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What is the Correlation between a Positive Ethnic Identity and Self-Worth in African American
Adolescents?

Submitted by Natalie Casemore

May, 2012

MSW Clinical Research Paper

The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present their findings. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

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Abstract

Racial and ethnic differences that exist within our society are discovered by children at a very young age (Derman-Sparks, Higa, Sparks, 1980). The development of ethnic identity is an important part of overall identity development and is an indispensable human need that fosters a sense of belonging and a sense of historical continuity (Smith, 1991). Therefore, this paper examined if there was a correlation between a positive ethnic identity and self-worth in African American adolescents. In order to examine this correlation, the researcher surveyed 30 African American adolescents between the ages of 18 to 25-years-old and asked them about their ethnic identity development as well as how they valued themselves based on their self-esteem. The findings demonstrate that there were no statistically significant correlations between an African American adolescents' ethnic identity and his/her self worth, nor were there statistical differences based on gender. However, the researcher did find a statistical significant between participants' age and their ethnic identity. In addition, the researcher found a statistically significant relationship between age and the About Me survey that was issued, which focused on the combination of ethnic identity and self-esteem. There are several implications for social work practice, policy and research that resulted from this study. Identity formation and is a pivoting task of adolescence and if individuals are not able to arrive at a stable sense of self then interpersonal areas and psychological effects may affect the individual (Phinney, 1992). As a whole, society needs to take a stance against racism and exclusion and encourage differing ethnic groups to take pride in where they come from rather than promoting a melting pot ideology. Future research needs to focus on adolescents are acquiring a sense of ethnic identity in the 21st century and how this is affects their self-esteem.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Literature Review	3
Definition of Race.....	4
Ethnic Identity.....	5
Adolescent Development.....	6
Developmental Approach to Ethnic Identity Development.....	8
Stereotypes of African Americans.....	10
Risk Factors in Adolescence.....	12
Protective Factors of Ethnic Identity in Adolescents.....	13
Conceptual Framework	14
Theories of Development.....	14
Ego Identity.....	15
The Self Concept.....	16
Methodology	17
Research Design.....	17
Sample.....	18
Protection of Human Subjects.....	18
Data Collection Instrument and Process.....	19
Data Collection and Analysis.....	21
Findings	22
Demographics.....	22
Descriptive Statistics.....	23

Inferential Statistics.....	24
Discussion.....	28
Ethnic Identity Instrument.....	28
Self-Esteem Instrument.....	30
Ethnic Group Reported and Overall Results.....	31
Implications for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research.....	32
Strengths and Limitations.....	33
Conclusion.....	35
Appendix.....	50
Appendix A.....	50
Appendix B.....	54
Appendix C.....	57

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Ethnic Identity and Gender	26
Table 2: Self-Esteem Instrument and Gender	27
Figure 1: Number of Participants and Gender	40
Figure 2: Number of Participants and Current Level of Education	41
Figure 3: Number of Participants and Age of Participants	42
Figure 4: Number of Participants and Ethnic Identity Instrument	43
Figure 5: Number of Participants and Self-Esteem Instrument	44
Figure 6: Number of Participants' and About Me Survey	45
Figure 7: Age and Ethnic Identity Instrument	46
Figure 8: Age and Self-Esteem Instrument	47
Figure 9: Age and About Me Survey	48

Introduction

Race and ethnicity are ambiguous concepts that have been created socially constructed to reflect changes in political climates. Race has no scientific value and has been socially constructed and the meaning has changed over time. In addition, ethnicity has become a socially constructed concept whose definition and meaning have been revamped and changed over time (Cokley, 2007). Race has been used to promote an ideological view that some human beings are inherently superior to other human beings. Many individuals believe that all races differ from each other primarily in terms of genetics, but this is without any scientific basis (Williams, Lavizzo-Mourey & Warren, 1994). Moreover, Williams, Lavizzo-Mourey and Warren (1994) demonstrated that there is more genetic variation *within* races than *between* races. The fact that individuals are able to know what race they belong to reflects more upon the society that they are imbedded in rather than their specific genetic makeup (Williams et al, 1994). Therefore, the socially constructed taxonomical categories of race are arbitrary and do not reflect biological distinctiveness.

Ethnic identity is defined as the subjective sense of ethnic group membership that involves being able to identify with a group, creation of a sense of belonging, preference for the group, positive assessment of the ethnic group, ethnic knowledge and participation in ethnic group activities (Cokley, 2007). This process is a very important in the development of an individual's overall identity. The process is learned and worked on throughout an individual's life and it directly impacts the ability to take on other roles and statuses in an individual's life (Smith, 1991).

There are vast implications if an individual is not able to develop an ethnic identity and be embedded within his/her own culture (Smith, 1991). Smith (1991) stated that the ability to

develop one's own ethnic identity protects him from developing a vulnerable identity and assists him when his identity becomes vulnerable. Furthermore, Smith (1991) discovered that being embedded or living amongst one's own ethnic/racial group is healthy and provides individuals the ability to enable their racial identities to grow and flourish in a healthy manner. Recent statistics discovered that Black individuals living in White neighborhoods had a 32% higher rate of psychosis than did Blacks living in Black neighborhoods. This finding implies that individuals who are embedded in their culture are more resilient when ethnic identity conflicts arise (Smith, 1991). In addition, research conducted to explore the effects that individual and institutional racism have on children's self-concepts in the United States (Derman-Sparks et al., 1980). Derman-Sparks, and Higa (1980) found that racism impedes children's ability to experience themselves and their culture as they are. Therefore, it is extremely important for an individual to develop a self-concept to help him/her work through the problems that arise in everyday living as well as when dealing with racial inequalities and derogatory racial slurs (Epstein, 1973).

In America, society uses race and ethnicity to define one's power status within the society (Smith, 1991). This has been noted throughout history, and in particular with racial preference toward young African American children. Through judicial decision making public schools went from segregated to desegregated in the 1950's. From this, stimulation and development arose around theories of ethnic and identity development (French et al., 2006). Every multiracial society develops a social scale between and among differing racial groups. Majority/minority status plays a significant factor in determining social distance. Majority members create strong sanctions against those that are most unlike them, and therefore this group is continuously marginalized and this ultimately results in status inequality. This plays a direct role in an individual's well-being, which is a function of the social conditions in which he or she

grows and matures (Smith, 1991). Therefore it is important to be able to identify with one's own ethnic/racial group in order to feel a sense of belonging (Smith, 1991).

Oppressive conditions, such as racism, discrimination, and prejudice, disable an individual's ability to develop their identity and fulfill their potential (Smith, 1991). One prominent notion in the U.S. is that all children are color-blind and are completely unaware of race and racism. Racism involves power, and intricate patterns of privilege that white Americans enjoy whether they are conscious of it or not (Lazarre, 1996). This ideology further perpetuates racism due to its perspective of viewing all differences as bad and focusing on the exclusively on the universality of the human race (Derman-Sparks et al, 1980).

Furthermore, adolescence has been viewed as a stage of development in which individuals begin to explore who they are, what they believe in and what paths they will follow in their lives. This is the point in which individuals start examining, questioning and really forming their identities (Para, 2008). There has been little research conducted about the lived experience of ethnicity or how individuals come to develop a personal understanding of their own social identities (Way, Santos, Niwa & Kim-Gervey, 2008). Therefore, this paper will examine if there is a correlation between a positive ethnic identity and self-worth in African-American adolescents.

Literature Review

Cokley (2007) stated that the term ethnicity is often used as a euphemism and proxy for the concept of race. Both terms are socially constructed, ambiguous concepts that change over time based on the changes in political climate and ethnic consciousness. Therefore, in this literature review, race and ethnicity will be defined in this study, and the importance of looking at both concepts in their entirety. Next, the concept of race and then how race affects African-

American adolescents in today's society will be explored. In addition, the term self-worth will be defined as self-esteem that examines an individual's comprehensive assessment of themselves, including feelings of intrinsic worth, competence, and self-approval as well as how an individual feels about being a member of a racial or ethnic group (Phelps, Taylor & Gerard, 2001).

Definition of Race

Williams, Lavizzo-Mourey, and Warren (1994) mention that race has been socially constructed and used to support ideological thinking that some groups of individuals are inherently superior to others. Other researchers note that the uses and agreements of the definition and implications of race, have evolved over time (Quintana, 2007), and race is allegedly based on genotypic and phenotypic similarities (Scottham et al, 2010). This ideological view is based on individual's external physical characteristics or geographical origins that he/she has come from (Williams, Lavizzo-Mourey, & Warren, 1994). This construction, that is reaffirmed and altered by members of society, is made evident through our own "sociological imaginations" that enable and disable individuals. It is through these imaginations that individuals understand how they fit into society and what their worth is (Ore, 2009). One can surmise that children begin to form their own sociological imaginations at a young age. Derman-Sparks et al (1980) found that children when compared to adults, have a very heightened awareness when examining differences between and among races.

Racial taxonomies are arbitrary. When viewed from this stance race reflects more of a social category than a biological category based on genetic distinctiveness (Williams et al, 1994). As a result, racial taxonomies have been constructed to reflect sociological processes, namely the distance that has been created between racial groups (Quintana, 2007). The taxonomy of race has

been created through the intersection of components reflected in historical times in regards to various economic, political, legal, social, and cultural factors, resulting in the inclusion of some individuals and exclusion of others decided by people within the particular social system (Derman-Sparks, Higa, Sparks, 1980; Williams et al, 1994).

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity includes race, but is not limited to this factor alone (Smith, 1991). Individuals' living in the United States comprises an ethnic group in and of itself. The United States is composed of many different ethnic groups coexisting in one society. This makes the one's ethnicity extremely salient, as the number of ethnic "minorities" grow and move to surpass the "majority" of European Americans in the coming years (French et al., 2006). Research uses multiple terms to describe the developmental process of discovering one's ethnic/racial identity. This process has been called multiple terms including racial identity development (Derman-Sparks et al, 1980) and ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1989). For the purpose of this paper, ethnic identity will be used to encompass all facets of this process of development.

Ethnic identity is the process of becoming self-aware with one's ethnic membership group. An ethnic group consists of a group of individuals who share a common history and culture (Smith, 1991). The study of ethnic identity has two primary foci. The first focus takes into account what developmental psychologists have examined as the process in which children learn the label as well as attributes that correlate with their own ethnic group. The second focus examines the characteristics that define ethnic identity in adult populations and the way the differing characteristics define ethnic identity in adult populations and the impact these characteristics have on individuals when in contact with other ethnic groups (Bernal & Knight,

1993). Ethnic identity is extremely important for the psychological well-being of ethnic and racial minorities (Brook & Phal, 2005).

