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Cohort Differences in the Structure and Outcomes of an African American Belief System

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The authors examine the structure of African American belief systems across different age strata or cohorts. The authors speculate that, because of negative categorical treatment on the part of the dominant culture, African Americans in different age cohorts possess and share a common schemalike set of beliefs, culminating in “double consciousness.” The results demonstrate substantial similarity across age cohorts of African Americans in their understanding of these belief systems and their tendency to share a strong sense of group attachment and self-worth. The results also indicate substantial overall mean differences in age groups. Further, the authors found that the different constructs of these belief systems relate differentially to an individual’s sense of well-being and system orientation for those who came of age during the Civil Rights era, especially as compared to those who were socialized during an earlier era.

The beliefs, attitudes, and feelings that individuals hold are conditioned by their position in age strata and by their experience in different social and historical contexts (Riley, 1976). Implicit in a definition of generation is an awareness of one’s birth position in an age stratum, a time and place in history, and a sense of self and group consciousness (Bengtson & Cutler, 1976). The concept of generation also assumes that individuals in a particular age stratum will experience their personal, political, and social histories in similar ways. In short, a generational definition includes a confluence of birth cohort, group consciousness, and social and historical experience. An

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ongoing problem with the concept of age is that it is confounded with temporal sequence concepts of all kinds, developmental or life cycle and historical (Chaffee, 1991).

In this article, we use the concepts of generation and age strata to examine empirically the structure of an African American belief system (racial attitudes and self-esteem) and its relationship to well-being, “other” group attachments, and system orientations across different age and generational groups of African Americans. Previous research has defined and documented the existence of a unique set of personal beliefs related to the life circumstances of African Americans (Allen, 2001; Allen & Bagozzi, 2001; Allen, Thornton, & Watkins, 1992; Brown, Allen, & Dawson, 1989). An African American racial belief system and its structure have been examined for invariance across different socioeconomic and gender groups (Allen et al., 1992; Brown et al., 1989). Subsequent research expanded the racial belief system and conceptualized it in terms of the broader construct of self (Allen, 2001). Prior research, however, has not explored the structural invariance, the nature of this African American belief system across different cohorts, or age strata of African Americans and how this belief system relates to meaningful individual and social system constructs. The question that guides this inquiry is as follows: Do various age cohorts of African Americans have different conceptions of individual and Black group attachment, and do these different age cohorts have a different sense of well-being and system orientations? Furthermore, what is the relation between an African American belief system and system orientations?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Consistent with prior research (Allen, Dawson, and Brown, 1989), we view an African American belief system (represented by individual and group constructs) as having schemalike properties that explain one’s position in the opportunity structure. We assume that such a belief system evokes a set of principles that provide individuals with guidance and interpretation in everyday life experiences. An African American belief system also reflects different components of individual life circumstances. The study of the structural invariance in an African American racial belief system has been examined within the context of three major theoretical arguments: (a) intragroup racial polarization, (b) real group conflict, and (c) group self-interest. With regard to African Americans, these theoretical arguments are based on the extent to which group mobility is constrained by subordinate group status defined by racial membership.
The theory of intragroup racial polarization implies that increasing economic diversity among African Americans should lead to different levels of group attachment and self-pride. To the extent that individual and family economic mobility is operative, intragroup polarization should become a reality. For example, as African Americans join other important group categories, such as moving from one social class to another, their group interests should diverge. Consequently, African Americans who experience class mobility should perceive less of a tie to members of their racial group who do not share their class interests and have a different sense of self. In short, intragroup theory posits that with rising mobility, individual self-interests become more tied to other group loyalties, such as the middle class, or to self-interests outside the racial group (Wilson, 1980). This should engender greater self-confidence and worth. Intragroup polarization theory, operating from the assumption of a divergence from racial group interests with rising class mobility, has not received wide empirical support (Allen et al., 1992; Gurin, Hatchett, & Jackson, 1989). Both group conflict and group interest theories (Allen et al., 1992; Bobo, 1984; Jackman & Jackman, 1973) posit that the existence of racial group polarization and categorical racial group treatment should lead to greater solidarity and a commonality of belief among African Americans and that stronger racial group attachment is associated with a stronger sense of self-worth. Underlying group conflict and group interest theories is an assumption that prejudice and discrimination may serve inadvertently certain functions for racial groups, such as strengthening group ties, loyalties, and a sense of solidarity that might otherwise not exist (Coser, 1956).

Central to intragroup polarization, group conflict, and group interest theoretical arguments is the assumption that, with time, certain significant changes will occur in racial equality. For example, economic advancement should bring about change in the economic fortunes of members of a racial group. In turn, these economic fortunes should result in greater individual and family opportunities, the capability to seize such opportunities, and the social and political mobility to capitalize on such economic fortunes. The underlying assumption of the three theoretical arguments has been predicated on the experience of European ethnics. A different reality emerges from the experiences of certain other racial groups, such as African Americans, who have experienced a long history of exclusion from participation in the American dream (Danziger & Gottschalk, 1995; Fischer et al., 1996). Because the experiences of African Americans have been fundamentally different from those of European ethnics (Steinberg, 1995), we assume that different underlying forces may be operating. Thus, the theoretical models of
group mobility and the consequences of such mobility for African Americans also may be different.

Several important recent historical events have been credited with having a profound effect on African Americans’ sense of self. The civil rights movement was influenced by the rise in personal esteem and group identity among certain segments of the African American community. Dr. Martin Luther King often mentioned how the movement has invoked a greater sense of individual and group worth (Smith, 1995). Assuming that a large number of African Americans had internalized the onslaught leveled by White America on their sense of self, the Black power movement attempted to change this situation. The movement, initiated during the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, was to replace a “pernicious self and group hatred” with a positive Black identification in the minds of African Americans (Ture & Hamilton, 1992). The civil rights movement was depicted by Dr. King as a struggle to remove not only racism’s impediments to Black progress but also the psychological impediments (Smith, 1995). Given this major and prolonged effort, one might expect that it would have a profound influence on those socialized in a later era. Moreover, one might reasonably assume that those socialized during this historical period would develop institutions fostering those ideas and transmit them to later generations. Indeed, these movements (Black power and civil rights), which reached their apex in the 1960s, were credited with being the most important in Black history (Karenga, 1993). One might think of three distinct time periods that had differential effects on the sense of self for African Americans: pre–civil rights, civil rights, and the post–civil rights periods.

The generation reaching maturity during the human rights movement (i.e., those 35 to 54 years old in our sample) and the younger age groups thereafter will have a stronger sense of an African American racial belief system and a stronger sense of self than those who are older or of an earlier generation (i.e., those 55 years of age or older in our sample). That is, those who are younger, those who reached maturity during the human rights era, and those of younger generations (second and third) should have a stronger attachment to an African American belief system and a stronger sense of self-esteem as compared to older aged cohorts.

The nature of African American mobility in this country is highly complex. In-depth studies (Myrdal’s [1949] An American Dilemma, Kerner Commission [1968], Jaynes & Williams’s [1989] A Common Destiny) of the last five decades point to the continued subjugation and comparatively slow individual and family mobility of African Americans (Farley & Allen, 1989; Steinberg, 1995) Although these studies document significant economic, social, and political gains for African Americans, such gains are
overshadowed by the reality of persistent inequalities between Blacks and Whites. Recent research (e.g., Lipsitz, 1998; Schuman, Steeth, & Bobo, 1985) points to the increased positive attitudes of the White public toward African Americans during the past 50 years. The same work, however, reveals an unwillingness of the White public to endorse policies that would ameliorate the deleterious effects of the subordinate status of African Americans. A long history of prejudice, discrimination, and inequality makes it plausible to assume that different generations of African Americans retain their racial ties, racial group loyalties, group solidarity, and sense of self. Even in the face of real economic, political, and social gains, persistent categorical treatment should result in similar socialization experiences across different generations and age groups of African Americans. The social divisions between Blacks and Whites are still strong enough to solidify the racial beliefs of African Americans and how they view themselves individually. The juxtaposition of socially acceptable–driven changes in the attitudes of Whites along with their disinclination to endorse and evoke true ameliorative policies results in an unchanging and consistent set of beliefs among African Americans in different generational positions. But consistent with the argument calling for more active involvement of African Americans in fostering the self (group and individual), it is argued that the sense of the individual self and the group, growing out of a more abstract worldview, are only tangentially related to the conceptions held and permeated by the dominating society. That is, African Americans have a sense of their self beyond the often distorted and distorting one presented by the larger society.

A theoretical orientation has recently gained some prominence (Gaines & Reed, 1995; Nobles, 1991) and empirical support (Allen, 2001). It was formulated by DuBois (1964) and called “double consciousness,” or what some scholars have called the tension between pride and shame in self (e.g., Gaines & Reed, 1994) and the group to which the person belongs. This orientation points to the many forces that come into play in disparaging African Americans as a group and a culture and the ongoing struggle employed by African Americans to defend, define, and enhance their group and individual conceptions. Similar to the aforementioned arguments, this orientation explains the many constraining factors impinging on African Americans’ life experiences. It moves beyond them in emphasizing the elements within African American culture that permit it to not only respond to the psychological and social onslaught but to fashion a strong sense of the group. Thus, this position views African Americans as being more than passive receptors but rather as active participants in an ongoing struggle. That is, it is dynamic and exhibits varying levels of contestation over time.
The concept of double consciousness emerged from the analysis of African Americans’ experiences. Du Bois (1903/1964) explained this double consciousness as the sense of viewing the self through the eyes of hostile elements. The consequence is such that the person struggles to maintain a positive sense of self despite powerful forces pushing in the opposite direction.

Du Bois’ explication of this phenomenon highlights the social and psychological consequences emerging from the experiences of African Americans who are powerless in a hostile environment. It refers to the process of denigration of the African Americans, which has no parallel in American history. Aside from the destructive experience of hundreds of years of enslavement and many decades of Jim Crow laws and government-sanctioned segregation and discrimination, individual and institutional forms of racism still exist and present major obstacles in the forward flow of African American advancement. Yet, despite the destructive aspect of the dominating culture on African American life, Du Bois also emphasized, unlike many scholars working in this area, the tenacity with which the African American holds on to a positive sense of self and the group. He provides a historical assessment of the process, suggesting that by depending on a specific environment or era, the struggle will intensify or wane. Thus, it is dynamic, ever-changing, but assumed to be a monotonic relationship (Allen, 2001). This approach is decidedly sociohistorical and lends itself to a prolonged empirical investigation.

Building on the work of Du Bois and especially his writings on the double consciousness phenomenon, Nobles (1973, 1992) identified the African worldview, which he also attributed to Africans in the United States. He contended that there is not a major distinction between one’s self and one’s people, that one’s self-identity and the identity of one’s people is always a people’s and that they are not merely interdependent or interrelated but identical. He used the term extended self to describe this process and argued that in the African worldview, it is difficult to distinguish between the self, or the “I,” and the collective, namely, the “we.” This worldview is extant, but it is considered to be beyond the conscious level for many African Americans (Kambon, 1992). Aside from the measurement implications of Nobles’s observations, he argued that African Americans operate from a number of different assumptions about the world, and those most pertinent to the self-concept are (a) the sense of the whole and (b) the realization of self through the collective. That is, Nobles took the concept of double consciousness and provided a set of reasons for why the African American is able to have an essentially positive view of self. He also implied a dynamic process such that the extent to which an individual abandons the extended self concept and endorses a European concept of self (see Kitayama & Markus, 1993; Markus
Kitayama, 1994), he or she has a tendency to succumb to images or conceptions of the group provided externally.

If one systematically pursues the popular media over time, it becomes abundantly clear that the African American and more generally the African have been depicted in an unfavorable light (Allen, 2001; Dates & Barlow, 1993; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Finklenstaedt, 1994; Hillard, 1995). Moreover, an examination of the scientific literature pertaining to African Americans, particularly as it is related to their intelligence and intellectual capacity, highlights a litany of acrimonious attacks. The theme of intellectual inferiority of African Americans runs throughout this literature. Despite the gap between theory and the data, the inferior quality of the scholarship (both theoretically and empirically), and the demonstrated limitations and shortcomings of the scholarship (Fischer et al., 1996; Gould, 1981, 1993, 1995; Lewontin, 1992; Lewontin, Rose, & Kamin, 1993), notions that bring into question the humanity of African Americans (their intellectual prowess, moral character, social grace) receive extensive public exposure. Contemporaneously, this is seen in the wide circulation and currency of the book The Bell Curve by Herrnstein and Murray (1994).

A major focus of this article is the structural invariance of an African American racial belief and self system that includes feelings of positive and negative racial stereotypes about African people, feelings of closeness to the Black masses and elites, and self-esteem. To that degree, this idea is consistent with the schematic approach and the work by previous scholars (Allen, Dawson, & Brown, 1989).

We examine the structure of this belief system in different age strata or cohorts of African Americans. Although the theoretical frameworks of group conflict and group interest theories are instructive, they tend to overemphasize the impact of the larger society on African Americans and its role in determining African Americans’ sense of self while underemphasizing the culture shield provided by the African American community. They overlook the sense of an African self that grows out of African Americans’ conceptions of the world, which are different in many important respects from those of European Americans (Cross & Strauss, 1998; Kambon, 1992; Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Nobles, 1973, 1992). We maintain that an African American belief system persists across age groups and generations. That is, the belief system has meaning and significance along the age dimension and is reflected positively in one’s sense of well-being. Beyond this, we assume that although the mean level of the different constructs making up this belief system is positive, certain age groups relate differently to the belief system, and this is related to historical factors, namely, the prominence of certain major social events during the time of socialization.
This conception is captured in the double consciousness orientation and its many elaborations—especially the idea of the extended self—and is used in this study to serve as the overarching rationale for the hypotheses that follow. Compatible with this conception, we take into account sociohistorical factors. For example, we make predictions about one’s belief structure and societal orientations based on whether people were at the age of socialization during the tumultuous 1960s. This is an important historical time in the development and refinement of Black consciousness (Smith, 1995). Moreover, the predictions concerning the relationship of sociostructural factors, namely, class and religiosity, are based on past empirical research and present theorizing.

**Hypothesis 1:** An African American belief system (both individual and group) can be measured and has meaning across age groups.

**Hypothesis 2:** African Americans have a positive conception (meaning most people share the conception) of their group and have a positive conception of their own individual worth across age groups.

These two hypotheses are based on the observation that the consideration of race is an omnipresent force in the lives of African people. It is a historical reality that African Americans must come to terms with on a daily basis. Although the magnitude of its impositions on various segments of the African American population may vary, few escape its ravages. These hypotheses maintain that the phenomenon of race awareness, as manifested in the different measures of a belief system, is an integral part of the lives of African Americans. Moreover, this awareness is such that it results in African Americans in the aggregate demonstrating a sensitivity toward issues concerning their group. This sensitivity is not to be equated with uncritical endorsement of everything deriving from the African American experience, however, as some harsh criticism is also directed at the group. Within this study, outcomes associated with Black identification or attachment (e.g., closeness to Black masses and closeness to Black elites, positive stereotyping) are contrasted with an outcome that reflects an endorsement of issues critical of the group (i.e., negative stereotyping).

These hypotheses are not incompatible with group interest or critical group theories. However, only the double consciousness or extended self conceptions place an emphasis on the dual nature of African American identity and specify that the outcome of the internal struggle will be a more secure individual with an attachment to the group.
Hypothesis 3: Within each generation, social structural variables play a minor role in the endorsement of an African American belief system. Gender, followed by levels of impact, income, and education, is assumed to influence the strength of the African American belief system over time, with income and education having a more pronounced influence in more recent times and among the members of younger groups.

With respect to the third hypothesis, we assume that one’s location in the social structure influences his or her conception of the group but that the direction of the influence depends on the construct within the belief system under investigation. We assume also that this influence is neither dominant nor consistent across measures of location in the social structure. Until fairly recently, the dominating society made few distinctions in the nature of treatment meted out to African Americans, and thus, a racial belief system sympathetic to the group was encouraged by this reality. Moreover, certain assumptions held by African Americans about the state of nature, apart from oppression, would lead to similarity in conception. We contend that social structural variables will have little influence on the constructs of closeness to the masses and closeness to elites, as the latter most explicitly reference group identity. However, we assume income will influence positively one’s sense of self-worth.

The more ideologically based evaluative constructs in our study (positive and negative stereotyping) should be influenced by social structural variables, primarily gender, income, and education. The direction of these influences should be such that women and those with lower income should possess stronger positive as well as negative stereotypes about African Americans. Empirical support has been found for these hypotheses using large representative samples (Allen et al., 1989, 1992).

Because this double consciousness is a dynamic process that responds to various onslaughts, it should be modified by the historical context. Thus, when contestation to the inferiorization process is highest, we would expect that this would influence the individual’s conception of self. During the dramatic and change-inducing human rights era, which encompassed the Black consciousness movement, African Americans were at the forefront in challenging many traditional views, assumptions, and practices, particularly concerning the relationship of African Americans with the larger society. Thus, one would expect that those who were weaned and received their socialization during that time would have a stronger group attachment or racial group consciousness and higher levels of self-pride. Moreover, because several in-
Institutions still exist that foster ideas developed during that era and because those who participated or experienced those times are the mothers and fathers or socialization agents of subsequent generations, we expected that these groups would have stronger group attachment or racial group consciousness as compared to those who did not have this experience at a crucial period in their lives (i.e., those socialized during an earlier period).

**Hypothesis 4:** There is a relationship between having an African American racial belief system and having a sense of self-satisfaction. Specifically, across cohorts or historical periods, those who feel closer to the masses have greater self-esteem.

**Hypothesis 5:** Those who reached maturity during the civil rights era (ages 35 to 54 in our study) and those thereafter (ages 17 to 34) have a stronger sense of self-satisfaction, closeness to other dispossessed groups, and a system orientation reflective of criticism of the social structure and attribute major societal problems to the social system, as opposed to the older group.

These hypotheses grow out of the assumption that being in a state of harmony or support of the group will be satisfying to the individual because it is consistent with the person’s worldview and reflects his or her extended self. Also, although the argument is often made that to have a strong group identity is to be hostile to other groups (Pitts, 1974), we argue the opposite in this case. We maintain that group consciousness here is more embracing and nonexclusionary. It is an attitude that associates and positively identifies with other groups engaged in similar struggles. Furthermore, we predict that these relationships are most pronounced for those people who are the heirs to the human rights struggle and will be most evident for those people who feel the greatest closeness to the group (as reflected in the constructs of closeness to the masses and closeness to the elites). Finally, we expect that the holding of stereotypical beliefs bears little relationship to having a sense of self-satisfaction; thus, no relationship was hypothesized in this regard.

Religiosity or some closely related construct (e.g., religious involvement) has been conceptualized as an important variable in the prediction of various Black attitudes and behaviors and, more generally, its social role in African American society. Some scholars have argued that Black religion, because of its emphasis on metaphysical and other theological positions, would be inimical to the development of collective identification and consciousness. This state of affairs has been called the traditional view (Ellison, 1991). Conversely, the alternative and more contemporary view, as represented by such
personages as Cone (1970) and West (1982), maintains that Black religion and ideologies springing from such religions have been central in the development and perpetuation of Black solidarity. Several empirical studies using a different operationalization of the general construct of religiosity and a variety of measures of Black consciousness have found that religiosity tends to have a positive influence (Allen et al., 1989; Allen, Thornton, & Watkins, 1992; Ellison, 1991). Thus, the idea of religiosity’s having an influence on a wider range of such constructs across age status seems feasible.

Hypothesis 6: Religiosity is positively related to an African belief system across cohorts. Those who exhibit greater religiosity will (a) feel closer to Black masses, (b) feel closer to Black elites, (c) possess stronger positive stereotypes, and (d) possess a stronger sense of self-esteem.

Hypothesis 7: Those who exhibit greater religiosity have a stronger sense of well-being and are more critical of the social system (i.e., express greater system blame, more system cynicism, and more perceived racial discrimination).

VARIABLES

Our examination of age or cohort differences in the structure of an African American belief system involves dividing an adult sample of African Americans into three different age groupings (17 to 34, 35 to 54, and 55 and older). Such groupings correspond grossly to important periods in the history of U.S. race relations. For example, given the time of data collection (see Research Design below), individuals in the oldest age grouping (i.e., 55 and older) received their adult political socialization prior to the civil rights era. Those in the middle age grouping (i.e., 35-54) received their adult political socialization just prior to and during the human rights movement. Individuals in the youngest age grouping (i.e., 17-34) are likely to have received their adult political socialization in the post–civil rights era.

A conceptualization of an African American racial belief system has already been developed and empirically tested (Allen et al., 1989, 1990; Brown et al., 1989). Prior work has shown that a belief system among Americans of African descent consists of four related constructs: (a) positive stereotypical beliefs about African Americans, (b) negative stereotypical beliefs about African Americans, (c) closeness to Black masses, and (d) closeness to Black elites. However, we have expanded this racial belief system to include a fifth construct, (e) self-esteem. By including this new construct, we refer to this belief system as an African American belief system rather than an
African American racial belief system. Moreover, we assume that having self-pride and an attachment to the group are associated, which is consistent with the concept of extended self as we have presented it above.

Positive and negative stereotypical beliefs about Black people constitute the second and third constructs in an African American belief system. Prior studies (Allen et al., 1990; Brown et al., 1989) have defined these constructs using Tajfel’s (1981) thesis that individuals assign positive attributes and reject negative attributes about their group. Correspondingly, African Americans with positive stereotypical beliefs will assign positive values to their racial group.

Included in an African American racial belief system are also expressions of group closeness with members of the masses (mass group identification) and members of the elite (elite group identification). Closeness to the masses has affective components of racial consciousness and common fate identification with ordinary citizens. In contrast, closeness to elites is defined in terms of the degree to which African Americans identify with political leaders of their own racial group (Allen et al., 1990; Brown et al., 1989).

Overview of Model

Figure 1 presents a diagram of the proposed model of an African American belief system in which dimensions of Black identity are shown to be functions of background variables and to influence in turn personal and social outcomes. The background variables are thought to have an indirect effect on personal and social outcomes operating through the dimensions of Black identity (see solid arrows in Figure 1). In other words, Black identity mediates the effects of background variables on personal and social outcomes. In our research, we also tested for the presence of direct effects from background factors to personal and social outcomes (see dashed arrow in Figure 1). Figure 1 also shows that Black identity can be operationalized through an African American belief system consisting of five dimensions: (a) closeness to Black masses, (b) positive stereotypical beliefs, (c) negative stereotypical beliefs, (d) closeness to Black elites, and finally (e) self-esteem. The background variables include religiosity, education, income, and gender. Personal and social outcomes include well-being, closeness to non-American Blacks, closeness to other American minorities, system blame, system cynicism, perceived social discrimination, and individual versus group fate.
METHOD

RESEARCH DESIGN

The sample of Blacks in this study was drawn using a multistage sampling procedure for the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA) (Jackson, Tucker, & Gerald, 1979). This was an equal probability sample wherein every Black household had the same chance of selection in an attempt to obtain a nationally representative sample of African Americans. The NSBA also used sampling and screening procedures designed to give appropriate representation to Blacks living in low-density areas. Eligibility for this first national cross-section sample of Black Americans required that respondents be 18 years of age and older and reside in the continental United States.

PARTICIPANTS

Data were collected between the spring of 1979 and winter of 1980 by use of a structured questionnaire. Professionally trained interviewers who were matched on race of respondent conducted the survey in the respondent’s home. Each participant was reimbursed $10 for participating in the NSBA.
all, 2,107 interviews were completed, representing a response rate of nearly 70%. Approximately 28.9% of the sample was in the 18-to-29 age range, 43.1% was in the 30-to-54 age range, and 28% was in the 55-and-over age range. More information on the methodology of NSBA is available in Jack-son, Tucker, and Bowman (1982) and Jackson (1991).

MEASURES

The negative stereotypes construct contained seven items. A 4-point very true to not very true Likert-type scale was used to measure these items: (a) “Most Blacks are lazy,” (b) “Most Blacks neglect their families,” (c) “Most Blacks are lying and trifling,” (d) “Most Blacks give up easily,” (e) “Most Blacks are weak,” (f) “Blacks are ashamed of themselves,” and (g) “Blacks are selfish.”

The positive stereotypes construct contained seven items, each measured on a 4-point very true to not at all true format: (a) “Most Blacks are hard working,” (b) “Most Blacks do for others,” (c) “Most Blacks are honest,” (d) “Most Blacks are strong,” (e) “Most Blacks keep trying,” (f) “Most Blacks are proud of themselves,” and (g) “Most Blacks love their families.”

The construct of closeness to Black masses contained four items, each assessed on 4-point Likert-type response scales, from very close to not very close at all: (a) “How close do you feel toward poor blacks?” (b) “How close do you feel toward religious and church-going Blacks?” (c) “How close do you feel toward middle-class Blacks?” and (d) “How close do you feel toward older Blacks?”

