

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND CRIME, LAW, AND JUSTICE

REEXAMINING THE LINK BETWEEN AFRICAN AMERICAN RACIAL
IDENTITY AND WELL-BEING

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Fall 2013

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in Science
with honors in Sociology

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ABSTRACT

For many African Americans, race is a substantial part of their self-definition, but not uniformly so. Understanding how well-being is influenced by the importance Black Americans place on their racial identity has been a key aim of psychology research over the last several decades. Most of this research has relied on adolescent samples, often from a limited geographic area. Using a nationally representative sample of African American adults, respondents to the 2010 General Social Survey, the present study reexamines this question. My results show that racial identity interacts with some sociodemographic variables as they influence certain dimensions of well-being, suggesting that racial identity may serve as a source of solidarity among lower-status Black Americans. However, there are no significant overall associations between the importance Black respondents place on racial identity and their happiness, health, financial satisfaction, or social trust. These findings call into question arguments against transracial adoption and claims that race must be “cultivated” in African Americans to maximize their well-being.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to my thesis advisor, Dr. Marylee Taylor, for her unfailing and constant support during this entire process. Nearly two years removed from our initial conversation, I am astonished at the sheer volume of time she has dedicated to assisting me between then and now, whether describing how to broadly frame an empirical study or patiently editing (and re-editing) countless pages of prose and tables. By guiding rather than dictating, she not only helped me learn the science behind the statistical tests but also allowed me to make this project truly my own. I would also like to thank my three beautiful biracial sisters—Denise, Sarah, and Laura—for being the catalyst behind this experience. From the beginning, this thesis has been an attempt to better understand one of the few facets of their identities we do not have in common. If nothing else, I hope they will see this journey as an attempt in empathy, that I might both share in their struggles and fully realize their opportunities to overcome.

Chapter 1

Introduction

While many ethnic groups in the United States have experienced discrimination and oppression, the extent to which the humanity of African Americans was legally denied makes their experiences unique. As they were brought to the United States against their will and deprived of full access to their indigenous culture, they were not given the choice of whether to assimilate fully into American society or retain their ethnic roots. Rather, they had to suppress their African heritage, their lifeblood, and adapt as best as possible to this new land.

Not all African Americans reacted in the same manner. Some focused on social traditions like religion and music, others revolted or attempted to escape, while many simply shut down and despaired. These divergent approaches show that from the dawn of slavery in the New World, the experience of African Americans has not been uniform. Not only have their forms of struggle been distinctive from those of other races. Also, there is variability from one individual to the next that has profound implications for how members of this group relate to and derive meaning from the world around them.

Because of historical oppression and continuing discrimination, race has played a very important role in African American life. As the experiences of African Americans can be quite heterogeneous, the qualitative meanings each person associates with belonging to this racial group may vary. Individuals differ not only in how important the concept of race is in their lives,

but in what it means to be Black.¹ Some view their race as a primary characteristic in defining who they are, while others see it as only one of many facets of their identity.

Understanding the effect of one's racial identity on other facets of life has been a key aim of psychology research in recent decades. A significant body of work has claimed a link between strong racial identity and measures of well-being. Within the African American community, the racial identity/well-being relationship is widely believed to exist. Some researchers, however, have empirically questioned this association. Assessing the relationship between racial identity and well-being could have far-reaching implications, as many groups and institutions operate under an unexamined assumption that this relationship is strong and positive. For example, critics of transracial adoption often argue that the racial identity of Black children growing up in a White household will be compromised, leading to negative consequences. Entities like "culture camps" seek to rectify this problem by provide a space for adopted children to discover their heritage through games, language exercises, and traditional foods.

The goal of the present paper is to examine the identity/well-being relationship from an angle that differs substantially from the previous body of work. Not only is my data more recent than that used for the majority of published papers on the subject; it encompasses a broader definition of well-being than many and comes from a nationally representative sample of adults. In contrast, most research on identity and self-esteem has focused on adolescents from the same or nearby schools. Before the results of my study are introduced, a brief history of racial identity research and the different models used to examine and operationalize racial identity development

¹ A word is in order about use of the terms "Black" and "African American." Previous researchers (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) have defined "Black" as a relatively ambiguous term that represents an African American's own interpretation of who is Black, while referring to "African American" individuals as those who trace their roots back to the African slave trade and received a significant portion of their socialization in the United States. In this paper, however, no distinction is made between the two terms; they are used interchangeably.

will be outlined. Then, an overview of previous research on the outcomes of racial identity will be introduced. Next, the methodology of this study will be described. At that point the results will be presented. In conclusion, this paper considers the implications of viewing strong racial identity as a positive, neutral, or negative aspect of the Black self.

1.1 Brief History of Racial Identity Research

Racial identity is defined as the significance and meaning African Americans attach to race in defining themselves (Sellers et al., 1998). Most early attempts to understand Black racial identity stemmed from one of two sets of issues and assumptions. The first centered on understanding how rapport was built in the psychotherapy process. White counselors of the Civil Rights Era found it difficult to relate to their Black clientele, given the particularly strained racial relations of the time. Early researchers (e.g., Jackson & Kirschner, 1973; Vontress, 1971) gave empirical credibility to this struggle, finding that African Americans showed near-unanimous preferences for Black as opposed to White counselors. They also found significant differences among subgroups of Black adolescents in the strength of their preference for counselors of African descent. Specifically, youths who identified as “Black” or “Afro-American” preferred counselors of African descent significantly more than those who regarded themselves as “Negro” (Jackson & Kirschner, 1973). These variations in self-designation led to a more thorough study of Black identity and the introduction of different models to better represent it.

The second body of psychological research on African American identity was founded on the idea that African Americans must have a self-deprecating view of themselves. This was based on the “reflected appraisal” perspective, which argued that individuals’ sense of self is

largely derived from the way others view them. It was thus assumed that African Americans suffered from self-hatred and had low self-esteem because of their stigmatized status in society.

Instead of developing measures of self-esteem to assess whether African Americans actually suffered from self-hatred, researchers resorted to studies which compared Black and White children's preferences for dolls of their own skin color over another. When Black children didn't choose black dolls as frequently as White children chose white dolls (Clark & Clark, 1950), Black children were said to suffer from low self-esteem. Though these studies were done on children, the results were extrapolated to include the adult population. Another problem is that the White children's preferences were considered the ideal against which the Black children's preferences were measured. One could just as easily make the argument that Black children's lack of choosing one skin color over another is the ideal which White children should live up to.

In the late 1960s, studies that better measured self-esteem provided evidence that African Americans do not suffer from low self-esteem as previously thought. In fact, African American children often reported higher levels of self-esteem than their White peers. This eroded the notion that "reflected appraisal" governed Black self-esteem. With the rise of the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans became more concerned with defining how they were portrayed in society. Whereas previous attempts to understand African American identity focused on understanding their presumed self-hatred, research during this time reconceptualized racial identity as a testament to African American resilience in the face of oppression. Thus, a substantial body of research focused on the process by which a psychologically-enslaved "Negro" identity could be transformed into a healthy "Black" identity.

