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The relationship between perception of physical features, racial identity, and self-esteem of black adolescent females

Carolette Yvonne King

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEPTION OF PHYSICAL

FEATURES, RACIAL IDENTITY, AND SELF-ESTEEM

OF BLACK ADOLESCENT FEMALES.

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

by

Carolette Yvonne King

June 2011

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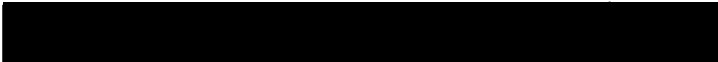Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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by

Carolette Yvonne King

June 2011

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between perception of physical features, racial identity attitudes and self-esteem of Black adolescent females. Thirty-eight Black adolescent females, ranging from 14 to 19 years old, were administered a survey packet including a Demographic Questionnaire, The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, and a shortened version of the 50-item Racial Identity Attitude Scale. Development in adolescence often includes the difficult phase of forming a personal identity, but Black teenagers face additional tasks such as connecting their personal identity development, ethnic identity, and self-esteem in a favorable way to grow into socially capable and emotionally stable adults. Besides just focusing on attaining high self-esteem, Black adolescent females are also attempting to establish an ethnic identity and feel satisfied with their skin color and facial features for overall well-being. Research has shown that Black individuals with a strong racial identity and high self-esteem have a higher level of psychological functioning and adaptation. This study may be helpful in determining possible factors that are

related to Black adolescent females' self-esteem and

racial identity. The findings from this study have

implications for social workers, teachers, and other

helping professionals when helping Black adolescent

females.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to all of those who helped and supported me through this project. I want to especially thank the IRB members, you were all wonderful. I want to give a special thank you to Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, who so graciously agreed to be my faculty research supervisor. I would also like to thank Dr. Jean Peacock, who gave me encouragement, advice and loaned me some great books and articles on my topic, Tim Thelander, who answered every question I could think of about this project without once rolling his eyes, and who also saved me several times when I messed up the formatting, and Ashley Burton, my SPSS tutor who patiently explained everything about data analysis to me, and proof read my thesis. Thanks Ashley, I couldn't have survived without you!

DEDICATION

A very special thank you God for giving me the strength to complete the Master's of Social Work Program and my graduate project even though I wanted to quit on more than one occasion. To my husband and best friend of 20 years, Alfred King and my three children, Asha, Aliyah and Ahmir, thank you for being my cheer squad. Thank you for understanding my long nights, cranky mornings and lack of energy to "hang-out." Please forgive me for not being mentally present at times. This project is dedicated to you, without your understanding and unconditional love I would have never been able to do this. My family means the world to me, and I love you guys with all of my heart and soul.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss how racial identity attitudes and self-esteem may be related in Black adolescent females and will explain why it is an important topic to study to improve social work practice today. Also included in this chapter is an overview of the problem as well as the purpose of the current study.

Problem Statement

Researchers recently began to thoroughly study how racial identity and self-esteem can impact adolescent Black females. A significant amount of research has focused on the ethnic identity and self-esteem of Black males (Blash & Unger, 1995), adult Black females (Boyd-Franklin, 1987), and young Black children (Clark & Clark, 1939). There has been research that focused on adolescent minorities of Mexican descent (Bernal & Knight, 1998), but their struggles cannot always be generalized to other minority groups. There has been a significant amount of research related to minority mental health issues that emphasize various ways in which ethnic identity can impact psychological health and stability,

especially related to skin color issues (Hill, 2002).
There appears to be a shortage of research that
specifically addresses the relationship between
self-esteem and racial identity, and the impact it may
have on the psychological development of Black adolescent
females. Some research also focuses on how complicated
identity formation may become when taking into account
the factors of skin color (Hill, 2002), physical
features, and hair texture (Neal & Wilson, 1989).

Development in adolescence often includes the
difficult phase of forming a personal identity, but Black
teenagers are also faced with the issues associated with
trying to connect their personal identity development,
ethnic identity, and self-esteem in a favorable way, to
insure the likelihood that they will mature into
emotionally secure adults. Besides just focusing on
attaining high self-esteem, Black adolescent females are
also attempting to establish an ethnic identity and feel
satisfied with their skin color and facial features for
overall well-being (Grantham & Ford, 2003). Young Black
females struggle on a regular basis to feel accepted by
Western society. According to Spencer and Marstrom-Adams
(1990), establishing an ethnic identity is difficult for

Black females, and may be even more confounded by factors such as lack of Black culture in families, society's skin color biases, and facial feature preferences. Black females that reside in a dominant Western society, where their culture, dialect, traditions and even skin color and physical features are undervalued can encounter psychological problems (Hill, 2002).

Research has shown that Black individuals with a strong racial identity have a higher level of psychological functioning (Carter, 1991), whereas having a negative racial identity has been associated with eating disorders, teen pregnancy, and other maladaptive psychological issues (Cross, 1991). Black adolescent females often receive detrimental messages about the way they look, which can have a huge impact on their self-esteem. Black women are constantly being told through the media and societal values that they do not represent the dominant culture's standard of beauty: long hair, light skin or blue eyes (Azibo, 1990). In the past, Black women who were of a lighter skin tone and had longer, straighter hair and smaller facial features were more likely to be socially accepted and therefore had access to more opportunities (Keith & Herring, 1991).

Women with features that were considered similar to the African image, like a broad nose and dark skin, were seen as unattractive (Neal & Wilson, 1989), and treated with less respect (Azibo, 1990).

Black adolescent females are flooded on a regular basis with media images that convey to them that their ethnicity is not considered beautiful (Keenan, 1996). Many Black females have a negative self-image and suffer from low self-esteem because through the media and society's messages, they are constantly reminded that they are not good enough, or considered beautiful (Omowale, 1997). According to Grantham and Ford (2003), Black adolescent females struggle with developing a good sense of self and a positive view about their personal worth. If adolescent females have a better understanding of their racial identity and a better understanding of the ingrained beliefs about skin color, it is likely that their self-esteem will improve.

According to Phinney and Chavira (1992), racial identity and self-esteem are positively related, and consequently low self-esteem may result in numerous dysfunctional behaviors that can continue to manifest in adult women.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between perception of physical features, racial identity attitudes and self-esteem of Black adolescent females. Perception of physical features has not been extensively studied to determine their relationship with racial identity and self-esteem in Black adolescent females.

Establishing a racial or ethnic identity is often difficult for Black adolescent females. According to Spencer and Marstrom-Adams (1990), establishing ethnic identity can be harder on adolescent females because of the influences of dominant social values, the conflicts that exist between cultures, and the lack of racial identity that is demonstrated by family members or other adults in their lives.

The aforementioned variables will be addressed through quantitative research methods because they are objective and measure targeted concepts. Quantitative data seems to be more efficient to test specific theories and also helps the researcher to remain separated from the subject to obtain an accurate uninfluenced response.

Thirty-eight Black females between the ages of 14 and 19 years old (Mean = 16, SD = 1.58) volunteered for a study examining perception of physical features, self-esteem, and racial identity. The participants were recruited from two high schools that were located in different socioeconomic neighborhoods. The participants were administered a packet that included an informed consent form, a demographics sheet, two questionnaires, and a debriefing statement.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

Social workers working with Black adolescent females need to be culturally competent and consider racial identity attitudes at the beginning of the assessment stage in therapy. If the therapist is not aware that the teenage client has issues regarding her ethnic identity, skin color, or overall self-perception, this may affect the relationship between the therapist and the adolescent female, and make it difficult to establish a good rapport. Social workers need to be aware of and consider these issues that afflict the Black community in order to properly counsel Black adolescent females. Social workers may be helpful in educating the adolescent female about

racial identity, and helping her confront and address these issues.