Ethnic identity is a very salient part of the development of an individual's identity, especially in adolescence (Smith, 1991; Way et al, 2008). There are several ecological systems that play a direct role in the formation of one's ethnic identity including: families, schools, peers as well as the political and economic climate (Way et al, 2008). An individual's dynamic ecological ethnic group that surrounds them, may share similar physical features and values, but the importance lies in the process of interacting with each other where they construct boundaries that allow them to feel as if they are members of that group. Ethnic groups are developed through shared historical encounters and provide individuals with a sense of belonging and continuity (Smith, 1991).

Members in a disadvantaged minority group are faced with a psychological conflict: one must accept the views that society has socially constructed towards their group or reject them in search of their own identity. Therefore, ethnic self-identity is central to the development of a person's personal identity (Phinney, 1989).

Adolescent Development

Phinney (1989) proposed that individuals work through four stages in order to develop their personal ethnic identity. These stages are often heavily weighted in adolescence where the psychosocial task is the formation of a consolidated ego identity measured by an individual having a sense of personal sameness and a historical connection that transcends any particular moment or situation (Louis & Liem, 2005). Adolescence is marked by a time where individuals begin to focus on who they are and who they want to become. Adolescence often begin their journey of discovery when they encounter a time of distress and begin to experiment with

options before they determine what their beliefs and values will be (Para, 2008). Phinney's model of ethnic identity development has been based on Erickson's conceptualization of the ego identity development process, which in turn was based on Freud's model of psychosexual theory (Scottham et al, 2010; Berzoff et al, 2008). The first stage is classified as diffuse (Phinney, 1989). This initial stage is not prominent in one's life, and individuals often give little conscious thought to what their ethnicity entails (Phinney, 1996). This stage is characterized by a little or no exploration of, or commitment to, a specific ethnic identity (Phinney, 1989; Scottham, Cooke, Sellers & Ford, 2010). Individuals in this stage have given little thought as to what it means to be a member of a particular ethnic group (Scottham et al, 2010).

The second stage is classified as foreclosed (Phinney, 1989). This stage is characterized by little or no exploration of ethnicity, but there is a strong commitment and clarity about one's own identity (Phinney, 1989; Scottham et al, 2010). An individual residing in this stage has often committed to a particular identity that reflects his relationships to significant others in his life (Scottham et al, 2010). In addition, feelings about one's ethnicity are often internalized, resulting in either positive or negative emotions about his ethnicity based upon his socialization experiences (Phinney, 1989).

The third stage is classified as moratorium (Phinney, 1989). This stage is characterized by a time of intense investigation of different ethnic identity issues and balanced commitment. During this stage individuals try to clarify the personal implications of their ethnicity by immersing themselves into their own culture and take part in various cultural events and activities (Phinney, 1989; Scottham et al, 2010).

The final stage is classified as achieved (Phinney, 1989). This stage is characterized by a strong loyalty to one's personal cultural beliefs and values and a deeper understanding of his

ethnic identity (Scottham et al, 2010). Individuals in this stage have accepted oneself as a member of a minority group and have developed a secure understanding of one's ethnicity (Phinney, 1989; Phinney, 1996). Individuals have developed healthy resolutions when confronted with ethnic or racial conflicts at this stage (Smith, 1991). In addition, individuals become open to other groups and work towards the common goal of integration and acceptance of all groups (Phinney, 1996). Individuals who achieve ego identity status are found to have a more positive sense of ethnic identity than individuals with a diffused ego identity (Louis & Liem, 2005).

Developmental Approach to Ethnic Identity Development

Research on ethnic identity proposes a developmental approach that involves the process by which individuals' attitudes regarding race systematically develop and change over the life span of an individual (Scottham, Cooke, Sellers, & Ford, 2010). This process has been demonstrated by research to begin in early childhood with the awareness of race and racism (Derman-Sparks et al, 1980). From birth on, children are constantly ingesting a great deal of knowledge and to the contrary, they are not the unsophisticated, innocent human beings that many adults imagine them to be (Ausdale & Feagin, 2002). They are able to view the physical and cultural differences that exist among people and they take in the prevailing social attitudes that society has created (Derman-Sparks et al, 1980). Derman-Sparks, Higa, and Sparks (1980) found that 25% of children in their sample were conveying strong race-related values by the age of four. Children struggle to develop a concept of ethnicity, especially if they are raised in a white-centered reality (Derman-Sparks et al, 1980).

In addition, three- to five-year-olds tend to see their world through an egocentric lens. They are unable to distinguish any perspective or attitude other than their own (Ausdale &

Feagin, 2002). These children develop racial identities by exhibiting thought patterns that are pre-operational. This age group focuses on physical characteristics of themselves and others as well as cultural identifiers, such as language and clothing styles. This age represents a time of foundational learning. Children are beginning to discover racial identities as they are learning their colors. Children learn which crayon represents their skin tone and that their crayon color is not always the same color as their peers' (Derman-Sparks et al, 1980). This age group is constantly taking in information from their surroundings and imitating what they have seen and heard in social settings. Logan (1981) found that African American children have the basic knowledge of racial differences. Three-to-five-year-olds are able to use racial material, such as hurtful epithet and derogatory name-calling, but do so in a naïve and rudimentary manner when interacting with their peers (Derman-Sparks et al, 1980; Ausdale & Feagin, 2002). This language is usually used as a means to explain and justify their actions (Ausdale & Feagin, 2002).

Five-to-eight-year-olds develop ethnic identities by using their newly acquired ability to think cognitively. Their major tasks are to build on their learning of accurate information, to deepen their understanding and pride for their identity and to learn authentic information about others. They display a greater interest in various cultural characteristics and become conscious of being part of something bigger than themselves (Derman-Sparks, 1980). Ausdale and Feagin (2002) argue that when using the developmental model, children are capable of developing some working hypotheses that focus on social behaviors. However, when it comes to race, children are often depicted as extremely ignorant and that experiences with racial distinctions are not consequential (Ausdale & Feagin, 2002).

Nine-to-twelve-year-olds deepen their understanding of what it means to have an ethnic identity. Preadolescents in this age group,- begin to examine and understand their historical and

geographic aspects of racial identity. Preadolescents' feelings are acknowledged and are centered around cultural values and their personal struggles against racism. These individuals are highly aware of their cultural and political values and therefore have a deeper capacity to understand racism in its historical and social/institutional dimensions (Derman-Sparks, 1980).

Ethnicity is a complex interrelationship that focuses on cultural, historical, political and physical factors. Children from oppressed racial groups question their own identity first, question about racism and whites second, and then question about other groups. In contrast, white children question people of color first, stereotypical attitudes second, and question their own identity last (Derman-Sparks et al, 1980). Thus children of color are succumbed to racial stereotyping and judgments from their white peers before their peers are even able to know who they truly are and what race means. Developing the concept of ethnic identity is a lifelong process, beginning in childhood and continuing through adulthood (Smith, 1991).

Stereotypes of African Americans

Ramasubramanian (2010) discovered that individuals' who identify as being racist, reported that they believe in racial equality and egalitarianism, but they continue to harbor unconscious feelings related to racial/ethnic minority groups. The harbored racial prejudices, also defined as stereotypes, are based on shared cultural norms and customs, rather than individual idiosyncrasies. Stereotypes serve as cognitive constructs that help people to explain their believed observable facts in understanding their relation to other cultural groups (Nunnally, 2008). Stereotypes directly affect the lives of African-Americans in a multitude of ways. African-Americans may suffer when they experience a "stereotype threat" (Washington Post Weekly, 2009). A "stereotype threat" refers to the psychological effects that occur when individuals experience prejudice. A "stereotype threat" is an uncomfortable feeling when an

individual is at risk of fulfilling a negative stereotype about their group (Dotterer et al, 2009). This occurs when an individual feels and thinks that a negative stereotype applies to them. African-American individuals may internalize this belief and become subtly biased to live out the specific preconception (Washington Post Weekly, 2009). African-American individuals may succumb to stereotype threats when they feel that they are at risk of fulfilling a negative stereotype and their apprehension evolves, leaving them questioning the way in which his actions may be reaffirming a stereotype (Dotterer, McHale & Crouter, 2009).

Although stereotypes can be either positive or negative, historically they have had a negative effect on the lives and characterization of African-Americans. This is a direct result of Caucasians exerting their supremacy and “otherizing” African-Americans as being inferior in comparison (Nunnally, 2008). Historically, African-Americans have been viewed as less intelligent and uneducated as compared to other ethnic group members (Ho, Thomsen & Sidanius). In addition, old-fashion racism has viewed African-Americans through a lens that sees them as lazy, unintelligent, violent and hypersexual (Nunnally, 2008).

Ramasubramanian (2010) discovered that there is mounting content-analytic literature that suggests that the media portrays racial/ethnic minorities in biased, stereotypical and negative ways. Reality television shows depict people of color as troublesome and often as characters that are boisterous and mean. Ho and colleagues, (2009) discovered that individuals who participated in Katz and Braly’s (1933) study found that they were quick to associate ignorant, stupid, naïve and superstitious to be characteristics of African-Americans. In addition, scientific and studious were reported to be among the least characteristic traits used to describe African-Americans (Ho et al, 2009). This ideological view has stemmed from the intellectual inferiority that has been a part of the common stereotype of people of African descent (Ho et al, 2009). Devine (1989)

found that European Americans who identify themselves as either being high or low on the prejudice continuum endorsed low intelligence and uneducated as characteristics of African-Americans. Such portrayals of African-Americans encourage modern racist beliefs and directly affect African-American's ability to develop positive self-images. This results in many feeling inferior, developing a lack of motivation and a sense of mortality in comparison to their majority counterparts (Ramasubramanian, 2010).

Risk Factors in Adolescence

The rapid physical, psychological and social changes that occur during adolescence play a direct role in the individual's ability to develop a sense of identity and therefore, make adolescence vulnerable to a variety of risk factors (Harris-Britt, Valrie & Kurtz-Costes, 2007). Harris-Britt, Valrie and Kurtz-Costes (2007) and Dotterer, McHale and Crouter (2009) reported that experiences of discrimination and perceived racism in adolescence were highly correlated with the development of psychosocial and psychological difficulties in African-Americans including low self-esteem and depressive symptoms.

In addition, negative stereotypes have been found to play a crucial role in influencing African-American adolescents. Negative stereotypes have been shown to play a role in undermining academic achievement by influencing African-Americans' performance on mental tasks, forcing them to disengage from school work with the hope of protecting their self-esteem. As a result, African-Americans may de-identify with academic achievement, which greatly impacts their ability to be successful in an academic realm and their self-esteem decreases as a result (Dotterer, McHale & Crouter, 2009).

Negative stereotypes often emerge out of racial discrimination acts taken by individuals, and this tends to denigrate African-Americans and is often viewed as a risk factor (Harris-Britt, Valrie & Kurtz-Costes, 2007).

