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## **Black Social Workers Use of Racial Identity and Self Concept in the Workplace**

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# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Shielah M. DeBlanc

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2024

Abstract

Black Social Workers Use of Racial Identity and Self Concept in the Workplace

by

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MS, California University of Pennsylvania, 2015

BS, California University of Pennsylvania, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Developmental Psychology

Walden University

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## Abstract

Navigating the Black professional identity in U.S. work environments poses challenges for social workers, with limited research addressing racial salience, power dynamics, and self-concept within their specific workplace contexts. Using self-concept theory, and the multidimensional model of racial identity as theoretical and conceptual frameworks, the purpose of this research was to examine Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept using racial salience, power distance, and employee tenure as predictors. Using web-based surveys to collect data, a purposive sample of 77 participants were used to complete demographic information, a measure of centrality to gauge racial salience Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity, a measure of self-concept using the Self-Concept Questionnaire, a measure of power dynamics using the Power Distance Index subscale of the Cultural Values Scale, and a measure of tenure (length of time in current role). The research questions included (a) to what degree racial saliency predicted Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept in the workplace, (b) to what degree perceived power differences predicted Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept in the workplace, and (c) to what degree employee tenure predicted Black social workers' self-concept in the workplace. Using multiple regression analysis, results suggested that racial salience, power distance, and employee tenure were not significant predictors of Black social worker's self-concept in the workplace. The non-significance implies positive social change through a need for further exploration and reevaluation of the research design and variables. Specifically, how variables may intersect, as well as the potential for mixed-methods research in the future.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation, above all, to God, who has kept me close to him on the days where there was no end in sight. To my beloved mom, Lisa, whose boundless support and love anchored me, and to my siblings, Nakia and Kris, whose unwavering encouragement kept me grounded at every turn. I'm honored to be the first to bring our family to this level of learning. My gratitude extends to all those who contributed with kind words, valuable advice, and heartfelt prayers throughout this journey. Lastly, to my daughter Heaven, I dedicate this work to you with profound love and pride in my heart. May it serve as a reminder that you, my dear, are unstoppable!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Professionalism within the social work field requires a level of self-awareness and sensitivity to interface with a diverse population of individuals whom to some degrees have been identified as needing services. According to Willmott and Rundle-Thiele (2021), human behavior becomes fluent at the onset of individual interpretation, application, and reporting of theory use. In sum, to gain the self-awareness and sensitivity needed to navigate the field, there is an impending demand to first recognize the complexity and variety of systems absorbed by the individual providing said service. Within these systems are means to delivery methods that prompt varying intervention to influence multiple behaviors under various social and physical conditions (Willmott & Rundle-Thiele, 2021). Social work professionals need to navigate these conditions by developing a soundness in the way information is understood and therefore applied. Daddow (2017) situated her research in this space using code, literacy, and life worlds as context for introducing pedagogy as a way to landscape classroom learning and therefore application of experience and history into what will become social work application beyond the classroom. Specifically, cultural ways of being, which include language, behavior, and experience, are said to be closely aligned with curriculum knowledge and are juxtaposed in a way that creates challenge in lifeworld application (Daddow, 2017). This further illustrates the differences in the absorption of information and cultural influence that will eventually drive the services provided by social services professionals, which is facilitated through workplace interactions. The understanding of assimilation, political correctness, and the overall awareness of embedded majority group power

dynamics highlight unevenness that can cause identity conflict if intersectionality and identity are not recognized and incorporated into research conversations (Azzopardi, 2020). Thus, it is important to study the relationship between racial identity and self-concept—specifically African American racial identity and self-concept behavior to understand professional impact.

Recognizing that the workplace is a breeding ground for inequality despite diversity and inclusion efforts, it is critical to highlight the discriminatory nature of social service workplaces. Specifically with the Black professional, their identities become marginalized and as a result are mediated through the suppression and dilution (i.e., watering down) of such identity to conform to the majority norms in the workspace (Dickens et al., 2019; Santiago et al., 2021). Several studies consider the grand challenges of social work, namely such challenges as “eradicate social isolation,” “achieve equal opportunity and justice,” and “eliminate racism;” however, many of the studies fail to explicitly describe how the concept of race and racism would work to eliminate race issues. For example, Rao et al. (2021) listed race and racism as major components of analytic research but failed to provide detailed analysis of how the use of race and ethnicity inclusion can be influential to combating racial issues. Both concepts are equally important but are not conceptualized at the same frequency. My study adds to the overall research by providing understanding of racial salience or the degree to which an individual considers race to be relevant to self-concept situationally (Sellers et al., 1998). While there is detailed information on identity in both academia and the workplace (Azzopardi, 2020; Bubar et al., 2016; Dodd and Tolman, 2017), there is still a need to

understand how race plays a role in response to social work situations outside of lived experiences in the workplace. My research bridges this gap from a lens of self-concept, which is used to describe an individual's definition of self at the personal, relational, and collective level which is influenced by individual and cultural differences resulting in varied salience among individuals.

My work made the argument that Black professionals in social service fields possess a multiplicity of identities by nature of their life and work. They are responsible for the identity maintenance required for survival in the U.S. professional world, as well as the necessary upkeep of their professional standards of practices. In this study, I considered how salient or prominent an individual's racial identity, specifically the Black identity, is within a workplace setting using self-concept as a springboard to examine the racial identity.

Chapter 1 previews the components of the study such as background, problem statement, purpose of the study, and research questions. In the Background section, I summarize prior literature relative to the topic as well as identify the gap in that literature. I then transition into the Problem Statement section, where I explain the rationale for the study through literature and current research findings. Then in the Purpose of the Study section, I identify the variables and the type of study to be conducted. Finally, within the Research Questions and Hypotheses section, I outline what questions I answered with my research. An extensive review of the literature that supports these components is detailed thereafter in Chapter 2.

## **Background**

Research on racial identity development has long been studied in Black individuals. Namely research regarding group behavior and how understanding ideals, beliefs, and values can aid in understanding vantage point during interaction. For example, Davis (2018) described the connection between power and discourse using Black women as a focal point. The researcher submitted that discursive power lies with the dominant group and thus controls the narrative to public discourses. Relative to Black women is the theoretical notion that once this group began to understand how knowledge is produced and influenced, a standpoint emerged that allowed discourse, specifically communication discourses that resist power dynamics that work against their identity (Davis, 2018). Although many researchers have studied how race contributes to institutions and agencies, much work needs to be done to examine real-world application in the spaces that house those professional individuals who are thought to be among the most diverse given the nature of the services they provide. For example, Gist-Mackey (2017) conducted a study that examined communication in the context of unemployment support and training. The findings revealed that the communication training implemented in two separate programs only caters to communication standards of middle-class individuals, which again speaks to power dynamics that shun individuals from a lower socioeconomic class.

Evident in research is the fact that White individuals who are shielded from accurate information about African American experience can potentially reject the White-privilege America argument, which negates the ongoing oppression and unequal

treatment that occurs (Sisco, 2020). Examining factors that contribute to self-concept and racial identity saliency in the workplace (i.e., power dynamics) is critical as it is through one's interactions, both abstract and concrete, where conflict (or in the context of my study, variance in situational responses) can occur (Perkins et al., 2019). Sisco (2020) described the habit of in-group (non-minority) co-workers to disregard the experiences of Black people, but at the same time be intrigued by the sentiments of individuals who encounter struggle. Examining Black individuals on the receiving end of that type of experience is critical to closing the gap in which it is situated.

Understanding the influences on an individual's identity that contribute to interaction and thus self-concept is critical to lessen miscommunication, identity suppression, and other discrepancies in service delivery. For example, Jackson (2018) explained in his research the idea of a professional pose or a "professional style and behavior meant to navigate professional settings" with collegiate Black men who were expected to present as professionals. Jackson's findings revealed that in order to cultivate a professional pose, an individual must outwardly project behaviors that are in alignment with middle-class behaviors in White-dominated professional settings. At the apex of many identity concepts are the sentiments of William Edward Du Bois, better known as W.E.B. Du Bois, who proposed the idea of double consciousness which in sum describes the notion of an individual having two selves congruent with more than one identity as being first African and then American (Lento, 2021). Little research focuses attention on racial identity crisis and how self-concept can influence the presence, use, and salience of



identities in the professional setting and how this can impact length of time in the field thus derived premise for this study.

### **Problem Statement**

In the field of social work, there is a universal understanding that the professionals within provide quality services to a diverse population in response to situations that may arise. Research that highlights the color divide in professional institutions is necessary, especially studies that examine the threat to an individual's identity that is often nuanced by written and spoken language, compliance trainings, as well as supervisor-subordinate interactions. Racial membership has long acted as an anchor for African Americans to stabilize their identities in White-dominated spaces such as the workplace (Gist-Mackey, 2017; Stanford, 2021; Villotti et al., 2019). Specifically, the absorption of racial cues during interactions can alert an individual to race-related events that influence responses to a situation (Hoggard et al., 2016). For example, Emerson and Murphy (2014) provided situational cues in the context of workplace settings that would alert an individual to potential identity threat or conflict. This includes cues that signal representation, cues that make identity and stereotypes salient, cues in diversity training programs, cues in physical environment, and positive stereotypes in the workplace (Emerson & Murphy, 2014). Sisco (2020) found in her work that various themes emerge when there is a level of incivility in the workplace in corporate America which included: safeguarding personal narrative, safeguarding Blackness, microtargeting opportunities, and micromanaging expectations. Whether themes or cues, what became evident from the research is the need to study how self-concept surrounding racial

saliency and power difference is germane to an individual's identity development and longevity in a particular position.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine how self-concept is related to racial saliency and perceived power dynamics (power distance) in the workplace. The intent of the study was to add to the knowledge of the social work field in the journey to diversity and inclusion by examining the relationship between racial saliency, perceived power difference (also referred to as power distance), employee tenure, and self-concept in a professional setting with a specific focus on Black social work professionals.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

RQ1: To what degree does racial saliency predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept in the workplace?

$H_{01}$ : Racial saliency as measured by the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity does not predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept as measured by the Self-Esteem Scale in the workplace.

$H_{a1}$ : Racial saliency as measured by the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity will predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept as measured by the Self-Esteem Scale in the workplace.

RQ2: To what degree does perceived power distance as measured by the Power Distance Index predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept in the workplace?

*H*<sub>02</sub>: Perceived power distance as measured by the Power Distance Index does not predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept.

*H*<sub>a2</sub>: Perceived power distance as measured by the Power Distance Index will predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept as measured by the Self-Esteem Scale.

RQ3: To what degree does Black social workers' employee tenure predict attitudes about self-concept?

*H*<sub>03</sub>: Employee tenure as measured by length of stay in current role does not predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept as measured by the Self-Esteem Scale.

*H*<sub>a3</sub>: Employee tenure as measured by length of stay in current role will predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept as measured by the Self-Esteem Scale.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Carl Rogers's self-concept theory encompasses the idea of becoming or being. By recognizing the idea of becoming as self-actualization, an individual's self becomes the focal point of the experience (Yazdani & Ross, 2019). According to Sebastian et al. (2008), during the convergence of one's own mental state and that of others, emerges the maturation process of the individual self. Researchers have explained that during this time in a child's development, the two main indicators of self are direct appraisals which derive from our own experiences and reflected appraisals which originate from other's perspectives (Sabastian et al., 2008). Self can be viewed from many different perspectives, which can include concepts such as self-consciousness or body image

(Keromnes et al., 2019), as well as physical self or perception of motor competence in adolescence (Dreiskämper et al., 2022); however, for the purpose of this study, I used self-concept in proximity to adolescent development through to adulthood in the workplace (i.e., esteem, confidence, etc.). The self-concept theory is mainly rooted in social and humanistic psychology; however, developmental stages can influence tasks associated with the self-phenomena. According to Rogers (1959) self-concept is comprised of three parts: (a) self-image, (b) self-worth, and (c) the ideal self. Nestled in the theory is the notion that the self is made up of conscious experiences that create self-concept, which can be understood as the integration of experience into organizing units known as self-schemas (Rogers, 1959).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The multidimensional model of racial identity is a fusion of both mainstream and underground approaches to racial identity. Sellers et al. (1998) submitted that the underground approach (qualitative meanings of identity influenced by experience and culture) as well as the mainstream approach (contextual understanding of racial identity in proximity to other identities) are complimentary and under this model should be synthesized. This is measured across four dimensions: racial salience or the extent to which race is relevant to one's self concept under situational context, racial centrality or the extent to which an individual defines their race as a part of their whole identity over time, racial regard or the degree to which an individual has positive feelings about their race, and lastly racial ideology which are the thoughts, views and opinions of how Black individuals should act (Sellers et al., 1998). Each of these dimensions, along with the

rationale for a race salience focus, are detailed in Chapter 2 along with additional review of discourse analysis.

