ABSTRACT

Previous research has demonstrated the positive implications of racial identity and religious socialization on the developmental and behavioral well-being of African American youth. Their vulnerability to maladjustment due to socioeconomic and sociopolitical challenges is magnified when coupled with the biological, cognitive, and psychological changes they undergo in their transition to young adulthood. Despite belonging to the majority group, the continuing marginalization of Black South African youth also makes them vulnerable to similar adversities in post-Apartheid South Africa. Prior research has typically approached adolescent racial identity and religiosity as distinct entities. Most often, the interplay between religiosity, education, and emotional, physical, and mental well-being are emphasized (Ball and Armistead 2003; Regnerus 2003) without considering racial identity perceptions, while other research on racial identity formation often does not consider religiosity (Phinney and Cantu, 1997; Seaton et al., 2003).

Drawing upon William J. Cross's Nigrescence Model (1971, 2001), W.E.B. DuBois's (1903) double consciousness perspective and other related social psychological frameworks, this qualitative study explored the reciprocal impact of racial identity and religious socialization on a sample of 40 African American and Black South African youth, who had a strong affiliation with either a school (secular setting) or a church
(religious setting). The aim was to determine: 1) how the youth perceive and express these racial and religious beliefs in their lives; 2) what family processes shape their racial and faith identities; and 3) how these perceptions and family processes inform the youths’ mental health, self-esteem, and participation in risk-related behavior.

First, the findings reveal that while racial socialization among African American families is normative and forms a crucial part of parenting, such practices are not prevalent among Black South African families.

Second, when exploring the Nigrescence model, most youth in both countries said they do not believe in the salience of race, especially in interpersonal relationships, and they do not harbor negative feelings about their Blackness. South African youth more frequently exhibited signs of an inferiority complex when comparing themselves to their white counterparts in terms of intelligence, innovation, and success.

Third, most youth in both countries and in both school and church settings were raised with strong Christian values within families dominated by women and other extended family members, and they strongly adhered to their family religious belief system. The multifaceted meanings they attach to their religious faith displayed a culturally informed agency in their relationship with God and their daily expressions of faith. Fourth, this faith-informed agency played a crucial role in their psychological development (self-concept, mental health and self-esteem). Especially for South African young men, this faith-informed agency serves as a deterrent against engaging in some risk-related behaviors. However, these religious values were more selectively utilized, and were less frequently referenced their when considering, sexual behaviors. Here, youth emphasized personal choice, and more frequently referenced peers in their
justifications of their competency and maturity regarding their sexual decision-making and behavior.

Finally, for youths in both South Africa and the United States, despite being selectively, and more frequently, applied to psychosocial than behavioral life domains, religiosity appears to gradually become more salient as they transition to adulthood. Applying the Nigrescence model to a sample of South African youth for the first time demonstrated its cross-cultural utility. It also revealed the long shadow of Apartheid, which is reflected in the sustained cross-racial sense of inferiority among Black South African adolescents. Despite these and other challenges, key ingredients for a developmental empowerment and sense of liberation rest in the interplay between racial and faith identities.
DEDICATIONS

This is dedicated to the memory of my beloved mother, Sibongile Christina Kubeka.

I also dedicate this to family: my father, Joseph Mcingeni Kubeka, my brother Bhekumthetho Aaron Kubeka, my aunt Miriam Jabulile Ngwenya for their constant love and support. I also thank my sweetheart Mr. Clement Ntshabele for his love, patience and encouragement.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore, through qualitative methods, how African American and Black South African adolescents navigate their changing lives as they make their transition to adulthood. In particular, the role of racial identity and religious socialization was deconstructed. Previous research on the impact of racial identity and religiosity on adolescent development has tended to treat these two aspects as entirely distinct entities. Several studies for instance, focus on the interplay between religiosity and education, emotional, physical and mental well-being (Regnerus, 2003; Ball and Armistead, 2003), without considering the issue of racial identity perceptions. However, studies that are devoted to racial identity fail to consider the question of religiosity adequately; or rather, they treat it tangentially (Phinney and Cantu, 1997; Seaton et al., 2003).

This comparative study serves to fill this gap, approaching racial identity and religiosity as complexly intertwined aspects by exploring a) the reciprocal relationship between racial identity and religiosity, and b) the cross-culturally similar and distinctive
processes through which the two aspects of racial identity and religiosity matter among Black youth as they deal with changes in their lives.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is known to be a stage of human development characterized by biological, cognitive, and psychological changes, rendering it both a period of excitement and angst, happiness and melancholy, discovery and confusion. Here adolescents are faced with the challenge of effectively adjusting to these changes, while at the same time dealing with constantly changing social contexts such as family, community, school, and society at large (Lerner and Spanier, 1980; Lerner and Galambos, 1998).

Adolescent development encompasses biological, psychological, social-interpersonal, cultural, and historical processes that often operate simultaneously to affect the constantly changing relationship between individuals and their contexts (Brooks-Gunn and Peterson, 1983). The nature of this relationship, which varies from one individual to the next, can either spawn positive or negative developmental outcomes. In the best case scenario, the youth “are encouraged by their parents to engage in age-appropriate autonomy while maintaining strong ties to their family” (Lerner and Galambos, 1998: 416); in the worst case, they make poor decisions that may lead to harmful consequences (Eccles et al., 1997).

In this study, the outcomes of interest assessed included: a) mental health, particularly how youth think, feel, and act as they face life situations, as well as their ability to handle stress, depression, and anxiety-producing situations; b) self esteem,
meaning self pride and the value youth place on themselves, their talents, and accomplishments; c) educational performance and achievements, as well as school social experiences; and d) propensity to engage (or not) in risk-related behaviors including early sexual activity, substance use and abuse, and delinquency.

Although these risk factors affect adolescents across population groups, they are most pronounced among the youth of African descent. Studies conducted in the United States reveal that African American youth and other minorities are more susceptible to negative developmental outcomes. Compared to their white counterparts, they are more likely to be at risk for problems such as teenage pregnancy, incarceration, male violence, mental breakdown, and school failure. These patterned adolescent outcomes significantly shape the life-course period leading into adulthood. In addition, these young people are vulnerable to special unfavorable conditions stemming from their racial group’s position in the general social structure, namely; social injustice, social incompetence, and denied personal efficacy (Spencer et al., 1990). Some scholars have even gone as far as dubbing this group of youth as “endangered species (Gibbs, 1989), due to their precarious position in the educational system, juvenile justice system, and mental health system. It is for these reasons that scholars like Burton, et al., (1995) contend that conventional concepts of adolescent development may not be germane to the experiences of some of the youth growing up in inner-city urban communities.

The contention presented in this study is that having a strong sense of racial identity may shield these young people from the negative impact of discrimination, thus reducing the levels of distress and negative outcomes (Sellers et al., 2003). Literature on
urban African American adolescent resilience points to racial socialization, as it is passed on through positive interactions within family and community, as an inimitable cultural protective factor that serves to safeguard this group from adverse environmental risk factors (Miller and MacIntosh, 1999). Conversely, growing up in a strong religious culture may facilitate and further strengthen their understanding of self within a predominantly white American society. The religious worldview they learn is based on African American history, heritage, and experience that pre-dates slavery through to the civil rights era and into today. This worldview increases the likelihood of a spiritual connectedness to their communities, their culture, and society at large. It also facilitates the formation of principles and norms for behavior, offering direction in life that leads to positive developmental outcomes (Earnshaw 2000; Youniss et al., 1999).

I argue that Black adolescents in South Africa are also vulnerable to the aforementioned challenges and problems even in the post-Apartheid era despite their status as the racial majority in the country. Black youth in contemporary South Africa are growing up in a society that is still dealing with the deep seated lingering socioeconomic problems inherited from the past political system of racial oppression and segregation. Not only do they have to adjust to changes in their own personal development, but they also have to negotiate these in a new context while at the same time having to cope with the legacy of the previous oppressive system. The burgeoning literature on the plight of Black youth in post-Apartheid South Africa shows that although strides have been made in years since the democratization of the nation in 1994, contemporary Black youth still face serious personal and social adjustment challenges. Indicators of marginalization are
still evident among Black youth who continue to be at risk for, among other things, unemployment, familial and community disruption, violence and crime, and contracting HIV/AIDS. The legacy of the migrant labor system has taken a toll on contemporary African family structures, causing most adolescents to spend a considerable portion of their formative years without their parents, and thus being deprived of financial and emotional support (Richter et al., 2009). Educational access is still a challenge for these youth, most of whom have career aspirations, but no financial means to access higher education (Morrow and Richter, 2005; Makiwane and Kwizera, 2009). Moreover, while extensive research has been conducted linking racial identity and religiosity to adolescent well-being in the United States, such information is scant in the South African context, a gap this study sought to fill.

The shared historical context of racial segregation, oppression, inequality, as well as the sociopolitical changes leading to the eradication of institutional discrimination, render these two nations well suited for a comparative analysis for several reasons: First, Black people in both nations have been historically subjected to oppressive systems of racial segregation and inequality that continue to have implications for their psychosocial lives today. Second, Black people in both nations have incorporated a collective sense of Black consciousness and religious faith into their cultural value systems and sociopolitical movements against slavery and segregation in America, and colonization and Apartheid in South Africa (Harris, 1997; Allen et al., 1989; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; Marx, 1998; Graybill, 1995). Additionally, both countries offer good comparative angles since in the
United States, African Americans are in the minority, while Black South Africans constitute the majority.

1.3 Rationale and Objectives of the Study

There appears to be consensus among theorists that racial identity is a continual, non-static, fluid, and dynamic phenomenon. It involves a movement from an amorphous to an advanced stage of complete self-awareness. The individual engages in self-reflection to assess his/her position in relation to others who belong in his/her own racial group, as well as those who belong to other racial groups. In this way, individuals learn to figure out their appropriate roles as racial beings (Helms, 1990; Thompson and Carter, 1997). Parental racial socialization is useful in prepare youth of color as they engage in this process of self-discovery. It has been found that the racial identity messages young people receive are significant in helping them navigate social spaces and relationships (Hughes et al., 2009).

In order to effectively capture how adolescents of African heritage in both the American and South African cultural contexts, articulate their formative experiences in the process of racialization, this dissertation draws upon William J. Cross’s (1995; 2001) Nigrescence model. From Cross’s standpoint, one’s initial understanding of race and its meaning in one’s life is rooted in one’s resolve to dismiss it as less salient or encounter it as more salient. Essentially, the Nigrescence model (Cross, 1995, 2001) seeks to explicate a resocialization experience, wherein an individual moves from having a ‘deracinated, deculturized, or miseducated’ Black racial self-concept, to an integrated
Black identity anchored in a strong sense of Afrocentric values and culture. It is important to note, however, that the intent of this study was not to test the validity of Cross’s Model. Rather, it was to provide a narrative extension/elaboration of its application in order to delve deeper into, and unearth the nuances related to issues of racial pride versus shame; rage versus joy; and disappointment versus celebration among contemporary Black youth.

Furthermore, religiosity is also said to be a significant feature in adolescence because a) youth have to deal with questions that pique their curiosity about existence, thus propelling them to search for the deeper meaning of who they are, the purpose of life, and the existence of god(s) or supernatural force(s); b) religious exploration is crucial in the process of identity formation; and c) religiosity is associated with feelings of self-worth, especially how adolescents view their own worth in relation to the perception of a supreme being (Makstrom, 1990). Given the fact that adolescents navigate numerous contexts in their daily lives (family life, peers, school, and community), where religion as it is practiced can influence behavior, it is imperative to provide a comprehensive description of its impact by paying attention to intergenerational social bonds, changing family structures, and valued group and community norms (Regnerus, 2003).

In their relational framework, Mattis and Jagers (2001) depicted the impact of religiosity and spirituality in the interpersonal relationships of African Americans. The authors demonstrated the significance of religious and spiritual socialization, stating that socializing agents such as parents, extended family members, and peers transmit and contribute to the sustenance of religious and spiritual values from one generation to the
next. They observed that within African American families, the convergence of family and religious life is “evident in the language used by African American believers. For example, the African American community thrives on such aphorisms as “the family that prays together stays together” (Mattis and Jagers, 2001: 526). In their framework, Mattis and Jagers, (2001) further draw attention to what they refer to as affective, cognitive, and behavioral correlates of religion and spirituality, which are linked to experiences of guilt, anxiety, altruism, hope, happiness, forgiveness, trust, love, commitment, and active participation in the promotion of social justice.

This comparative examination, therefore, aimed to accomplish four objectives: first, to discern the post-civil rights African American as well as a post-Apartheid South African Black consciousness from a youth standpoint. Second, to examine factors at play in the insidious nature of racism and the Black youth’s response to it. Third, to gauge the level at which the Black youth in both countries are socialized to embrace religious perceptions and how these are informed by racial identity perceptions. Fourth, to demonstrate how macro-level factors operate through micro-level factors of family and community to influence racial identity and religious perceptions of youth, and how these interact to affect African American and Black South African youth’s developmental outcomes.

Analysis of the aforementioned factors was predicated on the following assumptions: First, racial identity perceptions and religiosity are acquired through processes of socialization within the family and community contexts (Demo and Hughes, 1990; Thompson and Carter, 1997; Mattis and Jagers, 2001). Second, the degree to
which religiosity becomes salient in the developmental outcomes of Black youth is mediated by their sense of individual and collective racial identity. Third, the historical context of racial oppression, segregation, and inequality was bound to produce both similar and distinct youth experiences in both countries. The geographical locations, cultural orientations, political processes and the current demographic and sociopolitical status of Black people in both countries may determine these processes. Based on these assumptions, the following questions are explored in order to capture the ways in which racial identity and religiosity influence youth development on a cross-national level:

1. What constitutes a developed sense of racial identity and religiosity, that is, what are their components? And what is the nature, if any, of their relationship to each other? What is the significant manner in which racial identity and religiosity matter or not, as Black youth make sense of their changing lives?

2. How are racial identity and religious beliefs and perceptions enforced and experienced within the families and communities of Black youth in the United States and South Africa? In what ways do family and community socialization characteristics and exposure facilitate and inform the development of racial identity perceptions and religiosity among contemporary Black youth in the United States and South Africa?

3. To what degree do the historical context of racial experiences and race relations in America and South Africa matter in the youth’s sense of self as African American and Black South Africans?
4. What are the youth’s understanding and interpretation of race relations and religious experiences in contemporary America and South Africa?

In this dissertation, I report on the study I conducted with a group of African American and Black South African male and female adolescents residing in two urban cities of both countries. Chapter two of the dissertation will provide a literature review of previous studies and theories on the processes and dynamics of adolescent development in general and Black adolescents in particular. Chapter three will provide a thorough overview of the research design and methodological practices used to achieve the study aims. Chapters four, five, and six will present the major findings of the study. In particular, components of racial identity as a learned beliefs systems and how these youth express racial identity and the meanings it provides in their enactment of their self concept in daily life. Similarly, the components and meaning of religious values that are also inherited from home and community are also presented. Finally, how these youth draw upon the racial identity and religious lessons and values they learned from previous generations in their respective nations and communities are also presented. The focus is on the use value of these in their navigation of change. The concluding chapter will situate the findings of the study within the literature on racial and religious socialization and their impact on developmental outcomes among youth of African descent.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine, in-depth, how individual and collective racial identity perceptions and religiosity, as informed by family background and community contextual factors, shape the ways in which African American and Black South African youth navigate adolescence. This chapter will present a comprehensive review of the literature on: a) definitions, processes, and outcomes of adolescence in general and as experienced by Black youth in particular; b) the role of racial identity socialization at this critical stage of development; and c) an overview of the changing racial and religious orders in the United States and South Africa, so as to gauge the contextual and intergenerational transmission effects on adolescent development in both nations.

2.1 Adolescence: Processes, Context, and Outcomes

2.1.1 Adolescent Development

It is widely acknowledged among developmental scholars that adolescence is a critical stage commonly associated with physiological changes elicited by an evolving sexual and reproductive maturity, signalling a transition from childhood to adulthood. In
his renowned developmental model, Erikson (1968) underscores a set of tasks that individuals going through this stage have to accomplish, which include: a) an affirmation of an identity that makes them distinct from their parents and other significant figures in their lives, b) the ability to develop and nurture intimate relationships characterized by reciprocity, and c) developing a sense of mastery, which signifies the ability to find a career that will allow them to create value and become well adjusted members of the society. The degree to which an individual is able to optimally complete each task is determined by the availability of psychosocial, physical, and cognitive resources that will aid them as they encounter challenges on the way, thus ensuring a safe passage to adulthood, which will then have implications for long term well-being (Erikson, 1968).

According to Eccles et al (2006), these aforementioned resources come in handy when adolescents have to contend with particular changes and challenges occurring during this developmental phase. First, they have to cope with hormonal changes resulting from puberty marked by behaviours such as aggression, sexuality, and unstable temperament. Here, the ability to regulate these feelings and to develop mature sexual relationships with peers is imperative. When scholars examine the impact of puberty on adolescent development, they focus on status and timing. While the former concerns the current levels of physical growth, the latter refers to whether this growth occurs early or late compared to other adolescents. These two aspects have very important implications for adolescent psychosocial functioning. In particular, the timing of physical maturation has been found to be a strong predictor of mental health and adult lifestyle status (Dubas et al, 1991).
For instance, there seems to be a strong association between pubertal development and the onset of romantic interest and sexual impetus. Changes also take place in levels of emotionality (intensity and reactivity) especially in parent-child and peer relationships (Steinberg 2005). Gender differences have been found in experiences of pubertal changes. Increased pubertal changes among boys have been associated with positive body image and improved mood, while girls are more likely to have a negative self image in which they viewed themselves as unattractive. For both boys and girls, puberty increases their interest in the other sex, while bringing conflict within parent-child relationships. Gender differences in the timing of puberty and psychosocial adjustment have been reported as well. Early pubertal development is related to higher self-esteem for boys whereas for girls later development is associated with these positive psychological outcomes (Peterson, 1998; Ge et al, 1996; Steinberg and Sheffield-Morris, 2001; Lerner and Steinberg, 2004).

Second, adolescents have to attain personality, communication, judgment, and cognitive skills which entail an intellectual capacity to reflect upon oneself and make sense of one’s surroundings and in the process develop a strong sense of identity and morality (Eccles et al, 2006; Moshman, 1999). Essentially, the transition to adulthood is the beginning of a new way of comprehension whereby young people’s capacity to think expands and deepens. This capacity becomes visible not just in academic maturation, but also in how they perceive their relationships with others in their personal lives, community and society (Keatong, 1990). Experts in adolescent cognitive development attribute this development to “the apparent concentration of changes in the adolescent
brain in the prefrontal cortex (which serves as a governor of cognition and action) together with the enhanced interregional communication between the prefrontal cortex and other brain regions” (Steinberg, 2005: 73). A distinct depiction of who they are in terms of their personality also emerges during this stage. They tend to lean towards individualistic self-concept in which they assert their own personal beliefs and standards. Their assessment or depiction of themselves is usually based on how they are doing in school (academic performance), whether they are athletic, how they look (appearance), how they relate to others, and their moral behaviour. This self-concept is said to vary by context wherein youth tend to perceive themselves differently when they are around parents, teachers and peers. These interactions are crucial for adolescent self-esteem because, even though, they are determined to develop and assert an individualistic self-concept, they still need approval, validation and support from their parents, teachers and peers. (Steinberg and Sheffield-Morris, 2001).

Third, adolescents have a challenge to develop the aptitude to effectively adjust to changes in interpersonal relationships with parents and other significant adult figures in their lives. For instance, they have to be able to deal with potential family tensions that may be triggered by their strong desire to assert their independence from their parents or guardians. They also have to maintain self control in the face of peer pressure while at the same time sustaining strong friendship ties and networks. In addition to these intrapersonal and interpersonal changes, adolescents in contemporary societies also have to navigate institutional changes. These relate to changes in school settings during early adolescence with the transition from elementary school to junior high school or middle
school. For older adolescents the change involves moving from high school to either tertiary educational settings, employment or starting a family (Lerner and Galambos, 1998).

In addition to being known as a period characterized by continual changes as the person seeks to make sense of self and their milieu, adolescence is equally notorious for being a period marked by crisis. Experts believe that the crisis is compounded by the fact that these multiple biological, psychological, cognitive, and social changes occur concurrently. Here, poor decision making is likely to have negative consequences that may put adolescents at risk for maladjustment (Dryfoos, 1990; Peterson, 1988). The major risk factors that have been identified as predictors of maladjustment among adolescents are, among others: crime, substance use and abuse, early sexual activity which may lead to infections and teen pregnancy, poor nutrition, poverty, school underachievement and drop out.

2.1.2. Adolescence and Context: Family, and Community

Contextual factors and processes have a great impact in the lives of adolescents as they navigate change. Context refers to the family, neighbourhood, school and society at large within which the adolescent is reared. As the most significant agent of socialization, the family context has greater impact on adolescent transformation. In particular, the nature and quality of parent-child relationship is of concern here, which is said to go through tremendous change with the onset of adolescence. Parents’ relationships with their adolescent offspring can either be characterized by conflict,
distance and separation, while on the other hand, they can be characterized by warmth and closeness (Smetana et al, 2006). Adolescents tend to be drawn more to their peers at this stage, spending less and less time with their parents and family. In addition, the whole structure of family relations also change from being hierarchical in nature with parents exerting more influence and authority, to being more egalitarian, with adolescents developing the need to assert their autonomy (Youniss and Smollar 1985; Dubas and Gerras 2002). Conflict, in the form of constant disagreements inevitably becomes a part of parent adolescent relationship during this period. This conflict, which is often momentary, is considered to be normal and imperative in altering family relationships. More specifically, a correlation has been found between modest conflict between parents and their adolescent offspring and healthy adjustment among the latter. (Collins and Laursen 2004; Adams and Laursen 2001). The experience of divorce and remarriage and other changes that may cause parental discord and lead to one parent exiting the home, has been found to put a temporal strain on parent-adolescent relationships (Hetherington and Kelly 2002).

In addition to familial surroundings, adolescents become more exposed to external contexts as well, such as schools and neighborhoods. The ways in which such external environments affect the functioning of family relations and processes, and thus adolescent development has been well documented. One of the greatest contributions is from Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) ecological theory of human development, in which he illustrates how external environments influence the operation of families as contexts, and the implications of such on human development. Here, context, personal characteristics and
the interaction of the two aspects are significant for development and adjustment among adolescents. He identified three environmental systems that influence intrafamilial processes. The first is the *microsystem*, which describe the set of roles and relationships within the immediate family environment. The second is the *mesosystem*, which described how different types of microsystems, such as home and school environments, interact to exert mutual influence on adolescents. The influence of the third kind of environmental system, the *exosystem*, is more indirect and a function of the adolescents’ exposure to peers, teachers and community members. Finally, adolescent development is also affected by the *macrosystem*, which is the dominant sociopolitical and cultural patterns of the larger society in which they live. From this theory’s standpoint, all these systems are intertwined, with the individual placed at the center and receiving end.

Studies on neighborhood effects have been very useful in articulating the interaction between familial and external systems in adolescent development. Brooks-Gunn et al (1993) show how the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood matters when it comes to adolescent development. Those who grow up in affluent spaces fair better than their counterparts from low-income predominately Black neighborhoods. In particular, neighborhood effects are apparent outcomes such as childhood IQ, teenage pregnancy, and school dropout are taken into account. Furthermore, the residential structure of the neighborhood is also found to have implications for adolescent mental health. Aneshensel and Sucoff (1996) found a strong correlation between residential structural arraignments and stability and adolescent perception of safety. They argue that adolescents in transitional neighborhoods characterized by instability and lack of social
cohesion, social putridity, drugs and gangs are more likely to experience depressive symptoms, anxiety and anti-social behavior. Thus the actualization of risk related behavior is more likely in community contexts plagued by poverty and urban high-density (Lerner and Galambos 1998).

2.1.3. Black adolescence

As highlighted earlier, Black Adolescent development, experiences, processes and dynamics are unique. These factors are largely determined by the race, socioeconomic status and environmental forces (Jones, 1989) this group inherited from the socio-political and historical position of Black people in highly racially stratified societies.

In their essay, McKenry et al, (1989) provide a stern critique of the bias in social science literature, which tended to under-represent Black Adolescents. This literature is consistently comprised of Black-White comparison that depicts Black adolescents in pathological and negative terms. They counsel that research on Black adolescents should be culturally sensitive, taking into account the unique language, communication patterns, values, behaviour “…and the need for Black youth to develop a bicultural identification” (p. 261). It is important to capture the Black adolescent subculture in its essence in methodological undertakings. At the same time, the unique socioeconomic, educational and political challenges that Black youth often face should be given considerable attention.

We learn from the work of Burton, et al (1995) that for these youths, adolescence is not a clear cut developmental stage. They point to distinct parameters of development
wherein the social contexts in which this group is reared matters a great deal. They stress the importance of gauging the contextual meanings of adolescent development among this group to develop theories that are culturally sensitive. The authors further cite five dimensions of social contexts that may explain this ambiguity. First, there are structural inconstancies between the expectations from parents and institutions, particularly the school system, when it comes to youth social roles. This is because while “…school systems expect adolescents to adhere to mainstream educational aspirations, adult-monitored activities, and academic protocols…at home, however, some inner-city adolescents are treated as ‘grown folks’ often saddled with adult responsibilities that are in direct conflict with the ‘older child’ treatment and adult monitoring they receive in school” (Burton et al., 1995: 122). As a result, these youth may get mixed messages that may have detrimental effects on adjustment. Second, some African American youth may come from age–condensed families wherein the intergenerational age distance is significantly conical due in most instances to the prevalence of teenage pregnancies. This may lead to enmeshed boundaries in the roles of adults and adolescents. Third, the enmeshment of the world of parents and their children, particularly with regards to social roles and relationships, is a common feature in age-condensed families. Fourth, there is the issue of an ‘accelerated life-course’ among Black adolescents hailing from underprivileged social contexts. This occurs when an individual has a short sense of a life expectancy. This view may be prompted by the general trends of high mortality and imprisonment rates among the Black populace. Finally, Burton et al. (1995) given the aforementioned circumstances argue that Black adolescent developmental outcomes such
as those relating to school achievement, risk related behaviours including early sexual activity and delinquency, as well as future employment prospects, should be conceptualized and measured differently.

There has been recent literature that seeks to turn the focus to the experiences of Black middle class youth development, an area that some scholars like Pattillo-McCoy (2000) argues have been neglected. The author contends that the middle class status for Black youth does not entirely shield them from adversity. They are also more developmentally vulnerable compared to their white counterparts because of the different neighbourhoods they inhabit. Although they may have more arrays of resources for success, compared to their Black peers who come from less privileged backgrounds, they still encounter barriers on the road to success. Their performance in aptitude and achievement tests is still very low compared to that of white middle class youth. In addition, they are also exposed to unfavourable outcomes such as teenage childbearing, and crime like many of the Black youth in high risk neighbourhoods.

On the other hand, there is a whole body of literature on resilience, highlighting the ability of underprivileged youth to transform their life chances regardless of their experiences with hardship. Resilience in this context is cultivated by individual familial and community protective factors that function to bring about positive outcomes while reducing negative outcomes. Racial socialization is said to function as a powerful protective factor for African American youth who face deprivation and racial discrimination (Miller, 1999).
Employing Brofenbrenner’s ecological model, Barrow et al, (2007) classify individual, family, school, community and societal level protective factors in order to shift the focus more to the potent and protective forces that cultivate resilience among African American youth who face maladjustment. At the individual level, the authors argue that developing a positive self concept and strong identity, based on Afrocentric heritage and values that accentuate interdependence, collectivity, spirituality and affect, is especially crucial for African American youth who are brought up in a multi-cultural society that often presents constraints of racism and poverty. Related to positive racial-ethnic identity is self-efficacy and self-esteem. The former refers to having confidence in one’s ability to succeed and realize goals and the latter refers to a positive self affirmiative attitude and feelings of worth. At the familial level, being surrounded by supportive parents and other extended family members has important positive implications for, among other things, educational success of Black adolescents. Resources of support outside the home, and in the community are also essential for healthy development among this group. The presence of strong supportive elders and organizations within the community serve to counteract the negativity presented by dangers in poor neighbourhoods. Within African American communities, the church plays a crucial role in providing a safe haven for this group in that “…[it] fosters individual spiritual development, exemplifies competence and influence in the community, and provides leadership in the struggle against oppression and racism” (p. 401). Black youth who are religiously active in their communities have been found to be emotionally stable and tend
to perform better at school compared to their less religiously active peers (Barrow et al, 2007).

2.2. Racial and Religious Socialization and Black Adolescent Developmental Outcomes

2.2.1. Racial Identity

By definition, identity is an amalgamation of self-concept and self-esteem with both the discernment of personal development and an awareness of group membership, expectations, social responsibilities, and privileges (Spencer, 1988). Classic psychological theory (Erikson, 1958) considers identity formation, particularly during adolescence, as a psychosocial task to be accomplished during this phase, which then has significant implications for adulthood. This process, which is dubbed as positive ego identity formation, involves the merging of individual personality with social reality, resulting in a person’s developed sense of a coherent and stable internal capacity and a “meaningful relatedness” to one’s external environment. For this process to be successful, one usually experiences an identity crisis propelling them to explore their abilities, interests, and options. Once sorted out, these will eventually lead to a commitment to a personal identity that will in turn determine future behavior. Failure to attain a tenable identity results in confusion, ambiguity about one’s self concept and their role in the world (Erikson, 1968).

