (Hollingshead, 1975). Similar to the previous analysis, only those participants who responded to the group membership prompt were used. The overall model did not significantly predict state anxiety, $F(3, 30) = .947, p = .430, R^2 = .087$.

Chapter V: Discussion

This study was developed using the theoretical framework provided by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to this theory, by enhancing the image and status of a group to which we belong, we in turn increase our own self-image and self-esteem. Furthermore, optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991) suggests that individuals tend to achieve a balance between assimilation and uniqueness among the groups to which they belong. This theory was used to provide foundation for why the subcategorization among Black individuals can be so significant. The importance of these group memberships in conjunction with the effort towards balancing group memberships can increase the likelihood of social identity threat (Steele, et al., 2002). Social identity threat is the awareness that an individual may be marginalized or judged based upon their identity or group membership (Steele et al., 2002). While studies have sought to examine this concept across racial groups (Steele et al., 2002; Cohen & Garcia, 2008), this study attempted to examine effects of this phenomenon within a racial group. This was an exploratory study that aimed to 1) expanding literature regarding racial identity among young Black individuals and 2) examining how discrimination and marginalization plays a role intraracially.

In order to achieve these goals, this study examined the roles of Black individuals' self-identity in producing anxiety when their identity was challenged. Furthermore, physical and social characteristics were examined as factors possible exacerbating this relationship. It was hypothesized that 1) participants who described a time when their identity was challenged would have a higher state anxiety than those who did not, 2) that there would be a higher state anxiety among those with higher centrality of Black identity, and 3) cultural and physical factors would serve as predictors of subsequent state anxiety. The development of racial identity and its impact on the mental health of Black individuals have not been extensively examined in this manner.

Due to the heterogeneity of the Black racial group, it was deemed necessary to explore racial identity within the Black community as opposed to effects that exist interracially. This study was an initial step in exploring this area, especially given recent shifts in racial dynamics in America.

Unfortunately, the results of this study did not support the original hypotheses. There are a couple of reasons why this may have occurred. State anxiety was assessed based upon participants responding to a prompt about a time when they were challenged on their group membership. Recalling an event and writing about it is likely different than responding to a direct challenge. Furthermore, Lazarus' theory of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) suggests that there are two processes involved in appraisals of a stressful event, primary appraisals and secondary appraisals. Primary appraisals are an analysis of how relevant or important an event is in a given situation. Secondary appraisals are an analysis of what resources are available for an individual to cope with that situation. These appraisals together allow for the individual to assess whether they can adapt to the situation or event. If the significance or relevance of an event is in proportion to the resources one has available to cope with the event, it is known as a challenge stress appraisal. If the significance or relevance outweighs the resources available, it is known as a threat appraisal (Schneider, 2008). This study sought to gauge the anxiety from an event from a recall of the event. It is possible that if the individual had the appropriate resources to cope with the event, the anxiety or stress felt in that moment may not be observed during a recall. It was also noted that some participants gave more details than others when writing about their event. Without writing about the event in great detail, it is probable that simply briefly recalling the event may not be as triggering as originally intended.

Another possible cause for the lack of findings is the use of self-report measures. This is particularly true for the state anxiety measure. Despite self-report measures being used

commonly across research measures, there is always a probability of self-report bias. Self-report measures may provide valid information but care should be taken when using them as a sole source of information (Adams, Soumerai, Lomas, & Ross-Degnan, 1999). Many studies have found that self-report bias and social desirability have influenced study results (Van de Mortel, 2008; Hunt, Auriemma, & Cashaw, 2003; Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002). Considering the mental health stigma that exists among ethnic minority groups (Gary, 2005), it is possible that participant responses were influenced by social desirability.

Another possible reason for the lack of findings is the idea that the markers of Black identity were too wide. If an individual did not align with traditional markers of Black group membership in one area, they may have done so in another. Therefore, the anxiety could have been reduced. As discussed previously, Black group membership is complex. Therefore, some aspects of Black group membership may be more pertinent than others dependent upon the individual. An individual chooses which aspects of Blackness to highlight depending on the audience and the context. This was examined during the presidential campaign of Barack Obama. The content of his speeches varied when trying to appeal to certain audiences (Augoustinos & De Garis, 2012). It is possible that this study did not directly target the most salient markers of Black group membership for these participants.