### **Nature of the Study**

There exists a multitude of prior research methodologies and measurement tools to lay foundation. The quantitative researcher works to eliminate subjectivity by operating from standardized methods to cultivate and examine variable relationships that create specific effects (Lazaraton, 2002); therefore, I maintained the use of standardized tools consistently throughout the research. In my study, I utilized quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between Black social work professionals' self-concept and racial saliency. In addition, I used quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between Black social work professionals' self-concept and perceived power difference. Lastly, I examined the relationship between self-concept and employee tenure, thus connecting racial saliency, perceived power difference, and employee tenure as independent and dependent variables. I used web-based surveys to gather basic demographic information in the study as well. Participants were asked to respond to the questionnaires that were associated with each variable. Questions were comprised of the centrality subscale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity to measure racial saliency, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to measure self-concept, and the Power Distance Index Subscale of Cultural Values Scale to measure perceived power difference in the given situation. This information was then used to examine the correlation between variables of racial

saliency, perceived power difference, and self-concept, as well as employee tenure using a single-item question to measure employee tenure at the participant's current job.

Data were collected using web-based surveys. Inferential statistics, specifically regression, was then utilized to study whether there is a relationship between variables and the strength of that relationship. According to Scalcau (2021), the results of quantitative research can be used to make generalizations because it seeks to examine a sample of common features of groups of people as opposed to the individual lived experience thus, my study made generalizations about racial identity in Black social work professionals through the use of the aforementioned quantitative methods.

### **Definitions**

*Self-concept*: Self as a concept has been very loosely defined to include multiple identities and definitions per the individual in their environment (Liechty, 2018) but namely as a concept that includes all experiences an individual brings to awareness that then become a part of their self-definition (McMillan, 2004). According to Rogers (1959),

The self-structure is an organized configuration of perceptions of the self. ...It is composed of such elements as the perceptions of one's characteristics and abilities; the percepts and concepts of the self in relation to others and to the environment; the value qualities which are perceived as associated with experiences and objects; and the goals and ideals which are perceived as having positive or negative valence. (p. 501)

*Power distance:* Power distance refers to individual satisfaction of exerting power which leads to either an upward or downward tendency (Bruins & Wilke, 1993). Within an organizational context, power distance is best defined as the degree to which the less powerful individuals expect and accept a hierarchal power distribution that is unequal (Gerlach & Eriksson, 2021). Part of the cultural values dimensions proposed by Geert Hofstede (1980), power distance is thought to be a framework for examining values in the workplace specifically the unequal power from a cross-cultural perspective. Researchers furthered this work by addressing cultural values from an individual perspective to connect the attitudes and behaviors of an individual to cultural orientations at an individual level (Yoo et al., 2011) This can then be generalized to individuals within an organization as opposed to macro-level cross-cultural organization comparisons.

*Intersectionality:* An overlap or junction at which multiple identities are interconnected and inform experiences and instances of disadvantage. Crenshaw (1989) explained in her research that intersectionality is critical in understanding instances of discrimination and power dynamics that marginalize “otherwise privileged” members of a group. Her research highlights the need to reject movement along a single categorical axis, implying that there is a multiplicity of identities that can present and be influenced by experiences and to continue along said axis, would be to minimize the complexity of identities affected within the situational context (Crenshaw, 1989). According to Harris and Kruger (2021), intersectionality is compounded points of oppression that operate as a unit as opposed to autonomous occurrences of experience. There exist other definitions of intersectionality that make an argument outside of Black feminism and moves towards an

all-inclusive definition of intersectionality (Carastathis, 2016); however, to ensure alignment, I used the definition above as it gives foundational context to intersectionality with specificity to the race issues and discrimination discussed in this study.

*Role relationships:* A role relationship in the context organization refers to the way “institutional roles and authority reside in the mode of presentation at the linguistic/interactional level” (Halvorsen, & Srikant, 2015, p. 3). There is a sense of reciprocity in the power dynamic that is structured by interaction. Consistent with this definition is the idea that individuals project outward the internal identity structures that will help the receiver perceive that individual as a unique role player (Carter & Bruene, 2019).

*Employee tenure:* A measure that refers to the length of time with an employer at the time of survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). This measure can apply to long- or short-term employees.

### **Assumptions**

As the researcher, I made necessary assumptions generalizable to common knowledge. These assumptions included that the participants answered the questions to the surveys with fidelity, honesty, and without fear of pressure or repercussion from individual, agency, or institution resulting from disclosure. There were varying levels of education achievement among the target population, meaning skill levels varied; thus, the social work professionals may or may not have felt obligated to give the perceived correct answer based on skill set. Additionally, participants may have been influenced by other parts of their culture and identity, which for the purpose of this study they were



asked specifically about racial and professional identities. Due to the nature of the study, it was difficult to acquire participants, so various participant pools were explored.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The basic intent of the study was to examine the association between racial saliency, power difference, and employee tenure relative to overall self-concept. It was my general intent to examine the Black professional experience of social workers to further diversity and inclusion efforts in social work. I planned to use surveys and scales that have already been tested for validity to collect data. The study's participants were individuals within the field who identify as Black. Individuals who have not completed a 4-year degree in social work were excluded from this study. This was determined by developmental and academic grouping specifically as it pertains to practicing social work in a professional setting. Generalizability was increased given academic requirements of the participants as well as population demographics I used for participant recruitment.

### **Limitations**

There were many possible points of limitation to the methodology and design of my research. This was a correlational study, meaning I did not study the causal relationships of the variables but instead whether a statistical relationship existed. Additionally, concepts such as power difference and self-concept have largely been studied from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective; thus for my study, a threat to internal validity may have been the language used in both the research questions and in the surveys that were used. According to Lazaraton (2002), using "to what extent" makes distinguishable quantitative from qualitative methodology in that researchers are able to

determine statistical meaning derived from qualitative characteristics of data. Another limitation was to external validity: participants were required to identify as a certain race and all participants had to have work experience in the social service field. To minimize bias and to address limitations, I considered the fact that as a Black woman scholar, there were certain aspects of this study that were relatable to my experiences and identity, which may have interfered with the way I interpreted, structured, and analyzed the study and its data. Thus, I used web-based methods to collect data, so there was no direct contact or interface with the participants.

### **Significance**

Much research exists that emphasizes the criticality of diversity and inclusion efforts in social services as cultural similarities and differences of both the clientele and the staff are crucial to the success of services (Cano, 2020). Studies have shown that an individual's professional identity is predicated on versions of "self" inclusive of past, present, and future identities that help to formulate who they should be on their career path (Bentley et al., 2019). Versions of self would imply the presence of other social identities that make up "self" in addition to those characteristics that can be attributed to the identity displayed in the workplace. Parallel to and more frequently intersecting this process of identity construction is racial identity, which in the workplace is operationalized through racial discrimination and power dynamics. The presentation of these identities is situation based and can surface interchangeably or dichotomously intersect given the social cues present during interaction. The degree to which personal self and racial self are influenced and how it co-exists with power difference and

employee tenure in Black social service professionals have been left unaddressed in the research community. Focus on these aspects is critical as racial identity expression and suppression in the workplace are germane to strengthening services for clientele as well as interactions, policy, and process between staff.

Self-concept theory and the multidimensional model of racial identity are both theories that can inform the pivotal points above. It is important when examining identity beyond just language, to also incorporate what can be described as “the other stuff” in order to understand the significance of social and historical context that contribute to the individual and their identity (Gee, 2015). The multidimensional model of racial identity upholds the notion that a construct (in this case identity) that is most accessible to an individual in various situational instances has high probable use when judgement and expression of behavior is necessary during situational interactions (Sellers et al., 1998). For example, Whitaker (2019) used Black-sounding first names as example to explain that because Black names historically have disadvantages attached to situations associated with professional, academic, and social interactions, individuals will consider using a pseudonym during the interview process to remove bias behavior they may experience, thus suppressing their racial identity in order to be considered for job opportunities. Additionally, intersectionality becomes usable to the point where multiple identities intersect and discrimination, primarily in policy, can be experienced through more than one identity simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1989). These examples were significant because they provided a new way to examine the degree to which these modes of interaction are experienced by Black individuals, which can further research in the

topic area beginning with policy reformation that peaks on important points in diversity and inclusion efforts in institutions and organizations. This research was relevant to social change because it gave Black social service professionals the opportunity to provide perspective into racial identity saliency and its connection to the services they are expected to provide.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 1, I described the background and problem statement, which highlighted the premise for my study topic. Specifically, a focus on African American social services professionals and racial identity salience within the workplace, which was to be centered around self-concept. Also included in this chapter were research-based definitions that support the terms to be used within the contents of all study chapters which were included for the readers convenience and ease of understanding. Other important areas highlighted in Chapter 1 included the purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical and conceptual foundation, nature of the study, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations of the research study.

Critical to examining this research was the study of race, self-concept, and power difference constructs necessary to understand the ebb and flow of identity saliency amongst Black social workers. Biologically, barring significant disruption in development, humans develop the ability to distance themselves from their own experience to allow themselves to take on another person's perspective. This process helps individuals to develop meaning by discerning how one person's words, grammar, and behavior differ from another to communicate a perspective on an experience. In sum,

literacy is the ability to comprehend and communicate; and neither comprehension nor communication can occur without action and contextualized perspective. The literature supports this concept as Gee (2015) extended these basic principles of literacy to social interaction. He submitted that by conceptualizing social languages in communicative performances through language, symbols, or actions are relative to social activity, value-based perspective, and situated social identities of groups. Gee (2012) also explained that one can reasonably say they know a given social language if they can “do” the particular language or recognize it when one is not or cannot “do” the language.

The literature supported the need to apply this concept to racial identity and saliency in that the stable elements of the collective identity are also influenced over time based on encounters with spaces and people. Individuals hold multiple identities that are ordered in value and interplay or inform each other producing the self-concept. Perception of racial identity is the most valid indicator of identity and overt behavior should ideally match self-reported and group reported perceptions of racial identity. This study addressed these areas by recognizing the potential influence of all existing theories on racial identity within the workplace and the discourse that surrounds it. The findings of this study provided necessary insight in advancing each topic area and the obvious overlap. More in-depth review and analysis of the literature is in Chapter 2. In this chapter, concepts such as self-concept, racial discrimination, and power distance were detailed to further support the premise for the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

There has been much research on how racial identity influences the perception and processing of social interactions. There exists an underlying cultural implication to the way individuals make meaning of a situation which is influenced by the degree to which an individual holds their racial identity salient (Sellers et al., 1998). Specifically for Black individuals, qualitative works detail the experiences of racial instances that have called for a watered-down version of their Blackness out of fear of racial discrimination, tokenism, and stereotypes (Santiago et al., 2021). The current racial climate of the United States supports their claims as there has been a resounding outpour of Black pride whereby individuals have embraced solidarity through racial injustice protest, rejection of societal beauty standards through hair expression, as well as confrontation of microaggressions in various environments. This outward expression of racial identity for some mutes other identities (e.g., professional, spiritual/religious) that would otherwise be dominant in traditionally White-dominated spaces such as institutions, schools, and court rooms.

Gee (2017) contended that this type of identity performance can create discourse in which behavior, actions, language, and beliefs are expressed. Research has revealed that many Black Americans experience confrontation in the workplace, where actions, tone, and intention are often misinterpreted at professional institutions that are predominantly White. Halverson and Sarangi (2015) submitted that these interpretations are often characterized by the role in which an individual is associated, specifically in the field of social services. Many other articles detail workplace culture relative to the

display of identity that is deemed acceptable therein (Brewster et al., 2014; Halverson et al. 2015; Vilotti et al., 2019). Thus, this study focused specifically on the workplace environment, targeting Black social work professionals.

