

Identity Conflict in African Americans during Late Adolescence and Young Adulthood: Double Consciousness, Multicultural, and Africentric Perspectives

by

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Abstract

This study sought to determine whether “double consciousness,” multicultural, or an Africentric perspective best portrays identity conflict among African Americans during late adolescence and young adulthood. A subsample (N=465) of African Americans, ages of 18-25, were studied from the 2001-2003 National Survey of American Life (NSAL) conducted by the University of Michigan. Identity conflict was operationalized as the difference between measures of feelings of closeness to Whites versus closeness to Blacks. National identity as “Black,” “American,” “both Black and /American,” or “human being” was also assessed. The three theoretical models of racial identity made different predictions about the relationship between identity conflict scores and national identity. Regression analysis of the identity conflict measure with national identity as the independent variable, adjusting for covariates, supported the Africentric perspective. Also, implications for assessment and intervention targeting racial identity among African Americans are discussed.

A fundamental aspect of identity for people of African ancestry is ethnic, racial or cultural identity. Although these constructs are distinct, they overlap in defining identity for African Americans. Ethnic, racial or cultural identity have in common the fact that they reflect a set of cognitions representing beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors of positive identification with people of African ancestry (Whaley, 2003).

Research on ethnic identity and racial identity reveal considerable overlap between the corresponding constructs in African American adolescents (Lee & Ahn, 2013; Stanley, 2014; Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006). Similarly, cultural identity measured in terms of the African worldview is also correlated with racial identity in Black young adults (Bailey, Chung, Williams, Singh, & Terrell, 2011; Simmons, Worrell, & Berry, 2008; Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, & Fhagen-Smith, 2002). Worrell and Gardner-Kitt (2006) suggested that successful negotiation of identity formation for African Americans is difficult, because it depends upon reestablishing an identity that was lost due to adverse social and historical experiences.

For African American adolescents, racial identity is part of broader developmental milestone of identity formation (Erikson, 1968). The process of racial identity development tends to be successful (Gomes & Mabry, 1991), but it may be problematic for some Black adolescents (Robinson, 2000). The challenges of growing up in a society that negatively stereotypes and discriminates against Black youth and devalues their culture are major sources of their psychological problems (Umaña-Taylor, 2016). According to Azibo, Robinson, and Jones (2011), exposure to the pervasive Eurocentric perspective in the broader society negatively impacts racial identity functioning. As such, research on racial identity remains prominent among areas of study in the social and developmental sciences, especially Black psychology (Cokley, Awosogba, & Taylor, 2014). Theory and research on racial identity in African Americans is derived from three perspectives: double consciousness, multicultural, and Africentric. The purpose of the current study is to examine the basic assumptions of the double consciousness, multicultural, and Africentric approaches to African American identity using a sample of late adolescent and young adult Black respondents to the National Survey of American Life (NSAL). Thus, this article will review each perspective and, subsequently, test competing hypotheses derived from them.

Double Consciousness Perspective

One of the earliest discussions of racial identity among African Americans was introduced at the turn of the 20th century by W.E.B. Dubois (1903/2003) in his classic book, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois identified “double consciousness” as the core feature of identity among African Americans. Specifically, he proposed that being both “Negro” (or Black) and American (or White) created an ongoing internal conflict within Black Americans.

Du Bois explained: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others...One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body... “(p. 9).

From Dubois’s perspective of double consciousness, striking some type of balance between the Black and White components of the self is necessary for the resolution of this identity conflict. However, the onus for change is not on the Black individual but on American society. “The problem lies not in dysfunctional African American personalities but in the message, delivered to African Americans by a predominantly European American society, that African Americans must choose between White or Black—a choice they cannot win” (Gaines & Reed, 1995, p. 102). Thus the double consciousness perspective implies that American component of the Black identity is what drives the conflict. A relatively recent study which ostensibly tested the “double consciousness” concept suggested that the American identity does not negatively impact African Americans, if it is manifested in a nonthreatening context (Brannon, Markus, & Taylor, 2015). Under these circumstances, the impact of double consciousness favors a positive effect of the Black identity and a null effect of the American identity.

Several important points about the double consciousness perspective should be noted. First, it is not a formal theory derived from, or supported by, social science research. Despite this fact, Gaines and Reed (1995) pointed out that this perspective informs an alternative conceptual model of racial prejudice to traditional social-psychological theories. Second, the contribution of the Black identity to the identity conflict is unclear. Finally, there seems to be an inherent contradiction in the notion that identity conflict resolution results from a balance between American and Black identities, when the former has been the source of rejection and devaluation of African heritage and culture (see Gaines & Reed, 1995). Yet the assumption that a balance or harmony between the American and Black components of the self as essential continues to influence theories of racial identity development among African Americans throughout the remainder of the 20th century.

Multicultural Perspective

One of the first social science models of the process of Black identity development was “psychological nigrescence” presented by William Cross (1971. 1978). Cross referred to the process as “Negro-to-Black conversion,” proposing that black identity development occurs in five stages: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. According to Cross, progression through each stage is necessary for the individual to come to accept their racial identity.

