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The Socio-emotional and identity development of black teens in white communities

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**THE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL AND IDENTITY
DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK TEENS IN
WHITE COMMUNITIES**

A Thesis

Presented to

**The Faculty of the Department of Child Development
San Jose State University**

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Terri Wallace-Bielecki

December 2001

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ABSTRACT

THE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK TEENS IN WHITE COMMUNITIES

by Terri Wallace-Bielecki

This thesis is an investigation of the impact of racial context on the social and emotional development of African American adolescents. The four participants in this qualitative, multiple-case study were Black females between the ages of 22 and 33. They all lived in predominantly White or non-Black communities during their high school years.

Data on the participants' peer relationships, evaluations of themselves in regard to physical appearance, ethnic identity and emotional well-being were collected throughout approximately one hour, tape-recorded interviews. The interview findings indicated that all of the participants had generally positive reflections of their high school experiences. They also had satisfying, same-sex friendships and faced similar challenges with ethnic identity development, social dating, and perceptions of their own physical appearances. The results suggest that the degree of the participants' comfort with their racial identity and physical appearance were related to the extent of their socialization with other African Americans.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved husband, Christopher, who offered unwavering support in my goal of obtaining a Master's Degree. Without his encouragement, pride, and confidence in my abilities I would not have been successful in the completion this academic endeavor.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Child development studies seldom focus on the general experiences of ethnic minority subjects (Graham, 1992; Padilla & Lindholm, 1995). When African Americans are discussed in research they are usually examined in the context of people “at-risk.” With common topics such as poverty, drugs, gang violence, teen pregnancy, and academic mediocrity, researchers would have us believe that these conditions somehow represent the circumstances of all Black families in America (Tatum, 1987).

Many middle-class, African American families live in majority European American communities. Exact numbers are difficult to ascertain but when one considers the example of California, one of the Nation’s wealthiest states, the demographics are quite enlightening. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), only 6.7% of California’s 33,871,648 population are African American. In Santa Clara County, the million-dollar mecca of computer technology and home of the participants interviewed for this study, there is a 2.8% Black population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that middle-income Blacks in these areas would be hard-pressed to find neighborhoods and schools comprised mainly of African American residents. A recent article in a prominent Santa Clara County newspaper attested to the diminishing numbers of Bay Area Black inhabitants (San Jose Mercury News, 2001). A large part of the reason for the exodus of African American families out of the area, as explained in the article by a local psychologist named Carlene Young, is that “for blacks, living almost anywhere in the Bay Area can be very isolating... There is no cohesive black community” (San Jose Mercury News, 2001, p. 2).

The topic of diversity in Black American lifestyles and socio-economic backgrounds has been given little attention in psychological or sociological research

(Tatum, 1987). This deficiency includes the topic of the effects of racial context on African American adolescents' socio-emotional development. Black teens in predominantly White communities may face many challenges in their attempts to construct positive perceptions of themselves (Clark, 1991; Tatum, 1997). Successful psychosocial development is dependent on many factors which include the establishment of quality peer relationships, positive evaluations of oneself, and a healthy racial identity. In an environment where an adolescent is a member of the vast ethnic or racial minority, one must ponder the possibility of compromised emotional health. The psychologist previously quoted from the California newspaper also remarked on the plight of young African Americans living in the largely non-Black Bay Area: "This place is... hard on teens and young black children. That kind of isolation brings on many serious issues of identity and affects all kinds of personal interactions" (San Jose Mercury News, 2001, p. 2).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the nature and perceived quality of peer interactions and to examine physical, psychological, and racial evaluations of oneself. All of these variables were explored in the context of the adolescent experiences of African American females who lived in or were raised in predominantly White communities and attended predominantly White high schools.

The following research questions guided this study: Did the participants feel a sense of belonging in their schools and communities? Did they have satisfying friendships and social experiences? What was the impact of their environment on their racial identity development? How did racial context affect their social dating experiences? How did the participants evaluate their physical appearance? What was their general level of well-being or adjustment?

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Issues Related to Race

Race is the single most important factor in this study because it affects every other component, in one way or another. Racial socialization within African American families, the positive implications of biculturalism, and healthy racial identity development are all issues related to race that must be expounded upon in order to create a foundation for this study.

Racial socialization. The research on racial socialization is severely limited but it is important to understand what minority parents teach their children about race.¹ “Differences of opinion [in this matter] would likely be a function of such variables as education, socioeconomic status, political philosophy, gender, life experience, and age” (Griffith, 1995, p. 508). At least one model of racial socialization has been offered for African American children. Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, and Allen (1990) describe racial socialization as an interaction between one’s cultural, minority, and individual experiences. Thornton et al. (1990) sought to determine elements of heterogeneity in sociodemographic and environmental correlates of racial socialization. The findings demonstrated that age and education were mediating factors in the parents’ level of racial group identity and amount of participation in racial socialization. Older parents identified more strongly with their racial group than did younger parents. Mothers were

¹ Though there are subtle differences in the definitions of ethnicity and race, the terms tend to be used interchangeably throughout the literature on identity and socialization. Therefore, to avoid confusion, the terms will also be used interchangeably in the body of this paper unless specifically stated otherwise.

shown to carry greater responsibility for imparting racial socialization messages than fathers and older mothers with higher educations were the group most likely to relate racial socialization messages. Marital status, national region, and neighborhood composition also impacted racial socialization practices. Never married parents were less likely to racially socialize their children. Fathers living in the Northeastern region of the United States were more likely to give racial socialization instruction than were fathers in the South, whereas fathers in all other parts of the country had comparable levels of racial socialization with Southern fathers. Mothers living in highly integrated neighborhoods were more likely to socialize their children with regard to racial matters than were mothers who lived in predominantly Black environments. The key messages in the participants' racial socialization were the importance of hard work, good values, racial pride, Black heritage, acceptance of their heritage, self-worth, social barriers for Blacks, and equality among all races.

What the study by Thornton et al. (1990) signifies is that racial socialization among African American families in the United States is multidimensional. It appears that there is not simply one correct or consistent method by which Black parents choose to teach their children about issues of race in American society. Rather, the socialization messages and the extent to which racial socialization occurs varies by several background characteristics. An important reminder with regard to this study, however, is that although Black children living in highly integrated neighborhoods are racially socialized more than children in largely Black neighborhoods, the amount of ethnic socialization received by Black children in predominantly White neighborhoods is not clear.

Marshall (1995) indicated that racial socialization by African American parents emphasizes "... 'humanistic' values over more ethnic-specific parenting practices and values" (p. 394). The results of Marshall's study, in corroboration with previous race-

related research, stressed that parents made frequent mention of the equality of all races and the necessity of being able to get along with White people.

DeBerry, Scarr, and Weinberg (1996) cite studies suggesting that African Americans are actually "... socialized to be bicultural... or competent in both African American and European American contexts" (p. 2377). This notion of biculturality integrates well with the results of Marshall (1995) and Thornton et al.'s (1990) aforementioned research. Biculturality is considered by many researchers to be the most adaptive racial identity for individuals from various minority groups with many positive psychosocial outcomes.

Biculturalism. African American adolescents raised in predominantly European American environments may be faced with incongruities between what are acceptable behaviors and characteristics within their own ethnic subculture and what is considered acceptable to the mainstream culture (Clark, 1991). Subsequently, an African American's ability to navigate successfully through the dominant cultural context may be dependent upon his or her assumed coping strategy (Clark, 1991; Tatum, 1997). In models outlined by Tatum (1997) and Clark (1991), it has been suggested that some minority teenagers develop one of three types of identities in order to cope within mainstream society. A *raceless identity* is defined as one in which a person de-emphasizes her race by avoiding associations with any of the manners, traits, or attitudes typically ascribed to her racial group. Adolescents with a raceless identity within a majority White community may relate adequately with their White counterparts but may have difficulty with peers in their own racial group. Other young people may develop an *oppositional identity*. An oppositional identity is signified by refusal to affiliate oneself with the actions, attributes, or ideals of the dominant culture. These teenagers regard the White community with suspicion and disdain and often exhibit stereotypically Black

behaviors and characteristics. Adolescents who adopt a *bicultural identity*, however, are socialized into the dominant culture, yet they have strong ties with their own ethnic group. “Bicultural people actively participate in both cultures, have extensive interactions within each environment, and adopt behaviors that allow them to adjust to a variety of different environmental demands” (Clark, 1991, p. 42).

The social advantages of a bicultural identity have been supported in recent research. Rotheram-Borus’ (1990) study of high school students from an ethnically diverse high school examined reference group orientations in relation to self-esteem and adjustment. Reference group orientation refers to the ethnic group with which a person identifies. All of the students were from working-class families. The results demonstrated that students with strong ethnic identification or oppositional identities had the highest levels of separatist attitudes, cross-ethnic conflict, and ethnic pride. Students with raceless or mainstream identities had the lowest levels of ethnic pride. Bicultural subjects experienced the least amount of cross-ethnic conflict, as well as having more cross-ethnic contacts and ethnic pride than those with mainstream or majority culture identities.

Suarez, Fowers, Garwood, and Szapocznik (1997) explored the relationships between biculturalism and feelings of differentness, loneliness, and alienation. The sample in this study was Hispanic American college students in Florida. The students came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and varied in terms of immigrant generational status. The results indicated a negative correlation between biculturalism and feelings of loneliness and alienation. These findings suggest that a bicultural orientation may increase a minority’s opportunities, willingness, or comfort in making social contacts with a wider variety of people and thereby thwart feelings of loneliness and alienation.