The construct of closeness to Black elites contained two items, each expressed on a 4-point very close to not very close at all format. These items were as follows: (a) “How close do you feel toward Black elected officials?” and (b) “How close do you feel toward Black professionals (e.g., doctors and lawyers)?”

Self-esteem was measured by the following five items on a 4-point scale, from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree): (a) “I am a useful person to have around,” (b) “I feel that I can’t do anything right,” (c) “I feel that my life is not very useful,” (d) “I feel I do not have much to be proud of,” and (e) “As a person I do a good job these days.”

The construct of subjective well-being contained a single item for the concept of life satisfaction. It was worded as follows: “In general, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? Would you say that you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?” Responses were coded on a 4-point scale.
The construct of closeness to non-American Blacks was composed of two items: (a) “closeness to Black groups not in the United States” and (b) “closeness to Black people in Africa.” Each item ranged in value from 1 (not close at all) to 5 (very close), and the items were averaged.

The construct of closeness to American minorities consisted of three items: closeness to (a) Spanish-speaking groups, (b) American Indians, and (c) Asian Americans. Each item ranged in value from 1 (not close at all) to 5 (very close), and the items were averaged.

The construct of system blame was composed of two items. One of the items asked respondents to select which one of the following statements is most true:

In the United States, if Black people don’t do well in life, it is because (1) they don’t work hard to get ahead, (2) they are kept back because of their race, (3) both, (4) neither—no other reason mentioned, (5) neither—some other reason mentioned, (6) don’t know.

The other item asked respondents to respond to the following question:

In this country, if Black people do not get a good education or job, it is because (1) they haven’t had the same chances as Whites in this country, (2) they have no one to blame but themselves, (3) both, (4) neither—no other reason mentioned, (5) neither—some other reason given, (6) don’t know.

Each item ranged from 1 (individual blame) to 5 (system blame), and the items were averaged.

The construct system cynicism/optimism was composed of three items. The three items were as follows: (a) “How much power do you think black people have in American life and politics?” (b) “More Black people have been elected to important political offices. Do you think this has helped the cause of Blacks, hurt it, or has not made a difference?” and (c) “Do you think most White people want to see Blacks get a better break, or do they want to keep Blacks down or don’t they care one way or the other?” Each item ranged from 1 (system optimism) to 5 (system cynicism), and the items were averaged.

The construct perceived race discrimination is composed of two items. The items were as follows: (a) “Do you think there is more racial discrimination now, less, or have things remained pretty much the same?” and (b) “Do you think there will be more racial discrimination than now, less, or will things probably remain about the same?” Each item ranged from 1 (less discrimination) to 5 (more discrimination), and the items were averaged.
The construct group fate/individual effort was composed of two items summed to form an index. The first item was as follows:

For each statement I read, which of the choices do you think is more important for Black people to do? (a) Black people should work together as a group, (b) each Black person should work to get ahead on his or her own, (c) both (equal), (d) neither—no other course mentioned, (e) neither—some other course mentioned, (f) don’t know.

The second item was

Do your chances in life depend more on what happens to Black people as a group, or does it depend more on what you do yourself? (a) Black people as a group, (b) what respondent does, (c) both, (d) neither—no other course mentioned, (e) neither—some other course mentioned.

Each item ranged from 1 (individual effort) to 5 (group effort), and the items were averaged.

There were four background or sociostructural variables: religiosity, education, income, and gender. Religiosity was measured by five indicators using a variety of scales. The items were as follows: On a 5-point scale, ranging from nearly everyday to never, the respondent indicated (a) how often he or she read religious books or other religious materials and (b) how often he or she watched or listened to religious programs on TV or radio. On a 4-point scale, ranging from very often to never, the respondent indicated (c) how often he or she prayed and (d) how often he or she asked someone to pray for him or her. On a 4-point scale, ranging from very religious to not religious at all, the respondent indicated (e) how religious he or she perceived himself or herself to be.

The respondent’s education was placed into four categories: (a) 0 to 11 years; (b) high school graduate, 12 years of education; (c) some college, 13 to 15 years of education; and (d) college graduate, 16 years or more. The respondent’s personal income was placed into four categories: (a) less than $5,000, (b) $5,000 to $9,999, (c) $10,000 to $19,999, and (d) $20,000 and above.

Gender was coded as 1 for male and 2 for female.

**TEST OF HYPOTHESES**

Structural equation models (SEMs) were used to test hypotheses concerning the antecedents and consequences of Black identity. The LISREL8
program was employed for the analyses (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). The goodness of fit of the models were assessed with chi-square tests, the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA), the nonnormed fit index (NNFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR). Discussions of these indices can be found in Bentler (1990), Bollen (1989), Browne and Cudeck (1993), and Marsh, Balla, and Hau (1996). Satisfactory model fits are indicated by nonsignificant chi-square tests, SRMR and RMSEA values less than .08, and NNFI and CFI values greater than or equal to .90. For tests of the SEMs, multiple item constructs were indicated by two indicators each such that groups of items were split into two parcels and aggregated to form the pairs. Bagozzi and Heatherton (1994) termed this the “partial disaggregation” approach and recommended it to both smooth measurement error and maintain a proper ratio of cases to parameters to be estimated when many variables and paths in a model lead to unwieldy analyses. We also followed Bagozzi and Edwards’s (1998) recommendation that items should be combined only after factor analyses demonstrate that the items load satisfactorily on the hypothesized factors and not on inappropriate factors. Finally, hypotheses on differences in levels of constructs across the three groups were tested with structured means (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). All tests of hypotheses were performed on covariance matrices (Cudeck, 1989).

RESULTS

RELIABILITY

For the six constructs with multiple items, the results of factor analysis (maximum likelihood with promax rotation) and internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach’s alphas) are presented in Table 1. It can be seen that one factor was found for each construct under each cohort except for the measures of self-esteem, which exhibited two correlated factors each (see eigenvalues and range of factor loadings in Table 1). Consistent with past research, the two factors for self-esteem reflect response biases corresponding to the positively and negatively worded items. We followed past practice in the case of self-esteem and assumed that the scale items measure one underlying construct (Allen, 2001). Finally, following recommendations made by Bagozzi and Edwards (1998), we performed a grand factor analysis of all 31 items to see if items loaded on hypothesized factors and no high
## TABLE 1

Results of Factor Analyses and Reliabilities of Measures for Multi-Item Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Cohort 1</th>
<th>Cohort 2</th>
<th>Cohort 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of</td>
<td>Range of</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factors</td>
<td>Loadings</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2.68</td>
<td>.56-.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to Black masses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>.72-.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative stereotypes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.60-.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive stereotypes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>.63-.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>.56-.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.37-.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to Black elites</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>.49&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Age 17 to 34; n = 516.
b. Age 35 to 54; n = 402.
c. Age 55 to 90; n = 344.
d. Correlation coefficient.
cross loadings existed. The findings showed that there were indeed seven factors (explaining 63.1% of the variance in responses), and no high cross loadings were found (the highest cross loading was .20).

**PATH MODELS**

Tables 2 to 4 present the findings for tests of the causes and effects of Black identity and personal and social outcomes: background factors → dimensions of Black identity → personal and social outcomes. The findings are presented separately for the three respective cohorts. Most of the paths presented in Tables 2 to 4 are significant at the $p < .05$ level or better, but we have included those that are also significant at the $p < .10$. Those paths significant at only the $p < .10$ level, denoted by a single asterisk, are not interpreted but are presented as a possible basis for subsequent hypothesis testing. Standardized estimates are shown for ease of interpretation and comparability within cohorts.

The two dimensions of Black identity that refer to self-categorization—closeness to Black masses and closeness to Black elites—can be seen to be consistently influenced by religiosity. In all three cohorts, the stronger the religiosity, the closer people feel to Black masses and Black elites. The coefficients are moderately high in magnitude in all cases. Education also influences closeness to Black masses and Black elites for people in Cohorts 1 and 2, such that the greater the education, the less close one feels, but the effects are smaller than the effects of religiosity. And for people in Cohort 3, education does not influence closeness to Black masses and Black elites. Similar to religiosity, gender has an influence in all three cohorts. In Cohorts 1 and 3, females tend to have a greater closeness to the Black masses and the Black elite. In Cohort 2, females also tend to have a greater closeness to Black masses. However, there was no statistically significant relationship between gender and closeness to Black elites in this cohort.

Negative stereotypes for people in Cohorts 1 and 2 are inversely related to education: The higher the education, the lower the negative stereotypes about Blacks. The coefficients were moderate in magnitude. For Cohort 3, negative stereotypes were only a function of income: The greater the income, the lower the negative stereotypes.

Positive stereotypes were a function of only religiosity in Cohort 1: The stronger the religiosity, the stronger the positive stereotypes. In Cohort 2, positive stereotypes were functions of both religiosity and income: The greater the religiosity, the stronger the positive stereotypes; the higher the income, the weaker the positive stereotypes. For Cohort 3, positive stereotypes were...
TABLE 2
Causes and Effects of Black Identity and Personal and Social Outcomes: Cohort 1 (age 17 to 34)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Religiosity</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>CBM</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>CBE</th>
<th>R²</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to Black masses (CBM)</td>
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<td>-.10**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>-.12**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative stereotypes (NS)</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>-.25***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive stereotypes (PS)</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem (SE)</td>
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<td>.25***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>-.23***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to Black (CBE) elites</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.25***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to non-American Blacks</td>
<td></td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closeness to other American minorities</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>-.23***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>ns</td>
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<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
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<td>System cynicism</td>
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<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.14*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived social discrimination</td>
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<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>-.20**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td>.16**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual/group fate</td>
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<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Standardized coefficients. Gender dummy coded: 1 = male, 2 = female.
a. Not applicable.
* p < .10. ** p < .05. *** p < .01.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Religiosity</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>CBM</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>CBE</th>
<th>R²</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to Black masses (CBM)</td>
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<td>–.20**</td>
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<td>–.17**</td>
<td>–a</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative stereotypes (NS)</td>
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<td>–.23***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>–.11*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive stereotypes (PS)</td>
<td>.17***</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>–.14**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
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<td>.14**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to Black (CBE) elites</td>
<td>.26***</td>
<td>–.23***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.26***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.26***</td>
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<td>.16</td>
</tr>
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<td>Closeness to non-American Blacks</td>
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<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>–.14**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to other American minorities</td>
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<td>.11**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>–.28***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System blame</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>–.23**</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System cynicism</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>ns</td>
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<td>ns</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>–.32**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual/group fate</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>–.12**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.02*</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Standardized coefficients. Gender dummy coded: 1 = male, 2 = female.

a. Not applicable.

*p < .10, **p < .05, ***p < .01.
## Table 4

Causes and Effects of Black Identity and Personal and Social Outcomes: Cohort 3 (age 55 to 90)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to Black masses (CBM)</td>
<td>Religiosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative stereotypes (NS)</td>
<td>$ns$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive stereotypes (PS)</td>
<td>$ns$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem (SE)</td>
<td>$0.26**$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to Black (CBE) elites</td>
<td>$0.24**$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>$ns$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to non-American Blacks</td>
<td>$ns$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to other American minorities</td>
<td>$ns$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System blame</td>
<td>$ns$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System cynicism</td>
<td>$ns$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived social discrimination</td>
<td>$ns$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual/group fate</td>
<td>$0.24**$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Standardized coefficients. Gender dummy coded: 1 = male, 2 = female.

a. Not applicable.

$p < .10$, $**p < .05$, $***p < .01$. 
stereotypes were functions of only education: The greater the education, the weaker the positive stereotypes. The coefficient was moderately strong.

Self-esteem was influenced by religiosity in all three cohorts: The greater the religiosity, the higher the self-esteem. The coefficient ranged from low to moderate in magnitude across cohorts. Moreover, in Cohort 1, moderate effects on self-esteem were also found for education and gender: The higher the education, the higher the self-esteem; females showed higher self-esteem. Gender was dummy coded (male = 1) such that a negative sign indicates an effect for female. In Cohorts 2 and 3, income also had effects on self-esteem: The higher the income, the higher the self-esteem.

Focusing on the influence of the background variables on personal and social outcomes, we can see that in Cohort 1, religiosity has a negative influence on system blame and system cynicism. Those who tend to be more religious are less likely to blame the system for racial problems and to be less cynical toward that system. Religiosity has no other influences on personal or social outcomes in any of the other cohorts, except Cohort 3, where those who exhibit greater religiosity are more likely to accept the idea of a group fate. In Cohorts 1 and 2, those who have a higher level of education are more likely to feel closer to other American minorities. In Cohort 3, those with greater education tend to perceive less discrimination. Whereas income has no influence on the personal and social outcomes in Cohorts 1 and 2, it has a negative effect on perceived social discrimination in Cohort 3. That is, the greater the income, the less the perceived social discrimination. Finally, across the three cohort groups, females tend to feel closer to non-American Blacks and closer to other American minorities than do males.

Turning to the impact of the dimensions of Black identity on personal and social outcomes, we find a number of significant effects. Closeness to Black masses fails to have any effects in Cohorts 1 and 3 but has pervasive effects in Cohort 2. In Cohort 2, the stronger the felt closeness to Black masses, the stronger the felt closeness to non-American Blacks, the greater the system blame, and the more one believes that his or her fate is tied to being Black.

Negative stereotypes influence both perceived social discrimination and individual versus group fate in both Cohorts 1 and 2. The stronger the negative stereotypes, the greater the perceived social discrimination and the less the acceptance of a group fate. This latter effect applies to Cohort 1 but operates in the opposite direction at the $p < .10$ level for Cohort 2: The greater the negative stereotypes, the greater the acceptance of a group fate. Negative stereotypes had no significant effects in Cohort 3.

Positive stereotypes had positive effects on closeness to non-American Blacks, closeness to other American minorities, and perceived social discrimination in Cohort 1. The stronger the positive stereotypes, the stronger
the felt closeness to both non-American Blacks and other American minorities and the greater the perceived social discrimination. Likewise, for Cohort 2, the stronger the positive stereotypes, the stronger felt closeness to both non-American Blacks and other American minorities. Positive stereotypes had no significant effects in Cohort 3.

Self-esteem affected overall well-being in Cohorts 1 to 3. The higher the self-esteem, the higher overall well-being. Self-esteem also influenced individual versus group fate in Cohort 1. The higher the self-esteem, the more the acceptance of a group fate. In Cohort 2, higher self-esteem led to greater system cynicism.

Finally, closeness to Black elites had significant effects in all three cohorts. In Cohort 1, the greater the felt closeness to Black elites, the greater the felt closeness to non-American Blacks and the lower system cynicism. In Cohort 2, the greater the closeness to Black elites, the greater the closeness to other American minorities, the less blame of the system, the less system cynicism, and the less the perceived social discrimination. In Cohort 3, the greater the closeness to Black elites, the greater the closeness to both non-American Blacks and other American minorities.

Looking at the amount of variance explained across the cohort groups, an interesting picture develops. Although the amount of variance explained for any one outcome ranges from low to moderate, the pattern and size of the estimates are similar across Cohorts 1 to 3.

GENERALIZABILITY OF PATH COEFFICIENTS

The findings summarized above establish which relationships among variables are statistically significant. Now we wish to verify formally which relationships generalize across cohorts (and by implication, which relationships are statistically larger in one or more cohorts than the remaining cohorts, if any). Only the most interesting comparisons of paths across cohorts are made below.

The first row of Table 5 demonstrates that the same factor patterns apply in all three cohorts. The goodness-of-fit tests indicate that the variables shown in Tables 2 to 4 apply in all three cohorts as specified.

The second row in Table 5 shows that the factor loadings for the six constructs with multiple measures are invariant across cohorts. That is, the magnitude of factor loadings is equal across cohorts.

Rows 3 to 5 in Table 5 demonstrate that the magnitudes of path coefficients linking religiosity to closeness to Black masses, self-esteem, and closeness to Black elites are invariant. That is, the effects of religiosity are equal across cohorts for these three paths.
### TABLE 5

Goodness of Fit and Tests of Parameter Invariance Across Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Cohorts 1 and 2</th>
<th>Cohorts 1 and 3</th>
<th>Cohorts 2 and 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Baseline</td>
<td>$\chi^2(204) = 283.85$</td>
<td>$\chi^2(204) = 313.65$</td>
<td>$\chi^2(204) = 294.09$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RMSEA = .03</td>
<td>RMSEA = .04</td>
<td>RMSEA = .03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SRMR = .02</td>
<td>SRMR = .03</td>
<td>SRMR = .03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NNFI = .96</td>
<td>NNFI = .94</td>
<td>NNFI = .94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CFI = .98</td>
<td>CFI = .97</td>
<td>CFI = .97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Invariance of factor loadings</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(7) = 7.32$, $p &gt; .40$</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(3) = 2.83$, $p &gt; .40$</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(4) = 9.61$, $p &gt; .05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Religiosity $\rightarrow$ closeness to Black masses</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 2.19$, $p &gt; .10$</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 0.58$, $p &gt; .40$</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 0.03$, $p &gt; .80$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Religiosity $\rightarrow$ self-esteem</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 2.58$, $p &gt; .10$</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 0.62$, $p &gt; .40$</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 0.02$, $p &gt; .88$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Religiosity $\rightarrow$ closeness to black elites</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 0.45$, $p &gt; .49$</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 1.26$, $p &gt; .25$</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 0.24$, $p &gt; .70$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Education $\rightarrow$ self-esteem</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 6.37$, $p &gt; .02$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Closeness to Black elites $\rightarrow$ closeness to non-American Blacks</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 1.19$, $p &gt; .28$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 0.76$, $p &gt; .40$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Closeness to Black masses $\rightarrow$ system blame</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 0.20$, $p &gt; .65$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 3.61$, $p &gt; .06$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Self-esteem $\rightarrow$ well-being</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 0.00$, $p &gt; 1.00$</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 0.99$, $p &gt; .28$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Closeness to Black elites $\rightarrow$ closeness to non-American Blacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 1.48$, $p &gt; .22$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Closeness to Black elites $\rightarrow$ closeness to American minorities</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 1.93$, $p &gt; .15$</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 1.48$, $p &gt; .22$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Closeness to Black elites $\rightarrow$ system blame</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 3.12$, $p &gt; .08$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 3.58$, $p &gt; .06$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Closeness to Black elites $\rightarrow$ system cynicism</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 0.95$, $p &gt; .30$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 0.16$, $p &gt; .68$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Closeness to Black elites $\rightarrow$ perceived social discrimination</td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 11.56$, $p &gt; .001$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$\chi^2_d(1) = 5.35$, $p &gt; .03$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** RMSEA = root mean squared error of approximation. NNFI = the nonnormed fit index. CFI = the comparative fit index. SRMR = the standardized root mean squared residual.
Row 6 in Table 5 shows the result for the test of equality of the effect of education on self-esteem. Recall that this effect was only significant for Cohort 1, where the impact was positive. The findings show that the effect of education on self-esteem is indeed statistically greater in Cohort 1 than the other cohorts.

The findings for the effects of closeness of Black masses on closeness to non-American Blacks (row 7 in Table 5) and on system blame (row 8) show that the paths are statistically different.

Self-esteem has positive effects on well-being in each cohort. Tests of the equality of these paths show that the magnitude of effects across cohorts is equal (see row 9 in Table 5).

Closeness to Black elites had a positive impact on closeness to non-American Blacks in Cohorts 1 and 3. The results show that these paths are equal in magnitude (row 10 in Table 5).

Closeness to Black elites had a positive effect on closeness to other American minorities in Cohorts 2 and 3. The results in Table 5 show, however, that these paths were not statistically different from the corresponding nonsignificant path in Cohort 1 (row 11 in Table 5).

The effect of closeness to Black elites on system blame was only significant in Cohort 2, where the impact was negative. Row 12 in Table 5 shows that this path does not differ statistically from the nonsignificant paths in Cohorts 1 and 3.

Closeness to Black elites had a negative effect on system cynicism in Cohorts 1 and 2. Row 13 in Table 5 reveals that these paths are equal in Cohorts 1 and 2, yet also do not differ statistically from the nonsignificant path in Cohort 3.

Finally, the effect of closeness to Black elites on perceived social discrimination was negative and significant in only Cohort 2. Table 5, row 14, shows that this path differs statistically from the nonsignificant paths in Cohorts 1 and 3.

DIFFERENCES IN MEANS OF CONSTRUCTS

Table 6 summarizes the differences in structured means (i.e., magnitudes of variables) for all variables across cohorts, where different superscripts within any row indicate statistical differences in the levels of the constructs indicated for the pairs of respective cohorts. The findings show that religiosity, closeness to Black masses, closeness to Black elites, and well-being increase with age. In a parallel way, level of education and system cynicism decrease with age. The highest levels of income occur for Cohort 2, next highest for Cohort 1, and lowest for Cohort 3. No differences exist across
cohort for negative stereotypes. Positive stereotypes are somewhat higher for Cohorts 2 and 3 compared to Cohort 1. Self-esteem is highest for Cohort 3. Closeness to non-American Blacks and other American minorities, system blame, perceived social discrimination, and feelings of group fate are highest for Cohorts 2 and 3.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The seven hypotheses we formulated ranged from being fully supported to partially supported to one’s not being supported at all. Hypothesis 1 stated that our African American belief system has meaning across the three cohorts. This hypothesis was fully supported. Similarly, consistent with Hypothesis 2, we found that African Americans had a positive conception of both the group and their own individual worth across age groups.
Hypothesis 3 assumed that social structural variables (i.e., education, religiosity, income, and gender) play a relatively minor role in the endorsement of an African American belief system. This hypothesis received some support. Although there was no uniform pattern for the relationship of social structure variables on this belief system, several of the social structural variables were influential. For example, for some cohorts, religiosity, education, and gender influenced certain variables, whereas gender and income influenced a substantially different set of variables in other cohort groups.

In Hypothesis 4, we proposed a relationship between racial belief system and sense of self-satisfaction (i.e., well-being). There was some support for this hypothesis, but most notably with self-esteem.

Hypothesis 5 stated that those who reached maturity during the civil rights era (Cohort 2) and thereafter (Cohort 1) would exhibit a stronger Black identity and relate to the personal and social outcomes in a variety of ways as compared to Cohort 3. This hypothesis received support. That is, fewer Black identity constructs were related to the personal and social outcomes for Cohort 3.

In Hypothesis 6, religiosity was predicted to positively influence the endorsement of an African American belief system. This hypothesis also received substantial support.

Finally, Hypothesis 7 predicted that those with greater religiosity would have a higher sense of well-being and be more critical of the social system. This hypothesis received no support. There were no relationships. In Cohort 1, the relationship was opposite to predictions; that is, greater religiosity led to less system blame and less system cynicism, although the level of significance was only at $p < .10$.

DISCUSSION

We speculated that because of negative categorical treatment on the part of dominant Whites, Americans of African descent in very different age cohorts and generational positions would possess and share a set of racial and nonracial beliefs and schemas. Several analysts have pointed to the increased well-being of a new generation of African Americans since Reconstruction (e.g., Jaynes & Williams, 1989). Theoretically, we argue that inherent in this observation is a set of beliefs that increased intragroup cleavages; hence, intragroup polarization will occur as newer cohorts become identified with other groups (e.g., shared socioeconomic status or political obligations occur) with greater commonalities than racial solidarity.
A major flaw in this type of thinking is that enhanced mobility within the social, political, and economic structure should result in treatment by dominant groups that is commensurate with this ascension. Such thinking has been predicated upon the American experience with White ethnics as well as romanticized reports from longer lived multiracial societies, for example, Brazil or Puerto Rico.

Based on the ideas of double consciousness and the extended self, we predicted that even though life chances and opportunities have demonstrably improved for younger cohorts of African Americans, continued subjugation based upon skin color and group physical features would forge a continued set of definable experiences. And these experiences of negative categorical treatment, along with strong socialization messages, would contribute to an African American racial belief system and a sense of self-pride that is structured similarly, even across age strata of African Americans who differ markedly in opportunity. Moreover, this belief system would have predictable effects on African Americans’ well-being and various system perspectives.

The results point to substantial similarity across cohorts of African Americans in their belief systems. This structural invariance suggests that Americans of African descent who came of age in radically different periods in America’s racial history and the related age cohorts structure their beliefs in the opportunity structure in similar ways. This is indeed a powerful finding when one considers all the competing forces that would suggest this would not be the case across time and historical periods (e.g., differential legislation, civil rights enforcement or lack thereof, economic conditions, public awareness, and support for racial justice).