Expanding upon Erick Erikson’s theory of identity formation, Marcia (1980, 1994) formulated a typology of ego identity statuses which shows that identity formation during adolescence consists of four ego-identity statuses: identity diffusion, foreclosure,
moratorium, and achieved identity. Identity diffusion refers to those adolescents who have not experienced an ‘identity crisis’, meaning that they have not pledged allegiance to any religious philosophies, gender roles, occupations and political beliefs. However, the influence of peers, parents and society may put them in a position in which they may experience as a crisis, where they have to grapple with the pressure to adhere to these categories. Foreclosure, on the other hand, refers to adolescents who have not experienced any crisis, but have already made commitments to occupations and ideologies that have been imposed upon them by their parents, peers, and community. Adolescents in the moratorium stage are experiencing a crisis without making any commitments. As a result, this group is often in a state of confusion and instability, causing them to act out in rebellious ways. Adolescents in the Identity achieved phase have successfully resolved their crisis, have carefully considered their options and are more content with who they are and what they stand for. They have developed a cognitive capacity to make their own decisions and can interpret their own experiences with confidence. Contrary to Erickson, Marcia’s theory does not view identity as developing through stages. Rather it depicts identity as occurring along a continuum of the four ego-statuses. Marcia argued that approaching identity formation in this manner will enable us to best capture different aspects of identity development among adolescents (Marcia, 1966).

Another facet of adolescent identity development is racial identity and racial socialization. According to Helms (2002), until recently, this aspect has been neglected in identity formation literature. She defines racial identity as “....the person’s sense of
self relative to other perceived racial groups, as defined by the environment in which they interact” (p. 143). Therefore, Helms contends, an understanding of how adolescents attain racial identity and its impact on interpersonal relationships as well as lifelong educational, occupational goals becomes essential. Helms (2002) painstakingly distinguish between ethnic and racial identity, two concepts that are often conflated in literature. In essence, while both ethnic and racial identities are acquired through familial socialization, the two are significantly and meaningfully different. The former is defined by internalized cultural norms, traditions, customs that are intergenerationally transmitted, while the latter is informed by the structural position of the adolescent’s racial group in a society. Helms (2002) then underscores that such a distinction enables us to see the importance of racial identity socialization on the development of adolescent self-concept in a societal structure where “…resources are accorded and people are valued or devalued on the basis of their own or their ancestors’ ostensible racial-group membership…” (p. 143). Among minority youth, racial identification (self-consciousness within a particular group), preference (sense of group pride) and attitude are precursors of and form a critical part of identity formation during this stage (Spencer and Markstrom-Adams, 1990).

One of the most widely employed frameworks of Black identity formation is the Nigrescence model developed by William J. Cross (1995; 2001). Also known as the psychology of becoming Black, this model was first developed in the 1970s in response to need to elucidate Black identity as it evolved from “Negro” to “Black”. The idea was to articulate how Black people move from self-hate arising from experiences of oppression,
to self-love and Black pride within a predominantly white culture. The Nigrescence model is premised upon five theoretical assumptions about Blackness:

1. The Black self-concept consists of two distinct aspects, the personality or Personal Identity (PI), which refers to psychological traits that are common among human beings, and the Reference Group Orientation (RGO), a person’s membership to a particular group (race class, gender etc). Among the two, RGO plays a more significant role in the meaning of Blackness since the latter is a social identity that is cultivated by ones reference group membership.

2. Blackness is learned through traditional socialization processes, i.e. it is passed on from one generation to the next throughout one’s life-span and culminates in an array of identity types. This model points to the functional power of a socialized racial identity in a) preparing adolescents for psychological insults originating from racial oppression, b) instilling cultural pride and awareness of its essence anchored in historical African origin, and c) providing a social platform for creating meaning through established symbolic interactions with other Black people as a reference group in home, schools and the larger societal contexts (Cross, et al, 1991; Stevenson, 1995).

3. Blackness is made up of an assortment of identity types ranging from those that are committed to and actively engaging in Black problems and culture, to those that do not. These identity types can be classified into four stages of Black racial identity. The first stage, Pre-encounter, describes an individual who either does not believe in the salience or have anti-Black and pro-White attitudes. The second
stage is that of an Encounter where the individual experiences a decisive situation that challenges their previously held racial belief systems, which forces them to search for a new identity. By the third stage, the Immersion–Emersion, the individual immerses themselves in Black culture and struggles to establish a positive identity, a process often characterized by turmoil. The final stage is known as the Internalization stage, which in contrast to the preceding stages that entails both internal and external turmoil is characterized by a resolution where a person becomes comfortable with themselves as Black individuals. Nigrescence is a process of resocialization involving a transformation of a core racial identity.

4. Black individuals do not remain in a single stage perpetually. This does not indicate confusion or instability, “rather, they are experiencing….Nigrescence recycling” (Cross, 2001:378).

5. When a Black person has internalized their identity in which they are comfortable with who they are, they engage in an array of identity enactments in their daily lives depending on the situation: a) buffering (psychological protective mechanism), b) code switching when interacting with and adhering to norms and values of white mainstream society, c) bridging, between a white person’s standpoint and that of Black person’s, and d) individualism, the need to stand out and not conform to or be defined by one’s membership to a social category. (Cross, 2001).

Empirical evidence pointing to the use value of racial identity on developmental outcomes among African American youth has been documented. In her application of the
Nigrescence model, Munford (1994) found that the youth who were in the pre-encounter, encounter and immersion stages showed higher levels of depressive symptoms, while those in the internalization stage showed no signs of depression. She concluded that adolescents with lower levels of a Black identity view themselves negatively because of their race and may feel that they lack good qualities. In contrast, those who have higher levels of Black identity may feel they possess strengths and good qualities because they are Black.

Evidence shows that positive racial identity development among African American adolescents serves to cultivate positive mental and psychological well-being. It also accelerates the process of a positive identity formation (Caldwell et al, 2002; Marshall, 1995). The positive racial group messages Black youth receive from their parents and peers are associated with positive self-esteem and developed self-perceptions and means for coping with racial discrimination and prejudice (Johnson, 1988; Constantine and Blackmon, 2002; Sellers et al 2003). Youth who are taught to be cautious and aware of racial hurdles are more likely to adopt positive social and psychological behavioral outcomes than those have not received that kind of socialization (Pipes McAdoo, 2002). Steven and Arrington, 2009), found that the centrality of racial identity expression is influenced in large part by the racial context Black youth navigate at school. High school students who are aware of the racial and political climate that devalues African Americans, tend to be more skeptical about mainstream culture and surroundings. Therefore, given the well documented fact of the unique and delicate position of African American youth in the United States, racial identity socialization as a
protective mechanism facilitating a safe passage to adulthood, plays a very crucial role within the Black community.

2.2.2. Racial Socialization

The family is the most appropriate setting within which specific messages and practices pertinent to personal and group identity as well as intergroup relationships is intergenerationally transmitted (Miller and MacIntosh, 1999). Racial socialization, anchored in strong interpersonal relationships within Black families, is said to validate the latter’s significant role in providing support and strengthening kinship bonds (Demo and Hughes, 1990). Thus, parental conversations with their children about racial issues are part of “…developmental processes by which children acquire the behaviors, perceptions, values and attitudes of an ethnic group and come to see themselves and others as members of such a group” (Rotheram and Phinney in Coard and Sellers, 2005: 265).

In most cases, African American parents have been known to incorporate racial socialization messages as a customary component of their parenting. These messages can be direct or indirect, verbal or nonverbal, overt or covert and are shaped, in part, by their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of race (Stevenson 1995; Thornton et al, 1990). These parents may believe that their roles and responsibilities differ markedly from those of their European American counterparts in that they are more challenging. Their own personal experiences with racism may prompt a sense of exigency in raising children
with a sense of racial awareness (O'Brien Cauchy et al, 2002; Hughes, 2003; Coard et al, 2004).

In their seminal work, Bowman and Howard (1985) and later Sanders-Thompson (1994) have classified the types of racial socialization messages African American parents confer to their adolescent children into four categories. There are those that endorse racial pride, African tradition, ancestral and cultural history (Racial Pride/Commitment). Others emphasize self-development through hard work, educational ambitions and achievement (Self Development/Achievement). Some parents seek to raise awareness of and prepare their children for possible racial barriers imposed by racial discrimination (Racial Barriers/Protocol). Finally, other parents may encourage their children to have an Egalitarian outlook wherein one embraces and values individual qualities over racial group membership and even avoid mentioning race completely (Equality/Co-existence).

By fostering the development of a positive racial identity, these messages function to protect the youth from the antagonism of a racially hostile environment. Furthermore, they function to infuse a sense of pride, among this group, in their culture. According to Jones-Thomas (2000) parents who possess a more integrated racial identity and self-concept are more likely to promote child-rearing attitudes that are based on Afrocentric values whose “substance is historic, African derived, [and] culturally empowering” (Stevens, 1995: 52).
In essence parental racial socialization within the family context centered on instilling cultural pride has been linked to high self-esteem in external contexts such as peer interaction (Constantine et al, 2002). What makes racial identity socialization effective in producing positive effects on adolescents is what Townsend and Lanphier, (2007) call ‘family functioning and coping strategies’. In other words, the degree to which family racial identity socialization will lead to positive youth developmental outcomes is determined by familial coping strategies that are based on Africentric values of social support and spirituality as well family interconnectedness and adaptability. The authors are therefore stressing the significance of parental behavior modeling beyond direct racial socialization messages.

Positive self-concept has been linked to adjustment and coping with potential stressful experiences caused by discrimination. African American youth have been found to report similar kinds of perceived racial discrimination as do their adult or parental counterparts. However, their risk of cognitive and psychological maladjustment is greater, especially if the racial attacks are blatant as opposed to subtle in nature. This is because effectively coping with the latter requires a more expansive comprehension and ability to assess the nature of the attacks, a skill that adolescents are still in the process of acquiring (Sellers et al, 2003; Sellers et al, 2006).

Coping with such difficult circumstances is ensured when an adolescent has a strong sense of cultural and racial pride. Evidence shows that having a strong connection with and positive attitudes towards one’s racial group is significant for wellbeing in that it
provides one with a basis of awareness that will enable them to block the negativity of and thus avoid internalizing racially demeaning messages (Jones, 2000).

Furthermore, McMahon and Watts, (2002) found that African American youth with an enhanced sense of ethnic-racial identity, are more likely to have in their arsenal, active coping strategies that do not encourage aggressive behavioral responses to external racial stressors. These youth were less likely to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety. African American youth with more supportive parents reported a stronger sense of ethnic identity. This, in turn, is linked to high levels of confidence and competency in dealing with depressive symptoms Swenson and Prelow (2005).

In addition, Spencer et al. (2001) found that African American secondary school students who have been socialized to have strong Black pride and greater levels of Afrocentricity demonstrate high self-esteem and academic achievement goals. A positive racial identity has been found to function as a protective force for African American youth against the potential barriers they may face in schools. Academic detachment may result in cases where some Black youth anticipate racial discrimination, but it may increase for others. Actual and frequent experiences of racial discrimination from teachers and school peers, however, may have detrimental effects on their inspiration for academic success during high school years. Having a strong sense of a “culturally connected racial identity” may, however, reverse these effects. This is because racial identity is associated with competence and resilience (Miller and MacIntosh, 1999; Eccless, et al, 2006). In fact, African American youth with as strong sense of racial pride are also more likely to have high educational expectations and beliefs, not only with
immediate academic outcomes, but future career achievement as well. Having a positive
sense of self as an African American and about African Americans in general has been
found to be strongly related to attachment to school and later educational attainment

2.2.3 Religiosity

Religion refers to shared values, mythology, and rituals used to honor sacred
connections to a higher power. A distinction is often made between “religiosity” and
“spirituality” even though these terms are often used interchangeably. While the former
is concerned with a person’s level of devotion to the beliefs, doctrines and practices of a
particular religion, the latter is concerned with recognition of the existence of a
supernatural power permeating all areas of sentient and non-sentient life (Jagers and
Smith, 1996; Mattis and Jagers, 2001).

In the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), religiosity is represented as
encompassing beliefs, practices, experiences, identities and attitudes. Beliefs include
acknowledging the existence of a higher power. Practices comprise regular attendance to
religious activities and services. Experiences refer to a spiritual awakening and feeling.
Identities include shared religious values, culture, heritage, that connects one to others
(http://www.youthandreligion.org). Religiosity has also been defined as a form of a
cultural capital, which is a cherished resource implanted in social interactions with
“productive and exchange capacities” (Bourdieu, 1990 in Caputo, 2008: 3). Furthermore,
a distinction is often made in scholarship between intrinsic and extrinsic religious
orientation. While in the former individuals consider their religiosity as deeply personal, in the latter people’s religiosity is defined in terms their membership to an in-group, which provides them with protection, consolation and social status (Maltby and Lewis, 1996).

As they move towards adulthood, establishing a value system becomes another one of the vital tasks adolescents have to accomplish. They begin to check their religious identity and beliefs, a mission made possible by the fact that the cognitive capacity to reflect on and integrate a religious belief system emerges at this time (Fowler, 1991; Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966). Having a solid value system entails a strong sense of internal control grounded in a moral philosophy. As Knight (1968) noted, during this stage “[The adolescent] is faced with learning to live with heightened impulses, as well as finding a balance between desire and restraint…. [This requires them to]…build a system of values which will serve as a guide to behavior and valuation appropriate to [their] circumstances…. “ (p39). This is where religion becomes useful in that it can provide adolescents with some structure or order from which they can draw upon when dealing with the challenges of change. In essence, religion enables young people to develop and nurture a pro-social identity. The fact that the religious resources (beliefs, practices, attitudes) are based on social relations founded on shared ideologies, histories and traditions makes it possible for adolescents to enjoy a sense of identity, purpose and belonging. The latter encourages them to commit to others who share similar beliefs (Ebstyne King and Benson, 2006).
Similar to racial identity, religiosity is learned through familial interactions with significant others during one’s formative years. Religion in this case is seen as a social product conferred in early socialization and serves as a thread that connects individuals across generations. The intergenerational transmission of religiosity is a concept often used to describe the processes through which religious beliefs and values are passed on from one generation to the next. Religious beliefs and rituals communicated, shared and expressed within the family can greatly influence individual choices and trajectories over a life-course. Thus, within the family there exists a repertoire of religious capital that has a potential to enthuse the religious commitment of subsequent generations (Bengtson et al, 2008, 2009; Mahoney et al, 2003).

From a social learning perspective, the transmission of religiosity evolves in a form of imitation and modeling facilitated by parental affection and acceptance. In essence, “Parents’ beliefs and behavior are associated with warm, rewarding, and affectionate parenting practices, and parents' behavioral characteristics gradually take on a positive value for the child. Consequently, the child is motivated to acquire and to reproduce these attributes in his or her own behavior. Specifically, children who experience positive interaction with the model display more imitative behavior than do children with whom the same adult interacts in a less supportive way” (Bao, 1999: 363-4). The quality of parent-child relationship is thus vital in ensuring a successful transmission of and conservation of religious beliefs and values (Taris and Semin, 1997).

Evidence of the intergenerational transmission of religiosity has been documented by few scholars in the United States. Francis and Gibson (1993), for instance, noted that
parental church attendance is a key predictor of adolescent church attendance. Their analysis revealed that adolescents are unlikely to maintain their practice of church attendance without clear parental examples and support. They also found that regular attendance of religious services among adolescents is more likely to occur when supported by both parents rather than only one parent.

Myers (1996) found that a smooth transfer of and endurance of religious values is made possible by the strength of parental religiosity, parental martial quality and family structure. He noted that children brought up in two-parent homes with high marital quality and less discord, are more likely to adopt their parents’ religious beliefs. More recent findings (Milevsky and Leh 2008) show that these familial processes-parental marital status, satisfaction and family support-are predictors of a strong religious expression, which in turn is related to adjustment in early adulthood.

Furthermore, positive parent-child relationships are significant in shaping adolescent religiosity. There is evidence of an association between high intra-family interaction and adolescent continuous adherence to parental religious values and beliefs in adulthood (Regnerus et al, 2004; Taris and Semin, 1997; Burkett, 1993). In particular, mothers’ religiosity has been found to have greater influence on the development of religious values among adolescents. Specifically, it has been found that mothers' affection and acceptance, as experienced by boys, may be essential in passing on their religiousness. A girl's emotional bond with her mother, on the other hand, may influence her conformity to her mother's religiousness (Bao, 1999). Other scholars found that both parents can exert influence on their adolescents’ religiosity. Douglas and Flanagan-
Knap, (2001) used the concept of “dyadic discussions of faith” to argue that the more frequent and bidirectional the conversations about faith between parents and their adolescent children, the more likely that the latter would internalize and place more importance on religion. Parental religiosity is said positively predict adolescent social responsibility indirectly through authoritative parenting (Gunnoe, 1999).

Indeed a link has been found between religious involvement (attendance at religious services, participation in a Bible study group, and youth group involvement) and psychosocial development (ego strengths, ideological and ethnic forms of identity, general self-esteem, and school self-esteem) among adolescents in the United States (Makstrom, 1999). Overall, Miletsky and Levitt (2004), found a positive and significant correlation between having a religious value system, whether expressed extrinsically or intrinsically, and adjustment in pre-adolescence and adolescence.

In an effort to provide a systematic representation of the positive influences of religiosity on the lives and development of adolescents in the United States, Smith (2003) compiled a comprehensive framework of nine key factors-Moral directives, Spiritual experiences, Role models, Community and Leadership skills, Coping skills, Cultural capital, Social capital, Network closure, and Extra-community links- that cluster around three key dimensions of influence(moral order, learned competencies, and social and organizational ties). Moral Order constitutes moral directives or guidelines, which youth are socialized to adapt and internalize and use to guide their life choices. Spiritual experiences are provided by the religious organizational contexts to cultivate and strengthen these morals and thus behavior. A sense of moral order is further cultivated by
the peer group role models that youth are exposed to in religious organizations. These role models provide examples of behavior based on religious moral orders that not only positively influence the lives of youth, but also affords them an opportunity to build positive relationships. Learned competence contains the acquisition of leadership and coping skills. Within the religious organizational context youth enjoy the space and opportunity to attain leadership skills through observing others, learning from them and getting the training they will need to nurture these skills.

In addition to leadership skills, youth are also equipped with coping skills based on beliefs, which come in handy when they encounter stressful events and circumstances in their psycho-social lives. Religious organizations also provide youth with other opportunities- beyond family, school, and the media -to obtain essentials of cultural capital that may directly enhance their well-being, which they can also draw upon as they enter other social environments. Being actively involved in a religious organization enables the youth to establish and maintain social and organizational ties that provide complete access to adult members who will guide, care and provide helpful information, resources and opportunities they will need. These figures can also closely monitor the behaviors of youth, thus encouraging positive and discouraging negative practices and influences. These adult networks can also expose youth to wider national and transnational religious organization (extra-community links), providing connections to positive experiences and events well beyond their local communities.
Further evidence that connects religiosity to adolescent outcomes, points out the
social control nature of religious socialization. As a secondary socialization agent, with
family being the primary, religion is said to affect beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors
through the mechanisms of social control, social support and values/identity. Parents who
have strong religious adherence may incorporate their beliefs and values in their
socialization styles. It appears that parental religiosity together with parenting style, is
strongly and positively associated with adolescent religiosity (Wallace and Williams,
1997; Caputo, 2005).

In addition, Ball et al (2003) found that religion serves as a protective mechanism
for African American teenage girls living in urban areas and who are at risk of negative
developmental outcomes. Most notably, having strong religious beliefs seem to boost
their self-esteem and that, in turn, leads to success in school and in life in general.
Furthermore, religiosity is also cited to be positively associated with delayed sexual début
among African American youth (Rostosky, 2004). Religiously active African American
youth tend to avoid risk-related behavior such as early sexual intercourse and smoking.
Even youth who have already been tempted to engage in such behavior are more likely to
stop as they increase their church attendance (Steinman and Zimmerman, 2004).

Religiosity is also deemed useful as young people attempt to define and form an
identity, one of the crucial tasks of their development. There seems to be a link between
strong religious allegiance-the extent to which it has meaning to the youth and they find it
fulfilling in life-and pro-social behavior (Furrow et al, 2004). Particularly for Black
youth in high risk neighborhoods for whom religion in central to their lives, higher self esteem and better psychological well being has been found (Ball et al, 2003).

2.3. Parameters of Cross Cultural Comparison: The case of the United States and South Africa

As highlighted earlier, the shared historical and cultural processes of racial formation, contestation, struggles as well as the role of religion makes the United States and South Africa fitting sites for a cross-cultural comparative analysis of this kind. Here, an overview of the changing racial and religious orders in the United States and South Africa is presented. In particular, the focus will be on the role of race and religion: a) in the cultivation of a collective consciousness, b) as a response to oppression, and c) in community formation/building.

Fredrickson (1995) cited four sources of ‘ideological parallelism’ that form a core foundation of shared historical struggles against white domination in the United States and South Africa. First, white supremacist ideology in both countries was predicated on the belief in the perceived inferiority of Black people. Black people were dubbed as “morally and intellectually inferior and incapable of self-governance and therefore unfit to vote, hold office and hold an equal social standing with whites” (p. 5). Second, there was recognition among Black liberation movements in both nations of the fact that theirs was not an isolated struggle within their countries. There was a Pan Africanist awareness of the racial struggle waged by African descendent people across the globe. Third, there was a shared sense of minority status in both societies. Although Black South Africans are in a numerical majority, they are still not adequately represented in the major political,
economic, social power structures. Finally, the liberation movements were anchored within Black communities and were led by the educated elite whose mission was to propagate these Pan-Africanist ideologies and inspire collective action.

Furthermore, in her historical analysis, Jefferson (2008) outlines the objectives, nature and content of white supremacist oppression in the United States and South Africa as well as the response from the Black Consciousness Liberation movements. She describes the relationship between the oppressive forces and the oppressed as “dialectical” in nature, where “white supremacy exercises domination, Black Power responds. A synthesis of this dialogue plays out in specific Black/white relations—antagonism, conciliation, forgiveness, etc” (p.50). She further notes that the white supremacist forces became entrenched and institutionalized, resulting in the segregation of Black people (separate development) in order to perpetuate and maintain the status quo. The institutionalization of racism also meant that Black people would be stripped of their rights to education, employment and other socioeconomic opportunities. This oppression, Jefferson (2008) argues, elicited an equally powerful response from the oppressed groups. She states that in these two countries, “Black Consciousness movement stemmed from various discriminatory and racist practices that created an intense irritation in the people, an irritation that incited them to action…… The environment had indeed been hostile; the response, nevertheless, has been an amalgamation of the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional (p. 54). How then did these dynamics or processes manifest in each country? The following sections provide an overview that seeks to answer this question.
2.3.1. The United States

Omi and Winant (1994) define race as a socially constructed and unstable notion that is historically situated within the social structure. This definition reveals the political nature of race in the United States, which has manifested itself in the form of racial dictatorship characterized by: a) designating “American” identity as white, thus excluding other racial groups, and b) the imposition of the “color-line” resulting in fundamental racial divisions. As a result, racial beliefs, practices and relations in contemporary America have become even more complex and contradictory. Up until the 1960s, African Americans were completely excluded from the American collective identity. This exclusion was viewed as existing outside of the value system promoted and defined by the American value system (Kook, 1998). This exclusion subsequently advanced from the denial of human rights to what Morris (1984) called “the tripartite system of racial domination” which is characterized by economic, political and personal oppression that was enforced through governmental legislation. Explaining W.E.B. Du Bois’s 1940 definition of Black people as those “…who must ride Jim Crow’ in Georgia”, Austin, (2006) points out that this description underscores the fact that race significantly determines people’s social lives. He notes that: “In 1940, Blacks were subject to Jim Crow policies. They were not allowed their full rights as citizens. They were blocked from entry into certain occupations. In their interactions with whites, Blacks were often required to show deference. In many aspects of social life, Blacks faced constraints where whites had opportunities.” (p47).
Although the systems of slavery and segregation disconnected African Americans from their African roots, they managed to sustain a sense of community, which resulted in the development of a nurtured Black collective consciousness. Incorporating the idea of community into their political consciousness and activities enabled African Americans to declare and maintain their historical connectedness and continuity of a culture characterized by kinship ties that emanate from a core African value system (Harris, 1997; Allen et al, 1989). Scholarship on African American Ethnogenesis, a process by which ethnic groups come to exist, highlight the enduring ability of Black collective consciousness in the midst of constraining racist conditions embedded within the structural system in the United States. Proponents of this area of research posit that Black collective identity/ethnicity in the United States emerged in response to the need for survival and is characterized by an interplay between urbanization, internal migration, and structural inequality. Therefore, the process of urbanization that took place during the Great Migration period (1916-1970s) characterized by occupational concentration and residential segregation led to an increased awareness of an attachment to ethnic identity among African Americans. This in turn, resulted in the formation and preservation of Black communities with distinct institutional and cultural lives (Taylor, 1979; Price-Spratlen, 1999). Consequently, African Americans found themselves occupying both the white world and the Black world, a situation which facilitated the emergence of what Du Bois (1903) called a Twoness of identity or a double consciousness characterized by a dialectical tension of living in two spaces at once. How do African Americans manage this Twoness identity? Du Bois says they use the Veil. The veil enables African
Americans to see white people while making it impossible for white people to see them.

In this way, the veil serves to separate and divide. This double consciousness has been transmitted from one generation to the next through parental role modeling and socialization, and friendship and community networking (Demo and Hughes, 1990; Blau and Brown, 2001).

Religion has always and continues to play a pivotal role in African Americans’ lived experience of race. Despite the fact that in the past it has been used by European Americans to legitimize racial subjugation (Baer, 1993; Higginbotham, 1993), religion has a special meaning for African Americans as both a worldview, encompassing mythic, experiential, doctrinal, ethical, ritual, and social dimensions on the one hand, and a tool for human organization on the other. Religion coalesces the awareness, celebration and preservation of African heritage as well as “an activist oriented spiritual/religious response to the racial stratification, injustice and oppression of the American society” (Clark-Hines, 2005: 41; Baer and Singer, 1992). In fact, the idea of freedom has long been recognized as having a deep symbolic religious resonance throughout African American experience from the moment of arrival in the United States. “During slavery, it meant release from bondage, after emancipation it meant the right to be educated, to be employed, and move about freely from place to place, in the twentieth century, freedom means social, political, and economic justice” (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990: 4).

The Black church has been one of the major institutions that have played a central role in solidifying Black identity and cultural ideologies, while at the same time functioning as a platform of resistance against white oppression in the United States.
With regards to the former, a strong and positive correlation has been found between participation in the Black church, the strong interpersonal relationships cultivated in the process, and Black racial identity. In particular, the feeling of closeness among Blacks within spaces of worship is said to increase as communal ties, integration and involvement become stronger (Demo and Hughes; 1990; Ellison, 1991). Furthermore, in her more recent analysis of interracial churches Edwards, (2008) found that in addition to educational attainment and early socialization, the extent to which racial identity becomes salient among African Americans is determined by participation in the Black church. In essence, African Americans who are actively involved in predominantly Black religious organizations feel a stronger sense of closeness to other Blacks compare to those who participate in racially mixed churches.

When it comes to political activism specific messages during sermons have been found to elicit community action among Black people. Specifically, as Barnes (2005) found, symbolic spiritual or religious expressions such as gospel music and prayer groups are linked to increased levels of group solidarity which is in turn is connected to the strong desire for social justice and involvement in sociopolitical issues. Indeed, as history has shown, the Black church has played very central role in liberation movements. Hawkins, (2005) poignantly expressed the decisive role of the Black church in the Civil Rights movement when she says:

The Black church is the crucible of the civil rights movement; the linchpin on which success was predicated. Beyond the task of resource mobilization, the Black church became the center of coordinated activity at the local level that transformed national identity and shaped the future of Black politics. the Black counterpublic… nurtures an oppositional civic culture…that utilizes the symbols of Black religion to demonstrate
resistance to all forms of injustice. The vision of the Black church, therefore, extends beyond the spiritual to spheres of physical and societal import (p.7-8).

Indeed, the centrality of the Black church as a safe haven for the Black community was prompted by the fact that Blacks were often deprived of the opportunity to fully partake in the socioeconomic and political processes in mainstream American society (Morris, 1996). The Black church as an institution has therefore served as a “cultural blueprint for civic engagement [wherein] particular theological foundations of Black Christianity, especially its collective ethos and the notion of God as active in earthly affairs, support the content of secular activism” (Pattillo-McCoy, 1998: 767). In other words, over and above its spiritual and theological mission, the Black church has integrated political mobilization in its activities with the aim of teaching the masses about the importance of challenging the racist status quo (Williams, 2002).

2.3.2. South Africa

South Africa provides a fitting and fascinating comparative angle to the United States because of its historical racial politics and the subsequent displacement of Black African natives. The dynamics of oppression and segregation and their legacy, have also negatively affected the socioeconomic and personal lives of Black South Africans. Unfortunately the extent to which racial identity processes were affected and the role of religiosity are yet to be thoroughly investigated within the social sciences. However, few observers have noted how the essence of African identity, which was explicit, firm and enduring before colonial invasion, suffered constant and severe assaults from the western
cultural influences. Africans were faced with the challenge of safeguarding their identity and cultural realities amidst the strong forces of colonialism, which were hell bent on implementing their programs (Abdi, 1999). It was not until 1948 when the white government of the National Party came to power that the system of segregation, Apartheid, was systematically put in place and legitimized. This system was deliberately designed to promote and maintain white supremacy.

While de-colonization processes were prevailing and civil rights movements challenged racial discrimination in the United States, the white government in South Africa was reinforcing its segregation and discriminatory laws. As a result, Africans were marginalized to a point where they were denied the right to identify themselves as South Africans. The government operated on the “divide and rule” ideology where African ethnic groups were placed in designated “homelands” in the rural areas and “poor townships” in urban areas so as to legitimize “separate development.” The Black South African response to racial subjugation was that of resistance through protest oriented social movements. The very same economic system that served to concentrate and divide Africans across ethnic lines in the townships, led to the formation of a common identity, which was used as the basis for resistance. Leaders of the liberation movements such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) urged ordinary Black people to disregard imposed ethnic divisions and to instead foster a unified Black South African identity (Marx, 1998).