Racial identity development. Phinney (1989) discussed and explored Marcia's (1966 & 1980, cited in Phinney 1989) model of ethnic identity stages of ego identity development. The model suggests that a minority in the initial phase of racial identity development can be described as having a *diffuse* identity. A diffuse identity is one in which the person has spent little or no time exploring general issues related to race or what it means for them to be a person of color in their society. A *foreclosed* identity is one that is characterized by the acknowledgment of one's own race with either positive or negative associations but with no attempt to further explore racial topics. Individuals are considered to be in *moratorium* when they are actively examining their ethnicity even though there may still be some confusion about what race means in the grand scheme of things. Moratorium is typically followed by an *achieved* racial identity. Having an achieved identity indicates that a person has spent some time in exploration and has come to "... a clear, secure understanding and acceptance of one's own ethnicity" (p. 38). In Phinney's (1989) study on ethnic identity development, high school students who had achieved the stage of ethnic identity had the highest scores on adjustment. This study provides some evidence for the psychological importance of ethnic identity development for minority children and adolescents.

Another study was able to demonstrate a relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). The subjects were college students of Asian, Hispanic, African American, and European American descent. A majority of the respondents indicated that ethnic identity was an important facet of their overall identity development. Minority students reported ethnic identity to be more important and explored their ethnic identity more than did White students. Consistent with previous research reviewed, ethnic identity search and ethnic identity commitment were positively correlated with self-esteem. The researchers were clear in pointing out that self-esteem

was not influenced by the extent of one's ethnic association but "... by the extent to which one has thought about and resolved issues regarding one's ethnicity" (p. 181).

Martinez and Dukes (1997) conducted a study on the relationships between ethnic identity, self-esteem, self-confidence, and purpose in life in junior high and high school students. In this study, ethnic identity was identified as unexamined (comparable to diffuse or foreclosed), searching (comparable to being in moratorium), or identity achieved. Most respondents were categorized as searching for their ethnic identity. It was found that, for Blacks, higher levels of ethnic identity corresponded with higher levels of self-esteem. Overall, students with achieved identity received the highest scores on self-esteem, purpose in life, and self-confidence. Students with unexamined racial identity had the lowest ratings on all three variables.

The extant research clearly demonstrates that healthy psychological functioning is affected by the status of one's racial identity development. Ethnic minority adolescents who have yet to explore their ethnicity or who struggle to identify with their own racial group appear to have the lowest levels of emotional adjustment. Biculturalism is reported to be an adaptive racial identity for teenagers of color who must learn to interact effectively with members of their own group and those of the White majority culture. For Black adolescents living in communities with few other Blacks, relating to their own racial group in an attempt to achieve an ethnic or bicultural identity would presumably be a challenging prospect. How can a person learn to identify with a group with which they may have little or no contact?

The Nature and Function of Friendship In Adolescence

The developmental significance of friendships throughout the human life span has been established through an abundance of research (see Hartup & Stevens, 1997). In an article on the developmental influences of social relationships, Hartup (1989) suggested a

distinction between two major kinds of relationships that are relevant to children. It was proposed that a child's social relationships could be categorized as ones that are either vertical or horizontal. Relationships in which the balance of power is weighted heavily to one side, such as parent-child relationships, are considered vertical. Horizontal relationships are described as ones in which the power structure is more equalized. An example of a horizontal relationship would be one that exists between friends. Hartup (1989) states that horizontal relationships help children to extend the basic social skills that have been learned through their vertical relationships, thereby honing the abilities which lead to intimacy and connections with others.

African American teens in predominantly European American contexts may face many challenges in their attempts toward successful social interactions (Clark, 1991; Tatum, 1997). The possible repercussions on the emotional health of an adolescent who is unable to achieve intimate friendships is an important consideration in the current study. Although most of the current research on adolescent friendships focuses on European American subjects, it helps to establish the psychological value of friendships and the significance of friendship in the current study.

Friendship and emotional well-being. Bishop and Inderbitzen (1995) conducted a study of junior high school students, examining the relationship between self-esteem and two components of peer relations (peer acceptance and friendship). The sample of ninth-graders was pooled from a total student population that was 90% Caucasian, 4.5% African American, 2.3% Asian, and 1.9% Native American. The results of this study showed that self-esteem scores were significantly higher for students with at least one mutual friendship than for those students with no mutual friendships. Additionally, friendship scores were better predictors of self-esteem than were scores on peer acceptance. The contention supported by this study was "... that children who lack

friends are likely to experience lower self-esteem, but poorly accepted children who have at least one reciprocal friendship may be buffered in some way from the deleterious effects of poor peer acceptance” (p. 486).

The correlations between friendship cliques, friendship characteristics, and emotional well-being were studied by Claes (1992). The subjects were girls and boys from Montreal with an average age of 15 years and 11 months. The results of Claes’ (1992) study suggested that the quality of friendships among adolescents was more important than the quantity of friends. Emotional well-being (e.g., self-esteem) and the degree of closeness within the friendships were positively correlated. The absence of conflict in a friendship was also related to emotional well-being.

Gauze and colleagues (1996) discovered a link between the quality of family relationships and friendship in early adolescence. Ninety-five percent of the 138 students in the study were Caucasian. The remaining 5% were “... visible minorities...” (p. 2204). Researchers met with participants at the beginning and at the end of a nine month period of time. The results demonstrated a positive relationship between friendship and assessments of perceived social competence and self-worth. The relation between friendship, social competence, and self-worth were stronger in children from non-close, maladjusted families. These children were also more likely to display relative changes in self-concepts and self-worth when they experienced changes in their friendship status. Correlations between friendship, social competence, and self-worth were stronger for children without a friend or with friendships of lower quality than were correlations for children with friends and those with friendships of a higher quality. The findings “... show that friendship may help a child compensate for vulnerabilities and stresses that may derive from particular family environments” (p. 2213).

A longitudinal study investigating friendship and peer rejection as predictors of

adult adjustment (Bagwell, Newcomb, & Bukowski, 1998) indicated that students with higher levels of peer rejection tend to have poor school performance and vocational competence, fewer future expectations, and do not participate in as many social activities as do students with lower levels of peer rejection. The results of this study also revealed a positive relationship between preadolescent interactions with peers and adult life status, perceived competence, and psychological health.

Moore and Boldero (1991) conducted a study investigating the possible correlations between different styles of identity and intimacy and their associations with friendship beliefs and characteristics. The dynamics of friendship provide opportunities for self-discovery, self-concept development, and independence development -- all of which are important in establishing identity. Friendship also allows for mutual support and self-disclosure, which are both a part of intimacy development. The authors suggest that psychosocial maturity and friendship most likely interact and stimulate growth in each other. The results of their study support this idea. The study involved a sample of secondary school and college students whose ages ranged from 12 to 20 years. The participants' scores revealed that there was a relationship between identity and intimacy formation and friendship patterns. Participants with the highest levels of friendship quality had more mature levels of identity and intimacy development. They also reported more emotional closeness and togetherness with their best friends than any of the other participants.

Friendships provide adolescents with opportunities to learn about themselves and to build intimate relationships with others. Having at least one good friend boosts self-esteem and may provide a necessary buffer when a child is poorly accepted by peers or has a particularly stressful home environment. Adult psychological functioning is also affected by the quality of one's adolescent, peer interactions. Without the benefits of

friendship, one may be doomed to struggle with social inadequacy, low evaluations of self-worth, low perceptions of competence, or may be more vulnerable to the pressures of daily life and subsequent emotional maladjustment in adulthood.

Gender differences in friendships. Many studies report gender differences in friendships. Jones and Costin (1995) found that girls had higher mean scores on measures of communal orientation (concern for the needs and desires of others in social exchanges), expressivity (a focus on emotional expression and responsivity), and friendship quality. Boys had higher mean scores for exchange orientation (concern with equating the benefits of the relationship) and instrumentality (traits such as decisiveness, forcefulness, and being task oriented). Similarly, the results of Clark and Ayers' (1993) investigation of same-sex friendship expectations indicated that females expected more empathic understanding, conventional morality, loyalty, and commitment from friends than did males. Additionally, Jones and Costin (1995) discovered significant positive correlations for girls between communal orientation and friendship quality and for boys between exchange orientation and instrumentality. This suggests that "... sex differences in relationship orientations and gender-related characteristics are evident in the early adolescent years and are linked to perceptions of friendship quality" (p. 530).

Gender-differences were also found in studies examining intimacy in same-sex, adolescent friendships (Shulman, Laursen, Kalman, & Karpovsky, 1997). The results showed that females expressed more closeness, self-disclosure, and tolerance for differing opinions in their friendships than their male peers. The friendships of males were characterized by higher levels of control and conformity.

A study on the social networks of middle-income, Black adolescents revealed several significant gender-related differences (Coates, 1987). Females reported knowing more people, had networks that were more geographically proximal, tended to have more

adults in their social networks, and had smaller close friendship groups than did males. Males indicated greater frequency of contact with the members of their social networks and a greater tendency toward not having cross-sex peers as members of their close friendship groups.

Although the extensive study of friendships in both male and female adolescents is a worthy research goal, in order to provide greater focus and depth of data collection, the current study was conducted solely on females. The reason for this focus is the gender differences demonstrated in the research on the peer interactions of junior high and high school aged children. Namely, girls had smaller and closer friendship groups, tended to focus more on emotional expression, sensitive responsiveness, and friendship quality.

Race and friendship choices. Research has demonstrated that adolescents tend to choose same-race friendships (Clark & Ayers, 1992; Tolson & Urberg, 1993). However, African Americans in predominantly European American schools may need to cross racial lines in order to attain friendships. This may present some difficulty because these friendship choices are seldom reciprocated (Clark, 1991; see Clark & Ayers, 1988).