The pre-encounter stage reflects anti-Black /pro-White attitudes which results in maladaptive psychological functioning; the encounter stage is the one in which there is a reevaluation of the relationship to White American society; immersion-emersion occurs in the third stage with a pro-Black disposition leading to promotion of Black culture and devaluation of White culture; and the final stage of internalization involves acceptance of being Black along with other identities (i.e., White) characteristics. In the final stage of internalization-commitment, the individual is deemed psychologically healthy purportedly recognizing their humanity and begin to improve the African American community. In other words, the individuals acquire a Black racial identity after they recognize their humanity and are no longer burden by racial categories.

Helms (1984) reconceptualized Cross's five-stage theory of racial identity in terms of four "statuses" used to explain Black identity development: preencounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and integration. The major difference is that the last two stages of Cross's model are condensed into one and renamed. Her use of the term "integration" for the final status makes more explicit the best-of-both-worlds assumption underlying Cross's model. The Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS) was created and tested by Helms (Helms & Parham, 1981, 1984) and empirically examined by others (Ponterotto & Wise, 1987). Cross (1991) devised the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) which reflects his revisions and expansion of the concept of psychological nigrescence. The expanded nigrescence model acknowledged the fact that attitudes toward Blacks versus Whites are not dichotomous ends of a unipolar dimension. Moreover, Worrell, Andretta, and Woodland 's (2014) empirical test of the developmental model in a confirmatory factor analysis of the CRIS failed to support the notion that racial identity development occurs in stages.

Instead, these racial attitudes toward the different groups are independent and are measured separately with the CRIS in the different statuses, previously defined as stages (Cross, 1991; Vandiver et al., 2002; Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001; Worrell, 2008; Worrell et al., 2014; Worrell, Cross, Vandiver, 2001; Worrell, Vandiver, Cross, & Fhagen-Smith, 2006). For example, Pre-encounter has been broken down into Assimilation, Self-Hate, and Miseducation. Internalization has been expanded to include several components that are variations on multiculturalism including Multicultural-Afrocentric and Multicultural-Inclusive.

The latter change clearly situates Cross's nigrescence model in the multicultural perspective. Cross also demonstrated a bias for multiculturalism that was transcendent of race, when he dropped his Multicultural-Racial Minority scale, which assessed a sense of connection with other racial minority groups (Vandiver et al., 2001). Bias is inferred from the fact that no rationale is offered for the selection of the Multicultural-Inclusive scale, even though it had essentially the same psychometric properties as the Multicultural-Racial Minority scale.

Similarly, the Immersion-Emersion was divided into Intense Black Involvement and Anti-White subscales; and he found the Intense Black Involvement subscale was correlated with Internalization Nationalist Identity, so it was also eliminated from the CRIS. Cross described the

Intense Black Involvement dimension as a reactionary response to racism, so it is supposed to be motivated by resentment and other adverse emotional coping behaviors (Simmons et al., 2008; Worrell, 2008). Researchers do not find an association between immersion-emersion stage and negative emotions with the original RAIS (Kambon & Bowen-Reid, 2010; Ponterotto & Wise, 1987). Moreover, Vandiver et al., (2001) failed to support the conceptualization of Intense Black Involvement as a negative coping reaction to White oppression, because it was correlated with the Internalization Nationalist scale which is a positive affirmation of the Black community.

The use of racial identity profiles was also accompanied by greater reliance on multivariate techniques, usually cluster analysis, to identify and examine their relationship to psychological functioning (e.g., Worrell, 2008; Worrell et al., 2014; Worrell, Vandiver, Schaefer, Cross, & Fhagen-Smith, 2006). Cluster analytic studies tend to reveal racial identity attitude profiles that are similar across studies (Worrell et al., 2014). In addition this conceptual and methodological change aligns Cross's revised nigrescence theory with other contemporary theories of racial identity such as the multidimensional model of racial identity (MMRI) developed by Robert Sellers and colleagues (Sellers, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous, 1998). Sellers' model of racial identity specifies four dimensions in evaluating the significance African Americans ascribe to being Black: salience, centrality, regard, and ideology. It has been operationalized and tested with the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyen, 2008; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997). The CRIS and MIBI can be used to assess the degree of similarity between Cross's revised or expanded model and Seller's model of racial identity.

For example, Worrell et al. (2001) raised the question of whether the Assimilation and Nationalist subscales of the CRIS and MIBI are measuring the same construct. Some empirical studies indeed show significant correlation between Pre-encounter Assimilation subscale of the CRIS and .Assimilation subscale of the MIBI (Vandiver et al., 2002), while others do not find a significant correlation (Simmons et al., 2008). Thus equivocal findings have been reported about overlap between these instruments for a common dimension of racial identity. It can be argued, however, that both models and the corresponding measurement instruments represent a multicultural perspective.

The essential difference between Cross' theory and that of Sellers is the fact that the former author favors the multicultural perspective as the optimal identity, while the latter places no value on any of the different identity profiles. Azibo et al. (2011) made a similar observation. A meta-analysis revealed that use of the CRIS versus the MIBI can lead to different results in studies of racial discrimination and psychological distress among African Americans (Lee & Ahn, 2013). This may be due to philosophical differences that inform the measurement models underlying these two multicultural theories.