The result was a tug of war between the Apartheid ideologies and wardship, on the one hand and Black Consciousness movements on the other, whose ideologies were a
hybrid of the ideas of Fanon and African Nationalism. The leadership structures of the latter made efforts to raise consciousness, confidence and hope as a means to inspire action among the masses. The elimination of the foe that was white domination in the form of the Apartheid system was central to their political credo and activism (Gerhart, 1978).

It is this united front that formed the fabric of resistance which endured into the late 1970s and most of the 1980s, an era that was dominated by a surge of youth activism. This group of defiant Black youth activists first emerged in the late 1960s to fill the void left when most of the leaders of major political movements such as Mandela’s African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress were imprisoned and some driven to exile (Ndebele, 1995). The “Young Lions”, as they were called, were notorious for employing ‘shock troop’ and ‘foot soldier’ tactics, including forcing their peers to boycott schools, organizing riots, engaging in direct confrontation with the soldiers who were deployed in the Townships and so on (Seekings, 1996). These young people continued to battle the State and thus played an influential role in the eventual demise of the Apartheid system and the achievement of a Black-majority electorate. The changes in the sociopolitical status of Black South Africans signaled the improvements in this group’s living conditions. It would be interesting to find out whether and how the Black South African identity forged during the period of resistance manifests and matters in the lives of Black youth in the new South Africa.

Religion, in particular Christianity, also played a crucial role in the racial politics of South Africa and it is still an integral element in contemporary Black lives. It has
shaped many political ideologies (Elphick and Davenport, 2000) where it was used by both the Apartheid government and the liberation movement leaders to push a sociopolitical agenda. As Graybill (1995) noted, religion in South Africa was never an inert dogma but was continually reinterpreted in the light of exigencies that needed mass mobilization at that time. For instance, the system of Apartheid itself was based on religious beliefs and ideologies of its architects, who were predominantly associated with the Dutch Reformed Church. As a matter of fact, several leaders of the ruling National Party actually served as ministers and church leaders within this denomination. These leaders used religion to promote and bolster Afrikaner Nationalism, which was based on the belief that the Afrikaner nation was called upon by the higher power to fulfill a divine mission as a superior race (Moodie 1975 and de Klerk, 1975). On the other hand, counter theologies emerged in response to the imposed oppression based on the will of the divine. The Gramscian view is relevant here where religion becomes a counter-hegemonic force or a revolutionary tool to fight the dominant ideology. Here religion becomes less a means to achieve secular ends and more of a means to achieve political goals. The consequence is that the discourse and practice of worship becomes oppositional (Simms, 1999).

In the case of South Africa, the very same Christian ideology that was launched by the colonial missionaries, was reconfigured and manipulated to promote active resistance against and the eradication of a white supremacy ideology on the one hand, and an endorsement of the armed struggle on the other hand (Graybill, 1995). At the grassroots level African Independent Churches from Black communities, whose aim was to secede
from the white mission church, emerged. The burgeoning of these independent churches
was in response to the deprivation and alienation imposed on Black people by the
Apartheid system. In addition, the prevailing sentiment at the time was that the
Eurocentric theologies, practices and doctrines were irrelevant and detached from the
African Black life. These churches were reshaped so that they incorporated the enduring
African cultural value systems and customs that affirmed Blackness as a positive identity
(Kunnie, 1994).

Consequently, religious diversity within Black communities accommodating
religious differences soon became a way of life. There were those Independent Christian
groups who engaged in ancestral veneration, consulted traditional healers, and believed in
witchcraft. On the other hand, there were also those Black separatists who belonged to
missionary churches including Anglicans, Protestants or Catholics (Kondlo, 1990).
However, separation between mission and independent churches was hardly ever clearly
demarcated. Their religious practices incorporated rituals and dance, thus conserving the
core elements of African traditions. The role of these churches was crucial in
augmenting a sense of community in South African Townships. They offered those who
were marginalized by Apartheid and capitalist forces a sense of belonging and safe
haven. (Wilson and Mafeje 1963). The missionary and independent churches in
particular functioned as channels through which people could turn to for socioeconomic
support. Both corporation and resistance were embedded in the ways these Black
Christian organizations functioned. These included deliberate acts of defiance against the
impositions of the oppressive government (Kondlo, 1989). Given this historical role of
religion in South Africa, the current study sought to ascertain its current meaning for Black religiosity through the eyes of Black youth.

This chapter has provided some background on adolescent developmental wellbeing as a stage of change. It also paid particular attention to adolescent developmental process, dynamics, challenges, risk-factors, and protective factors for African descendent youth in the United States, making an argument that Black youth in South Africa are similar, having comparable experiences with change, albeit that are contextually different and distinct ways. It also provided an overview of the changing racial and religious orders in the United States and South Africa. The goal was to show how the shared historical and cultural processes of racial formation, contestation, struggles mattered as well as the role of religion in these processes were similar or different in both countries. Chapter three will outline the methodological approach and strategies employed in a cross-cultural comparative exploratory study that sought to examine the ways in which African American and Black South African youth navigate racial and religious identity in their daily lives.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this exploratory study is to examine the ways in which African American and Black South African youth navigate change in their daily lives. In particular, the role of racial identity and religious socialization is explored in an effort to get a sense of how this group of youth form and enact these two aspects within their unique cultural contexts. In this chapter the methodological approach and strategies employed to accomplish the goals of the study will be outlined in greater detail. In particular, the theoretical paradigm and research design that guided the execution of this investigation shall be unpacked.

3.1. Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

According to Creswell (1994) “A qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.” (p.2). In other words, the researcher seeks to discover the process, meaning and understanding obtained through words or pictures. Here, as Maykut and Morehouse, (1994) noted, a general focus of inquiry is developed with the
aim of establishing how people experience and view reality. Evaluating the simultaneous impact of individual and collective racial identity perceptions and religiosity on Black youth developmental outcomes within two national contexts calls for a research design that facilitates an in-depth, personal investigation and even a possible participation on the part of the researcher. The two types of qualitative designs that were ideal in aiding this process were Ethnographic and Grounded Theory designs. This study was ethnographic in nature because of its emphasis on studying young people’s behavior within their natural environment (Hammersley, 1990; Genzuk, 2003), that is, the school and church. Approaching the investigation in this manner ensures access to information that will make it feasible to generate what Geertz (1973) calls a “thick description” of human behavior within its context and how this behavior is interpreted by both the actor and the researcher alike. The interplay between behavior and context is such that as the context changes, the meaning of the behavior changes accordingly. Therefore, by continuously engaging with the actor in their social environment, the researcher is able to capture the intricacies of their subjectivity and its phenomenological meanings, that is, how they understand themselves and the reasoning behind their actions and their interaction with others in their environment (Gillham, 2000). An ethnographic design is emergent in nature since the investigator enters the field equipped with tacit knowledge as opposed to a grand theory in mind. As the inquiry progresses this knowledge becomes more focused with significant elements and themes gradually emerging making new theoretical discoveries possible (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Gillham, 2000). In the current study, my initial entrance in the field was guided by the following broad questions:
1) In what ways do family and community socialization characteristics and exposure facilitate and inform the development of racial identity perceptions and religiosity among contemporary Black youth in the United States and South Africa?

2) What constitutes a developed sense of racial identity and religiosity, that is, what are their components? And what is the nature, if any, of their relationship to each other?

3) How do racial identity and religiosity matter for youth developmental outcomes, including mental health, self-esteem, educational performance, and risk-related behaviors?

4) In what similar or distinct ways might these processes be influenced by the unique historical and contemporary cultural, political and social characteristics of the United States and South Africa?

Grounded theory was a complementary qualitative design in that it goes beyond subjective depiction of space and experiences to using the latter to engender theory. Theory that is grounded in data is powerful in the sense that it unearths the diverse meanings people attach to their daily experiences of reality (Creswell, 2007). Based on the theoretical foundations of Symbolic Interactionism and Pragmatism, grounded theory has two major premises. First, that phenomena are not static, they are constantly changing through process. Therefore, researchers should take this fact into account and built it into their methodological strategies. Second, participants are viewed as actors who are in charge of their lives and destinies. They make decisions based on their perception and interpretation of reality. Consequently, the relationship between changing context and phenomena and the actor’s responses to these changes are crucial considerations in the generation of theories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

In essence, grounded theory aims at providing a basis for a theory that is derived from empirical data. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), it seeks to enhance the
validity and reliability of qualitative research by providing methods and procedures that can generate empirically grounded theory. Moreover, the fact that it enables the researcher to make constant comparison and to examine incidences means that theories that are captured in the data are constantly refined. The approach also helps in integrating categories of coded texts into their properties. Lastly, data reduction is done through the merging of categories, which therefore helps in transforming substantive data to formal one.

3.2 The Research Setting: Entering the Field

Guba and Lincoln (1985) emphasized the importance of a natural setting in a qualitative investigation. The natural setting is more than just a physical space. It is where the construction of reality is embedded. People derive meaning from their environment in the same ways they do from themselves. Observations must therefore be time-and-context specific. Thus when deciding which people to study, the researcher will need to picture them in their own context, find ways to gain access, and establish relationships with the participants who will be willing to provide data. In addition, when entering a natural setting, researchers become the instruments of data collection. They are in a good position to make observations and obtain rich insights, making their information valid and reliable. Although the natural settings are unfixed and thus require flexibility, the human instrument is said to posses the qualities, which enable them to cope with uncertain situations. They are responsive and equipped with the capacity to sense, react to, adapt to and interact with personal and environmental cues. In a research
situation, this means that they can collect information about manifold factors and levels at the same time. Holistic emphasis is another function humans can perform. It refers to the ability to grasp everything about the phenomena under study (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). This indicates therefore that the researcher (Flick, 1998) has a very important role in the field. This also means that as an instrument they cannot take on a neutral stance both in the field and during their interaction with the people they are studying. They must rather take or be allocated certain roles and positions. This is a process that is negotiated by the researcher and the participant.

When conducting ethnographic studies, researchers often look for a single site where people are brought together by and share strong values, culture and beliefs (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, given my interest in racial identity and religiosity as they affect the changing lives of Black adolescents, an insight into their shared values, culture and beliefs as expressed in their social context was crucial.

In grounded theory studies, on the other hand, researchers can work with individuals in several sites who can provide pertinent contextual information (Creswell, 2007). The nature of the study and the questions I sought to answer required me to work with youth. In order to capture the ways in which identity and religious socialization play out in the lives of Black youth, I chose religious and secular institutions as my research sites. Both institutions across two nations were historically Black in their demographic, religious and educational practices.

One of the challenges of conducting research in natural settings, however, is gaining access to the field. This is especially true, as noted by Flick (1998), when the
research is conducted in an institution. One has to learn to effectively navigate the complex rules, procedures and regulations by which the institutions operate. As part of the research designing process, researcher familiarity with the channels of access approval is very crucial. One of the best ways to get access to an institution is to first identify and establish a good relationship with a gatekeeper, someone responsible for authorizing access. The researcher needs to make sure to gather information on the exact position, responsibilities, and titles of gatekeepers who will be the key contact and who will clearly articulate the rules and procedures (Hatch, 2002).

In the current study the process of entry and access took the following sequence. I consulted with my contacts who consisted of educators, researchers and professionals with long term established relationships with the schools and churches located in two major urban cities in both countries. They approached authority figures regarding my request to conduct interviews with their students and youth on my behalf. These gatekeepers then explained the procedures for securing permission to enter their institutions. The school principals in both countries, who served as my gatekeepers, referred me to the regional boards of education who oversee the functioning of schools in the province and county. The church ministers in both countries provided written authorization for my study. Once permission was secured at institutional administrative levels, I was allowed to approach and present my study objectives to the students and youth who are active members of both institutions.
3.3 Sampling Measures

3.3.1. Purposeful Sampling

I visited each research site to recruit volunteers. I also distributed fliers\(^1\) that served as invitation to participate in the study. To ensure privacy, those who were interested in participating were asked to sign up and provide their contact information at the end of each presentation. They were also presented with a packet containing letters to parents\(^2\), consent forms for parents of youth under 18 years and assent forms for the youth who are 18 and over\(^3\). The youth were asked to consult their parents for permission to participate in the study. They were then asked to bring signed consent forms from their parents on the day of the interview which had been tentatively scheduled on the day of the first meeting.

I sought to use purposeful sampling as a strategy of participant selection. Whereas random sampling, as often employed in quantitative studies, permits the generalization of findings to the larger population, the advantage of purposeful sampling is that it allows the research access to information-rich cases. The latter provide in-depth information on the central questions (Patton, 1990). The purposeful sampling strategy that I used was the **Criterion purposeful sampling**. This is because it allowed me to establish a criteria that would ensure that I picked respondents who met that criterion (Patton, 1990). I was specifically interested in 40 African American and Black South African male and female high school youth between the ages of 13 and 19 years from two

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\(^1\) See example of the recruitment fliers in Appendix A

\(^2\) Refer to the Appendix B for an example of parental consent form

\(^3\) Refer to the Appendix C for examples of youth consent and assent forms
urban areas in both countries. At this stage, these young people are old enough to comprehend and interpret their experiences as they navigate their social world. Racial identity formation and perceptions and religiosity become salient in their lives as they may be tools with which they define themselves and cope with their ever changing and sometimes hostile social world. This purposeful sample of youth was ideal for this investigation given the fact that it was my intention to discover, understand and gain insight into and thus learn the most from them (Merriman, 1998).

Moreover, previous research on urban neighborhoods in the United States reveal that these areas, especially those with a high concentration of African Americans and other ethnic and racial minorities, are plagued with all types of social and community problems. The history of residential segregation that has characterized these neighborhoods has produced and continues to perpetuate poor socioeconomic conditions such as high unemployment, poverty and crime rates. Youth in these areas are more vulnerable since they are often exposed to gang violence, delinquent crime, drugs and alcohol, teen pregnancy, domestic conflicts, and depression (Massey and Shibuyu, 1995; Jargowsky, 1997).

It is my contention that similar dynamics can be found in the South African urban context given the history of residential segregation imposed by the Apartheid government on Black South Africans. Even though Apartheid laws restricting the movements of Black people in and around urban cities were dismantled in the early 1990s, considerably high levels of residential segregation in these areas can still be found. Due to their locations within poor areas of the cities, Black South Africans continue to face
disadvantaged social and economic opportunities (Brueckner, 1996). Therefore, an in-depth cross national understanding of how Black youth who grow up in such urban contexts negotiate racial and religious identities within their own space and the impact thereof on developmental outcomes will be invaluable. As observed by scholars focusing on urban neighborhoods and child development, there seem to be an interdependent relationship where children and adolescents are constantly interacting with their neighborhoods to produce developmental outcomes Burton and Price-Spratlen (1999).

3.3.2. Profile of the Respondents

Tables 1 and 2 present descriptive results of the sample in both countries. In particular, demographic characteristics across research sites and gender, including: family structure, mother’s education, father’s education and community racial composition are outlined. Two out of 5 school African American male respondents came from two-parent families, while most of their female counterparts (4 out 5) came from single-parent families with their mothers as significant figures. Furthermore, two out of five school males reported that their mother’s have college/bachelors degree while the females reported that their mothers have graduate degrees. Three out of five males said their fathers graduated from high school, while most of the females did not know how far their fathers went in school because they have been absent from their lives. Most of the male and females school respondents live in predominantly Black communities.

While the majority of church male respondents also lived in predominantly Black communities, their female counterparts (3 out 5) lived in predominantly white
communities. Four out of five church males came from step/blended family backgrounds, while half of the females either came from two-parent or step/blended family structures. Most church male and female respondents reported that their mothers have college/bachelor degrees (3 out of 5). In addition, three out five church males reported that their fathers graduated from high school, while most of the females did not know how far their fathers went in school.

All 20 Black South African respondents lived in and grew up in Black townships/communities. The majority of these young people came from single parent family structures in which extended kin contributed extensively in their upbringing. This kind of family organization is not atypical among Black families in South Africa. One of the major historical contributing factors cited for this complex family organization is the migratory labor system instituted by the Apartheid regime. Under this system, African adults (often men) were forced to leave their families to work in the major cities. This system in part disrupted the traditional family patterns among this group. It is said to have somewhat contributed to the increase in divorce and non-marital births among Africans during the Apartheid era. In order to obtain help with child rearing, parents began to solicit the help family members other than spouses (Niehaus 1994; Preston-Whyte 1993 in Anderson, 2003). “To a certain extent, Blacks began relying less on traditional patrilineal kin for support and more on matrilineal kin and on conjugal relationships” (Anderson, 2003: 4).

Among the school respondents, most males came from single parent family structures, while the majority of female respondents (3 out of 5) were brought up by their
relatives who served as guardians in the absence of biological parents. Most of the males (3 out of 5) reported that their mothers dropped out of high school. Most of the females did not know how much schooling their mothers had obtained. The majority of school males and all of the female respondents did not know their father’s educational status.

Within the church setting, most of the males either came from two parent (2 out of 5) or single parent (2 out of 5) family structures. Most of the male respondents did not have knowledge of their mothers’ educational status, while most females reported that their mothers’ either had college/bachelor’s degrees (2 out of 5) or high school diplomas (2 out of 5). Most church male and female respondents did not know their fathers’ educational status.
<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>African American School Respondents</th>
<th>African American Church Respondents</th>
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<td>FEMALES</td>
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<td>1</td>
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N = 10
Mean Age = 16
Mean Grade = 10
Table 2: Demographic characteristics of Black South African Male and Female Youth Respondents

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<th>VARIABLE</th>
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<th>FEMALES</th>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
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N = 10
Mean Age = 17
Mean Grade = 10

N = 10
Mean Age = 16
Mean Grade = 10
3.4. Data Collection Methods

In-depth individual qualitative interviews were the primary method of data collection, while field observations served as supplementary methods. In both ethnographic and grounded theory studies interviews play a central role. However, ethnographic researchers tend to use other methods in conjunction with interviews including observations, documents and artifacts to collect data. In this study I used a combination of semi-structured, audio-taped and transcribed interviews and observations wherein I spent more time as an interviewer and observer than a participant and gathering field notes (Creswell, 2007). I spent the latter part of the summer of 2008 and whole winter of 2009 conducting fieldwork.

My fieldwork began in South Africa in the latter part of summer 2008 where I spent a month and a half visiting the school and church research sites. At the school site I conducted semi-structured interviews with each of the students, while at the same time visiting classrooms and observing teacher–student, and student-student interactions. At the church, I was invited to attend services which, in addition to interviews, enabled me to observe the respondents as they engaged in their religious practices. In this way I was able to capture moments of faith expression, practices, and interactions. All the South African interviews lasted between an hour and half to two hours and were conducted in Xhosa\(^4\) (The respondents’ native language) and English concurrently.

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\(^4\) There are 11 official languages in South Africa including 9 indigenous languages (Zulu, Xhosa, South-Sotho, Northern-Sotho, Tsonga, Venda, Ndebele, Swati and Setswana) as well as two European languages (English and Afrikaans). It is quiet common for people to switch between several languages during conversations.
Data collection continued in the United States during the months of October 2008 to early April 2009. Here, visits to the school and church were scheduled around the respondents’ availability. My school site fieldwork took place during the school-calendar year. As was the case in South Africa, I paid daily visits over a couple of weeks conducting interviews with some of the students and also managed to sit in and observe interactional processes between teachers and students and among students themselves. Most of the interviews in the church site took place in the evenings when the youth were participating in various activities including: rehearsals for performances, youth leadership meetings, bible studies and so on. I had the opportunity to participate in services of worship, Sunday school and bible study.

I used a semi-structured interview protocol\textsuperscript{5} with open ended questions organized under six thematic categories. The objective was to solicit personal background information, experiences, feelings, knowledge, and interpretations. These included: 1) Family background and characteristics; 2) Family racial and religious socialization, 3) Community characteristics, 4) components of racial identity, 5) Components of religiosity and, 6) Developmental outcomes. In two of the six categories, namely: racial identity and mental health, I used measurement scales. Given that my study sought to explore the Nigrescence of the youth, the revised 126 item Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) was used Hatred; Pre-Encounter Miseducation; Immersion-Emersion Anti-White; Immersion-Emersion Intense Black Involvement; Internalization Nationalist; Internalization Biculturalist; and Internalization Multiculturalist. Each of the clusters

\textsuperscript{5} See example of the interview protocol in Appendix D

65
contains five items that are rated on a likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree (Cross, 2001).

For the purpose of this study, the Nigrescence model was expanded using ethnographic methods for two major reasons. First, as mentioned earlier, the purpose of the current study was not to test the Nigrescence model, but to provide a narrative extension of its utility. The aim is to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of processes of racialization among Black youth. The ethnographic approach allows researchers to honor the manifold voices stemming from multiple realities constructed by individuals within their social settings. These multiple realities represent stories that, for each individual participant, describe the conditions of the reality in which they dwell (LeCompte, 1995). These stories are said to play a central role in the construction of identity. This is because as Holland notes “people tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are. These self-understandings, especially those with strong emotional resonance for the teller, are what we refer to as identities…Identities are the key means by which people care about and care for what is going on around them” (Holland et al, quoted in Perry et al, 2003: 93). For this reason therefore, the significance of the stages of Nigrescence will be determined by these young people’s interpretations of the realities of their lived race experiences, which are unearthed in the stories they share.

Second, the cross cultural nature of this study also warrants an ethnographic exploration or application of the Nigrescence model. Here, I follow in the intellectual footsteps of Hocoy, (1999) the only scholar on record to apply the Nigrescence model
using the ethnographic approach to assess Black racial identity development among an adult sample in South Africa. He argued that South Africa is a perfect candidate outside the United States wherein to replicate and validate the Nigrescence model because of:

“(a) the unique importance and salience of one’s race in the South African context, (b) the greater degree of societal discrimination based on one’s race, and (c) its indigenous African context and the influences of the traditions and heritage of that context.” (p132). Given these factors, Hocoy (1999) concluded that there exists a ‘functional equivalence of a psychological phenomenon’, i.e. the salience of race, which functions in similar ways in reaction to shared problems between these two cultures. Therefore, an ethnographic or ‘emic’ exploration is the “the first step in determining the functional equivalence or the generalizability of foreign measures…. that seeks to find an understanding of the psychological phenomenon in its own cultural context’ (p132). It is through the stories of the youth in this study, as they are told within their unique geographic and cultural locations that we can ascertain post-civil rights and post-Apartheid Black consciousness. The ethnographic application of the Nigrescence model involved a careful selection of some of the items contained within the identity clusters of the CRIS scale that were deemed relevant. Out of the 126 item, 11 (three Pre-Encounter, two Encounter, three Immersion-Emersion, three Internalization) were chosen. These were then reformulated as open-ended questions so as to yield in-depth insights of each stage. In the section that follows, these insights from the African American youth (and later Black South African youth) are presented.
In order to explore the mental state and self-esteem of the Black youth, psychological scales were employed. For the sake of this investigation, these well established and scientifically validated scales were modified to allow for an in-depth, rich and subjective insight into the perceived meanings of wellbeing among Black youth. In this way, the extent to which racial identity and faith perceptions matter, will be ascertained. To get a sense of the state of mental health of the youth, the following open ended questions were posed during interviews: Are you satisfied with the way your life is going thus far? Would you say you are generally happy or generally sad? Have you ever been depressed? What was it that led you to be depressed? Do your racial beliefs as a Black person affect your outlook in life? Does your faith affect your outlook on life?

As far as Self-Esteem was concerned, some of the questions from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (1965) were used. This scale is commonly used in psychological and sociological studies to appraise global self-esteem. It is a 10-item self-report questionnaire designed with five positively worded items and five negatively worded items with a dichotomous scoring system (Davis et al, 2009). In this study, four out of the ten items were reformulated as open-ended questions in the following manner: Would you say that as a Black person, you are a person of worth at least on an equal basis with others? Would you say as a Black person you have good qualities? Are you inclined to feel that you are a failure as a Black person? Do you feel as a Black person you have much to be proud of? Questions regarding self esteem were meant to understand the value they place on themselves as Black people, their self-concept. The youth were asked to identify qualities they believe makes them unique and valuable, as well as what
self-value means to them: Would you say that as a Black person, you are a person of worth at least on an equal basis with others? Would you say as a Black person you have good qualities? Are you inclined to feel that you are a failure as a Black person? Do you feel as a Black person you have much to be proud of?

3.5. Validity and Reliability

Studies conducted through qualitative designs operate on the principle that an explanation is only valid if it makes sense to the subjects as well as the extent to which the researcher is able to understand deeply and enter the world of people they are studying. The main emphasis is on the quality of data, which is found in the power of its language to present a picture of the world within which individuals function (Neuman, 1997; Miller and Dingwall, 1997). Unlike quantitative studies that focus on sample size, the reliability of an instrument e.g. a questionnaire, the time frame of the study and the unit of analysis, qualitative strategies for enhancing and ensuring validity of data include triangulation, field notes, member checks, peer review, extended participation and observation, thick description, external audit and negative case analysis. This is to make certain that participants' responses are accurate and not distorted. Triangulation involves the use of multiple methods at the same time (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Babbie and Mouton, 2001). For instance, the use of focus group discussions and in-depth individual interviews concurrently, with the former supplementing the latter. This does not only help in exploring in-depth the themes picked up during the discussion, but it also helps in establishing whether the researcher has interpreted the participant’s responses accurately.
However, since it was not practical to use triangulation in this study, the compilation of extensive field notes was another option, which is another way to ensure validity. Babbie and Mouton (2001) suggest that the researcher must keep about two sets of notes during their fieldwork. The first set, observational notes, describe the environment in which the study takes place. The second set are notes on observation that the researcher can use to compare with the literature, i.e. information in the study setting that either agree or dispute the initial theoretical assumptions related to the study. Field notes in this study, in addition to observational notes, were successfully captured through a tape recorder, which Flick (1998) sees as the most effective way of assessing the reliability of data. Here, participants are given a voice. Data is captured in their own words and thoughts.

The youth respondents in this study did not object to the recording of their interviews. Most of them seemed excited for the opportunity to share their experiences and views. This is because they were made aware beforehand that the tape recorder was only used to capture accurate information. I emphasized during the recruitment phase and in the consent forms that whatever information they provide will be kept confidential between the respondents and the researcher.

### 3.6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

This study utilized the grounded theory approach as an analytic strategy. This is a useful tool when one is working with complex and huge amount of textual data. The fact that it is an inductive approach is most useful in theory building with the latter being grounded in the data. It allows the researcher to take different cases and make them
wholes, in which the variables interact as a unit to produce certain outcomes. A case-oriented perspective tends to assume that variables interact in complex ways. For instance, the complex and overlapping nature of the racial identity and religiosity intersection could be unpacked and their link to youth developmental outcomes of interest will be identified (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Central to this approach is the constant comparison of cases. This would be especially useful in comparing interviews from the United States to those in South Africa to identify common themes or identity patterns. Here individual cases similar on many variables but with different outcomes will be compared to see where the fundamental differences may lie. Likewise, cases that have the same outcome will be examined to see which conditions they all have in common, in this way revealing fundamental sources. The phases of grounded theory include, data collection, note-taking, coding and memo writing, which often and ideally occur simultaneously from the beginning to the end of the research process. The basic idea of the grounded theory approach is to read several times over a textual database consisting of detailed field notes and discern or label variables that are often referred to as categories, concepts and properties and their interrelationships. The ability to perceive variables and relationships is termed “theoretical sensitivity” and is affected by a number of things including one's reading of the literature and one's use of techniques designed to enhance sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In keeping with the grounded theory approach and in order to fully represent and appreciate similarities and differences across the important dimensions of the study focus (namely, Country level [United States-South Africa], Research site level
[School-Church], and Gender [Males-Females]), the major themes of the study are presented in a format that provides more general/holistic themes followed by more specific themes found across the subgroups of the sample. The findings from this exploratory study will be presented in three chapters. This strategy will allow for a greater appreciation of the major components of interest: namely, Racial identity, Religiosity and their meanings or use value in the respondents’ perceived developmental well being. In other words, by affording each of these components ample consideration we will be able to gauge the deeper, varied and complex themes that emerged from the data as experienced by the respondents. We will then be able to make more patent linkages between their perceived racial identity and religiosity and the key outcome of interests (mental health, self-esteem, risk related behavior and educational experiences).
CHAPTER 4

COMPONENTS OF RACIAL IDENTITY

In this chapter, racial identity components and processes among a sample of African American and Black South African adolescents are deconstructed. The aim is to decipher the significance of racial identity in their lives, the agentic ways in which they construct racial identity meanings and expressions, and the extent to which context matters as they engage in the enactment of racial identity in their daily lives. The chapter begins with an in-depth discussion of the foremost themes regarding: a) the kind of racial socialization messages, if any, they have received from their homes of origin and the ways in which these messages have informed their lives, b) how they define themselves in terms of race and what meaning they attach to their sense of Blackness, c) and how they express their Blackness.

4.1. Family Racial Socialization Experiences of African American youth

_Egalitarian and Racial Discrimination Awareness Oriented Messages_

We learn from the narratives of most African American youth in this study that they have, at some point during their development, had conversations about racial issues with their parents. These conversations had meaningful implications for how they regard the salience or not of race in their lives. It appeared that the most prevailing messages regarding race were those that emphasized respect for everyone regardless of race as well
as awareness of potential racial discrimination. True to Bowman and Howard’s (1985) assertion, the narratives of African American youth in the study reflected these categories of messages in a variety of ways. In particular, the Equality/Co-existence and Racial Barriers/Protocol messages could be identified. For instance, while it was important for some parents to make their offspring aware of the discrimination that Black people have been subjected to in the United States in the past, it was more important to teach their children about respect and consideration of others as human rather than racial beings, especially since the young generation are more likely to navigate more racially diverse environments as Maya, one of the church female respondents, states vividly in her explanation below:

**Maya:** They taught me the history you know, of slavery, racism in America and to respect people regardless of race. I think it’s really important because if kids don’t know about racial identities then they’ll like some kids like one minute they be going to an all Black school and then they get transferred to an all white school and it’s totally different and their parents haven’t said anything about it so it can be like a shock on you. Like I’ve been with, I’ve been going to so many schools, transferred through schools quiet a bit. I been around so many different races of people and I know how to get along with them because I know about my identity.

