VALIDATION OF THE MULTIGROUP ETHNIC IDENTITY MEASURE

FOR AFRO-CARIBBEAN-AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Dissertation

by

KEISHA VENICIA THOMPSON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2011

Major Subject: Counseling Psychology

VALIDATION OF THE MULTIGROUP ETHNIC IDENTITY MEASURE

FOR AFRO-CARIBBEAN-AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Dissertation

by

KEISHA VENICIA THOMPSON

Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	Linda G. Castillo
	Charles R. Ridley
Committee Members,	Jamillia J. Blake
	Fred Bonner
Head of Department,	Victor Willson

August 2011

Major Subject: Counseling Psychology

ABSTRACT

Validation of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure for Afro-Caribbean-American

College Students. (August 2011)

Keisha Venicia Thompson, B.A., Baruch College, City University of New York;

M.S. Ed., Hunter College, City University of New York

Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. Linda G. Castillo
                                                              Dr. Charles Ridley

        The purpose of this study was to validate the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

(MEIM) on a sample of Afro-Caribbean college students. Participants were drawn from

a larger national study on culture and identity collected at 26 universities from across the

United States. Students included in this sample were either born in a Caribbean country,

or had one or both parents from a Caribbean country. The students completed various

measures of culture and identity. The ones utilized in this study were ethnic identity

(Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure), self-esteem (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) and

depression (Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale).   Analyses were

conducted using the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences and AMOS (SPSS for

Windows Version 16.0.2, 2008). A confirmatory factor analysis was utilized in order to

confirm the hypothesized factor structure of the MEIM with this sample in terms of

goodness of fit. Correlations to determine the internal reliability and construct validity of

the MEIM and multivariate analysis of variance to determine group differences within

the sample were conducted. Additionally, criterion validity was examined between the

MEIM and measures of self-esteem and depression. The results of this study indicate that the MEIM is a two factor structure for Afro-Caribbean college students. The results suggested adequate to good internal item consistency on all measures utilized with this sample. With regard to concurrent validity, the relationship between self-esteem and ethnic identity in this sample wasn't as remarkable and supportive of past research where there has been a more distinct and robust relationship. There was a statistically significant positive correlation with the affirmation subscale and depression. This was not true for the total MEIM measure and the exploration subscale. Ethnic identity does not have the same relationship with self-esteem and depression as it has in previously studied Black/African American and minority populations in the United States.

DEDICATION

For my family and all those whose shoulders on which I stand

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Booker T. Washington said, "I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has had to overcome while trying to succeed." I would add that it should also be measured by the people who help you along the way. I am overwhelmed by the gratitude that I feel towards the individuals who have helped me to reach to this point in my educational journey.

First, I would like to thank my heavenly father for life, purpose and grace. I would never have been able to complete my graduate studies and dissertation without the guidance and support of my committee members and the love and support of my family and friends. I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Linda Castillo, for her patience and guidance during this process. Thanks for believing in me, even when I wasn't convinced that I was on the right track. To my co-chair, Dr. Charles Ridley, thank you for sharing with me your passion for theory directed research. I feel like I can say, "I get it". Thank you to Dr. Jamilia Blake for allowing me to be on in your PRA lab and giving me numerous opportunities. I'll even thank you "for kicking me out" so that I could work on my dissertation. Dr. Fred Bonner, thanks for agreeing to be on my committee and being in my corner.

I share all of my achievements and this accomplishment with my family. You have made so many sacrifices for me, and taught me so much along the way. I thank my mother, Esther Thompson, for teaching me the value of hard work and sacrifice. You sacrificed so much in order to give your children limitless possibilities in a new country.

I thank my father, Kelvin Thompson, for being the positive voice in difficult times and for teaching me that I should always know more than one way to get home. I would like to thank my siblings, Curtis, Kelvern, Stacey, Nigel and Jody for supporting me throughout my studies. Curtis and Kelvern are always sources of inspiration for me. You made sacrifices for your younger siblings that only a parent would make for a child. Stacey, you are the best example of a big sister and mother in my life. My nieces and nephews; Keziah, Kimberley, Khristian, Nigel Jr., and Kemuel bring me so much joy and laughter. Thank you to my brother in law, Sterling, for your positive spirit. To my dear aunts, Nenny and Elma, thank you for your unconditional love, support and prayers. Always cheering me on are my cousins, who can be more like siblings. What I love about you guys is the fact that you seem to get pleasure out of my shining, and for that I thank you. I especially want to thank Debbie and Esther for being the "loudest" and the brightest in the trying times. My motivation for getting through my program and getting my dissertation done has often come from those who, although they are no longer with us, have had a tremendous impact on my life. My late grandmother taught me to believe in myself, and to stand up for myself if for no other reason than that she was my grandmother. The past few months have been filled with memories of my dearly departed brother and uncle. They were two men who always expressed pride in me, before I ever accomplished anything.