Africentric Perspective

Africentricity or Afrocentricity has been conceptualized in various ways, but a core definition is that African history and culture are the sources of authentic identity for people of African ancestry in the Americas (Belgrave, Townsend, Cherry, & Cunningham, 1997; Borum, 2007; Dei, 1994; Ntseane, 2011). A number of African American scholars consider Africentrism more preferable to Afrocentrism because of the former's linguistic connection to Africa (see Cokley, 2005, for a discussion). The author concurs with this rationale and will use Africentricity. The spelling of the term notwithstanding, they share the same core definition presented earlier. The Africentric worldview is the only perspective where the reconciliation of identities related to one's racial group vis-a-vis European American society is not the goal. In fact, any integration of European American culture into African Americans' identity is considered pathological or abnormal, i.e., "cultural misorientation" and "psychological misorientation" (Azibo & Robinson, 2004; Azibo et al., 2011; Baldwin, 1984; Kambon & Bowen-Reid, 2009, 2010). This notion that African American and European American cultural experiences are irreconcilable, thereby making a multicultural identity untenable, is a key aspect of Africentricity that is rarely acknowledged by other identity theories (e.g., Cross, 1990).

To the contrary, Cross added an Internalization-Afrocentric dimension to his theory and measurement of psychological nigrescence (Vandiver et al., 2001). Cokley (2005) delineated the following problems with this particular subscale of the CRIS: a) it violates a basic principle of scale development in that it is not informed by theory; b) the Internalization-Afrocentric scale might unintentionally prime respondents to associate the concept with a reactionary approach to mainstream society instead of affirmation of African cultural values; and c) the inclusion of the term "Afrocentric" in the items invite confusion about its meaning and idiosyncratic definitions underlying responses to this subscale. In other words, the scale is not a true measure of the Africentric worldview. This is not surprising given the fact that Cross's attempt to incorporate Africentrism into a multicultural framework is antithetical to the fundamental assumptions.

Essentially, this perspective contends that differences exist between African Americans and European Americans in regard to culture, worldview, and historical experiences (Turner, 1991; Hunn, 2004). This difference between African and European cultures and their respective worldviews has been empirically demonstrated in that African cultural attributes (e.g., collectivism) and European cultural attributes (e.g., individualism) show an ethnic/racial difference that corresponds to the worldviews of the two groups. That is, African Americans tend to score higher on measures of collectivism, and European Americans score higher on measures of individualism, in cross-racial comparisons (e.g., Baldwin & Hopkins, 1990; Brannon et al., 2015; Oyserman, Gant, Ager, 1995). It is important to note that research indicating significant cultural differences between African Americans and Europeans Americans does not necessarily support the more nuanced assumptions in formal Africentric theory.

Several formal theories of Africentricity have been created, but only a few of these theories have been subjected to empirical study (see Kambon & Bowen-Reid, 2009, 2010, for a review). African Self-Consciousness theory is among the few formal theories of Africentricity generating empirical research (Baldwin, 1984; Kambon & Bowen-Reid, 2009, 2011). According to Kambon's theory, the Black personality has two components: African self-extension orientation and African self-consciousness. These two components reflect unconscious processes and conscious processes, respectively, with regard to "Black personality" development. African self-consciousness is also deemed the component of the Black personality that is susceptible to social and environmental influences. The African Self-Consciousness Scale (ASC) is the measurement instrument developed to assess the extent to which people of African descent manifest the conscious component of Black personality (Baldwin & Bell, 1985). The basic premise that the African self-conscious component of the Black personality is influenced by the social environment has received empirical support.

The Cultural Misorientation Scale (CMS) complements the ASC in that it is a measure of the extent to which African Americans adopt a non-African worldview, usually the Eurocentric perspective, in their personality development (Kambon & Bowen-Reid, 2011). The empirical literature is consistent with Kambon's theory in studies using the ASC (Bailey et al., 2011; Baldwin, Brown, Rackley, 1990; Thompson & Chambers, 2000; and the CMS (Azibo et al., 2011; Jamison, 2006; Kwate, 2003). However, some studies, especially those that include measures representing both the Africentric and multicultural perspectives, tend to yield mixed results (Bailey et al., 2011; Brookins, 1994; Simmons et al., 2008). Bailey et al. found more convergent validity between the subscales of their new measure, the Internalized Racial Oppression Scale, and the subscales of the ASC than those of the RAIS in their psychometric study. Brookins (1994) validated the Beliefs Systems Analysis Scale, using an African American college sample, with more significant correlations between this new measure and the RAIS than with the ASC. Ironically, Brookins's target measure was derived from the principles of Africentricity. To date, there has been no empirical test of the double consciousness, multicultural, and Africentric models in a single study.