Through literature review, recurring themes relative to self-concept, racial identity development, and racial saliency became evident. Derived from these themes is the need to examine the Black professional through an understanding of identity in the workplace environment and how this impacts self-concept. Chapter 2 will contribute to the overview of these topics parsed out in a way that outlines developmental components of Black racial identity. To maximize understanding and display an exhaustive review of literature, this chapter will include peer-reviewed publications, research strategies, theoretical foundations, and conclusions about the anticipated quantitative study that adds to the research topic.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

When conducting research on literature germane to the topic, I reduced my research window to include recent publications within the last 5 years and seminal works of those researchers who were instrumental to the contribution of this topic area. Databases used to collect information include ProQuest, PsycBOOKs, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, Google Scholar, SagePub, Psychology, ERIC, PubMed and Education Source. Key search terms used in the literature review included the following: *black professionals, identity development, discourse, ethnic-racial socialization, racial identity, socio-demographic factors, symbolic interactionism, social literacy, appraisal cognitive development, social literacy, identity threat, racial discrimination, micro-aggression,*

*language, behavior switch, culture, young people, race, racism, social class, mobility, marginalization, identity, ethnography, emotion and affect, racial bias, experiences of racism, African Americans and discrimination, burden of racial discrimination, racism and health, self-perception, self-concept, self-worth, culture, African American, Black men, Black women, social identity, self-identity, norms/social roles, performing the self, performativity, feminist theory, psychology of women, identification, job performance, intersectionality, black feminism, performance-based identity, self-definition, work-related identity, ethnicity, classification, racial identification, social influences, racist language, workplace environment, discourse role, activity role, workplace discourse, decision making, activity analysis, corporate America, career development, coping strategies, resilience, intersectionality, multiple identities, social service, social work, social workers, Black social workers, power distance, cultural values, and employee tenure.* Various permutations of the keywords were used in different databases to search for information. Searches were narrowed and filtered using features of EBSCOhost and Google Scholar, which allowed the space for more updated and relevant literature built upon foundational works that were outdated. Literature directly related to the topic as well as literature that may be neighboring to the topic was reviewed and was balanced between qualitative and quantitative publications.

### **Theoretical Foundation: Self-Concept Theory**

Self-concept, proposed by Carl Rogers through his work on personality, is largely contingent on an individual's need to self-actualize (Rogers, 1959). Rogers posited that the idea of "self" is central to the nature of the oneself and the conditions of natural



development (Yazdani & Ross, 2019). Self-concept is typically equated to a person's perception and evaluation of who they are, what they offer, and how this information is perceived by others (Yazdani & Ross, 2019; Esnaola et al., 2020). Rogers's theory of self-concept is one that is present throughout adolescence and is typically fluid across the lifespan (Yazdani & Ross, 2019). Research shows that self-concept is critical to the Black identity in the context of thinking, being, and doing. A variety of literature describes, however, that Black identity is not always salient to the performer that of which can be influenced by identity classification, as well as experiences with race. In fact, consistent with Sellers's multidimensional model of racial identity, saliency is directly impacted by one's ability to recognize and respond to their environment at present (Sellers, 2016), which is an expansion of Rogers's basic views about awareness and the threshold in which individuals freely admit, deny, or distort to their real selves and their ideal selves (Rogers, 1959). However, it is the position of my proposal that the ability to recognize these cues is directly related to the saliency and self-concept. Also consistent is Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, which is nuanced in identity saliency in that intersecting identities exist in a given space, thus a given situation where the marginalized identities present simultaneously (e.g., workplace; Crenshaw, 1989). Therefore, one should be able to examine salience, and thus behavior, by ascertaining which and to what degree recognizable identity cues are read and surface.

### **Conceptual Framework: Sellers's Model of Racial Identity**

The overarching basis for this study from a developmental perspective is racial identity development of African American individuals. Examining how race adds an

extra layer to discourse performance is critical in understanding the use of identities when responding to various situations. According to White-Johnson et al. (2010), early socialization of adolescents involves various settings of influence in which a child is exposed. This includes school, family, and extra-curricular activities in which a child is socialized to the norms of the environment. White-Johnson et al. submitted that of these influential factors, parental roles are most important as they are charged with managing various aspects of identity including puberty and peer relationships; however, for the African American parent, another contentious point of socialization must be considered—race. When addressing various aspects of identity development, African American individuals must consider their membership to the minority group and how exists in the world is the functional rejection of Blackness (Nelbitt et al., 2008, Willis, 2020).

With racial identity as an extension of identity development (Hoggard et al., 2015), a notable facet of how to quantify the navigation of environments through the lens of identity would first be through mention of qualitative ideals of the underground approach. W.E.B Du Bois was a seminal author in the field of Black identity development during the creation of this approach. During this time, he put words to the experience of Black people in America who inevitably come to a state of double consciousness due to the prejudiced, racist, view of Blackness perpetuated by society and the view of Blackness they develop for themselves (Lento, 2021). While many authors in the field of Black identity development may disagree on the process (Allen, 2003; Fertik & Hanses, 2019; Gooding-Williams, 2009) and the outcome of Black racial identity

development, a majority would agree that it is formed, facilitated, and shaped by discrimination and oppression (Hoggard et al., 2016; Nelbitt, 2004; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Writers from the underground approach contend that racism is not the only factor that influences racial identity development. They also assert that culture, both the remaining shared values and beliefs that were saved through chattel slavery and those learned in the New World (United States of America). Thus, becomes important the work of Sellers et al. (1998), who created the multidimensional model of racial identity to capture both of those elements in ways that prior theorists were unable. Thus, for this study, I will use the multidimensional model of racial identity.

The multidimensional model of racial identity suggests that racial identity is composed of four dimensions that can be divided into two larger categories of significance and meaning. The dimensions that contribute to significance are salience and centrality. The second set of dimensions related to the meaning of being Black include regard and ideology. For this study racial salience and centrality will be used from the model. Sellers et al. (1998) defined racial salience as the extent to which one's race is a relevant part of one's self-concept at a particular point in time. This element is highly impacted by the context of the situation and one's likelihood or desire to define themselves racially. Racial salience is a mediating process between the stable characteristics of identity and behavior. Centrality on the other hand is defined by Sellers et al. (1998) as the extent to which a person defines themselves by race normally. It differs from racial saliency in that it captures stable elements of one's own racial identity. Embedded in this component is also the hierarchical categorization of the multiple

identities that comprise the self. Racial centrality has been difficult to research empirically as it can be confounded with saliency.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**

#### **Cultural Influence on Identity**

*Culture* can be used as an overarching term that includes human behavior, human philosophy, and habitual principles of living (Davis, 2020). According to Davis (2020), the cultural component of race (skin tone) has been used as a divisive measure in Black culture, which has caused cultural contamination through racially charged socialization practices. To understand Black culture, it is imperative to explore it by way of acculturation into historically “superior” White America. The premise in which Black people acclimated to the Americas was created to systematically warp self-identity, which is still perpetuated in today’s African American culture. Thus, it is critical to study race as a central construct to behavioral discourse.

#### **Culture**

Culture sets the premise of an individual’s sense of self, others, and the relationship between the two (Markus & Kitayama, 2010; Oyserman & Markus, 2014). Research supports a positive relationship between Black cultural values and prosocial domains (Johnson & Carter, 2020), additionally low status racial identity also referred to as ethnic-racial identity has been linked to prosocial behaviors being nuanced in respectable citizenship. This refers to the presentation of intersecting identities that are deemed respectable in the context of the dominant cultures in society. Further research highlights the idea of out-group populations creating identity affirming spaces where

there is a sameness and bond formed from culture (Stafford et al., 2021; Grier & Ajayi, 2019). Relevant to Black culture is the idea of “identity affirmation space” or the space that houses the relationships that function as an extension of family through the identification of individuals who share commonalities as well as a shared sense of social and economic gain or opportunity (i.e., fictive kin; Stanford et al., 2022; Taylor et al., 2022). From the perspective of work and career dynamics this idea of forming an identity affirming space or a workplace culture in which Black professionals can work under the notion of shared culture can be examined from the lens of role-relationships, racial saliency, and self-concept.

### **Racial Identity**

The idea of race has long been studied to cultivate an understanding of how it contributes to situations, interactions, and behaviors in various settings. In order to understand racial identity development, it must first be deconstructed into its simplest forms—race and identity. Marcia (1966) described identity through four statuses (i.e., diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement) and suggested that adolescents can transition through these statuses through exploration and commitment with the possibility of membership to more than one status at a time. Using these identity statuses, Seaton et al. (2012) conducted a 3-year study of 566 African American participants that tracked progression, regression, and consistency through each status, finding that high racial socialization, namely parental messages about race, led to lower instances of identity foreclosure (low exploration, high commitment) and diffusion (low exploration, low commitment) as compared to an achieved identity (high exploration, high commitment).

In other words, children who are socialized to understand their race as a chief identity are more likely to have reached an achieved identity. Like Seaton, other researchers have used perceptions about racial discrimination, racial socialization, and racial identity development to examine how race influences self (Cross et al., 2017; Hoggard et al., 2019). Hoggard et al. (2015) inferred that the extent to which an individual defines themselves relative to race (racial centrality), feelings about group membership and being African American (private regard), and perception of how others view or feel about African Americans (public regard) are all indicators of approach and response to race-related events and situations. Specifically, high race centrality or subscription to race as a main identity can prompt depressive symptoms (concentration issues, poor decision making, anxiousness, etc.) in situational instances that are race heavy.

Research centered around Black racial identity speak to the “ah ha” moment that triggers social understanding of Blackness, described in the findings of Neville and Cross (2016), as a racial awakening that is composed of epiphanies and external events that speak to Blackness and the transformation of Black performance relative to behavior and increased knowledge within the new schema of group identity Blackness. This “racial awakening” is typically followed by racial activism, racial pride, and other unapologetic open displays of race appreciation. Schmader et al.’s (2017) research seems to be somewhat contrary following a study that measured perceived displays of pride categorized as either hubristic or authentic. Results show that Black individuals across unspecified, academic, and work-related settings are perceived as less hubristic (excessive) in their pride as opposed to their White counterparts; however, White

individuals are penalized more for their hubristic display of pride (Schmader et al., 2017). Critical to identity status, racial centrality and Black pride is the idea of the collective identity or the shared connectedness to a group. Within the African American race group, cultural values, beliefs, and principles have positive of psychological and prosocial implications, many of which perpetuate race-related coping necessary to make it through various race-related interactions with outgroup members (Johnson & Carter, 2020).

### **Intersectionality**

*Intersectionality* is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the de-marginalization of experiences outlined by identity overlap (Bailey et al., 2019).

Crenshaw (1989) explained intersectionality from the perspective of Black women and how advocacy for the interests of Black women is seen by the majority as a threat to political normalcy. Crenshaw made an argument against single-axis identity labels, claiming that simultaneous existence of more than one marginalized identity can further create disparity and inequitable approach by the masses (Crenshaw, 1989).

The effects of discriminatory and lopsided power dynamics have long been documented throughout research. For example, many works detail how intersecting identities in the workplace create an environment that affects both behavior and response of those holding marginalized identities (Cech & Rothwell, 2020; Crawford, 2021; Hanlon & Taylor, 2022; Salter et al., 2021). Researchers have also increasingly seen the need to expand social work curriculum by integrating the concept intersectionality to illustrate power dynamics in the multiplicity of identities held by both social workers and clients (Alvarez et al., 2021; Edmonds-Cady & Wingfield, 2017; Simon et al., 2022).

Research on intersectionality submits that identities can be categorical in nature yet exist at the same time as non-independent experiences in a given setting. Rosette et al. (2018) used race and gender as two social categories that in the workplace intersect, thus giving the overlap a greater sum meaning than each category independently. For example, if an individual identifies as a Black scholar, then the sum of this identity, by definition of intersectionality, would be weighted more heavily than the identities of being Black and a scholar. Thus, the need to have an awareness of the presence of intersecting identities becomes important. The intersecting identity present in this research is the Black social worker.