Several studies on seventh through eleventh grade, racially diverse groups of students emphasize a pattern of same-race friendship choices. In a study by Clark and Ayers (1992), out of 213 friendship pairs, 118 were Caucasian, 39 were African American, and 39 were cross-race dyads. Twenty-five percent of Caucasian friendships were cross-race friendships, whereas 50% of the African American friendships were cross-race friendships. Tolson and Urberg's (1993) study revealed equally high numbers of same-race friendship dyads. Eighty-five percent of the subjects were matched to one of the two friends they named on a questionnaire. Eighty-eight percent of the matched friendship dyads belonged to the same racial group.

DuBois and Hirsch (1990) investigated neighborhood and school friendship patterns. The results showed that 82% of Black students and 87% of White students reported having an interracial school friend. However, Blacks reported nearly twice as much contact outside of school with a close interracial school friend than did Whites. For both Black and White students, there was a significant decline in cross-race school friendships as grade levels increased. This study also demonstrated that children living in neighborhoods with children of other races were positively correlated "... with closeness and non-school contact in an interracial school friendship and negatively with having no other-race school friend" (p. 529).

Hallinan and Williams (1989) used data collected from a survey of over 58,000 high school students in their sophomore and senior years. Out of a reported 8,834 mutual friendship dyads, only 86 were mixed-race friendships. Mixed race friendships were influenced by the same psychosocial processes as were same race friendships. It appears that both persons in the friendship, regardless of the racial make-up of the dyad, live in close proximity and are similar in personality and socioeconomic status. Data were collected on "tracking" choices. The reasoning is that Black students are placed in lower tracks more often than White students, which creates fewer opportunities for students of different races to interact, recognize similarities, and establish friendships in an equal status context. Hallinan and Williams (1989) stated that, "the assignment of students to tracks can effectively resegregate a desegregated school" (p. 77).

Clearly, race and community are relevant in the establishment of friendships. It was suggested by Clark and Ayers (1992) that "if reciprocal relationships are necessary before friends can serve as social support agents, African Americans attending majority White schools may have less effective peer support systems in school than their Caucasian counterparts" (p. 403).

Physical Attractiveness

On countless occasions, many of us may have been told that true beauty is on the inside. In other words, we are led to believe that physical appearance counts for little in life when compared to the importance of inner substance or good character. The irony is that research on physical attractiveness demonstrates the significance of its influence on one's social, working, and personal life, while society seems to de-emphasize this significance.

Physical attractiveness and self-esteem. In this media-frenzied era, individuals are bombarded on a regular basis with the majority European American culture's images of attractiveness. "Physical attractiveness is a highly desirable social attribute" (Gurman & Balban, 1990); the most celebrated people in our society tend to be men and women who epitomize these standards of beauty. The way in which people view their own attractiveness has been linked, through research, to how they feel in comparison to their peers and how they feel about themselves in general.

One study (Gurman & Balban, 1990) investigated the hypothesis that people who were considered unattractive would become defensive when confronted with information or "... feedback implying that they were unappealing" (Gurman & Balban, 1990, p. 576). It was suggested that these people, ranging in age from 19 to 34 years, would overestimate their physical attractiveness in an attempt to preserve their self-esteem. The results revealed that people high in attractiveness tended to underestimate themselves and those low in attractiveness tended to overestimate their physical attractiveness. The researchers maintained that this result confirmed their hypothesis. It showed that people low in attractiveness would deny or defend against "... the conscious acknowledgment of negative feedback concerning their appearance, fostering overestimation" (p. 579). It was also discovered that those who overestimated their physical appearance had higher

ratings of self-esteem than did subjects who had accurately estimated their attractiveness.

So, is it a person's own perception of their physical attractiveness or an outside observer's perception of the person's attractiveness that is most significantly related to self-esteem? Kenealy, Gleeson, Frude, and Shaw (1991) investigated the possible relationships in their study of 11 1/2- to 12 1/2-year-old children from Wales. The results suggested a lack of correlation between self-ratings and objective ratings of physical attractiveness. Specifically, attractiveness ratings by the judges did not correlate with the children's self-esteem scores, however, the children's self-ratings of attractiveness did correspond with self-esteem. Furthermore, this study, much like the study by Gurman and Balban (1990), also established that attractiveness over-raters had much higher self-esteem than did subjects who under-rated or accurately perceived their own attractiveness.

In a study conducted to determine the possible associations between physical attractiveness and feelings of hopelessness in high school students, it was discovered that there was a strong, negative correlation between hopelessness and self-appraisals of physical appearance. Page (1992) explains that our society offers "rewards" for people perceived as attractive and that differential responses from other people may contribute to feelings of hopelessness. Other studies also support the notion of a relationship between physical attractiveness and emotional well-being. Lerner and colleagues (1991) analyzed adolescents' responses to measures of physical attractiveness and psychosocial functioning. The research team rated the physical attractiveness of the students based on individual frontal and mid-chest-to-head photographs. The results indicated that higher scores on physical attractiveness corresponded with "... more favorable psychosocial functioning" (p. 316). Similarly, Thornton and Ryckman (1991) determined that physical attractiveness is a fundamental aspect of adolescent self-esteem for both boys and girls,

regardless of grade level. They found positive correlations between these two constructs in both sexes.

Social comparison and physical attractiveness. It is important to make the connection between the importance of social comparisons in people's self-perceptions of physical attractiveness and, in turn, the connection to self-esteem. For example, for an African American female living in a predominantly European American community, the social comparisons on which she bases her assessment of her appearance may present internal conflicts. In a primarily White context, standards of beauty will surely reflect those most significant to the cultural majority. Could self-comparisons to the beauty standards of others who are dissimilar in skin color, facial features, hair texture, or body shape affect one's self-esteem? It is in this respect that the relationship between social comparison and perceptions of physical attractiveness becomes important this study.

The influence of social context on self-appraisals was addressed in a study by Brown, Novick, Lord, and Richards (1992). In their review of the literature, the researchers claim that previous studies have shown "...that people spontaneously describe themselves in ways that distinguish them from others" (p. 718). In essence, they seem to suggest that people tend to define themselves in terms of how they compare to other people. After being exposed to photographs of unattractive females, the female college students who participated in Brown, Novick, Lord, and Richard's (1992) study gave themselves higher scores on physical appearance. Scores on physical appearance were comparatively lower after exposure to attractive female targets. However, exposure to photographs of males had no effect on the female students' ratings of themselves. These results imply that social comparisons only occur against similar others. In a study with similar results, Crouch and Degelman (1998) examined the effects of female images in advertising on self-perceptions of attractiveness in teenage girls. High school girls were

exposed to advertisements that contained either images of an attractive female model with a regular or fat-free cheese product or the same attractive models, digitally altered to appear overweight, with a regular or fat-free cheese product. While the regular or fat-free product label had no significant effect, girls who had been in the group with the attractive model in the advertisement rated themselves lower in attractiveness than did the girls who had been in the group with the physically altered models.

Race and physical attractiveness. Makkar and Strube (1995) examined how racial identity and self-esteem might mediate self-perceptions of attractiveness in Black, female college students who were exposed to images of White and Black models. Participants with high scores on African self-consciousness, who had been exposed to White models, evaluated themselves as more attractive than did the participants with lower scores on African self-consciousness. "These results indicate that women who do not embrace their own ethnic identity may be more susceptible to comparison of White standards of beauty, resulting in lower self-acceptance" (p. 1560).

In a qualitative study of adolescent girls at an "ethnically diverse" (p. 194) urban high school, Milke (1999) also uncovered the possible influence of racial identity in moderating comparisons of attractiveness between Black and White beauty standards. Forty-nine White, ten African American, and one Asian American girl were interviewed regarding their opinions of popular teen magazines containing mainly White models and celebrities. The researcher concluded that "... the magazines and the images they contain were part of White girls' culture... but... Black girls generally rejected the images as part of their reference group..." (p. 196). Even though they occasionally read these popular magazines, many of the Black girls preferred magazines such as *Ebony* and *Essence*, which depict Black images but are aimed at adult audiences. It was also reported that the Black girls in the study had higher levels of self-esteem and expressed more satisfaction

with their appearance than their White counterparts. The only ethnic minority that admitted to the occasional desire to emulate the girls in the popular “White” magazines was a girl of mixed-race (African American and White). Perhaps, this is a result of the complexity of biracial identity development, in that belonging to two groups may produce inner-conflict with respect to concepts of attractiveness.

Wade (1991) used data from a previous study to investigate racial and sex differences in self-perceptions of physical attractiveness. The findings showed that Blacks and Whites did not differ significantly on ratings of self-esteem nor were there any significant interactions for race and sex. However, Blacks rated themselves higher in physical attractiveness than did Whites in this study. Wade postulated that “... it is possible that the standards which Blacks use [to judge their physical attractiveness] are more subjective than those used by Whites and are less influenced by the media” (p. 1322). It is suggested that the media creates a source of social comparison for attractiveness in which White images are much more prevalent than Black images. Therefore, Blacks do not have a way of validating their attractiveness in the same way that Whites do.

It is important to point out that racial context is not mentioned in Wade’s (1991) study. It is reasonable to expect that Blacks who live in predominantly Black or multi-racial communities have other racially similar individuals to use for social comparisons and an awareness of those more “subjective” Black beauty standards when making self-assessments of attractiveness. As demonstrated in Makkar and Strube’s (1995) study, stronger ties with the Black community may provide a buffer for Blacks against pervasive White beauty standards. However, for a Black person living in a predominantly White community with only Whites as markers for social comparisons of physical attractiveness, would the self-perception of attractiveness be lower than that of

their White peers?

Gender and physical attractiveness. Self-perceptions for boys and girls in America tend to differ quite a bit based on cultural expectations and the gender socialization implemented to achieve those cultural expectations. The differences in perceptions of physical attractiveness between males and females are few but significant nonetheless.