Study Objective and Hypotheses

The purpose of the current study is to test the fundamental assumptions of the double consciousness, multicultural, and Africentric approaches to African American identity using the Black subsample of late adolescent and young adult respondents to the NSAL. Specifically, this study seeks to determine whether identity conflict, operationalized as the differences in closeness in feeling and ideas to Blacks versus Whites, is associated with national identities in a manner reflected in the double consciousness, multicultural, or Africentric perspective. National identity is operationalized by the endorsement of "American", "Black", or "both Black and American". Survey respondents who view themselves as exclusively American are defined as having double consciousness; those who endorse a Black identity are considered Africentric.

And finally, the individuals that describe their national identity as both Black and American or dual identity represent the multicultural perspective. It is important to understand why the dual identity represents multiculturalism instead of double consciousness: DuBois's notion that African Americans see themselves through the "eyes of the oppressor" is better characterized by the American only national identity, whereas the best-of-both-worlds assumption underlying the multicultural perspective is better portrayed by the dual national identity. The following hypotheses derived from the three perspectives on racial identity development will be tested:

- Double Consciousness Perspective---The national identity of American will be associated with significantly greater identity conflict than the Dual Identity.
- Multicultural Perspective---The national identity of Black and of American will be associated with greater identity conflict than the Dual Identity.
- Africentric Perspective---The Dual Identity will be associated with greater identity conflict than the national identity of Black.

Perceived discrimination and negative stereotypes about Blacks will be included in analyses as covariates, because these experiences in the broader society can affect individuals' ideas and feelings. Perceived discrimination may result in less identification with European Americans, and negative racial stereotypes may create greater social distance from African Americans.

Method

Participants

The NSAL is a comprehensive and detailed study of mental disorders and the mental health of Americans of African descent (Jackson et al., 2004). Complex sampling produced a representative sample (N = 6199) of 3,570 African Americans, 1,623 Caribbean Blacks, and 1,006 non-Hispanic Whites. The questionnaire contains 1,535 items covering 17 domains and takes, on average, 2 hours and 20 minutes to complete. A subsample (N=465) or 13% of the African American group between the ages of 18-25, which was 7.5% of the total sample, composed the current study population. The African American subsample used in this current study was 54% females, average age of 20.81, 65% employed, 49% high school graduates, and had a mean household income of \$29,689.

Measures

Identity Conflict. Two items in the NSAL were global measures of Black Identity and White Identity. The individual items asked, “How close do you feel in your ideas and feelings about things to Black (White) people in this country?” Each item yielded a range of scores from 1 (Very close) to 4 (Not at all close) which were reversed scored so that higher scores reflect greater closeness. Identity conflict was operationalized as the Black Identity score minus the White Identity score ranging from -3.00 to +3.00.

National Identity. Participants were asked, “Which is more important to you being Black or American?” The response options were “both Black and American,” “Black,” “American,” or “Human Being.” The first three response categories correspond to multicultural, Africentric, and double consciousness perspectives, respectively. It must be made clear that we understand that use of “Black” as a national identity is not appropriate, but historical and cultural forces of racial oppression have made it impossible to identify the national origins of people of African descent. Also, the “Human Being” category may be construed as a race transcendent identity. Nevertheless, it can be considered an aspect African American identity. For example, this latter perspective is captured by the Humanist subscale of Sellers et al.’s MIBI.

Perceived Discrimination. This is a 10 item self-report scale of respondents’ perceptions of being the target of unfair treatment. A sample item is “You are treated with less courtesy than other people.” Each item is scored from 1 (“Almost everyday”) to 6 (“Never”). Items are reversed scored so that higher scores reflect greater perceived discrimination. Total scale scores are the sum of individual item scores divided by the number of items and range from 1 to 6. Internal consistency reliability of scale scores for the study sample is $\alpha = .87$.

Negative Stereotypes about Blacks. This is a 6-item scale assessing the extent which respondents endorse racial stereotypes. A sample item is “How true do you think it is that most Black people/Black Americans are intelligent?” Each item is scored 1 (“Very true”) to 4 (“Not at all true”). Some items are reversed scored so that higher scores reflect higher endorsement of negative racial stereotypes. Total scale scores are the sum of individual item scores divided by their number resulting in a range from 1 to 4. Internal consistency reliability of scale scores for the study sample is $\alpha = .63$.

Statistical Analysis

All analyses were performed using SPSS v. 22 with the Complex Samples option to account for the multilevel sampling strategy. Regression analysis were conducted using the General Linear Model (GLM) procedure from the Complex Samples option with identity conflict, Black identity, and White identity as the dependent variables with age, gender, education, employment status, household income, perceived discrimination, and negative stereotypes about Blacks as the independent variables.

Simple contrasts were applied to mean scores across groups defined by national identity with Bonferroni adjustments ($p < .017$) for multiple comparisons. Measures of perceived discrimination and negative racial stereotypes were included to control for their confounding effects on respondents' feelings of closeness to Blacks versus Whites. Supplemental analyses were conducted to determine the role of Black identity versus White identity in identity conflict. Black and White identity scores were correlated with Identity Conflict scores controlling for the other and the variables of perceived discrimination and negative stereotypes about Blacks. The correlation coefficients were then squared to compute the percent of unique variance explained in identity conflict scores by Black identity versus White identity. A 4 (National Identity) x 2 (Black Identity versus White Identity) chi-square test was conducted to determine statistically significant differences in the proportion of variance explained in Identity Conflict scores between group and within group at $p < .05$.