### **Racial Discrimination**

Race-related coping is a survival response to discriminatory practices (Johnson & Carter, 2020). Racial discrimination is situated within the larger system of racism which marks relational experiences with racial themes (Banks & Stephens, 2018). These relational experiences can occur in various environments where there is a potential for interpersonal, structural, and institutional racism (Banks & Stephens, 2018). Research shows that although not all African American individuals have the same experience with racial discrimination (Hoggard et al., 2017), personal experiences with racial discrimination and anticipated racial discrimination influences parents' socialization messages to children acting as a buffer to child exposure to racial discrimination (Holloway & Varner, 2021, White Johnson et al., 2010). Alio et al. (2020) described racial discrimination using an iceberg analogy, which likens the tip of the iceberg to overt discrimination and the ice below the surface as structural and institutional discrimination



that is indirect and embedded in process and policy. Their findings show that racial discrimination is still present in the United States but is coded in racially “progressive” statements similar to “I don’t see color.” This speaks to the research of Mouzon and McLean (2017), who found that consistent in the African American culture are patterns of internalized racism in which most African Americans do not have immunity against coded racial messages about their race group regardless of ethnicity (cultural identification). These covert messages, for example, can come in the form of social segregation in workplace environments where African Americans must reject the notion of internalized racism to protect themselves against perceptions about race as well as their Black professional identity (Sisco, 2020). Subtle discriminatory nuances against race impact self-perception and individual’s beliefs about race categories.

### **Self-Concept and Self Perception**

Specifically, in the child and adolescent stages of development, children internalize messages from both their environment as well as their parents and these perceived messages then influence how that individual will define their future and past selves. Self-concept represents the whole of an individual which includes the cognitive and emotional views of a being (Carter & Bruene, 2019). Dimensional in nature, self-concept usually includes self-perception, self-esteem, and self-worth all of which are situated in proximity to identity, experience, and environment. To study the multidimensional perspective of identity Wilson and Leaper (2016) utilized “Cameron’s (2004) social identity scales (centrality, in-group affect, in-group ties) and Egan and Perry’s (2001) gender identity scales (felt typicality, felt conformity pressure)” (p. 1621).

Paramount to the use of these identity scales was centrality or what the researchers describe as the “perceived importance of a particular social identity to one’s self-concept” (p. 1621) this is how I will gauge racial salience with the social work workplace being the situational context.

Taking this a step further with a specific focus on self-perception, it is recognized as a term used to describe traits and characteristics that evaluate self-worth (Adams et al., 2020). These traits or descriptors are then used by the perceiver to generate an assumption of one’s self-esteem using traits that are aligned with the perceiver’s social schemas as a frame of reference (Beauregard & Dunning, 2001). Perception starts to develop in infancy and matures as a child progresses through the developmental stages by both internal and external motivators in which race categorically fits into both. Race is folded into self-perception as it contributes to how an individual feels about themselves, which in turn translates into beliefs about various traits including skin tone (shades of black and brown), and language (Atkinson, 2016; Adams, 2020).

Situated in societal standard exists a concept called White accusation. Fordham and Ogbu, (1986), conducted research outlining White accusation linking academic underachievement to African American’s students’ rejection of majority standard and fear of being associated with the state of being or acting White. A study conducted by Neal et al. (2010) found that adolescents put less bearing on White accusation in the context of academics than when the accusations are associated with social activities. The findings of both studies would suggest that perception of others relative to connectedness with salient group membership is heavily weighted against racial identity status. This is

also consistent with White-Johnson et al. (2010), Jones and Neblett (2017) on environmental and parental messages communicated about race. Specifically, how an individual perceives self in relation to their social environment as opposed to their academic environment differs based on saliency as nuanced by the perceiver. Exposure to these messages compiles what is known as identity knowledge.

### **Identity Knowledge**

Research indicates that differences in exposure can account for variation in stored memories of an individual (Stanley et al., 2021). Identity knowledge for the purpose of this study will be described similarly to Ilievski et al. (2020)'s work on knowledge and identity of long tail entities which describes identity knowledge as total recall and recognition of stored information that is accessible to the learner for long-term use. Research has found that when accessing identity knowledge, the context of language becomes critical to the interaction. Marian and Neisser (2000) found in their study that if the linguistic context of an experience is the same from initial retrieval to encoding, then ease of access to identity knowledge should be more prominent than if the context is different. A notable mention from this study is also the presence of linguistic behavior associated with the identity knowledge retrieved. This is consistent with more updated research from Bentley et al. (2019) who found that individual success in the workplace and professional identity is related to accessible identity knowledge as evidenced by same context implications of the study.

### **Shift in Code or Behavior**

Most work done in code-switching has been with participants who are Bi-lingual and early language learners. The idea was codified into research as early as the 1960s by John J. Gumperz. Originally, linguistic researchers aimed to discover how bilingual speakers blended their languages. It was thought as improper language performance or failure to adhere to linguistic rules, but later research supported the idea that the blending was intentional and followed patterned rules that linguistically congruent people would understand (Heredia & Brown, 2015). Further research developed by Carol Meyers-Scotton looked at the motivation for code switching and found that code switchers choose to do so as they navigate rights and obligations of their language performance and the audience. For any given interaction there are certain social rules at play, also known as rights and obligations. The language performer has the choice to perform the expected performance or deviate from the norm. Meyers-Scotton (1998, 2020) argues that the choice to deviate (or code-switch) is dependent on the social factors the speaker would like to mediate. When performance standards are not clear, the speaker may explore with codes in order to establish a favorable social outcome suited to their needs (Meyers-Scotton, 1998, 2020).

Because codes are highly technical terms related to and dependent on the profession speaking about them, in this case linguistics--of which is outside the scope of my practice, Code switching is relative to developmental psychology through the idea of Gee's (2015) work on "Big D" Discourse. James Paul Gee (2015) takes time to define discourse and separate the two types, to encapsulate the idea expressed above as being

proximal to self-experience from a historical context of speaking, being, and doing. He argues that “Big D” Discourse is reflective of performances of identity that are expressed through language, actions, interactions, tools, technologies, beliefs, and values (Gee, 2015). Germane to my research is the notion that the thought of “being” is a reference to “being oneself” (i.e., self-concept).

This creates a flexible framework through which researchers, and me, can begin to look at how Discourses that involve self-concept language, values, and undertones are leveraged to better gain social outcomes that are favorable in the work environment. Heredia and Brown (2015) contend that fluent speakers who code switch seem to have a level of understanding of both languages to the extent that rules, even though they deviate from the norm, are understood by those who also hold the same identities. When considering discursive code switching, one must examine the identities at play and agree that the performer has membership, fluent access rather, to the discourse of two identities possibly within the same domain (gender, race, ethnicity, religion, etc.). This phenomenon can be conceptualized by applying the notion of double consciousness or multi-consciousness.

### **Behavioral Influences and Identity Development**

Themes in research suggest that a multiplicity of identities are responsible for the dichotomous Black–White performance required for survival in the U.S. professional world, as well as responsible for discourses necessary to upkeep professional standards of practices; and have been for centuries (Davis et al., 2018; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Neal-Barnett et al., 2010). For example, there is a theme in the literature of Black women

professionals having high emotional intelligence and identity saliency awareness than the due to the nature of occupying White-dominated spaces and occupations (Crawford, 2021; Dickens, & Chavez, 2018). Thus, studying self and salience and individual choices may add to the work of code-switching motivation and impact the profession in a positive way as it relates to cultural sensitivity in practice. Same example can be used for lack of men professionals who are said to have to use a guise when in professional space to not be categorized as a stereotype (Cornileus, 2013; Jackson, 2018). Erikson placed a special emphasis on identity crisis and identity exploration as the processes by which identity development occurs. He highlights that identity is the outcome of biological, psychological, and social factors in action through choice. As such identity development is impacted by psychological, biological, and social contexts (Kroger, 2017).

Building on the work of Erikson, Marcia (1966) proposed that identity attainment and role confusion did not truly conclude in adolescence. Instead, Marcia proposed that identity development begins in adolescence by way of a period of crisis where values and choices are questioned which in turn leads to commitment to said values and choices. Thus, identity attainment is not achieved rather identity is formed through commitment (Marcia, 1966). Identity is said to be achieved when a person commits to an adoption of a set of values and ideals, vocational direction, and sexual orientation (Rosenthal, 2000). Marcia (1966) proposed that rather than being a staged process as Erikson suggests, identity is in a state of statues. He proposed there were 4 stages of identity status. Beyond Attainment, there is diffusion, foreclosure, and moratorium. Diffusion occurs when an individual has no sense of choice and no commitment to values, ideals, or trajectories.

Foreclosure occurs when an individual has some kind of commitment to roles, values, and ideals, however they have not experienced any crisis which leads to conformity to expectations of others in absence of any real exploration (Marcia 1966). Moratorium a period of crisis in which the individual is actively exploring but no commitment has been made (Erikson, 1985; Marcia, 1966).

Historically within Western society, identities were inherited or placed upon an individual. Modern progressive changes have created a society where one also has the ability to choose their identity. This is largely in part due to less rigid social boundaries and greater access to education and thus wealth (Kroger, 2017). Similarly, where adults in society used to make the decision about a youth's identity prospects; that task now befalls the individual often at the onset of puberty. This has led to an individualization of personal identities (Cote, 2016) which creates a system of risk and reward as it relates consequence and opportunities. The risk and rewards are heavily embedded in social factors. According to Renfrow and Howard (2013) humans process information in a manner that is efficient at making meaning, finding patterns, and predicting outcomes. This process is known as social cognition. Because of social cognition, the human brain categorizes information about objects, people, and actions before it engages in situational inferences or memory. The mind stores this information in schemas. The schema one builds on one's identity (Renfrow & Howard, 2013). The self-schema is composed of characteristics, preferences, goals, and patterns of behavior. Individuals also hold group schemas, also conceptualized as stereotypes. Group schemas are composed of the same elements of self-schemas and help individuals process information on groups of people

who share common categorizations such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, age, and ethnicity, or social identities (Renfrow & Howard, 2000). These group schemas, similar to the self-schema, then become identities as well. In alignment with Erikson's idea (1968), the group schemas acts as parts of the self-identity, however the self-schema remains a distinct entity that is greater than the sum of its parts (Erikson, 1968, Howard, 2000).

The concept of social identity supports the nature of in-group and out-group perception and behavior specifically the notion that each person defines their own identities through the groups to which they belong in the interest of protecting and bolstering their own self-identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The concept of group membership necessitates the creation of an "in-group" and "out-group" with a propensity to favor groups, and functions of them, with which one has membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The aforementioned propensities to bolster and protect also causes individuals to exaggerate differences between in-group members and out-group members as well as increase the salience of distinguishing characteristics relative to each group. Positive bias toward the "in-group" develops as individuals begin to define themselves through the context of the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This begins to blur the boundaries between a personal identity and the collective identity. As such attacks on the group become attacks on oneself. Research on social identity has also shown that competition for resources and historical tension furthers negative perceptions between in and out group members (Abbink & Harris, 2019).



The study of the process of developing a group identity is known as social identity development. With the advent of media, social identities have taken center stage and are at the core of many of the movements and changes to society that we see today.

According to Tajfel and Turner (1986) There are three elements that compose social identity development, social categorization, social identification, and social comparison.

The first element involves discrimination and grouping. Humans naturally discriminate as a means of survival. As babies we begin to formulate and test ideas on things that are “good” and “bad” for our survival. As we grow more abstract in our thinking, the categories change to fit our experiences (Piaget, 1929). Discrimination can lead to and is often the basis of prejudiced and harmful actions; but, at its core, discrimination is used to help make sense of the world. As humans apply this evolutionary skill to themselves social categorization occurs.

The second element involves adopting the norms, values, and actions of groups whom we feel are safe and similar to ourselves. During the identification process an adoption of all the elements of identity is required. As with any adoption process, bonds are made with the people of the group, the group itself, and (almost most importantly) the identification itself. When this occurs self-esteem can be impacted by one’s relation to the group

The final element is social comparison. It is made up of maintained by constant comparison of the group, and its members, to other groups and their members. This usually results in a self-elevating view of self/the group and sometimes exaggerated negative views of non-group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Additionally, Tajfel and Turner wrote that all social behavior falls on a spectrum that is capped at the ends by interpersonal behavior and intergroup behavior. The authors theorize that most behavior requires a negotiation between the two ends of the spectrum. Identity then follows suit, with adoption of values falling on the same spectrum.