Having a good command of the historical conditions and experiences of racism that Black people had to endure has informed Maya’s sense of identity and in turn, confidence and comfort within her own skin. This has enabled her to interact with diverse groups of people without feeling ashamed of or loosing herself in order to fit in. For others, however, teaching their children about racial issues functioned to make them aware of not only the racial inequalities accompanying possible barriers to opportunities, but also racial discrimination they may face as Black people.
Leon: Yes, my grandpa told me about racism against Blacks, but also, most of the stuff I grew up on, racism was there. Last year, I have, when I went down to Mississippi, we went to Wal-Mart and me and my cousin and my sister’s we were standing in one of the aisles and so a white guy came over and said ‘move Niggers’ and then.....at first I was just like, I did not hear the Nigger part so I just stood there and thought this ain’t my state, I am not about get in no trouble....and he comes back to me and said ‘did you hear me? I said move’ and then that’s when I backed off and we walked away from him, we just, we laughed and told my grandpa what happened.

What Leon (school male) has learned from his conversation with his grandfather about the plight of Blacks has prepared him for real life experiences with subtle and, as was the case in this incident, blatant racial attacks. He was then able to respond with composure, controlling his emotional and mental anguish as a survival mechanism.
Gender based racial socialization messages

Variations in experiences and perceptions showed that parental racial socialization messages differed by gender. To their daughters, parents tended to emphasize more egalitarian views, encouraging them to disregard race and treat all people with respect. To their sons, they were more inclined to make them aware of racial barriers and discrimination, encouraging them to put more energy in developing themselves so as to avoid being stereotyped as troubled Black males. For instance, according to most school male respondents, their parents were more likely to convey the importance of alertness to their sons as young Black males navigating a racially hostile external environment. They were to be on the lookout in terms of what they project to others because they are an easy target. These messages served to inform and prepare the youth about the realities of racial prejudice as well as raising awareness about the historical and contemporary plight of Black people in the United States. For instance, in Zenith’s case, his father even went as far as pointing out to him that his physical appearance automatically renders him a “disability” in society:

6Zenith: Mmm, my dad has. He told me that I have a disability in society, that’s what he said, because of the fact that, I am not only Black, but I am big. I am very big, I am 6.4, and I have a big voice. So he tells me that when I do things sometimes people take them into consideration and think I am being negative or harmful or you know that’s why I have to talk so kind and generous. He said I am a threat like people see me as a threat, so that’s why I kinda have to be a friendly giant.

Perhaps one of the reasons parents of Black males tend to orient their children to be cautious has been brought on by their vulnerable status in society. This group is more

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6 Pseudonyms have been assigned to all respondents to protect their identities and privacy
likely to be perceived as a threat to themselves, community and society at large. Therefore, parents may feel the need to impress upon their children, especially their male children, to be aware of what they project and how they behave in the outside world. By explicitly warning his son to be cognizant of his behavior in public since his appearance and physical attributes will surely expose him to negative stereotyping, Zenith’s father is instilling what Stevenson (1998) terms ‘adaptive racial socialization beliefs’. To Zenith’s father, the only way his son could be spared from the harmful effects of racial discrimination is for him to be passive, guarding against drawing attention towards himself as he is already a target. In Will’s case it was more important for his mother to impart values of and commitment to hard work as a Black male growing up in the United States. Therefore, she used these ‘adaptive racial orientation’ messages as an empowering tool her son will need to navigate both the mainstream culture as well as his own. Here, academic excellence and achievement, even more than their white counterparts, is deemed necessary to counteract the widespread belief that Black people are lazy and inferior.

**Will:** Yeah actually she did, she always had her own like opinions and views on how things went like when the Rodney King incident happened, we talked like about other things happening. She has always told me that whether people want to address it or not, it is harder for Black people in America, we have to work ten times harder than other people to achieve success just because of the color of our skin so with that in mind you know she tried to get me to focus and understand that I have to work harder, that I have to be focused I cannot get sidetracked.

According to these young men, these parental messages have been useful in that they are now more conscious, more aware and navigate their external environment with prudence. They are also more aware of the built-in structural and institutional discrimination
experiences by Black people compared to other racial groups. This awareness and consciousness serves as an impetus propelling them towards success. To illustrate, Zenith narrated an incident wherein he and his other Black male friends found themselves in a mall which had just had one of its stores robbed. The suspects happened to be Black males and the police immediately targeted him and his friends because “we fit the description but we had nothing to do with anything at all” because the store manager confirmed that Zenith and his friends were not the culprits. Compared to his friends, Zenith shared that he opted to keep quiet and communicate with the police in a polite manner. This is because he believes that:

**Zenith:** I speak nice, I speak nice to whoever like when I see cops I would treat them different because I just I am aware that you know as long as you come correct, you know what I am saying, You are not in the wrong, whether or not they are in the wrong, you know what I am saying, when it all boils down to it they will be more in the wrong than you are, you did the right thing. Like my friend was being the negative one, he was being negative towards this white cop and I was being cool about it because I just know how to communicate, I know what I can do like, I am more aware.

Here Zenith demonstrates a strong self-assurance fueled by his sense of awareness based on what his father taught him. He was confident that he handled the moment of perceived racial profiling with grace and dignity.

Unlike their male counterparts, most of the female school respondents received messages that were more egalitarian in nature stressing the importance of Equality/Coexistence (Bowman and Howard, 1985). Here the youth were encouraged to be nonjudgmental and be respectful towards other human beings, their parents did not emphasize racial awareness and preparedness:
Simone: I would say from kindergarten to about fourth grade I went to French emergency school......Its , all you do is talk French mostly...I was not that good at it I think that’s why my mom transferred me to [here]. This is the first school I went to that has a lot of Black kids because when I was at the other schools there wasn’t a lot of Black kids, so it’s like maybe ten out of our class and …we did not have many Black kids...I always got along with everyone no matter who they are.

According to Marshall (1995), teaching egalitarianism for some parents is probably safe because they do not have to deal with sensitive issues in their interactions with their children. Thus it is easier for them to merely let their children believe that all people are treated equally in society regardless of race, class or gender. Rather than putting an emphasis on racial and cultural pride as well as awareness of their minority status, some Black parents may favor the idea of personal development equipping them with the skills and characteristics they will need to prosper in the mainstream society, or dominant, culture (Hughes et al, 2006). Even though in retrospect, she wishes her mother would have taught her about racial issues, Jasmine offers a justification for her mother’s decision not to broach the subject to her as necessary at that time since they were living in a predominantly white neighborhood:

Jasmine: Racial issues, well I didn’t have a lot, she didn’t teach me a lot about racial issues, because of the fact that when I was born, I was raised where it wasn’t just a Black neighborhood. I lived in a predominantly white neighborhood; I went to a predominantly white school. I wish I would have known, but then sometimes I think she held it back because I probably would not have been successful being in a predominantly white school if I knew the things that I know now.

Khosi: When you say you would not have been successful if you had known, what did you mean by that?

Because I probably would have held it against people, like knowing that, knowing everything that Black people had to go through I might have held
it against the Caucasian people and I might not have gotten along with them as much as I did.

Khosi: Has your perception of Caucasians changed, now that you know all these things?

A little bit, but because I was raised the way I was I don’t, I won’t hold it against them but if I wasn’t brought up that way I probably would.

Jasmine’s insightful response demonstrates that context matters when it comes to racial socialization. In her view, there are appropriate and inappropriate spaces to assert racial identity. One can only do so in the company of members of the in-group. This contradicts Thornton’s (1990) argument that the greater the numbers of white people in a neighborhood, the greater the chance that African American parents will engage in racial socialization practices than their counterparts in predominantly Black neighborhoods. In recent years, scholars such as Stevenson and Arrington, (2009) found that the racial composition of a community provides what they call “racial centrality” which means that adolescents living in predominantly Black neighborhoods perceive being Black as more vital to their sense of self. This is because “Living in predominantly Black contexts may encourage open expression and adoption of race-centric attitudes. There is safety and support for the expression of Black cultural expression in predominantly Black contexts…” (p.132). This sense of safety and support is clearly what Jasmine feels she has been deprived of. Her sense of yearning which she articulates in her narrative shows that she would have liked to be afforded the opportunity to independently assert and celebrate her Blackness. By the same token, however, she admits that knowing the true details of the historical struggles of Black people in the United States would have
affected her perception of other racial groups. It’s worth noting that these changes in perception have been triggered by the fact that by the time of the interview, Jasmine had recently moved from a mixed race neighborhood to a predominately Black community and school. Jasmine’s statement also supports the argument in this study that young people exercise agency as they navigate change. Jasmine later added that the knowledge she has now gained about the historical and contemporary race relations in the United States will be useful for her in the future as she prepares to face the real world:

Jasmine: It’s useful a lot because of my age, I am 16 I still have year to be on my own and independent and some stuff that I did need to know before I get out into the world and have to, you know, be by myself, its preparing me.

Most of the church male respondents, said they did have conversations about race with their parents or guardians. As a way of ensuring that the younger generation becomes well adjusted Black people in the future, these parents and guardians used educational strategies that included lessons about the historical position of Black people combined with their personal experiences with racism in their socialization practices:

Terrence: Um, it was more my grandma who taught me about racial issues, she would always tell me, cause of the hard times she went through. She just tells us how much easier it is for the white folks than for the Black folks, we struggle a little harder and work harder than they do.

In Tyler’s story, we find a young man who has been taught to and regards it as his prerogative to declare his uniqueness. He refuses to allow himself to be defined by the stereotypes attached to being Black, male and living in a predominantly Black neighborhood.

Tyler: I have always been raised in a predominantly Black neighborhood, but I have always been raised and taught to believe that where you are,
where you live, doesn’t define who you are and what you wear does not define who you are.

Khosi: What does?

Um, it’s like, I define who I am, the way I act, the way I speak, the way I live my life, basically defines who I am. Most, well I won’t say most, well some African American young men, they still like, they do live in a predominantly Black neighborhood and a lot of them don’t grow up with their fathers in their homes, they feel like they have to fall into the hood mentality if you will and they might have to go out and fight being gangsters just because of the stereotype that has been set.

Tyler is setting himself apart from the negative images that are portrayed by mainstream society as well as the mass media. In his mind, by engaging in anti-social behavior and acting out, his fellow Black males are giving into the label that society imposes upon them.

Most church female respondents indicated that they had conversations with their parents about racial issues, particularly pertaining to the historical experiences of Black people in the United States. They felt these messages were important most for two reasons: First knowledge of Black history is critical for identity formation. This is because being able to distinguish between generational experience of lived race in order to appreciate what has been achieved and what one has is very crucial:

Maxine: Yes, Um, they taught us a lot about how Blacks really didn’t used to get along with whites. We were taught about, you know Um Martin Luther King Jr., everybody, Harriet Tubman. My stepmom she definitely makes sure that we know our history, because you know, she tells us, you know ‘you should read the newspaper about the economy, about why gas prices are going up about us having a new Black president and you know Um they tell us to watch the news more…. [I think] it is definitely important because its history, I mean in order to know where you are going you also need to know where you came from, you know you have to be able to see the difference from how things were and how they
are right now because once you learn that you will become more grateful for what you have now because what we have our parents didn’t have.

As we can see from the narratives above, African American parents deem race as salient and make sure that their children appreciate and are prepared when they navigate mainstream American society. Having a strong foundational sense of Black history and culture helps them function in racially and culturally diverse conditions, which may be potentially harmful, without losing their sense of identity and therefore self.

4.2. What’s in a Name? Racial Categorization and the Meanings of Blackness

As we continue to engage in a discussion about racial construction, experiences and significance among youth of African ancestry, considering the question of racial categorization becomes imperative. As both a social and primordial construct, race is considered to be a form of categorization used in social identification to distinguish between social groups (Cornelissen and Horstmeier, 2002). We learn from social psychology that this categorization of people into racial groups is both a psychological and sociological undertaking. The psychological element involves the application of specified indicators such as physical traits, language, and experiences to place people who share similar characteristics in the same category. Ultimately, membership to a category creates a context for social identification that provides not only a label (African-American/Black/African), but also a potential network of others who share that membership. It also invokes a set of meanings that characterize group membership, ranging from personal attributes to implications for activities consistent with the category. The sociological component points to the properties of the social structure.
Here, the self is viewed as a reflection of the wider social structure with membership to a category forming the basis for identification. Identities are hierarchically ordered and provide self-meaning and influence behavior (Tajfel, 1982; Hogg et al. 1995; Deaux and Martin, 2003). Furthermore, the fact that societies place people within categories (race, class, gender, occupation, religion etc) that often stand in power, status and prestige with one another, inter-group tensions are more likely to surface, especially when the dominant group with material power imposes its own value system and ideology that is often designed to benefit the group and thus legitimate and maintain the status quo (Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

In the United States, the perception of Blackness as a racial category has evolved throughout history as the community continues to negotiate self-identification within the country. Depending on the sociopolitical era and their positionality within the social structure, various labels (Negro, Colored, Black American, and African American) and associated meanings, have been used to refer to Black people (Thompson-Sanders and Akbar, 2003). Consequently, Blackness in the United States has now become a label that is associated with what McPherson and Shelby, (2004) call a social conception that is multifaceted and strongly contested. They argue that this social conception contains five intrinsically interconnected dimensions, making up “the modes of Blackness.” There is a) the racial dimensions, which is based on hereditary characteristics, b) ethnic dimension that refers to shared cultural background, c) the national dimension, which relates to shared territorial or place of origin, d) the cultural dimension, which includes
common beliefs and traditions, and e) the political dimension, that is, dedication to 
certain political values such as civil rights and group empowerment.

So what are the implications of categorization on the perceptions and meanings of 
racial identity among contemporary Black youth in both countries? All of the American 
respondents (school and church sample) defined themselves as African Americans, a 
label they have come to embrace as symbolically meaningful and reflective of something 
positive about the community in contemporary United States.

According to the underground view of racial identity which stems from the work of 
Du Bois, personal descriptions of what it means to be Black signify one’s cultural 
experiences, attitudes and beliefs about being part of the African American community 
(Shelton and Sellers, 2000). In response to the question, *What does it mean to be African 
American to you?* Various themes emerged that could be categorized as follows:

*African Heritage and Originality, Black Pride and Positive worldview*

The dominant themes in the responses of school males were a strong sense of 
African Heritage, which consists of recognition of and celebration of one’s African 
ancestral roots as clearly expressed in the two examples below:

**Zenith:** That I am an African living in America.

**Khosi:** Can you explain that further?

It’s just, African living in America, like living in America like, I mean 
you, we all know that we were brought here from Africa, our mother land 
where we are from you know forced to live in the ways that they built this 
nation upon you know, I just feel like you know I still know my identity I 
still know who I am I am Black but I live here in America.
Will: African American, well all Black people originate from Africa so and we live in America so’ African American’ and that’s basically how I would sum it up.

Wanda: Ah, I wrote a book in my English class and realize that we are not African Americans, we are Africans in America. So, I didn’t really pay attention to it until now, to like, like our ancestors and stuff so, I am looking at different now than I did before. I just looked at it as me being American, Black American.

Furthermore, having a strong sense of Black Pride and Positive worldview wherein one is responsible and committed to hard work and achievement constitutes a central part of Blackness:

Leon: What does it mean? It has to mean that you have pride, and you wanna do soothing in life instead of sitting around, now the team Black on the other hand, I call myself Black but would considered to be kinda of lazy seeing how everybody says, Black people do this, Black people do that, but if the say African Americans its always something great, when they say Black it's never something positive.

Pride, Distinct Status in American Society.

For most of the school females, Blackness signifies pride in having a unique historical and cultural position within the United States as a Black man or a Black woman and honoring that. It also requires one to apply themselves and work harder than any other racial group and take pride in that:

Jasmine: Actually to me [sighs] It’s a positive thing because of the fact that you know, we were here first and it’s a good thing to be able to say that, knowing that you know I have other things in my family like I am Irish, but in spite of, it’s a positive thing.

Brianna: Well, the way I think, uhm I feel as though being in the race I am we have to put effort in order to get where and try and grow, that’s how it works, but I am very determined.
A sense of Individuality

Most responses from the church males revealed strong feelings of individuality. Here Blackness was mostly associated with an assertion of autonomy wherein a person seeks to validate themselves as opposed allowing others to judge and pigeonhole them on the basis of being Black males.

**Tyler:** [Long pause] To me personally, what I would say I am an African American, but I can’t, I won’t say that, I would say I am different from anybody else, who says that they are African American male and they should say that they are different from anybody else who is African American cause we are all different in one respect it would be weird to have someone to act like me, who tries to be me, wear what I wear, do what I do …So me as an African American I would say that I am independent, I am strong, I am positive, I am intellectual and I am different.

**David:** I feel like, I would rather not fall under statistic with things and stuff, cause just me being me because when you look, either way you look at it is like ‘Oh well you are a Black male’ So it’s like ‘Oh well’ it’s like they look at me as if I have been in trouble with the law, like I have never been even suspended from school, like I have a clean record type thing. Everything like expect that at some point you will be arrested. I would rather not fall into statistics whether it has to do with selling drugs, it’s just not me.

In essence, being Black and male for these young men means something other than the popular notions about this group who are often labeled as criminals and gang members by popular media and society. They wish to underline that their sense of being as individual Black males means strength, intellect, independence, and good conduct. White and Cones (1999) would argue that in the narratives above, the young men are refusing to be portrayed as “… a symbol of a lurking evil…..” (p80) often conferred to Black males in American society. These scholars point to the distortion and manipulation of Black male images by the media, which influences white America’s perceptions of Black
masculinity. This happens because most White Americans seldom have close contact with Black male. Their judgments are based on the false information perpetuated by the popular media that portray Black males as gangsters, urban outlaws, violent and crime prone. The “unique” physical appearances of these young men, thus put them at risk because in the eyes of White America they are symbolic representations of Black masculinity and thereby behavior.

Strength, Endurance and Accomplishment

For most of the church females, Blackness means having the strength and willingness to persevere and withstand any obstacle:

Sondra: When I think of African-American, I just see I mean strong like you came from a long way and now you’re in America and you’re trying to make things happen and you just gotta keep on being hard workers. I hear positive, I think positive.

Virginia: Um, it means a lot to see how the word has changed from, you know back with Rosa Parks and how we were Negros and stuff like that to now being called African American, it’s a big accomplishment.

Khosi: Why is that?

To see the struggles of our ancestors and how they paved the way for us and all they went through and it’s like now we are actually called the name we should be given ‘African American’.

Blackness is therefore a symbol of accomplishment that elicits a sense of pride in one’s racial group category.
4.3. Symbolic Expressions of Blackness

Ollivier and Fridman (2001) define taste as not something that can be removed from social experience, rather it is part of what they call ‘symbolic systems of classification that are used to convey and inform social interaction. As such, it forms part and parcel of identity development and maintenance as well as exclusion since it also leads to the creation of ‘symbolic boundaries’. Taste is not only a representation of symbolic classification, but it also becomes a form of expression of Blackness or identity among the youth.

It is no secret that musical tastes in heterogeneous and hierarchically structured societies such as the United States have been racialized. This is exemplified in the ways in which the youth in the current study use music, as a cultural artifact, to define themselves in relation to other racial groups. Drawing from the classical work of Pierre Bourdieu, Clay (2003) classifies hip-hop culture (fashion, music, gesture, language etc) as a form of social capital utilized by African American youth to validate their Black identity. She argues that within the Black youth community, hip-hop culture is used in the social construction of race. This was true for most of the respondents in the study when they were asked how they expressed their Blackness.

African American school male respondents instantly associated their taste in music and fashion with self-expression. Judging from insightful articulation they provide below, their taste in music and fashion carries a deeper political meaning of expression:

**Zenith:** Like I told you I am a writer so I write music and lot of my music I like to express like who I am now as opposed to who I was before so I kinda like to educate and help not only myself throughout my process in life but other people understand who they are and go on the right path…I
write more positive music. Like I write, I don’t like to call myself a rapper I just have to say that for understanding so you can understand who I am cause that is the basic term everyone uses but I like to refer to myself as a lyricist you know like I love to write more poetry.

Khosi: Why is it important to you to make that distinction?

You see rap all together is like polluted, you see what I am saying like the major the rappers they are not controlling what they are saying, it’s the companies, the ----I don’t wanna be. Its killing us as a generation which the plan, you know, like the things they talk about you know, it’s not a representative of Blackness, actually its degrading us and people don’t necessarily understand that, so when they listen, they listen as if it’s just music but it’s actually, it’s what can I say it is, I cannot find the word I wanna use, it’s actually like its putting us in a trance basically, its hypnotizing in a negative way. The reason why I call myself a lyricist is because I write positive, I express myself, how I feel and I like to use my expression of how I feel to help other people it’s not that I wanna talk about things I don’t do, I don’t wanna talk about drugs, and f**ing this and f**ing that and you know smoking this and yeah you know what I mean do this smoke this you

Will: Well, I have a hat that says “Black Pride”….My brother he actually gave it to me…and well I dress in urban clothing you know 8732 you know and I listen to a lot of my own music, Rap Music, Jazz, R and B that type of stuff and I am aware of my culture you know my historic background so I would say

Khosi: What is urban clothing, can you define it for me?

Urban clothing, I would say, my definition of it is people like Urban clothing, is for like people, not exactly, I would not say that rich people can’t wear it but I would say that it’s for the middle class and under-like urban clothing cause we live in like urban areas, you know like the city, you know [names the city] all that urban areas, clothing that just fits that.

From the above narratives, we can see these males making efforts to provide a more positive portrait of Blackness to counteract what they believe to be tainted media representations. According to Watkins (1998) what he terms ‘popular expressive culture’ as enacted by Black youth is usually an act of resistance against sociopolitical
circumstances. He argues that this practice is often tied to the discourse about race, youth, gender and social change. Statements articulated in musical or fashion taste often functions to not only express style, but also generational identity and voice. For the Black youth, the author continues, “the sphere of popular culture therefore becomes a safe space for them to cultivate alternative notions of racial and gender identities” (p.4). Musical and poetic tastes were dominating themes in the responses of school female respondents as well:

**Jasmine:** I: Uh, I write poetry, so I write poetry about the experience you know living here. I just have a whole lot I just need to put it all together

**Khosi:** When did you start writing poetry?

Ehm, it’s been I have been writing poetry for 6 years now. My cousin was my inspiration, Yeah I would always, you know listen to her write and then I would start, you know, the littlest things and now my writing has matured over the years. This is really helpful to me cause it inspires me and others.

For others, the expression of Blackness also means refusing to participate in and condone behavior and language that devalues and denigrates Black people. Specifically, the use of the “N” word, an expression that historically represented the subjugation and relegation of African Americans to second-class citizens as a way of dehumanizing them, was mentioned by some of the respondents.

**Wanda:** Through music. I listen to Hip-Hop and Rand B Em I don’t really listen to country though, it’s basically like Hip Hop and Rand B. But I also try not to Em, I try not to use certain words.

**Khosi:** Like what?

Like Nigger, I don’t use those words. I don’t use words that put me down, who I am, make me look like, about a certain way, looked at as a stereotype, that people might think.
As with hip-hop, the “N” word has been and continues to be surrounded by controversy both within the Black community and in mainstream American spheres. The narratives in this study point to the fact that the youth are also chewing over this widely debated issue and are rethinking the implications of using such language on their selfhood. They admit that they have been brought up in a society that has taught them that it is permissible for Black people to use the term when referring to each other because in this context, it is used to express warmth and goodwill and serves as a reminder of the significance of Black historical struggles (Kennedy, 2000). Some scholars like Fisher, (2008) place the “N” word in the category of ‘verbal pollution’, which is “to the use of words and comments that the majority agrees are offensive, are damaging, and may lead to the deterioration of social institutions” (p278). Some of the African American youth who made reference to the “N”-word associated it with disrespect and something that undermines and therefore is antithetical to their Blackness. Thus by actively challenging people who call them the N-word and by refraining from using the word themselves, they are expression their Blackness.

Although some of the church male respondents did use taste as a means of self expression, the majority, however, chose to draw upon the lessons and racial socialization messages they acquired from their parents and guardians to express their Blackness:

**Tyler:** I would say against all odds I tend to go forth and pass through things that most African Americans they say shouldn’t or couldn’t be or do.

**Khosi:** Go for what things?
Go for like, anything like, like there is a stereotype that most Black men
don’t graduate from high school, don’t go to college but me based upon
that I am gonna go for it and graduate high school, go to college.

In other words, those values of hard work and educational success and achievement that
were meant to help them overcome the odds of their underprivileged position become
symbolic representation and expression of who they are as Black youth. For the church
female respondents, hard work, perseverance and fortitude were common themes of self
expression and core of Blackness and culture:

Pamela: Em, how do I express it? I guess really just trying to do the best
that I can in everything that I do, and I think that’s how I view Black
people, always trying to overcome something. I just think that Black
people always face obstacles, not to say that nobody.

In the section that follows, a deep examination of racial identity among these respondents
is situated within the context of the stages of the Nigrescence model, so as to uncover the
nature and dynamics of their experiences of personal and social identity.

4.4. The Nigrescence of Contemporary African American Youth

Stage 1: Pre-Encounter

The majority of African American youth did not display any signs of pre-
encounter, which describes Black people who embrace an assimilation-integration belief
system that affirms and internalize a Pro-White identity at the expense of their Black
identity. Typically, this person would have ant-Black attitudes in which they view Black
people as incompetent, while harboring negative feelings about being Black themselves
(Cross, 2001). As a matter of fact, most African American youth expressed strong feelings against what they view as a distorted depiction of Black behavior and attitudes:

**Simone:** There are many educated Black people in America, you are one of them yourself so, to me everybody could be playful at times but they still get down to work (school female).

**Timothy:** No I disagree. And I disagree because. Well, there are two different types of Blacks. There are motivated ones and there are ones that are living up to the statistics that is placed on them, and I don’t agree with that, I think that Blacks wanna work hard, extra hard to get to where they wanna go, they think that the sky is the limit, that’s the kind of African American I am, I think the sky is the limit, if I work hard and I could do what I need to do (church male).

In addition, none of the African American youth displayed any signs of self-hatred and went as far as proclaiming that “I love me, I love where I come from. Ain’t nothing wrong with me” (Denzel, school male). Most of these young people had a very good sense and knowledge of their historical roots. They stated that Black people in the United States have come a long way. They were not always accepted and treated equally, but they endured and withstood all the obstacles, making strides and contributions along the way.

**Sondra:** we began here as slaves, that we were enslaved by Europeans, you know it was like that for a while until the emancipation proclamation and then Black people started to make a living a thing for themselves and eventually we just moved on to doing great things like we have George Washington Carver and you know we have Gerard Morgan, we just began to move up and excel in America and just to get our own, you know thing going, you know, just take something and make something of it, that’s basically the story of Black people in America, taking nothing and making it into something even if, doing things that need to be done whether we want to do it or not, that’s basically how it is (church female)
Interesting gender differences were noticeable among the African American youth sample in both school and church settings. Within the school context, most male respondents neither expressed Assimilation nor Anti-Black sentiments. Although they believe race to be insignificant and thus should not be used to assess character, they were not likely to embrace a strong attachment to being American.

**Leon:** Race is a type of, it’s really like a color to me, it’s nothing important, now your personality on the other hand, I can see if you judge somebody by their personality, but race is just a color nothing beyond that.

**Maliq:** No, I don’t think they should be judged, it really does not matter what color they are.

In addition to approaching race with dispassionate valance, this group did not express any anti-Black sentiments in that they do not harbor any negative feelings about being Black. In fact, Zenith expressed that what he feels negative about is the society that he lives in as a young Black man:

**Zenith:** I mean like I might have negative feelings about the society that I live in but I love who I am I love the color of my skin, I love my melanin you know.

They were very critical of the negative stereotypes conferred to Black people i.e. among others Black people do not value hard work and are thus lazy. Most refuted what they perceived as unjust problematization of typical human behavior when Black people engage in it and generalizing the negative aspects of that behavior to the whole Black race:

**Denzel:** Nuh. I know a lot of Black people, African Americans that work hard 24 hours a day, then for one hour they might just go party, and then
the next day they might work hard. That’s just stereotyping again. That’s all it is. It’s probably white people out there that just party every day. Hippies do that every day. They Smoke. There’s nothing wrong with having fun as long as you do what you’re doing, going to school or going to work, providing for your family. It’s nothing wrong with that.

**Will:** I can’t apply that to every African American, you can’t just say that really. I would have to say that a lot of my people like my people that I know they do put more emphasis on having a good time, but that’s not like that for everybody, it’s just like saying ‘all white people listen to Rock and Roll.’

The perception of race as insignificant was also shared by the female school respondents. This group also concurred that race is a physical attribute that should not be used to judge people. It is just a color:

**Wanda:** I learned in class that race is, there is no race, it’s the human race, so I think everybody should be equal, everybody should judged the same way.

**Jasmine:** I don’t think people should be judged by race because it doesn’t matter what color you are, you have the capability to be just as good as anybody else.

**Nikki:** No, because a person can be really, really Black and be the rudest person, and people can be really, really white and be the meanest person, I mean it doesn’t really matter.

Unlike their male counterparts, however, females were more likely to display some elements of Pre-Encounter Miseducation in that they appeared to believe as truthful, misguided stereotypes about Black people. The Nigrescence theory claims one of the reasons a Black person would give into such views is because they have weak bonds or connection with the Black community. This would be especially true for Jasmine, the young woman who earlier revealed that she grew up in a predominantly white
community and thus had little exposure to Black culture and relationships with other Black people. According to Jasmine:

**Jasmine:** Our race, well no I am not gonna say ‘our’ because I don’t put myself in it, but some of the people in the Black race definitely do that, they play, play, play, but then you have to think about it, they don’t understand that where we got to was hard work and now this generation is the laziest I have ever seen. They don’t, people in our generation don’t realize that they have little ones looking up to them, so the little ones all they see its us playing and not being serious not taking education seriously and that’s all they are gonna know and it’s just, it’s just getting worse and.