Although the double-consciousness and extended-self frameworks do not explicitly point to the nature of the time period or age differences, it argues that the African American’s sense of self, broadly defined, is a dynamic process, such that an individual would be differentially influenced by the forces in his environment at any particular time. Thus, one would expect mean differences in key constructs and that the pattern of these mean differences would depend on many factors, especially on the period in time when the individual was socialized. Our hypotheses were informed by the nature of our sample and the historical period when our study was conducted and by empirical work. Previous research (e.g., Broman, Neighbors, & Jackson, 1988) had indicated that older Blacks indicate greater closeness, a variant of group identity, than do younger Blacks. This singular construct has been assessed in prior research by ascertaining perceived closeness in beliefs, attitudes, and behavior to various subgroups in the African American population. An important demarcation has been the mass/elite dimensions. As
shown in the present study as well as prior analyses (e.g., Allen et al., 1989, 1990; Brown et al., 1989), perceived closeness to these two types of subgroups form different dimensions of an African American belief system.

We found that one’s belief system influenced people’s sense of well-being and societal orientations across the age cohorts. Self-esteem was the strongest positive predictor of subjective well-being, although the other belief constructs were substantially interrelated. It is only the self-esteem construct that contributed to the sense of well-being. This relationship was revealed across the different age groups and generations. Furthermore, with few exceptions, Black identity mediated the effects of background variables on personal and social outcomes.

We speculate that the assessment of closeness to different subgroups may reflect a set of traditional values in African American communities as well as adherence to a possible set of conservative beliefs. We contend that the pattern of mean differences found in our study support this contention. In the African American belief system, we think that negative and positive stereotyping are much more responsive to negative categorical treatment by the dominant group. Thus, ubiquitous discrimination, racism, and blocked economic, political, and social opportunities should be reflected in similar perceived levels of feelings of autonomy and efficacy across different age strata as well as similarities in positive and negative attitudes toward the racial group. On the other hand, different generations of African Americans should differ in their adherence to traditional values. Many scholars have documented the inexorable changes in values held by the American public (e.g., Schuman et al., 1987). The pattern of results indicating strong perceptions of closeness by older Blacks to Black elites may reflect respect and deference historically paid to the elite members of the Black community. As for youth in the dominant society, Black youth of today may not be as deferential. Also, it is possible that the meaning of elite members of the Black community to old and young may differ. Older Blacks received their adult socialization prior to the human rights movement period. Consequently, the notion of elite Blacks may be more consistent with today’s civil rights leaders. Because we lack extended longitudinal and repeated cross-sectional replicates, we cannot rule out effects due to aging of individuals and significant period effects.

On the other hand, the lack of perceived closeness to Black mass groups on the part of the young, who received their adult political socialization in the post–civil rights era, may represent the beginning of a shift in the nature of the African American belief system on the part of new cohorts of Blacks. Younger cohorts showing less closeness to the masses of Blacks may presage significant shifts in perceptions of group solidarity. This shift may ultimately
result in a change in what constitutes a set of beliefs providing meaning and guidance in racially tinged matters. Continued negative categorical treatment by the dominant group, however, may continue to promote group solidarity, even in the face of real material and social advances by younger cohorts of African Americans. This may lead to continuing similarity in the structure of this belief system, with concomitant differences across generations in levels of the construct, reflecting secular trends in society and age-related differences in adherence to traditional group values.

On the other hand, the strength of an African American belief system may continue to have a major influence on how individuals perceive their own social status and psychological well-being well beyond how the larger society might act to thwart the group’s development. That is, growing out of the African American’s interpretation of the world and his or her place in it, the belief system may grow and expand to reflect this reality. This interpretation is more attuned to the concept of double-consciousness and, its expansion, extended-self orientations.

In our conceptualization, we specified a model that included both constructs of an African American belief system (group identity) and individual self-esteem (personal identity) and explored various implications of this model for different age cohorts and generations. This approach departs from some thinking that suggests that within the African American context, the individual self and the group self should not be separated conceptually or empirically. The extended-self framework is consistent with the above position. Empirically, this suggests that rather than having two scales representing identity, the measures tapping individual and group identity should be one. In this work, we did not make this separation, but our findings do suggest that there is a strikingly similar relationship between individual and group identity across generations and individuals. Beyond this, future studies in this area might find it useful to examine the implications of a number of scales of African identity or, more generally, African self-consciousness that have recently been developed to reflect the psychological functioning and behavior growing out of a distinct African worldview and social reality. Such scales, it has been argued, should operationalize the values, norms, and standard for normalcy for African Americans apart from or independent of European or European American racial or cultural oppression of Africans (Kambon, 1992). It would be interesting to explore how such newly developed scales depart from earlier scales operating from a different set of assumptions and to make comparisons as to the antecedents and outcomes of these different ways of conceiving and measuring African American identity and self-consciousness.
NOTES

1. For works that include a measure of historical period and age in their analyses, see Broman, Neighbors, and Jackson (1988). We acknowledge the problematic nature of the concept of age as it confounds the effects of age, cohort, and period or generation (Schuman & Scott, 1989). Because the data that we employed are cross-sectional, it is untenable to estimate the separate influence of age and cohort. A more defensible position would require data collected over time. We assume throughout this study that the effect of our age variable is reflective of generation or cohort effects. Borrowing from Schuman and Scott (1989), cohort refers herein to an aggregate of individuals exposed to the same event within the same time period, and cohort effect or generation tend to have enduring, long-lasting effects.

2. See Morris, Hatchett, and Brown (1989) for details about the conceptualization of age groupings on the basis of adult political socialization.

3. This model builds on and extends work done by Allen, Dawson, and Brown (1989) and Allen et al., 1990.

REFERENCES


Biomedical Ethics: An African-Centered Psychological Perspective

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Biomedical ethics examine questions of right and good action that arise in biological and medical settings. In the biomedical, ethical universe, continental Africans and the diasporic descendants tend to react differently than the ordinary Westerner. African American psychology is particularly concerned with the ethical dimensions and cultural competence of systems of health care. The quantity and quality of psychological health care delivered to African Americans raise deeply pervasive and troubling ethical questions. The significance of African consciousness, skin color, religion, education, racism, and the sociopolitical and economic posture of African people cannot be ignored. In a world culture where the rationing of resources is determined along a color line, the medical and mental health status of continental and diasporic Africans is adversely affected. A psychological perspective on the biomedical ethics of the African communities, particularly in America, is urgently needed. This exposition is intended to stimulate scholarship toward that end.

Who will live? Long ago recognized as the ultimate question (Van Peebles, 1973), it continues to be a question (Fuchs, 1998) that aims a bioethical bullet at the life chances of continental and diasporic Africans. Inadequate nutrition; excessive use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs; high incidences of teenage pregnancies; high incidences of poverty; reduced levels of educational attainment; high levels of crime victimization; and so forth are influential to marital dissolution and family disruption (Adams, 1999). Individually and collectively, these are deathly destructive forces shortening life expectancy in the African American community.
Overindulgent lifestyles, driven by a quest to be somebody, are too evident within the African American community, where the behaviors of its members reflect conditioning by Western psychological principles intentionally designed to destroy African civilizations (Williams, 1987). Thompson (1999) believed that as African Americans enter the new millennium, they are far worse off than they were in the old millennium of great African kingdoms, where the historical record supported the inference of longevity and esteemed accomplishments.

The current conditions of African American life place its members at increasing risk of early deaths (Lynch et al., 1998; Wilkinson, 1996; Wilson & Daly, 1997). Racism and oppressive elements of the sociopolitical system supply inducements to reinforce and maintain high-risk lifestyles among African Americans, placing their very existence increasingly at risk, especially the African American male (Mauer & Huling, 1995).

The life expectancy for White females in this country today is about 80 years; for White males, it is 74 years, and for Black females, it is 74 years. However, Black males are only expected to live a mere 66 years (Crispell, 1995). Black men face a sequel of psychosocial (Peterson & Krivo 1993), political (Mauer & Huling, 1995; O’Reilly, 1989; Petersilia, 1985), and economic (Jencks & Mayer, 1990) pressures that stretch from birth to an early death. It is a feat to marvel that Black men end up less wounded and crippled and that so many survive as long as they do, given the preponderance of environmental adversity they face.

It is the behavioral correlates of physical and mental disease that cause psychology to take on such immense importance in furthering good and right action in a manner that allows all to live to the fullest of their talents, interests, and motivations. When quality of life indicators are applied to the American and diasporic communities of African people, bioethical inequities abound.

In *Roots of Soul: The Psychology of Black Expressiveness*, Pasteur and Tolldson (1982) advanced an African-centered theoretical perspective that is foundational to the development of this psychological treatise. Black expressiveness was defined as the readiness or predisposition to express oneself in a manner characterized by vital emotionalism, spontaneity, and rhythm. Often, these tendencies, the authors argued, act in combination with one or more other essential characteristics, including naturalistic attitudes, physical movement, style, and creativity with the spoken word. These characteristics interact to produce human behavior that when expressed or perceived, register images, sounds, aromas, and feelings of beauty to the senses. The frequency, duration, and utilitarian features of the behavior, resembling that of traditional African people, make it unique. A naturalistic attitude is a core
dimension of the expressive style of African people and heavily influences their responses to healing endeavors, establishing bioethical premises that must not go unobserved or excluded from medical and mental health practices.

The African-centered expressive approach outlined in *Roots of Soul* (Pas-
teur & Toldson, 1982) uses notes or musical stimuli, lines or visuospatial stimuli, and movement or kinesthetic stimuli in conjunction with words and numbers in the derivation and application of therapeutic procedures. The goal of that specific African-centered approach to therapy is consistent with the African belief that optimal mental health is a function of balancing energy patterns within the self, that is, emotional, cognitive, and especially spiritual (Akbar, 1996; Ani, 1990; Nobles, 1986; and Pasteur & Toldson, 1982).

These authors believe that the following two forces come together to make up the fabric of African-centered psychology: (a) African consciousness—the primary force—and (b) racism and oppression—the second force. As psychological constructs, African consciousness and racism and oppression significantly impinge on the question of an African-centered perspective on biomedical ethics. Both forces are reviewed with the intent of establishing the psychological parameters that are important in framing a view of biomedical ethics that reflects the psychological orientation and sociopolitical status of Africans and the diasporic descendants who live under a Eurocentric, monopolistic power regime.

**AFRICAN CONSCIOUSNESS**

The first force, the presence of an African consciousness, is primary because it embodies the collective memory of ancestral wisdom, the archetype. African consciousness is an important construct in the attainment of optimal self-development (self-concept, self-esteem, and self-image) among continental and diasporic African people. This important outcome is typically denied in patients of African descent in traditional approaches to healing. The presence of an African consciousness within the psyches of the descendants of Africa presupposes, at least in some tenuous way, the continuation of belief patterns and attitudinal dispositions of the traditional African man or woman (Ani, 1980; Jones, 1995). This sense of African consciousness forms a cognitive set, which is used by a significant segment of diasporic Africans in making moral judgments and decisions about what is real or important in terms of perceptual phenomena, including their medical and psychiatric health care.
Linda James Myers (1988) argued that essential to the African consciousness construct is the view that reality is inseparably spiritual and material. In this way, everything becomes spirit. Oneness with all things is proposed. That which appears materially and becomes known through the five senses becomes the benchmark of Western psychology. The concurrent spiritual/material conception of reality, Myers argued, opposes the Eurocentric perspective, which Vandiver (1999) insisted sees the world as an infinite number of discretely different manifestations presenting as observable, material phenomena.

African consciousness, which umbrellas African identity, is the archetypical background from which diasporic Africans must formulate answers to questions of identity: Who am I? How do I see myself? Who defined my image, and was my image defined in a way to help me challenge, confront, and overcome adversity? Who do I come from? What can I do? What do I believe about my lineage and myself? Where am I going in life? And what does it mean when I become ill (sick, fail, transgress, addicted)?

Information that is allowed to proliferate in the Western world keeps the African consciousness conceptual construct sufficiently latent so that it is distorted or functionally obliterated in the psyches of African people. The outcome achieved is tantamount to the maintenance of psychological oppression as a replacement for physical oppression; and this is a fundamental issue in the health status of African people.

THE SPIRITUAL IMPERATIVE IN THE AFRICAN ETHOS

Among traditional Africans, John Mbiti (1969) explained that affliction illness is considered to be as much a spiritual illness as a physical one. Healing is believed to be a function of every thought, emotion, and activity working toward creating balance in the individual. This holistic perspective makes healing a collective undertaking of the body. Collective phenomena continue to pervade African American community life, serving to heal and repair it from environmental and social adversities.

Myers (1981) noted that contemporary physicists believe that a material conception of reality is outmoded. They hold that all particles can be created from energy and vanquished into energy and that the whole universe appears as a dynamic web of inseparable energy patterns. Myers believed that the view of energy patterns held by some modern physicists is analogous to the African conception of spirit (Some, 1995). Spirit, in the African cosmos, rhythmically shapes things, ideals, animals, and human beings together in a representative whole of its essence. When this rhythm is disturbed, the spirit
is unsettled and manifests in the individual as anxiety, depression, or other describable mental or physical disorders. Restoring this rhythm to achieve an integrative harmony within the self is the goal of African-centered approaches to therapy. These approaches must form the backdrop to therapeutic services delivered in the African American community in the interest of providing authentic mental health care to Africans and the diasporic descendants—a bioethical imperative.

In seeking to reestablish balance in one’s existence, as manifested in thought, feeling, and motor expression, a spiritual dimension is incorporated (Azibo, 1994; Finch, 1990; Pasteur & Toldson, 1982). Moral failures and socially compulsive, addictive behaviors are considered spiritual transgressions throughout traditional African cultures that are likely to result in affliction illnesses because they create disharmony within the self and the society of one’s affiliation group, contributing to the mental and physical deterioration of the individual and his or her group. It is common among African Americans who are afflicted with physical illness to search their conscience for moral failings to answer the question, “Why me?”

The absence of a balanced focus in modern-day medicine places the typical African American patient in an etiological dilemma with respect to acquired illnesses. Finch (1990) insisted that among traditional African people, “Without the psycho-spiritual cure—without reestablishing this sensitive harmony—the medicinal cure is considered useless” (p. 129). Finch went on to say that African medicine has baffled scholars because it completely integrates the magico-spiritual and rational elements. The spiritual aspect of healing has been discredited among modern-day scientific-minded scholars (Finch, 1990). However, Finch explained, modern medicine acknowledges that 60% of illnesses treated by physicians have a psychological basis, and interventions quite often involve pharmacologically inactive drugs, that is, placebos.

Prayer proverbs are widely used in the folk community of south Louisiana residents (Fontenot, 1994). Fontenot provided an example. For a sunstroke, or any illness related to burns or burning sensation, this prayer is repeated nine times: “The sun, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I command you to come out of this person as quickly as you went in” (p. 103).

Shorter (1975) cited a prayer by a medicine man from Kenya: “Nyaga helps his man that he may be well, that he may recover tomorrow” (p. 61). In a survey conducted by the National Mental Health Association (1998), almost two thirds of the African Americans surveyed said they believed prayer and faith alone would successfully treat depression. What is thought to constitute insight, change, or new behavior involves a significant spiritual manifestation.
THE BIOETHICAL RELEVANCE OF AFRICAN IDENTITY

Individual identity is an important construct in African-centered approaches and is conceptualized in relation to the total tribe, group, community, and/or environment that support the existence of the individual (Onwuachi, 1977). Personal identity embraces the life force or spirit and character structure of other things and beings (e.g., trees, animals, and minerals—oneness) in the universe to which the traditional African identifies (Onwuachi, 1977). This life force is believed to manifest in the cognitive sets of diasporic Africans as well. Traditional Africans saw this life force as power that comes from God, who makes it available in varying degrees to spirits and to human beings (those alive and those about to be born). The life force or spiritual power is present in the remainder of biological life, including animals and plants, and is lastly present in phenomena and objects without biological life (Mbiti, 1969) and is collectively incorporated into individual identity.

An authentic African identity, then, in the psyches of African people, is represented in the notion of oneness of being (Mbiti, 1969). Oneness is a concept that is precipitous to a priority of group identity over individual identity and exerts primacy in the idea of the African consciousness construct.

African identity is inherent in collective and communal participation, and the idea incorporates respect for elders and embraces an acceptance of unseen forces. The elders, in the West African view, are closer to that which is divine or spiritual in the universe. Unseen forces are held as real and deducible. The invisible, such as spirits, ancestors, the unborn, the wind, and thunder, has life qualities with feelings and intelligence and is evident in the organization of decision-making behavior in African Americans who are beset with the pulse of an African identity.

Respect for fertility and procreative virility, as manifested in praise for generative powers (ability to bring the vital, spiritual force into being), are integral to the concept of African identity, the soul of African consciousness (Kannae & Pendleton, 1994; Okediji, 1968). As subtle or oblique as they may appear, these elements of African identity combine to create the fabric, consciousness of Black culture and frame the behavior of ordinary or core people of African descent.

RESPECT FOR NATURE AND NATURALISTIC HEALING

Living close to nature, core or ordinary or marginally acculturated people of African descent have acquired and maintain a disposition of comfort with
and acceptance of nature and natural processes (Pasteur & Toldson, 1982). Questions relative to the frequent choice of many young, single African American females to give birth and provide care for their children rather than abort or put them up for adoption can be understood from the viewpoint of naturalistic forces that imbue African identity. Even contraception, vasectomies, and artificial insemination are often seen as unnatural intrusions or interruptions of the spiritual force that harmonizes one’s existence and are therefore regarded as unnatural solutions to what may be misguided choices.

Questions relative to infrequency of core or ordinary African Americans to donate organs and even the reluctance to undergo surgery may possibly be explained by elements of an African identity. “I want to go back to heaven with everything that God brought me here with” is not an uncommon response by many ordinary Blacks, who believe it to be unnatural or even blasphemous to alter God’s creations or spiritual manifestations.

As explained earlier, the confrontation of many health problems in the ordinary African American community involves what Herskovits (1941) called a “magico-medical” element of the personality. Bryant (1966) documented that the Zulus knew medicinal uses for nearly a thousand plants and more than a few forms of the active ingredients in modern-day pharmacological substances. The West African practice of deriving concoctions from roots, herbs, and other curative plants has continued in the traditions of Africans in the Western world. Nature’s products and God (who is seen as the highest force in the universe) are seen as healers that are sometimes, perhaps often, preferred to professional health care providers and are often used in conjunction with traditional medical advice.

Divine intervention in the personal problems of many African Americans make professional mental health care secondary to that which is spiritual and, oftentimes, altogether suspect. In the celebrated play Yin Yang, by Walker (1976), an African American psychiatrist was presented rather mockingly. Walker argued that African American mental health professionals who provide counseling and therapy are in an occupational dilemma by virtue of their training and the alien models they adopt. This is what the psychiatrist in Yin Yang represented in his restrained and excessive objectivity, Walker explained. His dress, speech, and every gesture communicated to the ordinary people in Yin Yang, as to many in real-life situations, an emotional detachment that suggested to them a potential irresponsibility toward their welfare.

Richard King (1990) noted that African history is fundamental to the development of an African identity and is essential for optimal mental health among African people. This includes knowing and studying the inner self to
develop what King proposed as seven levels of consciousness (dreams, feelings, sensations, logic, intuitions, visions, and beauty and perfection).

An outcome of knowing and studying the inner self, King explained, is a redistribution of energy. King theorized that energy is redistributed from the base of the spinal column, where the sex organs are empowered, to the top of the brain. The top of the brain, King informed, is the seat of the pineal gland. The pineal gland is considered the third eye, which looks inward and is responsible for inner vision and intuition on a spiritual level of consciousness.

King provided an illuminating example of the Western tendency to mistakenly read the symbol of a snake as a bad omen. This is because, according to King, the European belief system symbolically and mythologically associates the snake with evil (Swidler, 1986). In the African belief system, King noted, the snake, because of the cyclical shedding of skin, has a good omen as well, that of renewal, regeneration, and rebirth. Knowing one’s history, King insisted, provides a knowledge base for symbolism and mythology that is consistent with the archetype of one’s existence.

**BIOETHICAL RELEVANCE OF SKIN COLOR**

The dark secret of the history of African people is the melanin pigment, which has far-reaching implications for the advancement of physical and mental health among Africans and African Americans (Barnes, 1988; Finch, 1991; King, 1994; Moore 1995; Welsing, 1991). Finch (1991) was so convinced of its significance he “goes out on the limb.” He stated, “It is not too much to say that without this original black pigment, there would be no human race today” (p. 5). Dark skin is an adaptive asset in a hot climate because it protects the skin from the sun’s ultraviolet radiation. Unprotected skin is subject to grotesque, disfiguring cancers that are soon fatal, Finch explained. Aging of the skin and the aging process is retarded, protection against vitamin D intoxication and mutational damage to basal cell DNA is guarded against, and more efficient activation of muscle response for reaction speed is enabled because of the melanin pigment that causes the skin to be dark (Brando & Eaton, 1978). Melanin is known to provide mechanisms of defense for the body’s immunologic system, promote the health of the reproductive organs, enhance body energy metabolisms, and heighten extrasensory perception (King, 1990).

It is a bioethical holocaust to keep African people in the dark about the biological advantages of their darkness. Increasing self-knowledge in this regard among people of African descent is certain to translate to an improved sense of psychological well-being. Correspondingly, there is likely to be greatly reduced risk for somatic illness and maladaptive lifestyles or coping
patterns, which are instrumental to a diminished quality of life for most diasporic Africans. What is more, these patterns lower the life expectancy of too many African people who have come to feel, through the proliferation of distorted and false knowledge about themselves, that their darkness is a curse.

RACISM AND OPPRESSION: THE CONTINUING THREAT TO BLACK SURVIVAL

Racism and oppression constitute the second force. This force stems from the seemingly unending confrontation of African people with environmental and interpersonal adversity resulting from racism and oppression, where the virtues of truth, justice and fair play, and equal opportunity and treatment under the law are severely compromised. Racism and oppression have been precipitous to behavioral responses that signal concern about physical survival and deliverance from psychological stresses, which pose a threat to the physical well-being of African American people (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999).

Consideration of racism and oppression is warranted in forming a psychological perspective on the biomedical ethics of communities of African people and must be addressed from the framework of African-centered theories of psychology (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1996; Oyserman & Harrison, 1998). Anxiety stemming from the question of Black survival in America has not been dispelled to the satisfaction of many Africans in America and other parts of the world who continue to live under the ravages of racism and oppression. And although recent social changes have temporarily suppressed some of the more critical threats to physical well-being, new threats and tactics, many believe, continue to take shape and form.

The nefarious Tuskegee syphilis experiment, called a "tragedy of race and medicine, and a moral astigmatism" (Jones, 1982, p. 30), has resurfaced in questions about governmental involvement in the spread of the AIDS virus among Africans and African Americans (Welsing, 1991). After all, Jones (1982) insisted, disease germs are the most democratic creatures in the world.

Health brutality and population control are seen as two new tactics that futurists believe threaten the survival of people of African descent (Yette, 1971). Many believe these schemes to be blatantly genocidal (Wikler, 1999).

Yette (1971) informed that health brutality is packaged in an aura of impersonality. Yette warned that it has respectability and takes on the trappings of scholarly research and is purported to be front-line helper to
educators, social workers, and even the police and all who work toward the betterment of society. Because of the recessive posture of transcultural psychiatry and psychology, many malevolent schemes, from the viewpoint of many African descendants, have proliferated in the name of improving society.

Psychosurgery is perhaps the most dramatic of all medically based individual therapies for mental and behavioral deviance. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, psychosurgery became a sociopolitical issue. Vernon Mark, William Sweet, and Frank Erwin (1967), all associated with psychosurgery projects in Boston, argued that some of the violence in ghetto rioting could well stem from brain disease that could be cured by psychosurgery. Is this nothing more than a rather crude disguise for a form of social control?

Neville (1978) contended that a decision to treat patients with psychosurgery is part of the process that defines certain behavior as unacceptable or undesirable, legitimizes action to suppress or extinguish the behavior, and renders power to the powerful, including health care providers, to take action against the behavior. Neville’s point is that when violence is defined as a mental or physical disease, it deprives those with the supposed affliction some of the powers of due process that would go with an otherwise purely criminal claim made against their behavior.

Prisoners whose behavioral problems were indocility and who were judged irrational by prison staff have had psychosurgery performed on them—an intervention touted by one of its strongest proponents, Dr. Ernest Rodin (Citizens Commission on Human Rights, 1995). Rodin also favored castration of incarcerated violent offenders, most of whom were diasporic Africans. This is an example of how behavior that can be a response to racism and oppression can be ruled an illness. In such instances, due process to those so diagnosed can be circumvented.

Castration surgery may not be dead as a form of intervention for Black male sex offenders, particularly those convicted of forcible sexual crimes against White women. Not surprisingly, the literature provides support for reduced recidivism among sexual offenders treated with castration (Sturup, 1971). Clearly, this represents a throwback to the days when African American men were castrated by Caucasian lynch mobs, which was a prevention strategy to protect the supposed sanctity of White womanhood.