The results of this study can provide social workers with clues into factors that are related to racial identity development and self-esteem. It is important to further study this topic to give social workers, teachers, and mental health professionals more knowledge and a clear understanding of what Black adolescent females experience. In addition, it is critical that professionals understand how dominant societal preferences (e.g., skin color, hair, facial features) may be related to the racial identity development and self-esteem of Black adolescent females.

Black females may have a more successful transition during adolescence and may have fewer problems and internal conflicts if the connection between self-esteem, racial identity development, and societal values is better understood. Today, many Black females are dealing with negative self-image as well as low self-esteem surrounding personal identity, racial identity, and skin color prejudice (Powell, 2004). Black adolescent females may present symptoms of depression as they seek to attain

feelings of self-esteem, attractiveness, and belonging in

a predominantly Caucasian society (Brown, 1993).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review was developed to analyze and provide awareness of the relationship between the perception of physical features, racial identity attitudes, and self-esteem of Black adolescent females. Information and resources were collected from internet search engines with articles from professional journals, public libraries, university libraries, and numerous books. The literature review was separated into six relevant sections. The first section discussed identity development in adolescents; the second section discussed identity development specifically in Black adolescent females. The third section addressed racial identity in Black individuals. Section four covers Black adolescent females and self-esteem. Physical features specifically related to Black adolescent females is focused on in section five. The literature review will conclude by focusing on theories that guide thinking and perceptions on this topic.

Identity Development in Adolescence

Adolescence is a time when a lot of changes take place. Teens are dealing with physical, social, as well as mental changes. It is a time when teens begin to consider things like values and morals (Kohlberg, 1981), and attempt to solve problems independently (Piaget, 1965). During this phase, relationships develop and become very important to the adolescent (Erikson, 1968). Subsequently, this can be a confusing time for many adolescents.

Erikson (1968) stated that adolescence is a period of self-examination, when teens compare themselves to friends, and worry about what their peers think and how others perceive them. According to Erikson (1968), adolescent identity formation is a complex process that typically results in a crisis. Erikson (1968) explains that the crisis occurs when the teenager experiences identity issues, and is faced with questions regarding the beliefs, goals and values that they have been raised with. Erikson (1968) stated that adolescents want to develop their own unique beliefs, goals, and values.

Erikson's (1968) main concept was the attainment of ego identity in adolescence. He stated that identity

development is different in each culture, but the achievements within each developmental phase all have several common aspects. For example, in the Black culture, identity occurs within the person as well as within the culture. For Black adolescents to function well in adulthood, the two distinct identities need to be accomplished at the same time (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Chavira, 1992).

Marcia (1980) describes adolescents as being at one of four levels of identity development. The four levels of identity development are diffused, foreclosed, moratorium and achieved. An adolescent that is in the diffused stage is described as not having an identity, and not actively looking for one. An adolescent in the foreclosed stage is described as accepting an identity that was given to them by someone else. Teenagers in the moratorium stage are looking for an identity and considering who they are and where they are going in life. Teenagers in the achieved stage have reached their identity and know exactly who they are and where they are going in life. Research has stated that Black adolescents and other ethnic minority adolescents are more likely to

be in the stage of foreclosure than Caucasian adolescents (Phinney, 1989).

Identity Development in Black Adolescent Females

Black adolescent females are faced with the same issues of being a teenager as any other girl. They also face issues that are specific to their race and culture, such as racism, skin color biases, and developing a strong racial identity (Caldwell, Zimmerman, Bernat, Sellers, & Nataro, 2002). Many Black adolescent females struggle against the harmful messages that the media presents, as well as the damaging images that society depicts (Hall, 1995). Some Black females start to believe these negative images and stereotypes are true, and try to become more like the White images that are shown, whether that occurs by communicating like White people, chemically straightening their hair, trying to lighten their skin through bleaching, or surgically altering their features to appear more Caucasian (Harvey, 1995). This type of camouflaged racism can cause Black teenage girls to abandon their own image, and attempt to imitate and support another image (Boyd-Franklin, 1987).

Many images portrayed in the media that represent Black adolescent females are those of single teen mothers with very low income and a low education level (Robinson and Ward, 1991). The current hip-hop music videos depict Black adolescent females as sexually promiscuous "gold diggers" whose only goal in life is to land a rich man (Ross & Coleman, 2011). These stereotypes can be demeaning, damaging and can annihilate the self-identity and racial identity of Black adolescent girls unless they are given sufficient support.

Racial Identity Development in Black Individuals

The topic of racial identity has been discussed and researched for over 80 years. In 1939, Clark and Clark established the racial preference assessment after the idea of ethnic identity was recognized through the doll study on self-antipathy. Racial identity development literature became very important in understanding the overall development of Black people. Historically, Black people were thought to be uncontrollable, deviant, and dysfunctional savages by White norms (Akbar, 1979; Baldwin, 1984). The dominant society was not taking into consideration racism or oppression (Akbar, 1979).

Black people began to be brainwashed by the dominant society's views and the stereotypes about Black culture (Baldwin, 1984). After a while, they began to detach themselves from their heritage, history, and culture to assimilate with the dominant Western culture (Akbar, 1979; Baldwin, 1984). Many Black people tried to embrace and imitate the characteristics they believed to be White, in hopes of being accepted and successful in the dominant society. They did not realize that they were being self-destructive and committing genocide on their own race (Akbar, 1979; Baldwin 1984).

Cross, Parham, and Helms (1991), said that one of the important aspects of racial identity is to instill in individuals the desire to defend a person from being attacked in a racist society. Racial identity and Black consciousness allowed Black people to define their own culture and stop feeling pressured from White people to define it for them (Akbar, 1979).

Black Adolescent Females and Self-esteem

A limited number of research have examined the connection between self-esteem and racial identity in Black female adolescents (Grantham & Ford, 2003).

Guralnik (1982) defines self-esteem as a person's evaluation of his or her worth in one area or in many areas, based on societal and personal standards. Most of the research about self-esteem with Black adolescents focuses only on troubled (Hay, 2000). There appears to be a deficit of research on the typical Black adolescent. According to Rotheram-Borus, Dopkins, Sabate & Lightfoot, (1996), Black people are not often included in theories of self-esteem because theorists do not think about racial identity as being associated with self-esteem.

In 1997, Phinney and Devich-Navarro studied the ways that minority adolescents adjust to being part of two distinct cultures, their own and the dominant culture. They talked to middle class and working class Mexican Americans and middle class Black adolescents. The study showed that with the Black adolescents, there was no considerable difference between racial identity and self-esteem, however there were several positive correlations between self-esteem and racial identity.

Most of the research on self-esteem and racial identity is inconsistent and limited (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). More research needs to be done in this area, especially on Black adolescent females. All of

the negative images on television and in magazines

suggest that Black culture is inferior and that Blacks do

not measure up to society's standards of beauty and

success. It is possible that many Black adolescent girls

will suffer from low self-esteem and an inadequate racial

identity.