A simple study on the interactions between gender, self-esteem, and perceptions of attractiveness was conducted by Nell and Ashton (1996). They conducted a survey on college students to ascertain the students' impressions of their physical attractiveness. Women scored significantly lower than men on ratings of perceived attractiveness, body satisfaction, and self-esteem. Gurman and Balban (1990) found similar differences between men and women in their examination of physical attractiveness, self-esteem, and defensiveness. Females provided more accurate assessments of their physical attractiveness than did men. The researchers theorized that this accuracy could be the result of the higher incidence of feedback that women generally receive regarding their appearance. Likewise, in the aforementioned study by Thornton and Ryckman (1991), males rated themselves higher on measures of physical attractiveness than did females. Thornton and Ryckman suggested that this gender difference is likely a reflection of the female tendency "... to express greater dissatisfaction with their appearance than males" (p. 92). There was also a tendency toward stronger correlations between physical attractiveness and self-esteem for females.

Social Dating

It is theorized that dating and early romantic experiences are key components in a teenager's quest for self-identity and intimacy (Montgomery & Sorell, 1998). Along the same vein, McCabe (1984) states that dating is a means of "personal and social growth"

(p. 159). Though there is some debate on the interpretation of his theories and the sequence and functions of his psychosocial crises, intimacy versus isolation and identity versus identity diffusion, several researchers cite Erikson on the issue of adolescent dating (Montgomery & Sorell, 1998; Moore & Boldero, 1991). It has been said that “Erikson observed that some adolescent attachments... are actually attempts at arriving at a personal identity through the creation of an interpersonal context for mutual self-exploration of plans, wishes, and expectations...” (Montgomery & Sorell, 1998, p. 21). In similar translations or extensions of Erikson’s work, it is postulated that females explore identity through, and place greater value on, the aspects of identity that deal with intimate relationships with others (Moore & Boldero, 1991; Shaffer, 2000). Therefore, dating and romantic relationships can be described as an important component of identity development as well as an obvious means of socialization.

Race and social dating. Racial preferences in social dating would seem to be another important variable for an ethnic minority in a predominantly European American context. Logically, choices for dating partners of the same ethnic minority would be limited as may opportunities for dating cross-ethnically. For a Black female in a primarily non-Black context, her attitude about interracial dating as well as the attitudes of family, friends, and the community as a whole would play a crucial role in her dating practices (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000). The research on interracial dating is minimal (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000), but a few studies do broach the subject of race and dating.

Liu, Campbell, and Condie (1995) analyzed the questionnaire responses of Asian Americans, African Americans, Latino Americans and Euro Americans from the racially diverse college campus of UCLA. The questionnaire was constructed to examine ethnocentrism in dating. Sixty-five percent of the participants reported having inter-ethnic dating experiences, but Asians, Blacks, and Whites were considered to be equally

ethnocentric when they made their choices for dating partners. Latinos had slightly lower scores in ethnocentric dating than did the other groups. When asked to rate the overall physical attractiveness of Asians, Blacks, Latinos, and Whites, respondents rated Whites as the most physically attractive. Asians were rated least physically attractive. Blacks were the only group that rated "... opposite-sex members of their own ethnicity as more attractive than Whites" (p. 103). The data also suggested that Asian males and Black females were the least preferred inter-ethnic dating partners.

In the same study, the approval of one's social network was considered a possible influence as to whether or not a person would participate in inter-ethnic dating. Participants reported the highest social network approval scores for dating a White person and the lowest for dating a Black person. Whites were deemed the most preferred inter-ethnic dating partners collectively among Asians, Blacks, and Latinos. However, as an individual group, Blacks were the only group that did not rate Whites as the most preferred outgroup partners. For Blacks, Latinos were rated as the most desirable outgroup partners. It was speculated that tension between Blacks and Whites and the advent of the "... counter ideology [of] 'Black is beautiful'..." (p. 111) are possible contributors to this effect. Whites, after themselves, nominated Latinos as the next most preferred dating group. Liu, Campbell, and Condie (1995) suggested that this may be due to Latinos' physical similarity to Whites and/or Latinos being attributed with less ethnocentrism overall by the other groups. "In summary, social network approval, similarity, and physical attractiveness were the most powerful predictors of ethnocentrism in dating preference..." (p. 109). Ethnic identification was of the least consequence in making ethnocentric dating choices.

Todd, McKinney, Harris, Chadderton, and Small's (1992) study on interracial dating with a similar sample indicated that 61% of the total number of participants was

interested in dating outside their racial group. In general, men and younger participants expressed the most positive attitudes toward cross-race dating but there was no significant difference between racial groups. People who were willing to date outside their group scored higher on measures of independence and assertiveness than did people who were unwilling to date interracial. Researchers suggested that this may indicate that “a higher degree of conformity and passivity may account for an unwillingness to engage in interracial dating” (p. 208). Interestingly, 44% of young, Black women reported that they were unwilling to date interracial, making them the group least willing to date outside their race. In this case, for African American girls in predominantly White schools and neighborhoods, there would appear to be very few dating choices or opportunities due to the poor availability of African American boys and a reluctance to date someone outside their ethnicity.

Summary

In summary, the review of related literature has shown that the exploration and achievement of ethnic identity appears to be an important component of positive psychological adjustment for ethnic minorities. While the available literature is limited in both depth and scope in comparison to the developmental significance of the issue, the current research implies that a healthy self-concept for minorities includes an understanding and acceptance of race as a mediating force in our society.

Conversely, the research on adolescent friendships is plentiful and it is clear that positive peer relationships have a number of psychological and developmental benefits. Furthermore, the absence of these relationships seems to warrant concern for adolescent socio-emotional health. However, this research is primarily focused on European Americans and same-race friendships.

Physical attractiveness was also found to have a substantial influence on one's social and emotional functioning. Its importance lies in how a person evaluates herself in comparison to racial groups with inherent physical differences. Perceptions of physical appearance tend to have a positive correlation with psychological health.

Research on social dating shows that it is a crucial ingredient in the search for one's identity, especially for females. Data on interracial dating establish that it is a complex phenomena and a reasonably significant consideration for a young Black woman searching for potential romantic partners in a predominantly White community. Social pressures, her attitude about cross-race dating, as well as the attitude of non-Black males in her environment would appear to be influential factors in whether or not a Black female in a predominantly White community would have much of a dating pool.

Chapter III

Method

This is a qualitative, multiple-case study. A qualitative research design was chosen mainly because of the lack of existing research on ethnic minorities living in various racial contexts. This study was aimed at providing detailed information to inspire new avenues for future research and to help fill in the knowledge gaps for African American psychosocial development. The absence of sufficient literature on adolescent African American friendships, ethnic identity, and self-perceptions in varied racial environments warrants a broad investigation of the topic in order to pinpoint areas of developmental interest or concern. The contextual nature of qualitative research lends itself to this type of exploratory study.

Participants

There were a total of four participants in this study. All participants were African American (both parents are African American) females, between the ages of 22 and 33, who had lived in predominantly White or predominantly non-Black communities in California during their high school years. Each of these young women came from middle-class families in suburban neighborhoods. All of them had some college education. Only one participant was married and had children. The other three women were unmarried, had no children, and were not involved in romantic relationships at the time of the interview. The subjects are described in greater detail in the results section. Their names were changed to protect their anonymity.

Data Collection & Analysis

Participants for this study were obtained by distributing letters and flyers, explaining the research, to the faculty at various junior college and university campuses throughout the Silicon Valley in California. The letters and flyers were targeted toward

the child development, sociology, and psychology departments. Colleagues, co-workers, and friends were also asked to refer acquaintances that they thought might fit the criteria for this study. Respondents contacted the researcher by e-mail or telephone and they were asked to schedule interviews at their convenience. They were given a choice of two locations for the interview, either in their homes or at the researcher's office.

Data was collected via individual interviews that lasted from approximately one hour. As mentioned previously, this study was intended to be exploratory in nature in the hopes of pinpointing possible areas of concern or interest for future research in the area of African American development. With that goal in mind, the interviews were transcribed and analyzed for common themes among the participants and their experiences, within the specified areas of research interest. Also evaluated were common or recurrent themes among the subjects that were originally not intended to be the focus of research but posed interesting questions about race and racial context.

Chapter IV

Results

The participants were very forthcoming in sharing their experiences as teenagers growing up in an environment that presented unique developmental obstacles. Being one of a small number of Blacks in their communities and at their high schools, each interviewee was able to offer valuable insight into the impact of racial context on the evolution of their self-concepts, ethnic identity, and emotional well-being. It is important to acknowledge that every human being has a unique background or family history, personality, and life experience. These factors often dictate how we meet the challenges of the everyday world, no matter what those challenges may be. Therefore, it is crucial that the individual story of each participant is narrated in order to understand and recognize the plausible developmental significance of similar threads in their collective experiences.

Theresa. Theresa is 23-years-old. Her mother was raised in a racially mixed suburb of Chicago. Most of the families in her mother's neighborhood were first generation European immigrants. Theresa's father was from a small town in rural Louisiana. Though most families in his community were Black or Creole (a culture composed of a mixture of African, French, Hispanic, and Native American heritage, speaking a dialect of French and Spanish), contact with these families was minimal because of their farm-oriented lifestyle.

Theresa's parents divorced amicably when she was four-years-old. She lived with her mother, but was able to maintain frequent visits with her father who lived in a nearby city. Theresa and her father were close and she described him as "... a really, really loving man." Unfortunately, that close relationship with her father was cut short when he died only one month before her eleventh birthday. Theresa has a half-brother who is nine

years her senior with whom she had a good relationship. Theresa also has a half-sister with whom she has had very little contact.