1.2 Frameworks and Models of Racial Identity Development

As racial identity research increased in the 1990s, there were notable inconsistencies in the literature. These disparities were understood as reflections of two contrasting frameworks that differed in their approach to studying the psychological experiences of African Americans on multiple levels. Most studies have focused on African American racial identity within the context of the group's oppressed status in society, without taking cultural forces into consideration. This outlook has been called the *mainstream* approach (Constantine, Richardson, Benjamin, & Wilson, 1998; Sellers et al., 1998) and seeks to apply universal factors of racial identity to the African American racial group. It focuses on the affective, behavioral, and cognitive processes that Blacks experience on the path to achieving a healthy racial identity (Constantine et al., 1998). This is contrasted to the *underground* approach, which focuses on the uniqueness of African Americans' oppression and cultural experiences. This perspective puts forth the claim that, despite the oppressive experiences African Americans face, there are positive cultural influences that can assist them in the formation of a healthy self-image without having to first devalue their ethnic group (Constantine et al., 1998). It is called "underground" because research and theories examining identity from this angle have received considerably less attention from the broader psychological community.

Mainstream Approach to African American Racial Identity

This section and the one following provide a summary and review of the most influential models and theories guiding racial identity research. In the early 1970s, numerous stage models were proposed to describe the process of transformation from "Negro" to "Black" (e.g. Thomas, 1971; Cross, 1971; Jackson, 1975). While many of these were introduced to describe the unique

structural and cultural experiences associated with becoming Black in the United States, and would thus be categorized as *underground*, they have been adapted to include other groups and are more frequently used in this manner (Sellers et al., 1998). Cross recognized the similarity among these models and labeled them *Nigrescence* models (1978). Cross' early theories promoted the notion that healthy racial identity development is achieved when Blacks progressed through a series of stages—from a self-hating “Negro” identity to a self-healing and culturally affirming “Black” identity (Marks, Settles, Cooke, Morgan, & Sellers, 2004)—but empirical research provided evidence to the contrary. Not only was it shown that Blacks' self-esteem is not lower than Whites, researchers also demonstrated that Black self-esteem does not change dramatically over the life course. Because of this, Cross withheld self-esteem from revised versions of his model and now defines Nigrescence as the transformation from a preexisting (non-Afrocentric) identity into one that is Afrocentric (Cross, 1991; Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001).

Cross' revised theory consists of five stages: Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment. In the Pre-Encounter stage, individuals pay little attention to race and focus on their membership in other groups more strongly. They have internalized the beliefs and values of the dominant culture and seek to assimilate and be accepted by it. At some point in time, though, a specific experience causes individuals to challenge their previously held racial attitudes and acknowledge the impact of racism on their lives. The impetus is typically an act of overt racism, though it can be a positive event. Here, individuals are forced to focus on their identity as members of a stigmatized group. In the Immersion/Emersion phase, individuals immerse themselves in Black culture and feel resentment towards White people. Despite this, they have still not fully committed to a Black

identity. In the internalization stage, individuals learn how to balance their Blackness with other group memberships. They show less animosity towards White people and their pro-Black attitudes become more expansive, often including other oppressed groups. The final stage is psychologically similar to the fourth stage, but represents a shift in individuals' actions. Here, individuals make a conscious commitment to translate their personal sense of Blackness into action in accordance with this new self-image.

Phinney's (1990, 1992) conceptualization of ethnic identity focuses on universal processes that are applicable across a variety of groups. She de-emphasizes the aspects that might make an ethnic group distinctive, such as diverse experiences or a unique history, focusing instead on the similarities across ethnic groups so comparisons can more easily be made. She delineates four aspects of ethnic identity as universal. First, she claims individuals must refer to themselves as a member of the ethnic group in question in order for their attitudes to be relevant. Next, she attaches significance to the degree one partakes in social activities and cultural traditions with his or her ethnic group. A third aspect of her model captures the attachment and sense of belonging individuals feel towards their ethnic group. Her fourth component stresses the idea that ethnic identity is dynamic, and one's ethnic identity is a reflection of the identity stage the person is in at the time.

In addition to her universal approach to studying racial identity, Phinney has also proposed a developmental model. She outlines three distinct identity stages that occur during adolescence: diffuse/foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved. The first stage describes individuals who have little understanding of their ethnic or racial identity. Their views are often those expressed by their families, and they have yet to question or explore their identity. Individuals who are actively searching for meaning in their ethnic group identity, yet have not chosen a

particular one, are classified in the moratorium stage. Finally, individuals who have found an ethnic identity they embrace are described as having an 'achieved' identity.

Underground Approach to African American Racial Identity

As previously stated, the underground perspective recognizes the specificity of African American racial identity. Describing what it means to be Black through identity profiles that outline individuals' attitudes and beliefs about racial identity has been a key focus of this research. While these profiles may differ in the wake of a nurturing sociocultural environment or in different stages of development, an optimal position in the spectrum of attitudes and beliefs regarding racial identity is clearly stated.

One of the early underground approaches was proposed by Baldwin in the early 1980s (1980, 1981). He introduced a conceptual model in order to better characterize the structure and nature of Black personality (1985). This perspective described the Black personality as having two core components that were similar across all African people: the African Self-Extension Orientation and African Self-Consciousness (ASC). The African Self-Extension Orientation is an innate, unconscious psychological disposition that organizes and provides both coherence and spirituality to the behavior and psychological functioning of African Americans (Constantine et al., 1998). The second component, African Self-Consciousness, is the conscious expression of the African Self-Extension Orientation (Baldwin, Brown, & Rackley, 1990). Baldwin proposes that ASC is transmitted genetically via melanin, but also argues that conscious elements are present which vary based on the experiences of the individual. When African Americans are raised in a nurturing environment that affirms African beliefs and values, he argues, ASC becomes synonymous with African Self-Extension Orientation. When the environment does not

affirm these beliefs and values, ASC and African Self-Extension Orientation are asynchronous, leading African Americans to exhibit variation in their worldviews and approaches to life.

African Self-Consciousness (ASC) carries with it a set of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The extent to which a person of African descent exhibits these characteristics provides a measure of one's ASC. Baldwin argues that a healthy ASC is acquired when the individual's beliefs are harmonious with the specific beliefs and behaviors deemed essential to the African Self-Extension Orientation. He posits four basic characteristics: 1) recognition and appreciation of one's African cultural heritage, identity, and history; 2) the placement of African survival and proactive development as the individual's first priority; 3) the desire to actively perpetuate all things African; and 4) acknowledgement of the detrimental nature of racial oppression and active resistance against it. One of Baldwin's primary contributions was that he provided a basis for African Americans to reconnect with their African origins. He also stressed the importance of African heritage to buffer the effects of racism and oppression.

In the late 1980s, Thomas Parham recognized that most of the studies on racial identity were limited by virtue of their reliance on adolescent and college student samples. He re-conceptualized Black racial identity development as occurring throughout one's life and divided the process into three phases: Late Adolescence/Early Adulthood, Middle Adulthood, and Late Adulthood (Marks et al., 2004). In the Late Adolescence/Early Adulthood phase, one is concerned mostly with activism and the outward appearances of "Blackness" (e.g., choice of friends or books). As one progresses into Middle Adulthood, increased responsibilities and opportunities shift one's attention towards institutional issues. One area where this might surface is the individual's choice to join an organization that advocates for racial justice. The Late

Adulthood phase is characterized by reflection. Here, African Americans think about their role as a Black person and their contributions to society.

Parham, operating under the original premise of applying the Nigrescence models to indicate the uniqueness of the African American experience, also introduced a new way to conceptualize progression through identity development stages. While it was previously assumed that individuals moved in a strictly linear fashion from Pre-Encounter to Internalization-Commitment, Parham proposed two alternative pathways: stagnation, and recycling (Marks et al., 2004). Stagnation occurs when individuals remain in a particular stage of identity for an extended period of their lives. Recycling is a regression to a previous stage of identity development, usually sparked by a specific event that forces individuals to rethink previously held beliefs about their identity. For obvious reasons, the Pre-encounter stage is generally excluded from this discussion.