RACISM AND THE BIOETHICAL USE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS

Nixon. During his tenure as the nation’s chief executive officer, Nixon asked the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to study the proposal of a New York psychiatrist. The psychiatrist proposed that psychological tests be administered to all 6-year-old children in the United States to determine their future potential for criminal behavior. Massive psychological and psychiatric treatment of those children found to be “pediatric criminal,” the doctor believed, was a better short-term and less costly solution to the crime problem than urban reconstruction. Teenage boys later found to be persisting in incorrigible behavior would be remanded to camps. The determination of criminal tendencies would be made by psychologists using such tests as the Rorschach, which derives its predictive insights from the responses and reactions of the person being tested to a series of inkblot images.

The pattern of using tests to exclude, un-educate, and mis-educate African Americans does not appear to be losing momentum (Young, 1999). The items used in personality tests such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) are designed to identify a person’s degree of mental health by measuring the degree to which his or her attained rating deviates from a normative standard. Considered to be the best test of its kind, the MMPI yields results that suggest African Americans consistently score further from the norm than Whites, and according to the rationale of the test, African Americans seem more psychopathological than Whites (Baughman, 1971; Loring & Powell, 1988; Velasquez & Wendell, 1990). The accuracy of this instrument for Blacks has been a matter of extensive debate among experts because of its tendency to show false positive psychopathology in normal Blacks and to exaggerate the severity of illness in Black patients (Adebimpe, Gigandet, & Harris, 1979; Pritchard & Rosenblatt, 1980). It is ironic, Baughman (1971) observed, that the test uses separate norms for men and women because of observed modal differences in their personalities. Modal differences between men and women are not unlike, nor perhaps as great, as those existing between Blacks and Whites, Baughman noted. Others question whether separate norms are required (Greene, 1990). The revised edition of the MMPI, MMPI-2, calls attention to social and racial differences in interpretation manuals (Graham, 2000). Nevertheless, there are no adjustments in the normative data or graphical depictions of psychological deviance that clinicians are free to apply liberally.

Although most believers of Black intellectual inferiority have retreated to the background, large numbers of African American children and patients continue to be misdiagnosed as mildly retarded or borderline with tests of intelligence, such as the Wechsler Scales (Renzulli, 1986). These children are locked into educational environments that woefully underprepare them for
life, lessening their ability to participate in the processes of their own liberation.

**PHARMACOLOGICAL INHIBITION OF AFRICAN PSYCHOMOTOR EXPRESSION**

Another major source of distress to the American public is the amount of energy that ordinary African Americans exert on the environment using the expressive modality of physical movement (Samuel et al., 1997). When physical movement is excessive in children, it is often wrongly diagnosed as attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity and treated with psychomotor stimulants, which supposedly heighten attentional forces and paradoxically reduce overactive behavior. There is general agreement that these drugs are disproportionately used to treat the behavior of African American children and that drugs in general are disproportionately used to treat mental disorders in African American patients (Baker, 1988; Klerman & Izen, 1978). Most of the time, it is difficult to distinguish the drug-responsive group from children whose learning difficulties are due to social deprivation.

Limitations of teaching style in terms of the inability of teachers to accommodate the African expressive style are a function in the liberal application of the diagnosis and the use of pharmacological agents to treat it (Baker, 1988; Klerman & Izen, 1978). Expressive physical movement is a core dimension of Black expressive psychology (Pastur & Toldson, 1982). Many children of African descent use this component of their heritage in traditional learning environments and are then targeted for behavioral suppression or physical exclusion. Many in communities of African people are apprehensive, some even outraged, because they feel that psychomotor compounds are being used for social control, that is, submissiveness and subversiveness, to fit the expressive norm of a society that is uncomfortable with active physical expression in formal training environments (Baker, 1988; Klerman & Izen, 1978).

During the advent of adolescence, when the young person uses heightened physical movement to vent the natural age-expected opposition to authority, it is most often regarded as abnormal aggression when exhibited by African Americans, especially males (Franklin, 1999). Social systems become increasingly confrontational in their attempt to control African American physical expressiveness and unduly provoke many of these young people to behave in ways that promote their early exits from school and their early entrance into correctional settings.
RACIST CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF NORMAL BEHAVIOR AND MENTAL ILLNESS

Mental health theory draws its guiding principles of illness and intervention from both general and abnormal psychology. Generally, these principles have been seen as universal and applicable to all humans. Prior to the advent of transcultural psychiatry, that approach to theory building and intervention presented no major concerns (Wittkower & Fried, 1958). This was true despite earlier suggestions by cultural anthropologists that Euro-American theories of mental illness and health did not necessarily hold for other societies.

But Euro-American prejudice worsened in spite of enlightened views and has led to the identification of one particular pattern of behavioral adaptation as superior to all others, with only minor regard for the adaptiveness of different behavioral patterns within different sociocultural settings. Such ethnic bias forces a popular question: What is normal behavior?

It is a question that has led to a polarization of mental health theorists. Most of these theorists continue to be steeped in Euro-Western ideology and assert that mental illness can be operationally defined in terms of failure to adjust to dominant conceptions of proper behavior (Ausubel, 1961). Symptoms of this failure include, among others, transgenerational poverty, chronic unemployment, sexual promiscuity, and illegal and violent behavior (Parsons, 1972). These characteristics have largely become the dominant conceptual framework by which less acute illness has been identified and treated.

African Americans, along with others, have been adversely affected by ideological maneuvers of this sort. For many scholars, this theoretical viewpoint is racist. In fact, racism and oppression are believed to be the major sources of stress that have an impact on the physical and mental well-being of African Americans (Clark et al., 1999).

Contrarily and importantly so, the view of mental health theory to which many African American scholars adhere blames the environment and not heredity for many of the maladaptive excesses and/or deficits in the behavior of African Americans when compared to Euro-American norms. Moreover, many believe that these behavioral tendencies are justified, that is, not maladaptive at all and perhaps necessary for the oppressed person (Fogelson, 1971; Tomlinson, 1970).

For instance, rioting, under certain conditions, can be argued to be normal, healthy behavior for the oppressed in that it forces attention to the degree to which the group is being oppressed (Tomlinson, 1970). Rioting, therefore, can potentially take on an adaptive meaning—a quest for liberty and liberation. The freedom of every group, “by any means necessary,” is a long-
standing principle of all sovereign democracies (Fogelson, 1971; Tomlinson, 1970).

Given this perspective, mental well-being for the oppressed can be operationally defined in terms of some of those very behavioral tendencies that are believed to be maladaptive by those who oppress. Resistance, protest, caution, suspicion, and spontaneous violence of the masses are historic responses to oppression, not mental illness, among all people who have been oppressed (Sears & McConahay, 1973; Skolnick, 1969). Dr. William Tautman of the African American Coalition for Justice in Social Policy was clinically correct when he remarked, “To oppress a race and then label its reactions as ‘mental illness,’ is not only morally wrong, it is criminal and a fraud” (Citizens Commission on Human Rights, 1995, p. 22).

Thus, for all practical purposes, the dominant theory of mental illness when applied to the African American population is essentially a theory of pathology. It argues that for African Americans to be mentally healthy, they must stay in their place and accept the system of racism and oppression in which the effective majority of White people participate.

The dominant theory of mental health envisions a kind of group mental illness pervading the African American community. This kind of theorizing not only lends scientific support to traditional stereotypes of African Americans but also provides the legitimization for return to the traditional forms of relating with Blacks: control and containment (Mason, 1973). The influence of such theorizing is evident in contemporary discussions of means of controlling urban racial protests and violence.

**BIOETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF CROSS-RACIAL CLINICAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Another trend that has been viewed as race related is the disproportionate extent to which Black mental health patients are given somatic therapy (drugs and electric shock) as opposed to psychotherapy (Maas, 1972; Thomas & Sillen, 1972). Presumably, severity of illness is the main criterion for this therapeutic trend. However, in these cases, severity of illness has often been defined in terms of African American negativism—violence and hostility— toward hospital staff and therapists.

It is noteworthy that this mode of deterring acuteness is conceptually linked to that part of the dominant theory that presupposes that all African Americans have tremendous amounts of suppressed rage toward Euro-Americans (Greer & Cobb, 1969). This fear has not gone away and serves to suggest added pressures and tensions extant between White therapists and
Black patients. This partially explains the documented centrality of race issues in therapy even when they seem irrelevant (Milner, 1953; Sue & Sue, 1999).

The presence of racial tension in therapy has produced two important consequences. First, White therapists often avoid individual therapy with African American patients, even when time and money seem unimportant factors. Second, White therapists tend to adopt a patterned response to Black patients regardless of the presenting problems or mitigating circumstances (Franklin, 1999).

This patterned response has been described as defensive and pessimistic or overly accommodating and permissive regarding the possibility of therapeutic success (Bernard, 1971; Maas, 1972). Their procedures are unlikely to deal directly with their own incompetence and racial ambivalence. Rather, they seek to use their theories and concepts of personality as a means of containing the patient by encouraging him or her simply to talk, take pills, and receive shock treatment or explain his or her negativism when their procedures are seen as ineffective (Brooks, 1974; Shannon, 1973).

African Americans are not typically quick to seek help for mental health concerns (National Mental Health Association, 1998). A survey by the association revealed that 27% of African Americans said they would “handle it” (clinical depression) with prayer and faith alone. Only one third of those surveyed said they would take medication for depression if prescribed by a physician, as compared to 69% of the general population. Moreover, 19% of African Americans said they would seek help from friends and family rather than from a mental health provider. When combined with the high percentage who rely on prayer and faith alone, this position is consistent with a community reliance on the support of family and the religious community during periods of emotional distress.

TOWARD BIOETHICAL AUTHENTICITY IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE DELIVERY

Some progressive and comprehensive mental health programs have recognized and accepted the necessity of carrying services to the homes, schools, and communities in which diasporic Africans live (Toldson & Toldson, 1999). This is especially significant, given the sometimes reluctance of African Americans to seek professional mental health care in traditional settings. This approach serves to overcome, at least in part, the belief system of African people that embraces the idea that depression and other mental illnesses are personal weaknesses and not health problems. Although not being terribly cognizant of the consistency with traditional African
modes of mental health service delivery, this represents a progressive step
toward communalizing the process of mental health delivery.

As practiced by traditional healers in Africa, delivery modes and strate-
gies of psychological/psychiatric health care typically included treating the
patient in the home and having informal and unstructured contact with the
family. The application of suggestion and assurance as well as naming the ill-
ness and providing education and explanation about cause to reduce associ-
ated anxiety is a component of the helping process. Traditional West African
healers would often manipulate the environment to alter anxiety-arousing
stimuli and encourage some acting out or abduction to permit the patient to
speak his or her mind and unburden himself or herself of troubles (Swift &
Asuni, 1975). Giving direct, constructive advice and guidance were also
essential strategies of traditional West African healers that could be adapted
by Western practitioners who serve African American clients.

Most mental health practitioners, however, have resisted this trend and
have reformulated what elements that are acceptable, under the guise of a
Western idea. Maas (1972) explained that some critics of traditional therapy
view the resistance among mainstream therapists as a mere matter of prefer-
ence and tradition. Others viewed it as yet another instance of polite racism
based on an aversion for personal contact with Blacks and the poor. This latter
view has been more convincing. There are numerous instances where avoid-
ance of interaction with the African American community has also been
accompanied by an unwillingness to encourage younger, more liberal mental
health workers to practice a community orientation (Bernard, 1971).

Moreover, there has been resistance to allocating resources needed to
increase the ranks of African American mental health workers who might be
better prepared and more willing to carry their services to the community as
evident in the crackdowns on affirmative action programs in all of higher edu-
cation (Kravitz, 1995). Racism is present in and affects theories of
psychopathology, modes of identifying the mental ill, preferred styles of
intervention, routine therapist-patient interaction, and resistance to the impli-
cations of transcultural psychiatry for the American setting.

Although life expectancy has increased for most other groups based on
gender and ethnicity, for African American males it has grown to a mere 66
years (Crispell, 1995). There is unusual irony in the fact that the group from
which springs the nation’s most robust athletes is the first to die. A quiet and
unannounced lifeboat ethic, a passive triage, appears to be operating against
the African American male and ultimately the African American family. The
African American male is encouraged, by an oppressive and racist society,
into a lifestyle that is marked by poor physical and mental health, woefully
stunting and abbreviating his full maturity.
Group therapy and community-based interventions are more consistent with the African values of collectivism and communalism (Jackson & Sears, 1992; Toldson & Toldson, 1999; see also Post & Weddington, 1997). The group combats the sense of isolation that is a product of individualism while it promotes a sense of oneness consistent with the African ethos of oneness of being. Yalom’s (1995) idea of universality comes close to the African idea of oneness of being, and creating this sense within the group requires culturally appropriate interventions and procedures.

Based on Black expressive psychology theory, Toldson and Toldson (1999) have provided some cogent examples of integrating the African ethos into clinical group therapy. They suggested having therapy group members dress alike on designated days with T-shirts bearing agreed-upon African symbolism indicative of positive African values to promote unity and collectiveness. Ritualistic unison recitation of important beliefs, in the form of positive affirmations that tout positive values, is advised. They suggest the creation of ceremonies that emphasize group members’ reliance on each other rather than competition with each other. Developed from within the group should be cohesive elements such as developing secret hand signals, passwords, and codes to express aggressive urges and discontent that portend of verbal or physical violence. Creating dance/drilling steps that embody the African propensity for psychomotor kinesthesia, combined with music and dramatic storytelling to express innermost and troubling feelings, is another example of recommendations they make.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Psychological health care must begin to affirm a biomedical ethic that is sensitive to perspectives of Africans and diasporic descendants. The process can be enhanced by making accommodations for the expression of belief patterns, thoughts, and sociocultural customs indicative of the presence of an African identity in the behavior of African people. These must be woven into theoretical points of departure in the provision of quality psychological health care.

The impact of the interrelationships among environmental conditions and sociopolitical dynamics on the definitions of normal mentally healthy behavior of oppressed Africans must be accounted for in diagnostic decision making relative to clients of African descent.

Increasing the presence of psychological health care providers who embrace the understanding that it is therapeutically relevant to develop an
African identity in the psyches of African people is essential. These providers should understand the sociopolitical influences of the dominant perspective of psychology to help affirm a bioethical perspective that is sensitive to the African ethos.

Recognizing group identity and collective responsibility as real and deducible phenomena within the culture of African American people is consistent with the embrace of an African ethos. This can be made operational by soliciting consent for biomedical involvement of the individual from relevant groups, including the family, church, social and civic associations, friends, fraternal and sorority societies, and/or sociopolitical organizations (the tribe) with which the individual affiliates in the manifestation of his identity as a group member. Such a procedure is advisable not only out of respect for these African values but also in recognition of the low power quotient afforded the ordinary citizen of African descent.

In addition, it is important to recognize that most African Americans have to be, at least to some extent, bilingual and that this status creates a unique set of mental health issues related to self-esteem, identity formation, and role behavior to which systems of psychological health care must appropriately respond. Differentiating between the symptoms of intrapsychic stress and stress arising from sociopolitical powerlessness and limited economic resources is an essential clinical skill of the psychologist who claims sensitivity to a biomedical perspective that is consistent with the African ethos.

Learning the culturally different indicators for depression, anxiety, attachment and loss, identity confusion, and other less inflammatory diagnostic indicators so as to more accurately replace those that are excessively used, such as schizophrenic, borderline personality, oppositional defiant conduct, and attention deficit disorders, in African American clients is a diagnostic imperative. Moreover, subscribing to diagnostic nomenclature introduced by African American psychologists, which also defines accommodationist behavior of the acculturated African American as maladaptive, must be considered in diagnostic formulations about the mental health of African Americans.

Accepting spirit and unseen forces as meaningful phenomena in the life realm and decision-making processes of the majority of African people is significantly important. Spirit is an entity that has to be reconciled and/or accommodated in formulas for clinical insight and understanding.

In behavioral as in biomedical research, there is a tendency to recruit participants disproportionately from particular groups within the social system (Greenberg, 1987). Groups that are dependent or powerless by virtue of their age, their physical and mental condition, their minority status, their social
deviance, or their condition of captivity within various institutions are heavily recruited as research participants.

Given the African American power deficiency within the social system, the truly voluntary nature of consent becomes problematic for Black research participants. The exploitation of Black research participants, usually to demean the Black community, is a situation that must be brokered at the sociopolitical level. Power bases in the Black community to sign-off on matters of consent would rightfully bring the control of such research within the bounds of the African American community in concurrence with its collective nature.

The medical-based professions emanate from Africa, brought to excellence in antiquity by the Egyptians (Finch, 1990). Racism within the biomedical sphere of intelligence must be confronted and purged. Purgation should be followed by an impregnation with the spirit of Africa. The degree of confrontation, purgation, and impregnation will be measured by the degree of African consciousness that is cultivated within the African American community.

African and diasporic scholars as well as others of goodwill who are possessed with the ethos of doing what is good, right, fair, and just in the interest of the physical and mental health of African people everywhere, must cultivate clinical procedures that promote comfort with the existence and therapeutic desirability of an African consciousness in the psyches of African descendants. Cultivating its expression is consistent with good and right action in the delivery of quality mental health care to citizens of African descent.

REFERENCES


Since its inception, the Journal of Black Psychology has only undergone a period of self-reflection once. To that end, this study examined the content of the Journal of Black Psychology. A content analysis of articles published for a 15-year period (1985-1999) was conducted. A total of 245 articles were classified into 15 content categories. Authors and institutions that were the most frequently published were identified and ranked. The categories of articles that received the most activity were in the areas of personality (i.e., racial identity), reactions and commentary, social behavior, and physiological functioning and health psychology. These 4 categories accounted for 52% of the articles examined. Neglected areas of research are discussed.

The origins of Black psychology as a field can be traced to the year 1968, when a group of Black psychologists attended the American Psychological Association’s (APA) annual convention in San Francisco, California. Although this small group of less than 25 individuals differed in varying degrees of ideology, they were clear on one fact: The psychology they had been trained in was oppressing the very people with whom they were trying to help. When it became apparent that the APA was not going to address the psychological problems and social challenges facing Black people, this group of psychologists left the APA to found the Association of Black Psychologists. The Association of Black Psychologists’ charge was to
authenticate the psychology of Black people in a way that was culturally responsive and nonpathological. This sentiment was probably best expressed in the 1970 classic work by Dr. Joseph White. In a classic paper called “Toward a Black Psychology,” he made the following statement:

Regardless of what Black people ultimately decide about the questions of separation, integration, segregation, revolution, or reform, it is vitally important that we develop, out of the authentic experience of Black people in this country, an accurate workable theory of Black psychology. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to understand the lifestyles of Black people using traditional theories developed by White psychologists to explain White people. Moreover, when these traditional theories are applied to the lives of Black folks many incorrect, weakness-dominated, and inferiority-oriented conclusions come about. (p. 44)

This now well-known statement was the first attempt to identify the need for a Black psychology as well as to define and outline its purpose. The purpose of the Association of Black Psychologists as indicated in its current by-laws includes the following:

1. promoting and advancing the profession of African psychology,
2. influencing and effecting social change, and
3. developing programs whereby psychologists of African descent can assist in solving problems of Black communities and other ethnic groups.

Some Black psychologists have devoted their entire careers to developing culturally appropriate theories for Black people, whereas others have focused on the empirical investigation of these theories and other theories assumed to be generalizable to the experiences of Black people. Still others have focused their efforts on providing culturally appropriate services for Black people. One of the primary means of disseminating knowledge about theory, research, and practice that promotes the field of Black psychology is through publication in professional journals.

The flagship journal for the field of Black psychology, indeed the only journal dedicated exclusively to Black psychology, is the *Journal of Black Psychology (JBP)*, published by the Association of Black Psychologists. The *JBP*, like many other professional journals, consists of an editor-in-chief, associate editors, editorial board reviewers, and numerous ad hoc reviewers. The reviewers judge the merits of each manuscript according to professional standards for scholarship and relevance. The mission statement of the *JBP* states that the journal publishes empirical research, original theoretical analyses of data, and discussions of the current literature. Specifically, the journal
publishes work in personality, social behavior, child development, cognition, education, physiological functioning, and clinical application. The journal also publishes theoretical and empirical work that falls outside traditional boundaries. Regardless of the specific area, all articles should make a scholarly contribution and focus on the general domain of Black populations. According to Williams and Buboltz (1999), an examination of articles published in a journal reveals the trends and issues that have an impact on the discipline. The purpose of this study is to chronicle the directions the JBP has taken over the years regarding its content, professional issues and concerns, and other issues that are considered appropriate and relevant to the field of Black psychology.

A content analysis of a journal allows for an examination of the kinds of topics that are deemed important to the particular field the journal represents. Of course, the articles that are published are influenced by several factors. Each editor brings to the position his or her vision for the direction in which the journal should be going. Relatedly, the editorial board and ad hoc reviewers also have particular views on the types of articles that should be published. In theory, these editorial board members and ad hoc reviewers should represent the broad spectrum of specialty areas within the field so that diverse topics are appropriately addressed. Articles that are published also reflect the contemporary issues that are germane to the readership and the field at that time. The journal publishes articles that reflect the zeitgeist of the discipline and “reflect the values, beliefs, and perceptions of professional identity by a scientific discipline, journal editors, and individual authors” (Williams & Buboltz, 1999, p. 496).

Content analyses not only help identify what issues are deemed central to the field but also can help identify areas where more work needs to be done, particularly if it is considered to be an important and defining issue in the discipline. For example, suppose that a content analysis of the JBP reveals a paucity of empirical articles with an African-centered focus. If African-centered empirical articles are seen as important in the further growth and development of the field, the editor can then focus part of his or her energy on soliciting more articles of this type. Conversely, it could also be decided that African-centered empirical articles are no longer seen as important in the further growth of the discipline. These and other interpretations and conclusions can be drawn based on the results of a thorough content analysis. In general, content analyses can lead to the narrowing or broadening of the scope of a journal.

Content analyses have been performed in other disciplines as well as other areas within psychology. For example, the counseling profession’s flagship
Several interesting and important findings were obtained from these analyses. Perhaps the most interesting finding came from Weinrach and colleagues’ (1998) content analysis, where they found that psychologists were publishing in increasingly higher numbers in a counseling-oriented journal. Weinrach and colleagues (1998) concluded that a cross-fertilization of ideas from other disciplines would ultimately benefit the counseling profession. Counseling psychology’s flagship journal has had numerous content analyses, including Munley (1974); Heesacker, Heppner, and Rogers (1982); Wampold and White (1985); Ponterotto (1988); and Buboltz, Miller, and Williams (1999). Buboltz and colleagues (1999) concluded that “the research reported in the JCP has remained consistent with the mission statement of the journal” (p. 496).

However, an examination of the JBP reveals that only one content analysis has been conducted during its more than 20-year history. In that content analysis, Steele and Davis (1984) reported that there was an increase in empirically based research articles and a decline in the number of political/ideological articles. They also reported that there was a small increase in the number of articles that used a deficit orientation to explain Black behavior. They concluded that there is a need for explanatory models of behavior based on “Afro-graphic” experiences of Black people. The only other article that performed a content analysis reported the results of an examination of the commitment of three journals to publishing research on racial and ethnic issues (Carter, Akinsulure-Smith, Smailes, & Clauss, 1998). The JBP was not included among these three journals for obvious reasons.

The current study seeks to begin what we hope will be an ongoing, systematic self-reflection of the JBP. This content analysis will cover 15 years and will chronicle the nature and quantity of topics published in the JBP. We will also report the most frequently contributing authors and institutions to the JBP.

**METHOD**

**RATERS**

Two African American female doctoral students in their 20s and one African American 31-year-old male assistant professor of counseling psychology served as raters in the study. The doctoral students were in clinical and counseling psychology programs. One student attended a historically Black
college in the South, whereas the other student attended a predominantly Black college in the Midwest. Both students were exposed to the field of Black psychology by their professors. All of the raters have been members of the Association of Black Psychologists and have attended the annual national convention. This information is important because it demonstrates a familiarity with the history and purpose of the field of Black psychology. The method of rating was taught by the assistant professor of counseling psychology.

MEASURE

Both deductive and inductive procedures were used to determine the categories used in the content analysis. The initial inclusion of content categories relied on deductive procedures, that is, previously determined categories as ascribed by the journal’s mission statement. This included nine categories. Next, the raters used inductive procedures to develop additional categories for the articles. This was done by each rater independently reviewing the contents of the journal, meeting and discussing their overall impressions of the types of articles published in the journal. The inductive procedures resulted in the addition of six categories. A category’s inclusion required a majority decision by the raters. This resulted in a total of 15 categories. It should be noted that three of the original categories as ascribed by the journal’s mission statement (i.e. theoretical, physiological functioning, and child development) were expanded to be more inclusive of topics that were seen to be closely related (i.e., theoretical/conceptual, physiological functioning/health psychology, and child/adolescent development). One original category (i.e., empirical research and theoretical formulations outside traditional boundaries) was reworded to reflect what we believe was the original intent of the category (i.e., empirical research and theoretical formulations with an African-centered focus). Articles were coded into the following content categories:

1. Theoretical and conceptual: These articles were based on specific theories or concepts as supported by research. These articles used a conceptual framework to organize and integrate research studies. Therefore, the primary intent was not to perform an empirical study but, rather, to interpret the results of a collection of empirical studies or to understand a particular phenomenon within a particular conceptual framework.