Theresa was raised in Milpitas -- a small city with predominantly White and Asian residents. Specifically, the View City Demographics page on the internet (1990)² reports numbers obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau showing that Blacks occupy only 5.7% of the city's population. However, Theresa felt comfortable and accepted within the community, especially during her elementary school years. Her mother had Black friends with children and they would get together on occasion. It wasn't until her early teens, during junior high, that she began to feel "... like an outsider."

During junior high and high school, for the first time in her life, Theresa began to realize the relevance of race in her environment. Theresa attended an all-girl, private school in her city. As social dating became more prevalent among her peers, and clothing and hairstyles became more important in order to fit in among her friends, she began to feel like she did not measure up. "I started noticing that, I guess, what... I had was not appealing. The ideal beauty. You know, and that's when a lot of that awareness started happening." In general, her naiveté regarding race slowly disintegrated. "I can remember all the way up to junior high. I really did view the world through... rose-colored glasses... I thought... everybody gets along, you know. And high school is when a lot of things changed for me [and] I definitely saw the racism."

Episodes of racial inequality and tension on Theresa's high school campus were catalysts in her newly emerging view of the world. Theresa felt that her high school's academic agenda did not place the same importance on African American culture or

² U.S. Census demographic data from 1990 is being used, as opposed to data from the year 2000, because it creates a more accurate picture of racial context during the participants' high school years.

history as it did with the cultures and histories of other ethnic groups. She recalled a period of time in a history class when she was looking forward to the chapter on African Americans. Theresa was devastated when the teacher intentionally skipped that chapter, especially because the teacher had diligently reviewed the chapters on Europeans, Asians, and Hispanics. For the first time, Theresa was also confronted with racist comments and “jokes” that generally left her speechless. She shared a memory in which a Hispanic friend stuck up for her when a White student remarked that she needed to be careful while tanning for the prom. The White girl did not want “... to be as dark as a nigger.” Theresa’s Hispanic friend, sympathetic because of a similar experience when she was called a “wetback,” dragged Theresa off to the principal’s office to report the incident.

Despite her feelings of being an outsider, Theresa made friends easily and felt satisfied by the closeness of those friendships. She had a racially mixed group of friends -- one Black girl, one was Filipino and the rest were White.

In relationships with other Blacks, she felt disconnected, intimidated, and uncomfortable. During her junior year of high school, Theresa attempted public school, in the hope that she might have a more pleasant high school experience. There was a greater population of fellow African Americans on her new school campus but she still felt out of place. She was often accused of being “Whitewashed,” and questioned or criticized about her “proper” manner of speech by other Blacks. “Listen to you,” Theresa said, remembering the comments of another Black girl. “You sound like a White girl.” Black peers openly wondered why Theresa associated with White girls during lunch time and other breaks. Eventually, Theresa transitioned to a Black group of friends at public school and gained a higher degree of comfort with other Blacks, but she still experienced a great deal of anxiety in her interactions with them. Her speech continued to set her apart, she was negatively labeled as “smart” and “stuck up” due to her quiet and studious

personality, and, to Theresa's surprise, her medium skin tone made interactions among darker African American students difficult. Still, when she transferred back to private school, because she had more credits and could graduate on time, she felt stronger and more assertive as a result of her experience at the public school among teens of her same race.

Dating was a challenge. Considering the population where she was living and the type of school she attended, opportunities to date Black boys were few and far between. Actually, even when circumstances gave way to opportunities to meet Black boys, such as school dances and mixers, Theresa said that the boys were generally interested in White girls. This situation only added to her already low evaluation of her physical appearance. Initially, Theresa refused to date White guys because of the hurt and resentment she was feeling as a result of racial tension she was experiencing at school. However, after high school she had her first White boyfriend and after they dissolved their relationship, she continued to date White boys. She felt that she was treated better and was made to feel more beautiful by the White guys she dated. This treatment was different than that of the Black men in her life who were consumed with light skinned, Black females with long hair and tended to idealize "gangster" or "pimp" attitudes popularized by current Hip-Hop and Rap music trends.

During high school, Theresa began to think about her racial identity. She identifies as Black but proudly acknowledges her mixed or Creole heritage. People often remark on her ethnically ambiguous appearance, wondering about her racial mixture and why she has a French surname. She identifies with her Black culture "somewhat," stating an interest in Black history and music. When asked if she ever wished that she were White, Theresa claimed that she never wanted to be White but that she had wanted lighter skin.

Overall, Theresa reflected negatively on her high school experiences. However, all things considered, she felt as though personal problems overshadowed those related to race. In looking toward the future and having children of her own, Theresa was mostly concerned with the possibility of raising a biracial child. She discussed the importance of making sure that her children appreciated both sides of their heritage but that they also realized that the world would view them not as biracial but solely as a Black person. Open communication with her children about race and preparation for "... the real world" were crucial points for Theresa.

Yolanda. Yolanda is 27-years-old. Her parents were both raised in the southern United States. Her father was from Texas and her mother, as with Theresa's father, is of Creole heritage and was raised in rural Louisiana. In both of the regions where her parents were raised, Blacks predominated the populations. Yolanda's parents remain married and she lived with them and her older sister in Gilroy during her adolescence.

Gilroy is a suburb of San Jose, with a largely White (48.5%) and Hispanic (45.9%) population (View City Demographics, 1990). During Yolanda's adolescence, Asians made up less than 3.5% of the community and African Americans totaled 0.7% (View City Demographics, 1990). Socialization with other Blacks, for Yolanda, was generally non-existent as were discussions among her family members of race or the meaning of being Black in their community. Occasionally, they joked or remarked upon seeing another Black person or family within town but other than that, race seemed irrelevant in their household. However, Yolanda felt safe and comfortable in her community and discussed being part of a fairly close-knit neighborhood. Most of the racial tension she witnessed was directed toward Hispanics.

Yolanda was happily oblivious and naive about racism and prejudice until high school. She recalled her first eye-opening incident that occurred at a coffee house in her

hometown. "A friend I was sitting next to got in a fight with a bum outside of [a] coffee [shop] and [the bum] told [my friend]... that he hopes he gets AIDS from the nigger-woman he's sitting next to... which was me." Yolanda was shocked because she lived in California and she believed that "... nobody really [thought] that way." Her friends were supportive of her and managed to turn the situation around. They spoke to the owner of the coffee shop, had the bum banned from the establishment, Yolanda got free coffee, and her friends made efforts to console her. "So, it was really positive afterwards."

Yolanda felt that she had good friendships and that race was not a negative factor in her efforts to socialize. Her immediate friendship circle was ethnically mixed; it included Whites, Hispanics, Filipinos and Asians. She believed that her Asian and Filipino friends could relate to her experience as a minority in Gilroy. They often commented on "... how odd they'd feel when it's like they're the only family that's Filipino or the only family that's Asian."

In describing her relationships with Black peers, Yolanda reported that there were all of two Black boys, two Black girls, and one girl who was Black and Hispanic. She became friends with the biracial student and tended to avoid the Black boys because "... the kids in school would try to hook me up with the other Black guys... and I wasn't interested in them." Outside of school, Yolanda was nervous and felt uncomfortable in interactions with African Americans. She said that no one has ever commented on the way she speaks, but she realizes that her she may be perceived as "sounding White." "I still feel out of place like I don't know quite their language or how to talk to them." Even though Yolanda admits that she still feels awkward around fellow Blacks, she has started to "relax a little" because she currently lives in an area with more Blacks and interacts with Black co-workers on a daily basis.

Dating for Yolanda was limited to a brief relationship with a White boy in junior

high and then she did not date or have another boyfriend until after high school. She has never dated Black men and actually has a preference for non-Blacks. Her dating experiences have involved Hispanic, Asian, Filipino, and White guys. Yolanda felt as though her preference and living circumstances made it difficult to meet guys and said, "... a lot of times it makes me wonder if they even think that I'm interested in White guys or if they automatically assume I like Black guys because I'm Black."

With regard to her physical appearance, Yolanda hated everything about herself. One must keep in mind, however, that she was only able to make physical comparisons with non-Black peers. "Most of the friends that I... [was] around were a lot skinnier than... I was. Their behinds were smaller than mine and their hair was definitely straighter than mine and I just couldn't get my hair straight enough. And their noses were smaller." There were times that she even wished that she were White so that she could have more manageable hair and appealing features.

Though she did not contemplate her racial identity as a teen, Yolanda has spent some time mulling over the subject as an adult. For the most part, she has thought about her difficulty interacting with people of her own race and has felt as though she is "missing out" on something important. "It would have been nice to have been around more people of my same race," she said, reflecting on her childhood. As a result of her lack of Black socialization, Yolanda does not identify closely with Black culture but it is a situation that she would like to remedy. She has begun the process by allowing herself to be more racially aware, reading more about Black history, and seeking out opportunities to be around other African Americans.

In spite of some trying moments during her adolescence, Yolanda reflects positively on her high school experiences and said that she was happy when she was in school. Personal conflict at home was the biggest stressor in her life, not the fact that she

was one of few Blacks in her community. She even commented that there was an advantage to being raised in Gilroy. Being out in the workforce has made her feel that the education she received in high school was better than the education of many minorities whom she comes into contact with. Growing up in a predominantly White neighborhood gave her a superior academic opportunity. Yolanda added, however, that she would caution any Black family considering a move to a community like the one she grew up in. She feels that they need to be aware of the impact that their move may have on their children. “How are your kids going to react to being in a school with a bunch of people that are not like themselves?... Kind of make them look at a bigger picture.” Concerns for her future plans of having children included raising biracial children who may not fully fit into either White or Black society, the geographic area in which she would want to raise her children, and being sure to discuss race openly with her children. She felt unprepared by her own parents to deal with race in the real world.

Daphne. Daphne is 33-years-old. Her father is from a predominantly Black neighborhood in Alabama. Her mother was a “Navy brat,” so she moved around a lot. However, the places where her mother did live were mostly comprised of African Americans. Daphne is one of four children in her family. She has one sister and two brothers.