Protective Factors of Ethnic Identity in Adolescents

Self-Esteem

Way, Santos, Niwa and Kim-Garvey (2008) discovered that a strong attachment towards one's ethnic group correlated significantly with high self-esteem, low levels of depressive symptoms, good grades, high quality of friendships, as well as several other indicators of adjustment in cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of adolescents. In addition, Brook and Pahl (2005) revealed that the internalization of a positive Black identity was related to healthy psychological functioning and higher levels of personal self-esteem. When African Americans were able to feel positive about their racial/ethnic group membership, they displayed higher levels of self-esteem (Brook & Pahl, 2005).

Furthermore, Phelps, Taylor and Gerard (2001) and Phinney, Cantu and Kurtz (1997) stated that African Americans adolescents' when compared to their Caucasian counterparts, do not differ from or score higher than Caucasian adolescents on measures of self-esteem. In addition, Phinney (1992) demonstrated that minorities had a statistically significant correlation between ethnic identity and a positive self-esteem. Furthermore, when looking at various subgroups sorted by ethnicity and gender, African American males and females did not differ in their self-esteem. However, research with adolescents has often found females to have a lower self-esteem when compared to their male counterparts (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997).

Social Support

In adolescence, social support networks serve as an important developmental factor in helping to affirm and shape an individual's self-concept. Social support networks provide an individual with a social ecology that supports his/her ethnic identity and socialization journey. Social networks vary in size, structure and function, but essentially cater to the basic foundations of the social and developmental needs of adolescents (Pernice-Duca, 2010). Racial socialization (the implicit and explicit ways in which parents' beliefs and behaviors about race are portrayed to children) has been discovered to be the primary practice utilized by African-American families and communities to assist children in coping with race-related issues and to act as a buffer against discrimination (Harris-Britt et al, 2007). Individuals' support provide them with an environment that focuses on learning interpersonal strategies to interact with members of the dominant society as well as help them in develop positive ethnic/racial identities (Pernice-Duca, 2010). As a result, racial socialization, social support networks and ethnic identity have all been found to be useful mechanisms and protective factors that promote resiliency, effective coping and psychological strength among African American adolescents (Dotterer et al, 2009).

There are vast implications when examining protective factors and risk factors in regards to whether or not an adolescent develops a positive ethnic identity. Thus, this paper will examine how an African American adolescent feels about their own ethnic identity and whether having a positive ethnic identity protects an individual, or makes an individual at-risk in relation to their self-esteem.

Conceptual Framework

Theories of Development

There are several ecological models of development that help understand the developmental processes in context and how one comes to an understanding and meaning of

his/her own social identity (Way, Santos, Niwa & Kim-Gervey, 2008). For the purpose of this study the researcher will discuss Erik Erickson's revision of classical psychoanalysis in which he developed the ego identity theory (Forte, 2007). From here, the researcher will focus on how an individual develops his/her own self-concept and how his/her own self-concept is influenced in the development of one's own racial identity and ethnic identity development.

Ego Identity

Erik Erickson was an exquisite ego psychologist who examined how the ego maintains coherence over the course of an individual's life and concluded that personality development was not fixed in childhood (Berzoff, Flanagan & Hertz, 2008). Erickson argued that humans have the ability to develop beyond adolescence and can grow vital and substantial ways through adulthood (Forte, 2007). Ego development is universally experienced by all human beings through life experiences and physical maturation (Logan, 1981). Erick Erickson defined ego identity as an individual's capacity to unify their inner conflicts (Forte, 2007).

Ego identity allows an individual to break away from his/her previously held constraints in childhood in an adaptive and creative manner (Forte, 2007). Erickson developed this ego identity based off of Freud's model of psychosexual theory. Erickson linked biological, erogenous zones with specific areas of ego functioning, and demonstrated how self and identity are biologically, psychologically, and socially determined. From his discoveries, Erickson viewed identity as a sense of personal continuity and sameness, personal integrity and social status, which occurs over time due to interactions that take place between the self and the environment (Berzoff, Flanagan & Hertz, 2008).

Identity was seen by Erickson as a subjective sense of wholeness that is achieved when a child enters adolescence through the experience of an identity crisis. The process of identity

achievement involves an individual delving into one's own abilities, interests, and options, leading to a commitment to a personal identity that will foster as a guide for future action and development (Bernal & Knight, 1993). In addition, the development of a coherent identity affects every aspect of an individual's life including one's occupation, sex role, political stance, and religion; again, failure to develop a coherent identity results in role confusion and personal upheavals (Scottham, Cooke, Sellers & Ford, 2010).

Erickson's theory of ego identity was based on the empirical work of Marcia (1966, 1980). He discovered four possible ego identity statuses that reflect the presence or absence of exploration of identity issues and commitment to a personal identity. The first status is diffusion, where adolescents have never experienced a crisis or made a commitment to their identity. Individuals in the diffusion stage are said to have identity confusion. The second status is foreclosure, where adolescents have not explored their identity, but have made an early commitment to their identity based on the opinions and attitudes of others. The third status is moratorium. This stage is marked in adolescents who are currently in the process of exploring identity options, but have not made a commitment to a specific one. The final stage is called achieved. Adolescents in this stage have delved into their identity and explored it in depth; resulting them in arriving at a secure sense of self to which they are committed (Bernal & Knight, 1993).

The Self Concept

The self is gradually formed in the second and third year of life (Clark & Clark, 1939). It encompasses everything that the individual views as belonging to himself/herself. This includes a material self, a social self, and a spiritual self. These selves are created through social interactions and help shape the way in which an individual perceives himself and the way that

others perceive him. The basic function of the self is to maintain an individual's self-esteem and to organize incoming experiences in a manner that an individual is able to cope with effectively (Epstein, 1973). Until a child is able to develop a conception of himself as an independent person, he is unable to conceptualize his relationship to the surrounding world and, therefore, lack the ability to develop his own personality and identity (Clark & Clark, 1939).

Methodology

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to examine if there was a correlation between a positive ethnic identity and self-worth in African-American adolescents. The researcher used a survey as an instrument to discover if there was a correlation between a positive ethnic identity and self-worth among African-Americans. The survey was entitled All About Me, (Appendix A) and was composed of four sections. In the first section participants were asked to complete demographic information, such as gender, identified race, school year, and age. The second section of the survey was composed of three parts. The first part was the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) which is a 12-item instrument that examined adolescents' degree of identification with their African-American ethnic group (Phinney, 1992). The second part asked two questions from the Family Schema-Ethnic Scale, and the third part asked four questions from the Cultural Congruity Scale. The final section included the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) a 10-item instrument that examined adolescents' global feelings of self-worth and self-acceptance (Rosenburg, 1979). The design of this study was a cross-sectional, mixed method study in which participants complete a questionnaire at one point in time (Monette, Sullivan & Dejong, 2011).

Sample

The sample for this study was a nonprobability, convenience sample composed of African-American male and female adolescents (ages 18-25) lived throughout the Twin Cities Metro. African American adolescents were the target population, because the researcher hoped to determine whether or not African American adolescents were able to develop an ethnic identity and, in doing so, if they were able to maintain a high self-esteem. Furthermore, the researcher was interested in adolescence, because this is the point in which individuals start examining, questioning and really forming their identity, and there has been little research conducted about how an individual at this age comes to develop a personal understanding of their own social identity (Para, 2008; Way, Santos, Niwa & Kim-Gervey, 2008).

The researcher distributed the survey to 15 male and 15 female African American adolescent subjects. Participants were asked to complete a hard copy, written, paper survey, composed of the MEIM, CCS, FSCH-E and RSE instruments as well as some demographic information. The subjects' responses were collected and analyzed in order to determine the impact of their racial identity on their self-worth.

Protection of Human Subjects

Recruitment process. The researcher recruited subjects for this study by asking adolescents, between the ages of 18-25, throughout the Twin Cities Metro to participate. Each subject was selected from various locations throughout the Twin Cities area. Some of these locations included a department store, The University of St. Thomas, St. Catherine University, as well as the streets of St. Paul and Minneapolis. All subjects were informed that participating in this study was strictly voluntary and that all of their information that was provided would be anonymous and confidential.

Measures to assure confidentiality/anonymity. When participants submitted their surveys to the researcher, they were placed in a manila envelope and locked in a filing cabinet to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. In addition no identifying information was collected in order to protect each participants' identity.

Protocol for ensuring informed consent. Before completing the survey, the participants were asked to read a consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, why the participant has been selected, how their responses will be anonymous and kept confidential and where they can turn if psychological issues arise while taking the survey. Participants then signed their names stating that they understood the purpose of the study, that their information would be kept anonymous and confidential and that they were not coerced to partake in this study (Appendix B).

Data Collection Instrument and Process

The data collection instrument for this study was entitled, All About Me and was composed of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), two questions from the Family Schema-Ethnic (FSCH-E), four questions from the Cultural Congruity Scale (CCS) and three questions related to demographic background information.

In the first section of the survey, the measurement instrument asked demographic variables that included gender, identified race, school year, and age. The researcher collected data by administering the All About Me survey to a nonprobability, convenience sample in the Twin Cities Metro Area.

The second section of the survey was composed of three parts. The first part was composed of the MEIM instrument. The MEIM is a 12-item survey instrument that provides a means of examining adolescence degree of identification with their ethnic groups. The MEIM is

composed of two factors: ethnic identity search, and affirmation, belonging and commitment. The scale is a four-point response scale in which participants are asked to rate that they strongly disagree=1, to they strongly agree=4. The MEIM is scored by summing up all items for each subscale and the total scale and deriving the mean by dividing by the total number of items on each subscale and the total number of items overall. Subscales were as followed: Affirmation and Belonging (Items 9, 10, 13, 15, and 16 on the About Me Survey), Ethnic Identity Achievement (Items 5, 7, 8, 11, and 12 on the About Me Survey) and Ethnic Behaviors (Items 6 and 14 on the About Me Survey). Higher scores reflect individuals with a stronger ethnic identity and lower scores reflect individuals with a weaker ethnic identity. The MEIM has a good internal consistency with alphas for subscales reflecting above .80 across multiple groups of varying ethnicities and ages. There is some degree of concurrent validity with statistically significant positive correlations between the MEIM and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory for Minority Students (Phinney, 1992).

In the second part of the second section, participants were asked two questions that the researcher took, from the FSCH-E scale. These two questions provided a family component that added to the strength of an individuals' overall ethnic identity. This original scale is composed of a 39-item instrument that is designed to measure the degree to which family has acquired a schema that encompasses cultural and ethnic values and has incorporated them into part of the family's identity. The FSCH-E is scored by summing the individual responses, with 0=false to 3=true. The FSCH-E has very good internal consistency with an alpha of .87. In addition, the FSCH-E has been positively correlated with family problem-solving communication and a sense of coherence (McCubbin, Thompson Elver & Carpenter, 1996).

In the third part of the second section, participants were asked four questions that were taken from the CCS. The original scale is composed of a 13-item instrument that was designed to measure Chicano students' sense of how their cultural congruity fit into the college lifestyle. It is a 7-point scale ranging from 1=not at all to 7=great deal. The CCS is scored by summing up item responses. Scores range from 13 to 91 with higher scores reflecting a greater sense of cultural congruity. The CCS has good internal consistency with a alpha of .81. The CCS has also established predictive validity, accounting for a considerable amount of the variance of academic persistence (Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996).