2. Cognition: This category deals with topics such as thinking, categorizing, schemas, creating, reasoning, problem solving, and intelligence. For example, articles that examined learning styles would go in this category.
3. Personality: Articles in this category examined the relationship between personality and correlates of personality such as mental health, performance, and development. For example, articles that examined the relationship of racial identity and some other variable were coded in this category. Articles pertaining to the development of personality measures were coded in this category as well as the testing and assessment category.

4. Social behavior: Articles in this category examined the psychological processes that take place in group behavior. Examples of articles in this category examined social behavior such as gang violence and sexual risk behavior.

5. Physiological functioning and health psychology: Articles that address psychological issues pertaining to health and physiology were placed in this category. An example of articles in this category examined AIDS in the African American community.

6. Child and adolescent development: Articles in this category examined psychosocial developmental issues of children and adolescents. For example, articles that dealt with coping behaviors and racial awareness were placed in this category.

7. Education: Articles in this category address the psychological impact of education and educational environments. For example, articles that focused on culturally sensitive approaches in educating African American students were included in this category.

8. Clinical application: Articles that address implications for clinical practice were placed in this category. For example, articles that dealt with interventions for a specific population (e.g., African American children) would be placed in this category.

9. Empirical research and theoretical formulations with an African-centered focus: Articles in this category were explicitly written using an African-centered conceptual framework. For example, articles using Kambon’s (1996) African Self-Consciousness construct would be placed in this category.

10. Testing and assessment: Articles in this category discussed philosophical and methodological issues concerned with the practice of psychological testing and assessment. For example, articles that dealt with the use of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders would be placed in this category.

11. Research reviews: Articles in this category reported a comprehensive review of articles in a specific area of Black psychology. For example, an article that reviewed the empirical research about transracial adoption would be placed in this category.

12. Research on families: Articles in this category reported on research pertaining to the psychological functioning of Black families. For example, articles that addressed the role of grandparents in Black families would be placed in this category.

13. Psychometric research on test development and other forms of assessment: Articles in this category reported on the development of psychological instru-
ments. A common example in this category was the development of personality measures.

14. Miscellaneous: Articles in this category were determined by the judges to not fit in any of the categories. For example, one article discussed the use of segregation indexes, which was not deemed to fit in any category.

15. Reactions and commentaries: Articles in this category were either reactions to an important article or commentary about some social issue of particular relevance to African Americans. For example, articles responding to Herrnstein and Murray’s (1994) book *The Bell Curve* would be placed in this category.

**PROCEDURE**

The current analysis covers articles published from 1985 (Volume 12) to 1999 (Volume 25). For the purposes of this analysis, only empirical studies, theoretical and/or conceptual contributions, research reviews, and commentary/reactions were included. Book reviews and introductions to special sections were excluded. The raters met weekly to ensure that there was consistency in the judgments. A majority vote was used following discussions in instances where raters disagreed.

Previous attempts to assign a credit value to each article based on categories have resulted in 1 point being assigned to each article (Buboltz et al., 1999). In instances in which articles fit two categories, credit for the article was divided among the categories (0.5 for each category) (Buboltz et al., 1999). Buboltz and colleagues made no further divisions. However, that system is inadequate for the current investigation, because the nature of the field of Black psychology is multidisciplinary. As the primary outlet for research in areas of Black psychology, the *JBP* necessarily reflects this multidisciplinary approach. Cross-classification of articles was necessary, so that in some instances an article might be classified in two, three, or even four categories. In only a handful of cases were articles classified in four categories. If an article met the criteria for two categories, 0.5 points was assigned to each category; for three categories, 0.33 points was assigned to each category; and for four categories, 0.25 points was assigned to each category. Therefore, the focus is not on how many points a single article accumulates but rather, on how many points a single category accumulates. This system often resulted in categories with fractionalized numbers (e.g., $n = 3.66$), where $n$ is the number of points falling in a category. To determine rankings for authorship and institutional affiliation, a weighted, proportional counting system as devised by Howard, Cole, and Maxwell (1987) was used. The formula
was used, where \( n \) = the total number of authors and \( i \) = the particular author's ordinal position. So, for example, a single-authored article received 1 credit. Second authorship in an article with two authors results in the first author’s receiving 0.60 points and the second author’s receiving 0.40 points. In an article with three authors, the first author received 0.47 points, the second author received 0.32 points, and the third author received 0.21 points. Four authors received 0.42, 0.28, 0.18, and 0.12 points, respectively; five authors received 0.38, 0.26, 0.17, 0.11, and 0.08 points; six authors received 0.37, 0.24, 0.16, 0.11, 0.07, and 0.05 points. Seven authors received 0.35, 0.23, 0.15, 0.10, 0.06, 0.04, and 0.03 points. This system was also used for assigning points based on institutional affiliation. If an author listed more than one institutional affiliation, credit was assigned to the institutional affiliation listed first.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the frequencies and percentages of the articles classified in the 15 content categories for each year in Volume 12 (1985) through Volume 25 (1999). The last two rows of Table 1 indicate the total number and percentage of the articles classified in each category.

The personality category and reactions and commentaries category accounted for the largest number of articles (16% each) during the 15-year time span. The second largest category focused on social behavior research (12%). Physiological functioning and health psychology composed the third largest category (8%). These categories accounted for 52% of the articles published in that 15-year span. The other 11 categories made up the remaining 48%. Of these publications, 6% were child and adolescent development, 6% were cognition, 6% were African-centered research, 5% were education, 5% were theoretical and conceptual, 4% were clinical application, 4% focused on test development and the psychometric qualities of tests, 4% were family research, and 4% were miscellaneous. Two percent were research reviews, and only 1% focused on testing and assessment.

Table 2 lists and ranks the top 17 contributors to the JBP during the past 15 years. The author making the highest contributions to the journal during this time is Daudi Ajani ya Azibo. The second highest contributor is Oscar
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NOTE: All percentages are rounded off. Total by row equals number of articles published that year. Total n by column equals number of points per category. 1 = theoretical and conceptual articles; 2 = articles about cognition; 3 = personality research; 4 = research on social behavior; 5 = research on physiological functioning and health psychology; 6 = research on child and adolescent development; 7 = education; 8 = clinical application; 9 = African-centered empirical research and theoretical formulations; 10 = testing and assessment; 11 = research reviews; 12 = research on families; 13 = psychometric research on test development and other forms of assessment; 14 = miscellaneous research category; 15 = reactions and commentaries.
Barbarin, followed by Jerome Taylor and then Samella Abdullah as the third and fourth highest contributors, respectively. Hope Landrine is the fifth highest ranking author.

The top 20 institutions are listed in Table 3. The institution with the highest rank is Florida A. & M. University. The second- and third-ranked institutions were the University of Michigan and the University of Cincinnati, respectively. They are followed by Temple University, University of Pittsburgh, and Howard University as the fourth, fifth, and sixth most frequently contributing institutions.

DISCUSSION

The results of the content analysis for the 15-year period covering Volumes 12 through 25 provide some revealing information about the trends and issues that have had an impact on the discipline of Black psychology. The primary purpose of this study was to analyze the content of the JBP. An invest-
The results indicate that the majority of articles were published in four categories consistent with the JBP’s mission statement. The JBP’s top-ranked publications were in the categories of personality and reactions and commentaries. More often than not, the area of personality addressed was racial identity development. In other instances, the area addressed racial/cultural consciousness. This emphasis may reflect a historic dilemma of African Americans to resolve the psychological conflicts of “double consciousness” (Du Bois, 1903). The racial identity models of Cross (1971, 1991) have been very influential in seeking to describe the psychological impact of White oppression on...
the personality development of African Americans. The ability to conceptu-
alize healthy and unhealthy personality development has implications for all
realms of African American life (i.e. education, mental health, etc.). Reac-
tions and commentaries covered issues such as transracial adoption and the
bell curve. The high ranking of this category is probably due to the JBP’s
being responsive to the mission of the Association of Black Psychologists to
influence and effect social change relative to the lives of people of African
descent. It is probably the case that this category serves as the position of the
Association of Black Psychologists on such critical issues relevant to the
African American community.

Social behavioral research was the second largest category. This is not sur-
prising, considering the importance of social behavior on the collective psy-
chology and well-being of African Americans. Physiological functioning
and health psychology ranked as the third largest category. This category’s
relatively high ranking could be viewed as the discipline’s attempt to view
psychology and mental health from a holistic health perspective in which
addressing such issues as AIDS/HIV, sickle cell anemia, and other health
issues are critical because they threaten the life expectancy of African Ameri-
cans. The fourth largest place ranking was composed of articles published
about child and adolescent development, cognition, and African-centered
research. These seven categories represent the majority of articles published
in the JBP for the period under study.

Arguably, the trend during this 15-year period was to address Black per-
sonality development and respond to contemporary social affairs. It should
be noted that during this period, there were considerable social issues facing
African Americans in the form of attacks on Black intelligence, the in-
creasing popularity of transracial adoption, and a rise in hate crimes. These issues
can be seen as influential in research addressing a healthy Black/African cul-
tural identity.

Another purpose of this content analysis was to rank the top contributors
to the JBP. Daudi Ajani ya Azibo and Oscar Barbarin were ranked first and
second, respectively, whereas Jerome Taylor and Samella Abdulla were
ranked third and fourth, respectively. A majority of Azibo’s articles were in
the area of empirical research and theoretical formulations using an African-
centered conceptual foundation. The majority of Barbarin’s articles were in
the areas of health psychology, family research, and child and adolescent
development. The majority of Taylor’s articles were in the areas of family
research, child and adolescent development, and social behavior. The major-
ity of Abdulla’s articles were reactions and commentaries, although she also
published in the category of clinical application.
A third purpose of this content analysis was to rank the institutions that have contributed the most publications to the *JBP*. It is not surprising that the historically Black college Florida A. & M. University was ranked number one. Florida A. & M.’s faculty includes two of the most prolific Black psychology scholars in Daudi Azibo and Kobi Kambon. These two scholars, along with their students and collaborators, have published numerous articles in the *JBP*. The University of Michigan and the University of Cincinnati are second and third, respectively. It is interesting to note that only 3 of the top 20 contributing institutions of higher education are historically Black colleges or universities. In other words, most of the contributors to the *JBP* were located at predominantly White colleges and universities.

**LIMITATIONS AND SCHOLARLY GAPS**

The scope and range of scholarly publications in the *JBP* may reflect the trends of the discipline, the particular research agendas of top contributors, or the commitment thrust of institutions. However, there are obvious scholarly biases as well as gaps in the 15-year period under study. One bias seems to be an abundance of publications investigating personality development, namely, racial identity development. As mentioned previously, it is certainly understandable why there would be so many articles addressing Black/African personality development given its importance in practically all areas of functioning. The number of articles that were reactions and commentaries were disproportionate in comparison with the other categories. This category was primarily responsible for Samella Abdullah’s high ranking. The *JBP* is different from many other journals in that it quickly responds to contemporary social issues that have psychological implications for Black people by publishing reactions and commentaries. One question that should be raised is whether the journal should continue publishing reactions and commentaries at rates that far exceed some of the other neglected content areas. This is a question that the editor and editorial board must answer.

There seems to be a need to expand the scholarly scope of the *JBP*. Categories such as education, clinical application, theory, and family research each accounted for 5% or less of the articles published during this 15-year period. In short, there seems to be an overrepresentation of identity articles and position papers published during this period. Areas that need more research include career counseling and development and, ironically, difficult mental health issues (i.e., psychotic and neurotic disorders, personality disorders, etc.).
CONCLUSION

This study satisfied the important process of self-monitoring for the JBP. Self-monitoring through content analysis is essential to the scholarly advancement and practical application of Black psychology. The JBP is an invaluable asset to the community of scholars and practitioners who strive to provide culturally relevant services to people of African descent. The discipline of Black psychology is relatively young, but the history of Africans is ancient. JBP represents the scholarly ascension of the discipline of Black psychology.

REFERENCES


Informal Social Support Networks and Subjective Well-Being Among African Americans

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This article examines the influence of sociodemographic and family, friendship, fictive kin, church, and neighbor network variables on two measures of subjective well-being (i.e., life satisfaction and happiness) among a national sample of African Americans. The analyses were conducted on the National Survey of Black Americans, a national cross-section study of the adult (age 18 and older) Black population (N = 2,107). Multivariate analyses revealed that sociodemographic (i.e., age, income, region, health, marital status, urbanicity) and social relations and network factors (i.e., subjective family closeness, support from family, number of friends, presence of fictive kin, church attendance, and frequency of contact with neighbors) were significantly associated with subjective well-being. The findings are discussed in relation to previous work on the sociodemographic, health, and social network correlates of subjective well-being.

Extended family, friends, church members, neighbors, and fictive kin constitute complementary sources of informal support for African Americans (Billingsley, 1992; Chatters, Taylor, & Jayakody, 1994; Dilworth-Anderson, Burton, & Johnson, 1993; Hill, 1999; Hill et al., 1989; McAdoo, 1980; Taylor & Chatters, 1986b; Taylor, Chatters, & Jackson, 1997; Taylor, Chatters, Tucker, & Lewis, 1990). These sources of assistance may assume greater prominence

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under conditions of economic stress and demographic change. This article explores the impact of kin and nonkin support resources on the subjective well-being (SWB) of African Americans. The research question specifically examines the impact of several measures of support from family, friends, church members, fictive kin, and neighbors on individual assessments of happiness and life satisfaction. The focus on social resources and the family, in particular, derives from a recognition that (a) social support has been linked empirically to a number of social and psychological outcomes and (b) families and related social networks are the primary providers of a variety of assistance (i.e., instrumental, emotional, informational) to African American adults (Taylor et al., 1990).

FAMILIES, FRIENDS, FICTIONAL KIN, NEIGHBORS, AND CHURCH MEMBERS

A growing body of research focuses on the nature and operation of social networks and resources among African Americans. A long tradition of research has examined family and friendship networks, including the existence of extended family networks within African American communities (Aschenbrenner, 1975; Billingsley, 1992; Dillworth-Anderson, Williams, & Cooper, 1999; Dilworth-Anderson et al., 1993; Dillworth-Anderson et al., 1993; Dressler, 1985; Hill, 1999; Hill et al., 1989; Martin & Martin, 1978; McAdoo, 1980; Stack, 1974). These networks are particularly prominent as sources of informal social support among African Americans (Hatchett, Cochran, & Jackson, 1991; Taylor, 1988a; Taylor & Chatters, 1989; Taylor et al., 1990). Analyses of types of assistance indicate that extended family networks provide a variety of support within the broad categories of instrumental and tangible aid, emotional support, and advice/information (Hatchett et al., 1991; Taylor & Chatters, 1986b). Consequently, family networks may function in important ways that affect SWB.

Ethnographic research reveals that fictive kin relationships are an integral component of informal social support networks (Anderson, 1978; Aschenbrenner, 1975; Kennedy, 1980; Martin & Martin, 1978; Stack, 1974; Tatum, 1987), and indeed, extending kinship status to friend relationships is a means to expand one’s social network. Persons who are designated as fictive kin are unrelated by either blood or marriage but regard one another in kinship terms (Taylor, 1988a) and employ a standard cultural typology (i.e., likened to blood ties, sociolegal or marriage ties, and parenthood) to describe these nonkin associations (Rubenstein, Alexander, Goodman, & Luborsky, 1991). Despite the importance of fictive kin ties in the maintenance and functioning of the extended family networks of African Americans, little is
known about fictive kin. Furthermore, basic quantitative evidence as to the
general pervasiveness of these ties is lacking. One notable exception is
the work of Chatters et al. (1994), who found that fictive kinship relations are
fairly pervasive in the family lives of African Americans. Two out of three
Black Americans indicate that their family has incorporated a fictive kin rela-
tive, verifying the importance accorded this unique relationship in the
ethnographic literature. In addition, socioeconomic status, gender, region,
and age differences were found for the likelihood of having a fictive kin
relation.

Research attention has begun to focus on the impact of neighbors and
neighborhood behaviors on individual and community well-being. Jayakody
(1993) presented an in-depth review of the role of neighbors as a source of
informal social support to Black Americans that indicated that neighbors
have the potential to provide assistance that cannot be met by families,
friends, or formal organizations. Due to their physical proximity, neighbors
can assist with tasks requiring knowledge of the spatial area or speed of assis-
tance (Cantor, 1979). In particular, neighbors are uniquely suited to provide
help during crisis situations such as emergency first aid or baby-sitting
(Kail & Litwak, 1989; Messeri, Silverstein, & Litwak, 1993). Given the
important role of neighbors in the informal networks of Black Americans,
frequent contact with neighbors may enhance SWB by virtue of its social
integrative functions and greater opportunities for providing support.

Religion is considered a major resource for Black Americans (Billingsley,
1999; Hill, 1999). Recent survey-based research indicates that Black Ameri-
cans display high levels of religious involvement (Chatters, Taylor, &
Lincoln, 1999; Ellison & Sherkat, 1995; Taylor, Mattis, & Chatters, 1999;
Taylor, 1988b) across a variety of religious indicators, including church
membership rates, frequency of public behaviors (e.g., church attendance),
private devotional practices (e.g., prayer and reading religious materials),
and subjective appraisals of religiosity and spirituality. In addition, research
using several national data sets indicates that Black adults, adolescents, and
elderly report significantly higher levels of religiosity than the general popu-
lation (Levin, Taylor, & Chatters, 1994; Taylor, Chatters, Jayakody, & Levin,
1996).

Recognizing the importance of religion and churches to Black Americans,
an emerging body of research explores the role of church members in the
informal social support networks of Black Americans (Taylor & Chatters,
1986a, 1986b, 1988; Taylor, Chatters, & Jackson, 1997). This work indicates
that a majority of Black Americans receive assistance from their church
members. The most important types of assistance included help during sick-
ness, advice and encouragement, and prayer. Collectively, this work shows
that for many Black Americans, church members are an important component of their support network. Consequently, receiving help from church members may enhance psychological well-being.

SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

SWB is a broad term that refers to a diverse group of indicators commonly used to measure various aspects of life quality (George & Bearon, 1980). SWB measures reflect underlying psychological states encompassing affective (e.g., happiness) and cognitive (e.g., satisfactions, values, aspirations) dimensions. Measures of SWB represent individuals' general evaluations of circumstances or their perceptions within specific life domains (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Chatters, 1988). Two commonly used global measures of SWB are happiness and overall life satisfaction. Happiness is generally regarded as an affective measure that involves emotional states, whereas life satisfaction is a cognitive measure that involves a summation of intellectual evaluations of satisfaction from several life domains.

Early research on SWB among African Americans derived from a model stressing the importance of social status and resources. The social status/resource model argues that one's status position and available resources are directly linked to overall assessments of life quality. That is, objective status indicators (e.g., income and education) and subjective reports of well-being are directly and positively correlated. Efforts to account for differences in SWB ratings using this perspective have had limited success, frequently explaining only a small portion of variation.

Research findings on the impact of sociodemographic factors on SWB are mixed. Effects for age status indicate that older persons are more positive in their evaluations of overall life quality (Ball, 1983; Campbell, 1981; Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; Chatters, 1988; Jackson, Chatters, & Neighbors, 1982, 1986; Jackson, Herzog, and Chatters, 1980; Janson & Mueller, 1983; Veroff, Douvan, & Kulka, 1981) than their younger counterparts. Gender differences in the SWB of African Americans are equivocal and indicate either no differences (Linn, Hunter, & Perry, 1979; Wilson, 1980) or that men are more likely to characterize their life situations in a positive manner (Jackson et al., 1982; Sauer, 1977). Prior findings for the relationship between educational status and well-being among African Americans reveal either a positive association (Himes & Hamlet, 1962; Jackson, Bacon, & Peterson, 1977) or no relationship (Jackson et al., 1980, 1982, 1986; Sauer, 1977). Income also has been negatively related to SWB among this group in some studies (Ehrlich, 1973; Jackson et al., 1977, 1980, 1982,
1986; Sauer, 1977), but Ellison (1990) found a positive association between family income and life satisfaction among Blacks. Marital status differences in SWB among Black adults indicate a benefit in being married (Ehrlich, 1973; Jackson et al., 1977, 1980, 1982, 1986). Despite a recognized increase in the number of investigations focusing on sociodemographic correlates, an adequate synthesis of research findings in this area is hampered by a number of challenges. These include differences in the SWB measures used, sample limitations (e.g., small, geographically restricted), and analytic restrictions (e.g., reliance on correlational procedures).

Several efforts highlight the conceptual, methodological, and analytic problems in past research (see Chatters, 1989, for a review). One study (Jackson et al., 1986), in particular, systematically examined the independent effects of sociodemographic factors on SWB among African Americans and suggested that the concept of age cohort might be useful in modeling the effects of antecedent factors on SWB. Among the study findings were the following: (a) Age was related to SWB only among those persons in the oldest age group (persons 55 years of age and older), (b) respondents who lived in rural areas reported higher levels of SWB than did their urban counterparts, and (c) measures tapping interpersonal relationships were consistently significant predictors of both happiness and satisfaction. Comparable results were found in Chatters’s (1988) investigation of SWB among older African Americans in which happiness ratings were directly influenced by age and marital status as well as stress and health factors. These and similar investigations demonstrated that (among a representative sample of African Americans) SWB measures were influenced by sociodemographic factors and that marital status factors (i.e., married persons reported higher levels of satisfaction and happiness) had independent effects on SWB.

In summary, research findings on the sociodemographic correlates of SWB among African Americans failed to confirm the social status/resource model. The absence of expected relationships between social status factors and SWB, the emergence of associations that were counter to model predictions (e.g., age relationships), and generally low levels of explained variation in dependent measures indicated that social status/resource formulations were of limited usefulness in understanding SWB among this population group. However, this research does suggest that interpersonal (e.g., marital status) and social relationships are potentially significant for SWB.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

Among the general population, the importance of family and friendships for SWB has been well documented, and overall, studies report a positive
relationship between social resources and participation (e.g., family and friend networks and support relationships) and SWB outcomes. Research in the area has focused on the functional relationships between social participation and SWB as well as the characteristics of family and friend networks and associations. The presence of supportive personal relationships is thought to result in higher levels of individual well-being, whereas their absence increases an individual’s susceptibility to psychological distress (Campbell, 1981).

A number of empirical studies conducted exclusively on Black samples identify a positive relationship between social participation and well-being for women but not for men (Ball, 1983; Ball & Robbins, 1986). Social participation as defined in these studies includes family interaction and religious activity as well as involvement with friends. The focus of this work was on examining the significance of social participation in specific life domains, such as family life, parental, or marital satisfaction, for well-being evaluations.

A large body of work indicates that the marital relationship is one of the most important personal ties with respect to SWB. Broman (1991) found that married adults have higher levels of well-being than do nonmarried adults. In general, females are less happy than males. Those with less education have higher levels of life satisfaction and satisfaction with their family life. Gender-specific work and family roles do not affect life satisfaction and general happiness. However, they do have an impact on the more domain-specific measure of family life satisfaction. In a study on middle-class dual-career Black couples, marital happiness is a strong contributor to the overall life happiness. Overall, spouses in this study were happy with all aspects of their lives. However, happiness with friendships was not a significant predictor of global life happiness for husbands or for wives (Thomas & Holmes, 1992).

Friendships are often viewed as being complements to family relationships and contribute significantly to overall quality of life. It has been suggested that friendships serve as buffers that diminish the negative consequences of stressful life events. However, the social support literature is equivocal concerning the role that friendships play in overall quality of life. This work suggests that in understanding the effects of friendship, it is important to distinguish between friendship quality (e.g., level of intimacy) and network size (Cantor, 1979). Number of friends is an objective characteristic of social networks that is positively related to well-being (i.e., morale) (Ward, Sherman, & LaGory, 1984). Studies on older adults show that intimacy is more important than number of friends (Adams, 1989) in relation to well-being. Furthermore, for older adults, friendships have a positive effect on
personal happiness (Ellison, 1990), morale (Arling, 1976; Ward et al., 1984), and global life satisfaction (Campbell, 1981).