Like Yolanda, Daphne spent her adolescence in Gilroy. Daphne’s family did not place any special emphasis on Black culture or socialization and she did not discuss race with her parents beyond “subtle” issues such as not having a place in town where they could have their hair done. Daphne did not perceive any tension or hostility toward Blacks in the community, commenting that “... there weren’t a lot of Black people to really... have a lot of tension.” Any racial hostility that she witnessed was directed toward the Hispanic sector of the population.

Daphne became aware of herself as “different” from others in her community when she was in elementary school. At times, she found it to be emotionally stressful or uncomfortable. She recalled instances of being called “the ‘n’ name” and “Blackie” while walking home from school and situations with “... kids just being afraid to touch our hands.” In junior high, Daphne cringed at being the center of attention when the teacher would discuss anything related to African Americans. It was during these moments that the other students often stared at Daphne as she was the only Black student in any of her classes. Daphne also experienced a different kind of teasing from some of the other kids. “I always used to get this ridicule that I wasn’t really Black... you know, because of the stereotype... and the language... Like when someone would say that to me, I never knew how to respond.”

There were five other Black adolescents in Daphne’s graduating class. Although she was acquainted with them, her close group of friends were two Hispanic girls and one White girl. It was easy to make friends and Daphne participated in the student council, cheerleading, and color guard. She described the quality of her close friendships as “very good” and still continues relationships with some of her high school friends. The only time she felt that race led to awkward moments in her friendships was when it came to going out dancing. “I just always hated going out... Some of my friends would always... [say], ‘Oh... you’re Black. You can dance’.” Daphne was frustrated by the stereotype and the pressure placed on her as a result of the stereotype because she did not feel as though she was a good dancer. “I just hated that feeling,” she reiterated.

Daphne was uncomfortable around other Blacks. “I had grown up basically, you know, in a White and Hispanic community... from kindergarten through high school and it really wasn’t until I went to college where I really started feeling comfortable,” she explained. She attended a four-year university in Northern California. The university

was in a predominantly White community but there was a greater number of Blacks and more opportunities to engage in activities with Black peers than there were in her hometown. Although there were Black fraternities, sororities, and organizations, Daphne was a member of a club in which there were few African Americans.

In the arena of social dating, Daphne encountered a few obstacles. "Dating was like such a hard thing because there were not that many Black guys at all..." Daphne did not date much in high school and she believed that race played a significant role in her limited dating experiences. Her choices were to date the one available Black guy on campus, which she did, or to date interracial. Even though she was not opposed to dating someone of another race, Daphne felt as though her White male peers were not up to the challenge. She imagined that most people in high school did not want to deal with the "ridicule" or social hassles that went along with interracial dating. Later on, in college, she dated mostly White men. Race was still a barrier in many of those relationships. The barriers were mainly attributed to having to deal with prejudicial public views, especially in what Daphne described as "a very racist area."

Daphne's evaluation of her physical appearance was very negative. "I just never liked my appearance," she said. When comparing herself to White and Hispanic peers, her hair and the size of her posterior made her feel self-conscious. Daphne wished she could change some features but she never wished that she were White. Daphne did, however, desire a skin color that "...was a more golden brown." This desire was expressed when Daphne recalled negatively tinged questions from her cousins like, "Why are you so dark?"

As a teenager, racial identity was not a topic of concern. In adulthood, especially in the last few years, she has begun to ponder "Who am I?" and "What am I supposed to be?" as a Black person. Being raised in a predominantly White neighborhood, speaking

stereotypically associated European American English and marrying interracially, she finds that her Blackness is often called into question. “Oh, you’re not Black enough,” is a familiar phrase to Daphne and she wonders “What is a Black woman supposed to be like?” She also wonders if it is not enough to just be herself. “Doesn’t that qualify me as being Black?”

Daphne enjoyed high school and considers it to have been a positive experience, even when considering her challenges with race. She stated that her situation was just something that she accepted because she “... didn’t know otherwise because that’s how [her] life had always been.” Academically speaking, Daphne saw an advantage to growing up where she did. She had a good education and good role models. She asserted that there were “... people that pointed me in the right direction.”

When asked about her three young children and how she identifies them racially, Daphne responded that whenever she has to check a box or fill out a form, she marks Black or African American. However, “I tell them that they’re... half Black, half White. And they know and they’ll tell people, you know that they’re light brown because, ‘My mommy’s dark brown and daddy’s White.’” Daphne is raising her children in the same community that she was raised in. Her biggest concern regarding race for her children was what it would be like for them at school. However, those concerns are lessened by the fact that “... they have a lot of friends... from that same background. Interracial background.”

Christine. Christine, age 22, lived with both of her parents, a younger sister, and a much younger brother in Fairfield. Fairfield’s population in 1990 was 63% White, 13% Black, 10% Asian and 12% Hispanic (View City Demographics, 1990). Christine’s father was stationed at the local Air Force Base. Originally, her parents were both from predominantly Black communities in Georgia. The bulk of Christine’s socialization with

other African Americans stemmed from her family's involvement in the church. In addition to church activities, Christine's mother often took Christine and her sister to Black community events and made books about Black History available in the house. Christine recalled, with great enthusiasm, the time when she and her family saw Nelson Mandela give a speech. She was at an age when she did not truly understand who he was but there was enough excitement surrounding the event that she was aware that Nelson Mandela was an important man. Race and community were not major topics of conversation in her household, but Christine's parents did stress a need to "... strive to be better."

Christine began to notice race-related changes in friendships and cliques among her schoolmates when she was in junior high. However, Christine remarked that these transitions did not cause her stress and she was not aware of any racial tension within the community. Her belief was that the Air Force Base created diversity that led to a fairly tolerant setting. The only memory Christine had of an awkward situation related to race was actually the experience of a male, African American friend. "You're not like the others," another student remarked to Christine's Black friend. In the interview, Christine's comment in regard to her friend's experience was that she, "...almost... expected to hear [that comment] one day from someone." When asked why she had that expectation Christine responded as if the experience had been her own, claiming that "I'm not like the typical Black female who's, you know, loud... always dressed to impress and hair all done... I'm low key [and] I do a lot of things that probably is not typical of me to do."

Her close group of friends in high school was racially mixed. They were mostly White but some were Asian and her best friend was biracial (African American and Caucasian). Christine was a cheerleader for a short period of time but she quit as a result

of the negative perception of cheerleaders at her school. She also participated on the drill team and on the tennis team. Christine viewed the drill team as a diverse group and the tennis team was mainly comprised of Whites and Asians. Her associations with other Blacks were limited to acquaintanceships.

Christine did not date in high school. She labeled herself "... the girl in the background." She was the friend who chaperoned on movie dates. Christine had crushes and even remembers being subtly pursued by a White friend. Though she had difficulty admitting it to herself, Christine really liked him. However, she was unsure of her ability to handle the social pressure or attention that often comes with a Black and White interracial relationship and she believes that her parents would have reacted negatively. Those feelings about interracial dating persist and, as a young adult, Christine also questions the ability of a White significant other to "... understand certain things that [she] would have to go through." In college, she has been on a few dates and all of them have been with Black men, but she has never had an "official" boyfriend.

During Christine's first year out of high school, she attended a university in Georgia and dubbed it the best experience of her life. She said it "... was the first time I was ever around Black people all the time and that was a different feeling but... it was really, really nice." Her first feelings of connectedness with other Blacks were at school in Georgia. In high school, Christine did not believe that she fit in with the other African American students based on speech, behavior and academic achievements. She was quiet and was often the only Black student in her honors classes. Christine was more comfortable and participated in more activities with her White peers. Currently, Christina attends a university in Northern California and is interested in joining a Black sorority but she is turned off by their reputation on campus. Her hope is to return to Georgia sometime soon saying that "... it really is a whole different atmosphere. To me,

it can't compare to the friendships that I have out here with people who aren't Black. I love them but it's just not the same." She also believed that her experience in Georgia boosted her confidence and made her personally realize the strength of African Americans as whole, something she had heard people discuss but had never felt firsthand.

Christine's experiences in high school and in Georgia have affected her thoughts on racial identity to the extent that she wonders, "How come I'm not like the rest of them?" She has also wondered how she might be different if she had been raised in an area with more Blacks. Christine seemed a little unsure of how strongly she identified with Blacks and Black culture. She had previously mentioned that she did not "feel Black" until she went to Georgia. However, she also responded that in high school she would have rated herself as a four or a five on a racial identity scale of one to five, meaning that she identified very strongly. She admitted that people on the outside may question her ethnic group orientation and that she even questions it at times. At this time in her life, she rates herself in the middle, at three. Christine's reasoning was that she feels comfortable as a Black person but stated that "... the experiences of a typical Black person who supposedly grew up in a low-income area, that's not really me."

With respect to physical appearance, Christine wished that she had more "manageable" hair. She has considered wearing her hair in more ethnocentric styles such as a close cropped Afro, braids, or locks but is concerned about what other people might think. Christine claimed that her concern was not related to racial perceptions but to the anxiety and personal risk often associated changing one's hairstyle. Colored contact lenses were also something that Christine had wanted try but she rarely used the clear prescription contact lenses that she already owned and felt it would be a waste of money to purchase contacts to alter her eye color. She also wanted a smaller nose but she said that she was not bothered with the size of her lips. Tall and thin, Christine also desired

bigger or more curvaceous hips and a larger rear-end. She mentioned an admiration for what she perceived as the general physical beauty of females and males with biracial backgrounds, of any racial combination, and that her comparisons of physical attractiveness were not specific to any one race. She never wished she was White and, though dark complexioned, did not desire lighter skin. However, she did guard against developing darker skin by regulating sun exposure. In comparison to her brother and sister, Christine felt as though she "... was just like the sample and... they've got all the features." When asked if she was referring to Black features, she said, "So to speak, yeah." She says that even though she thinks about the differences between her physical features and those of her siblings, it does not bother her.