Multidimensional Approaches

It is clear that the mainstream and underground approaches view racial identity through different lenses and differ in the types of research questions they ask as well as their methodology. They also each contain limitations and shortcomings. The mainstream approach often receives criticism for over-generalizing identity development and representing it in only linear terms. On the other hand, the underground perspective is frequently thought to lack significant discussion about how racism may shape the experiences and perspectives of African Americans (Constantine et al., 1998). More recently, researchers have conceptualized racial identity as multidimensional in an attempt to paint a fuller picture of African American racial identity. One of the most prominent researchers in this area, Sellers, attempts to synthesize the strengths of mainstream and underground perspectives in his Multidimensional Model of Racial

Identity (MMRI) (see Sellers et al., 1998). He proposes four dimensions as part of this model: *salience*, *centrality*, *ideology*, and *regard*. Salience refers to the significance of individuals' racial identity as a part of their self-concept at a particular moment in time. Centrality also captures the significance of race, but portrays the extent to which individuals' race is an important part of their self-concept over time. Racial ideology and regard tap into the meaning of race. Racial ideology reflects individuals' beliefs about how Blacks should act in society. Sellers proposes four ideological philosophies which emphasize or de-emphasize the uniqueness of African descent and other oppressed minorities. Racial regard has two dimensions: private regard and public regard. Private regard encapsulates an individual's feelings, whether positive or negative, about being an African American. Public regard, on the other hand, refers to how African Americans think society views them.

1.3 Previous Studies Linking Racial Identity and Measures of Well-being

Both positive and null associations between racial identity and well-being have been documented in contemporary research. The significance (or lack thereof) of these relationships varies among the different dimensions of identity. For multiple ethnic minorities, higher racial centrality has been related to higher self-esteem (Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000; Kiang, Yip, Gonzales-Backen, Witkow, & Fuligni, 2006; Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998; Ryff, Keyes, & Hughes, 2003; Umaña-Taylor, 2004). Individuals who attach more significance to their racial identity also demonstrate higher qualities of life², a key indicator of well-being (Utsey, Chae, Brown, & Kelly, 2002). Research has also noted positive psychological outcomes as a

² QOL is a construct aimed at determining individuals' perception of their position in life in relation to their goals, concerns and expectations, while taking cultural standards and values into account. It encompasses four domains: physical, psychological, social, and environmental (Utsey, Bolden, Brown, & Chae, 2001).

result of increased identification with one's minority group (Major, Spencer, Schmader, Wolfe, & Crocker, 1998; McKenna & Bargh, 1998). More recently, a study claimed a link between racial centrality and happiness (Yap, Settles, & Pratt-Hyatt, 2011). Specifically, this study found that for women alone, the importance of racial identity is positively related to happiness among those that are close to other Blacks. However, there have been exceptions in which no relationship was found (e.g. Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003).

Likewise, the relationship between public regard and well-being exhibits mixed patterns. While some studies have found an inverse relationship between public regard and depression (Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Yip, Sellers, & Seaton, 2006), other studies have failed to document significant relationships (Sellers et al., 2006; Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, and Smith, 1998; Rowley et al., 1998). Researchers have also found that private regard is consistently related to positive psychological outcomes, including less stress, depression, and distress, and higher self-esteem (Rowley et al., 1998; Sellers et al., 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). To summarize, private regard seems to be strongly related to well-being while findings for centrality and public regard are mixed, often indicating a positive relationship, but sometimes finding none at all.

Using the responses of a representative sample of African Americans, this research focuses on the importance of Black racial identity. More precisely, I ask whether racial centrality among African Americans is indeed related to well-being, and whether that relationship is moderated by other variables.

Chapter 2

Method

Participants

All data for this study come from the 2010 General Social Survey (GSS). General Social Surveys are fielded biannually to chart attitudes and demographic characteristics of adults (18 years of age and older) in the United States. Conducted by the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago, the GSS is second only to the U.S. Census as the most frequently analyzed dataset in the social sciences (Smith, 2008). The survey is carried out as a face-to-face, 90 minute interview of adults chosen via stratified, multi-stage probability sampling in order to obtain a representative sample of the adult population in the US. Some 4901 respondents were included in the 2010 survey. Of those, 226 were coded³ or self-identified as Black and provided responses to the question that is key to this research. The response rate for the 2010 General Social Survey was 70.3% as indicated in the GSS Cumulative Codebook.

Measures

Importance of Racial Identity. Importance of Racial Identity has been measured in many different ways. The 2010 GSS data contain one central question explicitly related to racial identity—“How important is your racial identity to you?” Responses ranged from “very important” to “not at all important.”

Well-being. Perceived life quality is an important dimension of well-being (Zhang, 2010). Perceived life quality refers to one’s satisfaction with life and his or her life happiness. It

³ Researchers only coded an individual’s race without asking if there was no doubt in their mind.

also encompasses domains outside psychology, such as physical health and social relationships (Utsey et al., 2002). The 2010 GSS data measure multiple dimensions of well-being. Happiness, Marital Happiness, and Zest for Life (finding life exciting versus dull) were standardized and their average was taken as a measure of *Overall Happiness*.⁴ Cronbach's alpha equals 0.69. *Health* was assessed with a single measure of self-reported health. In a similar manner, *Financial Satisfaction* was gauged with a single measure of self-reported financial satisfaction. *Social Trust* is a scale, the average of standardized responses to questions about whether others are generally good and trustworthy. The variables Helpful, Trust, and Fair comprise the scale, which has an Alpha of 0.473.⁵

Sociodemographic characteristics. Sociodemographic characteristics included *Age* (measured in years), *Family Income* (on a 25-point scale), *Occupational Prestige* (assessed with the Hodge-Siegel-Rossi index), *Education* (measured in years), *Female* (gender, with female coded 1, male coded 0), *South* (region, with South coded 1, non-South coded 0), and *Married* (marital status, with currently married coded 1, not currently married coded 0). *Subjective Social Class* is a scale, the average of standardized values of one's perceived Relative Financial Status (from far above to far below average) and self-reported Social Class (on a four-point scale from "upper" to "lower").

Auxiliary Social Psychological Variable. *Closeness to Blacks*, the degree to which individuals feels close to other African Americans, was included as an auxiliary measure, in order to examine whether or not it moderated the relationships between Importance of Racial

⁴ Scale values were computed for all subjects who provided responses to at least one of these questions.

⁵ This scale is widely used in social science research and will be used in this study even though the Alpha is modest.

Identity and the various measures of well-being, as claimed in the earlier-cited work of Yap and Settles (2011).

Appendix A contains question wording for dependent and independent measures, sociodemographic variables, and the auxiliary social psychological variable. Appendix B reports descriptive statistics for the same measures. Correlations among the well-being measures that serve as dependent variables in this study are presented in Appendix C, and correlations among the sociodemographic variables in Appendix D.

Plan for Analysis

After presentation of the percentage distribution for responses to the Importance of Racial Identity question, correlations are used to assess the relationships between Importance of Racial Identity and the eight sociodemographic dimensions named above.

With this background, I turn to the central question examined here: Does the importance given by African Americans to their racial identity predict their level of well-being? Each well-being measure was regressed on Importance of Racial Identity, first as the sole predictor, then controlling for the sociodemographic variables. The interaction between Importance of Racial Identity and each sociodemographic variable was also assessed.

Finally, following up on the findings of Yap and Settles (2011), Closeness to Blacks and its interaction with Importance of Racial Identity were added to the regression model.