Thanks to my spiritual father, Rev. David Lowe. You have pushed me to reach my potential from the age of 16 and continue to do so. Thank you to the other members of my home church who have continued to bless me throughout the years, both

spiritually and tangibly. I would like to thank my two mentors, Dr. Tamara Buckley and Dr. Andrae Brown, for helping me to start on this journey and for sticking with me the entire way. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Daniel Brossart and Dr. Timothy Elliott just for being yourselves and for the time I've spent working with both of you. Thank you to my colleagues and cohort members who have been supportive. I also thank Dr. Becky Petitt and Dave McIntosh for being a part of my support system. Words cannot express how grateful I have been for you over these past 4 years. A heartfelt thank you also goes to Dr. Julia Phillips and the staff of the University of Akron Counseling Center for supporting me over this past year.

Much gratitude is given to the Black Graduate Students Association of Texas A&M. You guys are the most inspiring bunch of people to be around, and we had fun too. To my divas, who have always stuck by me; Ann, Michelle, Lorraine, Zenelle, Schillivia, Joeleen and Petagay. I appreciate you. To the sisterhood whom I encountered while in graduate school, I am so blessed and honored to call you sisters, Laura, Helene and Reynolette. Our time together has been priceless, and I am so grateful to have each of you in my life. This journey hasn't been without its obstacles and challenges, but for everyone I have acknowledged and thanked, I never would have made it without you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) is a widely used instrument on adolescents and adults representing diverse ethnic groups (Lee & Yoo, 2004). The construct of ethnic identity as used in the MEIM is defined as a common phenomena across diverse ethnic groups, which include self-identification as a group member, a sense of belonging, and attitudes toward one's group (Phinney, 1992). Despite its wide usage, there is a paucity of empirical knowledge about the structure and measurement of the MEIM with respect to specific ethnic or racial groups (Fischer & Moradi, 2001; Lee & Yoo, 2004) such as Afro-Caribbeans. This paucity of research reflects larger problems in the racial and ethnic literature: inadequate measurement of the construct of ethnic identity, and disagreement in the psychological literature between the constructs of ethnic and racial identity (Cokley, 2007) . Ponterotto and Mallinckrodt (2007) challenged the field of counseling psychology to carefully reexamine the interrelationships between theory, measurement strategies, and instruments of racial and ethnic identity.

Within the field of counseling psychology, theory as it relates to racial and ethnic identity development has advanced, but there has been a failure to advance the methodology (Ponterotto & Mallinckrodt, 2007). The lack of research on the ethnic identity of Afro-Caribbean college students is a case in point of the failure of the field to reexamine existing theory and measurement strategies. Multicultural theory and

_____

This dissertation follows the style of *Journal of Counseling Psychology*.

literature has moved from Black and White racial comparisons, to focusing on the cultural experiences of minority culture and its implications such as acculturation and within group differences (Ponterotto & Mallinckrodt, 2007).With the exception of some dissertation studies, there has not been a generation of knowledge, studies and publications about Caribbean college students in the United States (Buddington, 2002; Burrell-McRae, 2009; Douglas-Chicoye, 2007; Edwards-Joseph, 2009). It is possible that this population may often be subsumed under the African-American or Black population in research studies. Janet Helms (2007) observed that other than to say that participants "self-identified", researchers do not adequately describe the racial or ethnic composition of their samples. They also tend to assign participants to a racial or ethnic group without demonstrating how the assignment was determined (Helms, 2007).