The third and final part of the survey used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). The RSE is composed of a 10-item Guttman scale that was designed to measure the self-esteem of high school students. The RSE is scored based on a four-point response format with 1=strongly agree to 4=strongly disagree. Low self-esteem responses were "disagree" or "strongly disagree" on items 1,3,4,7,10 and "strongly agree" or "agree" on items 2,5,6,8,9. Items 1,3,4,7 and 10 were scored with Strongly Agree=3, Agree=2, Disagree=1, Strongly Disagree=0. Items 2,5,6,8, and 9 were reversed scored, that is, Strongly Agree=0, Agree=1, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=3. Sum the scores for the 10 items. The total score is then summed and the higher the score, the higher the self esteem. The RSE has an excellent internal consistency with a coefficient of reproducibility equaling .92. The RSE has also established concurrent validity with other self-esteem measures such as the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Rosenberg, 1979).

Data Collection and Analysis

The surveys were distributed randomly throughout the Twin Cities Area after the Institutional Review Board approved the research plan. The researcher collected data at one point in time at multiple locations in the Twin Cities Metro area. The people who participated in this

study were from multiple parts of the Twin Cities. After all of the data was collected the researcher analyzed the survey by using the statistical analysis program called Minitab. The researcher used several descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics included frequency distributions, histograms, a bar chart and measures of central tendency and dispersion to examine the demographic information. In addition, the researcher conducted several inferential statistics in order to examine whether or not there is an association between different variables. The inferential statistics included correlations, scatter plots and t-tests in order to identify the relationships that exist, or may not exist between the varying survey scale's. Please refer to Appendix C for a complete list of the statistical tests that are examined.

Findings

The findings will explore and review the results of the About Me survey to determine whether or not there is a correlation between an individual's ethnic identity and self-worth among African American adolescents.

Demographics

Participants. Figure 1 depicts that there were 30 adolescents who participated in this study. Fifty percent of these adolescents identified as female and 50% of these adolescents identified as male. Of these 30 adolescents, 5 participants (16.67%) held a level of education reflecting a freshman in college, 5 participants (16.67%) held a level of education reflecting a sophomore in college, 5 participants (16.67%) held a level of education reflecting a junior in college, 7 participants (23.33%) held a level of education reflecting a senior in college, and 8 participants (26.67%) considered themselves to be college graduates (See Figure 2). The variable, age of the participants', was also examined. Of the 30 participants, the average age (mean percentage) was 22.13 with a standard deviation of 2.045. The median was 22 with a

range of 19 to 25. In the first quartile, 25% of the participants fell into the age range of 19 to 20. In the second quartile, 25% of the participants fell into the age range of 20 to 22 years. In the third quartile shows that, 25% of the participants fell into the age range of 22 to 24. Finally, the fourth quartile shows that, 25% of the participants fell into the age range of 24 to 25. The quartile ranges demonstrate that there is a concentration of data within the first and fourth quartiles with a range of only 1 year. There are larger ranges in the second and third quartiles, demonstrating that there are not as many individuals who fall into these age ranges who participated in this study. Figure 3 depicts an asymmetrically skewed histogram.

Descriptive Statistics

Ethnic Identity Instrument. Figure 4 depicts the results of the Ethnic Identity Instrument. The Ethnic Identity Instrument was calculated by summing up questions 5-22. Of the 30 participants, the mean percentage was 71.77, out of a possible 90 points, with a standard deviation of 9.52. The histogram in Figure 4 shows that the participants' responses were positively skewed.

Self-Esteem Inventory. The variable self-esteem was measured by summing up questions 23-32. Of the 30 participants, the mean percentage on the subscale was 24.53, out of a possible 30 points, with a standard deviation of 6.47. The histogram in Figure 5 depicts that the responses were negatively skewed.

About Me Survey. The variable, About Me Survey, was measured by summing up questions 5-32. Of the 30 participants, the mean score on the survey was 96.30, out of a possible 120 points, with a standard deviation of 12.93. The median was 96.00 with a range of 71 to 119. Figure 6 depicts a negatively skewed histogram.

Identified Ethnic Group. When participants were asked to participate in this study, each participant identified themselves as African American. When participants were further asked to write down what ethnic group they felt most related to 3 individuals wrote down African American, 3 individuals wrote down Black, 2 individuals wrote down African, 4 individuals wrote down bi-racial, and 18 individuals left this question blank. The two individuals who identified as African American scored higher on the Ethnic Identity instrument and the Self-Esteem instrument when compared to their counterparts.

Inferential Statistics

The Correlation Between Participants' Age and Ethnic Identity Instrument

The researcher examined the relationship between the participants' age (question number 4) and the subscale scores on the Ethnic Identity Instrument, the summation of questions 5-22. The calculated correlation ($r = -.550$, $p < .002$) indicates a moderate to strong correlation. The r -value is also negative indicating that the participants' age and scores on the Ethnic Identity Instrument are inversely related. That is as age increases, the subscale scores on the Ethnic Identity Instrument decreases. The p -value is $< .002$ (less than $.05$) indicating a statistically significant relationship between participants' age and the summative scores on the Ethnic Identity Instrument. Therefore the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and states that there is a correlation between participants' age and their summative scores on the Ethnic Identity Instrument. The scatter plot in Figure 7 depicts these results.

The Correlation Between Participants' Age and Self-Esteem Instrument

The researcher examined the relationship between the participants' age (question number 4) and the subscale scores on the Self-Esteem Instrument, the summation of questions 23-32. The calculated correlation ($r = -0.198$, $p > .294$) indicates a fairly weak correlation. The r -value is also

negative indicating that the participants' age and Self-Esteem Instrument scores are inversely related. That is, as age increases, the subscale scores of the Self-Esteem Instrument decreases. The p-value is >0.294 (greater than .05) indicating that there is no statistically significant relationship between the participants' age and their subscale scores on the self-esteem instrument. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no correlation between participant's age and subscale scores on the Self-Esteem Instrument cannot be rejected. The scatter plot in Figure 8 depicts these results.

The Correlation Between Participants' Age and About Me Survey

The researcher examined the relationship between the participants' age (question number 4) and the subscale scores on the About Me Survey (the summation of questions 5-32). The calculated correlation ($r = -.505$, $p < .004$) indicates a moderate correlation. The r-value is also negative indicating that the participants' age and About Me Survey scores are inversely related. That is as age increases, the subscale scores of the About Me Survey decreases. The p-value is $< .004$ (less than .05) indicating a statistically significant relationship between participants' age and the scores on the About Me Survey. Therefore the null hypothesis that states that there is a correlation between participants' age and their scores on the About Me Survey is rejected. The scatter plot in Figure 9 depicts these results.

The Correlation Between Ethnic Identity Instrument and Self-Esteem Instrument

The researcher examined the relationship between the participants' score on the Ethnic Identity Instrument, summation of questions 5-22, and the participants' scores on the Self-Esteem Instrument, summation of questions 23-32. The calculated correlation ($r = .281$, $p > .133$) indicates a weak correlation. The p-value is $>.133$ (greater than .05) indicating that there is a not a statistically significant relationship between participants' scores on the Ethnic Identity

Instrument and scores on the participants' Self-Esteem Instrument. Therefore the researcher keeps the null hypothesis stating there is no correlation between participants' scores on the Ethnic Identity Instrument and scores on the Self-Esteem Instrument.

Difference Between Genders and Scores on the Ethnic Identity Instrument

The researcher tested the hypothesis that there is a difference between males and females and their summative scores on the Ethnic Identity Instrument. A t-test was run to examine whether or not there is a statistically significant difference between genders and their scores on the Ethnic Identity Instrument. The average score for males was 68.87 with a standard deviation of 8.30, and the average score for females was 74.7 with a standard deviation of 10.0. The calculated p-value was $> .096$ (greater than .05) indicating that there was not a statistically significant difference between males and females and their scores on the Ethnic Identity Instrument. Therefore the researcher keeps the null hypothesis stating that there is no difference between males and females and their scores on the Ethnic Identity Instrument. This can be further seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Ethnic Identity and Gender

Gender	N	M	SD	SE Mean
Males	15	68.87	8.30	2.1
Females	15	74.7	10.0	2.6

T-Value = -1.72 P-Value = 0.096 DF = 27

Difference Between Genders and Scores on the Self-Esteem Instrument

The researcher tested the hypothesis that there will be a difference between males and females and their summative scores on the Self-Esteem Instrument. A t-test was run to examine whether or not there is a statistically significant difference between genders and their scores on the Self-Esteem Instrument. The average score for males was 23.07 with a standard deviation of

6.65, and the average score for females was 26.00 with a standard deviation of 6.16. The calculated p-value was > 0.221 (greater than .05) indicating that there was not a statistically significant difference between males and females and their scores on the Self-Esteem Instrument. Therefore the researcher keeps the null hypothesis stating that there is no difference between males and females and their scores on the Self-Esteem Instrument. This can be further seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Self-Esteem Instrument and Gender

Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	SE Mean
Males	15	23.07	6.65	1.7
Females	15	26.00	6.16	1.6

T-Value = -1.25 P-Value = 0.221 DF = 27

Difference Between Genders and About Me Survey

The researcher tested the hypothesis that there will be a difference between males and females and their summative scores on the About Me Survey. A t-test was run to examine whether or not there is a statistically significant difference between genders and their scores on the About Me Survey. The average score for males was 91.9 with a standard deviation of 11.0, and the average score for females was 100.7 with a standard deviation of 13.6. The calculated p-value was > 0.064 (greater than .05) indicating that there was not a statistically significant difference between males and females and their scores on the About Me Survey. Therefore the researcher keeps the null hypothesis stating that there is no difference between males and females and their scores on the About Me Survey. This can be further seen in Table 3.

Table 3

About Me Survey and Gender

Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	SE Mean
Males	15	91.9	11.0	2.8
Females	15	100.7	13.6	3.5

T-Value = -1.94 P-Value = 0.064 DF = 26

The findings in this study provide evidence that there was a moderate to strong correlation between participants' ages and their scores on the Ethnic Identity Instrument. No other relationship between the variables of age, gender, Ethnic Identity Instrument or Self-Esteem Instrument were found to be statistically significant.

Discussion

The present study investigated whether or not there is a correlation between age and self-esteem among African American adolescents. The results of this study provide strong support for the importance of age as a predictor of self-esteem and ethnic identity. It was expected in the present study that older subjects would have higher scores than younger subjects on ethnic identity achievement and self-esteem. However, the results of this study found that age was not a predictor of higher levels of ethnic identity achievement or self-esteem. The following sections discuss the implications of the Ethnic Identity Instrument, the implications of the Self-Esteem Instrument, implications in the social work practice, policy and research as well as the strengths and limitations with the present study.