### **Socialization and Behavior**

Racial identity has long been identified as being embedded in the socialization process of child and adolescent development. Primary to this process is the influence of family in that positive familial support can impact a youth's attitude about their race (Holloway & Varner, 2021). Previous studies indicate that socialization can predict the strength of an individual's racial identity (typically generalized as ethnic-racial identity) specifically, a parent with strong beliefs about their Blackness can instill these same beliefs in a child thus rendering their racial identity central to their worldview (Caldwell 2002; Marshall 1995; Thomas 2000). Racial socialization exists namely in the African American household due to the micro aggressive subtleties of mainstream America that provide people of color with experiences riddled with racial and discriminatory undertones (Hughley et al., 2019). As a result, internalized attitudes about their racial identity can ground traditional child rearing methods and overall parenting styles in Afrocentric ideals (Holloway & Varner, 2021; Thomas, 2000).

White-Johnson et al. (2010), describes the approach to racial identity development in three racial socialization profiles: the multifaceted, low race salience, and the unengaged profiles. The research suggests that each of these profiles can help to identify the parental socialization messages that are conveyed to children about race and society

(White-Johnson et al., 2010) which lends itself to the four identity dimensions within Sellers's multidimensional model of racial identity. Specifically, the parental message in each profile speaks to situational context(salience), group membership(centrality), feelings about group membership(regard), and feelings about how one should act as a member of that group(ideology) (Scottham et al., 2008). What remains unclear; however, is whether demographic factors such as age and gender influence parent's racial socialization methods with conflicting research from various studies (White-Johnson et al., 2010). What is clear, however, is the various studies that speak to the duality of self and society as it relates to how internalized messages manifest behavior. Research indicates that prosocial behavior is influenced by positive messages, inclusive when negative macro-level socialization messages are communicated to African American adolescent males. Those messages influence behavior at a macro level, and all can directly influence behavior at a micro level for the African American adolescent male.

### **Identity Threat to Self**

Social identity threat occurs when a person perceives an identity they hold is under attack. Research shows that a typical response to this kind of threat is to either distance oneself from the said identity or to reinforce association with the said identity. Research from White et al. (2018) showed that high public self-awareness leads to the desire to display a consistent self which thus increases the propensity to reinforce association with threatened identity. Uniquely, White et al. focused their research on when social identity threat was perceived from an organizational community. Research also has shown that propensity to reinforce association with a threatened identity occurs

when a chance to enhance the said identity is possible (Shih et al., 2013). Identities are situationally influenced meaning that racial identity for Black Americans are influenced by contextual cues. That is not to say that elements of the identity are not stable. The stable elements of the collective identity are also influenced over time based on encounters with space and people. Individuals hold multiple identities that are ordered in value and interplay or inform each other. Perception of racial identity is the most valid indicator of their identity and overt behavior should ideally match self-reported perceptions of their racial identity. However, they do note that external influences can affect overt behaviors. There is an emphasis on adaptability of racial identity relative to the environment it was created in rather than an emphasis on whether a healthy (good) or unhealthy (bad) identity is in action. Racial identity is developed over the lifespan and as such a measure of racial identity at any given time can be understood as a snapshot and not as a place on a staged model.

The assimilationist ideology believes that Black Americans should act in a way that emphasizes and highlights commonalities between Black Americans and all other Americans. Lastly, the humanist ideology believes that Black Americans should act in a way that highlights and emphasizes commonalities among all human beings.

Sellers (1998), place a heavy emphasis on saliency. Though saliency is an identified dimension of racial identity it is said to be composed of situational cues and racial centrality. Racial salience then informs racial ideology and racial regard. This full process ends in appraisal or construal of a certain situation which then impacts behavior.

According to Sellers et al. (2003), this chain that results in behavior begins with both Literacy and the ability to gain and maintain social identities. However, research on Literacy and social languages suggests that Sellers's model of racial identity may view identities too rigidly and fixed, whereas they may be more fluid and intertwined than previously thought.

### **Workplace Environment**

To understand racial saliency, self-concept, and power difference, I will utilize African American social service professionals. This was chosen due to the diversity in various organizational structures and the varying situations that occur which can put an individual's identity in direct conflict with ethical and organizational practices. Research on identity in the workplace suggests that when identities are in conflict, that is, if there is an impending threat to a valued identity that an individual can cloak themselves in a façade that upholds the accepted identity for said situation. For example, Leavitt and Sluss (2015), submit that in the event of failed identity enactment and exit, an individual may use dishonesty (lying) to shift the narrative towards the more accepted identity as a situational maintenance measure. Research also suggests that workplace identity and relational process are inseparable due to the transactional nature that exists within organizational spaces (including social services). For example, Hsu et al. (2014), uses cultural congruency as a reason for customer preference for same-race service providers due to some level of common characteristics that lead to shared thought process. Specifically utilizing the Lehigh Valley Trust Survey data was analyzed which revealed that out of 2,077 respondents, only about 20% felt it "quite important" for an individual

of the same race or ethnicity and showed with larger percentages relative to wanting a professional who knows their background of service (Hsu et al., 2014). Breaking this down in the study topic's context would imply that Discourse around quality of care may prompt customers with high racial saliency to request providers with that same relational identity. This speaks to the potential of an individual to leverage an identity for the purpose of conformity and anonymity stemming from workplace discourse.

### **Race and the Workplace Environment**

Much research exists detailing the experiences of marginalized groups that highlight differences, slights, stereotype threat, and discrimination (Adisa et al., 2020; Brewster & Rusche, 2014; Hall et al., 2012). Namely psychological and economical differences can be seen which are negatively skewed towards racial and ethnic minorities (Emerson & Murphy, 2014). Walton et al. (2015), explain that when there is a stereotype threat, that members of the stereotyped group become vigilant to situational cues that either signal identity safety or confirmation of non-acceptance. For example, patriarchal concepts and expectations to uphold the old-world ideals can pose a stereotypical threat to how individuals behave and perform in the workplace. Adisa et al. (2020) performed a study in which 32 women aged 22-40 to study background knowledge, private life, and work contexts as well as effects of patriarchy on workplace behavior and performance. What they found was that in male dominated space patriarchal social structures negatively impacted women's workplace behavior (Adisa et al., 2020). The findings imply that relational proximity to being a member of a marginalized group in the workplace can work against identity safety and confirmation regarding workplace

performance. In some instances, individuals who value their workplace identity over their relational identities will manipulate the cues that display their racial identity through a concept known as Racial identity-based impression management (Roberts et al., 2014). In other words, individuals will water down their racial identity to display identity characteristics that are more consistent with what is accepted to manipulate perception (Roberts et al., 2014). This is consistent with identity performance ideals that outline an individual's use of leveraging and negotiating identity to make choices that are perceivably accepted by White dominant culture (Culver, 2018). Additionally, Erez et al. (2015) explain that these interactions within the workplace are evaluated and speak to workplace relationships, appraisal, and reward within the environment. Research specific to social work practice reveals how historically there are missed opportunities to use race as a corner stone to both the field and work. A specific example can be seen in Varghese's (2016) study where face to face interviews and case vignettes were used to reveal the lack of attention to specific race related topics in clinical social work programs. The findings show that many faculty members do not include race in their teachings and worse barely think about the topic as germane to the lesson (Varghese, 2016).

### **Role Relationships**

Role Identity is a branch of identity development that focuses specifically on roles that interplay between role and identity. Roles have been defined as a set of behavioral expectations attached to a position in an organized set of social relationships. The performance of said role leads to a role-identity. According to Sluss (2007), roles provide one with a sense of who one is and who one is becoming. Roles, whether individual or

organizational, provide a way to structure, organize, and create a network of interdependent and intertwining tasks and responsibilities. Roles influence attitudes and behaviors via self-concept. Research in organizational roles focuses on how collective social categories influence self-concept and eventually behavior, affect, and cognition (Adisa et al., 2020; Brewster, & Rusche, 2014; Hall et al., 2012).

Role theories can be broken into two main groups. The first group places emphasis on how social structure institutionalized behavioral expectations across contexts. The other, symbolic interactionism theorizes that individuals use identity roles to relate, which in turn gives birth to shared, negotiated, meaning and relationships. Additionally, symbolic interactionists would argue that role identities then create schemas to categorize and interpret experience.

Traditional research in role identity theory situates society at large as the bestower of role expectations and identity roles. However, identity roles and role relationships can be examined in other more specific contexts such as work. When referring to role relationships within a workplace context, organizational roles are formed and thus organizational role relationships. Organizational role relationships are impacted by institutionalized expectations as well. Leaving one within an organizational context organizing, managing, and performing a myriad of identity roles at one time. Role Identity research generally seeks to answer why do people choose a particular course of action, given situations where two or more sets of role expectations are affixed to two or more social relationships. This guiding question, and the research it brings forth, highlights the fact that at any given time a person can belong to various identities and be



in varied role-relationships that conflict and cause internal negotiations which in turn impact attitudes, behaviors, expectations, and performance. Sluss (2007) writes that identity saliency is the main factor that dictates the eventual choice between conflicting or opposing role identities.

### **Power Distance**

Mulder (1977) defined power distance as “the degree of inequality in power between a less powerful individual and a more powerful other, in which individual and other belong to the same (loosely or tightly knit) social system” (pp.90). It is the concept that accounts for an uneven proximity to power in various institutions, groups, and organizational environments. Hofstede (1980) utilized and expanded this definition by incorporating it in his proposed Cultural Values dimensions (individualism and collectivism, power distance, masculinity and femininity, and uncertainty avoidance) that provided a framework to view diversity in values within people who are a part of the same group; this was later expanded to include additional dimensions (long term orientation, and indulgence) (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede & Bond, 1988). In the context of supervisor-subordinate relationship, Khatri (2009) found in her research that when there is a high-power distance organization there exists a differentiation of tasks, duties, and decision making associated with the power difference. Lee et al. (2000) describes in their research the idea that attitudes about power distance are largely contingent upon a high-status individual’s ideals about societal and organization roles (i.e., role relationships). Research also suggests that leadership style can influence granted power/authority in that individuals are more likely to comply with given tasks due to supervisor creating a sense

of given authority that motivates the low power distance individual to achieve the ask (Fertik, 2000). A low power distance index score can also indicate a higher propensity to question authority and an expectation of the subordinate to participate in decision making (Hofstede, 1980). The power distance concept also explains the negotiation between behavior and power in the workplace context, specifically as it relates to the power distance between two parties in a hierarchy (boss and subordinate) marked by the difference between the extent to which both can determine each other's behavior (Hofstede, 1980). Since power distance is one of the indicators of values used to dictate rituals and relevant symbols which in turn impact one's ability to predict one's behavior in a given context (workplace) I used power distance as a variable.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

In Chapter 2, I provided an in-depth review of the literature, which focused on major themes embedded in the study topic. One major theme that surfaced is that socialization is situated at the base of Black identity, meaning interactions with individuals of diverse cultures, environments, and belief systems are at the core of the self-learning process. Research place's strong Black identity in proximity to public domains of action through strategic assimilation where boundaries and selective identity extraction (choosing to display only parts of an identity), work in favor of maintaining the upkeep of identities in spaces as deemed appropriate by said environment without completely relinquishing the host's cultural identity (Meghji, 2017). The other major theme in the literature is the centrality of racial discrimination and racially charged occurrences whether intentional or unintentional can surface in a variety of settings in

which Black individuals have to shift or adjust to process and interactions that are not predicated on culturally sensitive Discourses.