Hesitant to label her experience as negative, Christine remarked, "I don't really care about high school." Watching her mom raise her younger brother and deal with the prejudice toward Black males, Christine's biggest concern for her future children are in raising a son. Her advice to another family who is considering moving to a predominantly White community would be to provide their children with plenty of opportunities to interact with other Black families. Open communication with their children about race and culture were also issues of importance for Christine. In her words, "Don't just put them in a situation and say, good luck!... Make sure you talk about what's going on."

Chapter V

Discussion

Racial Socialization

Out of the four participants in this study, only one expressed what seemed to be a concerted effort by her parents to provide racial socialization. Christine discussed attending Black functions and events, attending a church with other Black members, and some family discussions on race. As mentioned in the Thornton et al. (1990) study, with regard to typical racial socialization themes, Christine's parents also stressed the need to work hard. Christine was also the participant who lived in the city with the largest population of Blacks, a significantly larger population than the hometowns of the other three subjects. This fact alone may have made it easier for her parents to expose her to other African Americans, their culture, and their history.

Christine was not the only one, but she was the participant who made the most active effort and appeared to be most comfortable in seeking out opportunities to associate with other Blacks. For one year, she went to a southern college with a large population of other African American students. The other participants attended colleges in predominantly White areas. Christine also expressed an interest in joining a Black club or group. Yolanda was the only other interviewee who noted a desire to spend more time with other Blacks but remains trepidant about interactions with those of the same race. Yolanda and Daphne had the least amount of racial socialization, had the lowest level of comfort with other African Americans, and they grew up in the communities with the fewest number of African Americans. Theresa's junior year of high school at a more integrated public school gave her an opportunity to socialize with other Blacks that she would not have otherwise had. Still, some of these interactions were tense and she ultimately returned to the predominantly White private school. Theresa saw her time at

public school as a valuable experience in being able to deal more competently with Black peers.

Again, it is important to keep in mind that while the current research in all the areas relevant to this study may discuss race, they generally do not discuss racial context. The work on racial socialization included a study (Thornton et al., 1990) that indicated that mothers in highly integrated neighborhoods were more likely to racially socialize their children than were mothers in predominantly Black neighborhoods. In Christine's case, this may hold true. Hers was the most integrated community. However, for Theresa, Daphne, and Yolanda, Thornton et al.'s (1990) study does not explain their circumstances. Theresa, Daphne, and Yolanda did not live in predominantly Black neighborhoods nor did they live in highly integrated neighborhoods. They were reared in predominantly White neighborhoods and received little or no racial socialization from their parents. The notion of bicultural socialization, as suggested in other studies (DeBarry, Scarr, & Weinberg, 1996) also falls short of shedding light on the three participants' ethnic socialization. They were socially competent among Whites but lacked that same competency among other Blacks. This is, most likely, a result of the lack of opportunities or resources in their communities. One might guess that it may have been possible for their parents to pursue opportunities or resources outside of their residential areas to impart Black culture and history. However, it is interesting to note that their parents did not make these extra efforts toward Black racial socialization in order to compensate for their family's largely White racial context. Additionally, most of the participants expressed a desire to have had more racial socialization in their childhoods and recommended that Black families living in similar racial contexts provide plenty of racial socialization in order to help their children cope with their environment.

Racial Identity

The lack of opportunities to socialize with other African Americans can go a long way in explaining, what appeared to be, moderate to low levels of Black identity development in the participants in this study. To reiterate, all of the participants had mostly non-Black friends, did not participate in Black organizations and did not seek out significant interactions with other Blacks. Christine did mention interest in a sorority but decided not to join the group because of their “reputation,” describing them as “very loud” and exclusive. In itself, the comment may embody a desire to avoid stereotypical Black associations. Once again, that is a typical behavior of the adolescent with a raceless identity.

All of the young women in this study mentioned ways in which they were not like other Blacks. This feeling of separateness may be reflected in the way Christine, on several occasions, referred to other African Americans as “them.” The interviewees all described characteristics that they felt would make them “more Black.” Christine frequently made mention of the “loudness” of other African American women or girls at her high school and both she and Daphne referred to a certain assertive or aggressive “attitude” that other Black women had that they did not. Theresa and Christine also viewed strength and confidence as quintessential attributes of Black females, attributes that they did not inherently possess. Speech, for all of the participants, that has been described as White English versus Black English, created another barrier between themselves and their same-race peers.

After spending their whole lives in predominantly White communities, all of the participants might be viewed as having raceless identities, as described by Clark (1991) and Tatum (1997). Despite their varying degrees of ethnic socialization, none of them maintained consistent ties with the Black community and they all expressed greater ease

in relating to non-Black peers. Additionally, though the de-emphasis or avoidance of stereotypically Black association does not seem purposeful, as in many teenagers with raceless identities (Clark, 1991; Tatum, 1997), all of the participants described feeling different, not fitting in with other Blacks, or even being told by other people that they were not like other Blacks. The participants' only examples of language or speech and acceptable behaviors, attitudes or mannerisms outside of their homes were those of the White mainstream culture. They did not have the chance to develop what society typically deems "Black characteristics;" as narrow and misleading a view of the African American population at large as it may seem. Their racial identity struggles seemed to center on this discrepancy. Are characteristics such as speech, attitude, and hairstyle what make a Black person a bonafide member of the group?

These conversations on what the women in this study perceived to be as the essence of Blackness were accompanied by statements of inner conflict. Their thoughts about racial identity were focused on who they were as Black women, what they felt they were expected to be and that, somehow, they were not Black enough either in their own eyes or the eyes of others. These women currently seem to be in moratorium with their racial identities, still examining their ethnicity and attempting to decipher the meaning of race in their lives (Phinney, 1989).

Friendship and Social Dating

It was expected, based on previously cited research, that some or all of the participants would have reported difficulty in making friends or some level of dissatisfaction with their high school friendships. After all, cross-race, reciprocal friendships have been reported to be few during the teen years (Clark & Ayers, 1992; Tolson & Urberg, 1993) and there were few Black peers available to the participants to establish same-race friendships. However, Theresa, Daphne, Yolanda, and Christine all

had what they viewed as reciprocal friendships and high levels of satisfaction with their friendships. The participants considered themselves to be accepted among their peers and Theresa and Yolanda shared specific experiences in which non-Black friends displayed support and compassion for their brushes with racism. Daphne and Yolanda remembered their high school experiences as happy and positive ones. Theresa felt that her negative feelings surrounding her adolescent years were a result of personal problems, not the racial challenges she had endured. Christine claimed to be indifferent about her high school experience but she was the only participant who did not report stress, tension or conflict as a result of her presence in a predominantly White environment.

The research by Gauze and colleagues (1996) demonstrated that friendship might provide a buffer between family stresses and vulnerabilities. Perhaps, the friendships of the four participants provided a similar buffer in their attempts to navigate through life in a predominantly White community.

Social dating was another area of uniformity among the participants. However, their dating experiences in high school were not as positive as their friendships. Their dating was very limited, if they dated at all. Several factors could have contributed to this finding. The most obvious factor was the paucity of Black boys. Theresa went to all-girl school and when opportunities did arise to interact with Black males at inter-school mixers (from other private schools), the boys seemed to be interested in White girls. In Daphne's senior class there was only one Black male available and Yolanda recalled only two Black boys in her graduating class. Christine did not give numbers but she stated that she did not have access to the Black boys at her school who were not in her classes and "... always in trouble." Most people, in any environment, fare better in romantic pursuits when they have more than a handful of potential dating partners.

Another issue to consider, in social dating, is social pressure or attitudes. Daphne and Yolanda, numerically speaking, had more choices in White partners and a willingness to date interracially but their male counterparts may not have shared that willingness. Black and White interracial relationships come with additional challenges that same-race couples usually do not have to deal with. Reproach from family and friends keep many people from dating outside their race, especially when it comes to dating a Black person (Harris & Kabfleisch, 2000; Liu, Campbell, & Condie, 1995). Daphne's dating relationships in college with White men reflected some of these challenges and many of those relationships were adversely affected because of these challenges. Yolanda, who has only dated non-Black men, found it difficult to meet potential boyfriends and worries that non-Black men who may be attracted to her will not approach her, assuming that she dates only Black men. It might even be, as suggested in Liu, Campbell and Condie's study (1995), that Yolanda's status as a Black female (or any of the other participants, for that matter) made her an unappealing interethnic dating choice. Theresa, who dates both White and Black men, prefers the treatment she receives from White men. In general, people tend to date others with whom they share things in common (Baron & Byrne, 1999). A Black woman with a mainstream cultural identity may be more attracted to a Black men with a similar upbringings, who may be rare, or White men who share the same cultural base.

An interesting side note is that Christine, the only participant who had never had a boyfriend and had the least amount of dating experiences, was the only one who did not date interracially. Her reasons for not dating outside of her ethnic group had nothing to do with lack of physical attraction. Christine was concerned about parental and social disapproval, reasons which match those given by others in the current research (Liu, Campbell, & Condie, 1995; Harris & Kabfleisch, 2000). Additionally, Christine

projected great concern for the thoughts and opinions of others throughout her interview and how that concern prevented her from doing things that she might have done otherwise. She also mentioned a lack of confidence and inability to assert herself. The notion of assertive and less conformist personalities as typical of people who choose cross-race dating, may be true in Christine's case (Todd et al., 1992). Regardless, interracial dating may be an adaptive method of augmenting the dating pool of someone living in a community that is primarily populated by people of other races. Still, interracial dating during the high school years, in a White social context, may be a less desirable option for Black females or their potential dating partners. More research is needed in this area to determine the extent to which the lack of opportunity for dating may lead to feelings of peer rejection, greater difficulty in developing intimate relationships, and negative self-evaluations.