Although the results of this study did not support this hypothesis, research suggests that this is still an important area to be explored. Historically, Black Americans have had to cope with the fear of not adhering to stereotypical cultural norms which would lead to sanctions, accusations of disloyalty, or embarrassment from the Black community. Because of this fear, Black individuals have developed coping mechanisms to deal with the pressures they face from their community. For example, individuals who deem it necessary to “act White” in certain

spaces sometimes engage in camouflaging. Camouflaging involves an effort to show other Black people that one is for Black people. One way of doing so is participation in civil rights activities (Ogbu, 2004). Another coping mechanism is accommodating the culture without assimilating. The more familiar term for this is code-switching. Code-switching involves behaving like the dominant culture when in a majority space and switching to talk and behave like Black people when in Black spaces (Ogbu, 2004). The negative impact of these pressures have been observed academically (Ogbu, 2004). It would be beneficial to examine the impact of these pressures on the mental health of Black individuals who face these challenges in various social spaces. Furthermore, Harris & Khanna (2010) suggest that the focus on being genuinely Black can negatively impact group cohesion and divide the Black community. This division occurs across both racial and class lines. In their study, they examined how biracial individuals (with one Black and one White parent) as well as middle-class, monoracial Blacks were accepted to the Black community. While both groups were ostracized to some degree by their Black peers, in some ways middle-class, monoracial Black individuals experience greater marginalization than biracial individuals. This points to the cultural significance of belonging to a particular “struggle” (Harris & Khanna, 2010). Although it is important to note that the Black community is a heterogeneous one, it has been suggested that some sense of unity is needed when an oppressed group is striving to achieve greater justice in order to combat feelings of alienation implemented by a majority group (Dalmage, 2000). Similarly, Stubblefield (2005) suggests that Black people will need to unite as a group to achieve the justice that they seek. This unification rests on a solid sense of group identification. The state of race relations and the current cultural climate in America have led to the development of movements, such as Black Lives Matter. It is likely that, despite class or physical characterization, those individuals who have a desire to

achieve justice and equality for those in their community and who also identify as Black, seek acceptance within their community. Therefore, being marginalized based upon a social or physical characteristic will likely produce its own set of mental health consequences. In order to achieve liberation and justice, it may be necessary to reconfigure the constructs of what constitute Blackness, how Blackness should be executed in various spaces, and the ways Blackness is analyzed and assessed within the community (Harris, & Khanna, 2010).

Given the significance of a sense of belonging in racial identity formation as well as the importance of belonging during efforts to achieve liberation and justice, if one is challenged on their group membership some form of anxiety will likely be produced. Furthermore, given the state of race relations in present-day America, that sense of belonging may be more important for some now than before. Limitations to consider, as well as suggestions for future directions will be discussed in the following section.

Limitations and Future Directions

One minor limitation of this study was the sample size. A number of participants had to be removed from analysis for either not completing the questionnaire or not aligning with research study requirements. The remaining sample likely reduced the chance of detecting an effect with some of the analyses ran for this study. It was not feasible at the time of this study to collect additional data. Another minor limitation was the reliability of some of the AAAS-R subscales. While the overall scale for the AAAS-R was reliable, the subscales for family practices, health beliefs, and family values were on the lower end.

The method of data collection used in this study could also be considered a limitation due to the possibility of self-report bias. In future studies, an in-person method of data collection should be used that would allow for physiological data, such as heart rate, to be collected. This

may be more beneficial in assessing anxiety levels instead of relying solely on self-report measures. Additionally, a direct, person-to-person challenge on group membership would more closely resemble what Black individuals encounter in their daily lives. It would provide room for an analysis of these appraisals to determine when this questioning is a threat versus a challenge. Moreover, it would be interesting to explore whether the anxiety differs when the questioning comes directly from someone within the group versus someone outside of the group. Survey responses do not allow for that person-to-person interaction.

Aside from a direct challenge, it may also be beneficial to conduct focus groups in order to gain qualitative data regarding the beliefs of group membership and to identify the most significant factors. This is important not just because of the heterogeneity of the Black community, but also because it is possible that ideas of race and group membership may change across generations. This study utilized millennials, who may have a slightly different view about Black group membership than studies in the past. When conducting these focus groups, it would be most beneficial to use researchers who belong to the Black community. Similarly to the desire for African Americans to seek therapists of their same race, it is likely that when discussing topics pertaining specifically to their racial group, participants would be more forthcoming when speaking with someone within the community. While in many cases, therapist match does not have a substantial effect on the outcome of the therapy, among African Americans there has been evidence of a mild improvement in outcome as well as a preference for a therapist of the same race (Smith & Cabral, 2011). Therefore, it is probable that a Black researcher would aid in the reduction of discomfort and reluctance during the study. Additionally, should participants discuss past experiences as a method of producing anxiety, participants should be asked to thoroughly discuss the experience to avoid merely glossing over the event in a superficial

manner. Thusly, participants should either be asked to discuss in further detail, face a direct challenge where they are questioned about their group membership, or participate in focus groups in order to obtain qualitative data to use for further research.