Ponterotto and Park-Taylor (2007) suggest to researchers that it may be wise to disaggregate data from individuals and groups who may share the Black designation but vary in terms of their identities and experiences in the United States. For example, Cokley (2005) explains that specifically for African Americans, the development of racial or ethnic identity is a result of their minority status. As will be demonstrated later in the literature review, many individuals and populations of African descent outside of the United States do not have minority status in their countries of origin. As a result of this significant distinction, it is possible that the construct of ethnic identity as defined and measured by the MEIM may not be accurately measured and defined in Afro-Caribbean college students in the United States. The purpose of this proposed study is to validate the MEIM on Afro-Caribbean college students. The results of this

investigation should provide information about the valid use of the MEIM as a measure of ethnic identity in this population. Results of this investigation will contribute to the psychological literature and inform practice as it relates to this growing population. It will also offer insight into ethnic identity development in Afro-Caribbean individuals in the United States.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Due to increased migration, the Caribbean population in the United States has grown exponentially over the past 44 years. Immigration from the English speaking islands of the Caribbean and Haiti grew substantially after the change in immigration laws in 1965 (Waters, 1994). According to the 2009 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, there were 2,540,251 West Indian (Caribbean) non-Hispanic individuals in the United States; the vast majority of these being of African descent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Of this number 820,150 are enrolled in educational institutions. While some first generation immigrants choose to pursue higher education, others sacrifice and work for the second generation to do so.

It is with greater frequency that Caribbean students are enrolling in the nation's higher education institutions. The 2009 American Community Survey 1-Year estimates that 40.4% of Caribbean individuals over the age of 3 are enrolled in college or graduate school (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Of the greater population over the age of 25, less than 20% do not have a high school diploma. Even so, Afro-Caribbean students are underrepresented in higher education. Afro-Caribbean students are rarely identified or mentioned in research on Black college students in terms of their overall adjustment and achievement. These students are also not included or identified in research concerning immigrant or international students. Unlike those of other immigrants, they encounter a higher education system in which they are a distinct

minority (Hine-St. Hilaire, 2006). Afro-Caribbean students are also different, in that they speak English or may lack the distinct accents of their parents, and are identified racially by others (Hine-St. Hilaire, 2006). Afro-Caribbean students are also of various generation statuses (Waters, 1994). Those considered to be first generation may fall into three categories; (a) they immigrated to the United States as adults, (b) they immigrated to the United States as children and have been a part of the educational system prior to college, and (c) they are in the United States strictly to get an education and return to their home countries. The second generation students are those born in the United States to parents who emigrated from the Caribbean. The generational status of students further contributes to the complexity of understanding the experiences of Caribbean students.

Afro-Caribbean students are often studied in homogeneous samples identified by the monikers "Black or African American", and little to no research has contributed to the knowledge of ethnic identity in this population. This may be based on the similar phenotypic expression of genes in most individuals of African descent. In an effort to bring a nuanced view, the literature reviewed in this research will focus on ego identity development and ethnic identity as it has been studied in Black adolescents and college students. Ego identity development was utilized by Jean Phinney in her development of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). Phinney's theory utilizes Erikson's ego identity development theory conceptualized by Marcia as its theoretical foundation. What follows is an explanation of each theory, and how it has been studied and applied to Black college students. A brief explanation of Afro-

Caribbean identity is also included. Due to the lack of research and application of ethnic identity theory to Afro-Caribbean students, a comparative explanation is offered in terms of African American adolescents as a benchmark.

Ego Identity Development Theory

Research on identity formation has focused on ego or personal identity and reference group orientation (Gardner-Kitt & Worrell, 2006; Marcia, 1966). The theory of ego identity development that is commonly used in Psychology is that of Erik Erikson. Erikson (1963) proposed eight critical periods of development of the human life cycle commonly referred to as psychosocial tasks. Erickson's theory purports that as an individual matures, he or she needs to negotiate each task before moving on to the later stages of development. Successful negotiation of each stage is critical towards becoming a psychologically healthy individual. Erikson posits that a lasting ego identity cannot be established without the trust of the first stage and the successful completion of the subsequent phases through adulthood. The stages begin at birth through age 18 months, where the infant negotiates between trust and mistrust. Erikson asserts that development of trust is dependent on how responsive and consistent the parent is with basic needs being met. This is particularly true on the areas of care and food. The premise of this is that the infant must first form a trusting relationship with the parent in order for mistrust to not develop. As a toddler (ages 18 months to 3 years), the negotiation between autonomy and shame/doubt occurs. This stage is the beginning of the development of self control and self confidence for children (Sparrow, 2005). This negotiation takes place in tasks such as toilet training, and children

feeding and dressing themselves. Parents facilitate their children's development by not being overprotective at this stage, as the level of protectiveness will influence the child's ability to successfully negotiate this stage. The adverse effect of parents being overprotective is that the child will develop shame and doubt in his/her abilities. During the initiative versus guilt (ages 3 to 6 years) stage, the child continues to take initiative and are typically eager for responsibility. If this is not encouraged, the child will believe that what they want to do is wrong and develop a sense of guilt. The next stage of industry versus inferiority (ages 6 to 12 years) is marked by the child's need to be productive in several areas and to do work on their own. The areas of importance during this time are academics, group activities and friends. Difficulty with any of these leads to a sense of inferiority. The fifth stage takes place during adolescence and the negotiation is between identity and role confusion. Marcia (1966) proposed that the formulation of psychosocial identity takes place here. The adolescent child strives to achieve a sense of identity in occupation, sex roles, politics, and religion.