Chapter 3

Results

Of those African Americans who were asked how important their racial identity was, 59.7% responded that it was very important and 27.4% responded it was somewhat important. On the other hand, only 5.3% stated it was not very important and 7.5% responded that it was not important at all. The percentage distribution clearly shows that the vast majority of African Americans consider their racial identity at least somewhat important to their self-concept.

Relationships with Importance of Racial Identity. Table 1 shows the correlations of Importance of Racial Identity with the eight sociodemographic variables.⁶ Significant relationships ($\alpha = .05$) were found for Age and Family Income. Older people are more likely to have a strong racial identity, perhaps due to the racially-charged times many of them grew up in. The numerous events of the Civil Rights Era, especially the Black Power movement, likely served as a catalyst which impressed upon African Americans the importance of being Black as they sought to end segregation. Respondents with higher incomes also said their racial identity was more important to them. A stronger racial identity may contribute to a stronger sense of self that is more effective at helping individuals cope with stress and positively define reality, thereby ultimately making them more successful.

Regression of Overall Happiness on Importance of Racial Identity and Sociodemographic Controls. Table 2 reports results from the regression of Overall Happiness on Importance of Racial Identity. For Model 1, Importance of Racial Identity is the only predictor, while Model 2 adds the eight sociodemographic controls. Importance of Racial

⁶ All tables can be found at the end of the chapter.

Identity is not a significant predictor of Overall Happiness in either of these models (Model 1 $b = .042$, *ns*; Model 2 $b = .011$, *ns*). Model 2 does indicate that males ($b = -.185$, $p < .05$) and those with higher income ($b = .020$, $p < .05$) have significantly higher levels of Overall Happiness than their female and economically disadvantaged counterparts. The relationship between higher income and increased happiness has been well documented worldwide, though recent research indicates the relationship is logarithmic and not linear (i.e. small amounts in monetary gain yield relatively large increases in happiness) (Sacks, Stevenson, & Wolfers, 2012). When the entire GSS sample for respondents of all races is analyzed, the income relationship with happiness is evidenced, but the gender relationship is not nearly as strong.

An examination of the individual components of the Overall Happiness scale reveals that women have higher Happiness than men and near equal Marital Happiness, but their Zest for Life is lower. Perhaps men are more easily excited by life, or women are less likely to have stimulating jobs. A nearly significant positive coefficient was found for Marital Status ($b = .178$, $p < .10$), indicating that married people were happier than their unmarried counterparts. This is as expected, especially because the unmarried category included those who were widowed, divorced, and separated.

Regression Analyses with Health. Table 3 reports coefficients from regression analyses parallel to those represented in Table 2, but with Health as the outcome variable. Here, Importance of Racial Identity is nearly a significant predictor of Health in Model 1 ($b = -.136$, $p < .10$), but the effect disappears in Model 2 when the control variables are inserted ($b = -.088$, *ns*). Because the relationship in Model 1 suggests that those whose racial identity is more important to them have worse health, and Table 1 indicates these individuals are generally older, the effect seen for Model 1 is more likely an age effect than one related to racial identity, as

health is known to deteriorate with age. As one would predict, this effect is eliminated when Age is controlled in Model 2. In fact, adding Age as the only control was sufficient to bring the effect down below the criterion for significance. Model 2 also indicates those with higher levels of education ($b = .077$, $p < .05$) and those who view themselves as having higher social class standing ($b = .180$, $p < .05$) are healthier. There is a nearly significant relationship linking higher income with better Health as well ($b = .021$, $p < .10$). Two possible explanations are that those with higher social class standing and those with more money are likely to be able to afford better health care and to have healthier diets.

Regression Analyses with Financial Satisfaction. The regression reported in Table 4 shows coefficients for various predictors of Financial Satisfaction. While Importance of Racial Identity does not have a significant effect (Model 1 $b = .090$, *ns*; Model 2 $b = .070$, *ns*), there is a clear and significant link between Subjective Social Class and Financial Satisfaction ($b = .554$, $p < .001$). The relationship indicates that people who perceive themselves to be of higher social class standing are more satisfied with their financial situation. While this relationship is to be expected, it is interesting to note that none of the objective measures of socioeconomic status—Family Income, Education, or Occupational Prestige—yielded significant results. To check whether the null coefficients for the objective measures were merely a function of collinearity suggested by their intercorrelations, three separate regressions were run with only one of these variables inserted each time. In all three cases, the objective measure was not significant. This supports the hypothesis that individuals' subjective interpretation of their class standing compared to others is more important than their actual socioeconomic level.

Regression Analyses with Social Trust. Various predictors of Social Trust are examined in Table 5. While Importance of Racial Identity is not a significant predictor of Social Trust with

or without the control variables (Model 1 $b = .012$, *ns*; Model 2 $b = .016$, *ns*), there is a significant relationship between Age and Social Trust ($b = .004$, $p < .05$). Those who are older have more positive views about others' inclination to be helpful, fair, and trustworthy. This could be a reflection of the cautious culture of modern America, where children no longer hitch-hike rides to their friends' houses and are constantly warned about strangers by parents seeking to protect their children from new threats brought about by technology and the internet. There is also a nearly significant relationship between Subjective Social Class and Social Trust ($b = .069$, $p < 0.10$), where those who view their class standing as being higher are more likely to see others as trustworthy, fair, and helpful. As one might posit, those who have climbed farther up the "ladder of success" are more likely to have dealt with or benefited from the good nature of others.

Statistical Interaction. For each dimension of well-being, a series of analyses examined the interaction of Importance of Racial Identity (IRI) with the various sociodemographic predictors, adding the interaction terms one-by-one to the independent variables already in Model 2. Coefficients for the interaction terms are presented in the "Model 3" and "Model 4" columns of Tables 2 through 5 only where the interaction was significant or nearly significant.⁷

To illustrate the nature of all significant/nearly significant interactions, Tables 6-12 report coefficients for the regression of well-being measures on IRI and the sociodemographic controls at two different levels of the moderator.⁸

The nearly-significant negative interaction between Subjective Social Class (SSC) and Importance of Racial Identity (IRI) as they affect Overall Happiness, reported in Table 2, implies

⁷ Although all investigations of interaction included the full set of predictors represented in Model 2, Tables 2-5 present coefficients only for the significant/nearly significant interaction terms themselves, because the coefficients for other predictors in the interaction models are difficult to interpret and not of primary interest.

⁸ Moderators that were not dichotomies at the outset were dichotomized as close as possible to the median.

that the effect of IRI on Happiness is less positive/more negative for those of higher class standing ($b = -.121, p < .10$). We see this illustrated in Table 6, where the IRI effect on Overall Happiness is positive for low SSC respondents and negative for those of high SSC, though neither of the effects is significant (Low SSC $b = .073, ns$; High SSC $b = -.046, ns$). One possible explanation is that racial identity acts as a source of resolve in the communities of those with a lower SSC, while for high SSC respondents, solidarity with other Blacks is less important for happiness.

The significant positive interaction between Age and Importance of Racial Identity (IRI) reported in the Table 3 summary of results for Health indicates that older respondents show a more positive/less negative effect of IRI on Health than younger respondents ($b = .008, p < .05$). Indeed, Table 7 reveals that older respondents show a positive though non-significant effect of IRI on Health, while younger respondents show a significant negative effect (Younger $b = -.190, p < .05$; Older $b = .095, ns$). As medicine has advanced tremendously in the last half century, modern youth and younger adults may have access to a broader spectrum of treatments and medicines with higher efficacy than what was afforded older respondents when they were growing up. Older individuals may have been more likely to rely on intangibles like racial identity and support networks when they were in the younger, more formative stages of racial identity development. As one would expect, though, the effect of IRI on Health in older respondents is non-significant and weaker than the effect in younger respondents, as older respondents now have access to more effective treatments. As for the younger group, it is possible IRI causes distrust and thus influences individuals to underuse medical institutions.