Empirical evidence for the impact of friends on global measures of SWB among Black adults is scarce. Ellison (1990) examined the relationship between friendships, and family ties and overall life satisfaction/happiness for African American adults. Cognitive and affective dimensions of SWB demonstrated different relationships with friendship measures. Availability of close friends and frequency of contact with friends were both positively associated with affective dimensions of well-being such as general happiness. These relationships, however, were negative among older age groups. In contrast, number of friends was positively related to general happiness among all age groups studied. None of the friendship variables were associated with cognitive SWB measures such as global life satisfaction.

Several studies examine the significance of social network characteristics of African Americans in predicting SWB (Ellison, 1990; Thomas & Holmes, 1992; Thomas, Milburn, Brown, & Gary, 1988). Thomas and Holmes (1992) examined the determinants of satisfaction for Blacks and Whites using the Quality of America Life data sets (collected in 1971 and 1978). They found that for both racial groups, perceptions of the quality of social relations were associated with overall satisfaction. Among Blacks, those who reported having a number of good friends and neighbors had high levels of satisfaction. Those who reported being closer (on average) to a least one parent also tended to be more satisfied.

A large body of research documents the role that religious involvement plays in psychological well-being (see Chatters, 2000, for a review of this work). Although the majority of investigations of religion and well-being involve the general population, a small body of research documents the specific benefits of religious involvement for African Americans. This work generally indicates that religious involvement is beneficial to psychological well-being (Ellison & Gay, 1990; Levin, Chatters, & Taylor, 1995; Levin & Taylor, 1998; Ortega, Crutchfield, & Rushing, 1983; St. George & McNamara, 1984; Thomas & Holmes, 1992) and is inversely associated with psychological distress and depression (Brown, Gary, Greene, & Milburn, 1992; Brown, Ndubuisi, & Gary, 1990; Ellison, 1995; Musick, Koenig, Hays, & Cohen, 1998). Walls and Zarit’s (1991) study is one of the few, if not the only, studies to examine the impact of support from church members on well-being. They found that in their convenience sample of 98 older Black adults, perceptions of church support contributed to well-being.

In summary, available research indicates that informal social support networks are important correlates of SWB among African Americans. However,
little is known about the relative contributions of the various sources of social support on perceptions of well-being. This analysis will further investigate the influence of family, friends, church members, neighbors, and fictive kin on SWB among this population group.

METHOD

The analyses were conducted on the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA) data set. These data were collected by the Program for Research on Black Americans in the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. The NSBA sample is the first nationally representative cross-section of the adult (18 years and older) Black population living in the continental United States. The sample was drawn according to a multistage, area probability procedure designed to ensure that every Black household had the same probability for being selected for the study. A total of 76 primary areas were selected for interviewing. Twelve of these areas were selected with certainty because of the large size of the Black population (e.g., New York, Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta). The remaining 64 primary areas were randomly selected from standard metropolitan statistical areas within regions of the country (Northeast, South, West, North Central) in inverse proportion to the size of the Black population. Census tracts and groups of census tracts within these primary areas were stratified according to racial composition and income. Smaller geographical areas (clusters) were randomly chosen within income and racial composition strata. Next, professionally trained interviewers went into each cluster and listed every habitable household. Because correct identification of eligible respondents was critical, special screening procedures were developed for finding Black households. Within each selected Black household, one person was randomly chosen to be interviewed. All interviewing was conducted by professionally trained Black interviewers. These sampling and interviewer procedures resulted in 2,107 completed interviews collected in 1979 and 1980, representing a response rate of nearly 70%. About 41% of the Black population in 1980 was located in urban, central city areas where response rates have been extremely low. The relatively high overall response rate was achieved by intensifying efforts in these areas through repeated callbacks. A more detailed description of the sample is provided by Jackson (1991). A demographic description of the NSBA sample and comparison with census data is provided by Taylor (1986).
DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Two items measuring SWB are used in this analysis: personal happiness and global life satisfaction. Personal happiness is assessed by the question, “Taking all things together, how would you say things are these days—would you say you’re very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy these days?” Life satisfaction is measured by the question, “In general, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? Would you say that you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?”

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Family and friendship network variables. Several family and friendship network variables are used in this analysis. Family contact is measured by the question “How often do you see, write, or talk on the telephone with family or relatives who do not live with you? Would you say nearly everyday, at least once a week, a few times a month, a few times a year, or hardly ever?” Family closeness is measured by the question “Would you say your family members are very close in their feelings to each other, fairly close, not too close, or not close at all?” Two variables assess the relative influence of family versus friends with respect to contact and support. The first question asks, “When you visit people, are you more likely to visit friends or to visit relatives?” The second question asks, “When you think of the people you can count on in life, are they mostly your relatives or your friends?”

Contact with friends is measured by the question “How often do you see, write, or talk on the telephone with your friends? Would you say nearly everyday, at least once a week, a few times a month, a few times a year, hardly ever, or never?” Size of the friendship network is measured by the question “Think of the friends, not including relatives, that you feel free to talk with about your problems—would you say that you have many, some, a few, or no friends like that?” Finally, having a best friend is measured by the question “Not counting your spouse, do you have a best friend?”

Family and church support network. Support from family is measured with the question “How often do people in your family—including children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, in-laws, and so on—help you out? Would you say very often, fairly often, not too often, or never?” The receipt of help from church members was measured by the variable “How often do people in your church or place of worship help you out? Would you say often, sometimes,
hardly ever, or never?” The recoding of these two social support questions are worth noting. A portion of respondents, when asked how often they receive assistance from their church members and family members, volunteer that they never needed assistance from those groups. In the NSBA, 17.9% of the respondents volunteered that they never needed help from church members (Taylor & Chatters, 1988) and 9.7% volunteered that they never needed help from their family members (Taylor, 1990). Previous analysis has indicated that respondents who volunteer that they never need assistance are conceptually and empirically distinct from those who received assistance and those who do not receive help (Taylor, 1990; Taylor & Chatters, 1988). Consequently, these variables have been recoded into three categories: those who received assistance (support recipients), those who did not receive assistance (support deficients), and those who volunteered that they never needed assistance (self-reliants).

Religious service attendance. Frequency of attending religious services was created by combining two variables. Respondents were first asked, “Other than for weddings and funerals, have you attended services at a church or other place of worship since you were 18 years old?” Respondents who answered affirmatively to this question were next asked, “How often do you usually attend religious services? Would you say nearly everyday, at least once a week, a few times a month, a few times a year, or less than once a year?” Responses for these two variables were combined such that the most frequent attendance category is nearly every day and the least frequent attendance categories are less than once a year followed by never attends religious services other than weddings and funerals since the age of 18.

Fictive kin and neighbor network. The presence of fictive kin is measured by the question “Is there anyone close to your family who is not really blood or marriage related, but is treated just like a relative?” Two questions were employed to reflect the availability of neighbors as social resources. Respondents were asked, “How many of your neighbors do you know well enough to visit or call on? Would you say you have many, some, a few, or none that you know well enough to visit or call on?” Interaction with neighbors is measured by the question “How often do you get together with any of your neighbors—I mean either visiting at each other’s homes or going places together? Would you say nearly everyday, at least once a week, a few times a month, a few times a year, hardly ever, or never?”

Demographic variables. Several sociodemographic variables are used in this analysis, including age, income, education, gender, marital status,
employment status, region, urbanicity, and number of health problems. Number of health problems is measured with a multi-item health index. Respondents were read a list of 11 problems and asked if they had been told by a doctor that they had that problem. The number of health problems was then summed.

RESULTS

Overall, Black Americans indicate that they have fairly high levels of subjective well-being. Thirty percent (30.7%) of respondents indicate that they are very satisfied with their life, and 47.7% say that they are somewhat satisfied. Only 5.3% indicate that they are very dissatisfied with their life. Similarly, 8 out of 10 respondents indicate that they are either very happy (29.3%) or pretty happy (54.3%) these days.

The results for the regression of life satisfaction on the demographic, kin and nonkin network variables, and religious attendance is presented in Table 1 (Model 1); the equation explained 12% of the variance ($R^2 = .12$) in life satisfaction evaluations. Among the demographic variables, age, income, marital status, region, and number of health problems are significantly associated with reported level of life satisfaction. Age and income are positively associated with the dependent variable such that older respondents and those with higher incomes indicate higher levels of life satisfaction than their counterparts. Respondents who reside in the South and those who have fewer health problems report being more satisfied with their lives than their counterparts. Married respondents have higher levels of life satisfaction than divorced, separated, or widowed respondents. For the network variables, family closeness and the receipt of assistance from extended families are significantly associated with life satisfaction. Persons who rate their families as being subjectively closer report higher levels of life satisfaction. In addition, those respondents who indicate that they do not need help from their extended family (self-reliants) indicate that they were more satisfied with their lives than those who receive support from their extended families (support recipients). Last, frequency of religious service attendance is positively associated with life satisfaction such that those who attend services on a more frequent basis indicate higher levels of life satisfaction.

The regression analysis for general happiness using sociodemographic and kin and nonkin network variables is also presented in Table 1 (Model 2). These factors explained 17% of the variance in general happiness ($R^2 = .172$).
### TABLE 1
Subjective Well-Being Regressed on Sociodemographic and Social Network Factors

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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<td>−.133***</td>
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<td>.011</td>
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<td>.100***</td>
<td>.009***</td>
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<td>−.172**</td>
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<td>.065</td>
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<td>.027</td>
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<td>.004*</td>
<td>.021</td>
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<tr>
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<td>−.000</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>−.027</td>
<td>−.001</td>
<td>.012</td>
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<td>.003</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>−.023</td>
<td>−.003</td>
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<td>Visit relatives versus friends</td>
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<td>−.001</td>
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<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.033</td>
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<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>−.012</td>
<td>−.004</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.069</td>
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<tr>
<td>Count on relatives versus friends</td>
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<td>−.004</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.035</td>
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<tr>
<td>Count on friends</td>
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<td>−.003</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.046</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact with neighbors</td>
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<td>.001</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.049*</td>
<td>.001*</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Church network</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Church attendance</td>
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<td>.005**</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.109***</td>
<td>.005***</td>
<td>.016</td>
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<td>.045</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never received help</td>
<td>−.019</td>
<td>−.003</td>
<td>.070</td>
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<td>.055</td>
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</table>
For the sociodemographic variables, age, marital status, urbanicity, and number of health problems are significantly related to happiness ratings. Older respondents and those with fewer health problems have higher levels of happiness than their counterparts. Married respondents display higher levels of happiness than persons who are divorced, separated, and widowed. In addition, rural respondents have higher levels of happiness than respondents who reside in urban areas. For the kin and nonkin network variables, family closeness, number of friends, having a fictive kin, frequency of visiting neighbors, and extended family support exhibit significant associations with happiness. Respondents who indicate that their families are subjectively closer, those who have more friends with whom to discuss problems, and those who visit their neighbors on a more frequent basis report higher levels of happiness than their counterparts. Persons who have a fictive kin, however, indicate having lower levels of happiness. The extended family support variable demonstrates an interesting pattern of relationships. Respondents who do not need assistance from their family members (self-reliants) report higher levels of happiness than both those who receive support from their families (support recipients) and those who never receive assistance from their family members (support deficient). Finally, religious service attendance is positively associated with happiness; respondents who attend religious services more frequently indicate higher levels of happiness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Life Satisfaction</th>
<th>Happiness</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.120***</td>
<td>0.172***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>0.105***</td>
<td>0.158***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.334</td>
<td>2.068</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Several of the predictors are represented by dummy variables. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Marital status: Married and common law is the excluded category. Urbanicity: 0 = rural, 1 = urban. Region: 0 = non-South, 1 = South. Family support: Never need support is the excluded category. Have best friend: 0 = no best friend, 1 = have best friend. Who visits: Visit relatives is the excluded category. Who count on: Count on relatives is the excluded category. Fictive kin: 0 = no fictive kin, 1 = have fictive kin. Church support: Never need support is the excluded category. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. 

TABLE 1 Continued

Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Life Satisfaction</th>
<th>Happiness</th>
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<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.120***</td>
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<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>0.105***</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
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</table>
DISCUSSION

This article investigated the relationships between various aspects of kin and nonkin informal support networks and subjective appraisals of the quality of life among Black Americans. The findings are consistent with previous research on the role of family and friends on SWB (Broman, 1988; Ellison, 1990; Thomas & Holmes, 1992) and the correlates of well-being more generally (Jackson et al., 1986). This analysis extends previous work in the area (Ellison, 1990) in its investigation of (a) the relative influence of kin and nonkin informal networks and (b) the specific effects that church members, fictive kin, and a confidant or best friend have on levels of well-being.

The relationships between the demographic variables and SWB are consistent with previous work in this area. Despite controls for network variables, age remained a strong and positive correlate of both life satisfaction and happiness. This finding is consistent with other work (Campbell, 1981; Campbell et al., 1976; Jackson et al., 1986; Veroff et al., 1981) which found that older Black adults reported higher levels of SWB than their younger counterparts. The higher levels of well-being among southerners (for life satisfaction) and rural residents (for happiness), as opposed to persons residing in non-South and urban areas, is consistent with other work (Ellison, 1990; Jackson et al., 1986). The finding that more health problems are associated with lower levels of well-being and happiness is one of the strongest and most documented relationships in the SWB literature (Ball, 1983; George & Landerman, 1984).

In the present analysis, imputed family income was positively associated with life satisfaction. This finding contradicts earlier work in this area (Ehrlich, 1973; Jackson et al., 1977, 1980, 1982, 1986; Sauer, 1977) but is consistent with the work of Ellison (1990). It is interesting to note that research in the United States indicates that income and wealth are not related to well-being (Myers & Diener, 1995). Cross-cultural research, however, finds that financial satisfaction was more strongly related to life satisfaction in poor countries (Oishi, Diener, Lucas, & Suh, 1999). In addition, the effects of income on well-being have been found to occur primarily among individuals who have very low incomes. As the median family incomes of Black Americans increases, it may be that income will become an ineffective predictor of life satisfaction. Future work in this area should stratify by income and explicitly test whether the impact of income on well-being is stronger among working-class Black Americans.

The finding that married respondents had higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction than divorced, separated, or widowed respondents is also consistent with previous research (Ellison, 1990; Jackson et al., 1986; Keith,
1997; Veroff et al., 1981). Other research indicates that nonmarried Blacks have a smaller group of individuals from whom they seek help when confronted with a serious personal problem (Chatters, Taylor, & Neighbors, 1989) and higher levels of poverty (Taylor, Tucker, Chatters, & Jayakody, 1997). Collectively, this work suggests that in comparison to their married counterparts, nonmarried Blacks may be disadvantaged with respect to income, support resources, and well-being. Presently, there is extremely little research on overall marital status differences among Blacks and research focusing on specific marital status groups (e.g., Black widowhood). From a psychological viewpoint, research on marital status differences among Blacks for indicators of social well-being such as psychological distress, self-esteem, optimism, morale, personal efficacy, and loneliness are critically needed.

Turning to the kin and nonkin variables, the strongest and most consistent correlate of happiness and life satisfaction was subjective family closeness. Of the variables used in the analysis, this was the only one that measured an explicitly affective dimension of an informal network. In contrast, other kin and nonkin variables assessed dimensions related to size of family, friend, and neighbor networks; frequency of contact with family, friends, and neighbors; interaction patterns; and presence of fictive kin and a nonkin confidant. The significance of family closeness to both measures of SWB echoes findings from previous studies.

An interesting pattern of relationships emerged between family support and the indicators of SWB. The self-reliants (those who volunteered that they did not need help) reported higher levels of happiness than those who did not receive assistance (support deficient) and also had higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction than those who received assistance from their families (support recipients). Clearly, the self-reliants are a unique group. Other research indicates that they are more involved in extended family networks than support deficient (Taylor, 1990). The self-reliants in this sample share a similar profile to a group designated the nonreciprocated givers in a study by Hill, Foote, Aldous, Carlson, and MacDonald (1970). The nonreciprocated givers were a group of individuals who provided help to others but did not receive assistance in return. One possible explanation for the elevated SWB perceptions of the self-reliants suggests that they are a group of individuals who are objectively more advantaged and thus less likely to indicate needing assistance from others. However, because this analysis controls for social status (e.g., income, education) and health factors, the positive effects for the self-reliant group on SWB are independent of these factors. It may be the case that the self-reliant group is distinctive in terms of various psychological and personality factors (e.g., locus of control) that are predictive of both the
likelihood of needing support and perceptions of well-being. Clearly, this is an area requiring further research.

Several nonkin network variables were significantly associated with the measures of SWB. Consistent with earlier work (Ellison, 1990), respondents who had more friends with whom they could discuss problems reported being happier. In addition, frequency of contact with neighbors was positively associated with life satisfaction. This finding is consistent with Thomas and Holmes’s (1992) work, which found higher levels of satisfaction among African Americans who reported that they had many good neighbors. In addition, those respondents who indicated that they had a fictive kin reported significantly lower levels of happiness. This finding is intriguing and deserves further study. One possible explanation is that individuals who have fictive kin are embedded in networks in which there are a frequent number of support exchanges and these exchanges are a critical component of daily living (e.g., Stack, 1974). Consequently, having a fictive kin may be beneficial for receiving assistance but is somewhat detrimental for SWB. This is consistent with research indicating that although having a large pool of relatives living in the same neighborhood is positively associated with receiving assistance from family members (Taylor, 1986), it is negatively associated with happiness (Ellison, 1990). The role of fictive kin in informal networks and the degree to which their inclusion in networks helps promote or is a risk factor for SWB is an area that deserves attention.

Receiving support from church members was not significantly associated with either measure of SWB. Frequency of attending religious services, however, was positively associated with both life satisfaction and happiness. This is consistent with a long line of research in this area that indicates the beneficial aspects of religious service attendance for a variety of indicators of health and well-being (Chatters, 2000; Levin & Taylor, 1998). Although there is an emerging body of literature on religion, health, and well-being (Chatters, 2000), more work is needed on the role of church members in the informal support networks of Black Americans. In particular, work using both organizational characteristics (e.g., size of the congregation) and various characteristics of church-based social networks themselves (e.g., frequency of interaction with church members, size of the church support networks, length of time in the congregation, member similarity) will assist the understanding of the influence on informal church support networks on SWB.

The analysis presented in this article has shown that demographic factors, health, religious service attendance, and various sources of informal social support (family, friends) all contribute to an individual’s SWB. Future research should investigate both functional (e.g., size, frequency of contact) and affective (e.g., quality of family, friend, and fictive kin relationships)
measures of the informal support network as well as both enacted and perceived social support. Although research generally shows that perceived social support is a stronger predictor of well-being than enacted support, it is important to note that the perception of support is not necessarily a reliable objective indicator of actual provision or receipt of support. For instance, several studies have found that individuals with high perceived support may interpret the same transfer of assistance more favorably than those with low levels of perceived support (e.g., Lakey & Drew, 1997).

This study and other research on the impact of families and friends on well-being (Ellison, 1990; Thomas & Holmes, 1992) have used national probability samples and multiple regression. Although these studies made significant advances over previous work, future efforts should use causal modeling statistical procedures (i.e., structural equation models). This type of procedure will allow for a determination of both the direct and indirect impact of kin and nonkin supportive networks on well-being. In addition, the use of panel data is preferred to adequately examine these relationships as they occur and transpire over time. A correlation matrix of all the variables included in the regression analysis is presented in Appendix 1.
## APPENDIX 1

### Correlation Matrix

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**NOTE:**
1. Life satisfaction
2. Happiness
3. Male
4. Age
5. Education
6. Income (imputed)
7. Divorce
8. Separated
9. Widow
10. Never married
11. Health problems
12. South
13. Urban
14. Family closeness
15. Family contact 16. Friends contact
17. Number of friends 18. Best friend
19. Visit friends
20. Visit both family and friends
21. Count on friends
22. Count on friends and family
23. Fictive kin
24. Number of neighbors
25. Contact with neighbors
26. Church attendance

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**NOTE:**
1. Life satisfaction
2. Happiness
3. Male
4. Age
5. Education
6. Income (imputed)
7. Divorce
8. Separated
9. Widow
10. Never married
11. Health problems
12. South
13. Urban
14. Family closeness
15. Family contact 16. Friends contact
17. Number of friends 18. Best friend
19. Visit friends
20. Visit both family and friends
21. Count on friends
22. Count on friends and family
23. Fictive kin
24. Number of neighbors
25. Contact with neighbors
26. Church attendance
27. Receive help from family
28. Never receive help from family
29. Never receive help from church members
30. Receive help from church member
REFERENCES


Understanding the impact of mass media communication from developing countries on Black populations continues to be an important research topic. This study assessed the impact of television, specifically, music video programming from the United States, on 191 Black adolescents from Botswana, a developing country located in southern Africa. Results indicated that television programming originating in America has a significant impact on the Batswana youth, with greater than two thirds of adolescents having weekly exposure to this form of American culture. However, the majority of African youth failed to demonstrate accurate perceptions of culture-specific language and images contained in the music videos. Findings also suggest that American entertainment figures are replacing the influence of African entertainers on the Batswana youth. Relations between media technology and shifts in cultural values of developing countries are discussed.

Literature from numerous fields, including marketing and advertisement, mass communication theory, and social psychology, posit that consumption of television programming affects the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of television viewers (Graham, 1996; Singer & Singer, 2001; Tan, Nelson, Dong, & Tan, 1997). Television programming produced in the United States is exported to more than 100 countries worldwide. Each year, the U.S. music industry produces thousands of music videos in scores of music genres,
including dance, hip-hop, pop, heavy metal, and rock and roll. Much like the British rock of the late 1950s and early 1960s that invaded American radio airwaves, American hip-hop, dance, and pop videos have begun to occupy the television sets of many countries across the world. The popularity of American music videos among Black adolescents in Botswana, a developing country in southern Africa, is growing. As social scientists, we are faced with the important task of investigating what effect these music videos have on the social and/or psychological development of these cross-cultural adolescent consumers.

Several studies have emphasized the effects of adolescent leisure activities on adolescent behavior (Fitzgerald, Joseph, Hayes, & O’Regan, 1995; Gordon & Caltabiano, 1996; Henry, 1998; Phillipp, 1998). Two studies (Garton & Cartmel, 1986; Poole, 1983) stressed the importance of adolescent participation in worthwhile leisure activities. Both of these studies concluded that the process of gathering information about adolescent leisure and entertainment activities leads researchers to new information about the adolescent as an individual and as part of a social group. Television as a leisure time activity constitutes a major socialization experience and influence on youth development (Singer & Singer, 2001). Psychologists have hypothesized that younger viewers exposed to some types of television programming might show tendencies toward imitation of those behaviors (Bandura, 1986; Bushman & Huesmann, 2001). The present study conveys preliminary findings regarding the influx of American music videos into Botswana. This research seeks to ascertain the degree to which these adolescent viewers understand and are influenced by the cultural images, language, and attitudes expressed in American music videos.

Culture has been defined as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from those of another” (Hofstede & Bond, 1988, p. 6). Thus, when examining the influence of American music videos on the Bushvana youth, a first step is the consideration of whether these youths are processing these culturally sophisticated messages as initially intended by the American artists. Bandura (1986) noted that media from one culture can serve as a socialization agent by influencing the thoughts of individuals from another culture. Therefore, we must ascertain whether the Bushvana culture, the culture of these adolescents, is similar enough to the American culture so that successful or accurate processing of music video images, language, and attitudes is likely.

Researchers investigating the impact of media within developing countries have raised critical issues. For example, an important research question involves documenting the effects that television may have on community activities to assess both positive and negative consequences for community
members. This analysis is especially crucial for understanding the impact of media messages on young children and adolescents, because their interactions with the media represent a form of social interaction that may be replacing social contact with other important members of their culture. In his recommendations for media studies within developing nations, Williams (1985) stated:

Much of the available television programming in the developing world is imported from developed countries, particularly the United States. Whether and how television from one culture influences not only behavior but thinking and attitudes in the culture to which it is imported will be an important topic for future research. (p. 276)

The present study seeks to advance this research agenda by examining television influence, in particular, on Batswana adolescent attitudes and thinking regarding American music video.

Botswana is a small, land-locked country located in south-central Africa with a population of approximately 1 million. Gaborone is the capital city. The country shares borders with South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. Botswana has been described as a stable country both politically and economically. Economic indicators from 1993 reveal the gross national product (GNP) per capita income for Botswana in U.S. dollars was $2,790. For comparative purposes, the GNP for South Africa was $2,980, whereas the majority of other African countries fell below $1,000 (Hope, 1997). During this same period, the U.S. GNP was approximately $24,740. World Bank classifications ranked the United States as a high-income country (GNP per capita exceeding $9,361), whereas Botswana was ranked within the middle-income country category (GNP per capita between $761 and $9,360).