Ethnic Identity Instrument

There are important implications from this study. In the Ethnic Identity Instrument, the process of ethnic identity achievement was conceptualized as a continuous variable that ranged from little/lack of exploration and commitment to exploration and commitment in understanding one's background and role of ethnicity in one's life. A low score was indicative of ethnic identity diffusion and a high score was indicative of ethnic identity achievement (Phinney, 1992). Out of the 30 participants who participated in this study the average score on the Ethnic Identity Instrument was 71.77 out of a possible 90 points. These findings indicated that individuals with a

higher Ethnic Identity were younger when compared to their older counterparts in this study. This finding is in discordance with previous research that has been conducted. Phinney and Chavira (1992) discovered significantly higher scores among college students than among high school students. This study hypothesized that between the ages of 16 and 19 years-old adolescents are in the first two stages of ethnic identity classified as diffused and foreclosed. As these adolescents age, they would move to a higher stage and individuals who are in a higher stage would not regress back to a lower stage of ethnic identity. However, this current study contradicts these findings and found that as age increased the participants' ethnic identity scores decreased. Phinney (1992) stated that attitudes towards one's ethnic group and a sense of belonging appear to be more influential by parents' and community members than by age alone. This study did not look at specific social support systems in the lives of adolescents, but the research has demonstrated that social support systems provide an individual with a social ecology that supports them throughout their journey in identifying their ethnic identity (Pernice-Duca, 2010).

Another reason for the differences in these findings could be the change in culture over the years as well as growing up in different parts of Minnesota. Phinney (1992) stated that ethnic identity is not a static phenomenon; rather, it is constantly changing as historical and social contexts change. Living in Minnesota may play a direct role in how African American adolescents view themselves when compared to individuals on the East or West coasts. The Martinez and Dukes (1991) study was conducted in Colorado, French, Seidman and Aber (2006) focused on students attending schools on the East coast and Phinney and Chavira (1992) conducted research on the West coast in Los Angeles. Very little research on ethnic identity has

been conducted in the Midwest area and this could be a major contributor to the contradiction with the current research when compared to past research.

In addition, Smith (1991) stated that majority/minority status for African American adolescents plays a direct role with the power status that each individual holds and is a significant determiner for ethnic identity development. Culturally speaking, Minneapolis varies greatly when compared to St. Paul and other neighboring suburbs. An adolescent living in Minneapolis may have a better understanding of their ethnic identity because they are surrounded by individuals from their own cultural groups. In contrast, African American adolescents residing in suburban cities might not have the opportunity to be as immersed in their ethnic groups. This study did not collect specific information about the geographic residence of participants; this may be an area for future research.

In addition, when looking at the variable of gender and the Ethnic Identity Instrument, the researcher found no statistically significant difference between males and females. These findings coincide with previous research. Phinney (1992) found that there was no statistically significant difference between males and females and their levels of ethnic identity achievement.

Self-Esteem Instrument

In addition, there are vast implications when examining the responses to the Self-Esteem Instrument. Out of the 30 participants, the average score on the Self-Esteem Instrument was 24.53 out of a possible 30 points. There was no statistically significant correlation between age and the Self-Esteem Instrument. This finding goes against previous research. Phinney and Chavira (1992) stated that there may be a correlation between self-esteem and ethnic identity development caused by the fact that people at higher stages of ethnic identity development use better and more effective self-protecting strategies that protect their self-esteem. In addition,

Phinney, Cantu and Kurtz (1996) stated that a strong ethnic identity is associated with a positive self-esteem. However, the present study found an inverse relationship between age and ethnic identity. As age increased one's ethnic identity decreased. Therefore, this could have directly impacted the relationship between age and self-esteem and account for the lack of a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

In addition, when looking at the variable of gender and the Self-Esteem Instrument, the researcher found no statistically significant difference between males and females. Previous research has found contradictory findings. Martinez and Dukes (1991) disprove this statement and found that the self-esteem of females is often found to be lower than males. In contrast, Phinney, Cantu and Kurtz (1996) discovered that African American males and females did not differ in their self-esteem. Future research needs to be done in order to look at what other variables are affecting these contradicting findings. Establishing a self-esteem may be affected by where an individual lives, an individual's socioeconomic status and/or their social support systems.

Ethnic Group Reported and Overall Results

Individuals who identified themselves as African American and wrote in that they most identified with their African roots scored higher on the Ethnic Identity instrument and the Self-Esteem instrument when compared to their counterparts. The researcher hypothesizes that individuals who identified as African may have been more recently immigrants to America and this could play a direct role in how they value themselves and their ethnic identity. Individuals who have resided in America for a long period of time may have conformed to the melting pot ideology and their values in regards to their ethnic identity may have become fragmented.

In addition, African Americans may have scored lower on the Ethnic Identity measurement due to the shift in society towards a more individualistic society that values money and status rather than family and love. Adolescents today often focus on themselves and can be very narcissistic in their thinking. These results may be influenced by the need for African Americans to try to break through the cultural barriers in hopes of being treated like equals when compared to their white counterparts. Being narcissistic and money driven may be the expense for why African Americans are losing a sense of who they are and where they have come from.

Implications for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

Social Work Practice and Policy

As ethnic minorities increase as a proportion to the population of the United States, the importance of how individuals' develop an ethnic identity is likely to become more salient for all members of ethnic minority groups. Identity formation is one of the central tasks of adolescence and if individuals are not able to arrive at a stable sense of self than interpersonal areas and psychological effects may hinder the individual (Phinney, 1992). If adolescents are not able to develop an ethnic identity and self-esteem then they are risk for developing psychological issues such as depression and hopelessness (Phinney et al., 1996). If adolescents are not able to develop a positive self-esteem and a positive ethnic identity then society as a whole will be at-risk for working with an age group that is markedly higher in psychological disorders. Smith (1991) stated that an individual's emotional well-being is influenced by the social conditions in which he matures in. Oppressive conditions such as racism, discrimination and prejudices may delimit a person's ability to fully thrive and meet his potential. However, when an individual is able achieve his ethnic identity and is aware of the dominant cultural ideals, then he is able to ward off and protect himself from fusing with the negative images that are presented in a society.

As a whole, society needs to encourage differing ethnic groups to take pride in where they came from rather than promoting a more of a melting pot ideology. Policies need to be created to fight harder against racism and prejudices that are occurring on a daily basis. Differences need to be embraced and as a society we need to learn from each other and grow, rather than thinking “white is right”. In addition, social workers need to be more self-aware and culturally sensitive when working with individuals who are of a differing ethnicity from their own. Race and ethnicity need to be the forefront of the conversation when working with individuals of color; rather than an issue that is simply ignored.

Social Work Research

This study only focused on African American adolescents. Future research is needed to replicate this study and to look at other factors that play into how adolescents acquire an ethnic identity and how this affects their self-esteem. Phinney, Cantu and Kurtz (1996) suggested that a central factor in adolescent self-esteem is the social support individuals receive from significant others such as family, friends, and teachers. Future research needs to focus on the multifaceted topic of self-esteem and how affects an African American while an African American is discovering themselves.

Strengths and Limitations of Current Study

Strengths

There were several strengths and limitations in the present study. One strength, was that the MEIM, RSE, CCS and the FSCH-E instruments all had relatively good internal consistency, with alpha levels ranging from .77 to .87 (Phinney, 1992; Gloria et al, 1996; McCubbin et al, 1996; Robinson et al, 1991). In addition, these surveys had been used in previous studies and had been well documented in their validity and reliability measures, allowing the researcher to use

already strong, valid and reliable questions. In addition, the current study built on previous research and this added some validity to the methods.

Another strength for the present study, was the beneficial factor of having all information that was provided, anonymous and confidential. This allowed for more participants to partake in the study knowing that their information that was provided remained anonymous and confidential, and this factor hopefully helped yield more truthful responses from the participants.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was that the researcher did not use all of the questions from the CSC and FSCH-E instruments. This may affect the reliability and validity of the questions asked from the two instruments. The researcher chose not to use all of the questions in order to minimize the time that it would take to fill out a survey that contained them in their entirety as well as the overlap in meaning behind questions in the CSC and FSCH-E instruments when compared to the MEIM instrument.

Another limitation may be response bias. Participants may have felt that they were inclined to respond to these questions in a manner that is socially acceptable and reflected them being extremely proud of who they are and their racial/cultural backgrounds, rather than responding truthfully to how they felt and where they were actually at in their identity formation. Another limitation was the possible transparency of the survey. Participants may have been aware of the intended purpose of the study and furthered bias their response bias by responding in a manner in which they thought the researcher wanted them to respond. However, the researcher had put in place several barriers to combat this possible problem. The researcher informed all participants' that their information that they provided would be kept anonymous and confidential.

Another limitation is the lack of specific information obtained when participants were asked to fill in what ethnic group they considered themselves to be. Some individuals wrote in the space that was provided as to what ethnic group they felt they belonged to, while others left this question blank. The lack of clarifying information that was collected could skew the findings in a disproportionately manner. If more individuals identified as African rather than African American and vice versa, then the results may not be as representative of the population that was sampled.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study found some evidence that age plays a direct role in how an individual develops an ethnic identity. These findings found that individuals who were younger in age had a higher level of ethnic identity development than individuals who were older. In addition, the current study found no correlation between an individuals' ethnic identity and their self-esteem. These findings are in discordance with previous research and need to be further replicated. The researcher believes that these findings reinforce the importance of addressing other variables that might be impacting an individual's ability to develop a positive ethnic identity and a positive self-esteem. Such research would provide richer and more of an understanding of the role of ethnic identity in the psychological experiences of African American adolescents (Scottham et al., 2010).