A nearly significant interaction exists between Family Income and Importance of Racial Identity (IRI) in Table 3. This negative coefficient indicates that higher income respondents

show a more negative/less positive effect of IRI on Health than lower income respondents ($b = -.018, p < .10$). In fact, Table 8 indicates the relationships run in opposite directions, as higher income respondents show a significantly negative effect of IRI on Health, while lower income respondents show a positive, though non-significant, effect (Lower Income $b = .010, ns$; Higher Income $b = -.222, p < .05$). This finding may reflect the tendency for those with higher incomes to rely more on tangible elements of modern medicine and less on more abstract methods of support like family or identity.

The nearly-significant negative interaction between South and Importance of Racial Identity (IRI) as they affect Financial Satisfaction, reported in Table 4, implies that the effect of IRI on Financial Satisfaction is more positive/less negative for those who live in the South ($b = .182, p < .10$). We see this illustrated in Table 9, where the IRI effect on Financial Satisfaction is positive and significant for respondents living in the South and negative, though non-significant, for those not living in the South (Southern $b = .152, p < .05$; Non-Southern $b = -.081, ns$). Perhaps racial identity acts as a “buffer” of sorts in the more racially-charged South, and those who have stronger racial identities are better able to cope with detrimental realities like financial discrimination.

The significant positive interaction between Education and Importance of Racial Identity (IRI) reported in the Table 4 summary of results for Financial Satisfaction indicates that respondents with higher levels of education exhibit a less positive/more negative effect of IRI on Financial Satisfaction than respondents with less education ($b = -.049, p < .05$). Indeed, Table 10 reveals that less educated respondents show a positive and significant effect of IRI on Financial Satisfaction, while respondents with more education show a negative, albeit non-significant, effect (Lower Education $b = .182, p < .05$; Higher Education $b = -.090, ns$). It is possible that a

similar mechanism to the one proposed to explain the income differences in the relationship of IRI to Health occurs here as well, as those who are less educated may achieve financial satisfaction through more abstract means like racial identity than those with high levels of education.

Table 5 reports a significant positive interaction between Subjective Social Class (SSC) and Importance of Racial Identity (IRI), indicating respondents in higher social classes exhibit a more positive/less negative effect of IRI on Social Trust than those in lower social classes ($b = .102, p < .05$). Table 11 verifies this, indicating low SSC respondents show a negative, nearly significant, effect of IRI on Social Trust while high SSC respondents show a positive effect, although it is non-significant (Low SSC $b = -.072, p < .10$; High SSC $b = .068, ns$). While the effect is undoubtedly small, perhaps racial identity contributes to how one chooses friends or a social group. As low SSC respondents are more likely to live in poorer neighborhoods, a strong racial identity could contribute to choosing less trustworthy, fair, and helpful associates.

Finally, the significant positive interaction between Occupational Prestige and Importance of Racial Identity (IRI) in Table 5 indicates those with more Occupational Prestige exhibit a more positive/less negative effect of IRI on Social Trust than those with lower levels of Occupational Prestige ($b = .006, p < .05$). Table 12 indicates this in greater detail, showing that respondents with higher Occupational Prestige show a positive, near-significant, effect of IRI on Social Trust ($b = .103, p < .10$). In fact, the relationship runs in the opposite direction for respondents with lower Occupational Prestige, who show a negative, though non-significant effect of IRI on Social Trust ($b = -.030, ns$). A mechanism similar to that described for the previous interaction may be at work here.

It is important to note that one would expect two or three interactions to be significant just by chance, so some caution must be taken in interpreting these findings.

Closeness with Blacks Interaction. As mentioned in the introduction, recent researchers have claimed that Closeness to Blacks moderates the relationship between racial centrality and happiness for women ($b = 0.65, p < .05$). More explicitly, this study found that for women alone, the importance of racial identity is positively related to happiness among those that are close to other Blacks. Other studies, however, failed to find a significant relationship. In light of these findings, Closeness with Blacks was examined as a potential moderator of the relationship between Importance of Racial Identity and the *Overall Happiness* scale created with GSS variables. No significant or near-significant interactions were found (Model 1 $b = .005, ns$; Model 2 $b = .008, ns$). Similarly, the three-way interaction with gender claimed by the earlier researchers was non-significant (Model 1 $b = .001, ns$; Model 2 $b = .007, ns$).

Tables

Table 1. Correlations between Importance of Racial Identity and Sociodemographic Variables

	Age	Female	Married	South	Educ.	Family Income	Subj. Social Class	Occup. Prestige
Importance of Racial Identity	0.154*	-.024	.080	-.008	-.057	.152*	-.011	.085

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ † $p < 0.10$

Table 2. Regression of Overall Happiness on Importance of Racial Identity and Eight Sociodemographic Controls.^a

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Importance of Racial Identity (IRI)	.042 (.043)	.011 (.044)	— ^c
Age		-.003 (.003)	—
Female		-.185* (.081)	—
Married		.178† (.094)	—
South		-.083 (.080)	—
Education		-.016 (.022)	—
Family Income		.020* (.008)	—
Subjective Social Class		.084 (.062)	—
Occupational Prestige		.001 (.004)	—
Subj. Social Class x IRI			-.121† (.068)
R ²	.004 ^b	.162	.177

^aValues are unstandardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). N = 225 in Model 1 and 193 in Models 2 and 3.

^bUnadjusted R Square is reported.

^cAll of the main effect predictors listed here were included in the interaction model, but because those coefficients are not of interest, only the interaction coefficient is reported.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ † $p < 0.10$

Table 3. Regression of Health on Importance of Racial Identity and Eight Sociodemographic Controls.^a

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>	<u>Model 4</u>
Importance of Racial Identity (IRI)	-.136† (.072)	-.088 (.070)	— ^c	—
Age		-.005 (.004)	—	—
Female		.184 (.116)	—	—
Married		-.214 (.140)	—	—
South		-.157 (.117)	—	—
Education		.077* (.031)	—	—
Family Income		.021† (.012)	—	—
Subjective Social Class		.180* (.088)	—	—
Occupational Prestige		-.005 (.006)	—	—
Age x IRI			.008* (.004)	
Family x IRI				-.018† (.010)
R ²	.024 ^b	.206	.173	.226

^aValues are unstandardized regression coefficients (with SE in parentheses). N = 152 in Model 1 and 136 in Models 2, 3, and 4.

^bUnadjusted R Square is reported.

^cAll of the main effect predictors listed here were included in the interaction model, but because those coefficients are not of interest, only the interaction coefficient is reported.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ † $p < 0.10$

Table 4. Regression of Financial Satisfaction on Importance of Racial Identity and Eight Sociodemographic Controls.^a

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>	<u>Model 4</u>
Importance of Racial Identity (IRI)	.090 (.055)	.070 (.053)	— ^c	—
Age		.003 (.003)	—	—
Female		.020 (.096)	—	—
Married		.000 (.112)	—	—
South		.009 (.095)	—	—
Education		-.011 (.026)	—	—
Family Income		-.008 (.010)	—	—
Subjective Social Class		.554*** (.074)	—	—
Occupational Prestige		-.004 (.004)	—	—
Region x IRI			.182† (.107)	
Education x IRI				-.049* (.025)
R ²	.012 ^b	.258	.270	.274

^aValues are unstandardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). N = 226 in Model 1 and 194 in Models 2, 3 and 4.