Although the results of this study did not support the original hypotheses, both recent and historical events point to this topic as an area worth being explored. For example, various podcasts have alluded to receiving backlash from their communities for not appearing as Black as they “should” or for not linguistically aligning with the culture and “sounding White” (Day & Baby, 2017; Rye, 2017). It has also been suggested that valuing aspects of Black culture and holding a solid Black identity can produce challenges for Black individuals who attempt to excel academically (Ogbu, 2004). Furthermore, while the impacts of being accused of “acting White” have been explored in academic settings (Webb & Linn, 2016; Ogbu, 2004; Horvat & Lewis, 2003), research suggests that negative effects resulting from the racial categorizations exist beyond the academic space (Burrell, Winston, & Freeman, 2012) and likely influence various social interactions. Additionally, the burden of upholding Black values, traditions, and mannerisms has not been examined as extensively among those individuals who do not appear stereotypically or characteristically Black. Due to the history of race and color in America, this is an important subtext to consider. Continuing to explore this phenomenon may further the existing knowledge regarding the mental health of Black individuals in America.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Demographic Information

Age: ____

Gender: Male Female Other

Classification (check one only):

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate student
- Non-degree seeking
- Other

Race/Ethnicity (select all that apply):

- Black or African American
- White
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Other (_____)

Parents' Marital Status

- Married
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed
- Single
- Other (_____)

Mother's Education Level

- Not applicable/unknown
- Less than 7th grade
- Junior high school, including 9th grade
- Partial high school, including 10th grade
- High school graduate
- Partial college, at least one year of specialized training
- Standard college or university graduation
- Graduate/professional training

Father's Education Level

- Not applicable/unknown
- Less than 7th grade
- Junior high school, including 9th grade
- Partial high school, including 10th grade
- High school graduate
- Partial college, at least one year of specialized training
- Standard college or university graduation
- Graduate/professional training

Mother's Job Title: _____

Father's Job Title: _____

Skin Tone (check one only):

- Very light
- Light
- Medium
- Dark
- Very dark

Lip Fullness (check one only):

- Very thin
- Thin
- Medium
- Full
- Very full

Nose Width (check one only):

- Very narrow
- Narrow
- Medium
- Wide
- Very wide

Appendix B: African American Acculturation Scale-Revised AAAS-R

Items

Below are some beliefs and attitudes about religion, families, racism, Black people, White people, and health. Please tell us how much you personally agree or disagree with these beliefs and attitudes by circling a number. There are no right or wrong answers, we simply want to know your views and your beliefs.

	I Totally Agree		Sort of Agree		I Strongly Agree
<u>Religious Beliefs & Practices</u>					
1. I believe in the Holy Ghost.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
2. I like gospel music.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
3. I believe in heaven and hell.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
4. The church is the heart of the Black community.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
5. I have seen people “get the spirit” or speak in tongues.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
6. I am currently a member of a Black church.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
7. When I was young, I was a member of a Black church.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
8. Prayer can cure disease.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
9. What goes around, comes around.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
10. I used to sing in the church choir.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
<u>Preference for Things African American</u>					
11. Most of the music I listen to is by Black artists.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
12. I like Black music more than White music.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
13. I listen to Black radio stations.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
14. I try to watch all the Black shows on TV.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
15. The person I admire the most is Black.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
16. I feel more comfortable around Blacks than around Whites.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
17. When I pass a Black person (a stranger) on the street, I always say hello or nod at them.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
18. Most of my friends are Black.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
19. I read (or used to read) Essence or Ebony magazine.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
<u>Interracial Attitudes</u>					
20. I don’t trust most White people.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
21. IQ tests were set up purposefully to discriminate against Black people.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
22. Most Whites are afraid of Blacks.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
23. Deep in their hearts, most White people are racists.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
24. Whites don’t understand Blacks.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
25. Most tests (like the SATs and tests to get a job) are set up to make sure that Blacks don’t get high scores on them.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
26. Some members of my family hate or distrust White people.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
<u>Family Practices</u>					
27. When I was young, I shared a bed at night with my sister, brother, or some other relative.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
28. When I was young, my parent(s) sent me to stay with a relative (aunt, uncle, grandmother) for a few days or weeks, and then I went back home again.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
29. When I was young, my cousin, aunt, grandmother, or other relative lived with me and my family for a while.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
30. When I was young, I took a bath with my sister, brother, or some other relative.....	1	2	3	4	5 6 7

Health Beliefs & Practices

- 31. Some people in my family use Epsom salts..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 32. Illnesses can be classified as natural types and unnatural types..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 33. Some old Black women/ladies know how to cure diseases..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 34. Some older Black women know a lot about pregnancy and childbirth..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 35. I was taught that you shouldn't take a bath and then go outside..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Cultural Superstitions

- 36. I avoid splitting a pole..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 37. When the palm of your hand itches, you'll receive some money..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 38. There's some truth to many old superstitions..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 39. I eat black-eyed peas on New Year's Eve..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Racial Segregation