I detailed factors that contribute to racial identity saliency and how these factors are relative to self-concept. Specific factors include culture, behavior and development, socialization, and environment. What is known about these areas is that they are all influential in perpetuating potentially negative barriers to racial saliency in institutions where Black individuals are expected to produce the same quality of work as their White counterparts without consideration for other intersecting identities that may be relative to the upkeep of their role. Research suggests that there are discriminatory and oppressive undertones that drive Black individuals to choose occupations that are “safe”, which include careers in education, social service, and government work (Brown, 2016). What is missing from the research is the data that examine how important an individual’s racial identity is relative to interaction and engagement. Specifically centered around racial saliency, power distance, and self-concept this research will fill this gap in literature by examining the extent to which these concepts relate to one another and how overall self-concept influences employee tenure. Chapter 3 features the research design briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, and the approach to the study is detailed for the readers’ understanding.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this research was to examine the correlation between racial salience and self-concept as it relates to Black social workers. My work made the argument that Black professionals in the social work field possess a multiplicity of identities by nature of their life and work which included power difference as well as employee tenure. Since points of contention (racial discrimination, oppression, microaggressions) regarding racial identity and management of self in the workplace has long been studied using various research methods and design, I provide in this chapter an in-depth explanation of the research design and rationale, which includes information on variables, time, and resource constraints, as well as design choice. Methodology is then discussed, where I provide information on the population, sampling, recruitment, participation, and data collection strategies. Lastly, I transition the reader into instrumentation, operationalization, threats to validity, data analysis plan, and ethical procedures.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The approach of this study was a quantitative, correlational design where racial salience, self-concept, power difference, and employee tenure are the identified variables. A quantitative research design was appropriate because it described the study's intent, which was to examine the significance of a relationship which utilized numeric data. According to Creswell (2013), quantitative research is used to explain the relationship of tested variables. This is in contrast to qualitative research which seeks to explore how people make meanings out of their experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Furthermore,

qualitative research has a smaller sample size and generalizations cannot be made (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

## **Methodology**

### **Population**

The purpose of this study was to produce results that not only show the predictive relationship between the identified variables, but to also produce results that were representative of African American/ Black social work professionals. Therefore, the target population was individuals who identified as Black, and the participants had to have completed at least a bachelor's level social work program. Participants also had to be 18 years old or older to complete the study.

### **Sampling and Sampling Procedures**

Since existing data from census, national organizations, and other sources varies about the total population of Black/African American social workers, non-probabilistic, non-random purposive sampling was the option used to collect participants. A weak point of this method was external validity; however, the demographic questionnaire oriented the appropriate participants to study access. Participants engaged in the study via web link to a survey through a crowdsourcing website. Individuals who were under the age of 18 and those who did not have at least a bachelor's degree in social work were excluded from the study.

The estimated number of participants for this study was 77, which was determined using standard significance, power, and effect size values in the G\* Power analysis program. According to Oribhabor and Anyanwu (2019), significance is typically

set to 5% or .05 citing that as significance criterion decreases, the sample size needed to detect minimum difference will need to increase. Significance is needed to determine the probability of detecting a Type I error. As the significance criterion is decreased, the sample size needed to detect the minimum difference increases (Oribhabor & Anyanwy, 2019). Opposite of significance is power, which is the probability of rejecting a null hypothesis, typically set to .8 or 80% and for a medium effect size .3 was used.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

I collected demographic information, which included race/ethnicity and highest completed level of education. Additionally, participants were asked a single question to gauge employee tenure at their current job during the survey. Email blasts detailing the study were distributed to potential sample sources such as universities, non-profit, Greek, and professional organizations. A disclaimer explaining informed consent was presented at the beginning of the survey to ensure participants were fully aware of what to expect in the study and their willful choice to participate. After reading the informed consent and agreeing to the study's terms, the participants were prompted to continue through. According to Sellers et al. (2016), racial salience is measured at the junction of situational context and racial centrality, thus participants also completed the centrality subscale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Vandiver et al., 2009) to measure the racial salience variable. Since racial salience is not measured specifically on Sellers's measurement tool, Worrell et al. (2020) submitted that the centrality construct on the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity—defined as “a measure of whether race is a core part of an individual's self-concept” (Sellers et al., 1997a, p. 806)—is a strong

proxy for race salience given that salience is largely dependent on the situational context and centrality of the individual; centrality being a stable dimension.

Responses from the inventory were then recorded and categorized as either high or low racial salience. Participants were then asked to complete the Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, which contained 10 statements that measured self-concept. Participants were then prompted to complete the Cultural Values Scale, specifically the power distance index (Yoo et al., 2011). Responses were analyzed to answer research questions using regression analysis. At the study's start, participants were debriefed via standardized message that again explained what their responses were used for, the intent to notify once the findings are published, and their right to privacy. Once the study is completed, the link to the published findings will be made available to all the participant pools.

## **Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs**

### ***Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity***

The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity was created in 1997 by researchers Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, and Smith. Since its operationalization, different scales have been used based on context of the research being conducted and has been used with Black persons, Native Americans, and individuals from different countries (Johnson et al., 2005; Nasim, et al., 2005; Wandert et al., 2009). Using the dimensions of the multidimensional model of racial identity as a foundation, the inventory contains three scales and reflects three of the four dimensions—Centrality, Regard, and Ideology (Sellers et al., 1997a). The Regard scale has two subscales: Private

Regard, made up of seven items, and Public Regard, made up of four. The Ideology scale has a total of 50 items that contains Assimilationist, Humanist, Nationalist, Oppressed Minority subscales. Lastly the Centrality scale has 10 items and measures “the extent to which being African American is central to the respondents’ definition of themselves” (Sellers et al., 1997a, p. 805). Of importance is the test of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity subscale’s reliability evidenced by Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .60 to .80 range (Vandiver et al., 2009).

For the purpose of this study the Centrality scale was used as it is a necessary scale to not only orient the participants towards the research, but it was also used to gauge the level of racial salience in each participant. Responses to items are given on a 7-point Likert-type scale which range from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7) (Sellers et al., 1997a). Participants had an unlimited amount of time to complete the questionnaire. The Centrality scale again is 10 questions; thus, the anticipated time needed to complete it is neither extended nor constrained. Participants completed this questionnaire online, which became available after the demographic survey was completed. This instrument was free and open to use without written permission. The actual instrument is included in Appendix A.

### ***Self-Esteem Scale***

The self-esteem scale is a 10-item survey used to measure the self-concept variable. The scale is widely used to measure self-concept as it utilizes a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (4) to gauge overall self-worth, which is often used interchangeably with self-concept. The scale has proven to have an



internal consistency of .77 evidenced in the original study, and a Cronbach's alpha ranging from .77 to .88 representing multiple samples (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1993; Rosenberg 1986). The scale also has a test-retest reliability of .85 and .88 over 2 weeks. Additionally, the scale for the instrument is forward and reverse scored, and score totals can range from 0 to 30. Participants completed this scale, and those scores were used to determine whether participants have a high or low sense of self-concept. That information was then used to answer research questions.

### ***Cultural Values Scale***

The Cultural Values Scale was proposed by researchers Yoo, Donthu, and Lenartowicz in 2011 as an expansion of Geert Hofstede's (1991) cultural values scale that measured cultural values at the country level (Prasongsukarn, 2009). Various researchers have validated its psychometric properties and have found it sound in measure, which does include research outside the United States (Bilgin & Kutlu, 2022; Prasongsukarn, 2009; Yoo et al., 2011). The Cultural Values Scale is a 26-item 5-dimensional scale that measures individual cultural orientations. Consistent with Hofstede (1991), the five dimensions of the Cultural Values Scale are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, long-term orientation, and masculinity. Participants respond to items in each dimension using a 5-point Likert scale, which can then be analyzed to examine cultural values at the individual level (Yoo et al., 2011). Germane to my research is the specific focus on the power distance index, which includes 5 items (see Appendix B). Relative to reliability, the Power Distance scale presented with a Cronbach alpha of .69 (Yoo et al., 2011). Additionally, unidimensionality was established

through factor analysis for each dimension with power distance having an eigenvalue of 2.091 in a Turkish sample. Studies across various cultures and countries have shown strong reliability with Cronbach alpha's greater than .6 (Chan et al., 2010; Schumann et al. 2010; Soares et al. 2007).

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The data in this research represented four variables with racial salience, power distance, and employee tenure serving as predictor variables and self-concept as the criterion variable. A standard multiple regression analysis best fit this study based on the intent to examine the degree to which one variable is related to two or more variables within a sample (Apuke, 2017). According to Hazra (2016), if there are two highly correlated variables, it is plausible to use one variable ( $x$ ) to predict another ( $y$ ) using the linear regression equation and line of best fit. A scatter plot is appropriate when meeting requirements of assumptions (Hazra, 2016). Data again were collected utilizing standardized survey instruments and analyzed using SPSS software. There was no missing or incomplete data to exclude from analysis based on complete case analysis.

### **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

There were three research questions in this study. Each research question had a null hypothesis as well as an alternative hypothesis. The research questions and hypothesis were as follows:

RQ1: To what degree does racial saliency predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept in the workplace?

*H*<sub>01</sub>: Racial saliency as measured by the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity does not predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept as measured by the Self-Esteem Scale in the workplace.

*H*<sub>a1</sub>: Racial salience as measured by the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity will predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept as measured by the Self-Esteem Scale in the workplace.

RQ2: To what degree does perceived power distance as measured by the Power Distance Index predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept in the workplace?

*H*<sub>02</sub>: Perceived power distance as measured by the Power Distance Index does not predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept.

*H*<sub>a2</sub>: Perceived power distance as measured by the Power Distance Index will predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept as measured by the Self-Esteem Scale.

RQ3: To what degree does Black social workers' employee tenure predict attitudes about self-concept?

*H*<sub>03</sub>: Employee tenure as measured by length of stay in current role does not predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept as measured by the Self-Esteem Scale.

*H*<sub>a3</sub>: Employee tenure as measured by length of stay in current role will predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept as measured by the Self-Esteem Scale.

### **Threats to Validity**

A potential threat to validity was the use of the purposive sampling technique. This technique specifically targets a population of individuals to answer specific research questions (Setia, 2016). For this study, I specifically targeted Black/African American social workers. External validity is weakened when using this type of sampling because the more purposive or targeted criteria there are in the sample, the less representative that sample will be of the population, thus decreasing generalizability (Andrade, 2021).

Another potential threat to validity was the use of the internet for web-based data collection measures. Using the internet diminished the ability to control the environment specifically by verifying that participants are who they say they are. Since I used self-report measures, there was a level of trust that participants fit the demographic criteria for participation in the study specifically as it pertains to race and level of education, and employee tenure.

Another threat to validity was participants potentially providing the socially desirable or politically correct response to the surveys so that they seem more favorable. Again, when using self-report measures, it is assumed that the participant answered the surveys and questionnaires truthfully and with fidelity. The identities of the participants were completely anonymous, which should have helped in getting honest answers from participants as well.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethics in research provides conduct guidelines that outline limitations and appropriate practice to be upheld by both student and professional researchers. To mimic

what standards have been set regarding legal compliance, I first sought approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB), which was obtained prior to the start of the research. Recruitment was done via mass emails with a brief overview of the study as well as an access link to the study. Recruitment sources included the National Association of Black Social Workers, Black Greek organizations, social work programs, professional social media groups, as well as non-profit organizations. No direct contact or face-to-face interaction with the potential participants occurred. To begin the study, participants first gave consent to participate and were also notified of their rights to privacy. Data were collected and protected via a secure website and then transferred into the SPSS program for analysis. The information was password protected and only accessible to me.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 3, I detailed the study's quantitative research methodology and how I intended to conduct the research from start to finish. Specifically, the chapter included information on research design and rationale, methodology, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. Also included in this chapter was instrumentation and operationalization of constructs, data analysis plan, research questions and hypotheses, and ethical procedures. In the coming fourth chapter is detailed information about the study's findings and results, pertaining to the regression analysis conducted. Findings are detailed in tables as well as descriptions.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the predictive relationships between the independent variables of racial salience, power distance, and employee tenure on Black social workers' self-concept (dependent variable). I recruited a sample of social workers who were at least 18 years of age, had at least a bachelor's degree in social work, and identified as Black or African American. I analyzed survey responses of the participants statistically to determine if there exists a relationship between variables. Specifically, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. To what degree does racial saliency predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept in the workplace?
2. To what degree does perceive power distance as measured by the Power Distance Index predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept in the workplace?
3. To what degree does Black social workers' employee tenure predict attitudes about self-concept?