Results

Descriptive statistics for dependent and independent variables by national identity are presented in Table 1. The percentage of respondents endorsing the different national identity categories were 75.3% for "Both Black and American", 15.8% for "Black", 6.5% for "American", 2.4% for "Human Being". The reference category for the National Identity variable in regression analyses is "Both Black and American". Figure 1 presents the distribution of Identity Conflict scores, which were categorized as "high" for values below 0 and "low" for values above 0, in a histogram. It is clear from Figure 1 that the overwhelming majority of African American young adults do not experience identity conflict. Separate regression models were tested for each dependent variable. Parameter estimates and standard errors for each model are presented in Table 2.

For the dependent variable Identity Conflict, significant model effects were evident for National Identity, $F(3, 31) = 3.00, p < .05$; age, $F(3, 33) = 4.10, p < .05$; household income, $F(3, 31) = 5.05, p < .05$; and negative stereotypes about Blacks, $F(3, 31) = 5.64, p < .05$. Between-group comparisons of parameter estimates for National Identity categories show that respondents who define themselves as Black have significantly less identity conflict than the Dual National Identity group, $t = 2.83, p < .01, d = 1.02$. A review of parameter estimates also revealed that African American adolescents and young adults have less identity conflict with increasing age, $t = 2.03, p < .05, d = 0.73$; more identity conflict with increasing household income, $t = -2.25, p < .01, d = -0.81$; and greater endorsement of negative racial stereotypes was associated with more identity conflict, $t = -2.38, p < .01, d = -0.85$.

Black Identity was significantly predicted by sex, $F(1, 33) = 4.10, p < .05$; household income, $F(1, 33) = 6.98, p < .01$; negative stereotypes about Blacks, $F(1,33) = 5.99, p < .02$. Inspection of parameter estimates revealed that African American males feel closer than their female counterparts to Black people, $t = 2.03, p < .05, d = 0.71$; a weaker Black identity with increasing household income, $t = -2.64, p < .01, d = 0.92$; and lower endorsement of negative racial stereotypes was associated with a stronger Black identity, $t = -2.43, p < .01, d = -0.85$. The only significant predictor of White identity, among African American youth was the National Identity variable, $F(3, 31) = 4.29, p < .01$. Inspection of parameter estimates revealed that respondents who endorsed “Black” had significantly lower White Identity scores than those who considered themselves “Both Black and American”, $t = -3.30, p < .01, d = -1.19$. Thus our regression findings suggest that the extent of closeness to Whites or White Identity is the main factor in identity conflict for African American young adults. It is important to note that this is a point on which the double consciousness and Africentric perspectives agree.

Supplemental analyses revealed statistically significant differences in the proportion of variance explained between group and within group, $\chi = 28.43, df = 3, p < .001$. The proportion of variance explained for the different groups is depicted in Figure 2. Between-group comparisons revealed that the amount of variance explained in Identity Conflict scores by Black Identity was significantly greater for the “Human Being” group relative to all remaining National Identity groups; and the American National Identity group was significantly higher than “Black” and “Both Black and American” groups. For White Identity, the amount variance explained by “Human Being” group’s scores was significantly higher than the “American” group and significantly lower than the other two groups. Within-group analyses showed a significantly higher amount variances explained by Black identity than White identity for the “Human Being” group. White Identity explained significantly more variance than Black Identity in Identity Conflict scores for both Black and Dual National Identity groups.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to determine whether the double consciousness, multicultural, or Africentric perspective best explains racial identity conflict in African Americans during late adolescence and young adulthood. The results were more consistent with the hypothesis derived from the Africentric perspective with Dual National Identity being associated with greater identity conflict scores than the Black National Identity. African American young adults, who reported that being “Black” only was important to their national identity, experienced less identity conflict. These findings provide empirical support for Africentric scholars, who argue that connection to one’s African heritage is the only important element for racial identity (Azibo & Robinson, 2004; Azibo et al., 2011; Baldwin, 1984; Kambon & Bowen-Reid, 2009, 2010). The Africentric perspective also suggests that exclusive focus on African heritage is associated with better mental health, but that assumption was not tested in the current study.

Yoon et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of 356 studies on “acculturation/enculturation” and found, unlike other ethnic/racial groups, enculturation or degree of connection with one’s own ethnic group was particularly relevant to African Americans’ mental health. Thus these findings are consistent the vast majority of the empirical literature, but they should be replicated with mental health measures included to confirm this specific hypothesis from Africentric theory.

The implicit assumption of multicultural models that the culture of origin and mainstream society are of equal value for identity formation among African Americans during late adolescence and young adulthood is called into question by these findings. Lack of significant differences in terms of degree of identity conflict for Dual National Identity, American National Identity, and the Human Being response contradicts hypothesis derived from both the double consciousness and multicultural perspectives. The fact that Black Identity and White Identity as outcome variables yielded different relationships with demographic and race-related factors further supports this assertion. Demographic and race-related factors were associated with identity conflict and Black identity. In contrast, demographic and race-related variables had no significant associations with White identity or closeness to Whites.