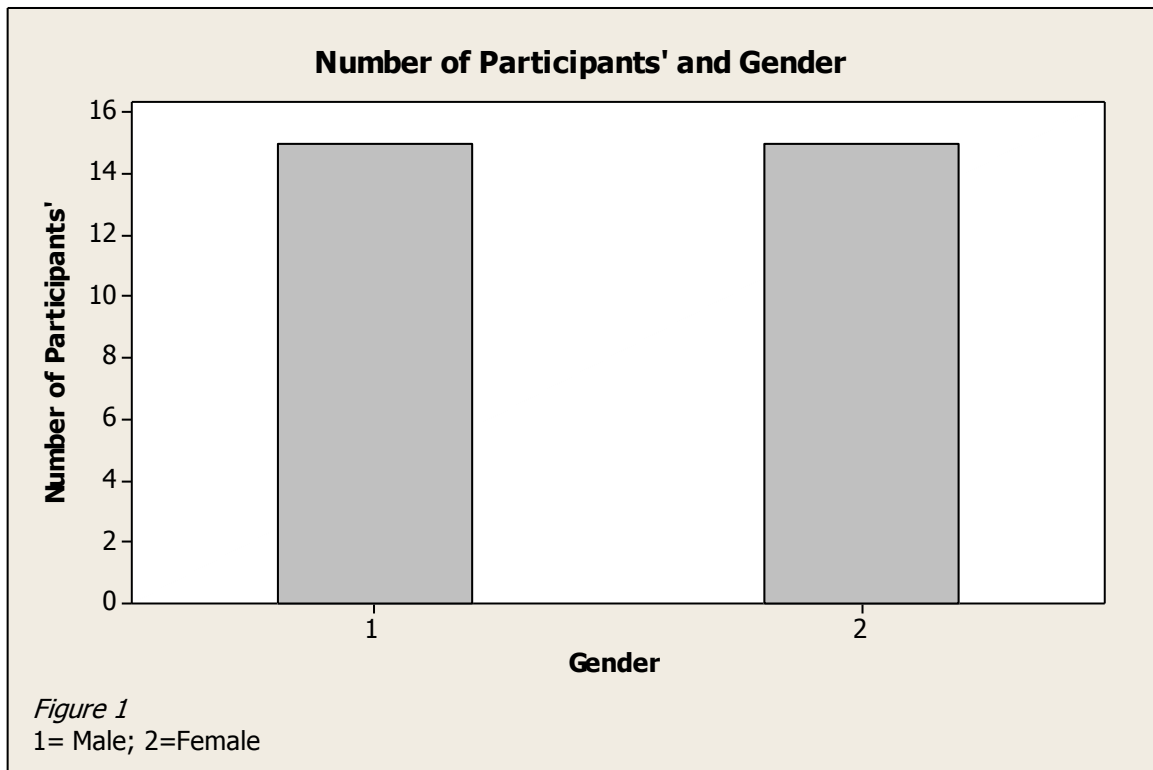
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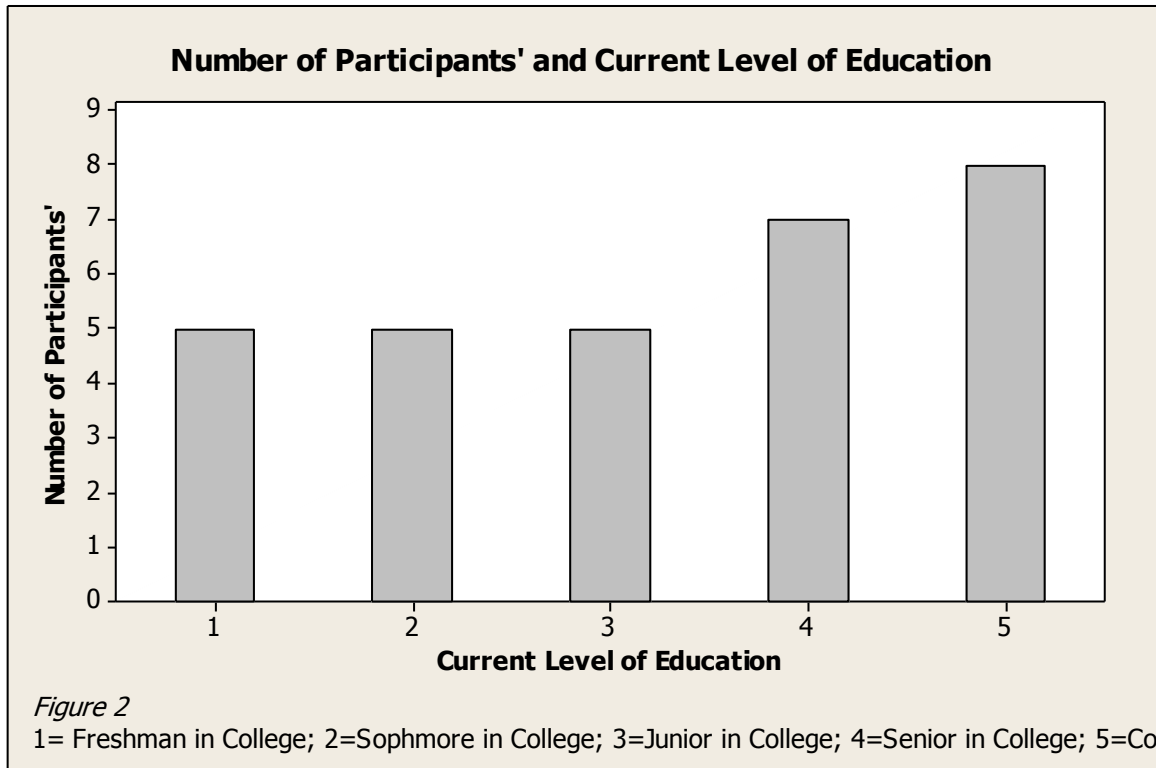
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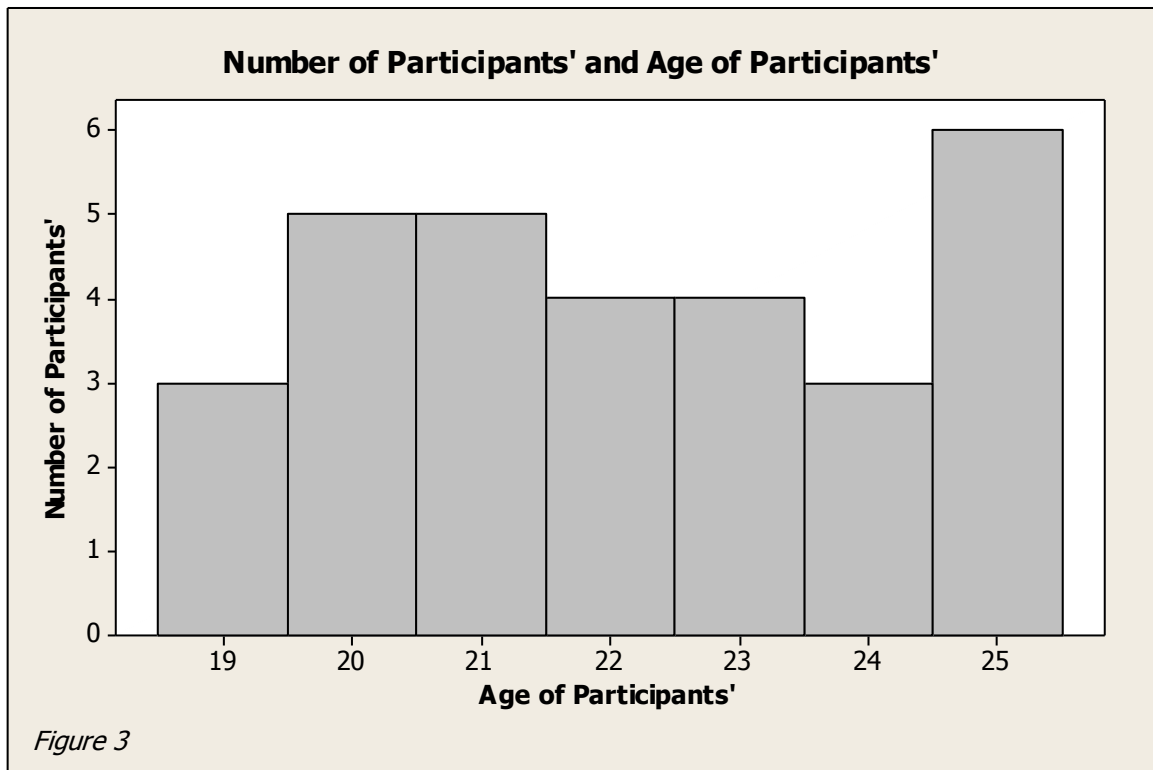