From the standpoint of Nigrescence (Cross, 1995), Jasmine is pigeonholing her stereotypic views in such a way that she removes herself from them. She clearly vocalizes this when she says ‘I am not gonna say ‘our’ because I don’t put myself in it’. In essence she had to remove herself from the whole Black race in order to ensure that we understand that she does not fall into that category. Earlier Jasmine indicated that her mother’s decision not to teach her anything about racial issues was for her own good in the sense that knowing the history of Black people and their culture would have stifled her progress in a predominantly white context. As a consequence, Jasmine developed this perception of Black people as the ‘other’ who symbolize lack of progress and laziness. This is an example of tension of parental socialization.

Others, like Nikki, on the other hand do not remove themselves from the stereotype, but accept it as a fact:

**Nikki:** Yeah, cause it’s just true I think we like to have a good time ….I don’t know just because most Black people are not focused about it [hard work] and it’s just they might be going through something and they just want have a good time for that thing goes away…I don’t think it’s a good thing, I don’t believe in that I mean, it can be times when I don’t feel good and I am not just going to quit working.
Nikki then qualifies her acknowledgement with a justification that depicts the Black stereotypical behavior of misinformed prioritizing as a response to problems stemming from their disadvantaged position within the social structure. She does point out that she does not think it is a solution. Although, these female respondents seem to exhibit Pre-Encounter Miseducation identities, they do not appear to completely reject Blackness at a deep-psychological level, which is typical of Black people who have Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred tendencies. Rather, they all stated unequivocally that they love and cherish who they are and celebrate their Blackness. The following examples were typical responses:

**Simone:** No never, I love my skin color to be honest, I think like people ask me ‘why do you like being Black’ because it’s beautiful to me, everything is beautiful, we have different things that makes us beautiful and I think being makes me beautiful.

**Jasmine:** I don’t have negative feelings about being Black at all. I love to be Black because I know that I am very determined and when I get I am gonna show people that it’s not all about being on spotlight, so I don’t have negative feelings about being Black.

Church males also condemned the use of race to judge people’s characters. In this way dismissing race as less salient. The prevailing sentiments were that it is ignorant to generalize about a particular racial group solely on the basis of behavior by a few members of that group. In addition, it does not make sense to judge people on something as primordial and unchangeable as race:

**Terrence:** No people should, not even the Iraqi people (Laughs) yeah the ones that are here now in the country, you know what I mean cause it ain’t like, it’s just like saying ‘yeah that Black guy shot him so all the other one will shoot me’. People should not be judged by their skin, people should look pass that.
Tyler: We didn’t choose, back when we were born, we did not choose to be Black, we didn’t chose to be white, we didn’t choose to be whatever, so don’t judge me based on something I had no control over or anything for that matter.

And in situations where they find themselves having to deal with racial judgment on a daily basis, some males like Timothy argued that the extent to which a person is judged by their race is determined by their behavior, i.e. how they present themselves. In essence, there are preexisting stereotypes about Black people which the latter can choose to internalize and then validate by acting them out accordingly. In such cases therefore the judgment that is imposed upon them becomes inevitable:

Timothy: It basically just depends on how people show up. I mean like if you put yourself out there as a stereotype everybody looks at, you are basically saying that’s what you are. I think you should be judged that way. Like at my school there are a bunch of guys who, I guess you can say they are from the more country part of the city. They are more racial than anybody; I have to deal with that every day. Like don’t really come at me because they look at it as you know ‘oh you know, you seem like the most whitest Black guy’ so, I guess because I don’t do anything like anybody else does, like with the girls at our school, the Black girls, they are I guess you can say they are loud, ignorance and obnoxious, they fight each other and getting ready to fight.

At first glance, one may construe that Timothy is enacting a Pre-Encounter Miseducation identity when he chooses to perceive the comments made by his White friends as a complement, an elevation to a higher status of an ‘honorary white male’, which distinguishes him from other ‘ignorant, obnoxious, loud violent’ Black kids in his school. However, one wonders whether or not this is his strategic mode of coping because when probed deeper, it appears that he considers or explains his reaction to such comments as his way of putting a positive spin on something he in actuality considers as a racial judgment or insult:
Khosi: When someone says you are the whitest Black man ever, what does that mean to you?

Timothy: I mean, sometimes I look at it as a complement because I think it’s funny like, like ‘well, you might say that so that must mean I am getting somewhere so you don’t look at me in a negative way’ I mean, it’s not that I accept it, it just means I am getting somewhere.

There was consensus among the church female respondents that race should not be used as a basis for judging human behavior. What matters most is personality because that can tell you a lot more about a person than the color of their skin. From the narratives below we can also recognize examples of the ‘social stigma attitudes’ wherein the youth denounce the unfairness of racial judgment by pointing out that it’s pointless, particularly in contemporary society where racial discrimination has been deinstitutionalized. What matters in contemporary society is educational achievement and ambition to succeed:

Sondra: I don’t think people should be judged on their race because that’s long gone now and every race can be accepted and treated as successful as any other race. Even a Hispanic can be as successful as the whites or whatever. I feel like it’s not up to that it’s up to your education…your drive.

Maya: Because when people. I just don’t think it’s right to judge somebody because of the color they are Like it’s something to judge somebody by their personality and then something else to judge somebody just by what they look like ‘cause you can..you don’t know how a person acts deep down you don’t know anything about the person you just know that they’re Black or they’re white.

With regards to the question of stereotypes about Black people, contextually divergent responses were noticeable. Unlike in the school sample, both male and female respondents in the church sample refuted the stereotype that all Black people lack a work ethic and are lazy.
Tyler: I feel like one, it depends on what people consider hard work because I can go out and work in strenuous labor for the whole day. Most Black people do their work for maybe forty hours a week and then maybe on the weekend get together with some friends for a good time. I feel like Black people whatever they do they try to do it well. So whether they are working when the economy is good and they have jobs, they will do it to the best of their ability and even if they are gonna go out and party and have a good time, they will do it to the best of their ability.

Maya: I think African-Americans we do have fun but we are also very, very smart and we also do the work that we have to do, and we get our education, well some of us get our education well every day.

Similar to their counterparts in the school context, all male church youth respondents stated that they do not harbor any negative feelings or shame about being Black:

Terrence: No, I love being Black.

David: I will never be ashamed. I am not ashamed of being Black.

Bobby: I am proud to be Black.

While most of the church female respondents did not harbor any negative feelings about being Black -

Pamela: No, I have always been proud of being strong Black person.

-quiet a handful did however, indicate that although they do not view themselves in a shameful manner by virtue of their skin color, their position in society and stereotypes about their race, society does shame them:

Maya: Well. It’s like sometimes people like I work with all Caucasian people and sometimes I feel like they look down on me because I’m the Black girl, but I don’t that’s the only time so.

Khosi: How does that affect you?

Well I don’t know if it’s in my mind because I know I get along with all of them. But then sometimes they always do something to like separate me or
single me out (garbled) Like they might say something or try like if none of the Caucasian girls wanna do something, they’ll have me do it. Yeah.

**Virginia:** Yes because like my dad was saying Um that at work, some of the Caucasian people that work with him would kinda push extra workload on him and he is trying to do his best and you know they won’t do the work but they’ll get credit for and so I feel like that’s not fair on their party, but as a African Americans he knows that stuff is gonna happen in the real world, you just have to stay tough, don’t let them see that you are hurting….it makes me feel like why should I have to be Black when this stuff happens to us, and how come we can’t just be equal, but I don’t regret being African American cause that’s who I am, often times I think why do we go through so much?

By examining the above stories more closely one may notice the echoes of Du Bois’ (1903) personal narration regarding his first encounter with his standing as a “problem” in childhood, which took place in school when a little girl refuses a card he has offered her as part of a class-wide card exchange:

> Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word….And yet, being a problem is a strange experience,—peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe (W.E.B Du Bois, 1903: 1-2).

Du Bois demonstrates that his personal dilemma of racial shaming is universally shared by Black people in contemporary society who still have to contend with living in a Black word where they enjoy more acceptance and whereby their self respect is nurtured, while also having to constantly enter the white world, which has more opportunities and
possibilities, but which views them as a problem. The narratives of the youth presented above may be described as contemporary versions of the personal dilemma that was identified and experienced by Du Bois a century past. They reveal an internal conflict wherein there is a sense of confusion (contradictory scripts), betrayal (from people who are supposed to be their friends), fatigue (continuous struggle, ‘why do we have to go through so much’) and exasperation (‘how come we can’t just be equal’?, meaning ‘why can’t I just be a human being?’), that has been carried over from experiences and sentiments of African American generations past. This in essence speaks to the collective identity of African Americans rooted in a collective experience of racial struggles.

Stage 2: Encounter

Significant life altering experiences that set in motion a transformation in identity, signaling a movement from Pre-Encounter stage wherein race was not salient to a place where it became a significant part of the youths’ lives, were not evident among most African American respondents. While most agreed that Black people are still disadvantaged and susceptible to racism and discrimination, they believed that in some respect being Black in contemporary American society can be a positive experience in the sense that:

Virginia: …for example, when I look at other countries like Korea and how they have, I don’t wanna say slavery, but how they dehumanize other humans and I feel living in America is a positive thing because I am not, I don’t feel like I am dehumanized by someone else and I am not put under pressure (church female).
In other words, unlike in the past (during slavery) when African Americans were treated as less than humans, their position or experience in contemporary America is more positive. Gender and site based differences and similarities could also be identified in the themes found in the stories of the African American youth. These are presented below.

The Precarious Status of Blacks in the USA: Constant Awareness and Coping

Not encountering a racist event(s) which results in the shattering of the shielded pre-encounter worldview did not mean that school male respondents were not aware of what they consider to be a precarious position of Black people in the United States. This shared sentiment among the males is exemplified in Denzel’s articulation below:

**Denzel:** You go through the negative and the positive trials in life. You go through what’s bad then you go through what’s good…coming to this school, learning about my history.

**Khosi:** Is that the good part?

That’s the good part.

**Khosi:** And then the bad part?

**Denzel:** Whips, not getting the right chances, going to jail for something you didn’t do, not learning correctly, not having your parents or somebody there with you. Locally, I’ve got all of them.

This finding is contrary to Cross’s (1995) assumption that individuals “experience some sort of a encounter that has the effect of ‘catching the person off-guard’…..[wherein it]…..work[s] around, slip[s], or shatter the relevance of the person’s current identity and worldview, and at the same time, provide some hint of the path the person must follow in order to be resocialized and transformed” (p.105). Instead, what these young men reveal
is how their experiences of living in a racialized society wherein in as a Black person, one has to learn to cope with and accept the good and the bad aspects of their reality which is imperative for their identity formation process. In essence, it does not take a single event to trigger a process of self-definition and awareness as a Black person, the latter is very much a part of their daily lives.

The same theme of awareness and coping emerged in the narratives of female school respondents. We see an interesting concoction in insights wherein being Black as a personal trait is intrinsically tied with being Black in the United States by virtue of belonging to this racial category. In other words, the positive perception and appreciation of Blackness is cultivated within an environment that tends to undermine those positive perceptions and in essence their sense of being:

**Wanda:** In some ways we are looked up to, like we do well in sports and stuff, there is good places that the majority of Black people have succeeded in and in life in general, like Oprah looking at her, like she has a big accomplishment, just people like that….But sometimes you get to places where it’s like you are not treated the same as a white person.

**Khosi:** For example?

Like in my old school, I had asked for something and my teachers said she didn’t have, but a white student asked for it and she gave it to him, so we not always be treated fairly

**Simone:** It can be good, people say that it is hard being Black in America because we have racial comments all the time and sometimes its good being Black in America because you can be different and you can fight you know do what you want.

The distinction between the negative and positive aspects of the Black experience as articulated by the youth in the above narratives provide evidence of the notion of Dualism as explicated in Du Bois’s (1903) theory of *Double Consciousness*. From Du Bois’s
standpoint, African Americans possess a split self-concept which they navigate in their daily lives. One moment they find themselves in a private Black world in which they cultivate a positive Black consciousness and at other times they find themselves in a public predominantly white mainstream world in which they are viewed with disdain and shame. The American youth in this study are showing how double consciousness is active in their daily lives. Having courage to stand against obstacles, seeking knowledge through education, learning about ones history and culture, and having positive role models is what the Black experience is about. At the same time, however, being persecuted by the law, having limited access to opportunities (education, financial), and being discriminated against is also what being Black is about. All these aspects are significant as they construct meanings in their lives.

The Precarious Status of Blacks in the USA: Awareness and Defying Odds

While most of the church male respondents acknowledged that indeed life for African Americans in the United States is more challenging because of their position in the social structure, they believe that the extent to which daily life as positive or negative is determined by the individual themselves:

Tyler: Um, that will depend on your experiences as an African American. I have been to a point where I didn’t know where my next meal will come from, where I didn’t know where I will be …I have been to that point…I am at that point now that I thank God for all I have….It has been sometimes a struggle for African Americans and I feel like now African Americans believe that things will change now that we have President Obama. I would love to agree with that, I would love to say will would have no more struggles because he is in office, I would love to agree with that if it were true, but I just don’t think it’s true in anyway…Because he can do what he can to a certain extent. He can call for bailout plans, he
can roll out stimulus checks and whatnot but it will continue to be hard for African Americans.

**Bobby:** I feel joy about being African American male, because there are so many stereotypes about what we cannot do, I get joy out of doing everything that they say we cannot do, out of overcoming everything that they think we cannot overcome the struggles, the hardship. In my family personally I will be the first male to graduate out of high school.

These young men did not experience any circumstances or events that would prompt an identity transformation. As with their school male counterparts, the church males expressed a deep sense of awareness that has always been a part of their lives. Their way of coping is to defy the stereotypes and to assert individuality by taking responsibility for their own lives.

None of the female church respondents experienced any significant events that changed their worldview:

**Pamela:** We still see people who have the same mindset they had over years ago, there always going to be people like that and, you know there are still people who say the Holocaust never existed, so I mean it happens not just in the Black community. I mean, everybody perceives a Black person as either athletic or an artist in some shape or form and that’s not true for every Black person, its true in a sense we all have a certain part of the soul that drive us to do certain things like dance or singing and it’s not so much to perform but it’s an enjoyment.

Unlike the church males, they did not have strong opinions regarding the position of Black people in the United States. As far as they are concerned, the stereotypical images of Black people are not exclusive to this group. Stereotyping a racial group is inevitable when one lives in a heterogeneous society like the United States. The United States is even far better compared to other nations where this kind of prejudice is still institutionalized with the end result being a “dehumanization” of a racial group.
Stage 3: Immersion-Emersion

Given that most African American youth respondents did not experience any of the significant racial or ideological shifts exemplified by the people in the encounter phase, they were less likely to report any of the behaviors associated with the immersion-emersion stage. According Cross (2001), this stage of identity formation is represented as a bifurcation of two intensive worldviews, one where a person harbors strong negative feelings towards whites (Anti-White attitudes) and the other where they become obsessed with Blackness (Pro-Black attitudes). Most of the male and female respondents share similar attitudes when it comes to this stage, with the exception of the school females. While they were also less likely to have anti-White sentiments, most school females were likely to have, albeit not extreme, misgivings about being around Black people. An element of distrust, skepticism and tension emerged as a theme in most of their narratives:

Brianna: Coming here [predominately Black school] I was like they don’t all have the same goals, like it seems like some don’t really care, they don’t want get out of this, like they don’t want to do better for themselves, I just like in my old school [predominately white school] at least people was like the classes were a lot quieter because people was doing their work because…here people seem like they don’t care, it just seem like they are stooping down to that stereotype

Jasmine: A lot of people [Black people] normally say I am a little more Caucasian because of where I come from, I have heard a lot people say you know ‘you act white’ or something like that, but to m, I don’t, I just say, listen I am intelligent and keep it as that. I really don’t pay attention, so. The way I was raised I guess my mom told me uh, ‘never let them see you sweat’ so we, it doesn’t bother you
From the above narratives, two types of tensions are revealed. These are young women who spend most of their time in a predominantly Black environment (school) who are not experiencing the space in a positive manner. Brianna does not feel as though her current school nurtures her growth. She seemed to rather enact a Pro-White, versus a Pro-Black disposition. For Jasmine, the tension stems from the fact that this predominantly Black space is new for her and she tends to stand out and is made to believe by her peers that she projects Pro-White behavior.

*Racist vs. Non Racist whites*

None of the school male respondents displayed any of the emotions or worldviews of immersion-emersion stage. There is no denial of the existence of white racism, in fact a lot of them have encountered it and have reacted with disdain, but they have come to understand and believe that not all white people are racists:

**Will:** There is actually, I am not going to say that all white people you know are bad because I have actually met some pretty cool white people as a matter of fact I worked with a close friend at Burger King, I have known him since middle school, one of the coolest white people I have ever met, and then there are some white people who are downright silly, that give me the weird looks at the store, watching me...you know I just basically think that they hate us and they are afraid of us at the same time, which doesn’t make a lot of sense.

**Leon:** I don’t have a problem with white people, but if I get disrespected by one I will deal with it according to the situation, I won’t put my hands on you seriously, unless you put it on me. If they use words, I will throw words back at them, but I am not gonna hit nobody cause they called me a Nigga because that is just pre-judging, they don’t know me, they don’t know how I am so.
They stressed the importance of having the wisdom to distinguish between those who show disdain against Black people and those who treat the latter group with respect. Some even go as far as enunciating how they would respond to those Whites who treat them with disrespect. At the same time, they do not view their interaction with other Black people as part of their efforts to immerse themselves in the Black world so as to “liberation from Whiteness” (Cross, 1995:107). Rather, participating in the Black world or in activities is part of and an expression of who they are.

Neither Non-White nor Pro-Black Immersion

The church males did not find any description in both phases of the immersion-emersion stage of Nigrescence. None of them seem to immerse themselves in their Blackness, while harboring intense anti-White views:

**Bobby:** I have Caucasian friends. I don’t hate Caucasians or anything and I don’t mind working with them. I have actually only been in my life, in two African American schools where all the students are predominantly Black. So I have been in predominantly white schools.

**Terrence:** It just depends on the individual. Just cause this white persons is racists does not mean they are all racist, like I said my stepdad is white, he is Blacker than an average Black person (laughs) so it just depends on the individual.

None of the church female respondents expressed any anti-White sentiments. There were no comments that reflected hatred and pent up anger towards White people and White society at large (Cross, 2001). Some of them even proudly shared that they have cherished friendship ties with some of their Caucasian counterparts.

**Maxine:** My best friend is Caucasian and I love her to death and Um, some Caucasian people don’t think the way most Caucasian people used to think back in the day, you know even back in the day there were still a few Caucasian people who disagreed about what most Caucasian people
thought about Blacks, they are really nice if you get to know them, they really are…some Caucasian even think like Black people.

**Virginia:** I love them, you know I know they have done some mean things to our ancestors like I said I was brought by my parents and not every white person is like that and I learned not to be quick to judge every white person I have some of my white friends at school that I love to death, I also have Asians friends and other cultures who I really care about.

With regards to intra-racial attitudes, i.e. their feelings about and attitudes towards other Black people, most stated that they feel comfortable when they are in the company of other Black people because:

**Sondra:** It just feels like, you have my back, like we are in the same position now, like we are in the same position where, maybe we are not going places but we have the same motivation, your ancestors have been through what mine have been through, and we have a reason to work hard, it’s the same reason, we influence each other.

Others expressed caution stating that it depends on whose company one is in and the kind of influence that person has on them:

**Virginia:** Some Black people have the same positive outlook that I do, some Black are negative I am not saying I feel bad but I don’t feel like they are really using their full potential as they should.

Contrary to Cross’s (2001) contention that having Pro-Black attitudes means that one is more likely to excessively embrace everything Black (immersion in Black cultural stories, art, politics, literature and history), which facilitates the movement towards an internalized Black identity. These have been embedded in their psychic and come naturally when they express their Blackness on a daily life. Some did however indicate that sometimes they do feel the pressure from their peers in the community to be Blacker than they are:
**Pamela:** Well [At her previous school] it was kind of like you had to be Black, you had to be ghetto or ghetto fabulous and that was what was cool and if you weren’t like that then nobody Black was going to be your friend. The girls were like they were really nasty they always had nasty things to say, like ‘that’s not cute why are you wearing that, that’s what white people wear.’

**Virginia:** I have never had an experience like that, but I know some friends that had that who go to predominantly white schools and they would speak correct English.

**Khosi:** What is correct English?

Subject and verb agreement and not saying ‘aint’ and then there are some of my friends who go to all Black schools they might be like ‘why do you talk like that?’ it’s not like I don’t talk ghetto, I just talk proper.

**Khosi:** What is the difference between talking ghetto and talking proper?

For African Americans talking ghetto could be you know rolling your neck or saying ‘aint’ in a sentence or ‘I isn’t’ stuff like that, just being loud, but talking proper could be like I said before using the same verb and subject agreement and not always having to have negatives in a sentence, no ‘aint’ that’s not correct just using the correct type of English, good sentence construction.

**Khosi:** So you are saying talking ghetto is not appropriate, it’s not acceptable?

There’s a certain time and place for everything and when you get to a public surrounding or a workplace, talking as if you don’t have any intelligence or sometimes you don’t have any educational background it’s not highly favored by society, but if you are with your friends you can say it.

From the standpoint of the Nigrescence model, the narratives above would be deemed as examples of how the youth enact their identities on the daily basis through the employment of code switching techniques. Code switching is said to involve acting in accord with cultural norms of the mainstream or white dominated society. It “makes everyday activities (on the job or in the classroom, etc) go smoothly. The Black person
‘fronts’, code-switches, or acts ‘White’ in a temporary sense” (Cross, 2001:379). I argue however, that code-switching among the youth in this study is enacted not only to navigate the white world, but it is functional when they re-enter the Black milieu as well. This is one of the implicit ramifications of having a double consciousness. I draw upon Carter’s (2003) theoretical framework of Black cultural capital to explain the balancing acts that these youth agentially use in their racialization processes. Carter makes a distinction between dominant and non-dominant cultural capital and how these coexist within the Black community. Dominant cultural capital refers to the codes, signals and attributes associated with power and high status and which Black people and thus youth have to rationally employ as they enter the mainstream world, wherein astuteness and achievement are highly valued. Non-dominant cultural capital, on the other hand, symbolizes a “set of tastes or schemes of appropriation and understating, accorded to a lower status group” (p138). This includes among others, manners of speech and communication styles and artistic forms of expression. These are used by members of the lower status groups to secure a pass within their own communities which guarantees a place in the “authentic” cultural status position. Here, we see an employment of symbolic boundaries that are used to screen fellow members of the in-group to see if they are worthy of cultural membership. One of the drawbacks of having a double consciousness and having to code-switch on a daily basis is that some Black youth may experience some form of persecution from other Black youth if they “act White” in a Black world.
Stage 4: Internalization

**Leon:** I think it’s better to be with a group not just being Black but explore new races cause when you explore new races, you will probably learn stuff about you that you didn’t know. Like Malcolm X, he went to the Muslim religion and learned something about his race that his original religion wasn’t telling him, as he learned more he changed his mind set.

Here, Leon is using one of the significant Black historical examples to convey his belief that while having as strong sense of Blackness is crucial as a foundation of self, interacting with other racial groups is also equally useful for one’s growth and ultimately one’s racial identity. Virtually all of the African American respondents embraced the same Multiculturist worldview, which according to the Nigrescence theory defines a Black individual who is comfortable enough with their own identity that they have no problem with embracing other racial groups.

Various views of the functionality of multiculturalism were expressed by male and female respondents within the school and church settings. They argued that the current sociopolitical landscape has changed African Americans’ lived experiences of race. Multiculturism is therefore, not only useful for personal growth and enrichment, but is necessary for the survival and socioeconomic progress of the Black race. The following responses were typical:

*Internalized-Multiculturist Worldview: Sociopolitical landscape*

**Zenith:** You got people or other races that are trying to be individual themselves, so I don’t know if we should retaliate with the same plan, but you know like Senator Obama said, they look at it as a melting pot, but he likes to look at it as, I like what he says, I am quoting him, he likes to look at our country as a tossed salad, you know, that every piece makes dish good, you know what I am saying, every piece has its role, you know what I mean, you got your lettuce, tomatoes, everything is there for a reasons. When you look at a melting pot it’s just everything thrown all
together, its one blend, everybody is the same, a salad still keeps itself, but it complements the dish, it still complements everything else, you know.

As Cross (2001) explained, one of the factors that may inform the individuals with this identity type may be their personal surveying of a situation or event. Their responses reflected an appreciation of the sociopolitical, both historic and contemporary, (the 2008 election season in which a first Black president was to be elected).

Multiculturist Worldview: Enriched self-appreciation

Similarly, the school females embraced Multiculturist worldview in which they believe as Simone articulates it “it’s okay to be loving yourself as a Black person and it’s all right to let other people that’s not Black being in your lives too”. The dominant theme among this group is the belief that embracing oneself as a Black person is of prime importance because which becomes even more enriched when once branches out to open interaction with other races and cultures:

**Jasmine:** It's important to know the way your culture did it but how everybody else did too, because if you study everything else it makes you appreciate what you have.

**Wanda:** Having Black pride and still have a multicultural identity because the majority of success like here is white people, you are just basically gonna have to learn from them before you can be able to get to where you want to be, you wanna be able to like connect with them maybe on the level that you would not be with somebody else.

In essence, there is use value in being exposed to different cultural perspectives for both personal and social development:
Multiculturist Worldview: Necessary for Survival

The belief that adhering to a Multiculturist worldview is not only ideal, but necessary for survival was a common theme in the narratives of church male respondents not only is embracing a multicultural worldview useful, but it’s necessary to survive in a white dominated society:

Tyler: I believe that you should have Black pride, you should be proud of who you are and that should be, your descendents and who you come from, but at the same time I do believe that it shouldn’t just be you know a ‘Us’ thing you know, like we are just being our own little circle and we are not messing with anybody else, I believe that you can intertwine with other races and stuff and actually be of one mind, you shouldn’t, it shouldn’t have to be all like segregated and everything it is the 1950s or something.

David: We need each other, like everybody has to work with each other regardless of color, the people who are stuck in “Black power” “White power” they need to come out of the 50s and 60s, its 2008 nobody is doing that anymore.

Multiculturist Worldview: Diversity and Cooperation Functions of Progress

The Multiculturist worldview of church female respondents was equated with progress. Most were likely to enact an identity type in which they felt their personal identity would be enhanced by engaging with other cultures.

Virginia: Like I continue to keep saying I go to a school where diversity is highly favored. At first when I got to the school I didn’t like it I thought I would turn out like the white folks, talk like the white folks and act like how they act, but I now I like the school for the lessons it taught me, how in the real world everyone isn’t like me, you have different cultures and different backgrounds you interact with and come across and so you have to learn to accept those for who they are and learn more about their culture and not be so quick to criticize.

Sondra: Umm if you, if you trying to strive for change why keep doing the same thing [favoring segregation], you have to try new things and
don’t exclude anyone, who is to say a Hispanic can’t be as intelligent as white people, and they could, together they could make our, you know, government better instead of leaving it all to one race, who knows, they probably know something we don’t know.

In this way, as Cross (2001) would contend, these youth are “…eschew[ing] solutions that rely on single-group interests and prefers solutions, instead, that address multiple oppression (p.376).

4.5. Family Racial Socialization Experiences of Black South African youth

By virtue of growing up in post-Apartheid South Africa, contemporary Black adolescents’ navigation of personal change is teeming with uncertainty that may have implications for their developmental wellbeing. The transformation that ensued after the abolishment of this system of institutionalized racism brought about a new set of challenges for families within Black communities. This is because the structure, organization and functioning of families was greatly altered and their ability to deal with the strain of social transformation, inequality, violence, poverty, the threat of HIV/AIDS became more daunting. Therefore, for children and youth, growing up in such fragile social conditions puts them at risk for various adjustment problems. They face economic destitution, limited access to social and financial capital that stifles their life chances by impeding their academic and emotional development (Barbarin and Richter, 2001).

Given that the vulnerable position of Black youth in South Africa has been linked to the legacy of institutionalized racism inherited in the past, how does the racialization process look like from their viewpoint? How do these young people perceive themselves in terms of race? How do they express it in their daily lives? In this section the racial identity
components, perceptions and expressions of Black South African youth are presented. Similar to their Africa American counterparts, Black South African youth were asked to share their familial racial socialization experiences.

None of the male and female respondents from the school sample indicated having any conversations regarding issues of race with their parents or guardians. It appears that it was never an issue of consideration. Their expressions when the question was brought seem to that show either that it never occurred to them or it was never of significance. Their expressions also showed that they had no idea what that conversation would entail as it was not part of their upbringing.

From the church sample, however there were male and female respondents, albeit in the minority respondents who said their parents talked to them about their personal experiences with racism as a way of cautioning and protecting them from racism and educating them on how to deal with discrimination. The following were the typical response offered:

**Zoli (male):** You see, they told me about the struggles mostly. My mother went through a lot of struggles and then she would sometimes tell me that there were times when white people used to point at her, calling her racist names. She then told me that she does not want me to go through the same experiences because she knows the outcome since she is a kind person white people took advantage of her since she is kind and shy, but she did not pay attention to these insults. My mother tells me directly, but she tells me by a way of scolding me. She would say something like ‘listen here, I saw you or I heard that you did this and that. Do not ever do this because I have been there and I know the consequences’

**Nomathamsanqa (female):** My mom told me that if someone is racist towards me I must just know that we have the same blood, you are created by the same God so there is nothing different just take it in or tell them what you want to tell them or just don’t pay attention to them at all
Evidently, unlike in the United States, racial socialization is not typically infused in parenting practices in Black communities within the South African context. There are possible explanations for this. In the United States, as the literature shows, the minority status of Black people and the accompanying structural disadvantages has deemed it necessary for parents to incorporate racial socialization in their parenting. In South Africa, however, Black people are in the numerical majority and thus Blackness may be taken for granted. In addition, the democratization of South Africa in 1994 with the resulting prevalence in “rainbow nation sentiments” denoting the dawn of racial harmony with the adoption of “neo-liberal policies and an orientation towards a more people-centered development of the country” (Habib, 1997: 30), may have contributed to this phenomenon. This signaled a move away from discourse of radical activism that dominated the Anti-Apartheid social movements wherein Black Consciousness was used primarily for the purpose of political mobilization.