Using a schema paradigm—i.e., mental structures that guides the processing of information and influence behavior, Brannon et al. (2015) demonstrated across several experimental studies that when the social context activates the interdependent schema reflective of Black cultural values, African American students perform better on academic tasks and show more creativity than African American students with the schema activated for independence reflective of American cultural values. These outcomes did not occur for White students whose interdependent schema was similarly activated. The researchers concluded that the inclusion of information and materials on Black culture would enhance the learning experience and academic performance of African American students in mainstream institutions. Although Brannon et al. (2015) claimed that their findings were consistent with the double consciousness perspective, the fact that identification with Black culture was the causal mechanism is more in line with the Africentric perspective. The current findings that Blacks identity is more influential than White identity are strengthened by similar findings from Brannon et al.’s more rigorous experimental research. .

Moreover, the supplemental analyses of amount of variance explained suggested the White Identity played a greater role in identity conflict. With the exception of the group of respondents endorsing the Human Being Identity, all National Identity groups’ identity conflict scores were better explained by their level of White Identity than Black Identity. Hyers used the same closeness-to-Whites item employed here to define Cross’s racial identity categories of “pre-encounter,” “immersion,” and “internalization” in her study. She classified survey respondents with high White identity scores as either pre-encounter or internalization groups depending on whether they also scored high or low on the item tapping acknowledgement of racism.

Interestingly, the demographic and psychosocial correlates of pre-encounter and internalization scores in Hyers's study were similar in many ways. Such findings suggest that pre-encounter and internalization groups are more similar than different. Similar findings have been found in other studies and are interpreted as being consistent with the Africentric perspective (Azibo & Robinson, 2004). Following the same logic, our findings of no significant difference between the American National Identity and the Dual National Identity in terms of identity conflict and the relatively greater role of White Identity can also be construed as supporting the Africentric perspective.

This study adds to a growing literature on multidimensional approaches to the study of racial identity among African Americans using nationally representative samples (Broman, Neighbors, & Jackson, 1988; Demo & Hughes, 1990; Herring, Jankowski, & Brown, 1999; Hyers, 2001; Thornton, Tran, Taylor, 1997). Our findings on demographic predictors were congruent with these other population-based studies of racial identity in some instances but discrepant in others. Age of respondent was significantly correlated with Identity Conflict scores such that older adolescents and young adults had lower scores. These current results regarding age effects were consistent with the findings of Broman et al., but at odds with those of Herring et al., Hughes and Demo, and Hyers. Thornton et al. provide a more nuanced analysis of age effects: They found that older African Americans felt closer to the "masses" and "elites" of the Black community, but younger respondents identified more with Black "rebels" or activism. The fact that we examined identity conflict, which seems to be best conceptualized within an Africentric framework, the current study is only partially consistent with Thornton et al.'s findings. African American youth with high levels of identity conflict may be less likely to identify with Black activism suggesting a possible cohort effect or differences in the eras studied.

Our sample had a more restricted age range than these previous studies. For example, Broman et al. found a curvilinear effect for age. Specifically, as Black Americans become senior citizens and move into retirement age (> 70 years), their racial group identification declines. Thus the age effects found in the current study are more suggestive of maturational processes both in psychosocial functioning (Erikson, 1968) and biological development (Freberg, 2010; Kalat, 2009). Future research should be conducted with a broader age range to determine the effects beyond late adolescence and young adulthood. Higher household income was associated with greater identity conflict and a weaker Black identity for this young adult subsample. This finding replicates the results reported by Broman et al. and Demo and Hughes. They are partly consistent with the Thornton et al.'s study in that higher income respondents identified with the Black "elite" and Black "rebels" but not the Black "masses."

Hyler found the opposite effect for income with higher incomes being associated with stronger racial group identification. An interesting point about Hyers's finding is the positive correlation between income and racial identification occurred for pre-encounter respondents over time. It may be that higher income African Americans with anti-Black attitudes exposed to mainstream society may reevaluate their racial identity.

Consistent with this view, Demo and Hughes demonstrated that income during adulthood had a more significant association with racial identity than household income during childhood. Strong endorsement of negative stereotypes about Blacks was associated with greater identity conflict and a weaker Black identity among African American adolescents and young adults.

In contrast, perceived discrimination was not significantly correlated with any of the outcome variables. This pattern of findings is consistent with previous research investigating analogous constructs in relation to racial identity. For example, Herring et al. found in-group orientation, but not out-group orientation, to be a significant predictor of racial identity among African Americans. Demo and Hughes found parental socialization that promotes racial pride, Black history, and positive community experiences is associated with stronger feeling of closeness to African Americans than a parenting style that focuses on defensive/cautious interactions with Whites.