^bUnadjusted R Square is reported.

^cAll of the main effect predictors listed here were included in the interaction model, but because those coefficients are not of interest, only the interaction coefficient is reported.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ † $p < 0.10$

Table 5. Regression of Social Trust on Importance of Racial Identity and Eight Sociodemographic Controls.^a

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>	<u>Model 4</u>
Importance of Racial Identity (IRI)	.012 (.025)	.016 (.029)	— ^c	—
Age		.004* (.002)	—	—
Female		.035 (.057)	—	—
Married		.002 (.063)	—	—
South		-.020 (.054)	—	—
Education		.008 (.015)	—	—
Family Income		.001 (.006)	—	—
Subjective Social Class		.069† (.041)	—	—
Occupational Prestige		.000 (.002)	—	—
Subj. Social Class x IRI			.102* (.040)	
Occup. Prestige x IRI				.006* (.003)
R ²	.002 ^b	.084	.133	.121

^aValues are unstandardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). N = 148 in Model 1 and 123 in Models 2, 3, and 4.

^bUnadjusted R Square is reported.

^cAll of the main effect predictors listed here were included in the interaction model, but because those coefficients are not of interest, only the interaction coefficient is reported.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ † $p < 0.10$

Table 6. Regression of Overall Happiness on Importance of Racial Identity and Eight Sociodemographic Controls for Low Subjective Social Class and High Subjective Social Class Respondents.^a

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Low Subjective Social Class Respondents</u>	<u>High Subjective Social Class Respondents</u>
Importance of Racial Identity	.073 (.075)	-.046 (.059)
Age	.001 (.005)	-.004 (.003)
Female	-.348* (.151)	-.076 (.100)
Married	.085 (.175)	.190† (.113)
South	-.128 (.141)	-.073 (.104)
Education	.016 (.040)	-.046† (.027)
Family Income	.029* (.014)	.023* (.010)
Occupational Prestige	-.005 (.007)	.004 (.004)
R²	.182 ^b	.148

^aValues are unstandardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). Low Subjective Social Class N = 72; high Subjective Social Class N = 121.

^bUnadjusted R Square is reported.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ † $p < 0.10$

Table 7. Regression of Health on Importance of Racial Identity and Eight Sociodemographic Controls for Younger and Older Respondents.^a

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Younger Respondents</u>	<u>Older Respondents</u>
Importance of Racial Identity	-.190* (.093)	.095 (.134)
Female	.025 (.167)	.250 (.167)
Married	-.442* (.219)	-.169 (.192)
South	-.310† (.176)	.019 (.166)
Education	.075† (.044)	.096* (.045)
Family Income	.018* (.017)	.021 (.017)
Subjective Social Class	.162 (.122)	.175 (.132)
Occupational Prestige	-.007 (.007)	-.002 (.009)
R ²	.231 ^b	.264

^aValues are unstandardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). Younger Respondents N = 68; Older Respondents N = 68.

^bUnadjusted R Square is reported.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ † $p < 0.10$

Table 8. Regression of Health on Importance of Racial Identity and Eight Sociodemographic Controls for Lower Income and Higher Income Respondents.^a

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Lower Income Respondents</u>	<u>Higher Income Respondents</u>
Importance of Racial Identity	.010 (.099)	-.222* (.109)
Age	-.006 (.006)	-.002 (.006)
Female	.226 (.207)	.071 (.146)
Married	-.595* (.287)	-.072 (.146)
South	-.074 (.196)	-.218 (.153)
Education	.090† (.052)	.070† (.038)
Subjective Social Class	.227 (.142)	.109 (.114)
Occupational Prestige	.000 (.010)	-.005 (.007)
R^2	.226 ^b	.221

^aValues are unstandardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). Lower Income Respondents N = 66; Higher Income Respondents N = 70.

^bUnadjusted R Square is reported.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ † $p < 0.10$

Table 9. Regression of Financial Satisfaction on Importance of Racial Identity and Eight Sociodemographic Controls for Southern and Non-Southern Respondents.^a

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Southern Respondents</u>	<u>Non-Southern Respondents</u>
Importance of Racial Identity	.152* (.070)	-.081 (.086)
Age	.000 (.004)	.009† (.005)
Female	-.021 (.132)	.036 (.147)
Married	.058 (.157)	.047 (.170)
Education	.006 (.035)	-.071† (.040)
Family Income	-.022† (.013)	.010 (.015)
Subjective Social Class	.520*** (.105)	.556*** (.107)
Occupational Prestige	-.001 (.006)	-.008 (.007)
R ²	.234 ^b	.377

^aValues are unstandardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). Southern Respondents N = 114; Non-Southern Respondents N = 80.

^bUnadjusted R Square is reported.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ † $p < 0.10$

Table 10. Regression of Financial Satisfaction on Importance of Racial Identity and Eight Sociodemographic Controls for Respondents with Lower and Higher Levels of Education.^a

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Lower Education Level Respondents</u>	<u>Higher Education Level Respondents</u>
Importance of Racial Identity	.182* (.069)	-.090 (.090)
Age	.005 (.004)	.004 (.006)
Female	.024 (.134)	-.006 (.148)
Married	.004 (.157)	-.068 (.168)
South	.029 (.131)	.066 (.160)
Family Income	-.013 (.012)	.000 (.017)
Subjective Social Class	.583*** (.098)	.477*** (.114)
Occupational Prestige	-.005 (.007)	-.004 (.006)
R²	.327^b	.230

^aValues are unstandardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). Lower Education Level Respondents N = 108; Higher Education Level Respondents N = 86.

^bUnadjusted R Square is reported.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ † $p < 0.10$

Table 11. Regression of Social Trust on Importance of Racial Identity and Eight Sociodemographic Controls for Low Subjective Social Class and High Subjective Social Class Respondents.^a

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Low Subjective Social Class Respondents</u>	<u>High Subjective Social Class Respondents</u>
Importance of Racial Identity	-.072† (.037)	.068 (.044)
Age	.002 (.003)	.003 (.003)
Female	.017 (.089)	.045 (.079)
Married	.023 (.102)	-.013 (.083)
South	-.029 (.077)	.024 (.078)
Education	.019 (.022)	.007 (.020)
Family Income	-.004 (.008)	.001 (.008)
Occupational Prestige	.001 (.003)	-.001 (.003)
R²	.112 ^b	.100

^aValues are unstandardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). Lower Subjective Social Class Respondents N = 45; Higher Subjective Social Class Respondents N = 78.

^bUnadjusted R Square is reported.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ † $p < 0.10$

Table 12. Regression of Social Trust on Importance of Racial Identity and Eight Sociodemographic Controls for Low Occupational Prestige and High Occupational Prestige Respondents.^a

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Low Occupational Prestige Respondents</u>	<u>High Occupational Prestige Respondents</u>
Importance of Racial Identity	-.030 (.033)	.103† (.058)
Age	.003 (.002)	.003 (.003)
Female	.090 (.075)	-.086 (.096)
Married	.059 (.083)	-.037 (.104)
South	.007 (.077)	-.058 (.089)
Education	.001 (.021)	-.003 (.023)
Family Income	-.003 (.007)	-.001 (.011)
Subjective Social Class	.081 (.057)	.071 (.063)
R²	.099^b	.163

^aValues are unstandardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). Lower Occupational Prestige Respondents N = 63; Higher Occupational Prestige Respondents N = 60.

^bUnadjusted R Square is reported.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ † $p < 0.10$

Chapter 4

Discussion

Racial identity holds importance for most African Americans. The percentage distribution on the focal question unambiguously shows this, as only 12.8% of African Americans said their racial identity was either not very important or not important at all. It is appropriate to mention at the outset, then, that most of the variation in the Importance of Racial Identity question featured here is between those who answered “very important” and those who answered “somewhat important.”