4.6. Racial Categorization and the Meanings of Blackness

As in the United States, the category of Blackness in South Africa has also evolved from being used to refer only to Africans under the Apartheid system to an all encompassing category that includes not just Africans, but also Coloreds and Indians. This controversial redefinition was part of the new political dispensation’s efforts to address previous inequalities. During the Apartheid era, racial categorization was used as

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7 “Colored” is generally used to refer to people of mixed racial descent as opposed to those of unmixed Black African, Asian, or European origin.
8 Indians constitute the majority of the Asian population in South Africa. Most of them are descendents of indentured workers who were brought to the country in the 19th century to work on the sugar plantations of Natal. They are largely English-speaking, although many also retain their native languages.
a homogeneously binding mechanism, across all areas of people’s experiences, to regulate and further reinforce strategies of unequal distribution of resources. In other words, racial classification was “a judgment about a person’s social status, as much as physical appearance” (Posel, 2001: 62).

All Black South African respondents (male and female) from the school sample described themselves as Black, thus unequivocally adhering to the label. While all church females also described themselves as Black, most of their male counterparts described themselves differently. For instance, while Mzi may accept the label, he does so reluctantly. He argues that the label carries with it both negative and positive connotations depending on who uses it to refer to Black people:

**Mzi:** To me if someone calls me Black, I would not mind because yes I am Black, but when it comes from whites, I would not like it because they do not mean it the way that I think or perceive myself as a Black person...some whites are still racist towards Blacks, so they don’t see us as equals, at the same level with them, they look down upon us. But that thing, I don’t see it as important because there are some Blacks now who are wealthier and can afford more than the whites now. So they are still fighting us. It’s been a while since we have seen a white person being a president and that is still painful for them because they don’t feel happy that we are enjoying ourselves as Blacks, so it’s something like that. There are now suburbs that Black people can live.

**Khosi:** Why is it different when a Black person calls you Black?

Because I can say to them that they are also Black and the meaning will be communicated between me and them because they say they say it in a positive way as opposed to in a negative degrading tone.

The distinction between two types of “tones” (positive vs. degrading) becomes apparent when Blacks and whites confer the label to him. Mzi feels that the label elicits a sense of pride, collectively shared meaning and identity when a Black person uses it to refer to him. It is degrading, however, when a white person calls him Black because the former
uses it with contempt and resentment presumably in response to the change in the status of Black people in South Africa’s structural system.

For Khaya being called Black is equivalent to being objectified. He does not appreciate the dehumanizing implications he associates with the label and emphatically demands that a clear distinction be made between being Black and African.

**Khaya:** I don’t like the word Black because I am not Black... I am an African. I am not Black. The reason why I am saying I am an African it’s because a Black thing is dark, if you say I am Black you are saying I look like a tire because a tire is Black so I am not a tire, I am human being with flesh, human flesh that is not Black, there is no human flesh that is Black. I am an African from Africa so that’s why I don’t, I hate to say I am Black, I am not Black, I am an African.

Themba also defines himself as an African since it places him in a specific geographical space which for him signifies and enhances his sense of belonging anchored in historical roots and ethnic ties with others from his Xhosa ethnic group:

**Themba:** I would actually prefer to say I am African because South Africa is under Africa and during the time of oppression, South Africans flee to other countries in Africa seeking refuge, as a result relationships developed and people came together as Xhosa, African and so on. So I would say I am African not Black.

Whether they choose to describe themselves or are labeled by others as Black or African, the bottom line is that these labels have come to be loaded with meanings that inform their fundamental sense of self and identity. One of the consequences of categorization is *internalization* whereby group members assimilate to a category, or some aspects of it, which then becomes an integral part of who they are (Jenkins, 2003). By probing into their interpretations of these labels we are able to gauge their individual awareness, values, attitudes and beliefs about their identity. In other words, we get a sense of how
these young people view and interact with their changing world through their perceived racial identity (Looney, 1988).

Native, Pride, and Independence

An assortment of meanings of racial identity was provided by the school male youth. Particularly, the recurring themes were a sense of nativity, compared to other racial groups. It’s also warrants pride and a sense of independence as a Black male.

Xoli: It means that I am South African. Being Black means south, you see I consider white people as foreigners because they have their own home countries. Coloreds on the other hand I would say are from here.

James: It means a lot. It means like Uh I am Black. It means that I am independent man I can do things myself, be educated

Khosi: Why is it important for you as a Black man to be independent?

Because I would not be able to achieve a lot of things without education. Outside you are treated as a dog if you are not educated, You are no body they don’t see you as an educated person out here. If you are not educated you are nothing

Khosi: Who treats you like that?

Like most of the time its people who are educated. Like working in the coal factories, you see Black people having to carry very heavy loads, while Coloreds only carry light loads.

For most of the school female respondents’ Blackness is an unchanging phenomenon, which requires self acceptance, pride and comfort in one’s own skin?

Thandiswa: To be Black I would say, you cannot change yourself, you will always be a Black person so it means that you are Black there is nothing you can do about that.

Precious: I think if I did not have the sense of racial Identity I have I would not be the kind of person I am today.... If I did not take my racial
identity into consideration I would not be who I am right now. I strongly believe that it is very important for you to know who you are, like to not to try and be like for example a white person, because I will never be a white person, I will always be a Black person and that will never change.

A handful of church male respondents asserted the meaning of Blackness within the context of the historical struggle, endurance and survival of Black people during Apartheid:

**Zoli:** It’s meaning to me. I would say I see myself as a hero because as they say at church that it is inevitable to go through suffering and problems. So what I am trying to say is that the bad things, it’s a must that we go through them. This is because in South Africa we had Apartheid and now we have our freedom, so that is why I am saying I am a hero you see.

**Khaya:** It means a lot beaus in Africa, just the word, just the continent African is beautiful so the reason why I am saying I am African because I know that even if it’s beautiful bad things have happened in South Africa, things like Apartheid and stuff like that but even though those things happened but things have changed no, Africa is beautiful now. The reason why I am saying African its beaus my history tells a lot about where I come from and where I am going now.

As Dolby (2001) observed, the Black youth who are growing up in contemporary South Africa where all the racist laws of Apartheid have long been abolished, are a part of a “….generation whose past present, and future are neither completely defined by Apartheid, nor completely free of it” (p7). Quite a few of the female church respondents attached a sense of deep meaning to Blackness. It was viewed as both something that is primordial, taken for granted because:

**Thembelo:** Black means I am born by a Black woman, not white or something and I am actually proud of being Black… I don’t know it’s just something that comes naturally.
For others like Nomathamsanqa, being Black means being indigenous to Africa as opposed to coming in from outside and establishing oneself within the continent. They consider their place of origin, South Africa and Africa, as being historically, genetically and culturally closely tied to their selfhood:

**Nomathamsanqa:** I don’t know if this is appropriate enough, but I would say for me Black means being proudly South African, I don’t know why, but that is what it means to me.

**Khosi:** Can you elaborate on that, what is proudly South African?

Proudly South African it’s like, you see in Africa Black people are mostly from Africa even people in America are mostly from Africa, so when you say Black I would say South African…now people who are white are mostly from Europe because what I have learned from history, White people are not from Africa, but its Black people, so when you say Black I actually feel like proud because this is my land I was born here

### 4.7. Symbolic Expressions of Blackness

**Nomathansanqa:** I also express my Blackness through my practices. My aunt is a traditional healer so we help her with everything, if there is intlombe.

**Khosi:** What is intlombe?

Intlombe when, Okay there are many types of Intlombe, first if you are about to be initiated into becoming a traditional healer, other traditional healers in the community gather from Thursday night until Friday morning for an initiation ceremony in which there is a lot of dancing and dancing. We then take a rest during the day because the dancing resumes in the evening until Saturday morning. We take a rest again during the day on Saturday and then later on there is *Umcimbi* [traditional party]….For me, I am grateful to my aunt because now I know where I come from, I know my roots even when they call out the names of ancestors *[Ukuzithatha]*, my aunt always teaches me she asks me questions about where I come from ….So

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9 It’s also a highly publicized slogan and campaign to promote South African companies, products and services which are helping to create jobs and economic growth in the country.

10 This is also a dance for young men and women in the marriage stage.
with my aunt being a Sangoma [traditional healer] I am very proud of who I am.

Tradition is a permanent fixture for the Black ethnic groups in South Africa. These have withstood even as the country continues to industrialize and assume its position as a middle income economy. It is often a way to converse with ancestors and usually expressed in the form of ritualistic traditional ceremonies characterized by song and dance, food and drink, and so on (Batho Portal: http://www.sacultures.org.za/nemisa_2836.htm). The significance of these ritualistic gatherings, according to Alexander, (2006) is that they serve to not only invigorate participants and observers but they also strengthen the sense of attachment among members and “...increases their identification with the symbolic objects of communication, and intensifies the connection of participants and the symbol object with observing audience, the relevant community at large” (p29).

In her ethnographic study of how youth construct racial selves within a multiracial school context in South Africa, Dolby (2001) argues that “African [Black] students are poised at a three-way juncture: an ever-changing traditional culture that exist for many, in the imagination; the urbanization of modernity; and the globalizing thrust of postmodernity” (p63). She stresses the ways in which these students draw heavily upon Western, particularly African American “icons and symbols of the global popular” to construct and express their racial identity. Interestingly, among the respondents in my study, it was mostly females who were vocal and articulate about engaging in actively expressing their sense of Blackness. The males did not seem to make this a priority. In most of the female narratives from both church and school contexts, we see a perfection
of the art of “symbolic creativity” (see Willis in Dolby, 2000), in which they combine their indigenous cultural practices and traditions with global popular culture as they aesthetically enact and re-enact their personal and communal identity. Therefore, whether through deliberate infusion of symbolic representations cultural agency (traditional skirt) into a predominantly white and male dominated sport-

Thandeka: I express my Blackness through sports. If you look at the Springboks [National Rugby Team] there are only three Black people in there. I also want to be in the team to increase the number of Black people participating and celebrating my culture. When everyone is wearing the Springbok gears and colors, I want to wear my own kind of attire. I would wear a traditional skirt with Springbok colors.

Blending contemporary styles of dress with traditional African flavors to create a hybrid style-

Zoleka: First of all I would say it’s the way I dress. I like Afro-fusion when I dress; I like to mix umbhaco [traditional Xhosa regalia] with beaded mbadada11 I like beaded stuff.

Or preserving ones indigenous accent when expressing oneself in non-native language with a strong sense of pride-

Cikiza: As I said before, I am not that type that when I speak English I tried to change the way I talk (the accent), if I speak English I speak like as I am speaking Xhosa. Every my sister once said to me, ‘you when you speak English you are Xhosalizing it’ and there is nothing like that, you have to be proud. My mother even commented once and said ‘I like the way Thandi is, she is confident’, and that confidence that is the one thing that boosts me every time I come across white or Colored people. The one thing I make sure of is to show my confidence because Colored people, they look down upon us. As I mentioned before I have spent a lot of time with Colored people at school, so I noticed that they are the kind of people who always bring us down, so that is when I learned that the first thing I need to have is confidence and knowing who I am. So that is how I express my Blackness.

11 These are traditional sandals made from car tires. There are two kinds, some with cross bars and tier soles and leather cross bars.
These narrative reveal the agentic ways in which these young people frame and use cultural practices to construct their identities as they “…creatively combine elements of global capitalism, transnationalism, and local culture” (Bucholtz, 2002: 525).

It was not until a question was posed, further probing into racial distinctiveness i.e. what kind of things set them apart from other racial groups, that male sentiments began to surface, wherein expressions of Blackness was illuminated. It was surprising to hear a persistently recurring theme of anti-Colored sentiments that were expressed in response. In addition to language, cultural practices, and place of dwelling, which convey some of the five dimensions of Blackness as proposed by McPherson and Shelby (2004), the majority of male and female respondents across research sites made racially charged comments about Coloreds. This was quite clear in their descriptions of the latter group as lacking in “dignity” “self-respect” as well as being “cultureless”, which revealed the racial stereotypes and prejudices they harbor for this group:

**Themba (church male):** It’s Dignity. You see here at [names the church] as I mentioned before we usually get together for conventions with other races from other districts. When it comes to the elections of YPD [Young People’s Division] president and as a Black person I did not show self-respect to these Colored people, my dignity goes down. So even if I were to get an opportunity to run for the presidency Colored people would always try to stop that.

**Dumile (school male)** First of all, its language and the way we practice our customs as well as the way we live our lives or conduct ourselves. For example we have one ceremony that you have to do as an infant. It’s called *imbeleko*\(^1\). If you were unable to do it as an infant, you will have

\(^1\) A ceremony conducted to introduce the baby to the ancestors and to thank them and ask for its protection. Here a goat is slaughtered as a sacrifice to the ancestors (a goat is always slaughtered for a feast that involves talking to the ancestors), and the family elder responsible for talking to the ancestors will call the baby by its name when presenting it to the ancestors at the same time the goat is being slaughtered (http://www.africa.upenn.edu/afl/zulunames.htm)
to do it before you have to go to *eSuthwini*\(^{13}\). So, Coloreds do not know all these things. They don’t practice such customs/traditions. Also we have rituals in which we communicate with the ancestors. For instance, in situations where a person has a bad dream or dreams about something that would require them to conduct a ceremony in which they ask the ancestors for guidance about the nature and meaning of the dream (Kwazi, Male from the school site).

These young people, one may argue, are engaged in what Tajfel (1982) refers to as the process of “accentuating intra-category similarities and inter-category differences”, as a way of safeguarding or attaining a “positive group distinctiveness”. As they construct meanings of their identities, this strategy functions to protect, enhance, preserve, or achieve their positive social identity as Africans. Tajfel points out that since social identity is: “…that part of the individuals’ self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership. In conditions in which social interactions are determined to a large extent by the individuals’ reciprocal group memberships, positive social identity can be achieved, in a vast majority of cases, only through appropriate *intergroup* social comparisons” (p24). Therefore, since members of the in-group perceive members of the out-group as belonging to a homogeneous category, they are more likely to confer to the latter stereotyped behaviors and mannerisms. This may lead to the “depersonalization” and “dehumanization” of out-group members, which often engenders intergroup tensions. In addition, the views expressed by these respondents raise questions that require further pondering. First, to what extent are they influenced by

\(^{13}\) A place of isolation in which young boys live for several weeks, often in the mountains, during their initiation (Ulwaluko) to manhood. Here, the manhood ritual, a secret rite that marks the transition from boyhood to adulthood involving circumcision is conducted.
both the historical and contemporary institutionalized racial categorization, regardless of motives, within the South African sociopolitical context? Second, what can we glean from these views about the dynamics of current race relations in South Africa and their implications for the identity development and well being of the youth as they navigate their surroundings?

4.8. The Nigrescence of Contemporary Black South African Youth

Stage 1: Pre-Encounter

Assimilation and Anti-Blackness are major elements of the Pre-encounter stage. While most of the Black South African youth claimed that they did not harbor any negative, self-hatred feelings about being Black, and regarded race as less salient, they did feel they were inferior relative to white South Africans. Some of the youth even felt that the latter have more intellect and are therefore more socioeconomically privileged:

**Xoli**: most white people are smarter and have higher jobs than us. As I am studying here I [names the high school] I wish I can get the same level of education as in white school because in those schools, you can stay and focus on books because if you live here in the townships, forget it, you cannot focus on books (school male).

Most of these youth also expressed strong negative perceptions about the Black race in general. This was demonstrated by the unequivocal general acceptance, as truth, of negative stereotypes about Black people. The strong undertone in their views seemed to imply that Black people in South Africa experience hardship as a result of lack of motivation and work ethic. Here white people’s experiences and behavior are used as a
yardstick or a standard for making critical judgments and proof of Black people’s ‘incompetence’

**Vivian:** We like our comfort zone, we don’t like to use our brains, we don’t like to, to work fast. We always want to be spoon-fed, you know. A white person comes and says ‘you should do this, this way and then do it that way’ why can’t you say that ‘I should do this, this way’. Like, in terms of unemployment, you cannot say that a person who is sitting, uhm always everyday sitting in front of the house just watch at the sun, and say that person is unemployed. A person who is unemployed is a person who is going out looking for work, but struggling to find it, that is a person who is unemployed. White people do go to work even if they don’t find work. Black people always just like to walk around and wait for work to come to them and it does not work like.

Vivien provides a good example of the prevailing sentiments among the Black South African youth. Here, racial comparisons of competence are made resulting in the conclusion that unlike white people who exude confidence, courage to take initiative, and commitment to hard work, Black people generally lack ambition, work ethic and have no sense of autonomy.

*Pre-Encounter Miseducation, confirming Black Stereotypes*

There was consensus among the school males in South Africa regarding racial judgment and treatment. They all expressed disapproval when it comes to the use of race as a measure of a person’s character:

**James:** No because you can do anything with other people, you cannot just isolate yourself and say ‘just because I am Black I cannot do this.’

However, there was evidence of Pre-Encounter Miseducation in that most were more likely to confirm the negative stereotypes conferred to Black people in South Africa. The
prevailing belief that is exemplified in James’ comment below was that Black people do not value education and are responsible for their circumstances.

**Xoli:** That is true, because first of all Black people do not want to learn, go to school. They think learning and going to school is a waste of time. They want money now and quick.

For the school female respondents, Pre-Encounter Assimilation views were also palpable in their regard of racial judgment as being futile as a strategy of character assessment:

**Petunia:** Black people should not be judged; actually people in general should not be judged because you don’t know how the person really is.

**Cikiza:** I don’t like judging people because the first thing I know from going to a colored school is being judged and being undermined and people looking at you like you and thinking that you are nothing and I don’t like that. So I think we should treat everybody equally.

Similar to their male counterparts, these young women were more likely to express views that are characteristic of Pre-Encounter Miseducation worldviews. Most were especially critical of what they perceive as Black people’s tendency to assign blame for their hardships to others; meanwhile they refuse to take the initiative to change their circumstances. A lot of these young ladies shared the sentiments of Precious and Petunia:

**Petunia:** Yes, Black people like to have fun. They do not care about working hard. You find someone complaining saying they don’t have money, they don’t have money, the government is not doing anything. The only thing they know is having fun. They don’t want to do anything; they just want to get things for free. For instance, they complain that Thabo Mbeki is not working, he refuses to release grant money for them. They only want Social Grants, they want the government to increase it. They want to depend on the government without working. They always complain that they can’t find work, they can’t find work they are responsible for not finding work. They don’t finish school, so when they search for work in newspaper they find that these jobs are for people who are qualified with grade 12 education.
Within the church setting, similar themes of Pre-Encounter Assimilation on the one hand, and Miseducation could be detected in the narratives of the male and female youth. For the males, not only is race useless in interpersonal interaction, it’s also against God’s will who created all human beings equally. A lot of the males perceived the issue of race from this standpoint, viewing God as a decider whose determines human behavior and interaction. He would not approve of racial salience:

**Khaya:** No at all because when God created us he did not discriminate that ‘no this one is like this and that one is like that’ when he refers to us he calls us his children are so why should we have race and discrimination. So to me the issue of race does not make any sense.

Ironically, although most church males unequivocally spoke up against judgment and discrimination based on race, they were also more likely to judge Black people as indolent and full of grievances when compared to whites who are hard working.

**Zoli:** You see, a Black person likes to experiment with things. When they are warned not to do something they do not listen and another things they do not want to go to school but they want to earn a lot of money when they do work whereas they are not educated, that is why you find a Black people complain, saying things like ‘hey I am not working my mother wants me to find work, so I will not work I will just use drugs. Another thing, we as Black people still have that mentality that we are still under Apartheid, you see, so just because even at work, you find people saying things like ‘I will not work for a white person’ we always complain wanting to have money, but we do not want to work for it.

Similar worldviews regarding racial judgments were expressed by the church females in that most believe in equal human capacity, thus providing evidence of Pre-Encounter Assimilation attitudes:

**Nomathamsanqa:** There is equality now. Everyone is equal even to God everybody is equal, every human being was created the same way so why should race come in now when race is something that was not created by God?
**Thembela:** Because at the end of the day we are all humans and we can all do the same things. We have the same capabilities.

However, they differed markedly from their male peers because in that they were more likely to reject Black stereotypes, dubbing these as misguided:

**Zoleka:** No I don’t agree with that because not all Black people do that. We do that when something happened to you or there is something that frustrated so you can that whatever you don’t care because …

**Thembela:** We do have fun, it’s part of our culture, we practice our culture, we have dances we have, it’s true, but we do work hard as well, but then there is a limit everything has boundaries, there is nothing wrong with it, it’s the way we are.

They believe that Black people are driven, have a work ethic and if they do not work it are due to circumstances (unemployment). Black people’s priorities are not seen as problematic for these young women.

**Stage 2: Encounter**

There were no indicators of significant encounter experiences (Cross, 1995) among the Black South African respondents, wherein they encounter and internalized a series of racist moments that caused them to re-evaluate their worldview. There were, however, gender differences in how they view life in contemporary South Africa as Black people. In particular, males most expressed feelings of uncertainty, distress, disadvantaged or deprived because of their social standing:

**James:** It’s still bad but they are trying. Like you see in [names a township], you would not see a white person living in those conditions. Like white people still live in nice homes. The homes built for Black people are always in bad shape and quickly fall apart (school male).
Post Apartheid uncertainty and white Superiority

**Dumile:** Yes, sometimes because other, most white people have higher jobs than us. As I am studying here in [names the school] I wish I can get the same level of education as in white school because in those schools, you can stay and focus on books because if you live here in the townships, forget it, you cannot focus on books.

As one can see from Dumile’s narratives above, most school male respondents tended to define their lived experiences of race in South Africa in terms of class. They are comparing their social positions with those of whites, not in terms of cultural differences, but in terms of class inequality. According to Bray, et al (2008), in contemporary South Africa, race is still very much a proxy for class background. They observed that “…..racialized identities retain salience in the lives of most South Africans – albeit often alongside other identities of class, religion and so on” (p10). From a standpoint of Nigrescence, one may argue that such feelings of deprivation may account for encounter moments that are yet to be experienced as such by these young men.

By contrast, school females were more optimistic about life in contemporary South Africa. Their insights tell us that they have not experienced any encounter moments. What they reveal are feelings of optimism for the future given the transformation from the past.

**Thandeka:** It’s a positive experience because now Black people are in charge of the country. White people are no longer in charge, which is in the past. Also, we are no longer required to carry Passes. What I like is that there is nothing as Black people we cannot do now. If you want to be something, you can. Also with languages, we do not have to speak Afrikaans anymore. You can speak any language that you feel comfortable with, even at school we are no longer taught in Afrikaans.

Similar to their school counterparts, for most church males, being Black in South Africa is still a harrowing experience in that the living conditions of Black people still
have not improved. They still face socioeconomic adversity as well as occasional racial psychic and verbal attacks at which some feel powerless to stand up against.

**Khaya:** I can say its better, but not 100% better because there are still those Black people who are treated badly in their work places because I remember the time I was, I think it was 2007 last year 2006, I was doing part time job at this company, then a colored guy called me a kaffir, the K-word a colored, and I was like ‘Hoo, this guy does not know me’. I wanted to fight with him and my uncle said ‘Khaya there is no need to fight him just go and report him to the management because there is no reason because he is not worth it, let him go and report him’ even I was angry because ‘you don’t know nothing about the K-word word, why should you call me with a k-word when you don’t know the history of the k-word, how Black people were treated because of the k-word.

It is foreseeable that both Themba and Khaya’s experiences of socioeconomic “stress” and racial slurs or attacks, respectively, may count as circumstances that are likely to bring on what Cross (1995) calls an identity metamorphosis. At the moment, these events are experienced as sources of discomfort or tensions which may lead to an inner transformation.

For the church females, there was hope for the future in that although there are still challenges, the plight of Black people is “quiet right”. This is because there is Black leadership in government, which is making efforts to afforded Black people more freedom of movement and access to resources they were previously deprived of.

**Thembela:** It is quiet right because there are a lot of Black people, I must say, Ja it is quiet…They have quiet changed because now you may live anywhere, you can go to school wherever you like. Nobody is different, it does not matter, we don’t get judge by our color.
Stage 3: Immersion-Emersion

None of the school males found any description of the immersion-emersion stage. They did not express any antagonistic feelings or thoughts towards white people, nor did they profess an immersion in their Blackness. Despite the fact that they had strong views about the still unfavorable and underprivileged socioeconomic position of Black people in South Africa compared to that of whites, they do not harbor any negative feelings towards the latter group. These young men simply stated that they “have no issues with them” (Dumile) because “we forgave them” (James) and “it’s good that they are around” (Xoli).

School females also did not harbor any anti-White attitudes as characterized by those Black people who are in the immersion-emersion stage. Most respondents spoke about forgiveness, not holding grudges against all white people for the past transgressions. Although some did point out that there are still those white people they believe to be racists-

**Thandeka**: Some of them are oppressive and prejudice. Like some of them would stay in the same room with a Black person. Not all of them though. But there is still this mentality that a Black person is a ‘kaffir’.

**Khosi**: What does kaffir\(^{14}\) mean to you?

It means you are Black

**Khosi**: Is that wrong?

Yes, because if someone call you a kaffir that is not acceptable today you can even place charges on someone who refers to you as a kaffir.

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\(^{14}\) An offensive racial or ethnic slur used especially in southern Africa as a disparaging term for a Black person.
I can say, eh, Okay, let me put it this way, I don’t have a problems with those who are English speakers who are coming from England, the only ones that I have problems with are the Boer\textsuperscript{15}, the Afrikaans speakers even when they speak their face turn red those are the ones that I.

\textit{Khosi:} Why?

Because they still have their old mind from their grandparents/great grandparents saying ‘\textit{you see da is die Black man, you see’} that is the problem I have with them because everything I do it’s because Eish I am Black ‘\textit{Hai die swart one, wat, wat wat’} you see that is what I don’t like about them.

-Most were likely to profess Pro-White sentiments that tended to place white people at a pedestal:

\textbf{Precious:} I actually like white people. I like being surrounded by them; I do actually have white friends so I spend a lot of time with. You see white people, what I like about them is that they have a great lifestyle the way they are brought up and the way they live. Besides what happened with Apartheid and what they did to us, let’s just put that aside, but white people are good in giving advice and motivation. They are well informed and are often willing to help. They do want to see us progress, some of them anyway.

\textbf{Cikiza:} I forgive them. I feel good about white people, just because I was not there and only my mother was there. Now I can see they have changed, I can also change because my mother is working as a domestic worker and she is getting a lot of support from her bosses, so I can say that they have also changed, so why should I hold grudges.

\textbf{Thandeka:} They are fine and it’s good that they are around; we would not be able to do a lot of things, us as Black people without them.

\textit{Khosi:} What do you mean?

Like they have ideas and they do things, like a person, like a white person if they start something they do not leave it in the middle, if they start something they what it is and what comes next, so we take things slow our brains are small.

\textsuperscript{15} A Dutch term used for farmer which came to be synonymous with the descendants of the Afrikaans-speaking pastoralists of the eastern Cape frontier in Southern Africa during the 18th century.
These responses provided insights into some evidence of inferiority complex that emerged where these youth expressed envy for what they perceive to be a privileged lifestyle that is only reachable to white people in South Africa. It was clear from most of the respondents that they have high regard for white people because they feel the latter group is somehow superior to Black people when it comes to achievement. They seem to believe that Black people cannot achieve any success without white people who are believed to have brought civilization in the country. They are also more likely to trust white people for guidance and ‘motivation.’ Church male respondents neither expressed any Anti-White views nor did they find seem engrossed in everything Black:

**Mzi:** I feel fine, you see because they live their own lives. They are not curious about how we are living our lives. So they are better off living their own lives and us living ours.

Similar sentiments were expressed by the church female respondents who viewed Anti-White sentiments as an aspect of the past. They also did not seem to be obsessed with Pr-Black activities and views.

**Nomathamsanqa:** I don’t have a grudge against them. Its, what happened, happened and like as we say, its history. Life goes on and you can’t keep grudges forever.

**Themebela:** I have got nothing against them because they have got nothing to do with what happened in the past, Ja I have got a couple of white friends.

**Stage 4: Internalization**

Similar to their African American counterparts, the majority of Black South African youth respondents leaned towards a Multiculturist worldview, albeit for different reasons. Whereas African American youth supported the idea of interracial cooperation,
interaction and did not harbor any negative feelings towards other racial group, particular whites, Black South African youth viewed such interracial group corporation as necessary for Black people’s survival. Central to their argument is that because of incompetence, Black people in South Africa need White people in order to achieve success and prosperity:

**Dumile:** For instance when it comes to running a business, like right now in many shops there aren’t many Black people. It can be run by a Black person, but there can be shares owned by a white person. If you are a Black person with a big business, if it collapses will be difficult to rebuild. But if you partner with a white person you can go to them and ask for financial help to rebuild your business and they will assist you.

Further exploration of gender and site specific differences showed that, the narratives from the school male respondents reflected an Internalized Multiculturist worldview. They believe it to be imperative for Black people to unite with other racial groups, especially when it comes to building the economy of the country because they are incapable of achieving progress on their own. The following were typical responses:

**James:** We have to be one, like here in South Africa we have to all work together because like people, we must not do things alone in isolation, we have to get together with other people from other races and hear what they say. Like it will help us know.

Comparable views were expressed by the school female respondents who felt it is important for Black people to cooperate with other racial groups, especially white people, because they [Black people] are not capable of standing up on their own. The process of cooperation in this case is not reciprocal; rather it is one-dimensional wherein Black people are the ones in need of assistance.