Physical Features and Black Adolescent Females

Ever since slavery skin color bias has existed

(Drake & Clayton, 1945). Slave owners use to have sexual

relations with female slaves against their will (Watson,

2001). White people would treat the offspring of these

slaves better because they had light skin or White

features, which represented White ancestry (Watson,

2001). Light-skinned slaves were priced higher at slave

auctions and given house jobs versus field jobs (Watson,

2001). Light-skinned Blacks or Mulatos (mixed heritage)

were considered to be better than the dark-skinned Black

people. The importance placed on skin color caused a

separation within the Black community (Bond & Cash,

1992). People with lighter skin were thought to be more

attractive and were valued more compared to Black people

with a darker complexion (Watson, 2001). Black people

with light skin have been treated better by both White people and Black people (Hall, 1995).

Sadly, in most societies, girls are expected to be more beautiful and are held to dominant standards of beauty more than boys (Brown, 1983). For Black adolescent females, skin color plays a huge factor in their perception of beauty (Robinson & Ward, 1995). According to Neal & Wilson (1989) and Coard (1997), there have been several studies that examine how skin color biases effect the Black female and hinders her quest for a positive self-esteem and a strong racial identity. Throughout Black history, a lot of emphasis has been on the color of a woman's skin, the texture and length of her hair, and the shape and size of her facial features. These issues have caused many Black adolescent females to adopt and incorporate the dominant society's standard of beauty (Keith & Herring, 1991).

In 1991, Porter did a study on skin color and found that women were more aware of skin color than men. In 2002, Hill found out that darker skinned Black people are more likely to have social disadvantages both inside and outside of the Black community. Hill (2002) also found out that Black females suffered more for having a darker

skin tone. Many Black females feel that skin color is fundamental to their identity. The controversy surrounding skin color is something that often presents in therapy with Black females (Boyd-Franklin, 1991).

Besides skin color being an issue, Black females also deal with the issue of hair. Hair texture that is seen as silky and straight is often referred to as "good hair," whereas if a Black woman's hair is tightly coiled or kinky it is referred to as "bad hair." Puente (2009) reported on the controversial film by Black comedian Chris Rock. Puente (2009) questioned Rock's statement that Black females spend hours at a time and hundreds of dollars to make their hair straighter or silkier to look White or fit in with America's standard of beauty. These types of issues are harmful to the adolescent Black female by sending messages that infer that her natural texture of hair is not considered beautiful.

According to Bellinger (2007), Black females are not succumbing to the historical norms of trying to look White. Bellinger states that Black females change the chemical make-up of their hair to make managing it easier. Regardless of the reasons, research has shown that Black women buy weaves, spend countless dollars on

products to straighten their hair and literally damage their scalp in an effort to "tame the coils" (Puente, 2009).

Black adolescent females are not only faced with issues concerning skin color and hair, but facial feature preference as well. The dominant White society and the media depict women with smaller, keener facial features as being the most attractive. Even when the media does showcase Black females as being attractive, it is common to them with fair skin and a keen nose (Keenan, 1996). According to Lipford-Sanders (1996), many adolescent Black females have reported in studies that they would like to change their facial features, and reported that they felt dissatisfaction with having what they considered a broad nose, or lips that they felt are too big. Being conscious and aware of these issues allows counselors and other helping professionals the opportunity to educate Black females about how to attain a positive racial identity and self-esteem early in their lives.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

There are not many theoretical studies on racial identity in adolescence, and especially on the racial identity development of Black adolescents. Phinney and Tarver (1998), state that for Black teenagers, establishing a racial identity is a part of establishing a personal identity. Theories of racial identity development declare that minority populations have to accept the values and attitudes of the majority population and culture in society and then realize the negative views that the dominant culture holds about the minorities (Azibo, 1983; Cross, 1978; Cross et al., 1991) Cross's racial identity model talks about the theory of "psychological nigrescense." This model is essentially the process of "becoming Black" (Cross et al., 1991). The theory states that there is a process of exploring one's culture and racial identity before racial identity can be obtained.

Helms (1985, 1990) researched the model further and developed more phases to the racial identity development model. Helm's model explains that there are four stages of racial identity. The first stage is called pre-encounter; this is when the person sees the world

from White people's perspective. The person might look at Black culture as inferior to or less than the White culture. People in this stage hold on to the values of the dominant culture, even though they are oppressive to their own culture.

In the second stage, called encounter, the person faces a shocking experience either personally or socially that causes them to re-think their outlook on life. The person begins to wonder and doubt if they were ever treated equally to White individuals. Sometimes the person is left feeling guilt and confusion. From this stage the person moves into the third stage, called immersion-emersion.

People in the immersion-emersion stage are often referred to as militant, because they are very pro-Black and often display anti-white behaviors. The person stops interacting with other cultures and becomes immersed with their own culture. They become fixated with stereotypical Black behavior. In the emersion part of this stage, the person will begin to accept and acknowledge Black culture more realistically. The person knows that there are both negative and positive aspects of Black culture.

Internalization, the final stage, is when the individual is secure, and comfortable being Black. A person in this stage is able to see benefits in all cultures, and stands up against racism for all individuals.

According to Plummer (1996), racial identity attitudes of Black adolescent females are a fundamental component of adolescent personality development theory, and should be studied more extensively.

Summary

This literature review was intended to provide an overview of the published work relevant to the focus of this research project. The literature focused on identity in adolescents in general, as well as identity development in Black teenage girls. Additional literature explained the development of racial identity in Blacks, and issues of self-esteem in Black adolescent females. Some of the literature discussed the issues related to physical features (skin color, hair and facial features) and the implications for Black adolescent girls. The final section explored theories that shaped past research on the topic.

Definition of Terms for the Present Study

Black in this study refers to individuals of the African Diaspora, or any individual who identifies with being Black. This includes bi-racial individuals. The term African American was not used in an effort not to exclude Black individuals such as Haitians, Jamaicans, etc.

Adolescent in this study refers to a person between the ages of 14 and 19 years.

Self-esteem in this study refers to a person's evaluation of his or her worth, based on societal and personal standards.

Racial Identity in this study refers to the attitudes or beliefs a person has about his or her racial or ethnic group.

Physical Features in this study refers to the outward physical characteristics of hair (texture and length), skin color, and facial features (lips and nose).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

Chapter Three describes the research procedures for the present study on the relationship between perception of physical features, racial identity and self-esteem of Black adolescent females. The sample for the study, the instruments, data collection, and the data analysis are also described.

Study Design

This study aimed to examine the relationship between perception of physical features and the self-esteem and racial identity of Black adolescent females. Data were collected using a non-random purposive sampling approach. This approach is very useful for reaching a targeted sample quickly. Quantitative research was utilized for this study because it results in a precise analysis of the targeted concepts. The research question for this study is: Is there a relationship between perception of physical features and the self-esteem and racial identity of Black adolescent females? Specifically, it is hypothesized that, in Black adolescent females:

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perception of physical features will be related to
self-esteem; perception of physical features will be
related to the stages of racial identity attitudes; the
stages of racial identity attitudes will be related to
self-esteem.

Sampling

Thirty-eight Black adolescent females between the
ages of 14 and 19 were recruited mostly from local public
high schools of different socio-economic levels in
Riverside, CA for the study (see Table 1). Flyers were
hung around the schools advertising the opportunity to
participate in the study, and letting participants know
that they will receive a free movie ticket for their
participation. Advisors for the Black Student Union Clubs
were willing to solicit participants during their meeting
times as well. The schools were chosen because of their
large population of Black students in comparison to other
schools in the area.