The official language of Botswana is English; however, nearly all citizens also speak Setswana. The major media outlets of the country are drawn from either South African broadcast companies or the Gaborone Broadcast Corporation. Botswana’s television broadcast system is not as highly evolved as the broadcasting system of the United States or any other Western country. There are three to four over-the-air channels available. The programming includes local news reports, local documentaries, a few South African–based soap operas and variety shows, some reruns of American and British dramas and situational comedies, and music video programming. The music video programming consists of videos featuring American, British, and African artists. Equal proportions of African- and Western-produced videos are broadcast daily in Botswana. Based on observations regarding the level of exposure to a very specific representation of American culture (i.e., hip-hop culture), the
The present study is designed to investigate how much the Batswana youth actually understood and interpreted from the videos.

In our review of existing literature, we did not locate any descriptive studies that would have guided the formation of specific hypotheses. Yet, because of the increasing need to understand the global influence of American mass media, several research questions and exploratory hypotheses guided this study. First, we were interested in describing the impact of television and music video on the daily lives of adolescents. We hypothesized that adolescents who resided in homes with a television would report greater consumption of music videos. We also expected that adolescents who watched videos would also demonstrate interest in purchasing clothing displayed by American artists. Second, we inquired about the preferences of adolescents to determine the views of adolescents regarding African artists as compared with artists from American countries. We hypothesized that more adolescents would prefer artists from their own nation and continent as compared with American artists. The final research question involved determining Batswana adolescents’ knowledge of the terms and actions conveyed within American music videos. It was hypothesized that the adolescents would not accurately understand the video content but would express favorable attitudes toward clothing and fashion shown within videos.

**METHOD**

**PARTICIPANTS**

Information was collected from 191 Black adolescents from five secondary schools in Gaborone, Botswana. Gaborone is the capital city of the country and home to the University of Botswana. The nationality of the majority of respondents was Batswana (95%). Ages of respondents ranged from 14 to 20 years old ($M = 17.26, SD = .91$). The percentage of females in the sample (61.4%) exceeded the percentage of males (38.6%). Most adolescents reported average family income (41%), whereas 15% of the sample reported below average family income, and 3% reported above average family income. Of the respondents, 40% indicated that they did not have knowledge regarding their family income. We surveyed only adolescent perceptions of their economic status, because actual economic data were not available. The school personnel and university leaders revealed that surveys of economic indicators would be inappropriate given the prevailing cultural view that individual wealth was not openly discussed or valued by the community.
PROCEDURES

Data collection occurred under the supervision and authority of the University of Botswana. The research project was conducted as part of a larger summer fellowship program that was directed by officials at the University. American Psychological Association guidelines for conducting research and protecting participants were used to design the procedures employed in this study. Parents were provided with a description of the rights of research participants and were offered an opportunity to decline participation for their children. Officials were involved in conveying the study objectives to families, and a university student also participated in communicating research questions and answering questions posed by students and their families.

Administrators of the 10 secondary schools within Gaborone were contacted regarding participation in this study. The project objectives and research procedures were discussed with school officials, who granted approval for the research. Out of this pool, five schools were able to participate during the study’s time frame. Data were collected from randomly selected classrooms across the five sites. Informed consent and confidentiality procedures were also explained to adolescents prior to completion of the study protocol. Respondents completed a brief survey assessing their exposure, knowledge, and attitudes regarding music videos.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The Video Influence and Behavioral Effects Survey is a 35-question survey designed to assess adolescents’ cross-cultural knowledge of music videos. Questions explored the adolescents’ exposure to the content of American music videos. Items for this survey were generated through use of focus groups prompting Batswana youth to engage in discussion of their favorite music videos. The survey contained a combination of true-false, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions. Respondents were asked to define or explain colloquial language, symbols, behavioral patterns, and attitudes depicted in American music videos. For example, open-ended questions asked students, “What is a blunt?” or “What is a glock?” These questions were written to reflect slang terms that had well-established meanings within the American music video culture. A code book was developed to score the correct definitions for each term, and students were given credit for an accurate answer. Other questions asked students to identify types of clothing seen in American music videos as well as their intentions to purchase clothing worn by the artists in the videos. Students were also asked questions regarding their favorite types of music, music videos, and music video entertainers.
The survey was administered to 191 adolescents in small groups of approximately 20 students within their normal classroom setting. The classroom teacher and the research team monitored students to ensure that each respondent worked independently.

RESULTS

TELEVISION VIEWING PATTERNS

Adolescents were asked about their access to television, how much they watched, and what types of programming they preferred to watch. Almost two thirds of the sample (72%) reported that their family owned a television, whereas 28% of families did not have a television in the home. Of those who reported watching television, more than 15% (n = 30) watched more than 15 hours each week. Close to 50% of adolescents reported watching at least 5 hours of television per week.

Owning a television was significantly related to self-reports of music video consumption ($\chi^2 = 38.89$, $p < .0001$). When asked about specifically viewing music videos, two thirds (n = 126) of all respondents reported watching, whereas one third (n = 60) of the sample reported that they did not watch music videos. Table 1 depicts the range of adolescent television exposure according to adolescent age. Table 2 shows television viewing patterns across adolescent gender.

ARTIST PREFERENCE

Next, adolescents were asked open-ended questions that yielded information about their preferences for African entertainers or American entertainers. The responses were coded as either members of African or American music culture. A significant difference in preferences was obtained; however, inspection of the contingency tables reveals that the preferences did not reflect the expected pattern. With respect to music videos, two thirds of the sample reported that an American music video was their favorite music video. Only 8% of adolescents nominated a video of African origin as their favorite video. Surprisingly, 19% of adolescents reported an American movie (as opposed to music video) in response to this question. Two chi-square statistics were computed to account for this unique response pattern of the sample. In the first analysis, American movies were included within the American video category. Using this method, a significant difference in preferences
was found ($\chi^2 = 85.28, p < .0001$). The second procedure involved omitting responses mentioning American movies from the analysis, and the chi-square remained statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 61.12, p < .0001$). This response pattern was not anticipated, because adolescents overwhelmingly preferred American entertainment. These findings refute our original hypothesis that most Batswana adolescents would prefer African artists.

A similar pattern existed with respect to the Batswanas sample’s favorite entertainer. Again, two thirds of adolescents nominated an entertainer from American culture, whereas 24% selected an entertainer from African culture. A portion of the sample either omitted this question or provided answers that were unable to be read or classified. The chi-square statistic was significant, with Batswana adolescents reporting a preference for American entertainers ($\chi^2 = 35.56, p < .0001$).
MUSIC VIDEO KNOWLEDGE

Adolescents were asked several questions with respect to the language and symbols used in American music videos. The major finding was that a substantial majority of respondents did not understand most of the terminology used in American music videos. These findings contrasted with adolescents’ perceptions that they did possess knowledge regarding terms and concepts specific to American videos. For example, when asked for definitions for slang terms contained in music videos, such as “glock,” “blunt,” or “O.G.,” less than 2% of the sample responded correctly. Yet, when asked yes-no responses regarding awareness of these terms, an overwhelming majority (greater than 90%) reported that they understood these terms. Other results indicate that adolescents are influenced by the fashion and clothing presented in the videos. When asked to report on their behavior, 70% of the sample indicated that they buy clothing they see in American music videos. This finding was further corroborated, as adolescents’ reports of watching music videos were significantly related to reported purchases of clothing depicted in American videos ($\chi^2 = 22.19, p < .0001$). Inspection of contingency tables revealed that 53 out of 59 adolescents who had not watched videos also did not purchase clothing. In contrast, 45% of adolescents who did view videos also reported purchasing clothing depicted in American videos.

DISCUSSION

This study provides some initial data regarding the influence of American media on an adolescent population in a developing African country. Specifically, the findings indicate that a majority of Batswana youth in this sample currently watch music videos. Furthermore, this research provides empirical documentation of the African adolescents’ lack of understanding of the symbols and language contained within American videos. Although adolescents believe that they understand terminology relevant to the American video culture, content questions substantiate the inaccuracies of the adolescents’ knowledge in this area. Some evidence also suggests that music videos may have brought about attitudinal or behavioral changes in these adolescents, such that they are interested in purchasing clothing and other fashion items as depicted in videos. However, further work is necessary to discern the causal impact of music video and other facets of American culture on the lifestyle and behaviors of Batswana adolescents.

The majority of the research hypotheses were supported by the data. First, the data indicate that adolescents with access to a television at home...
consumed more music video programming than did their peers without television at home. Next, we hypothesized that Batswana adolescents would prefer African music video programming to American music video programming because it would represent more culturally relevant phenomena for the Batswana youth. However, these adolescents overwhelmingly reported a preference for American music videos. This finding is particularly interesting in light of the adolescents’ lack of content knowledge regarding the terminology contained in the American music videos. As expected, less than 2% of the sample could correctly define the colloquial language used in American music videos.

Previous research has examined the presentation of media images as related to health promotion and educational issues (Hornik, 1978; Livingston, 1992; Naranjo, 1984). In one study involving media messages disseminated within Central America, the researcher noted that

no consideration is given to the cultural characteristics of these countries, to their need to promote national savings and avoid excessive consumption, and still less to their serious educational requirements. (Naranjo, 1984, p. 267)

With regard to media in developing countries, a greater awareness and analysis of messages is necessary to convey appropriate content. These researchers point to the need for examining the cultural content of the message, how and where the message will be delivered, the target group for the message, and the goal of the communication (Livingston, 1992). The author argues that conducting studies of media images in developing countries will reveal how different communities may be interpreting messages coming from outside sources and how these interpretations may affect their behaviors. Clearly, this study provides evidence that adolescents in Botswana are likely misinterpreting American videos due to a lack of understanding of symbols and colloquial language specific to American popular culture.\(^3\)

Other studies have discussed the role that media technology will play in developing countries. Narula (1988) described the powerful influence that media can have and notes the concern over “whether media technologies will be the preserver or destroyer of cultural values” (p. 195). This issue becomes complicated when officials or communicators with political or financial power determine distribution of influential media messages. For example, the television programming within India is largely determined by the ruling political party, and messages are reflective of the language and culture of the dominant party (Narula, 1988). Therefore, the implementation of media technology may be accompanied by a variety of cultural concerns, especially in countries with diverse communities.
Additional concerns raised by those involved in distributing media technology throughout developing countries include the interpretations of images that may originate in foreign, often Western, countries. For example, in Indian communities, Narula (1988) found that “rural administrators feared that television would raise villagers’ aspirations that they would not be able to meet” (p. 205). In particular, exposure to foreign products that are not available in certain areas via attractive, interesting commercial advertisements may encourage patterns of “consumption” that are not feasible alternatives within communities (Naranjo, 1984). Adolescents’ reports in this study suggest that influx of media information is already accompanied by availability of American products, such as clothing. Changes in adolescent behavior, such as the way that Batswana adolescents dress or act, may already be taking place as a result of music video exposure. Yet, communications that originate in American culture may still be interpreted differently within developing countries due to language barriers or discrepant values. The balance between incorporating features of American culture to expand a society and maintaining values consistent with the current culture is affected by the prevalence of foreign-based versus local media programming. It has been argued that local programming may serve to convey messages that are more culturally consistent with local communities and serve to balance the influence of Western images (Naranjo, 1984).

The powerful influence media brings to a country’s identity has been documented in a valuable study of one country before and after the introduction of television from the United States. Predominantly by chance, a Canadian community was discovered in 1973 that lacked television reception but was scheduled to receive media from the United States within a year (Williams, 1985). The findings of this study have multiple implications for researchers who are interested in examining media influences within developing countries. Although controlled studies such as this research effort are not always feasible, several theoretical issues and areas for investigation were discovered within this study. In addition, the effort of the researcher to obtain behavioral measures provides an objective standard for comparison across cultures.

Consistent with studies investigating displacement effects (Neuman, 1989), this study questioned how television “directly or indirectly displaced other activities” (Williams, 1985, p. 271). This research showed that adolescents and adults from the Canadian town without television participated in more organized community events than a comparison town with television. In addition, participation in these events was significantly reduced once television was implemented into the Canadian community. Specifically, adolescents were less likely to attend community dances and suppers, whereas
adults were less likely to attend organizational or club meetings. Evidence within the present study suggests that American entertainers may be displacing the importance of African entertainers for a younger generation of adolescents. Specifically, only one quarter of this sample reported their favorite entertainer was of African nationality, whereas nearly two thirds cited specific American entertainers as the most popular. Further research that monitors these attitudes will demonstrate if the overwhelmingly positive response to American entertainment culture is a temporary fad or a more permanent cultural shift in Botswana.

Changes over time in adolescents’ attitudes toward community activities may have a profound impact on a key developmental challenge for adolescents, namely, identity formation. Most researchers agree that adolescence is the developmental period in which the individual has the requisite cognitive abilities to effectively complete the process of identity formation (Blos, 1962; Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Waterman, 1984). For Black adolescents, the formation of racial and ethnic identity is a critical component of their sense of self (Phinney, 1989; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Research related to the process of identity formation also reveals the influence of important socialization agents, including parents, peers, and community members (Spencer & Dornbusch, 1990; Stevenson, 1995). Clearly, future work should also embrace the impact of media images as another source of information that affects adolescent identity formation (Lloyd, in press). The impact of the media may also be magnified or displace other influences during adolescence, especially if these images are being discussed and socially reinforced within the adolescent peer group.

An advantage of this study is that we now have some baseline data regarding the impact of American music videos on a developing country in Africa. Specifically, American entertainment culture appears to be displacing the importance of African entertainment for adolescents as well as changing adolescents’ attitudes and behaviors. A significant number of adolescents currently spend a substantial amount of time each week watching American videos. Despite this level of exposure, adolescents from Botswana seem to perceive images on the surface, lacking a deeper understanding of culturally specific language and symbol usage. Close to one third of families in this study did not own a television; however, as more families obtain access to American media, the effects detected within the present study may grow exponentially.

The major limitation of this study is that it is descriptive in nature. Future research will (a) add to this line of inquiry by empirically examining the cognitive processing of media images, both with adolescents from developing countries and Western societies, and (b) statistically link this exposure to
important outcome variables. Continuing to investigate the impact of media using cross-cultural research designs will refine our understanding of the role of media influence on adolescent development. This study also informs research investigating media influence among Black populations in other countries, including the United States. The results of this study highlight the need for continued consideration of American media, music videos, and popular culture as key contextual influences on the development of Black adolescents.

NOTES

1. **Batswana** is the adjective used to describe the citizens of Botswana. **Batswana** is comparable to the terms **American** or **British**.
2. The American adolescent culture defines these terms as follows: **glock** refers to an automatic handgun, **blunt** describes a marijuana cigarette, and **O.G.** stands for original gangster.
3. Some might argue that American adolescent pop culture, as expressed by performers within specific music video genres, may be so culturally specific that any individual (e.g., parent, teacher, researcher, or adolescent) outside the culture is prone to misinterpretation of symbols and language usage.

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Games Intellectuals Play:
Authority, Power, and Intelligence

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Herrnstein and Murray’s racist tone, The Bell Curve, becomes the occasion for an examination of issues related to authority and power. Their analysis of society and, more important, what they leave out allows the authors the opportunity to reexamine the ways in which people who have been denied power have successfully challenged oppression and oppressors. It is only when we have this understanding that we can consider and put into use effective strategies for change.

Of course, when The Bell Curve (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) was published, it was not without its critics. Reviewers of The Bell Curve have challenged aspects of Herrnstein and Murray’s work. Holmes (1994) problematized their definitions of race. Kaus (1994), Kamin (1995), and Beardsley (1994) demonstrated their problematic sources for and interpretations of the data on which they based their arguments. Hazlett (1995) criticized their interpretations of statistics. Gould (1994) criticized them on their definition of intelligence, their logic, and their rhetoric. Lind (1994) pointed out that many of the authors in Herrnstein and Murray’s bibliography, upon whose work they base their conclusions, have been recipients of funding from the Pioneer Fund, which was founded in the 1930s by a eugenist and which supports “neo-hereditarian” research. These reviews reflect legitimate concerns, yet they do not illuminate the implications of control by an elite over other members of society or the possibilities for challenging such a tyranny.
At issue is who has control in our society over access to resources. This control is becoming more important because of the gross inequalities in the distribution of resources. Furthermore, current controllers—predominantly White middle- to upper-class males—are being challenged not only in relation to their historical control but also because of the relative increase of non-White peoples. Certain White males seek to bolster their diminishing capacity to direct society through claiming inherent and natural superiority.

Yet control is complex. Society traditionally refers to control as power, suggesting that some people have power whereas others are powerless. Power implies that a person or group has the ability to act and to control, whereas another person or group has no ability to act or to control. This power/powerless model fails to reflect the historical reality of oppressed people’s taking action and forcing oppressors to change. If we preclude action by the oppressed on their own behalf through thinking of the oppressed as powerless, then our only choice is to wait until the Herrnsteins and Murrays of the world decide to share the control they have.

We urgently need a way of understanding hierarchical relationships such that we can see how oppressed people take effective action to end oppression. What kind of control does the individual have over his or her own life? How do people operate within hierarchical relationships? These are crucial questions to understand if we are going to end the influence of Herrnstein and Murray and their ilk.

Herrnstein and Murray created a specific picture of the world: The intelligent have control over themselves and society. They naturally do well in school. They then gain opportunities to continue their schooling. They have choices about what profession they pursue, and once they begin working, they make good salaries. This money gives them choices about where to live and what amenities they can buy. They band together, because they attend the same colleges; they become leaders and exert control over society. By contrast, those who lack intelligence also lack control over their own lives. They lack opportunities for education, and this limits their career choices to low-paying jobs, which limits the amount of money and therefore choices about where and how they live. Their lack of money or access to colleges and graduate schools means that they lack control over society. A hierarchical relationship is created and maintained: Those who are intelligent have control individually and collectively over those who are not.

Herrnstein and Murray tried to mediate the negativity of their message by bemoaning the isolation of the “cognitive elite,” which they said is natural
and unalterable. Instead of changing these inequities, however, they said the intelligent must help the less intelligent to live more “virtuous” lives. They proposed that laws should be uncomplicated—and their examples involved violent crimes and crimes against property. They suggested that crimes should be swiftly and surely punished and that if all were to subscribe to such a system, even those who lacked intelligence could live moral lives. Interestingly, they said nothing about a fair trial in their scenario.

Herrnstein and Murray lamented the impossibility of equality between people. With an appearance of reluctance on their part, they suggested the ways in which the cognitive elite should rule the hoi poloi: Simplify the rules—both legal and moral—so the intellectually challenged can understand and follow them. This is the moral of the argument made in *The Bell Curve*: Those who are less intelligent require control by the intelligent; the cognitive elite, then, needs only to learn how to control the less intelligent.

As repugnant as this argument is, the logic seems unassailable on its own terms because it relies on the power/powerless model of hierarchical relationships. Those who are not members of the cognitive elite have little to offer society in comparison with the doctors, lawyers, and business executives of the intelligent class. There is nothing the less intelligent can do to change their plight—they are powerless. Yet, this is not the only way to understand hierarchical relationships and individual roles within them.

**AUTHORITY, POWER, AND INDIVIDUAL CONTROL**

Instead of relying on the single word *power*, we split this word into two different functions that relate to the ability of an individual (or a group of people) to take action: authority and power. In our analysis, power is energy and authority is control. All actions require power (energy) to occur. Authority guides the energy. Actions can take place without control; an unplanned explosion is an example of action that includes power but no authority (no control). Yet, all constructive actions require both energy and control—both power and authority.

Human beings are born with personal power, energy. This power allows us to live our lives. Yet, none of us is born with personal authority—the ability to control our own energy. We develop personal authority over our lives. Infants, for example, have no control over their eating, peeing, pooping, or warmth. They do have personal power, that is, energy in the form of crying, screaming, and kicking. Personal authority separates people into two classes: those with it and those who lack it. In contrast to the oppressive class systems
that traditionally split society into various kinds of lifelong haves and have-nots, this class system is beneficial and mutable.

**PERSONAL AUTHORITY**

There is a physical element to self-control—the ability to control one’s own body. There are also psychological forms of control over oneself. Self-control, personal authority, developed over the course of one’s lifetime, is based on four different types of maturity: physical, intellectual, emotional, and ethical. The least important of these maturities, physical maturity, is the easiest to gain, simply through staying alive. Intellectual maturity, the ability to process and use knowledge, is the second easiest maturity to gain. Most people develop ways of using information. The other two forms of maturity, emotional and ethical, are more difficult. Even the most ethically mature can occasionally retreat into immaturity. Yet these two maturities are central to our concept of personal authority. Emotional maturity is the ability to control the way we act in relation to our emotions; emotional maturity helps us use nonviolent ways of expressing anger. Ethical maturity, the most difficult and most important maturity to attain, helps us to take into account the rights of all people; it consists of the ability to make decisions that benefit others instead of just ourselves.

Personal authority, then, is the ability to control oneself that comes from the attainment of maturity. It is a complex maturity that consists of four aspects and not simply age, physical maturity, or intellectual characteristics or accomplishments. Because it is so complex, personal authority does not accrue to a person on a particular birthday, for example, 16, 18, 21, or even 75. There are numerous people who have attained physical and intellectual maturity but who lack emotional and/or ethical maturity. These people have failed to grow up; they are overgrown children.

*The Bell Curve* privileges intellectual maturity, which is not central to the ability to make ethical decisions. The authors insisted that people with higher intelligence make better decisions, yet they failed to take into account intelligent criminals. Where Herrnstein and Murray were specific in their definition of crime, they focused on violent crimes, such as murder, assault, rape, and robbery (p. 236) and they added crimes against property (p. 240), leaving out white-collar crime all together. Intelligence and intellectual maturity are not sufficient forms of self-control. Knowledge without the wisdom that comes from ethical maturity is dangerous. Wisdom is not something that accrues only to people who have high IQs, nor is ethical decision making something all people with high cognitive ability naturally do. This should be one of many lessons from Nazi Germany.
PERSONAL AUTHORITY AND CLASS

Personal authority separates people into two classes: those with and those without. The notion of class indicates a division among people related to status and to the rights and privileges accorded in relation to status. Those who have personal authority are adults. Those who do not have it are children. Age is not significant to these designations; there are people who are physically young who make ethical decisions and people who are physically old who have never made ethical decisions. The attainment of personal authority is a lifelong process, not an immutable status. For the purposes of this discussion, we differentiate between the Adult and the Child (capitalized, singular) to define the two classes and the differences in rights between them, but we want the reader to keep in mind that each of us shifts constantly in relation to our own personal authority.

Authority and power (control and energy) are balanced: Both are required for constructive human action to take place. Power alone is destructive, and authority alone is impotent. There are corresponding concepts to authority and power in relation to the possibilities for action: rights and responsibilities. Rights create the possibility for action, like power. Responsibilities, like authority, control that action. The right to drive a car is accompanied by the responsibility to drive carefully. Adult rights are predicated on self-control—the ability to make ethical decisions in relation to both freedom and responsibility. A person cannot be expected to deal with the consequences of exercising rights unless that person has the maturity to consider those consequences in the process of decision making. This means there are two sets of rights: those accorded to the Adult and those accorded to the Child. These different sets of rights are what creates the two classes, Adult (who has personal authority and personal power) and Child (who has personal power only).

Some Adult rights are currently codified into law, whereas others are not. Table 1 shows some Adult rights in relation to responsibilities.

Because the Child lacks personal authority, it would be unfair to grant Adult rights to the Child. For example, if a child burns down a house by playing with matches (tools that rightfully belong only to adults), that child has to go through the rest of life with the burden of a terrible deed committed before it was possible to comprehend the consequences. Instead of Adult rights, then, the Child has a right that ensures his or her safety and well-being during the process of gaining the personal authority that creates the possibility of Adult rights: The Child has the right to be the responsibility of a Parent. We will discuss this relationship in detail later.

There are monumental differences between the class system that we outline here and traditional class systems. Traditional class systems are facts of
one’s birth; mutability of class over a lifetime is the exception rather than the rule. Herrnstein and Murray argued that intelligence is inherited and that test scores become consistent by the time a person is 10 years old, reducing movement between cognitive classes. In contrast, the class system of Adult and Child creates the possibility—and the desirability—of all people’s moving from one class to another. The purpose of childhood is for people to develop personal authority, to have the protection of a parent so they can make mistakes safely on their way to gaining the four types of maturity. All people should be able to move from being the responsibility of someone else to being responsible for themselves, from having few rights to having the full set of Adult rights. Unlike traditional class systems in which one class benefits at the expense of the others, the class system that we propose, then, is nondiscriminatory because it benefits both groups of people: It protects children until they can handle adult responsibilities, and it allows adults the freedom to create their own lives. We are arguing for a society in which all people have the opportunity to become Adult.