In a recent multinational, ethnographic study of “racial awakening” or sense of what it means to be Black reported by adults in the African diaspora, Neville and Cross (2016) found that the experience was entirely positive for 63 out of 64 participants in their research study. They also noted that the “preawakening states of participants were typically not characterized by intense racial hatred or high levels of internalized oppression” (Neville & Cross, 2016, p. 6). Such findings are consistent with notion that racial identity development is more about the affirmation of one’s heritage than a reaction to anti-White sentiments. Although Neville and Cross (2016) attempted to frame their research findings within psychological nigrescence, it seems more consistent with the Africentric perspective.

Lee and Ahn (2013) meta-analytic review of 27 studies on Black Americans indicated: 1) age moderated the link between discrimination and “Afrocentricity/racial centrality/private regard” showing a weaker relationship for youth than adults; 2) age moderated the negative relationship between psychological distress and “Afrocentricity/racial centrality/private regard” showing a stronger correlation for youth than adults; no statistically significant difference between “Afrocentricity/racial centrality/private regard” and “public regard” in overall relation to discrimination. A 3-year longitudinal study found no effect for perceptions of racial discrimination on changes in racial identity in a sample of African American adolescents, but racial socialization predicted a reduction in the frequency of “Foreclosed” and “Diffused” identities and an increase in Achieved identity over the time period (Seaton, Yip, Morgan-Lopez, & Sellers, 2012).

Taken together, these studies converge to suggest that racial socialization that emphasizes community connections and Black heritage and culture is more beneficial to racial identity development than prioritizing racism and racial discrimination. Whaley (2003) indicated that racism awareness is a secondary target for racial socialization by parents or Africentric socialization by community organizations.

That respondents who endorsed Human Being had significantly more variance explained in their Identity Conflict scores by Black Identity was an unexpected but noteworthy finding. Measures based on the humanist philosophy deemphasize racial characteristics and focuses on the individual (Scottham et al., 2008; Sellers et al., 1997; Sellers et al., 1998). The current findings suggest that attempts to characterize oneself as simply a human being really is more a strategy to avoid connection to the Black community. Demo and Hughes found that parental socialization that emphasizes an “individualistic/universalistic” identity was not significantly correlated with closeness to other Blacks but did correlate positively to the evaluation of Blacks as a group. This parenting strategy promotes the human being identity which may have the benefit of increasing positive attitudes towards the in-group for African Americans while undermining a sense of connectedness.

In conclusion, one implication of these findings is that there may be individual differences related to African American community and culture that influence racial identity development. Inventories and scales used to measure racial identity should assess different perspectives on the Black experience and include some measure of how those experiences are weighted in African American youth’s self-perception. Interventions to help African American adolescents negotiate racial identity development may benefit from theories and research based on Africentric paradigms. Future studies could improve tests of these three perspectives on racial identity with the following methodological changes. First, the current single-item, global measures of identity conflict and national identity should be replaced by instruments with multiple items. Second, the findings should be replicated with other ethnic groups in the U.S. Black population such as African Caribbean and continental African adolescents. Third, the data are correlational but longitudinal designs are needed to make causal inferences about the relationship between (racial) identity conflict and national identity. Lastly, future research needs to consider potential overlap among the double consciousness, multicultural, and Africentric perspectives.

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Table 1. Means Scores for Study Variables by National Identity Groups.

VARIABLE	Both Black and American	Black	American	Human Being
IDENTITY STATUS	.72	1.19	.62	.90
Identity Conflict	3.43	3.35	3.07	3.22
Black Identity	2.70	2.16	2.45	2.35
White Identity				
AGE	20.72	21.11	21.00	21.25
SEX				
Male	41.8%	54.5%	57.6%	57.4%
Female	58.2%	45.5%	42.4%	42.6%
YEARS OF EDUCATION				
0-11 Years	21.0%	22.3%	17.7%	22.3%
12 Years	51.1%	43.3%	49.1%	42.4%
13-15 Years	24.1%	24.9%	29.8%	18.0%
16 Years or more	3.9%	9.5%	3.4%	17.3%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME	28880.54	33895.34	31457.54	30214.63
EMPLOYMENT STATUS				
Not in Labor Force	15.5%	17.0%	8.1%	18.0%
Unemployed	19.7%	18.2%	24.5%	13.0%
Employed	64.9%	64.8%	67.4%	69.0%
PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION	4.45	4.40	4.29	4.53
NEGATIVE STEREOTYPE ABOUT BLACKS	1.81	1.96	1.87	1.51

Note: positive score on measure of Identity Conflict indicates less conflict.