Written consent was obtained from the school
principals (Appendix A), who were informed about the
study and its purpose prior to the request for consent.
The students were given a letter from the school

principals, along with a permission slip to take home

requesting parent permission to take part in the study,

letting them know who is conducting the research, and

that all information will be kept confidential (Appendix

B). The permission letters also explained that the study

is completely voluntary.

Data Collection and Instruments

Participants were given the following forms:

(a) Demographic Questionnaire with questions about

self-perception of physical features (Appendix C) created

by Lipford-Sanders (1996), (b) Rosenberg Self-esteem

Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965), and (c) the Racial

Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS; Helms & Parham, 1985)

(Appendix D).

The Demographic Questionnaire is a tool that

collects general information such as the participant's

name, age, and grade level, ethnic background, as well as

their perception of physical features. The researcher did

not find any reliability or validity data on this

questionnaire. Through further research, it was

discovered that so far, the tool has only been used by

the instrument's developer (Lipford-Sanders, 1996).

The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES) was designed to measure adolescents' global feelings of self-worth or self acceptance. The RSES, perhaps the most widely used self-esteem measure in social science research, defines self-esteem as having a positive or negative orientation toward oneself and an overall evaluation of one's worth or value. Much of Rosenberg's work examined how social structural positions, such as racial or ethnic statuses, relate to self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

The RSES was originally used with adolescents and has been shown as reliable when used with this population. The latter is the reason this scale was chosen over other self-esteem scales for the present study. This scale has generally high reliability: test retest correlations are typically in the range of .82 to .88. This scale is easy to administer and take. The RSES is a 10-question Likert-type instrument that asks the participant to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with statements. After reverse scoring certain items, the participant's raw score is summed. The highest possible score that a participant can receive is 40; the higher the score, the higher the self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

The Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS;

Helms & Parham, 1985) has been mainly used with Black

populations. The RIAS is a 50-item, 5 point Likert-type

scale with responses that allow for answers from Strongly

Agree to Strongly Disagree. The RIAS measures racial

identity attitudes. According to Helms & Parham (1985),

the RIAS was created to measure Cross's (1978)

Nigrescence model. Various studies have investigated the

reliability of the RIAS. Stevenson (1995) measured

internal consistency for the RIAS; he gave the 50-item

version of the RIAS to 287 adolescents from ages 14 to 16

years old. A principle components analysis was done on

the RIAS to see if it is appropriate with adolescents.

Stevenson found that three factors showed internal

consistency; Pre-encounter, Immersion and

Internalization. Stevenson (1995) stated that the

Encounter stage is an experience, not a developmental

struggle. The original instrument was longer than the

tool used in this study. The researcher removed eight

items from the measurement that were not developmentally

appropriate, overall appropriate, or relevant for

adolescents.

Before completing the questionnaires, the participants were required to read the informed consent (if they were 18 years of age or older) or the adolescent assent (Appendix E) if they were under 18 years of age. After completing the questionnaires, the participants were given a debriefing form. The form reiterated what the study was about, and provided follow-up information regarding the results of the study (Appendix F).

The independent variables examined in this study include the perception of different physical features (e.g. skin color, hair, and facial features). The dependent variables are self-esteem and racial identity. The demographic questionnaire contained both qualitative and quantitative data, however, for this study, only the quantitative data was analyzed. Responses to each item in the RSES were summed to create a total score, and higher scores were indicative of higher self-esteem. In the RIAS, scores were divided into four subscales that represented racial identity stages, with higher scores indicating the participant was more likely to belong to that corresponding stage.

Procedures

Participation was solicited at the high schools through flyers and word-of-mouth. The researcher coded all of the packets with a number prior to data collection, so that participants would not need to put their name on the packets. Participants were administered the survey packet at school during their lunchtime, in the room where the Black Student Union meeting takes place. The participants completed the surveys as they came in, on an individual basis. The packet took approximately 20 minutes to complete, but several teachers agreed to write students a pass if they required additional time. The participants were encouraged to complete all items and raise their hand if they had any questions. They were also assured that there were no right or wrong answers on the questionnaires or surveys, they could choose to skip questions they did not want to answer, and they could stop at anytime.

The researcher was present to administer the packets to the participants. Once the participants were finished, and the packets were returned, each participant received a complimentary movie ticket to a near-by theater.

Protection of Human Subjects

At the end of the data collection procedure, all of the coded forms were put in a locked filing cabinet to ensure confidentiality. Also, the participants were not identified by name; each form was be previously numerically coded. Participants were informed of their confidentiality and details of the study through the informed consent, adolescent assent and debriefing forms (Appendices E and F).

Data Analysis

The scores of all the questionnaires were analyzed to test the research question: Is there a relationship between perception of physical features and the self-esteem and racial identity of Black adolescent females?

The relationship that was examined among the variables is associative. Are there associations between the perception of the physical features of Black adolescent females, self-esteem, and racial identity development? A bivariate analysis was used, because it allowed for using two or more variables. A bivariate

correlation, t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were utilized to test the hypotheses.

Summary

The current study examined the relationship between perception of physical features, self-esteem and racial identity, in Black adolescent females. These relationships were analyzed through data collected on measures of racial identity attitudes, self-esteem, and physical feature perception from a sample of adolescent females in Riverside, California. This chapter explained the research methods, discussed the sample, procedures, instruments, and the process of data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The following chapter will discuss data relevant to the intent of the current study, which is to examine the relationship between perception of physical features, racial identity and self-esteem of Black adolescent females. This chapter will report relevant frequencies, means, and standard deviations, describe the sample statistically, report distribution of scores on the RSES and RIAS and report the significant statistical findings of the study.

Presentation of the Findings

Thirty-eight Black adolescent females between the ages of 14 and 19 years old (Mean = 16, SD = 1.58) participated in the current study. The grade level breakdown of the sample is as follows: 15.8% ninth grade, 28.9% tenth grade, 15.8% eleventh grade, 28.9% twelfth grade. Almost 53% of the female adolescents live with both their father and mother. After screening for outliers, one participant was excluded from the study due to the criteria of 3.5 standard deviations away from the

Table 1. Demographic Information of a Black Adolescent

Female Sample (N = 37)

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
14	7	19.9
15	9	24.3
16	3	8.1
17	7	18.9
18	5	13.5
19	2	5.4
Missing	4	10.8
Location		
JWN HS	18	48.6
MLK HS	18	48.6
Other	1	2.7
Grade Level		
9	6	16.2
10	10	27.0
11	6	16.2
12	11	29.7
Missing	4	10.8

Note: JWN HS = John W. North High School, MLK HS = Martin Luther
King, Jr. High School. These demographics represent the sample with
the exclusion of one outlier.

mean and discontinuous from other scores. The

demographics for the participants included in the study

(N = 37) can be seen in Table 1. In Table 2, the

frequency and percentage breakdown of the independent

variables are listed. The distributions of scores on the

dependent variables are as follows: self-esteem

(M = 32.66, SD = 5.64); pre-encounter stage of racial

identity (M = 1.99, SD = 0.47); encounter stage

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Table 2. Frequencies and Percentages of Participants'

Responses on their Self-Perception of Physical Features

$(N = 37)$

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Small Nose		
No	25	67.6
Yes	10	27.0
Missing	2	5.4
Thin Nose		
No	34	91.9
Yes	1	2.7
Missing	2	5.4
Wide Nose		
No	20	54.1
Yes	15	40.5
Missing	2	5.4
Fat Nose		
No	33	89.4
Yes	2	5.4
Missing	2	5.4
Pointed Nose		
No	35	94.6
Yes	0	0.0
Missing	2	5.4
Big Nose		
No	26	70.3
Yes	9	24.3
Missing	2	5.4
Pretty Nose		
No	25	67.6
Yes	10	27.0
Missing	2	5.4
Nice Length of Hair		
No	8	21.6
Yes	25	67.6
Missing	4	10.8
How Long is Hair		
Short	10	27.0
Medium	14	37.8
Long	7	18.9
Missing	6	16.2

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Does Skin Color Help Get Friends		
No	23	62.2
Yes	3	8.1
Others Think So	6	16.2
It is Silly	5	13.5
Skin Color		
Light	6	16.2
Medium	19	51.4
Dark	9	24.3
Missing	3	8.1
Like Hair with a Perm		
No	25	67.6
Yes	12	32.4

Note: These descriptive statistics represent the sample with the exclusion of one outlier.