- 40. I grew up in a mostly Black neighborhood..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 41. I went to (or go to) a mostly Black high school..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 42. I went to a mostly Black elementary school..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 43. I currently live in a mostly Black neighborhood..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Family Values

- 44. It's better to try to move your whole family ahead in this world than it is to be out for only yourself..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 45. Old people are wise..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 46. I often lend money or give other types of support to members of my family..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 47. A child should not be allowed to call a grown woman by her first name, "Alice." The child should be taught to call her "Miss Alice."..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix C: STAI Form Y-1

Directions: A number of statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each statement and then circle the appropriate number to the right of the statement to indicate how you feel *right* now, that is, *at this moment*. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer which seems to describe your present feelings best.

	Not at all	Somewhat	Moderately So	Very Much So
1. I feel calm.....	1	2	3	4
2. I feel secure.....	1	2	3	4
3. I feel tense.....	1	2	3	4
4. I feel strained.....	1	2	3	4
5. I feel at ease.....	1	2	3	4
6. I feel upset.....	1	2	3	4
7. I am presently worrying over possible misfortunes...	1	2	3	4
8. I feel satisfied.....	1	2	3	4
9. I feel frightened.....	1	2	3	4
10. I feel comfortable.....	1	2	3	4
11. I feel self-confident.....	1	2	3	4
12. I feel nervous.....	1	2	3	4
13. I am jittery.....	1	2	3	4
14. I feel indecisive.....	1	2	3	4
15. I am relaxed.....	1	2	3	4
16. I feel content.....	1	2	3	4
17. I am worried.....	1	2	3	4
18. I feel confused.....	1	2	3	4
19. I feel steady.....	1	2	3	4
20. I feel pleasant.....	1	2	3	4

Appendix D: Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI)

	Strongly Disagree		Neutral			Strongly Agree	
1. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. It is important for Black people to surround their children with Black art, music and literature.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Black people should not marry interracially.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I feel good about Black people.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Overall, Blacks are considered good by others.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I am happy that I am Black.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I feel that Blacks have made major accomplishments and advancements...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Blacks who espouse separatism are as racist as White people who also espouse separatism.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Blacks would be better off if they adopted Afrocentric values.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Black students are better off going to schools that are controlled and organized by Blacks.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Black people must organize themselves into a separate Black political force.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. In general, others respect Black people...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Whenever possible, Blacks should buy from other Black businesses.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Most people consider Blacks, on the average, to be more ineffective than other racial groups.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. A sign of progress is that Blacks are in the mainstream of America more than ever before.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I have a strong sense of belonging							

to Black people.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. The same forces which have led to the oppression of Blacks have also led to the oppression of other groups.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. A thorough knowledge of Black history is very important for Blacks today.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Blacks and Whites can never live in true harmony because of racial differences...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. Black values should not be inconsistent with human values.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I often regret that I am Black.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. White people can never be trusted where Blacks are concerned.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Blacks should have the choice to marry interracially.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Blacks and Whites have more commonalities than differences.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Black people should not consider race when buying art of selecting a book to read.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Blacks would be better off if they were more concerned with the problems facing all people than just focusing on Black issues.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Being an individual is more important than identifying oneself as Black.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. We are all children of a higher being, therefore, we should love people of all races.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. Blacks should judge Whites as individuals and not as members of the White race.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. I have a strong attachment to other Black people.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. The struggle for Black liberation in America should be closely related to the struggle of other oppressed groups.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. People regardless of their race have strengths and limitations.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. Blacks should learn about the oppression of other groups.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. Because America is predominantly White, it is important that Blacks go to White							

	schools so that they can gain experience interacting with Whites.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38.	Black people should treat other oppressed people as allies.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39.	Blacks should strive to be full members of the American political system	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40.	Blacks should try to work within the system to achieve their political and economic goals.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41.	Blacks should strive to integrate all institutions which are segregated.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42.	The racism Blacks have experienced is similar to that of other minority groups....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43.	Blacks should feel free to interact socially with White people.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44.	Blacks should view themselves as being Americans first and foremost.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45.	There are other people who experience racial injustice and indignities similar to Black Americans.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46.	The plight of Blacks in America will improve only when Blacks are in important positions within the system....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47.	Blacks will be more successful in achieving their goals if they form coalitions with other oppressed groups...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48.	Being Black is an important reflection of who I am.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49.	Blacks should try to become friends with people from other oppressed groups.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50.	The dominant society devalues anything not White male oriented.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51.	Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52.	Blacks are not respected by the broader society.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53.	In general, other groups view Blacks in a positive manner.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54.	I am proud to be Black.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55.	I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56.	Society views Black people as an asset... 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	