Table 1 provides information on the characteristics of those African Americans for whom racial identity is most important, and indicates that older respondents and those with higher incomes have stronger racial identities. While the age relationship is likely a function of the time period these individuals grew up in, the income correlation provides evidence that a strong racial identity may contribute to a positive self-image that helps individuals achieve success. Of course, the relationship might also go in the other direction, with success leading individuals to take more pride in their racial and ethnic heritage, especially in the wake of discrimination.

The regression results reported in Tables 2-5 indicate there is no significant link between the importance of racial identity and any of the four measures of well-being included in this study—overall happiness, health, financial satisfaction, or social trust. This was the case both before and after eight sociodemographic control variables were added. This lack of significant relationships between strong racial identity and measures of well-being suggests that the conventional wisdom linking the two should be taken with a grain of salt.

However, this is not to say racial identity has no effect on the well-being of African Americans. A series of analyses was carried out to examine statistical interaction between importance of racial identity and eight sociodemographic variables for each dimension of well-being, and a handful of significant and near-significant relationships were found. Table 6 indicates that racial identity may act as a source of resolve in poorer communities, as the effect of strong racial identity on happiness is more positive/less negative for those of lower class standing. Also, compared to younger respondents, older respondents show a more positive/less negative effect of racial identity importance on health, as seen in Table 7; racial identity may have acted as a means of support during older respondents' earlier health struggles, while possibly signaling distrust in the healthcare system among younger respondents today. Table 8 suggests that those with higher incomes may rely more on tangible elements of modern medicine than on abstract means of support like family or identity, as higher income respondents show a more negative/less positive effect of strong racial identity on health. The nearly-significant negative interaction between Southern residence and racial identity importance, reported in Table 9, suggests that racial identity may act as a "buffer" of sorts against ills like financial discrimination in the more racially-charged South, as the effect of strong racial identity on financial satisfaction is more positive/less negative for those in this region. Similar to the pattern seen in Table 8, Table 10 may indicate those who are less educated derive financial satisfaction through more abstract means like racial identity than those who are more educated: compared to those with less education, respondents with higher levels of education exhibit a less positive/more negative effect of racial identity importance on financial satisfaction.

On a different note, a strong racial identity may also contribute to individuals in lower social classes choosing less trustworthy, helpful, and fair associates: lower-status respondents

exhibit a less positive/more negative effect of racial identity importance on social trust than those in higher social classes, as indicated in Table 11. Finally, a similar explanation may underlie the interaction found in Table 12, as those with low occupational prestige exhibit a less positive/more negative effect of strong racial identity on social trust than those with higher levels of occupational prestige.

It is important to mention that closeness with blacks did not appear to moderate the relationship between the importance of racial identity and overall happiness, as had been claimed by some earlier researchers.

While one would expect two or three of these interactions to be significant just by chance, the congruent pattern invites serious interpretation, supporting the conclusion that racial identity operates as a source of solidarity among certain groups of African Americans. For individuals more likely to be marginalized in society, racial identity may broadly act as a means of support. In poorer neighborhoods, it is possible that racial identity provides resolve and a common bond among members in the community. Knowing that individuals like you are going through similar struggles can also help African Americans take pride in their racial heritage, despite structural inequality and racism. All these factors may help individuals stay healthier, happier, and more satisfied in the wake of societal ills like financial discrimination.

Limitations and Future Directions

Certain limitations of this study must be acknowledged. The constrained variability of the importance of racial identity question, combined with the small sample size, made it more difficult to detect meaningful relationships. Being limited to one measure of racial identity, I was not able to assess the impact of multiple dimensions of racial identity. The outcome variables were not all-inclusive either, but were limited to the questions included in the 2010 General

Social Survey. Nevertheless, this project does have strengths. The national sample of adults of diverse ages makes the findings more representative than most studies. The data is also more recent than most, and thus paints a clearer picture of racial identity in modern America. Finally, the measures used to represent well-being encompass dimensions not commonly included by earlier researchers, like health, financial satisfaction, and social trust.

This project will have additional value insofar as it invites future research that asks similar questions using a richer set of outcome measures. More robust measures of well-being could allow for better detection of relationships with racial identity. Future studies should also attempt to replicate these findings using different samples, particularly samples showing greater variation in responses to questions about the importance of racial identity, in order to assess the generalizability of the results presented here.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The present study adds to the literature aimed at examining the relationship of racial identity to well-being among African Americans. Although observed interactions may indicate that racial identity can act as a source of solidarity among lower-status groups, the broad results seen here are congruent with earlier research that reported null relationships between racial identity and well-being. These findings have far reaching implications. As stated in the introduction, a number of advocates and analysts operate under the premise that strong racial identity is beneficial, even necessary. For example, many critics oppose transracial adoption because they fear that Black individuals growing up in White homes might lose their racial identity. “Culture camps” seek to promote healthy identity formation in adopted children by exposing them to elements of their heritage through language classes, food, and games. Results reported here call these objections and institutions into question, as there are not significant differences in well-being among those who assign varying levels of significance to their racial identity. While many questions remain, this study represents a step forward in understanding racial identity and its complicated relationship to well-being.

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Appendix A

Question Wording for Dependent and Independent Measures, Sociodemographic Variables, and the Auxiliary Social Psychological Variable

Independent Variable

Importance of Racial Identity: How important is your racial identity to you? Would you say very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all?

(RACIDIMP)⁹

Dependent Variables

Happiness: Taken all together, how would you say things are these days—would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy? (HAPPY)

Marital Happiness: Taking all things together, how would you describe your marriage? Would you say that your marriage is very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy? (HAPMAR)

Zest for Life: In general, do you find life exciting, pretty routine, or dull? (LIFE)

Health: Would you say your own health, in general, is excellent, good, fair, or poor? (HEALTH)

Financial Satisfaction: So far as you and your family are concerned, would you say that you are pretty well satisfied with your present financial situation, more or less satisfied, or not satisfied at all? (SATFIN)

Helpful: Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves? (HELPFUL)

Trust: Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? (TRUST)

Fair: Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair? (FAIR)

⁹ GSS codenames in parentheses

Sociodemographic Variables

Age: Respondents age coded in years (AGE)

Female: Male=0, Female=1 (SEX)

Married: Are you currently—married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married? Married=1, Other=0 (MARITAL STATUS)

South: New England, Mid-Atlantic, E. North Central, W. North Central, Mountain, Pacific=0 (Other), South Atlantic, E. South Central, W. South Central=1 (REGION)

Education: Highest year of school completed (EDUC)

Family Income: Total family income, from all sources, before taxes (INCOME06)

Relative Financial Status: Compared with American families in general, would you say your family income is far below average, below average, average, above average, or far above average? (PROBE: Just your best guess) (FINRELA)

Social Class: If you were asked to use one of the four names for your social class, which would you say you belong in: the lower class, the working class, the middle class, or the upper class? (CLASS)

Occupational Prestige: Prestige of respondent's occupation according to Hodge-Siegel-Rossi index. (PRESTG80)

Auxiliary Social Psychological Variable

Closeness to Blacks: In general, how close do you feel to Blacks? (CLOSEBLK)

Appendix B

Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Measures, Sociodemographic Variables, and the Auxiliary Social Psychological Variable

Independent Variable

Important of Racial Identity (RACIDIMP)