This chapter presents the descriptive statistics of basic demographic information and the study variables. This chapter will also include the results of the statistical analyses to address each of the study's research questions. This chapter concludes with a summary of the key findings of the data analyses conducted in this study.

### **Data Collection**

After obtaining IRB approval (Approval No. 09-19-23-0954364), I began data collection. Participants interested in taking the survey accessed a link on the flyer. This

flyer was distributed via social media groups, local non-profits, as well as Black Greek organizations using email blast and content posting. Participation was voluntary, and participants could opt out at any point during the survey. The link directed participants to the survey which began with consent, transitioned into demographic information that screened for eligibility criteria, and then went onto scales that measured the variables which included the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity, Cultural Values Scale, and the Power Distance Index. I kept the link active until I received a minimum sample size of at least 77 total completed responses which resulted in a 60-day live link. There was an ebb and flow of participation over the live link data collection period. I administered the survey via SurveyMonkey to collect data from the participants, which I then downloaded to Microsoft Excel using a secure device. This data were then sorted and transferred into the SPSS program.

The survey yielded a sample of 79 participants in total; however, there were missing data that I addressed during data analysis. When performing a regression analysis using statistical software like SPSS, a researcher can specify methods for managing missing data, such as listwise deletion or the removal of cases with missing data for a particular variable in the analysis. If the percentage of missing data is minimal and is not expected to significantly impact the overall analysis, employing listwise exclusion is justified, as stated by Saunders et al. (2006). In this process, participants with missing data were only excluded from the specific analysis where the data were absent. Specifically, the Self-Esteem Scale was the only variable that presented with missing data; therefore, listwise deletion was applied.

### **Demographic Characteristics of the Sample**

I collected 79 completed responses for the study. I determined the minimum sample size necessary for the study to be at least 77 participants, which was determined using G\*Power analysis. Frequencies and percentages are used to describe demographic characteristics. The largest number of participants ( $n = 32$ ) lived in Pennsylvania, and the remainder of participants came from various locations across the United States (see Table 1). The majority of the participants (59.5%,  $n = 47$ ) hold a master's degree (see Table 2). Nearly a third (29.1%,  $n = 23$ ) have been in their current position for at least 1 year but less than 3 years (see Table 3), and just over a third (35.4%,  $n = 28$ ) described their current job level as intermediate (see Table 4). Note that that number of years in current position is used to measure the independent variable, employee tenure.



**Table 1***In What State or U.S. Territory Do You Live?*

State or U.S. Territory	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Alabama	2	2.5	2.5	2.5
Arizona	1	1.3	1.3	3.8
California	5	6.3	6.3	10.1
Colorado	1	1.3	1.3	11.4
Connecticut	1	1.3	1.3	12.7
Delaware	1	1.3	1.3	13.9
District of Columbia (DC)	2	2.5	2.5	16.5
Florida	1	1.3	1.3	17.7
Georgia	9	11.4	11.4	29.1
Illinois	2	2.5	2.5	31.6
Kansas	2	2.5	2.5	34.2
Kentucky	2	2.5	2.5	36.7
Louisiana	1	1.3	1.3	38.0
Michigan	1	1.3	1.3	39.2
Mississippi	1	1.3	1.3	40.5
New York	4	5.1	5.1	45.6
North Carolina	3	3.8	3.8	49.4
Ohio	2	2.5	2.5	51.9
Pennsylvania	32	40.5	40.5	92.4
South Carolina	2	2.5	2.5	94.9
Texas	3	3.8	3.8	98.7
Virginia	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

**Table 2***What is the Highest Level of Education You Have Completed?*

Education level	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Bachelor's degree	28	35.4	35.4	35.4
Doctorate/post doc training	4	5.1	5.1	40.5
Master's degree	47	59.5	59.5	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

**Table 3***About How Many Years Have You Been in Your Current Position?*

Years in current position	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
10 years or more	11	13.9	13.9	13.9
At least 1 year but less than 3 years	23	29.1	29.1	43.0
At least 3 years but less than 5 years	19	24.1	24.1	67.1
At least 5 years but less than 10 years	15	19.0	19.0	86.1
Less than 1 year	11	13.9	13.9	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4***Which of the Following Best Describes Your Current Job Level?*

Description of current job level	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Entry level	6	7.6	7.6	7.6
Intermediate	28	35.4	35.4	43.0
Middle management	26	32.9	32.9	75.9
Other (please specify)	6	7.6	7.6	83.5
Owner/executive/C-level	5	6.3	6.3	89.9
Senior management	8	10.1	10.1	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

A *t*-test was conducted for location to determine if there was significance between Pennsylvania and non-Pennsylvanian residents. Since nearly half the sample was drawn from one state, a comparison of means on all variables between the two groups was appropriate. Results showed the groups were not significantly different on the self-concept, and employee tenure variables; however, there is significance with the power distance and racial salience variables. Tables 5–12 detail the findings.

**Table 5***Group Statistics (Self-Esteem Scale)*

	Location	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>
Self-Esteem scale	Pennsylvanian participants	28	22.2357	2.28493	.43181
	Non-Pennsylvanian participants	46	23.1543	2.16659	.31945

**Table 6***Independent Samples Test (Self-Esteem Scale)*

		Levene's test for equality of variances		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means						
		<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Self-Esteem Scale	Equal variances assumed	.659	.420	-1.733	72	.087	-.91863	.53013	-1.97544	.13817
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.710	54.793	.093	-.91863	.53713	-1.99515	.15789

Table 5 represents the descriptive statistics for location (Pennsylvanian and Non-Pennsylvanian) with respect to self-concept. From the table we can infer that participants from non-Pennsylvanian have the highest mean value ( $M = 23.15$ ,  $SD = 2.2$ ) when compared to the other group. Additionally, Table 6 represents the independent sample *t* test for location (Pennsylvanian and Non-Pennsylvanian) with respect to self-concept. From table 6, the Significant value ( $p = .087$ ) shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between participants from Pennsylvania and those not from Pennsylvania since the P-value of .087 is greater than .05 (95% CI).

**Table 7***Group Statistics (Power Distance Index)*

	Location	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>
Power distance	Pennsylvanian participants	32	9.1438	5.19087	.91762
	Non-Pennsylvanian participants	47	7.2723	2.83501	.41353

**Table 8***Independent Samples Test (Power Distance Index)*

		Levene's test for equality of variances		<i>t</i> -test for equality of means						
		<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Power distance	Equal variances assumed	5.183	.026	2.064	77	.042	1.87141	.90665	.06604	3.67678
	Equal variances not assumed			1.859	43.656	.070	1.87141	1.00650	-.15751	3.90033

Table 7 illustrates the descriptive statistics for location (Pennsylvanian and Non-Pennsylvanian) with respect to power distance. From the table we can deduce that participant from Pennsylvanian have the highest mean value ( $M = 9.14$ ,  $SD = 5.2$ ) when compared to the other group. Table 8 represents the independent sample *t* test for location (Pennsylvanian and Non-Pennsylvanian) with respect to power distance. Table 8 shows that there is a statistically significant relationship ( $p = .042$ ) between participants from Pennsylvania and those not from Pennsylvania in terms of power distance since the P-value of .042 is less than .05 (95% CI).

**Table 9***Group Statistics (Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity)*

	Location	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>
Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity	Pennsylvanian participants	32	33.0586	6.76067	1.19513
	Non-Pennsylvanian participants	47	28.7420	6.63849	.96832

**Table 10***Independent Samples Test (Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity)*

		Levene's test for equality of variances		<i>t</i> -test for equality of means						
		<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity	Equal variances assumed	.024	.878	2.816	77	.006	4.31657	1.53279	1.26440	7.36875
	Equal variances not assumed			2.806	65.917	.007	4.31657	1.53818	1.24543	7.38771

Table 9 shows the descriptive statistics for location (Pennsylvanian and Non-Pennsylvanian) with respect to multidimensional inventory of Black identity. From the table we can infer that the participants from Pennsylvania have the highest mean value ( $M = 33.06$ ,  $SD = 6.76$ ) when compared to the other group. Table 10 represents the independent sample *t* test for location (Pennsylvanian and Non-Pennsylvanian) with respect to Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity. Table 10 reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship ( $p = .006$ ) between participants from Pennsylvania and those not from Pennsylvanian in terms of Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity since the P-value of .006 is less than .05 (95% CI).

**Table 11***Group Statistics (Years in Current Position)*

	Location	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>
Years in current position	Pennsylvanian participants	32	1.91	.296	.052
	Non-Pennsylvanian participants	46	1.83	.383	.057

**Table 12***Independent Samples Test (Years in Current Position)*

		Levene's test for equality of variances		<i>t</i> -test for equality of means						
		<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Years in current position	Equal variances assumed	4.293	.042	.994	76	.323	.080	.081	-.080	.241
	Equal variances not assumed			1.041	75.093	.301	.080	.077	-.073	.234

Table 11 represents the descriptive statistics for location (Pennsylvanian and Non-Pennsylvanian) with respect to number of years in current position. The participants from Pennsylvania have the highest mean value ( $M = 1.91$ ,  $SD = .296$ ) when compared to the other group. Table 12 represents the independent sample *t* test for location (Pennsylvanian and Non-Pennsylvanian) with respect to number of years in current position. Table 12 shows that there is no statistically significant relationship ( $p = .323$ ) between participants from Pennsylvania and those not from Pennsylvania in terms of number of years in current position since the P-value of .323 is greater than .05 (95% CI).

Overall results of the comparison of the participants from Pennsylvania vs those not from Pennsylvania suggest that the overall participant group is not homogenous on

these variables. These results might impact the overall analysis of the entire group on the identified variables addressed in the hypotheses.

## Results

### Multiple Regression Analysis

I conducted preliminary analyses to ensure there was no violation of the assumptions which included linearity, normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. The data presented no concerns or violations. Multiple regression was used to evaluate the predictive relationship between the power distance, racial salience, employee tenure, and self-concept variables. Tables 13, 14, and 15 illustrate the regression analysis for all research questions.

**Table 13**

#### *Model Summary*

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> square	Adjusted <i>R</i> square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
					<i>R</i> square change	<i>F</i> change	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig. <i>F</i> change
1	.205 <sup>a</sup>	.042	.001	2.24082	.042	1.022	3	70	.388 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Predictors: (Constant), Numbers of Years in Current Position, Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity, Power distance.

<sup>b</sup> Dependent variable: Self-Esteem Scale

Table 13 represents the model summary of the multiple linear regression analysis for Numbers of years in current position (employee tenure), Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity, power distance and Self-Esteem Scale. The Adjusted R Squared value

( $AR^2 = .001$ ) in Table 13 shows that .1% variation in the dependent variable Self-Esteem Scale was explained by the independent variables.

**Table 14**

*Analysis of Variance*

	Model	Sum of squares	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
1	Regression	15.398 <sup>a</sup>	3	5.133	1.022	.388 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	351.488	70	5.021		
	Total	366.887	73			

<sup>a</sup> Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem Scale

<sup>b</sup> Predictors: (Constant), Numbers of Years in Current Position, Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity, Power distance

Table 14 illustrates the ANOVA of the multiple linear regression analysis for Numbers of years in current position, Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity, power distance and Self-Esteem Scale. From the table, the Significance value (P-value = .388) shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between Numbers of years in current position (employee tenure), Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity, power distance and Self-Esteem Scale since the P-value of .388 is greater than .05 (95% confidence level).



**Table 15***Coefficients*

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% confidence interval for B	
	B	SE	Beta			Lower bound	Upper bound
1 (Constant)	24.210	1.252		19.336	.000	21.712	26.707
Power distance	-.102	.065	-.185	-1.562	.123	-.232	.028
Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity	-.018	.039	-.056	-.472	.638	-.095	.059
Numbers of Years in Current Position	-.238	.896	-.031	-.265	.791	-2.025	1.549

Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem Scale

From the coefficients in Table 15, the Significance value (P-value = .123) shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between Power distance and Self-Esteem Scale since the P-value of .123 is greater than .05 (95% confidence level). Therefore, null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ : Perceived power distance does not predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept) is valid and not rejected while the Alternative hypothesis ( $H_{A2}$ : Perceived power distance will predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept) is rejected.