**Vivian:** We as Black people you know we don’t have much, much experience as whites do because its only 14 years that we have been able...
to access everything, but them they know everything, not that we don’t know everything. In terms of economic control or economic growth we cannot be independent, we can’t do that because we don’t have much history of Black being economist and there are a few economists who are Black and most economists are white. Yes we can be business entrepreneurs and so on that is multicultural and multiracial, but in terms of economics because economics is about the currency of the country, not of an individual or a business but of a, so if you are just being independent without having experience the country will, its economy and currency will fall down as just right now, a rand does not have a value anymore and the inflation is doing its ups and downs and so on. Just imagine inflation just occurs again and we are being independent as Black and not having that much experience what will happen? You know, we won’t have food totally, no food. So I think I fall on the side that says we should be all inclusive.

Most church male respondents also embraced Multiculturist viewpoints, but unlike the school, male and female counterparts, they did not view Black people as less capable and in need of rescue from white South Africans. Rather they believe in a type of racial cooperation that is mutual and significant for mutual progress:

**Themba**: I: I think we should get together because we need each other to grow work together on issue surrounding us as a nation.

**Zoli**: During the time of Apartheid, the goal was to fight for freedom so that we can come together and mix, so that we can be friends, but then if we say we want to be separate from everyone as Blacks, we as Black people will destroy ourselves because white people have brains and then we as Black people are good with our hands. So if there is separation between Blacks and whites, the economy will suffer

The idea of mutual cooperation was also supported by the church female respondents. They believe that a multicultural society wherein people from different racial and cultural and racial backgrounds coexist and corporate is a sign of moving forward, beyond the past inequalities and racism:

**Zoleka**: we have to mix anyway, because now you can go anywhere you want to go and mix with people there, there is no such a thing as this is for
Blacks and this side is for whites, even at schools we mix Black and white in the same school so we have to socialize with others who from different colors. That’s important because you can learn from someone from a different race.

Nomathamsanqa: Because that hole thing that we should be separate from everyone else will bring Apartheid back man. It will bring back Apartheid and those people with backward minds. It’s like this politics thing, I don’t support this whole ANC and stuff, I don’t support it because it’s just setting South Africa back. I, I, it’s not like, it does not put South Africa into the New South Africa South Africa., Its setting it back

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, racial identity components and processes were examined and discussed in greater detail in order to understand the nature of post-Civil rights and post-Apartheid Black consciousness among the youth in both nations. The discussion began with a focus on racial identity socialization from their home and community as a first site of racial construction. It was clear that the presence or not of racial socialization messages in childhood does significantly inform the ways in which the youth construct race. We learned that African American parents are more likely to incorporate racial identity messages in their parenting styles than their Black South African counterparts.

Gender and site specific differences were apparent in the responses of African American youth. School males were more likely than their female counterparts to be exposed to more overt racial socialization messages. The content of these messages underscore alertness and preparedness. In light of the precarious position of Black males in the United States, parents felt a strong need to prepare them for how they may be perceived by others and thus teach them how to respond and behave. They were to avoid confrontation and conflict and put more emphasis on hard work and educational success
as a means to defy the negative stereotypes often conferred to Black males. This practice appears to serve several useful functions: a) it is a protective mechanism against racial discrimination, b) it is useful in cultivating a positive sense of self, c) it helps to instill self esteem and belief in one’s capacity to achieve success. The females were exposed to more egalitarian and indirect messages that emphasized respect and acceptance of others regardless of race and ethnicity.

Racial socialization practices are not common within the South African context. One possible reason may be the majority status of Black people in South Africa compared to the minority status of their African American counterparts, wherein such practices are not taken into consideration or deemed as necessary.

In order to delve further into the respondents’ racial identity perceptions in both countries, questions about the meanings and expressions of Blackness were posed. It was clear in both cases that the racial category of Blackness is loaded with meanings which the youth in both countries use to define who they are. These meanings ranged from the recognition and celebration of one’s African roots or heritage; distinct status in society, ability to endure and a sense of accomplishment; a shared sense of collective identity and meaning; as well as an unchanging phenomenon that requires self acceptance, self-respect and comfort in one’s skin.

With regards to findings on Nigrescence, most school male respondents in the United States sample did not exhibit any Pre-Encounter Assimilation nor did they condone Black stereotypes. They were more likely to regard race as less important and therefore it should not be used as a barometer to measure human character. They were
also critical of and therefore refuted the negative stereotypes conferred to Black people, thus did not show any evidence of that portion of Pre-Encounter stage characteristics. Furthermore, none of them reported experiences of life-changing racial moments that trigged self-evaluation. They were however, aware of the fragile position of Black people in the United States. This awareness was a constant versus a one-time, acute experience of events. In their responses they cited the challenges and experiences of navigating the Black world, which provides safety and cultivate a positive sense of self and the white world, which is more racially hostile and tends to undermine their self of being. They did not express any Anti-white sentiments, nor did they assert any Pro-Black ideologies and lifestyle as a sign of rebellion and bitterness against white culture. They were however, more inclined to embrace a Multicultural worldview indicating that they were not against interracial cooperation and interaction. Although female school respondents also viewed race as insignificant, they did display some of the elements of Pre-Encounter Miseducation, with no sign of Self-Hatred. They seemed to more frequently express negative viewpoints and confirmed the stereotypes about Black people, even though they still asserted racial pride. Similar to the males, none of the school females faced racial moments, but they did also allude to the fragile and disadvantaged positions of Black people in mainstream America. The assertion and expression of Blackness despite a hostile environment was accentuated and used as an indicator of endurance. These young women did not show any signs of Anti-white and Pro-Black obsession, rather they leaned towards a Multiculturist worldview which
constitutes simultaneous embrace and appreciation of Blackness on the one hand, and Interracial harmony, on the other.

Among the church respondents in the African American sample, the males asserted that the use of race to judge people is a sign of ignorance. They adamantly refuted the negative Black stereotypes and did not harbor any negative, self-hatred feelings. While they did admit that Black people continue to experience instances of racial subjugation, they stressed the importance of focusing less on structural hostility and more on positive individual conduct of Black people as a counter-response to racial discrimination. In essence, these young men declared that Black people must take responsibility for their lives and defy these forms of abuses by exerting themselves, or focusing their energy on positive activities, while making efforts to avoid ‘being a statistic.’ In addition, they were less likely to express Pro-Black and Anti-white sentiments, viewing Multiculturalism as necessary for societal progress. The church females also pointed to the futility of race as a measure of character, especially when it comes to Black people’s behavior. They viewed the categorization and generalization of Black choices as problematic. Citing the hardships that Black people continue to face, in their view, and indicated that these struggles affect them personally. It is hard to avoid internalizing negativity while constantly dealing with psychic attacks which inevitably conjure up feelings of shame and self-hatred. Still however, there was no evidence of Anti-white and Pro-Black sentiments among this group. They also favored a sociopolitical climate that nurtures Multiculturalist ideologies.
School male respondents in the South African sample also showed signs of Pre-Encounter Assimilation. But unlike their African American counterparts, they were more likely to believe the stereotypes about Black people which meant that a majority of them could be placed into the category of Pre-Encounter Miseducation. Central to their argument is that Black people do not value education and hard work. They did, however, express feelings of distress and an uncertainty about life in contemporary South Africa. They compared their living conditions to that of whites, who they regard as superior and with envy. They stressed that Black people need to work with whites because the latter is experienced and superior in intellect leadership abilities, which Black people are incapable of realizing.

Both Pre-Encounter Assimilation and Miseducation viewpoints were expressed by the school females as well. Here, they were harsh critics of a “victim mentality” that prevails among Black people who constantly complain about their living conditions, yet are unwilling to work hard to improve their lives. There were no signs of Immersion-Emersion characteristics among the school female respondents. In fact, they were more hopeful of the future of Black people stating that, although this group continue to struggle socioeconomically things have changed for the better in that they experiences less hostile circumstances than the previous generation. In addition an attitude of forgiveness was articulated, in which Whites were not blamed for past transgressions, but viewed with high regard as models of success. They also stressed that Black people should associate themselves with Whites in order to learn the strategies of success.
Within the church site males were also showing signs of Pre-Encounter Assimilation and Miseducation at the same time. They viewed racial judgment a immoral, while admitting that they themselves face hardships in their personal lives, and were in agreement with their school counterparts on the tendency of Black people to devalue hard work. They did, however, indicate that they believe in Black people’s capacity to succeed. Black people need to tap into their inherent potential and thus effectively participate in the socioeconomic processes.

Church females were the only ones who embraced Pre-Encounter Assimilation, on the one hand, while rejecting Pre-Encounter Anti-Black views, on the other. They viewed stereotypes about Black people as misguided, expressing high regard for the latter group’s fortitude. They were very optimistic about the future of Black people in the country despite experiences with adversity. They also supported Multiculturism as the only solution to interracial inequality inherited from the past.

When viewing these findings from a cross-cultural lens, it appears that having a strong foundation for racial identity socialization plays a significant role in informing the ways in which the Black youth in this study navigate adolescence. Given the fact that African American youth in the study were more likely to have been exposed to racial identity socialization than their Black South African counterparts, the former seem to have a stronger positive sense of racial identity and confidence than the latter group. In the next chapter, findings on the components of religiosity will be presented. Here special emphasis will be placed on religious socialization, beliefs and practices and the ways these matter in the lives of youth.
The Nigrescence model posits that Miseducation about the Black experience stems from exposure to Western cultural-historical perspectives acquired through socialization into a formal educational system that is narrowly ‘monoracial and monocultural’ in its focus. Typically, a Black person who fully adheres to such a perspective tends to have low expectations for the Black community and strives to distance themselves from engaging in Black issues. They tend to hold the attitude that ‘That’s the way they act, I am different’ (Cross, 2001). What is interesting in these narratives of the Black South African youth, however, is that they do not seem to exhibit the tendency to “compartmentalize [their] stereotypic perceptions so that such group images do not affect [their] personal self-image” (Cross, 2001:376). Rather, they appear to have internalized these perceptions as the truth about Black behavior in general, placing themselves in the equation. They seem to have bought into the negative beliefs that Black people do not value education, constantly play the victim-card with no sense of autonomy or self-reliance and are only concerned about the present with no interest in investing in the future. Cross (2001) notes that although the Miseducation does not automatically lead to self-loathing, it does grossly “distort the intra-Black discourse on Black cultural-historical issues and/or Black challenges and problems….” (p99). Among the economically underprivileged Blacks, in particular Cross (2001) argues that the Miseducation may lead to the beliefs that Black people are responsible and deserve the wretchedness of poverty. This in turn results in cynicism about the capacities of Black people to succeed in leadership, businesses and any professional endeavors. This inferiority complex is usually accompanied by a tendency to glorify the capacities and
talents of Whites (Cross, 2001). This observation, I would argue, may best explain the sentiments of the Black South African youth in the study. Whatever the source and intention behind the Black stereotypes, these young people, most of whom hail from economically disadvantaged families and communities in a country that is still recovering from the Apartheid system, seem to have internalized negative racial ingroup perceptions that may reflect deep-seated feelings of inferiority.

The persistence of feelings of white envy warrants consideration as well. Most of the youth in the South African sample expressed envy of what they consider to be the advantageous class positions and lifestyles of White South Africans. For some reason they do not believe that such achievements are attainable. It appears that being Black inevitably puts one in a position of pauperism which one cannot get out of and thus should accept as fateful. According to Franz Fanon (1967) Black identity is also shaped by the oppressive sociopolitical structure of colonial culture, which may explain the feelings of inadequacy as one strives to assimilate and acquire a social status with rules set up by European power structures. The inherent inferiority complex therefore is a response to the challenges of the white hegemonic power and rules and expectations which the youth feel that they, as Black individuals, are not fit to meet.
CHAPTER 5

COMPONENTS OF RELIGIOSITY

This chapter presents findings of the components of respondent religiosity. It is important to note that the majority of the youth sampled in this study adhere to the Christian faith even though they were approached in a church (religious space) and a school (secular) space to explore affiliation differences. That most of the youth in this study were raised Christian and identify themselves as thus can be attributed the fact that: a) Christianity is still the dominant religion in both countries even though in recent times, more Black people are exploring or converting to other religious faiths; b) In both countries, Christianity, a religion whose Eurocentric principles were imposed on Black communities through systems of slavery, colonial and Apartheid hegemonic rule to solidify and justify marginalization, was integrated into Black cultural practices and values. Moreover, the religion was also used as an instrument and platform from which to defy and fight against racial subjugation and c) Most Black youth in the two countries have been socialized with Christian beliefs and values within their families and communities during their formative years.
5.1. Religiosity of African American Youth

5.1.1. Religious Socialization

While the majority of African American respondents were raised in Christian homes, site specific differences were clear when it comes to continued commitment to their religious faith. Unlike their school counterparts (especially males), most church respondents clearly showed a sense of dedication to their religious beliefs and values independent from parental influence. It appears that their constant observation of religious precepts and practices stems from their need to connect with the divine, assert their leadership skills, express themselves through activities, strengthen their familial relationships and develop social networks. In other words, they may have been brought up with Christian values and faith, but as they transition to adulthood, their continued engagement in it is fueled by their quest for personal growth. For examples, Terrence shared that he chose to remain in his current church because it afforded him the kind of spiritual fulfillment he needed:

Terrence: I always believed in God, you know what I mean, I have been in different churches and like this one just seemed to catch my eye like, I have always been a Christian, but this one just seemed to be the one that grabbed on me …this one actually caught my attention, I like to listen, you know what I mean, I leave there feeling like I am grown, like I spiritually grew that day. Pastor [name of the pastor] like from what I heard and he tells me he’s been through the same things I have, he’s been around gangs, stuff like that and he speaks, he just speaks the truth, he don’t sugarcoat nothing, so that’s why I like it there, it just one of those superficial churches, the music is great, you do not just sit there and fall asleep, if you fall asleep in that church you don’t need to be there.

It was in the school setting that clear gender asymmetries became salient in terms of religious commitment. Most school males come from nontraditional family structures
wherein parents divorced, remained single or remarried. They all described their relationship with biological parents to be in good to great shape. Although all these young men came from families that are traditionally Christian, most were less likely to define themselves as religious. This is because they are in the process of either exploring other new faiths, or are questioning their familial inherited faith. Furthermore, this group was more likely to report that their parents were not actively religious and they did not enforce it in their relationship. These young men indicated that their parents are not strongly religious and thus never integrated religion in their parenting styles and interactions with their teenage sons:

**Leon:** I would say they [his parents], you can say they are Christians, but they don’t really go to church most of the times. Now my grandfather, at first he couldn’t go to church because he, my grandma was sick for all these years, he went when he could, but now he goes a lot, he is Christian too, because since my grandma was sick, the church would come to them.

**Khosi:** Does he talk to you about going to church?

No, because like my grandpa, he just wants time to relax and that’s what he can do at church, he can just.

**Khosi:** So he does not insist on you going?

No, my family, they don’t really push you on doing what you don’t wanna do, unless you absolutely have to do it.

**Zenith:** My mom is not really full effective of religion as well you know like, like my step mother, who is a strong Christian she goes to church every Sunday, my father doesn’t go to church much you know, neither does my mom, so I never like growing up, when I first, when I until I was about the age of 8, I was living with my aunt and she lived right across from the church and my cousin and I used to go to church every Sunday and when I grew up my day care was in a church the First Church of God, you know what I mean like, but for some reason you know, my parents, it was not really a force for me to go like anymore. Right, we don’t talk about those things that much the only person I talked to was my brother.
Most of the school female respondents defined themselves as religious, identifying with the Christian faith. They were more likely to have religious parents who were equally religious and shared similar beliefs and values. All of the respondents came from single parent family structures and reported that they have strong bonds with their mothers. The fathers were less present in their lives either because they are deceased, in prison, or not in the same geographical area.

All church male respondents came from step-parents family structures. Their mothers were either cohabiting with or remarried to men who seem to have taken on the roles of strong father figures in their lives. Although they reported having strong relationships with their parents, most demonstrated a sense of independence or autonomy in terms of places of worship and congregations:

**Tyler:** At one point, especially, my mom was heavily involved in the ministry she was really close with the pastor and it came to a certain point when I was about six or seven that she just stopped going to church altogether, it’s like she kinda dismissed God. But I did not understand it because I was so young, until today I don’t understand what happened actually, what was going on at that time and then my grandmother also left this church. I was probably ten or eleven…….her and my grandmother pressured me into leaving this church but I refused because I love it here.

While they have acquired Christian values and teachings from their parents, they have since deviated from their parents’ denominations. This decision appears to have been triggered by their need to find religious spaces that can fulfill their spiritual needs. As a result, they are dedicated to and are very active in their church organizations.

Most female church respondents came from step parent families and interestingly, a handful reported tensions in their relationships with their step parents, which in turn has
put a strain on their relationships with their biological parents. They did however note that their shared faith and beliefs affect their relationships in a healing and positive manner:

**Maxine:** Well Christianity? It does have an effect on my relationship because I have started to go to church a lot more often and so I am learning to do things God’s way like, one thing that I was learning in church is to trust him and you know that goes back to my stress problems, I didn’t used to trust God a lot but being in church more it showed me to have faith that things are going to get better with me and my dad’s relationship you know going to church more it really does have a big improvement.

**Virginia:** Over the years our relationship has grown as a mother-daughter and father-daughter relationship, I just have to trust God that it’s gonna continue to grow no matter its bad one day and better the next day.

Thus, even though there are tensions and their communication with their parental figures in their lives are not where they would like to be (a place where they can be able to trust and tell them everything) it is gradually moving towards a positive direction. Thus religion plays a mitigating role in their parent-child interactions.

5.1.2. Religious Commitment: Frequency of Church Attendance, Prayer and Bible Reading

In order to provide an overview of the extent of religious commitment or not among the youth respondents in the current study, Tables 2 and 3 presents a summary of the frequencies of religious practices, namely: church attendance and prayer among the school and church African American male and female youth respondents. Here we get a more in-depth look at how these youth express their religious beliefs in their daily lives. The majority of the respondents across school and church settings would be categorized
as Religiously Devoted. This is because they incorporate their religious beliefs in their daily lives and are active in their churches. These activities serve several functions in their lives. For instance, Jasmine, one of the school females indicated that she believes it’s important to read the bible because:

**Jasmine**: “that’s where the strength is ……because you have to know it in order to believe it, so you have to read it in order for you to have faith in it” (school female).

Terrence (church male respondent) feels that it is essential for him to converse constantly with God so that he can feel his presence. Thus, he goes to church every Sunday and prays:

**Terrence**: a thousand times a day, because I just talk to God like he’s right next to me …..It ain’t that I have to, it just feels like I need to pray, I just pray cause I then done so much dirt, I just sinned a lot. In terms of the reading the bible “And in terms of reading the bible, I have tried, I read revelations…because like it tells you how the world is gonna end, I don’t know I am just drawn to the part” (church male).

In their book *Soul Searching: the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers*, Smith and Denton (2005) report detailed and comprehensive findings from their study of religious identity among American adolescents. Based on the results from survey interviews with hundreds of teenagers across the nation, they conclude that American adolescent religiosity is divided into three categories, namely: a) Spiritual Seekers, those who are not committed to one particular faith as such. They are instead exploring “the world's storehouse of faiths and spiritualities for a variety of meaning systems and practices” (p. 73). This group is more likely to be critical of the traditional organized religion’s tendency to place prominence on what they may perceive as the propagation of “empty, habitual, ritualistic faith, b) the Religiously Disengaged, those
who may be connected to a religious organization or faith, believe in God, and even pray on several occasions, yet still identify themselves as nonreligious. This is because low parental religiosity, divorce, less parental affection and support; and the Religiously Devoted, who are very active. Typically, as Smith and Denton (2005) noted, these youth are more likely to frequent religious services, have parents who are religiously active and have strong bonds with their parents.

A closer exploration of the African American youth religiosity reveals gender and site specific differences and similarities that warranted attention.
Table 3: Frequency of Church Attendance and Prayer among African American Male and Female School Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency of Religious Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denzel</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>No longer attends church, but still prays because he feels strongly connected to God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maliq</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Raised as a Christian, but no longer embraces the teachings and does not participate in any religious activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zenith</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Does not attend church and does not pray because he currently does not adhere to any particular religious philosophy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Identifies himself as a strong Christian, but has not been in church for a while. However, he still 10% of his income to his church (ties). He reads the bible “every now and then”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Brought up in a Christian home, but has since rejected the faith and no longer engages in any religious activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Religion is important in her family because his grandfather is a pastor at her church. She Attends church every Sunday, prays all through the day and reads the bible periodically, not as often as she would like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Attends church every Sunday and she prays everyday. She does not read the bible that much because “I don’t really get to it that much”. Religion is a “little bit” important in her family life in that “we go to church as much as we can….we pray together every now and then”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simone</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Does not have a particular religious faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Attends church every Sundays and Thursdays and does pray every day about her family and anything that maybe bothering her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brianna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Attends church every Sunday, prays in the morning before going to school and evening when she goes to bed. She reads the bible only at church during a sermon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Frequency of Church Attendance and Prayer among African American Male and Female Church Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency of Religious Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrence</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Attends church every Sunday and prays &quot;a thousand times a day. It is important for him to communicate with God constantly because he feels him next to him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>It depends on a week normally he is at church on Sundays and Wednesdays. He is transitioning to a youth leader. He is currently direct the youth choir. He prays as often as he can, many times throughout the day, it may be short prayers for anything depending on what his day looks like. He reads that bible but not as much as he could.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Attends church every Sunday, prays every morning and evening and reads the bible only in church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Attend church three to four times a week, prays ever day and rarely reads the bible on his own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Attends church every Sunday for service and every Wednesday for bible study and rehearsal (he is in a church dance group). He prays ever day and reads the bible frequently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamela</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Attends church twice a week (Sunday and Wednesday), prays throughout the day and seldom reads the bible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxine</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Attends church every Sunday and some of the weekdays because she participates in church youth dance and she prays weekly. when it comes to reading the bible: &quot;I don’t do it outside the church, I am not perfect, but when the preacher is giving a sermon he tells you to turn to a page dad a dad a da, I would turn to it, highlight&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sondra</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Attends church every other Sunday and prays every day, but rarely reads the bible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>She tries to go to church every Sunday but sometimes she has to work, but she always tries to go to bible study. She prays every night. She mostly she reads the bible when &quot;I don’t have anything else to do, when I’m really bored and when I am really sad about something&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>As a Deacon’s daughter, she spends a lot of time in church. She is also “…dancer at church, I been gone on some mission trips with the church, so I am very involved in my church”. Therefore she attends every Sunday, she prays as she often needs to, but does not read the bible as much as she feels she should.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most school male respondents would probably best fit the description of “Spiritual Seekers” in that they were more likely to be critical of the traditional organized religion’s tendency to place prominence on what they may perceive as the propagation of “empty, habitual, ritualistic faith”. They would much rather practice “personally meaningful faith”. Their views on religious certainty are more likely to be “inclusive and pluralistic” versus “exclusive and particularistic” (Smith and Denton, 2005):

Denzel: I love God. That’s it. I don’t really go to church like that. But I know in my heart that I love God and that I’m gonna go to heaven. Every night I might pray. Like right now I’m gonna pray when I know I’m going through something or my family might need something. I pray like when I’m going through something. But, I think all that stuff, Buddhism and Christianity and all that stuff, I don’t get it, because when it comes down to it we believe in one person, and that’s God. It’s just a different name for God, a different name. When it comes down to it we believe in the same thing. That’s why I don’t get people when they go through all that. I think if you believe in God you should all go to the same church. Wanna go to the church down in Cleveland go to that one, wanna go to the church in India, go to that, regardless of your home. You believe in the same thing just different words.

By valuing spiritual expression in the form of prayer over attachment to organized religion, one would argue that Denzel’s religious beliefs are more intrinsic and thus can be categorized as a Spiritual Seeker. To him, a personal relationship with God is more important than being part of a religious group. He does not see the significance of having multiple religious groups and organization when, in his view, all the latter worship the same God. Leon and Maliq, even though they are not completely disengaged from the church, could also be described as Spiritual Seekers who are critical of and have reservations about the validity of the teachings of Christianity as represented in the
biblical scriptures as well as the existence of God, that have led to their suspicions about the religion itself:

**Leon:** I do sometimes go to church but to me honestly I don’t believe in the bible because the theories in the bible, I was thinking about it a lot they don’t add up at all, so I just, I don’t push church away, I just don’t believe in it. I went to church more often than I do now, but I just I was just in the middle of believing and not believing.

**Maliq:** I am Jehovah’s Witness but I don’t go to church often anymore. How it works is that I am probably in the middle, there is time ---I do sometimes pray to Him, but you never know where it’s going, you don’t know for sure if He is out there or not.

Zenith is another Spiritual Seeker who is going through a process of exploration wherein he is taking into consideration what he has learned from his brother whom he looks up to. He argues that his brother has “a great understanding about religion” and has helped him expand his understanding of religious philosophies other than Christianity. At this point, however, he has no attachment to any religion because he feels he is young and still has a lot to learn.

**Zenith:** Not necessarily, but technically yeah I mean, considering the fact that my mother, being, being born into Christianity you know what I mean like, but I don’t necessary believe in religion, honestly like not on a Satanist type, I believe in God, you know I believe there is a God, but I just don’t necessarily believe in religion, I think you know for one, the bible it a lot stuff about it like that is doubtful. I mean not, I don’t have a philosophy, I am exploring right now like as a person, like I am young and I know a lot now like for me to be my age, so it’s like I really have not been able to create my own understanding and everything which I plan on doing you know what I mean? I just got a lot of knowledge everywhere. So right now I am just absorbing and exploring. I haven’t, not that I am aware of but like, what I am doing isn’t like, or what I believe in isn’t exactly a religion, you know when you ask me about practices and what not.
Participation in religious activities appear to decrease as school males they grow older. Unlike their male counterparts, school females deemed engagement in religious activities as crucial for their relationships with their parents and for strengthening their faith. Compared to school males, the frequency of participation in religious activities was very high among church males. This group was also more likely to be very involved in the youth leadership structures of their church as well as in youth performance groups. The church females also regularly participate in religious practices, but were less likely to hold any youth leadership positions within their churches.

5.1.3. Personal Meanings of Religiosity

In addition to questions about the frequency of religious practices (Church attendance and prayer), the respondents who adhere to the Christian faith were asked what it is about their religion that appealed to them. The purpose was to gauge its agentic meanings in their lives. They were also asked to rate their faith, indicating their perception of what it means to have a strong faith.

Smith and Denton’s (2005) concept of “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” is especially relevant when reflecting on the personal meanings the youth in the current study attach to their sense of religiosity as well as how they enact it in daily life. After sifting through stories of religious faith and practices among youth respondents in their study, the authors systematically organized these and concluded that among some of the contemporary American teenagers, there is a “de facto dominant religion” (p. 162), which is moralistic, therapeutic, and idolatrous in its form. The first aspect of this “creed” is
holding an inclusive moralistic view of life the essence of which entails that one has to be “…nice, kind, pleasant, respectful, responsible, at work on self-improvement, taking care of one's health, and doing one's best to be successful” (p.163). Second, there are therapeutic benefits derived from adhering to a religious faith wherein, the emphasis is not on observing precepts and fulfilling religious duties, but on attaining personal spiritual well-being and being able to overcome problems. The third feature of this creed is a belief in a God who is considered to be omnipotent, who “created the world, and defines our general moral order” (p 165), but who does not interfere in the lives of people or dictate how they should live their lives. This God is reliable because he is always there when one needs him to pull them out of trouble.

Therapeutic and Idolatrous: Nurturing a strong relationship with God

Some of the themes of the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism were evident among the school female respondents, most of whom professed stronger religiosity compared to their male counterparts. These respondents did not necessarily espouse a Moralistic view of life, at least not in a way that Smith and Denton (2005) represent it in their work. However, when a question was posed as to what they liked about their religion, various themes in the narratives of youth in both national contexts alluded to perspectives akin to the Therapeutic and Idolatrous aspects of this belief system. The central meaning of religion in their lives is that it enables them to connect to, cultivate, nurture and maintain a strong relationship with God. A good relationship with God is made feasible in a nonrestrictive religious environment that does not impose “Do’s and Don’ts”.

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**Jasmine:** I am free. It’s not a religion with restrictions ehm, you have a relationship with God himself, that’s what’s important. Basically just having faith in God. I mean like, you know, there are some religions where you can’t do such things or you know, eh, some religions you can’t eat certain kinds of food and stuff like that, you know I like, my religion I am free about it. You know you pray you ask God to, you know, to help you go throughout the day, if you have problems you ask him for guidance.

This does not mean that there are no guidelines; however, it is just that following them is left to the discretion of an individual.

**Wanda:** Uhm, I like that it’s not strict, but it has guidelines that I am able to follow and not as strict as other religions. What is important is following in the right footsteps, God’s footsteps. Just for me to be glad that I woke up this morning and I was able to go to sleep that I have a house over my head, just maybe certain things that came up in the day that I would like to be better.

In other words, following in God’s footsteps provides a sense of security and wellbeing without imposing restrictions on the believer. Here, both the therapeutic and idolatrous implications can be identified in that God, who is accessed through religion, is seen as a positive force that provides support without interfering and imposing punitive sanctions.

The centrality of God as a provider of relief and protection without imposition was also found among the male church respondents in the African American sample. For these young men, most of whom Smith and Denton (2005) would describe as being Religiously Devoted by virtue of showing high religiosity activity and commitment, view the church as a space in which they can experience the closeness with God. First, an ethereal view was expressed in which one earns a life of eternity by affirming a strong commitment to God and his teachings while on earth:
Tyler: Security in knowing that when I die, that there will be, I am gonna live eternally because I do believe in Christ, with other religions and other faith, you do not have that security.

Second, not only does being in church provide a space within which to nurture one’s relationship with God, but it also provides shelter and safety from the harshness of life in the street and negative influences, especially for a young Black man.