(M = 3.11, SD = 0.67); immersion/emersion (M = 2.21, SD = 0.59); internalization (M = 4.03, SD = 0.44).

The following self-perception variables were examined through t-tests in relation to self esteem and racial identity: desire to change skin color (lighter, darker or leave color the same), perception of their nose as small, thin, wide, fat, pointed, big or pretty, perception of having a nice hair length (short, medium or long), and satisfaction with their hair texture without a perm/relaxer (yes or no). Despite previous findings, the current study's findings do not directly support the three hypotheses. Only a limited number of significant

findings were revealed; only the significant findings will be reported.

Girls who thought their noses were wide had a lower mean score on the self-esteem scale (RSES) (M = 30.29) than did other girls (M = 34.26) (t (31) = 2.075, p < .05).

Girls who thought their noses were big had a higher internalization mean on the racial identity attitude scale (RIAS) (M = 4.32) than the other girls (M = 3.92) (t (33) = -2.562, p < .05).

Girls who do not like their hair without a perm/relaxer had a higher pre-encounter mean on the racial identity attitude scale (RIAS) (M = 2.36) compared to other girls (M = 1.68) (t (35) = 3.502, p < .01).

Girls who thought their hair was short had a higher internalization mean on the racial identity attitude scale (RIAS) (M = 4.31) than girls who reported medium length hair (M = 3.87) (t (22) = 3.177, p < .01).

A bivariate correlation demonstrated that there were no significant associations between the dependent variables of self-esteem and racial identity attitudes.

Summary

Chapter Four discussed the data relevant to the intent of the current study, which is to examine the relationship between perception of physical features, racial identity and self-esteem of Black adolescent females. The relevant frequencies, means, and standard deviations were reported along with a statistical description of the population sample. A distribution of the participant scores on the RSES and RIAS were reported, as well as any significant findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter Five includes a discussion of the significant findings of the research study on the relationship between perception of physical features, racial identity and self-esteem of Black adolescent females. This chapter addresses limitations that may have impaired the results of the study, recommendations for additional research, as well as the implications that this study has for the practice and policy of social work.

Discussion

The intent of this study was to examine the relationship between Black adolescent females' perception of and satisfaction with their physical features, self-esteem, and racial identity attitude development.

The hypothesis that perception of physical features would be related to self-esteem was only partially supported. The only significant finding was that girls who described their noses as wide were more likely to report lower self-esteem. This is consistent with

previous literature (Neal & Wilson, 1989) which described

how women with features that were viewed as similar to

the African image, such as a broad/wide nose, were seen

as less attractive. Previous research also revealed how

dominant social values convey images that represent their

standards of beauty, such as Caucasian facial features

(Keenan, 1996), and how adolescent Black females may

suffer from lowered self-esteem as a result (Omowale,

1997).

The hypothesis that perception of physical features

would be associated with stages of racial identity

development was only partially supported. One finding was

that girls who considered their noses to be big were more

likely to be in the internalization stage of racial

identity attitude development. Helms (1985), describes

individuals in this racial identity attitude stage as

secure and comfortable being Black, and able to see

qualities in all cultures. It is possible that in the

Black population, wide noses are viewed differently from

big noses. According to Neal and Wilson (1989), in the

past people were thought to have either "good" features

or "bad" features. Good features were described as a

narrow nose, small forehead, and thin lips; "bad"

features were described as a wide nose, full lips and kinky hair.

Black adolescent females are exposed to reports of music icons like Michael Jackson, Patti Labelle, Lil Kim and actresses like Vivica Fox and Janet Jackson allegedly undergoing cosmetic surgery to alter their African features, and demonstrate this desire for "good" features, which reinforces the idea that African-like features are not attractive enough. A wide nose is a stereotypical African feature (Neal & Wilson, 1989) whereas having a big nose is perhaps more of a general neutral description and may not be viewed as negative. Moreover, other ethnicities have been said to have "big" noses, such as Italians. It may also be possible that girls that reported their noses as big were in the internalization stage because they were comfortable with and accepted their physical features regardless of shape or size.

Another finding was that girls who only liked their hair with a perm/relaxer were more likely to be in the pre-encounter stage of racial identity attitude development. According to Helms (1985), individuals in the pre-encounter stage view the world from the dominant

culture's perspective. These individuals are trying to assimilate to the White culture, and have not accepted their racial identity. American society has often idealized the physical features and characteristics of Caucasian women, such as long, silky hair and compared Black women against the dominant standard of beauty (Greene, 1994).

Black women's straightening of their hair has been associated with many beliefs stemming from over 400 years ago. During slavery, straighter, silkier hair was associated with having White heritage and therefore represented more privileges and opportunities (Byrd & Tharps, 2001). Eventually, it became ingrained and internalized in the Black community that long silky "good" hair was better than shorter, kinkier "bad" hair (Greene, 1994). Caucasian-like hair became synonymous with attractiveness and acceptance.

Taylor (2000) reported that in the 1960's during the Black power movement, Black people challenged the White standard of beauty regarding silky, straight hair. Black people started wearing their natural hair and making statements about their pride and acceptance of their natural beauty. Malcolm X spoke out against the act of

straightening kinky hair, and said it caused shame in Black people about their natural hair (Taylor, 2000). Marcus Garvey spoke out against assimilating to the White standard of beauty and said, "Don't remove the kinks from your hair, remove them from your brain" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001).

Although these efforts were made to increase Black pride and acceptance of kinky, natural hair, Byrd and Tharps (2001), reported that Black women today spend over 225 million dollars a year on hair weaves, hair straightening and other hair care products.

One last significant finding was that girls who reported their length of hair as short were more likely to be in the internalization stage of racial identity attitude development than girls with medium-length or long hair. The internalization stage is the last stage of racial identity development. Individuals in this stage have self-acceptance and feel comfortable with their Blackness. It is possible that girls, who reported their hair as short, have challenged the idea of assimilating to the White standard of beautiful hair as being long, silky and flowing. It is also likely that these girls have recognized that positive, conscious Black women such

as bell hooks, Angela Davis, Zora Neale Hurston and Maya

Angelou wear their hair short, and are choosing to

likewise express their ethic consciousness. Perhaps these

girls are defining their own standard of beauty and are

choosing to wear their own hair rather than sew in

synthetic hair to fit into society's definition of

attractiveness.