Ego identity development theory stresses the importance of an active search for identity during adolescence (Johnson, Buboltz Jr., & Seemann, 2003). The most utilized operationalization of Erikson's work has been Marcia's identity status model (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Wang, & Olthuis, 2009). Various researchers (Phinney J. S., 1989; Schwartz et al., 2009; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010) have utilized this model to examine identity in college students. The traditional college student enters college where they may be transitioning from adolescence to young adulthood. This period of development is extrapolated in Marcia's theory.

Marcia (1966) proposed that adolescents and young adults can typically be categorized as being in one of four ego identity statuses: identity achievement, foreclosure, moratorium, and diffusion. In establishing identity achievement, Marcia (1966) used the variables of crisis and commitment to operationalize Erikson's theory. It is important to note that the statuses in this theory all take place within the identity vs. role confusion stage. The status of the individual is determined by the two variables of commitment and crisis. Crisis is the period of engagement where exploration and commitment takes place. Each identity status is characterized by the degree of exploration and commitment to ideological and interpersonal issues (Johnson et al., 2003). The foreclosure status is defined by the presence of commitment, but without self-exploration having taken place. The individual at this status may base their commitment on family values and beliefs without exploring alternatives of their own. The diffusion status does not entail exploration or commitment, it can be considered as being pre-crisis (Johnson et al., 2003). The moratorium status is characterized by an active search and exploration process, but no commitment is made. The identity achievement status is characterized by the presence of exploration and a commitment to whatever issue is at stake. The ego identity statuses represent the degree to which self-concept or individual identity has been achieved as a unique individual living in the larger society (Miville, Koonce, Darlington, & Whitlock, 2000). It is a major part of self-concept. In his work with elementary school children, Burnett (1996) provides discrepant definitions for self concept and self-esteem; two constructs that are often used interchangeably:

Self concept can be defined as the descriptive and evaluative beliefs that (children)

have about significant multidimensional characteristics of the self, while self

esteem is the global thoughts and feelings that children have about themselves as

people, i.e. how much they like themselves (Burnett, 1996, p. 160).

Another level of self-concept is that of a collective identity; the collective identity

is a significant component of one's self-concept, especially for members of non-

dominant demographic groups (Tajfel, 1978). For people of color, the collective

identity may become a psychologically central or salient part of the self-concepts due

to a given socio-political history (Miville et al., 2000).The collective identity has been

labeled as cultural, ethnic, racial, and group identities. Group identity is considered to

consist of cognitive, evaluative and emotional components (Tajfel, 1978). The

cognitive component is in the group members' awareness that they belong to a

minority group which is markedly separate from other groups and they cannot rid

themselves of their membership in the group (Tajfel, 1978). The value connotations

associated with membership in a minority group makes up the evaluative component.

Value connotations according to Tajfel (1978) include minorities being socially

disadvantaged, comparison of their social position and circumstances as compared with

other groups, and favorable or unfavorable judgments about the group. The emotional

component is the way the individual feels about his group membership. Tajfel (1978)

posits that when evaluations are negative and one cannot leave the group, a range of

attitudes and strategies can be expected to occur such as a negative identity and self-

hatred. The interaction of individual and group identities can be explored with the construct of ethnic identity.

Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity

A precursor to understanding ethnic identity is an understanding of ethnicity. Ethnicity is a socially constructed concept, referring to the characterization of a group of people who are perceived by themselves and others as having a common ancestry, shared history, shared traditions, and shared cultural traits such as language, beliefs, values, music, dress and food (Cokley, 2007). These cultural traits, traditions and values are often transmitted across generations. Phinney (1996) identified culture, ethnic identity, and minority status as three psychological components of ethnicity.