TABLE 1
Adult Rights and Adult Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Rights</th>
<th>Adult Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choose friends, mate</td>
<td>Be respectful toward all people, including ourselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose whether or not to have a child</td>
<td>If we have a child, we have the responsibility to care for that child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have feelings, perceptions, and opinions</td>
<td>See that our expressions of our feelings, perceptions, and opinions do not impinge on the rights of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have our own personal space and privacy</td>
<td>Do not invade someone else’s personal space and privacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make decisions about our lives</td>
<td>Deal with consequences of our decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make mistakes</td>
<td>Deal with consequences of our mistakes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOCIETAL CONTROL:
AUTHORITY/POWER RELATIONSHIPS

Authority and power have roles to play in relationships between people. In hierarchies, authority and power are divided between people: One person has control and is in the position of authority, whereas the other person performs
the work and is in the position of power. Personal power and authority accrue to the individual at birth or through growth and cannot be taken away by others. In contrast, positional authority and power shift based on factors that are external to the individual. There are three types of authority/power relationships (APRs), which are based on the relationship of the personal characteristics of the individual to the position he or she occupies. Two of these relationships are positive, and one is destructive, the seat of oppression.

**ADULT TO ADULT AUTHORITY/POWER RELATIONSHIP**

One of the problems with many proposals for the reform of society is the attempt to eliminate hierarchical relationships. Although there are some hierarchical relationships that are codified into law, such as the relationship between judge and citizen, and others created by institutions, such as the relationship between boss and employee, there are still others that occur between individuals based on the greater knowledge, experience, or wisdom of one person over another. Herrnstein and Murray tried to account for these differences by placing them under the aegis of intelligence. However, as we have seen, intelligence fails to account for wisdom, an attribute that can determine a great deal about how a person interacts with other people. There are differences between people that are significant. There is no way to equalize all relationships between all human beings because human beings inevitably differ in certain personal attributes.

The Adult-to-Adult APR is a way of understanding how a hierarchical relationship can be positive and nonoppressive for both people, just as the difference in rights between the Adult and the Child are beneficial to both classes. For this analysis, we will examine relationships between two people. APRs can happen between groups of people, and one person can have authority over many. Relationships between groups, however, are ultimately enacted in relationships between dyads. For example, the patriarchal APR between men and women (discussed later) is constituted in the individual relationships between individual men and individual women. Likewise, one person in authority can have different APRs with the different people in the power position; thus, all hierarchical relationships between people are ultimately enacted in groups of two.

In the Adult-to-Adult APR, one person is in a position of control (the authority position) over the other person, who is required to use energy to accomplish the commands of the authority (the power position). At the same time, there is a similarity between the people who occupy these differing positions: They are both Adult; they both have personal power and personal
authority. It is the personal authority of both parties that keeps this relationship positive and healthy.

The position of authority carries with it the right to command the energy of the person in the power position. Yet this right to command is limited by the personal authority of the person in the authority position. Ethical maturity ensures that the person in authority recognizes the adult rights of and is respectful toward the adult who is occupying the power position. A boss, for example, might have the right to command an employee to do something distasteful or even unethical; the personal authority of this boss prevents him or her from doing so.

Yet what if the boss makes a mistake? Personal authority is a challenge to all of us across our lives, so it is likely that a supervisor’s every action will not reflect personal authority. Even if the supervisor makes a mistake, there is something that prevents the relationship from becoming oppressive: the personal authority of the person in the power position. Personal authority means that the adult in the power position is not a blindly obeying automaton. That person makes a decision based on personal authority to uphold the positional authority of the supervisor. Should the boss attempt to require the employee to do something wrong, the employee can use personal authority to make a choice about the proposed action. The employee might go to the boss and explain why the action is not a good one and negotiate a solution to the problem. This negotiation process may help the supervisor regain personal authority and good sense. If it does not, the employee might simply refuse to do what is commanded. Or the employee might quit that job. In any case, the action does not get carried out because authority without power is impotent.

Thus, positional authority is dependent on positional power because authority alone is impotent. The authority is dependent on the person in the power position to make the decision to uphold that authority. This dependency of authority on power is a safety feature of the relationship and prevents the relationship from becoming oppressive because positional authority is ultimately limited by the personal authority of the person in the power position.

PARENT TO CHILD AUTHORITY/POWER RELATIONSHIP

Like the Adult-to-Adult APR, the Parent-to-Child APR is a positive one that benefits both people and that has a mechanism that prevents the relationship from becoming oppressive. The difference between these two relationships is in the personal aspects of the people involved. The person in the power position is a Child, who does not have personal authority. This Child
requires external control, as anyone who has ever had responsibility for a toddler can attest. We come into the world unable to care for ourselves physically and unable to keep ourselves and others safe. We require the control of another person to stay alive and to have the opportunity to develop the kinds of self-control that lead to personal authority.4

The person who is in control of the Child is not merely an Adult. He or she is an adult who has made the decision to become a Parent. Parenthood is not ascribed by biology, just as personal authority is not accrued with biological age. There are plenty of people who become parents through adoption or simply through taking responsibility for a child. Likewise, there are plenty of people who have physically created children but who have failed to become Parents.

In the adult decision to become a Parent, there is a sacrifice that is central to the health of the relationship between Parent and Child. The Parent sacrifices his or her personal power—energy—to the child. The Parent, then, differs from the Adult. The Adult has personal authority and personal power. The Parent resides in the position of authority and has personal authority only. In this sense, the Parent and the Child are a single entity consisting of personal authority and personal power that is divided between two bodies; the big body has personal authority, and the little one has personal power. Throughout childhood, this relationship transforms until it becomes an Adult-to-Adult relationship in which both people have personal authority and personal power. At the beginning, however, the Parent, because of the double dose of authority, has ownership over the Child, who has a double dose of energy. This ownership, a parental right, is accompanied by a responsibility to give up this ownership as the Child develops personal authority. This ownership of the Child by the Parent creates the safety feature that ensures the health of the relationship: When the Parent makes a mistake, that mistake is painful not just to the Child but also to the Parent—because the two are one. The effort to prevent this pain becomes the motivation for the Parent to do his or her best for the Child and to make amends for mistakes wherever possible.

The Parent-Child relationship is one of the most complex relationships between human beings because it is required to transform over the course of years. The oneness of the two reduces the likelihood of harm coming from the Parent, but it cannot prevent misunderstandings, particularly as the two begin to grow apart. The Parent-Child relationship keeps the child safe and provides the child with opportunities to develop personal authority until the child has become an Adult. At that point, each person becomes responsible for self-parenting—for meeting, in an ethical way, the desires he or she had that the original Parent was unable to meet.
We have gone far afield from *The Bell Curve*, and yet, there is an important point about that book that we must make. The authors delineated certain “high IQ professions” (p. 54), many of which are mathematical, scientific (including doctors and dentists), and technical. Because they have to somehow justify the high salaries of CEOs, Herrnstein and Murray also suggested that being a business executive requires a lot of intelligence. The “high IQ professions” become conflated with status, suggesting that the most important jobs in our society are jobs that require high intelligence. The standard of success they offer are the salaries that jobs such as doctor, lawyer, business executive, and so forth currently command.

We suggest that despite the current privileging of doctoring and lawyering, the most important jobs are those that contribute to the long-term health of our society—jobs that involve helping children develop personal authority: parenting and teaching. Those who help people who have failed to take on personal authority during their childhood are also important, for example, social workers, counselors, and drug and alcohol treatment workers. We need to recognize the importance of these jobs; we need to provide many kinds of support for the people who take on these jobs.

Finally, Herrnstein and Murray appear to have argued in favor of increased support for parents because they acknowledge the importance of parenting for the child’s success. Yet, arguing in favor of marriage, they suggested on page 545 that fathers who fail to marry the mothers of their children should not have legal rights to those children (which means that these children would not receive child support under such a system). This, coupled with the suggestion on page 548 that the government cease to “subsidize” the births of children to low-income women, reflects an actual limiting of financial and social support to parents. Herrnstein and Murray’s policies throw away a whole group of children because of the actions of their parents, a move that contributes to the maintenance of the very underclass that the authors claim drains society. Instead, we need to find ways to help all people who have become parents—no matter the circumstances—to understand and take on the status of parenthood.

DESTRUCTIVE AUTHORITY/POWER RELATIONSHIP

We have spent time explaining the two positive APRs to be able to show how the destructive APR appropriates aspects of each to create tyranny of the sort advocated by Herrnstein and Murray in *The Bell Curve*. Unlike the two positive APRs, however, the destructive APR has no built-in safety feature to prevent oppression.
The destructive APR filches the appearance of its participants from the Adult-to-Adult APR; from the Parent-to-Child APR, it seizes the terms of its positions. Here’s how it works: In the Parent-to-Child APR, one person has all the authority and the other all the power. The fact that the parent has all the authority is balanced by the sacrifice the parent makes in having the child and is accompanied by the responsibility to divest oneself of complete authority over the child as the child develops personal authority. The destructive APR relegates authority to one person, the person in the authority position, without balancing it through sacrifice or through the recognition of the responsibility to divest authority over time. In other words, the positions of authority and power in the destructive relationship are the same as when a child is a completely helpless infant, and these positions never change.

From the Adult-to-Adult relationship, the destructive APR usurps its participants. That is, it appears that the participants are adults because they are full-sized human beings. In actuality, the person in the authority position enacts this relationship to satisfy his or her personal whims. This person has no personal authority—no ability to make ethical decisions based on the common good. The person in the authority position in the destructive APR, then, is an overgrown child—an adult-sized person who has failed to grow up. These are dangerous people.

In enacting the destructive APR, the overgrown child in the authority position recognizes only the energy, the power, of the person in the power position, the terms of the Parent-to-Child APR. The destructive authority places the person in the power position in the position of a Child—enacting ownership over that person. Although there is an appearance of two adults in this relationship, in reality, there are two children—the overgrown child in the authority position and the manufactured child in the power position. Imagine a boss of the worst sort: autocratic; plays favorites, manipulates, or harasses in order to get his or her own way; thinks only of his or her own needs and not the needs of anyone else; unpredictable because his or her whims shift constantly. This person’s employees are in the Child position, trying to respond to what he or she says, trying to deal with a person who changes but who never acknowledges those changes.

Why do people continue to work for a tyrant like this? They do so because of economic need, but also because the instant this overgrown child senses dissension, he or she has strategies to put down revolutions among the employees: cajoling, false promises, denial, lying, blaming others, granting special favors, blackmail, and other manipulations. These strategies keep the tyrant in control because they ensure that the manufactured child does not gain personal authority. Rather than supporting ethical decision making on the part of
the person in the power position, these tactics appeal to that person’s emotions or other desires in a way that can easily elude personal authority.6

The other aspect of the Parent-to-Child APR that the destructive APR corrupts is that of the class system, and it is from this APR that we have the immutable oppressive class systems that grant privileges to some groups and deny human rights to others. The differences between the Adult and the Child are the only differences that need lead to different sets of rights and responsibilities. That is because there are identifiable differences between adults and children and also because it is possible and desirable for a child to become an adult.

GAMES (OVERGROWN) KIDS PLAY

The Bell Curve supports three “games” (class systems) that are destructive APRs. The first is a foil for the other two. Herrnstein and Murray openly set up classes based on intelligence. They set up five “cognitive classes”; however, they focused on the differences between the highest and lowest classes. These cognitive classes are inherited and immutable over the course of one’s life; they determine the social privileges a person has. Finally, this class system is presented as natural. The authors appear to bemoan this difference, but it is there and we have to deal with it. The class system of intelligence presented in this book is a foil, a way of fortifying two older class systems that have fallen into disrepute.

One old class system that the authors attempted to strengthen is that between Blacks and Whites. The “game” of racism is a destructive APR based on skin color. In the not-so-distant past, Black people were literally owned by White people, a concrete demonstration of the terms of the destructive APR. Although slavery has been outlawed for 135 years, it has only been 35 years since equality between Blacks and Whites was legislated. The destructive APR between White people and Black people has only been outlawed since the Civil Rights Act. Laws govern positions only—they do not govern the characteristics of the persons occupying those positions; they do not require a person to have personal authority. Thus, although the destructive APR between Blacks and Whites has been outlawed, it continues to be enacted by White people who lack personal authority. The enactment is more subtle than slavery and has become even more subtle since the passage of the Civil Rights Act: There is the appearance of equal opportunity, of equality between Black people and White people. If it has not been obvious heretofore in this article, let us say it now: Appearances are dangerously deceptive.
We can look to the prisons and their death rows, which remain disproportionately Black; we can look to welfare systems, which place their clients in the position of a child, unable to have any kind of voice in a system that controls their lives yet is supposed to be helpful. We can look at the differences between the (Black) inner-city schools and the (White) suburban schools as well as society’s unwillingness to fund all schools equally. The criminal justice system, the welfare system, and the education systems are examples of continued White ownership over Blacks through continued denial of resources and, more important, respect to Black people. But even beyond systemic problems, there are the ways in which the destructive APR continues to be enacted on an individual level between Black people and White people. This happens in so many everyday encounters, when White people fail to recognize or respect the personal authority of Black people.

Thanks to the Black people who developed personal authority despite the terms of the destructive APR into which they were born—the Harriet Tubmans and Rosa Parks and all the nameless people who found respect for themselves and were then able to require that respect from others—we have a societal acknowledgement, at least in the form of laws, that differentiating between people on the basis of race is wrong. Herrnstein and Murray attempted to turn back the wheels of time through asserting that there are significant differences between races and that these differences cannot be helped. Yet, they based their argument on a trait that is suspect to begin with. Furthermore, to maintain their fiction, they ignored centuries of wise Black people and centuries of philandering and corruption by the intelligent White elite.

The other game that is sustained by *The Bell Curve* is that between men and women. This relationship is supported by Herrnstein and Murray in a more subtle way than the destructive APR between Whites and Blacks. The best way to access this support is through their statements about the importance of marriage. Their concern is with economics and the fact that single mothers are often poor—therefore, marriage as an institution should be encouraged to avoid this poverty. Yet, Herrnstein and Murray conveniently ignored several factors in relation to marriage. As with slavery, marriage used to entail the legal ownership of the woman by the man. Although women can own property now, we still do not have constitutionally guaranteed equal rights.

As with the relationship between Black people and White people, the destructive APR between men and women continues to be enacted by individuals. The authors of this article have spent a combined 30-some years working with and advocating on the behalf of battered women—women who
have done as Herrnstein and Murray dictated by getting married and who
have almost not lived to tell about it, women whose children have been brutal-
ized by the violence they have witnessed. There is something worse than eco-
nomic poverty and that is the poverty of the soul. It is the poverty of a woman
who lives in a large suburban house, who drives a nice car, who sends her chil-
dren to the best schools, and who lives in terror of her tyrannical husband.

Along with making invisible the role of the intelligent in crime, Herrnstein
and Murray concealed the responsibility of males in their relationships with
women. They never acknowledged battering. As a matter of fact, they did not
even acknowledge the male role in the production of children when they sug-
gested that parents should tell their daughters not to have babies out of wed-
lock. Women do not have children all by themselves. Nor are they always in a
position, whether married or not, to choose to have sexual relations with a
male or to choose to use birth control. Herrnstein and Murray did not mention
the possibility of rape, much less the equal responsibility of males for ensur-
ning that sexual relations with women do not lead to pregnancy.

Along with erasing male responsibility for the oppression of women,
Herrnstein and Murray took a hesitating step further, one that they can deny
because they couch it in questions. They wondered that because women have
babies, removing them from the workforce, might it be of greater social value
to choose men over women for various forms of higher education? They lined
up their definition of ethics with “using scarce resources efficiently” (p. 460),
which implies that the ethical thing to do might be to deny admission to med-
cal school for women. Herrnstein and Murray could not openly advocate for
intelligent (White) women to go home and have babies to improve America,
because that thinking reeks of the “Kinder, Küche, Kirche” mentality of Nazi
Germany from which the authors of *The Bell Curve* attempt to divorce them-
selves. But they did suggest (p. 548) that current governmental policies have
the effect of encouraging low-income people to have more children than do
high-income people. Their conclusion was that smart women need to have
higher birthrates than not-so-smart women. They paid lip service to the fas-
cist implications of their conclusion, and then, in the process of “condemn-
ing” eugenics, they suggested that we are currently practicing selection
toward low-intelligence babies. They ultimately recommended that all sup-
port for low-income women who have babies cease, which is a recommenda-
tion that appears to demonstrate their concern for maintaining liberty in this
country. Yet, in combination with the medical school dilemma, a pattern
emerges here: The importance of men to society lies in the brain; the impor-
tance of women to society lies in the uterus.
CHALLENGING TYRANNY

A rereading of history denies the reality of the power/powerless model. Many have challenged tyrannical authority. In fact, but for the actions of Black people, laws and practices would not have changed at all. Most White people were not interested in changing that which benefited them. How, then, do we understand effective action by people who are supposed to be powerless?

First, we would like to present a caveat. We are not providing oppressors with an excuse for blaming their victims. Over the course of history, individuals and small groups have found effective ways of challenging tyranny, and we are pointing these actions out. At the same time, there has never been a complete understanding of why or how these actions worked—the kind of understanding that would help others to begin to take the same kinds of actions. The purpose of our work is to analyze these actions across contexts and to show what makes them effective. But we cannot blame people for not taking action when they were not aware of its possibility.

The destructive APR is founded on the deception of appearance. The first order of business is to recognize the situation, to look beyond the appearance of the adult to discern the overgrown brat. Second, we must realize that authority is impotent without power. Energy without control creates destruction. But control without energy creates nothing. This is the principle on which labor union strikes operate: If the energy, in the form of workers, is withdrawn, then the factory or the mine shuts down. It was also the operant principle of the Montgomery bus strike. Third, all relationships are enacted in dyads. Racism, sexism, battering—all forms of oppression happen between two individuals. The male who beats his wife is enacting the destructive APR based on gender, but the action of beating takes place between those two individuals. Even legalized tyranny is ultimately enacted by individuals—such as the concentration camp guard who chooses to participate in the torture and killing of individual prisoners.

Each individual has the possibility to take action in opposing tyranny. This opposition to tyranny is not a matter of waiting until the “workers of the world unite,” to quote a previous attempt at ending oppression. Throughout history, there have always been individuals who have been able to challenge the tyranny into which they were born. We want to suggest that we must seek to end tyranny in the relationships we have with other individuals in our lives. As more and more people learn how to do this individually, the level of tyranny present in society will decrease.
Finally, there is only one kind of authority present in the destructive APR: positional authority. Positional authority is the weakest type of authority. We saw this in the Adult-to-Adult APR—that what really controls the terms of the adult-to-adult relationship is the personal authority that both participants possess. The way to effectively challenge tyranny is to use personal authority. That is, when the oppressed person in the power position develops personal authority despite the tyrant, that kind of authority becomes the authority that controls the relationship.

There are some principles for action:

- The main goal is to change a destructive APR into an Adult-to-Adult relationship. This means that the person in the power position who is using personal authority will not be creating a reverse tyranny in which the original tyrant becomes the victim.
- The reason to change a tyrannical relationship is not only for the benefit of the victim but also for the ultimate benefit of the oppressor. No one benefits in a fundamental way by oppression, even though some people appear to benefit or they benefit materially.
- The tactics that are being used are personal authority tactics. These tactics reflect emotional and ethical maturity—the maturities that are central to personal authority.
- The method of challenging tyranny focuses on the exercise of personal authority by the person in the power position; it does not have as a main focus the actions of the tyrant, even though the results of the challenge are to limit tyranny. Thus, the person in the power position begins to exercise his or her adult rights in a way that reflects personal authority.
- The personal authority includes a recognition of the adult rights of the tyrant. In this way, the person who exercises personal authority places the tyrant in the position of living up to the adult status that he or she pretends to have.

Finally, action takes place based on principles rather than rules. There is no set of behaviors that can be identified as behaviors reflecting personal authority—tyrants cannot fake personal authority by behaving in a certain way. There is no formula for challenging oppression, no series of steps that one takes that are guaranteed to work. If there were, these would probably have been discovered centuries ago. There are principles, however, that govern behavior.

Personal authority means making an adult choice to value more than intelligence, to avoid allowing our thinking to be limited to Herrnstein and Murray’s terms. We can seek and acknowledge wisdom. We can consider the ethics of our actions, the ability of our actions to contribute to a greater good in our society. We can recognize the right of people such as Herrnstein and
Murray to hold whatever opinions they wish to hold, but we do not have to allow those opinions to control our own decision-making processes or our interactions with other people. When we interact with authorities who are in accord with Herrnstein and Murray, we can make decisions about how we use our energy; we do not have to uphold tyrannical authority. When we make our own decisions, from our own sense of ethics, using our own wisdom, we do not defeat Herrnstein and Murray and their ilk; we render them irrelevant.

The discouraging aspect of The Bell Curve is that it presents a monolithic, simplistic world that denies a group of people control over their own lives—the control that allows people to determine important aspects of their own existence. By posing this world as natural, the authors attempt to make certain kinds of oppression unassailable. The good news for all who are interested in living in a nonoppressive world is that there are effective ways of challenging Herrnstein and Murray’s world, ways to which every individual has access. These ways of challenging oppression are not simplistic, as can be seen from the principles outlined above, because oppression is enacted in complex, subtle ways. At the same time, we know historically that these ways have worked, and now we are beginning to understand why.

NOTES

1. Early in their book, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) acknowledge the fact that the word intelligence carries negative connotations. Yet they continue to use the word, so they say, because alternatives such as “cognitive ability” are “uneuphonious” (p. 22). If the authors were truly concerned with remaining neutral about the problematic usage of the word intelligence, then the euphonic quality of a better phrase is a poor excuse for using a loaded word, despite their caveat that readers should not consider intelligence to be an “accolade” (p. 22). Therefore, to reflect Herrnstein and Murray’s not-so-hidden agenda, we adopt the word intelligence specifically because it is a loaded word.

2. Because emotional and ethical maturity are difficult to attain, not every decision by someone who is basically an adult will reflect these maturities. When we have very strong feelings or encounter a new situation, we struggle with making ethical decisions. We may make mistakes; we may retreat into childhood briefly.

3. We know that the boss might get someone else to carry out the action or he or she might carry it out himself or herself. Yet, the authority-power relationship of the original dyad is disrupted based on the personal authority of the person in the power position. Ideally, the boss will not be able to find anyone who will perform the unethical deed; if the boss does it himself or herself, then the responsibilities that accompany Adult rights kick in—the boss must deal with the consequences of his or her actions, including making amends for mistakes.

4. We recognize that children’s rights advocates may be uncomfortable with what we are saying. Yet we read every day about tragedies that result from failure by parents to control their children—youngsters who lock themselves up in refrigerators, children who die from poison-
ing, children who play with matches and burn themselves, children who play with guns and kill themselves or others. Children are not born with the ability to make good decisions about old refrigerators, knives, guns, poisons, and so forth. This decision-making ability must be developed over time, a time in which children are carefully supervised to prevent them from cutting short their own possibilities through ignorance and/or inability to control how they act in relation to their desires.

5. We are differentiating between these two types of children to show some kind of culpability. The overgrown child benefits from remaining a child; he or she can use the person in the power position to meet his or her desires, whims, ego needs, and the like. The manufactured child does not benefit from remaining a child and has not necessarily willfully refused to grow up. Often, manufactured children are born into the power position and are never given the opportunity to grow up.

6. Probably a good case in point would be that of Rosemary Woods, whose lies on behalf of her boss about the 18 ½-minute gap in one of the Watergate tapes resulted in a bizarre photo of her attempting to recreate the conditions under which she supposedly erased the tape accidentally during her transcription of it. Nixon, the overgrown child in authority, appealed to Woods in ways that helped her to avoid enacting her own personal authority. Anyone in the Nixon White House who approached Nixon with ethical concerns was quickly removed by Nixon’s henchmen, and no one would have known this better than Woods, who had been with Nixon since the 1950s. Woods was not of the Bob Haldeman ilk, an authority-hungry overgrown tyrant himself; rather, she was an ordinary person caught in the power position of a destructive APR. The evasion of her own sense of right and wrong by the terms of the APR in which she was in made it possible for a basically honest person to fail to see how extreme the situation had become until someone from the outside (in this case, reporters) intruded with a different perspective.

7. Over history, there have been White people who have lent significant support to the liberation of Black people. We do not have the historical data on these people, but we would suggest that these people developed their convictions through becoming aware of the realities of racism through individual contact with Black people. This is another form of leadership by individuals in the power position.

8. A significant factor that must be mentioned but that we do not have the space to explore in great detail here is timing. When does one take action against a tyrannical relationship? The centrality of discernment comes to light here: The sooner one identifies the tyranny of the relationship, the easier it is to take action in relation to it. The longer a tyranny operates, the greater the fear it generates. This fear makes it very difficult to take action. Furthermore, tyrannies increase in strength as they operate with impunity over time. This, too, makes them harder to challenge in later stages. Finally, violence tends to escalate over time. An early recognition is crucial to prevent further violence.

9. Examples of actions based on the principles outlined can be found in Juanita D. Price (2001).

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