Finally, the hypothesis that there would be an

association between self-esteem and racial identity

attitude development was not supported. This could likely

be due to several limitations in the study, which will be

described below. It could also be possible that

self-esteem is not directly related to racial identity

attitudes in Black adolescent females, and self-esteem

and racial identity attitudes are not directly related to

how they perceive their skin color, hair length, hair

texture, and shape of facial features. A girl could have

high self-esteem and a pre-encounter racial identity

attitude, or a low self-esteem and an internalization

racial identity attitude. A girl could show

dissatisfaction with her Black phenotype and still

exhibit high self-esteem, as well as a strong racial

identity attitude, or show satisfaction with her physical

features and exhibit low self-esteem, and low racial identity. This could be due to many reasons, one being that things are changing right in front of our eyes that can influence these factors. For example, since the November 4, 2008 election, the United States of America has gained its first Black President, Barack Obama; self-esteem and racial identity has increased in the Black community as a whole (Fiero, 2008).

President Barack Obama represents a positive ethnic role model, especially to Black youth who often do not see positive Black role models in the media. After the 2008 presidential election, a new phenomenon emerged called The Barack Obama Effect on Men. The hot topic discussed how Black males felt a sense of extreme pride and optimism. Black men reported feeling like there was a change in reality and hope for the future (Fiero, 2008). The effect that the election had on Black females was not addressed. Black females felt proud for the obvious reasons, but also for other not so apparent reasons. Here was this powerful, intelligent, articulate Black man, and on his arm was this classy, intelligent Black woman (Cole, 2009). Michelle Obama was a Black woman that did not fit any of the Black female stereotypes such as

mammies and jezebels that are portrayed in the media

(West, 1995). She was extremely educated, spoke

articulately, and was married to her children's father.

Michelle Obama was the epitome of class. Black females

felt good about themselves when they looked at Michelle

Obama. She did not have light skin, Caucasian facial

features, or "good hair", and the media was referring to

her as beautiful, classy, and intelligent. The love

between the President and the first lady instilled in

Black females a sense of pride and hope for the future

(Hayden, 2009).

Another possibility that there was no relationship

between self-esteem and racial identity might relate to

the fact that Black girls are looking beyond their

physical appearance to find self-satisfaction. The

American Psychological Association's (APA) book, Beyond

Appearance (1999), reports that Black girls draw strength

and self-esteem from their family from a very young age.

The book also discusses how Black girls often base their

self-esteem on academic achievement, maternal

relationship, and their spirituality. In addition, gender

roles in Black families are not as rigid as they are in

Caucasian families, so Black adolescent females typically

do not feel the societal pressure to live up to the norm of femininity, which could be a factor that contributes to a higher self-image (APA, 1999).

Black adolescent females may exhibit internalization racial identity attitudes as a result of many factors not related to their satisfaction and perception of their skin color hair and facial features. Some of these factors include family dynamics and attitudes, inclusion in cultural groups at school or in the community, involvement in church and positive Black role models.

Limitations

There are several limitations in the present study. First, the sample size utilized a small, non-random purposive sample of Black adolescent females from two socio-economically diverse schools. The sample was not equally representative of each population, and a comparison was not conducted.

The second limitation is that the participants were members of each school's Black Student Union. The participant's involvement in the Black Student Union may have put the sample at an advantage for a higher internalization racial identity attitude. The girl's

interest in the club was an indicator that they were well adjusted and had some awareness and appreciation of their racial identity.

The third limitation may be due to the length of the RIAS data collection tool, which included 42 items with a five-point Likert-type scale. The survey may have been too long to hold the attention of the participants, resulting in answers they were not well thought out.

The fourth limitation may have to do with putting the study's full title on the adolescent assent form. This may have possibly revealed the purpose of the study, hereby influencing the participants' responses to the questionnaires. The title of the study included key words, such as influence, self-esteem, and racial identity. Self-esteem may mean something different to Black girls. Participants were heard saying, "Of course I have self-esteem, I respect myself."

Finally, it is also imperative to keep in mind that the researcher is a Black female, with brown skin, and natural, un-straightened hair. These factors may have impacted the participant's attitudes and responses to the questions on the self-perception measure on skin color, hair texture and length and facial features. If

participants felt that the researcher demonstrated high

self-esteem, ethnic pride, and acceptance, it may have

influenced some of the participants to answer the survey

questions in a more socially desirable way. The

researcher-subject similarity is likely a limitation to

the present study.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

In spite of the limitations to the study, the data

presented in this study provide valuable information for

practice, policy, and research in social work. For social

workers who work with adolescent females, it may be

useful to understand that when Black girls present with

low self-esteem, it needs to be viewed differently that

it would with Caucasian adolescent girls. Although the

present study resulted in very few significant findings,

factors such as skin color, hair and facial feature

satisfaction have to still be taken into consideration as

well as the girl's racial identity development.

Black girls may outwardly exhibit, proclaim and

adhere to having high self-esteem even if they feel

differently inside, because it may be all they have;

maybe Black girls do not let themselves have low

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self-esteem. With all the negative messages and depictions regarding Black females in the media, it is important that social workers address these issues with teen girls, discuss the messages they may be getting regarding their gender, race and physical appearance and confront these ideas. Social workers may also be able to provide valuable information and educate the teen girl about racial identity and cultural awareness and the importance it plays in building self-confidence.

Existing research has examined and reported on the issues that plague Black adolescent females regarding skin color biases (Hall, 1992), feeling satisfaction with their hair and facial attractiveness (Bellinger, 2007; Lipford-Sanders, 1996) and establishing a healthy racial identity attitude (Helms, 1990). With this in mind, there are certain school policies in place that negatively affect the self-esteem and racial identity of Black adolescent girls. Many high schools require swimming as part of their physical education curriculum. This policy does not consider the impact that swimming at school can have on Black females. It is an accepted cultural code in the Black community that many Black females do not swim,

and if they do, they prepare in advance by getting their hair "ready."

In the documentary "Good Hair", Andre Harrell, a popular music producer stated that he thinks about hair issues before he will even date a Black woman. He considers factors such as will she go on beach trips or swimming with him on vacations (Flanagan, 2010). Actress Nia Long was quoted in the same film as saying, "A man has to be really special for me to get my hair wet in front of him, showering together could be more intimate than sex" (Flanagan. 2010).

Most Black girls wear their hair chemically straightened, which in the Black community is commonly called a relaxer. A relaxer is made of the chemical sodium hydroxide, which is also called lye. The chlorine in a swimming pool is a mixture of acidic chemicals and ions that are basically made of salt. These chemicals attack the relaxer chemicals, dry the hair out, and ruin the health and luster of the hair. More often than not, hair will break off or shed if not cared for with extreme caution (Flanagan, 2010). Another reason to consider changing this particular school policy is that after swimming, Black girls have the additional dilemma of

trying to manage their hair in the short time between

classes. It is not as easy for a Black girl to groom her

hair once it is wet as it is for girls of other

ethnicities.

Many schools have implemented the dress code policy

that hats or head scarves cannot be worn on campus by

males or females. This particular school policy does not

consider Black females, and the many issues they have

with the appearance of their hair. Schools today do not

take into account the possible impact the rule could have

on Black adolescent female's self-esteem or racial

identity. A common cultural practice is for Black girls

to use hats and scarves as a way to cover their hair on

the days that they may not be able to get it done. Unlike

a lot of their White counterparts, most Black girls do

not have "wash and wear" hair. It often takes hours to

care and groom Black hair.