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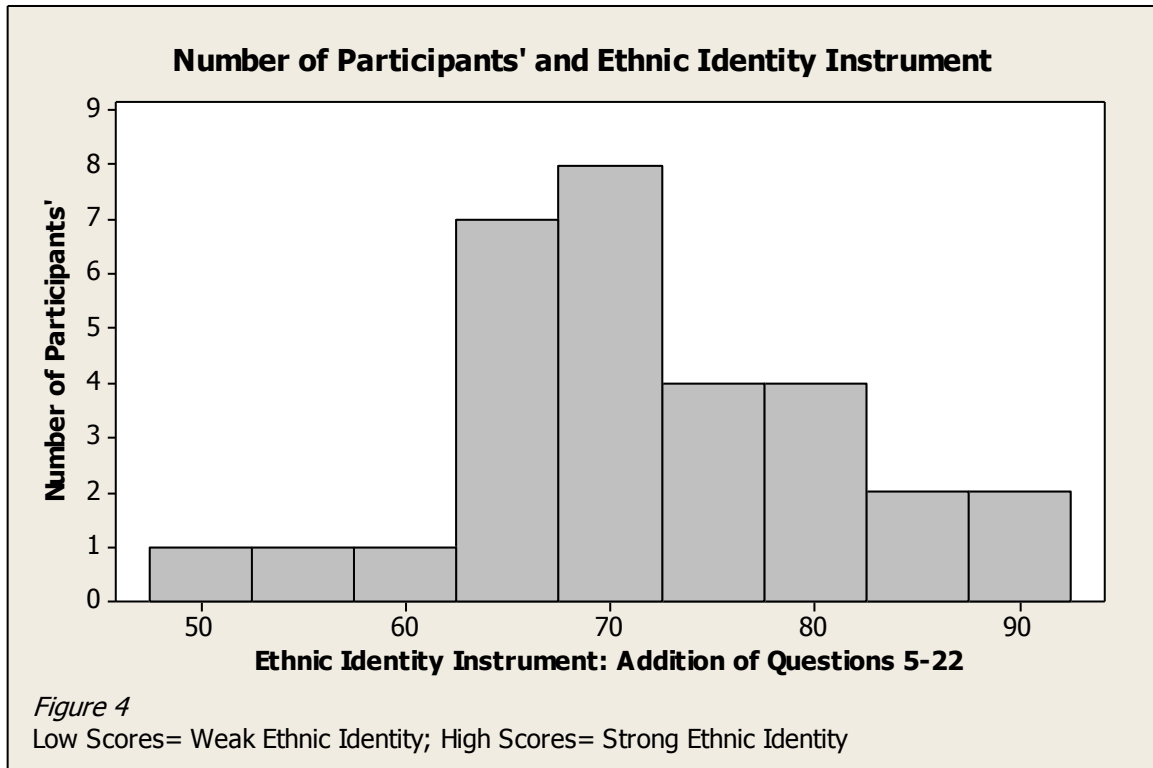
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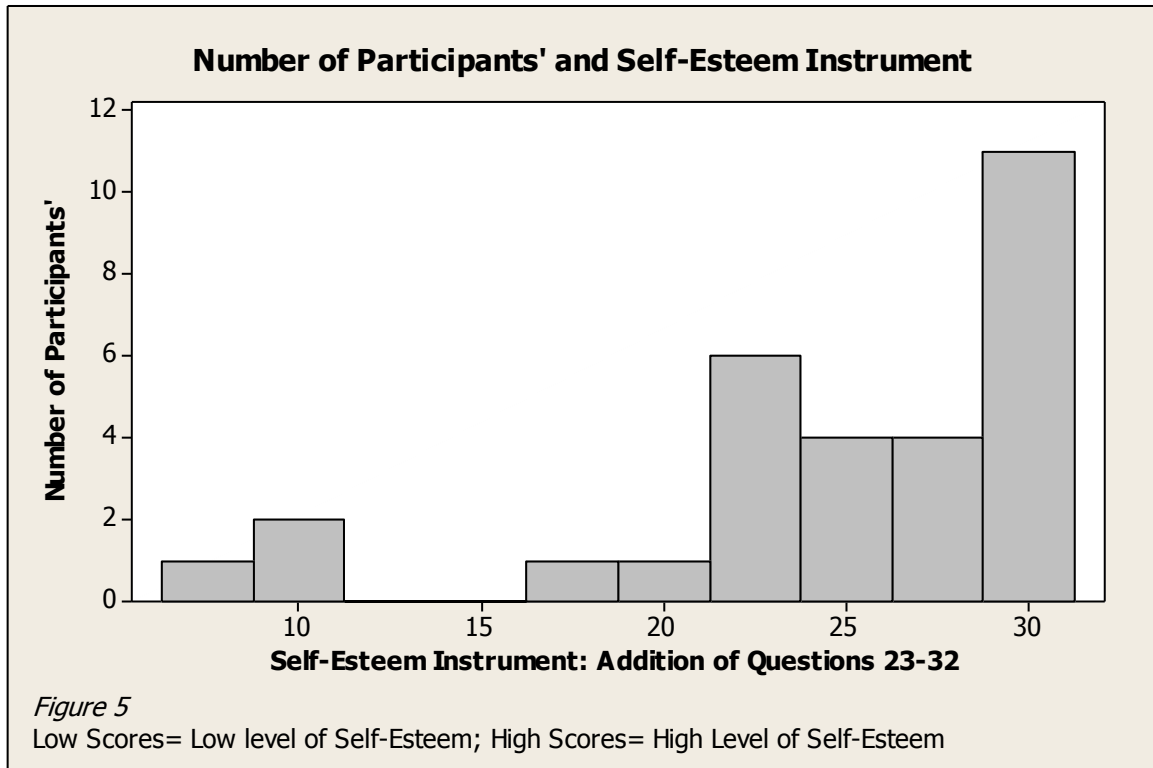
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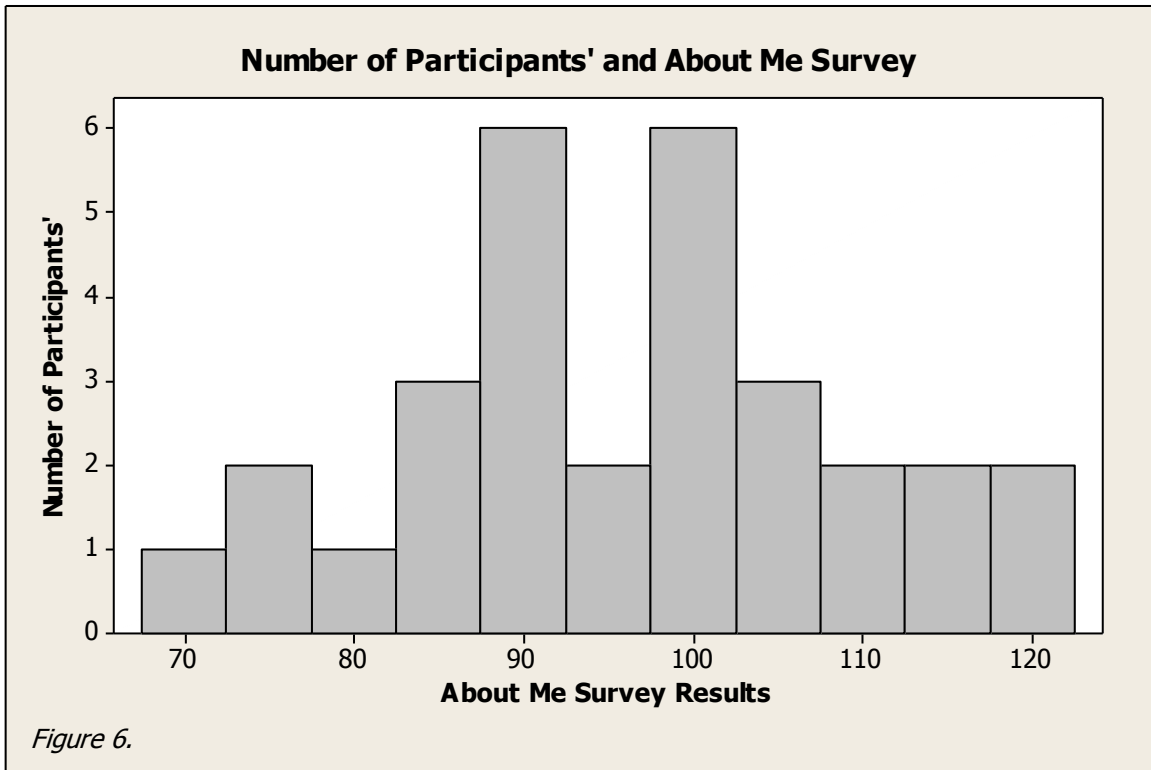