Phinney's conceptualization of ethnic identity is composed of two parts. The first component is a stage model that is based on Marcia's operationalization of ego identity theory. Phinney's stage model of ethnic identity utilizes Marcia's model of ego identity development as a framework for ethnic identity development in ethnic minorities. Phinney's model follows the logic of Marcia's in that identity achievement occurs at the end of a process which has been initiated by some form of a crisis. The model is similarly based on the degree of exploration, and commitment in each stage. In the case of ethnic identity development, a crisis refers to a period of engagement where the individual may choose among meaningful alternatives (Marcia, 1966) within an ethnic identity. The individual moves from a stage of diffusion to exploration, and finally ethnic identity achievement. The stage at which there is neither exploration nor commitment is referred to as diffusion; the moratorium is the stage of exploration, and

finally the individual should be able to gain ethnic identity achievement. Phinney has applied the same statuses of Marcia's (1966) model to ethnic identity development and presents them as stages. Figure 1 in the appendix summarizes Phinney's (1989) stages of ethnic identity development.

In the Diffuse stage, an individual may or may not have made a commitment to their ethnic identity. In the case of someone who may be in the diffuse stage, there has been no engagement in exploration, and no commitment made. Some characterizations of this stage are a preference for the dominant culture, and little thought or interest given to ethnicity. On the other hand, someone in the foreclosed stage may have a committed ethnic identity, but it was not as a result of exploration; it may be due to parental influence and transmission of values (Marcia, 1966; Phinney, 1990). Positive ethnic attitudes may have been absorbed from parents or other adults, and an individual may not show a preference for the majority group although they have not thought through the issues for themselves (Phinney, 1989). Depending on the socialization experience, feelings in both of these cases may be either positive or negative regarding one's own ethnicity (Phinney, 1990).

Moratorium, the second stage is evidenced by exploration, and some confusion about the meaning of one's ethnicity (Phinney, 1989). This stage may take place as the result of a significant experience that forces an awareness of one's ethnicity, which is followed by an intense process of immersion in one's own culture. This immersion process involves participating in activities such as reading to understand more about one's ethnic group, talking to people who share the same ethnicity, going to ethnic

museums, and participating actively in cultural events (Phinney, 1990). Although a commitment has not yet been made, the individual may begin to reject values of the dominant culture.

The final stage, achieved ethnic identity status, is characterized by a clear, secure understanding and acceptance of one's ethnicity (Phinney, 1989). After going through the exploratory stage, there is a deeper understanding and appreciation of one's own ethnicity. This stage may require resolution or coming to terms with cultural differences between the ethnic group of origin and the dominant culture group; as well as the lower status of one's own ethnic group in society (Phinney, 1990). Ethnic identity achievement does not necessarily imply a high degree of ethnic involvement; as individuals could be clear about their ethnicity without wanting to maintain the ethnic language or customs of their groups of origin (Phinney, 1990). This is why it is important to understand the meaning of ethnicity and the various components that compose ethnic identity. Phinney explains that:

> There are at least three aspects of ethnicity that may account for its psychological importance. These include (a) the cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors that distinguish ethnic groups; (b) the subjective sense of ethnic group membership (i.e., ethnic identity) that is held by group members; and (c) the experiences associated with minority status, including powerlessness, discrimination, and prejudice. (Phinney, 1996, p. 919)

The second component of Phinney's model focuses on cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors that distinguish ethnic groups and the subjective sense of ethnic group

membership. The model lacks a clearly defined relationship of the stages of ethnic identity development with the aspects of ethnic identity. While it is clear that a higher score on the MEIM represents ethnic identity achievement, it is not clear how scores can be translated into the other stages of ethnic identity development. The items of the measure also do not directly address the aspect of minority status and the related experiences. Cokley (2007) does offer, however, that the components of this model are not mutually exclusive and overlap with one another. The overlap is apparent in the first two psychological components but not in the aspect of minority status. This aspect may be where Afro-Caribbean individuals differ from some minority groups in the United States.

Afro-Caribbean individuals in the United States can be classified as a voluntary minority group. Voluntary minority groups are those who moved willingly to the United States in the hope of a better future and do not believe that their status on the society is forced (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Ogbu and Simons goes on to explain that involuntary minority groups are those who were conquered or enslaved and interpret their status in society as being forced on them by White people. The unique socio-political experiences of Afro-Caribbean individuals will be extrapolated in a later section of this literature review.

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)

The MEIM is Phinney's operationalized stage model of ethnic identity achievement in minority-group adolescents (Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007). It was created as a measure of exploration and commitment using an existing ego identity