Consider this: if a Black girl removes her braids on

a Thursday for a Friday evening appointment, but still

has to go to school on Friday, what options does she have

for her hair? The obvious option would be to put on a hat

or a scarf. With this rule in place, many Black girls

will choose to be truant rather than go to school with

their hair un-groomed. Another consideration is if she does go to school, she has to deal with feeling ashamed and embarrassed about her hair, or face possible taunting remarks. Neither of these scenarios are the optimal choice for healthy racial identity development or a positive self-image. These are issues that do not affect the dominant culture, so they are not being considered when school rules and dress code policies are being implemented.

Most schools are addressing the issue of bullying and gang related activities. They develop rules to eliminate the possibility of these actions occurring. One of the recent school rules that has been implemented in many middle schools and high schools states that students cannot cluster in groups larger than three. School administrators are trying to avoid cliques and bullying or "ganging" up on other students. This school policy has different implications for Black students. Black adolescents develop their self-identity differently than White students. Race plays an important role in their psychological development (Tatum, 1999). According to Tatum (1999), as kids move from elementary to middle school and high school, they tend to "hang-out" in their

own racial group. These groups provide Black students with a sense of belonging, unity, identity, and social support. Restricting this act of racial identity development may have a negative impact on Black adolescents (Tatum, 1999).

Recommendations for further research include conducting more studies similar to the current study that utilizes a larger sample group of Black adolescent girls. Further research may also examine the relationship between the girls and their parents, and what type of ideas, messages, and values the girls are receiving regarding physical feature satisfaction, self-esteem and racial identity, as well as factors such as income and demographic location. Previous studies have shown that family variables such as these can influence a girl's self-esteem and racial identity (Harris, 1995). It is also recommended that social work research develop more strength based measures and culturally appropriate research methods and measures to use with Black adolescent females.

Conclusions

Black adolescent female development is multifaceted, and takes into account many variables such as perception and satisfaction of skin color, hair texture and length, perceived attractiveness of facial features, self-esteem and racial identity. While this study attempted to show this relationship, the results were not consistent with prior research. Despite these shortcomings, this study may help in bringing attention to the variety of barriers young Black females encounter while developing as a minority in society.

APPENDIX A

LETTERS OF CONSENT
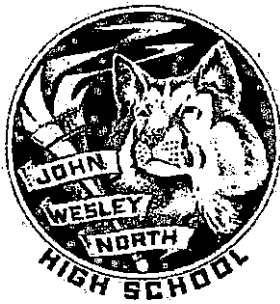
March 18, 2010

Dr. Rosemary McCaslin
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino CA 92407

Dear Dr. McCaslin:

This letter is to endorse the research project of Mrs. Carolette Y. King.
Mrs. King has described the research project to me and I feel that it would be of special interest to our District, teachers, and other helping professionals. As the Principal, I grant permission for her to conduct this research project with the following conditions:

1)   Participation by students is to be strictly voluntary.

2)   Researcher is responsible for informing the parents regarding the project and the

        measures that will be taken to assure confidentiality.

3)   The researcher will obtain written consent from the parents before collecting data.

4)   The researcher will be responsible to inform their participants that the Riverside Unified

        School District has no involvement other than providing this opportunity for the research.

If you have any questions regarding the above authorization, please feel free to contact me at (951) 788-7311.

Sincerely,

Doug Murphy
Assistant Principal
John W. North High School

MARTIN LUTHER KING HIGH SCHOOL

A California Distinguished School
9301 WOOD ROAD • RIVERSIDE, CA 92508
(951) 789-5690 • (951) 789-5692
Fax (951) 778-5680

March 8, 2010

Dr. Rosemary McCaslin
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino CA 92407

Dear Dr. McCaslin:

This letter is to endorse the research project of Mrs. Carolette Y. King.
Mrs. King has described the research project to me and I feel that it would be of special interest to our District, teachers, and other helping professionals. As the Assistant Principal, I grant permission for her to conduct this research project with the following conditions:

1) Participation by students is to be strictly voluntary.

2) Researcher is responsible for informing the parents regarding the project and the measures that will be taken to assure confidentiality.

3) The researcher will obtain written consent from the parents before collecting data.

4) The researcher will be responsible to inform their participants that the Riverside Unified School District has no involvement other than providing this opportunity for the research.

If you have any questions regarding the above authorization, please feel free to contact me at (951) 789-5690, Ext.62203.

Sincerely,

Darel Hansen.
Assistant Principal

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APPENDIX B

PARENT LETTER AND PERMISSION SLIP

April 12, 2010

Dear Parents,

Mrs. Carolette Y. King, a Master's of Social Work student at California State University, San Bernardino and a member of our community will be conducting a research project on the school campus; as school administrator, I grant her permission to conduct this study. She only needs females between the ages of 14 and 19 years old. Mrs. King is interested in examining and understanding how dominant social values such as skin color preference impact the racial identity development and self-esteem of Black adolescent females. All the data collected will be kept confidential. All forms will be coded, and no names, addresses or phone numbers will be requested on forms. If you allow your daughter to participate, this project would help provide research data, and knowledge for teachers, social workers and other helping professionals as it relates to the development of Black adolescents.

If you grant permission for your daughter to participate, please sign the attached consent form and return in the envelope provided. Your daughter can return consent to Mrs. Washington, room # 706.

For your daughter's time and participation, Mrs. King will be giving each girl surveys a free movie ticket voucher.

Sincerely,

Consent Form

THE INFLUENCE OF DOMINANT SOCIAL VALUES

ON THE SELF-ESTEEM AND RACIAL IDENTITY

OF BLACK ADOLESCENT FEMALES

Mrs. King:

I agree to allow my daughter to take part in this project, if she agrees to do so. I understand she will be asked to fill out three different questionnaires. I know that she may choose to stop the research project at any time.

_____   _____
Signature of Parent/Guardian   Date

_____   _____
Daughter's Name

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Questionnaire

Age _____   Grade _____

HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY YOURSELF:
(Check/circle as many as apply)

African American	White American
African	Bi Racial
Negro	Other
Black American	Colored
Black and White	

WHO LIVES IN YOUR HOUSE:
__Father and Mother together
__Mom only
__Mom, grandmother/other relatives
__Daddy only
__Mom & partner not related to me
__Dad & partner not related to me
__One parent and stepparent
__Other

HOW DO YOU CATEGORIZE YOURSELF: (Circle as many as apply)

Pretty	Cute	Unattractive	Good hair
Ugly	Light skinned	Dark brown skinned	Bad hair
Racially Mixed	Medium brown skinned	Big nose	Long hair
Thin nose	Light eyes	Big eyes	Short hair
Dark eyes	Wide lips	Thin lips	Medium hair

1. If you could change your skin color, would it be
   __lighter   __darker   __the same

2. What do you like best about your face? _____

Why? _____

3. If you could change anything about your face what would it be and why? _____

_____

4. I would describe my nose as: (Check all that apply)
   __small   __ thin   __wide   __fat   __pointed   __big   __pretty

5. I have a nice length of hair?   __Yes   __No**   __Short   __Medium   __Long

6. What do you like least about your face? _____
Why? _____

7. Do you have a lot of friends?   __Yes   __No

8. Do you think the color of a girl's skin helps her get friends?
   __Yes   __No   __Other people think so   __It is really silly

9. I would describe my skin color as: __light   __medium   __dark

10. I don't like my hair unless it has a perm in it?   __Yes   __No

Lipford-Sanders, J. (1996). My face holds the history of *my people and the feelings in my heart: Racial socialization and evaluation of facial attractiveness of pre-adolescent African American girls.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Kent State University, OH.