Table 2. Parameter Estimates and Standard Errors from Regression Analyses

VARIABLE	Identity Conflict		Black Identity		White Identity	
	b	se	b	Se	b	se
NATIONAL IDENTITY						
Human Being	.08	.22	-.30	.25	-.35	.20
American	-.13	.19	-.37	.23	-.24	.20
African	.49†	.17	-.05	.12	-.54†	.16
Both African and American	.00	.	.00	.	.00	.
GENDER						
Male	.04	.10	.14*	.07	.10	.11
Female	.00	.	.00		.00	.
AGE	.05*	.03	-.01	.02	-.06	.03
EDUCATION						
Less than High School	-.07	.12	-.12	.09	-.05	.13
Some College	.15	.15	.17	.10	.02	.14
College Graduate	.22	.19	.24	.14	.04	.18
High School Graduate	.00	.	.00	.	.00	.
EMPLOYMENT						
Not in Labor Force	-.23	.14	-.09	.09	.13	.12
Unemployed	.05	.11	.08	.08	.03	.13
Employed	.00	.	.00		.00	.
HOUSEHOLD INCOME	-.04*	.02	-.03*	.01	.01	.02
PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION	-.05	.06	.02	.05	.06	.06
NEGATIVE RACIAL STEREOTYPES ABOUT BLACKS	-.24*	.10	-.24*	.10	.00	.11
Intercept	.36	.67	3.89†	.63	3.52†	.81

Note. Household income was divided by \$10,000 to decrease decimal to two spaces.

†p < .01 *p < .05

Fig. 1. Histogram of Distribution of Identity Conflict Scores for the African American Adolescent Subsample (N=465).

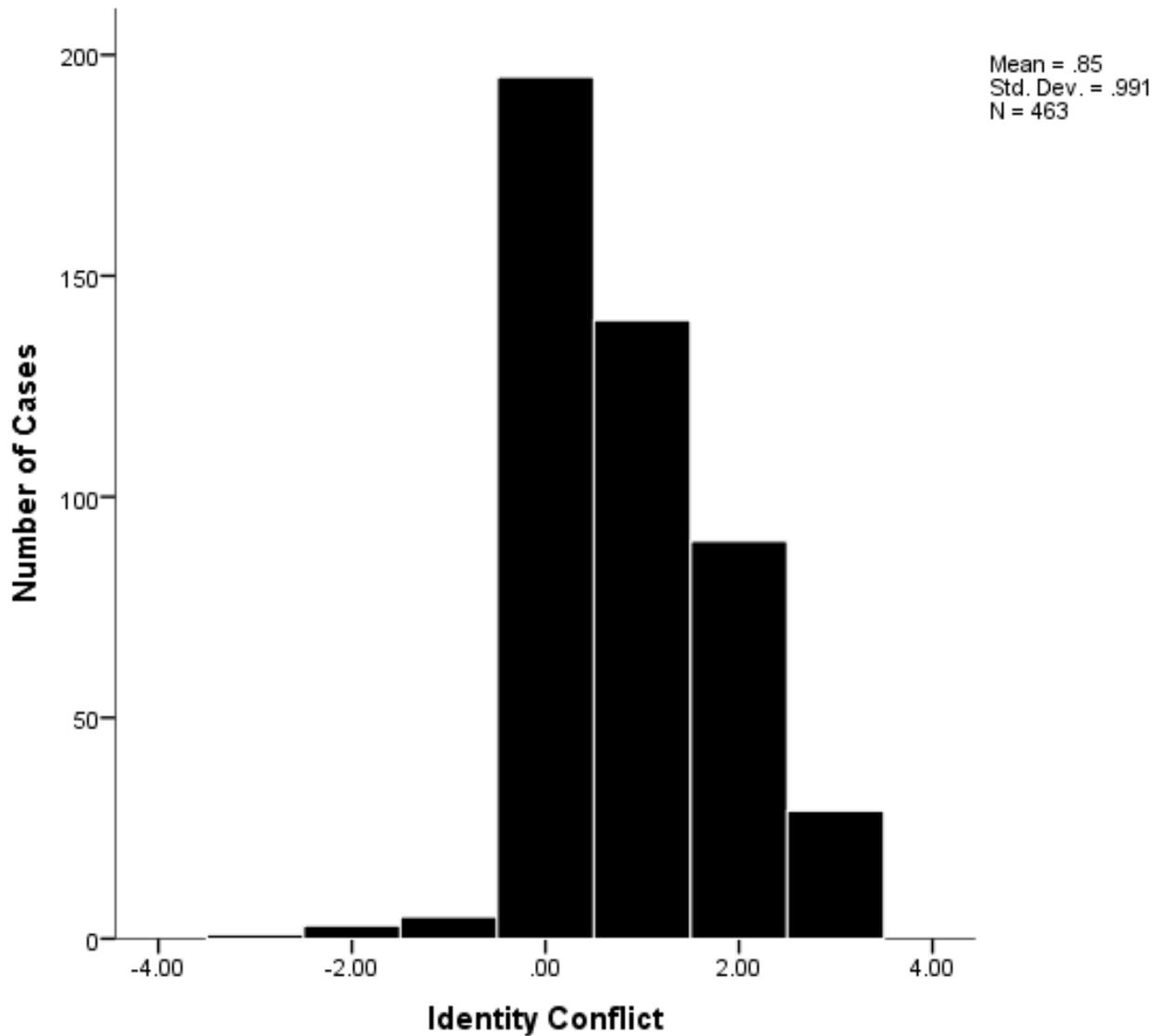


Fig. 2. The Percentage of Variance Explained in Identify Conflict Scores by Black Identity and White Identity Across National Identity Groups.