Likewise, the Significance value (P-value = .638) depicts the existence of no statistically significant predictive relationship between Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity and Self-Esteem Scale since the P-value of .638 is greater than .05 (95% confidence level). Hence, null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ : Racial saliency as measured by the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity does not predict Black social workers'

attitudes about self-concept in the workplace) is valid and not rejected while the Alternative hypothesis ( $H_{A1}$ : Racial salience as measured by the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity will predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept in the workplace) is rejected.

In addition, the Significance value (P-value = .791) reveals the existence of no statistically significant predictive relationship between the numbers of years in current position and Self-Esteem Scale since the P-value of .791 is greater than .05 (95% confidence level). Therefore, null hypothesis ( $H_{03}$ : Employee tenure as measured by length of stay in current role (employee tenure) does not predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept) is valid and not rejected while the Alternative hypothesis ( $H_{A3}$ : Employee tenure will predict Black social workers' attitudes about self-concept) is rejected.

The model can be given as:  $Y = B_0 + B_1 * X_1 + \text{Error}$ .

Self-Esteem Scale =  $22.210 + -.102 * \text{Power distance} + -.018 *$

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity +  $-.238 * \text{Employee tenure}$

$B_0$  with the value of 22.210 is the intercept of the model equation. This depicts that when other variables are zero, Self-Esteem Scale would be 22.210. The Power distance with the coefficient of -.102, implies that a unit decrease in Power distance corresponds to a unit decrease in Self-Esteem Scale by -.102. Likewise, the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity with the coefficient of -.018, implies that a unit decrease in Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity corresponds to a unit decrease in Self-Esteem Scale by -.018. Finally, employee tenure with the coefficient of -

.238, implies that a unit decrease in employee tenure corresponds to a unit decrease in Self-Esteem Scale by -.238.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 4, I described the characteristics of the sample, data collection and screening procedures, as well as multiple regression analyses used to test each hypothesis individually. Multiple regression was used specifically to determine if there exists a relationship between predictor variables and the outcome variable. The results illustrate that there is no significant predictive relationship between any of the independent variables (power distance, racial salience, employee tenure) and self-concept (dependent). The data screening results that noted a statistically significant difference between the participants from Pennsylvania and those from other states on the power distance and racial salience variables may have impacted the lack of significant findings. In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings of the study while also describing the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between characteristics of the Black social worker identity and overall self-concept. At present, many researchers have focused on the collective experiences of social workers as well as the effects of unevenness between education and actual fieldwork which are typically reduced to the client-social worker relationship (Sacristan & Lalane, 2022; Ying, 2011). Additionally, there was a dearth of information specific to the Black social worker in proximity to self-concept and the relationship that may or may not have existed based on their identity in the workplace as opposed to the field or the classroom. To continue to understand how self-concept effects individuals across various identities and contexts, it is necessary to understand the predictive relationship between key factors such as power distance, racial salience, and tenure predictors specific to the workplace setting. In this chapter, I will provide interpretations of the results of this study and how they relate to the literature. I will also offer the limitations of this research, recommendations for future research, and the implications for social change as in alignment with the motivation of this study.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The research findings present a nuanced perspective on the relationships between racial salience, power distance, employee tenure, and self-concept. Contrary to initial expectations, the study findings indicated that racial salience, or the heightened awareness of one's racial identity, may not serve as a strong predictor of self-concept at least as measured by the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity centrality scale prefaced in the workplace setting. The absence of a significant predictive correlation

suggests that other contextual factors or individual differences might overshadow the impact of racial salience on how employees perceive themselves within the organizational setting. The geographical differences between the participants may have also impacted the lack of significant results. Post hoc analysis is recommended to further evaluate the potential predictive relationship. This lack of a relationship finding is similar to the conventional assumption that racial salience significantly predicts the self-concept of Black social workers, the study conducted by Ufkes et al. (2016). They discovered that, in contrast to emphasizing distinct group identities or dual identities, a common ingroup identity diminishes the motivation for social change. This is because recategorization makes members of disadvantaged groups less attuned to general group-based disparities. Past studies have shown that positive intergroup interactions, a phenomenon consistently emphasized in other research (Gaertner et al., 1996), can foster a stronger sense of shared identity over individual identity. This implies that additional factors, such as professional identity groups and systems, may significantly influence the self-concept of Black social workers who hold in-group membership. Additionally, Berdahl and Min (2012) described stereotype violations in which people of color who do not fit into stereotypes are typically targeted for harassment, thus making it likely for these individuals to present as “fine” within a specific setting to avoid being singled out implying the potential weakening of racial salience in those settings. Ackroyd and Thompson, (2003) submitted that people may define themselves conceptually as members of a group and may hold attitudes (positive and negative) about the group, but

the group may, nevertheless, be relatively unimportant to their understanding of who they are. This is consistent with the lack of relationship evident in my research.

Similarly, the study findings challenge the assumption that power distance within an organization is a direct predictor of self-concept. The geographical differences between the participants may have impacted the lack of significant results. Post hoc analysis is recommended to further evaluate the potential predictive relationship. While power dynamics can undoubtedly influence the work environment (Richard et al., 2020), the findings suggest that its impact on employees' self-perception may not be as straightforward at least as measured by the Power Distance Index. Factors such as leadership style, organizational culture, and communication practices may play a more substantial role in shaping self-concept than the mere existence of a hierarchical structure with distinct power distances. Research states that those individuals in a position of power typically have an increased sense of self-esteem given the control and influence over resources and outcomes (Barlett & Arpin, 2020; Sosik et al., 2014). Watson and Barone's (1976) research indicated that Black individuals who have achieved success in managerial positions perceive themselves positively, at least to the same extent as their White managerial counterparts. The generalization suggesting a negative self-concept did not apply to Black managers and instead suggests that power dynamics would not cause fluctuation after the positive self-concept is achieved. Variation in the study participants may have also been influential in illustrating the lack of predictive value. The idea is that the variation in characteristics, backgrounds, or experiences among the study participants might have contributed to the observed lack of statistical significance in predicting

certain outcomes. In other words, the diverse nature of the participants may have introduced complexities that made it challenging to identify clear patterns or make accurate predictions based on the variables under consideration. This acknowledgment underscores the importance of considering participant diversity when interpreting study results and highlights that predictive models may not universally apply across varied demographic or contextual conditions.

The study also reveals that employee tenure might not be a reliable predictor of self-concept in the workplace. Although tenure is often associated with a sense of belonging and identity within an organization, the findings indicate that the relationship is complex and multifaceted. The duration of employment alone may not be sufficient to predict or explain variations in self-concept, as other contextual factors and individual experiences come into play, challenging the notion that tenure universally dictates how employees perceive themselves professionally. The study emphasized the importance of considering the impact of systemic inequalities and workplace dynamics specific to Black social workers, suggesting that factors such as racial discrimination and limited career advancement opportunities could influence how tenure correlates with self-concept in this professional context.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Conducting a study on the self-concept of Black social workers while considering racial salience, power distance, and employee tenure as predictors comes with several limitations. Firstly, the challenge lies in accurately measuring and isolating the impact of each predictor on self-concept, as these factors are often interconnected and can influence

each other. Racial salience, for instance, may not exist in isolation but may interact with power distance and tenure, making it difficult to attribute changes in self-concept solely to one variable.

Generalizability is also a concern. Findings from such a study may not be universally applicable to all Black social workers, as experiences and perceptions can vary significantly within this group. Social workers may belong to different demographic subgroups or work in diverse organizational contexts, introducing additional variables that could impact their self-concept. This limitation raises questions about the external validity of the study and its ability to provide insights that can be broadly applied.

Third, there is the risk of oversimplifying the experiences of Black social workers by reducing them to a set of quantifiable variables. Racial salience, for instance, is a complex construct that encompasses subjective experiences and perceptions related to one's racial identity. Attempting to measure such intricate aspects with quantitative metrics might overlook the qualitative nuances and richness of these experiences, limiting the depth of insights gained from the study.

Additionally, the study's findings may be influenced by cultural biases embedded in measurement tools. Traditional assessments of power distance and self-concept might not adequately capture the unique cultural contexts and dynamics within the social work profession, potentially leading to a skewed representation of the relationship between these predictors. Ensuring that measurement instruments are culturally sensitive and relevant is crucial for the study's validity and applicability.



The study's cross-sectional nature may limit the understanding of the dynamic nature of self-concept development over time. Employee tenure, for instance, may change and evolve, potentially altering the influence it has on self-concept. A longitudinal approach would provide a more comprehensive perspective, capturing the nuances of how these predictors interact and affect the self-concept of Black social workers over their careers.

Finally, the limitation arising from truncating employee tenure into categories rather than capturing specific years introduces a potential lack of precision in the assessment of individual employees' length of service. This simplification might overlook nuances in tenure duration, hindering a detailed understanding of the impact of specific timeframes on outcomes. Additionally, the use of broad categories may mask variations within each group, limiting the ability to discern subtle differences in experiences or performance based on more fine-grained tenure distinctions. Overall, navigating these limitations is crucial to ensuring the study's findings are meaningful and applicable to the real-world experiences of Black social workers. Addressing these limitations requires a thoughtful consideration of research design, measurement tools, and a commitment to acknowledging and understanding the complexity of the experiences under investigation.

### **Recommendations**

A study of this nature opens avenues for critical future research. Future studies should investigate the nuanced interplay between the predictor variables, considering how their combined influence shapes the self-concept of Black social workers over time.

Employing mixed methods approaches, including both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, can provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics involved. This multifaceted approach is crucial for capturing the subjective experiences and perceptions of Black social workers within diverse organizational contexts. Considering the risk of oversimplifying experiences, future studies could integrate qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, to delve deeper into the subjective experiences and perceptions related to racial salience. This qualitative approach will provide a richer understanding of the complexities associated with racial identity and self-concept, complementing quantitative measurements.

To address concerns about generalizability, researchers should adopt a more diverse sampling strategy that considers demographic subgroups and organizational contexts within the Black social worker population. By acknowledging and incorporating these variations, the study's external validity can be improved, offering insights that are more broadly applicable to different segments of the population. A comprehensive sampling approach would involve purposive sampling that deliberately includes participants from different demographic categories, ensuring representation across age cohorts, genders, educational levels, and geographical locations. This will facilitate a more accurate reflection of the diverse experiences and perspectives within the Black social worker community. Moreover, researchers should be attentive to organizational nuances, acknowledging the distinct cultures, policies, and practices prevalent in various work settings. This could involve stratifying the sample based on organizational

characteristics such as the size of the agency, urban or rural placement, and the nature of services provided.

The exploration of mediating and moderating variables can enhance the study's depth and applicability as well. Research should investigate potential factors that may mitigate or exacerbate the impact of racial salience, power distance, and employee tenure on self-concept. For instance, examining the role of organizational policies, leadership styles, and mentorship programs in shaping the self-concept of Black social workers can offer practical insights for intervention strategies. Identifying these factors can guide the development of targeted interventions to enhance the well-being and professional development of Black social workers.

### **Implications**

Although the study's findings did not yield statistically significant results, there are still implications for social change. The challenge to conventional assumptions underscores the need to broaden our understanding of the factors influencing the self-concept of Black professionals. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing the intricacies and individuality of experiences within the Black social work community, promoting a more informed approach to addressing the challenges they may face. Social work institutions should actively engage in dialogue and advocacy, promoting systemic change to eliminate barriers that hinder the positive self-concept of Black professionals and other professionals. By identifying potential mitigating factors and informing targeted interventions, this research can catalyze transformative social change.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the examination of racial salience, power distance, and employee tenure as predictors of the self-concept of Black social workers has yielded results that implicate a need for further research to understand how the Black racial identity, power distance, and employee tenure connects to the overall self-concept in specific settings. The interpretation of findings highlights the nuanced interplay between these variables as well as the importance of acknowledging and addressing the variables in fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment for Black social workers, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in the field.

Moreover, the recommendations for future research emphasize the need for continued exploration into the evolving landscape of social work, with a focus on refining interventions and policies that address the identified predictors. The implications for social change emphasized the urgency of implementing organizational reforms and fostering a culture that values diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. By integrating these recommendations into practice, the social work profession can advance towards a more equitable and supportive environment, ultimately contributing to broader societal transformations and dismantling systemic barriers.

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