Importance	Frequency
4. Very important	135 (59.5%)
3. Somewhat important	62 (27.4%)
2. Somewhat unimportant	12 (5.3%)
1. Very unimportant	17 (7.5%)
TOTAL	226 (100.0%)

Dependent Variables

Happiness (HAPPY)

Happiness	Frequency
3. Very happy	53 (23.6%)
2. Pretty happy	122 (54.2%)
1. Not too happy	50 (22.2%)
TOTAL	225 (100.0%)

Marital Happiness (HAPMAR)

Happiness	Frequency
3. Very happy	33 (49.3%)
2. Pretty happy	27 (40.3%)
1. Not too happy	7 (10.4%)
TOTAL	67 (100.0%)

Zest for Life (LIFE)

Feelings towards life	Frequency
3. Exciting	58 (38.9%)
2. Routine	79 (53.0%)
1. Dull	12 (8.1%)
TOTAL	149 (100.0%)

Health (HEALTH)

Health	Frequency
4. Excellent	27 (17.8%)
3. Good	80 (52.6%)
2. Fair	40 (26.3%)
1. Poor	5 (3.3%)
TOTAL	152 (100.0%)

Financial Satisfaction (SATFIN)

Level of satisfaction	Frequency
3. Pretty well satisfied	38 (16.8%)
2. More or less satisfied	86 (38.1%)
1. Not satisfied at all	102 (45.1%)
TOTAL	226 (100.0%)

Helpful (HELPFUL)

Feelings towards people	Frequency
2. Helpful	42 (28.0%)
1. Lookout for self	98 (72.0%)
TOTAL	140 (100.0%)

Trust (TRUST)

Feelings towards people	Frequency
2. Can trust	19 (13.2%)
1. Cannot trust	125 (86.8%)
TOTAL	144 (100.0%)

Fair (FAIR)

Feelings towards people	Frequency
2. Fair	43 (31.4%)
1. Take advantage	94 (68.6%)
TOTAL	137 (100.0%)

Sociodemographic Variables

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>N</u>
<i>Age</i>	44.88	15.92	217
<i>Family Income</i>	14.27	6.13	209
<i>Education</i>	12.83	2.60	225
<i>Occupational Prestige</i>	38.54	12.32	216

Female (SEX)

Respondent's Sex	Frequency
1. Female	133 (58.8%)
0. Male	93 (41.2%)
TOTAL	226 (100.0%)

Married (MARITAL)

Opinion	Frequency
1. Currently Married	70 (31.0%)
0. Not Currently Married	156 (69.0%)
TOTAL	226 (100.0%)

South (REGION)

Census Region	Frequency
1. South	129 (57.1%)
0. Other	97 (42.9%)
TOTAL	226 (100.0%)

Relative Financial Status (FINRELA)

Opinion	Frequency	
5. Far above average	4	(1.8%)
4. Above average	18	(8.6%)
3. Average	105	(47.1%)
2. Below average	78	(35.0%)
1. Far below average	18	(8.1%)
TOTAL	223	(100.0%)

Social Class (CLASS)

Class	Frequency	
4. Upper class	8	(3.6%)
3. Middle class	75	(33.5%)
2. Working class	113	(50.4%)
1. Lower class	28	(12.5%)
TOTAL	226	(100.0%)

Auxiliary Social Psychological Variable

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>N</u>
<i>Closeness to Blacks</i>	7.52	2.10	151

Appendix C

Correlations among Measures of Well-being

	Overall Happiness	Health	Social Trust	Financial Satisfaction
Overall Happiness	—			
Health	0.279***	—		
Social Trust	0.152†	0.197†	—	
Financial Satisfaction	0.227**	0.154†	0.205*	—

Ns range from 75 to 225.

*** p < 0.001 level ** p < 0.01 level * p < 0.05 level † p < 0.01 level

Appendix D
Correlations among Sociodemographic Variables

	Age	Female	Married	South	Education	Family Income	Subj. Social Class	Occup. Prestg.
Age	—							
Female	-.051	—						
Married	.163*	-.062	—					
South	-.082	-.071	-.038	—				
Educ.	-.165*	-.027	.144*	-.042	—			
Family Income	.000	-.221**	.421***	.021	.411***	—		
Subj. Social Class	.031	-.141*	.085	.000	.233***	.299***	—	
Occup. Prestg.	.016	.026	.132^	-.083	.469***	.322***	.121†	—

Ns range from 200 to 225.

*** p < 0.001 level ** p < 0.01 level * p < 0.05 level † p < 0.01 level

Academic Vita

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Education

M.B.A., Supply Chain and Finance Concentrations, Expected 2015
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

B.S., Science, Expected 2013, Schreyer Honors College
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

Study Abroad Program, Spring 2012, National University of Singapore, Singapore

Experience

KCF Technologies State College, PA
Sales and Marketing Associate 9/12-Present

- Formulated cold-calling campaign for the company's wireless vibration monitoring system, SmartDiagnostics™, which reached over 1000 potential customers with an average response rate of greater than 10%.
- Collaborated with Marketing Analysts and Product Manager to redesign company website.

Bristol-Myers Squibb Plainsboro, NJ
Global Procurement Co-op, Management Consulting 5/12-8/12

- Analyzed consulting spend data and performed benchmarking analysis to renegotiate supplier rate cards—a project which generated more than \$4 million in savings.
- Led evaluation of more than 20 vendor responses for a global contingent labor RFP, helping to consolidate the current supplier base by selecting three worldwide suppliers to staff commoditized R&D roles.
- Developed two RFPs in Oncology and Market Access, aiding in supplier selection and acting as a point person between the company and clients.

KCF Technologies State College, PA
Marketing Intern 11/10-12/11

- Created marketing strategy, including pricing and target market recommendations, through market research of 10 companies for the company's orientation sensor.
- Produced direct mail campaign, featuring custom designed datasheets and graphic art, to more than 200 software customers persuading them to upgrade their software package.
- Managed client relations by designing and sending monthly newsletters and self-made email greetings to inform them of new products, services and promotions.

Wishberry, LLC
Marketing Intern

State College, PA
7/11-12/11

- Worked directly with CEO to launch this social shopping start-up that allows customers to chip-in for group gifts.
- Made recommendations based on market research to improve the website, including website design, ease of use and product selection.
- Brainstormed, developed and executed a set of on-campus marketing tactics for launch of website on college campus, including marketing events, advertisements and sweepstakes.

Research

Honors Thesis: Reexamining the Link between African American Racial Identity and Well-being (2013)

Activities

Reformed University Fellowship

8/10-Present

- Organized and structured weekly meetings by planning icebreakers and making announcements to a Christian fellowship group of 80 students.

Global Brigades

8/10-12/11

- Honduras: led 40 students in creating and updating medical records of 1100 patients on a medical missions trip.
- Panama: taught two workshops in restaurant inventory management and marketing to rural microenterprises.

Homes of the Indian Nations

7/11 & 5/12

- Served an orphanage in India by performing facilities maintenance and tutoring 20 students in science and English.

Springfield THON

8/09-5/11

- Raised more than \$3,000 to benefit the Penn State Dance Marathon and its fight against pediatric cancer.

Honors and Awards

- Phi Beta Kappa (May 2013)
- Dean's List (all semesters)
- Civic Engagement Public Speaking Contest Finalist (Communication Arts and Sciences Department, Pearson Learning Solutions, and *The New York Times*, December 2012)
- Schreyer Ambassador Travel Grant (Schreyer Honors College, December 2012, January 2012, July 2011, March 2011, December 2010)
- Louis A. Martarano Endowment for Education Abroad Scholarship (Eberly College of Science, January 2012)
- Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship (Institute of International Education, January 2012)