APPENDIX D

RACIAL IDENTITY ATTITUDE SCALE (RIAS) AND

ROSENBERG'S SELF-ESTEEM SCALE (RSES)

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RSES

Circle the appropriate number for each statement depending on whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4
At times I think I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4
I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4
I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	1	2	3	4
I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4
I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

RIAS

This questionnaire is designed to measure people's social and political attitudes. There are no right or wrong answers. Use the scale below to respond to each statement. For each statement, fill in the number on your sheet that best describes how you feel.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Uncertain	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
1. I believe that being Black is a positive experience.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. I feel unable to involve myself in White experiences and am increasing my involvement in Black experiences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I believe that large numbers of Blacks are untrustworthy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I feel an overwhelming attachment to Black people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. I feel comfortable wherever I am.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I believe that White people look and express themselves better than Blacks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I feel very uncomfortable around Black people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. I feel good about being Black, but do not limit myself to Black activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I believe that to be Black is not necessarily good.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. I believe that certain aspects of the Black experience apply to me, and others do not.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. I believe that Black people should learn to think and experience life in ways which are similar to White people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. I believe that the world should be interpreted from a Black perspective.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. I have changed my style of life to fit my beliefs about Black people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. I feel excitement and joy in black surroundings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. People, regardless of their race, have strengths and limitations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. I find myself reading a lot of Black literature and thinking about being Black.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. I feel guilty and/or anxious about some of the things I believe about Black people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Uncertain	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
18. I believe that a Black person's most effective weapon for solving problems is to become a part of the White person's world.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. I believe that everything Black is good, and consequently, I limit myself to Black activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. I am determined to find my Black identity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. I believe that White people are intellectually superior to Blacks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. I believe that because I am Black, I have many strengths.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. I feel that Black people do not have as much to be proud of as White people do.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Most Black people I know are failures.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. I believe that White people should feel guilty about the way they have treated Blacks in the past.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. White people can't be trusted.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. In today's society if Black people don't achieve, they have only themselves to blame.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. The most important thing about me is that I am Black .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. Being Black just feels natural to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. Other Black people have trouble accepting me because my life experiences have been so different from their experiences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. Black people who have any White people's blood should feel ashamed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32. Sometimes, I wish I belonged to the White race.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33. The people I respect most are White.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34. A person's race usually is not important to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35. I feel anxious when White people compare me to other members of my race.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36. I can't feel comfortable with either Black people or White people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37. A person's race has little to do with whether or not he/she is a good person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Uncertain	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
38. When I am with Black people, I pretend to enjoy the things they enjoy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39. When a stranger who is Black does something embarrassing in public, I get embarrassed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40. I believe that a Black person can be close friends with a White person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41. I am satisfied with myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42. I have a positive attitude about myself because I am Black.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT AND ADOLESCENT ASSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which your daughter is being asked to participate is designed to investigate the influence of dominant social values, such as skin color preference on the racial identity development and self-concept/ self-esteem of Black adolescent females This study is being conducted by Carolette King under the supervision of Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Professor of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to explore how dominant social values can influence the self-esteem and racial identity development of Black adolescent females. The results of this study may provide social workers, teachers and other helping professionals knowledge about how a young Black female's self esteem and racial identity can be significantly influenced positively or negatively by dominant culture values; with this knowledge, they might be able to help the adolescent female learn to confront and address these issues and develop a stronger self-esteem and racial identity.

DESCRIPTION: Your daughter will be asked to complete a packet that will include a Demographic Questionnaire that includes questions to better understand self-perceptions, a self-esteem questionnaire, and an Ethnic Identity Attitude Questionnaire.

PARTICIPATION: Participation in this study is voluntary; refusal to participate will not affect her grade in any class. She may discontinue participation at any time. You may look at the questionnaires in advance; a copy will be available in the Principals office.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY: The answers that she gives on the questionnaires and her demographic information will remain confidential. Names are not being collected, and all questionnaires will be coded to ensure confidentiality. Once she completes all forms, the data will be entered into a computer database for research purposes, and the forms filled out will be kept in a locked filing cabinet.

DURATION: The questionnaires should take approximately 30-35 minutes to complete.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. If after completing the questionnaires, your daughter feels that she would like to talk to someone about her feelings resulting from the study, she may contact her school guidance counselor.

BENEFITS: There are no foreseeable benefits to the participants in this study.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about the research and research subject's rights or whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, please contact Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Professor of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (909) 537-5507. rmccasli@csusb.edu

RESULTS: After this study has been completed, results of this study will be published as a Master's Thesis. You can obtain results by contacting the school's Principal.

SIGNATURE: _____ Date: _____

ADOLESCENT ASSENT

Title of Study: The influence of Dominant Social Values on the Racial Identity and Self-esteem of Black Adolescent Females
Investigator: Carolette Y. King
Email Address: *kingc1@csusb.edu*
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Professor of Social Work
Study Contact telephone number: at (951) 537-5507
Study Contact email: rmccasli@csusb.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your parent, or guardian, needs to give permission for you to be in this study. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to, even if your parent has already given permission. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this assent form. You should ask the researcher named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to explore how dominant social values can influence the self-esteem and racial identity development of Black adolescent females.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 50 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?

Your part in this study should take no more than 30 minutes, depending on how fast you complete the questionnaire and surveys.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

Once you have your parent/guardian permission form signed, you will be given questions about yourself and two instruments, one on racial identity development and the other on self-esteem. You will fill out the questionnaire and both surveys, turn them in and get a free movie ticket.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study, but teachers, social workers and other people who help teenagers will be able to use this knowledge to better help Black teenage girls.

What are the possible risks involved from being in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks involved from being in this study.

How will your privacy be protected?

You do not have to put your name on the questionnaire or survey. This study is completely confidential, which means nobody will know what you answered on the forms. The questionnaires and surveys will be coded with a number. After I put all the data into a computer the forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will be receiving a free movie ticket for taking part in this study.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, complaints, or concerns, you should contact the researcher listed on the first page of this form or her faculty advisor.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board at (909) 537-7588.

- -

Title of Study: The influence of Dominant Social Values on the Racial Identity and Self-esteem of Black Adolescent Females

Principal Investigator: Carolette Y. King

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____   _____

Marl an X if you agree to be in the study   Date

APPENDIX F

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

The Influence of Dominant Social Values on the Self-esteem/
Self-Esteem and Racial Identity Development of Black Adolescent Females

Debriefing Statement

All teenagers have to one day find their personal identity, but Black teenagers have to connect their personal identity development, ethnic identity development and self-esteem in order to grow up and function as stable adults in society. Black teenage girls have it even harder. They have to deal with establishing an ethnic identity, showing that they have high self-esteem, and showing that they are happy with their skin color.

The forms you have just completed were to help the researcher study the association between racial identity, skin-color and facial feature perceptions and self-esteem in Black teenage girls. The personal questionnaire asked general questions that most researchers ask in addition to 10 questions about how you feel about your skin color, facial features and hair. The Ethnic Identity questionnaire asked questions about how you feel about being Black. The Self-Esteem questionnaire asked questions to assess how you feel about yourself and your worth.

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Professor of Social Work at (909) 537-5507. If you would like to obtain a copy of the results of this study, please contact the school after September 2011.

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