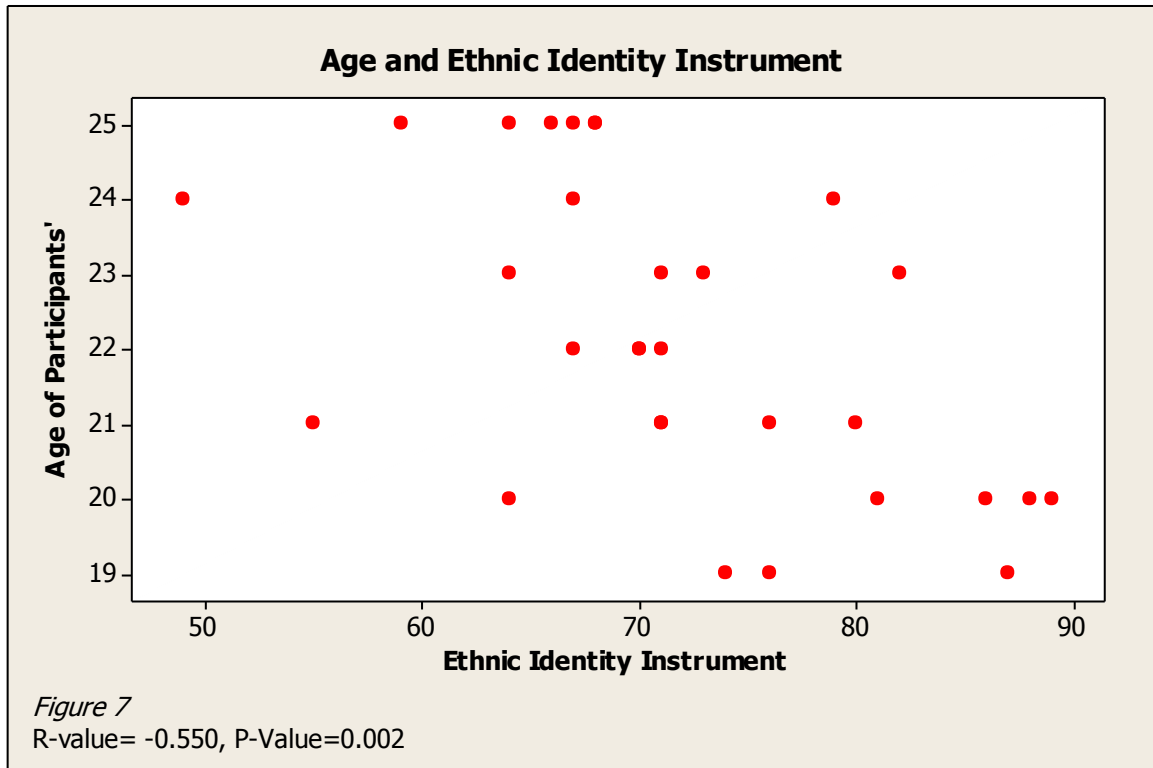


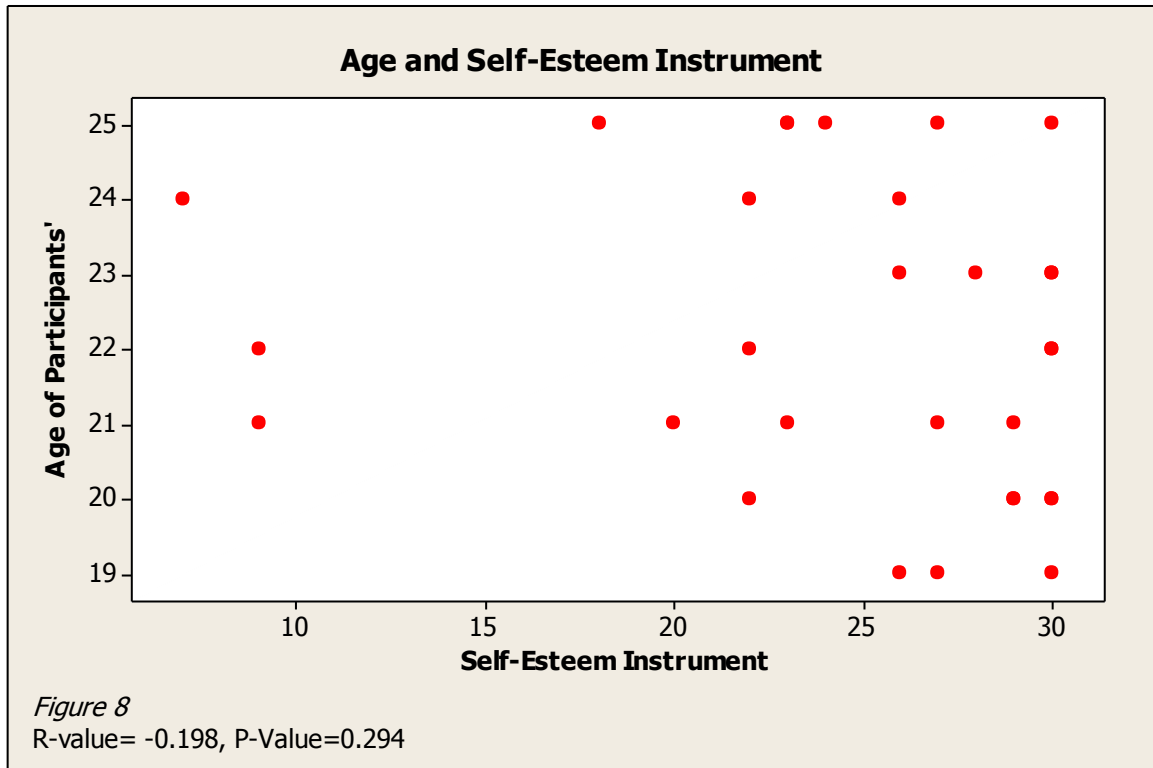


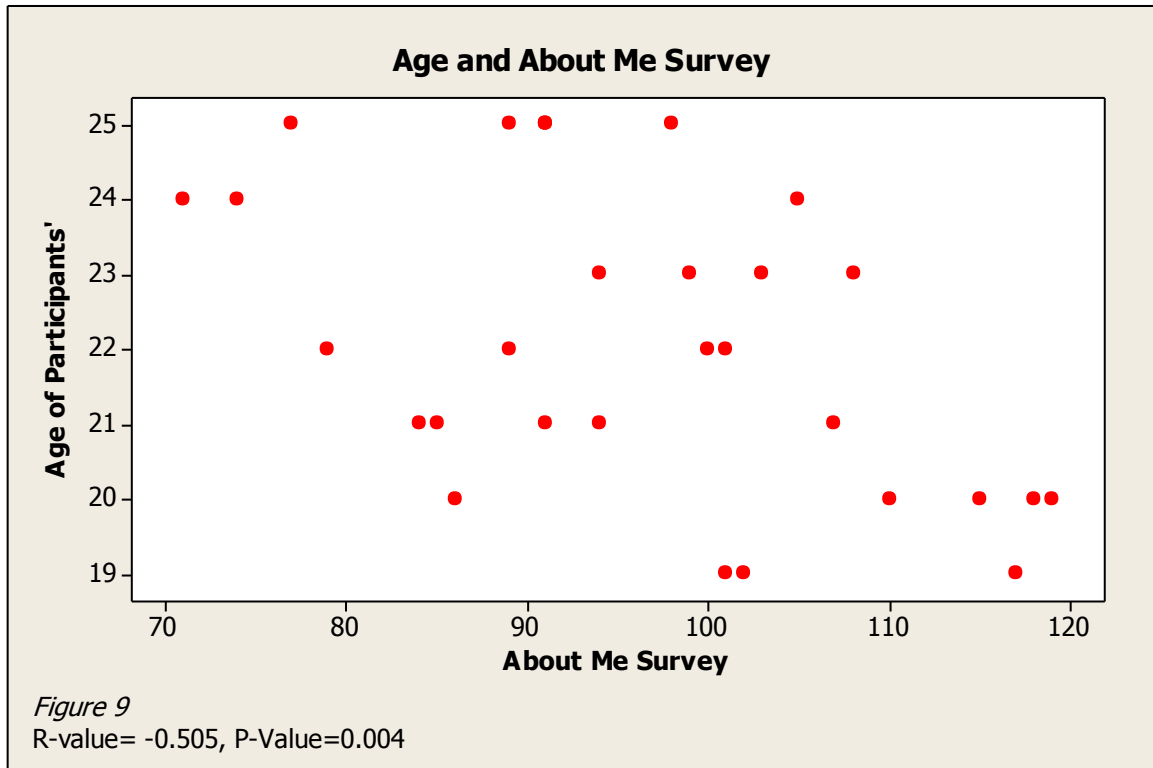


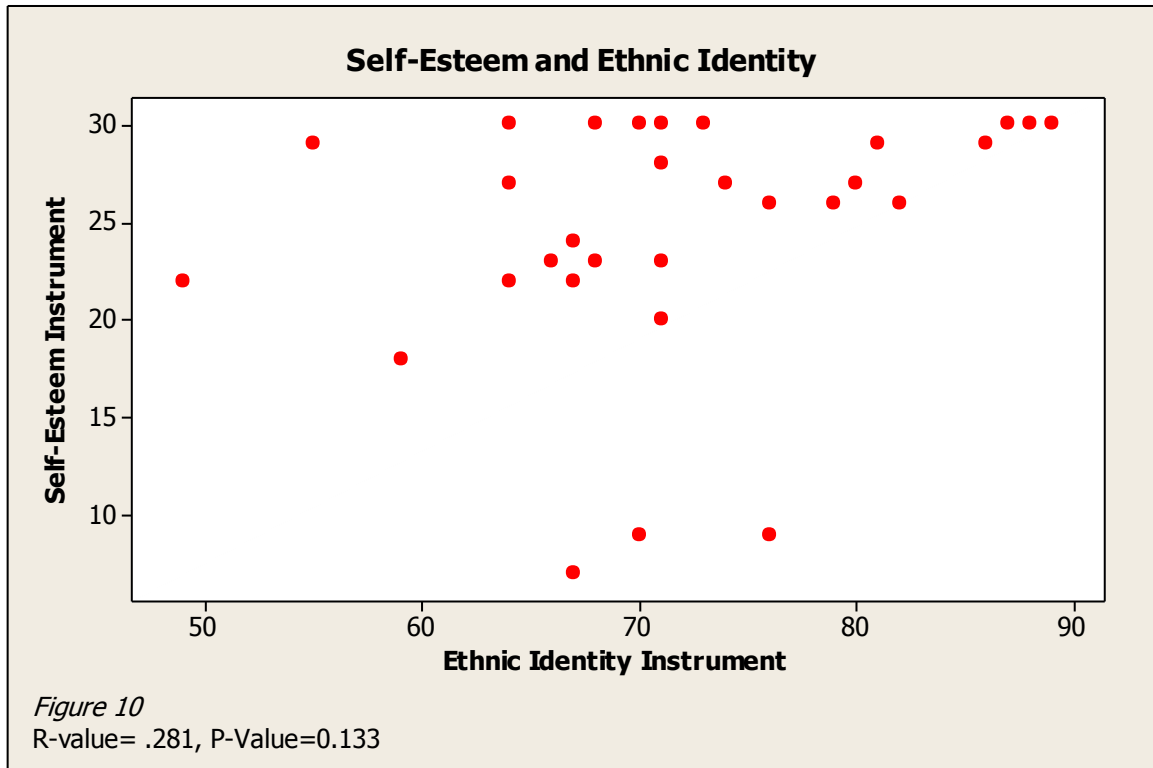












Appendix A
All About Me Survey

_____ 1. Please check one

(a.) Male

(b.) Female

_____ 2. I identify myself as an African-American?

(a.) Yes

(b.) No

_____ 3. Please indicate your current grade level:

(a.) Freshman

(b.) Sophomore

(c.) Junior

(d.) Senior

(e.) College Graduate

_____ 4. I am _____ Years-old

(a.) 18

(b.) 19

(c.) 20

(d.) 21

(e.) 22

(f.) 23

(g.) 24

(h.) 25

-Please fill in: In terms of your ethnic group, I consider myself to be_____

Use the numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

0= I Do Not Know

1= Strongly Disagree

2=Disagree

3=Neutral

4=Agree

5=Strongly Agree

____ 5. I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group such as its history, traditions and customs.

____ 6. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.

____ 7. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.

____ 8. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.

____ 9. I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.

____ 10. I have strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.

____ 11. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.

____ 12. In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.

____ 13. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.

____ 14. I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.

- ___ 15. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.
- ___ 16. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.
- ___ 17. My ethnic/ cultural roots gives me strength.
- ___ 18. My family does a lot to hold onto our ethnic/cultural identity and beliefs.
- ___ 19. I try not to show the parts of me that are ethnically based.
- ___ 20. I can talk to my friends at school about my family and culture.
- ___ 21. I feel that my language and/or appearance make it hard for me to fit in with other students.
- ___ 22. I feel accepted at school as an ethnic minority.

Please indicate how often each statement is true for you.

1= Strongly Agree

2= Agree

3= Disagree

4=Strongly Disagree

- ___ 23. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- ___ 24. At times I think I am no good at all.
- ___ 25. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- ___ 26. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
- ___ 27. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
- ___ 28. I certainly feel useless at times.
- ___ 29. I feel that I'm a person of worth.
- ___ 30. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

____ 31. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.

____ 32. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Appendix B

Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

All About Me Survey

I am conducting a study about how a positive racial identity can be a positive factor in the lives of African- American young adults and older adolescents (ages 18-25). I invite you to participate in this research study. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a member of the African-American cultural group and you are classified as young adult and/or older adolescent. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Natalie Casemore, Katharine Hill, PhD, Social Work Department at the University of St. Thomas

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is: To examine how a positive racial identity can be a positive factor in the lives of African-American young adults/ older adolescents. With this knowledge, teachers, parents, and individuals in authoritative positions can work to help eliminate racism and merge the gaps that exist between various cultures.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: take a hard copy, paper survey that consists of answering 31 questions. The length of this interview will be approximately 10-15 minutes.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

One risk that may affect an individual that is participating in this study is centered around the possibility that the participant might find the subject matter to be sensitive.

The direct benefits you will receive for participating are: helping the researcher identify if there is an association between a positive ethnic/racial identity and positive factors that may be associated with this development.

Compensation:

You will receive candy as a compensation for participating in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept anonymous and confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify the participant in any way. The types of records I will create include a survey. The researcher will only have access to the surveys and they will be destroyed on May 2012, upon completion of this study. Katharine Hill, my professor of research, will not have access to the data.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. Should you decide to withdraw data collected about you will not be used in the study. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Natalie Casemore. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at or Katharine Hill You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age. I also consent to allow transcripts to be used for this study.

_____ **By signing on this line the participant is stating that they do understand the purpose of the study, that their information will be kept anonymous and confidential and that they are not being coerced to partake in this study.**

Appendix C

Data Analysis Plan

Descriptive Statistics

1. Participants' gender: nominal variable; frequency distribution, bar chart (Question # 1)
2. Participants' current level of education: nominal variable; frequency distribution, bar chart (Question # 3)
3. Participants' age: ratio variable; measures of central tendency and dispersion, histogram (Question #4)
4. Participants' Ethnic Identity subscale scores: interval variable; measures of central tendency and histogram (Sum of Questions 5-22)
5. Participants' Self-Esteem Instrument scores: interval variable; measures of central tendency and histogram (Sum of Questions 23-32)
6. Participants' About Me Instrument scores: interval variable; measures of central tendency and histogram (Sum of questions 5-32)

Inferential Statistics

1. Age (Question #4) and Ethnic Identity Instrument (Questions 5-22): ratio and interval; correlation and scatter plot
2. Age (Question #4) and Self-Esteem Instrument (Questions 23-32): ratio and interval; correlation and scatter plot

3. Age (Question #4) and About Me Survey (Questions 5-32): ratio and interval; correlation and scatter plot
4. Ethnic Identity Instrument (Questions 5-22) and Self-Esteem Instrument (Questions 23-32): interval and interval; correlation and scatter plot
5. Gender (Question #1) and Ethnic Identity Instrument (Questions 5-22): nominal and interval; t-test
6. Gender (Question #1) and Self-Esteem Instrument (Questions 23-32): nominal and interval; t-test
7. Gender (Question #1) and About Me Survey (5-32): nominal and interval; t-test