Physical Attractiveness

Yet another area in which the participants shared similar responses was in the physical attractiveness component. The goal was to ascertain their feelings about their appearance when they were in high school. Each participant claimed an overwhelming dislike for her physical appearance. These evaluations could be due to the female tendency to express dissatisfaction with their appearance, as stated by Thornton and Ryckman (1991). However, by examining more closely the features that participants hated most, one might discern the influence of racial context and racial socialization, or the lack thereof.

None of the women liked their hair. They all wanted "straighter" or more "manageable" hair. Daphne wanted hair that could "just be," taken to mean that she wished her hair did not require all of the extra time and maintenance for an everyday living that is typical of many Black hair-types and styles. These are hair qualities more

typical of a White person's hair. Fuller in figure than Theresa and Christine, though not overweight, Daphne and Yolanda wanted smaller bottoms. Large or more rounded posteriors are often attributed to the African American physique and could be considered a nuisance to the young girl trying to fit in, wear the same clothing styles and look like her White peers.

Three of the girls wanted their noses to be smaller, another physical attribute that is generally distinct between Whites and Blacks. Though skin tone was not intended to be a focal point in this study it was a recurrent theme among the subjects and is thus important to report. Yolanda, who wished she were White, wanted the physical features associated with the mainstream standard of beauty. She made no mention of wanting to be White in order to be free of the prejudice, racism, or other hardships that one might associate with being Black in America. The three other girls were concerned about or mentioned skin tone as being a relevant factor in their perception of themselves. Two of them, one with a medium skin tone and the other with a dark complexion, both wanted lighter skin. None of the participants wanted darker skin. Christine and Theresa even discussed the relevance of skin tone and dating among Blacks. They talked about friends who expressed concerns about the skin coloration of possible dates and they remarked that lighter shades were generally more favorable.

It would appear that African American females with Whites as their reference group and with low levels of racial identity, as indicated in the research by Makkar and Strube (1995) and Milkie (1999), would be vulnerable to White standards of beauty. It is plain to see that most of the complaints the participants in this study expressed about their appearance concerned features or standards associated with differences between African Americans and European Americans.

Conclusion

Qualitative studies are an investigative means of research, not meant to provide definitive answers but often illuminating avenues for future research. With that in mind, the results of this study emphasize that there is much more to be learned about the development of Blacks from different socioeconomic groups and living in varied racial contexts. The persistent stereotype that every Black person grows up in the ghetto and has to struggle against the influence of gangs, drugs, and teen pregnancy must be dispelled. It is true that many African American families do face these challenges but it is also true that there are African Americans in every social standing, at every level of education, with as much variability in lifestyle as there is among Whites. The women in this study represent part of that unacknowledged Black diversity.

The research presented here is helpful but limited in its application and generalization to all Black teens attempting to build successful peer relationships and develop positive self-concepts in majority White neighborhoods and schools. The similarities in the participants' stories as adolescents in primarily White neighborhoods and schools warrant further exploration with larger subject groups and intensive focuses on the individual areas presented in this study. Furthermore, expanding future research to include Black males in predominantly White communities would also be beneficial. Once again, additional research that represents the diversity of Black family life in this country is needed for a more comprehensive understanding of the developmental needs of all African American adolescents.

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Appendix

Instructions to the Participant:

“I will ask you a series of questions about you family background, friendships, racial identity, and perceptions of yourself. When I ask you the following questions, please reflect on your teenage years and high school experiences unless otherwise stated. Remember, this interview is being tape-recorded but your real name will not be directly labeled on this tape. What name would you like to use for this interview?... There are no right or wrong answers, so please relax and answer these questions to your best recollection. If you feel you need a short break at any time during the interview, just let me know”.

Interview Questions

Family Background:

1. Tell me about your family. Did you live with both parents? *If no:* What living arrangements did you have with your parents? (Visit with dad on the weekends, summers, etc.) Did your parents live in the same town?
2. Did you have any brothers or sisters? How many?
3. What were the racial compositions of the neighborhoods your parents grew up in (predominantly Black, predominantly White, or mixed)?
4. Did your family place any importance on Black culture or socialization within the Black community? *If yes:* Please give examples.
5. In general, did you experience any emotional stress as a result of being one of very few Blacks in your community? If yes, were your parents aware of this stress? Did they help you to deal with this stress? *If yes:* How? *If no:* Did you try to discuss these issues with your parents? How did you deal with the stress on your own?
6. Did your parents talk about being different in any way? Did they discuss the issue of

being a minority in a predominantly White community?

Sense of Belonging in the Community:

7. Where did you grow up (what city or town)? How long did you live there?

8. How would you describe the racial make-up of the population? How would you describe the racial climate there? (Did you sense or notice tension or hostility towards Blacks?)

9. Was the community receptive to you and your family? What made you feel that the community was or was not receptive?

10. Did you experience any racism (including jokes, name-calling, put-downs, etc.)? *If yes:* How often? Where (at school, in the general community)? Can you tell me about one or two of those experiences? How did you deal with them? How did those events make you feel about yourself?

Friendships/Social Experiences:

11. How would you describe your ability to make friends at your school? In the community (in general)?

12. Can you name members of your close group of friends when you were in high school? What were their ethnic backgrounds? Did you have a larger group of friends? How would you describe the racial mix of that larger group?

13. *If participant had mostly non-Black friends:* Do you feel that your friendships were affected by being Black/African American? Did your friends treat you differently than White friends (leave you out of get-togethers, hold back comments in conversation, make comments about you being Black, etc.)?

14. How would you describe the quality of your close friendships? Did you and your friends ever discuss race-related issues? Did you feel like you could confide in your friends? *If yes:* About what? Did you feel like they could relate to your experiences as a

Black teenager? What kinds of things did you talk about (clothes, boys, etc.)?

15. How would you describe your relationships with Blacks as a teen (either outside of your close group of friends or outside of school)? Did you feel comfortable around other Blacks? Did you feel comfortable around Blacks from different social backgrounds/economic groups?

16. Did your interactions with White/European American peers differ from your interactions with Black/African American peers (types of activities, language, etc.)? *If yes:* In what ways?

17. What types of extracurricular activities did you participate in during high school (organizations, sororities, sports, etc.)? If yes, specifically what groups did you belong to? What was the racial composition of those groups? Did you feel accepted or like you belonged? Give examples of what made you feel accepted or not accepted.

18. Did you belong to any Black/African American organizations? *If yes:* Specifically what group(s)? Did you have a sense of belonging or feel accepted? Give examples of what made you feel accepted or not accepted into the group?

19. What were your experiences with other teenagers like at social events (sporting events, parties, etc.)? Tell me about them. Were they school sponsored events or events through outside organizations? What were the racial compositions usually like? Did you enjoy these events? Why or why not? Did you feel as though you fit in?

Racial Identity:

20. Did you spend much time thinking about your identity as a Black person when you were a teenager? Have you thought about it much now as an adult? What kinds of things have you thought about?

21. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “not at all,” 3 being “somewhat,” and 5 being “very strongly” how strongly did you identify with Blacks or Black culture when you were a

teen? How about now? ***In both cases, if the answer was 3 or higher:*** In what ways did you or do you identify with Black culture (reading culture or history, participating in organizations or events, etc.)?

22. Did you ever wish you were White when you were a teen? Now? Why or why not?

Social Dating:

23. Did you date when you were a teenager? Did you date Black or White boys? Both? Did you have a steady boyfriend? White or Black boyfriend(s)? ***If interracial:*** Do you feel that your relationships were affected by race? ***If yes:*** How?

24. Are you married or have you ever been married? ***If yes:*** What is your husband's race? ***If no:*** Are you in a monogamous relationship? ***If yes:*** What is your partner's race?

25. In your dating experiences/relationships since high school, have you dated in the past or do you currently date Black or White men? Do you have a preference? Why or why not? ***If your preference is Black:*** How do you feel about interracial dating? ***If your preference is White:*** Do you feel that makes or made dating more difficult for you (meeting men, dealing with racial differences, etc.)?

26. Do you have children? How many? ***If children are of mixed descent:*** How do you identify them racially? Why?

Perceptions of Physical Appearance:

27. How did you feel about the way you looked when you were in high school (your hair, skin color, body shape)? Why do you think you felt that way about yourself?

28. In high school, did you compare yourself to White or Black peers, celebrities, etc.? Who, anyone in particular? Did you wish you could have looked like anyone in particular or did you model yourself after anyone in particular? Why (what features did you admire about this person)?

29. As a teenager, what did you wish you could change about your appearance, if

anything?

30. How do you feel about your appearance now (your hair, skin color, body shape)? If different than before: Why the change? Why do you think you feel this way about yourself?

Well-Being:

31. How did you feel about yourself, in general? Were you happy, depressed, satisfied or unsatisfied with your life, satisfied or unsatisfied with your friends & dating experiences? Do you reflect positively or negatively on your high school experiences in general?

32. Do you feel like your experience growing up as a teenager in a predominantly White community have affected you and your life as an adult? How? Do your experience poses any social or emotional concerns for others growing up in the same racial context that you did? If any, what are those concerns?

33. Where you live now, work, and/or go to school? What is the racial composition? How do you feel about that? Do you feel comfortable? Do you feel that you fit in? Do you feel that there are racial barriers for you in work and/or school?

32. If you have kids or are planning on having kids, do you have concerns about race for them, because of your experiences? Why or why not? What concerns?

33. Is there anything you would like to add about your experiences growing up in a predominantly White community?