Bobby: The opportunity to praise God in church. It helps me through everyday life. Life on the street can be crazy. In church I feel like my life is just calm and just right. I participate in a lot of activities that are fun.

This is also a group youth which are dubbed as “Religious on Their Own” mostly do not share similar religious views with and attend religious services without their parents. Their religiosity may be informed by: a) cordiality and self-assurance, b) being popular among their peers, c) growing up in regions of the country, such as the South and the Midwest, wherein religious activities and involvement is normative, and d) active involvement in youth groups and religious activity, taking leadership responsibilities within the organization (Smith and Denton, 2005).

Similar Therapeutic and Idolatrous views of God were evident among the mostly Religiously Devoted group of church female respondents. Here, the particular kind of God revered is the one who, does not necessary punish, but constantly puts people in difficult situations with the purpose of testing their faith and conviction in order to cultivate their growth:

Maxine: That we believe in God, Um what I like most about my religion is that it’s funny how God tests us using our situations. As we get through them we learn more, I learn more and more about God every day I know I don’t know everything about Christianity, I know I don’t read the bible every day, but I do believe in God and what he has done and what he can
do for me and coming to a church that I love so much it just helps me to love my religion more and more.

In addition, God is forgiving and lives through them and is always there when one needs him to fill a void:

**Sondra:** What I like about my religion that God that he forgives us for our sins and like I personally believe that your religion is your practice. It’s what you do, your daily walk and I feel like God is there for me all the time like if I don’t have a boyfriend he fills in that spot if I don’t have a mother he fills in that spot, father that spot, he can, he is anything he is omnipresent, omnipotent all that.

**Maya:** Umm I well I like my church I like going to because the church is really I like how the youth part is because it really helps the youth like develop relationships with God so I like that part and I think… I like the pastor I love the pastor he’s great so that’s it.

In other words, their religion is therefore a part and parcel of their daily lives, which is further enhanced through participating in church activities that are youth friendly with leaders who are responsive to the needs of young people.

5.1.4 Perceived Strength of Faith

When the religious school female respondents were asked to rate the level of their faith between 0-100%, none of the respondents professed 100% faith:

**Jasmine:** I would say 90% because there is 10% of me that sometimes I lose faith, which I shouldn’t but I do….Sometimes you lose faith you just might go wrong way and you have to catch yourself.

**Nikki:** My faith? Mmmmm maybe 70%, because I mean, I like just being there [church], listening to the preacher and other people preach the word of God because, yeah, I wanna be there and listen and it’s exciting. I also I pray every day actually….I pray about family, anything that maybe bothering me. I may ask God to help me understand certain things in school and God will be able to help me understand
There was this prevailing sentiment of “I still have some work to do” “I am a human being with shortcomings, but I do my best”. Similar to school female respondents, none of the church male respondents, claimed that they had 100% faith. The following were typical responses:

**Timothy:** I feel like I am more at 80% and I mean, I don’t feel like I need to be at a point where I am able to quote scriptures to people or whatever, but I want to be able to talk about the bible in such a way that people would understand, being able to make it relevant to their lives. I mean, like I said before, I feel like God put on this earth to really help people, so I just need to know what the other point is cause I feel like I want to help a lot I just wanna get to that point where I can be available at all times. I feel like I am getting there. Like right we have a trip to New Orleans again, a mission’s trip where we help people with houses, rebuilding things, I went last year during the summer. I just I really like helping people.

These young males, felt they are going through a process of growth as young people and are still having questions about their faith. Therefore, until they can have a much deeper understanding of God and are able to articulate the teachings and convey them to others, they cannot claim with 100% certainty that they have strong faith. The church female respondents also felt that they still have work to do in order to develop a strong faith.

**Virginia:** 85-90%....Um, I don’t have faith about every single thing, but I think growing in Christ that you should have a faith in that God....I mean there was an incidence at school that I was in a relationship with a guy and he had cheated on me with someone else who wasn’t very important to me, you know I wanted to get back at her, but I knew that that wasn’t who I was inside, so I just set back and you know let God take over and what was happening with the young lady she was doing something where she made herself feels like she wasn’t appreciated, She was very Um, she put herself out there in a way that she shouldn’t have and fellows you know do, they reacted , you calling her names stuff like that, so like you now when God says he handles your enemy he handles them, so I didn’t have to do anything I let God handles the way he handles things, then she got what she deserved, I felt bad for her, but I felt that when you mess with the child of God you gonna get what you deserve.
5.2 The Religiosity of Black South African Youth

5.2.1. Religious Socialization

As was the case with the African American respondents, the majority of the Black South African respondents were raised as Christians. Most of these young people came from nontraditional family structures wherein the mothers and extended kin provided a strong religious foundation as part of their socialization. The narratives below are examples of the ways in which religiosity functioned in some of the mother-child relationships of the Black South African youth in the study.

**Khaya:** Ja my mother [now diseased] used to be one of the preachers/ministers of our family church so each and every Sunday she made sure that everyone was awake, wash up, if you don’t go to church she would lock you outside the yard, she would say ‘you cannot live in my house and not go to church.’ (church male).

**Cikiza:** Both my mother and I are born again, sometimes we share and we are taught at church about the importance of mother and daughter relationship and we must learn to understand each other and I must try to be open to my mother and talk about all that and I try that and I see a change in her that, no she is no longer that person who is short tempered..So I think it’s a miracle (school female).

Even though most of the Black South African youth respondents continue to practice Christianity, the meanings and significance of their religiosity vary across all of the subgroups. For instance, while they identify themselves as Christians, a religion they inherited from their parents and grandparents, what is fuelling the motivation, strength and focus of religiosity among Black South African school male respondents could not be clearly gauged. It appears that these young people identified with the Christian faith because of familial, community and cultural expectations. Unlike their African American
male counterparts, they were not showing any signs of rebellion or doubt nor were they on a path of religious exploration.

Contrary to males, religiosity among females in the school sample was more substantive and clearly defined. It was more agentic in meaning with most of them clearly articulating the philosophical tenants of their religion and its appeal and use value in their lives. Most of the females identified themselves as Born Again Christians. Within various branches of Christianity (Evangelical, Fundamentalist, Pentecostal, and some sections of Protestant), being Born Again is often used to describe a process of “religious conversion” which is characterized by personal repentance and change. The phenomenon of being Born-Again is interpreted differently within Christian traditions that endorse it. For some it means taking on Jesus Christ as one’s savior, an experience which is often preceded by a form of personal struggle triggered by an event, circumstance or place causing a person to reconfigure their spiritual beliefs. For others it involves a public profession of and identification with a group of believers who define themselves as being “saved” (Jelen et al, 1993). People adhere to a type of “charismatic faith” which they express through intense bible study and prayer (Garner, 2000).

For some of these female respondents, the decision to become a Born-Again Christian, one may argue, may have been impelled by their strong need to assert their own religious values as a way of setting themselves apart from their familial or parental influences. For example, Precious shared that the she could not find the kind of spiritual fulfillment she was looking for in her family church and thus she decided to leave. Her
decision however put a strain on her relationship with her mother. In the narrative below she demonstrates defiance and a strong determination and commitment to her beliefs:

**Precious:** My mother loves the Methodist Church, I have my own beliefs, so our beliefs. My mother and I used to argue when she keeps telling me to go to her church. I always tell her that I want to make my own decisions … ‘you don’t have to tell me what to do, because I have a reason why I believe in what I do and you also have your own reasons for believing and worshiping in the church you go to’ because I believe if you choose something you know where it will lead you. So I told her that I don’t like Methodist I like the Church of gospel.

Precious and other school females, who assert this kind of religious autonomy, would also be described as “Religious on Their Own” (Smith and Denton, 2005). This is because most of them have since disassociated themselves from the denominations they were brought up in to become Born-Again Christians.

Most church males would also be described as “Religious on Their Own.” This is because even though their mothers instilled strong religious values during their formative year, their religious commitment dissipated as they entered adolescence due to peer pressure. They have however, since gone back to church. Most sought out new congregations/denominations on their own or through positive peer influence. One of the males, Themba, shared that he stopped going to church after his father passed away. When his father was alive, Themba was very active at church. This was because his father strictly enforced religious commitment and he had a very close relationship with his son. This enabled Themba to avoid befriending delinquent peers. However, with his father’s passing Themba went through a process of psychosocial withdrawal. Consequently stopped going to church and became exposed to negative influence:
**Khaya:** I stopped [going to church] and when I stopped I began to hang out with friends on a regular basis. Eventually we hooked up with other groups of boys in our community. We engaged in robbery and what not. One day one of my friends told us he has decided to go to church and encouraged us to join him. Eish, that was a difficult request at that point. We just said to him ‘No you go ahead, we are not ready, but please pass our best regards to everyone’. He went ahead and attended the church service. When he got back we asked him ‘hey, how was the service’ he said ‘hey it was great’, we did this and that’. After that, he became a regular churchgoers for sometime. One Saturday, I just asked him ‘hey do not leave me behind tomorrow.’

**Khosi:** So something piqued your curiosity and interest.

Yes. Gradually I came back to church. Luckily I found a new pastor who was flexible, who was not hesitant to ask young people to come forward and lead the church services and sing. After that first time I went back to my other friends told them about the fun I had at church that day, telling them about this new pastor who lets us lead the services in singing and so on.

Church females shared very strong bonds and referred to their mothers as their best friends to whom they can open up about everything that goes on in their lives. Unlike church males and school females, they still adhered to the same religious beliefs and denominations as their parents and other significant figures. For these young women, religion continues to plays a very crucial role in their relationships with their mothers. Unlike their school counterparts, for these girls, going to the same church and worshipping together with their parents and relatives is a family affair that is essential to their relationships.
5.2.2. Religious Commitment: Frequency of Church Attendance, Prayer and Bible Reading

To provide an overview of how they integrate their religious beliefs in their daily lives, tables 3 and 4, presents summaries of the frequency of religious practices (church attendance, prayer and bible reading) among the school and church Black South African respondents. Similar to their African American counterparts, most Black South African respondents are religiously active. Reported regular church attendance was very high with youth participating not only in Sunday services, but those held during the week as well, including week nights. Frequent prayer and reading the bible was also reported as significant religious activities. For example, Precious from the school sample stated that prays every day before she sleeps, before she goes to bed and before she goes to school. She reads the bible often because:

**Precious:** I want to be able to explain to people so that they know and believe that God is there and can help them. I would make an example about something in the bible.

And Khaya, who cited his favorite verse, which has a special meaning for him because it assures him that God will always be there to look after him no matter what challenges he faces in life.

**Khaya:** Samuel verse 1, which talks about the fact that the Lord has been with us always and is still with us today. For me what that means is that the Lord had been with me always and is still helping today. When I look back in terms of where I come from or how far I have come. So it does not make sense for me to turn back and go back to my old ways.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency of Religious Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xoli</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Attends church every Sunday and loves singing in the choir. He prays when he goes to bed and when he goes to school. He reads the bible mostly on Sundays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Although he does not attend church as much as he used to when living with his grandmother he does pray whenever he is in trouble. He also reads the bible when he is bored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumile</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>He goes to church but not as often as he used to. He does pray often on his own and only reads the bible when he is at church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooi</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Attends church often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precious</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>She usually goes to church on Sundays, Fridays and Wednesdays. Wednesdays they usually have meetings. She prays every day before she sleeps, before she goes to bed and before she goes to school. She reads the bible often because: “I want to be able to explain to people so that they know and believe that God is there and can help them. I would make an example about something in the bible”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thandeka</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>She attends church only on Sundays, except on the days when she has to go to a rugby game. She only prays before she goes to school and when she goes to bed at night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petunia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Does not go to church often, but prays every night and does not read the bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cikiza</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>She attends Sunday and Tuesday and church choir Wednesday and Friday. She prays three times a day: at 6 o’clock, 1 o’clock during lunch and at night. She reads the bible at night when she prays or anytime that she feels like reading the bible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thandiswa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Attends church as often as she can and prays at night before she goes to bed. She reads it sometimes but she doesn’t know it well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>She goes to church every Sunday except when she is sick. She prays when she has time. She reads the bible, but can’t quote the scripture and that bothers her a little bit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Frequency of Church Attendance and Prayer among Black South African Church Male and Female Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency of Religious Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Themba</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>He lives at the church mission house so on Fridays he attends Umanyano (prayer meeting) at 6pm. On Sunday he attends morning service from 10am. He prays when he goes to sleep at night and when he wakes up in the morning and he reads the bible often because he preaches at sermons at church on some occasions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoli</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>He attends this church on his own. His mother goes to a different church. He prays once a day when he goes to sleep at night and he reads the bible when he has time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mzi</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>He attends church every Sunday. He doesn’t often prays on his own. It’s something he does often with other people at home. He does not read the bible very much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaya</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>He goes to church four times a month. He prays each and every night. He also loves reading the bible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mluleki</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>He attends church every other Sunday. He prays on his own with other people at church. He does not read the bible very much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoleka</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>She attends church on most Sundays, not every Sunday. She does pray, but she cannot pray in front of people. She reads the bible when she has time because she is always doing her school work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomathamisanqa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>She attends church every Sunday. She prefers to pray when she is on her own I am on my own every day, but praying is something she feels she has to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thembela</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>She goes to church every Sunday, unless she has school activities. She says even if it’s raining she attends church services. She prays every night at her home. When she and her family sit down and eat, they pray together. She reads the bible about two times a week because it’s like it’s her connection to God. This is how she connects to him by reading what he says.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonakele</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>She goes to church every Sunday, but does not pray often and seldom read the bible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athi</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>She goes to church, but not every Sunday like she used to do. Whenever she is at church she prays as much as she can for her family. She only reads the bible when she is at church.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Religiously Disengaged: Normative and Habitual Practices

Similar to African American respondents the stories of Black South African respondents revealed gender and site specific differences in terms of religious commitment. In the responses presented below respondents provide a glimpse of the current youth religious landscape in South Africa.

From their responses, it appears that most school males define their religious identity only in terms of “religious practices”, which is one of the components of religiosity. In other words, their engagement in religious practices is more of a customary, normative and traditional habit with no sense of inspirational incentive or meaning. This is the group of young men that would be considered as “nonreligious” by Smith and Denton (2005). The following is a summation of their responses as various questions were asked to gauge their sense of religious beliefs and values:

**Xoli:** Identifies himself as Christian and continues to be active in his church. He enjoys singing in the choir.

**James:** He used to go to church with his grandmother back in the Eastern Cape, but since he has moved to Cape Town to live with his aunt and her family, his church attendance and participation has weakened. His grandmother used to encourage him to go to church and to “know Jesus”, but now he has deviated from church.

**Dumile:** Goes to church but not as often as he used to.

**Rooi:** He identifies himself as Christian, but does not go to church often.

**Andile:** He attends church on a regular basis, but does not pray much
Religiously Devoted: non-Experimental Spiritual Syncretism

Most of the school female respondents fit the description of the Religiously Devoted segment of the sample. However, being Born-Again for these young women requires them to reject their inherited African traditional rituals. This is one rule they choose to disregard. This is because in their view, refraining from observing African traditional rituals is not an option. These traditional African practices have significant meaning with respect to their sense of identity and the way in which they connect with their families and communities. In addition, they have been brought up with and have internalized the view that failing to acknowledge and respect these rituals will lead to severe consequences. Therefore, they made a conscious decision to incorporate both these religious values, in their view, this practice is feasible because although these values are distinct, they are complementary and have significant meanings in their lives as young people:

According to Smith and Denton (2005) one of the features of Spiritual Seeker behavior, as displayed by the youth in their sample, includes an infusion of practices from various other religious and spiritual traditions that are not their own. The authors define this as a version of “Spiritual Syncretism” enacted for the sole purpose of “experimentation.” They note that “…in the U.S. marketplace of spiritual practices, the religious option that is actually having the greatest influence on teen experimenters with other faiths is not an “exotic” faith or spirituality but Christianity, the dominant American faith.” (p.82). In essence, the Christian religion, which is the dominant religious school of thought remains more influential even among spiritual seekers wherein “non-
Christians in the United States are much more likely to be influenced by Christianity than Christians are to be influenced by minority non-Christian faiths. And that is exactly what appears to be happening among American teenagers of different faiths.” (p.82). However, in the South African context, this phenomenon is more complex. Yes, Christianity is indeed the predominant religion among the Black people who also constitute the majority of the country’s population. However, indigenous African religions have long been embedded in this group’s spirituality. This makes the “Spiritual syncretism” practiced by the youth in this study, not experimental. Rather, it transcends intergenerational phenomenon of identity negotiation in faith. This kind of religious synthesis in this context has long been viewed by some as an interaction of native African religious systems with missionary Christianity across the Africa and the Diaspora. Certainly, within the Black community in South Africa it has become imperative and even normative to reconcile or blend differing systems of belief in religion (Stewart and Shaw, 1994; Kiernan, 1994; Maroney, 2006) as demonstrated by the youth in this study:

**Thandeka:** The church I attend does not recognize and acknowledge Xhosa customs. Most of us are Xhosas. People are told to abandon their customs and focus on the church. I think it’s important to combine Xhosa customs with church practices because many people who abandon their Xhosa traditions go crazy as a result. I heard about one guy in my community who had a dream about his mother wherein his mother was telling him to ukusila [slaughter an animal for ritualistic purposes] and go to the graveyard. He did not do it, instead he told his pastor who told him that there is no such a thing, and it’s a myth. So he ignored the dream and didn’t conduct the ritual. He had a car accident and died.

**Thandiswa:** I belong to a Born-Again Christian congregation; which is different from other Christian groups because they do not practice African rituals.

**Khosi:** So you don’t practice African rituals?

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I do. It’s really up to a person as to what they want to do. To me it’s important to do it because I grew up doing it. My whole family does it. When my family does it I do it.

The African or Xhosa rituals and customs mentioned in the narratives above allude to spiritual practices within which ancestors play a central role in every aspect of people’s lives. They are honored during major events such as weddings, births and deaths as well as less important ones such as getting a job and finishing university. Typically an offering is made to pay tribute and convey gratitude to the ancestors. A cow, sheep or chicken is slaughtered and the ancestors are called to receive the offering and bless the gathering.

Here, ancestors are viewed as munificent and protective, while at the same time punitive in that “A dead parent or grandparent may visit in dreams or send misfortune on account of the moral fault of or ritual neglect by a descendant” (Pauw, 1975: 215). For most Black South Africans belonging to the nine indigenous ethnic groups, ancestral veneration is not only a way of ensuring a spiritual connection between the living and the departed, but is also a religious philosophy. While some may question the infusion of Christian and African traditional values, beliefs, and practices a lot of those in support of this infusion believe that the two traditions do not conflict with each other in the lives of African people. This is largely because adherence to one is contextualized. For instance, it is not unusual for African people to attend church services to worship, study the bible and praise God and then go home afterwards to a sanctuary, burn incense and pour beer as they converse with the ancestors (Pauw, 1975; Denis, 2007).

Furthermore, as was the case with the school females, support for spiritual syncretism was expressed by some of the respondents in the church sample. In the
narrative below, Mluleki goes as far as quoting a scripture from the bible to justify this practice:

**Mluleki:** They do mix [Christianity and Xhosa customs] because even in the bible its written when Jesus or God says that ‘I am not here to destroy your customs/practices, the only thing I want is for you to praise/worship God’. So by worshiping our ancestors and God, there is nothing wrong there because we can find unxibelelwano (communication) because in order for our prayers to be heard by God first those ancestors have to communicate them to God so that is how they go together.

The biblical scripture that Mluleki is referring to is found in the New Testament from the Gospel of St. Matthew 5:17, also known as the Sermon on the Mount, wherein Jesus addresses the concern that his mission is to abrogate the “Laws” and the “Prophets” of the Old Testament scriptures (Lachs, 1965; Cheung, 2004). Here Jesus is quoted as saying:

Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, ‘Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever shall break one of these commandments and shall teach man so he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven, but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

It is interesting how Mluleki, with strong conviction, select to equate what Jesus terms the “Law or the Prophets” to traditional African or Xhosa customs as means to validate his belief that the two philosophies are compatible. He finds solace in the belief that his practice of spiritual syncretism is validated in the teachings on which his faith is based. He further elucidates the nature of this compatibility by citing the function of ancestors in the worshiping process. Here, ancestors are elevated to a position of intermediaries where they have direct access to God. Jestice (2004) observes that unlike the Christian
Saints, who also serve as intermediaries, “only specific people, usually members of the same kinship group can communicate with ancestors, while anyone can have has access to a Christian saint” (p.52).

Similarly, the church females also support the practice of spiritual syncretism. In the conversation that follows Nomathamsanqa provides a perceptive view on how Black youth in South African negotiate multiple faith identities which they inherit from their surroundings:

**Nomathamsanqa:** My religion as being a Christian or Xhosa?

**Khosi:** So you consider being Xhosa a religion?

Yes being Xhosa is a religion because we practice it [Xhosa rituals]. So being Xhosa you know your roots, you feel proud of being yourself, you know yourself more you get to know where you come from exactly. Then when I get to church, although I [laugh] cannot pray, but when I come to church I just feel like Wow! I am coming to my second family, and I tell myself ‘okay this year will not end with me not knowing how to pray’ I feel so happy, I feel safe, Ja.

**Khosi:** How do you negotiate your Xhosa practices and your Christian practices?

That’s the interesting part you know because some people say if you believe in ancestors you can’t believe in God, whereas me and my family we do both. I don’t understand it I am always confused by those comments. It’s not my family only, other families also do both, but now what I want to know is why do they say you cannot do both? Because we believe in God right? But then when we bury someone, they go six feet under and then they also end up being an ancestor. So I always ask myself that if they don’t believe in ancestors why do they have clan names in the first place. So that is what confuses me.

**Khosi:** So what do you think should happen?

Believe in both because they can both work. Praying—it is said that you pray to your ancestors and you also pray to your God. I don’t think there is a difference.
Nomathamsanqa highlights what she perceives as contradictory messages that are being circulated by those who promote the substitution of African Traditional religious beliefs with those of Christianity. Since the advent of Western influence in South Africa, there has been a long standing split between two schools of thought. One is that once you become a Christian and believe in God, you should let go of ancestral worship considered to be antithetical to scripture which admonishes against having other mediums or Gods. Nomathamsanqa believes that the propagation of such a stance is misleading and hypocritical in nature. It is her fundamental belief that ancestral veneration forms an intrinsic part African people’s identity. The elemental part of her Xhosa identity entails engagement in practices that acknowledge and honor ancestors, while her Christian identity involves strengthening her relationship with God. These two practices are not in opposition with, but rather complement, each other. She therefore rejects the notion that one has to abandon one practice in favor of the other.

5.2.3. Personal Meanings of Religiosity

Similar to their African American counterparts, personal meanings attached to religiosity among Black South Africa youth respondents reflected Therapeutic and Idolatrous themes. For most respondents like Thandeka (church female) and Athi (school female) above, knowing that God exist and is there to listen, keep them safe and help them overcome life obstacles is central to their religious faith.

**Thandeka:** I like the fact that we are told that God exists, even if I have never seen him before, that belief that God is there.

**Khosi:** What does it mean to you, knowing that God exists?
It helps me in such a way that I know when I go through something painful I can kneel down and pray and my heart is at peace as if my problem disappeared, even though I have not been able to solve it.

**Athi:** I value my church. It’s a place where I get to pray to God. I ask God to keep my mother, I ask God to keep my sister although we tend to fight a lot, I ask God to keep my sister, to keep me and help me pass/succeed at school, to keep me safe and then I want God to know that when I do bad stuff it’s not because I want to do it, but I am forced to do it because of peer pressure and Ja to keep me away from bad stuff.

Most school male respondents regarded their religion as somewhat significant in their lives. They noted that although they are not as active at church as they should be, they still find some solace in the fact that they gain strength from the teachings of Christ. Furthermore, their constant association with the church deters them from engaging in risk related behavior:

**James:** To be strengthened by the words of Christ know that you can get strength even if you are broke not knowing what to do.

**Dumile:** It took me out of the crime in the township. It protected me. The hours I am spending at church, those are the hours when things happen in the township so it’s better for me to sit at church because at church you are not told lies. There is always a message when you go to church.

For the school females, believing in God and having the opportunity to worship Him at church is what makes their religion appealing to them. It should be noted here that God and the church are intertwined in the lives of these youth. Through the church and God in it (even though they have not seen him with their own eyes), they have access to moral guidelines that enable them to remain “grounded” and “collected” avoiding/resisting negative influence and risk-related behavior. Their Christian religion also allows them freedom of expression in which they can articulate their individuality and respond to God and the “Holy Spirit” appropriately:
Precious: I think it teaches me a lot. I get guidance on how to deal with issues outside the church in my daily life. It keeps me grounded and collected. If you believe in God, you should know that there are certain things or behaviors that you need to let go off, like boyfriends, drinking and so on, things that go against the gospel or the word of God. Also, you must not get easily influenced by friends, let’s say for example if your friends do not go to church, do not follow in their footsteps and be influenced by them. So it helps me because if I pray very earnestly things do change gradually. So if you are willing and open to change, you have to pray and then God will respond because God helps those who help themselves. If you want God to help you have to meet him half way, you see. So I would say the church where I often worship has helped me a lot because I used to go off track. I have stopped doing the things I used to do that had a negative impact on my life.

Vivian: It’s a free religion and church you know everything lies in you it depends on you as a person how you accept God, how you listen to the word how you respond to the Holy Spirit.

For the male church respondents in the South African sample, God with whom they connected through their church provided spiritual healing, enrichment and fulfillment:

Mzi: I like the fact that when I am here at church, if something bothers me, by the end of the church service I am fine. I become more spiritual, you see, and change and get inspired to go out there to share with people about what I have learned at church in order to help them.

The church also provides a sense community when they felt accepted by the elders and were able to experience a spirit of camaraderie afforded by the friendships with other youth.

Khaya: The only place I would rather be, a place that has people who feel the same way I feel as opposed to a place with people who criticize, so I would rather be, you see the church is one of those places I would rather be because, because it’s fun being at church, we are brothers and sisters, God’s children.
The church environment is also a significant platform for the female church respondents to congregate with peers and engage in activities that are positive and value creative. Their church provides space for them to express their youthful impulses without undesirable consequences, on the one hand-

**Zoleka:** It’s a fun church, it’s like when you are at church you do whatever you want to do, you can dance, you see there are camps there places where you can get together and talk as youth and in the way that we have a pastor who is flexible and we can talk as young people with no restrictions you can talk to him about anything.

-and a safe haven on the other. Here, God not only serves to protect youth and their family, but he also keeps them safe from negative influence.

5.2.3 **Perceived Strength of Faith**

When asked to rate their faith between 0-100%, none of the school male respondents asserted a 100% faith. They felt their faith is still developing wherein they still have some work to do as emerging adults:

**Xoli:** 40% because like sometimes like I feel like, I am sure you have heard the saying that everyone has sins you see if you read in the bible where it says that a person who sins the most is the one who knows that what they are doing is wrong yet they continue to do it.

In Xoli’s view, being human means being a sinner. A sinner cannot therefore profess 100% faith as long as they continue to stray. He is aware of both his religious obligations and his breaching of these obligations. The females also felt they still have a lot to learn in faith. They do their best to observe the teachings and engage in religious activities, but they are not where they would like to be.
**Petunia:** 50%, I go to church as much as I can. When I get there I listen to what is said, also I when I get there I pray and sing.

**Cikiza:** I would say I am 80% because I am not there at the level that I want to be, whereby I can preach, Ja I do talk about God, but there is that need to preach and talk about God, Ja there is still a lot that I need to go through the process.

**Vivian:** Yo between 0 and 100% I would place my faith, I would say I am still young, still making a foundation so I would place myself at 40%. Mmm, still developing Ja.

From these narratives one can deduce that even though these young people continue to make efforts to observe and practice the teachings of their religion, they still feel they are growing in and are in the process of establishing a strong foundation of their faith. There appears to be dissatisfaction concerning their ability to reach an optimal point of an unambiguous articulation of these teachings and applying them in daily life. It is also essential to the church male respondents to reach a level wherein they are able to cultivate a strong faith that would enable them to develop a strong sense of compassion and patience for others regardless of circumstances, a process that could only be made possible if they work to connect to God. Being more involved in church and learning more about its operations is very crucial in realizing this goal:

**Zoli:** To be honest, I would place myself at 79% because most of the time, but as people say negative things and do crazy things that make me change and get angry and then tell them what I think, of the like ‘look here I do what I do, I am going to church and there is nothing you can say or do about that’ If they curse at me I curse back at them.

When it comes to the perceived strength of their faith, no female respondents from the church professed 100%. The reasons may be that a) there are other things going in their lives that may distract them from focusing on their faith-
Zoleka: I can place myself at 55% because I am not always thinking about church when I do things. I don’t give myself to the church each and every time. There are times when I fell sick and tire and just want to stay home. It just happens sometimes.

-b) They may not be completely satisfied with the level of their engagement or participation in church activities-

Nomathamsanqa: 95% because sometimes, I am still confused but I will say 95% because sometimes when I am at church there is a lot of preaching, you get those people who jump up Ja, so I am a type of a person who just sits on the chair and just nod, and then I ask myself ‘why can’t I do that? Why can’t I do that thing that make some do that’ So that is why I would rate it 95% because I cannot preach.

-and, c) similar to their school counterparts, their flaws as human beings prevent them from reaching an optimal level of faith. Perfection is something to strive through continuous efforts, but difficult to realize because of “mistakes” people make:

Thembela: I would place it at 80%, like I connect with him [God], but I would not say I have not I have made a few mistakes and stuff Ja. My mom always taught me that ‘whatever you are going through God is there.

Summary and Conclusion

Weak parental religiosity was evident among African American male school respondents, who showed low to none religiosity commitment and interest. On the contrary, strong parental religiosity was associated with strong religiosity among female school respondents. This is consistent with previous research reported in the United States that parents’ religious influence on religious behavior appeared to be minimal for boys but quite strong for girls (Martin, 2003). In particular, mothers were more influential despite the fact that most were single parents. This finding is supported by previous studies that show that maternal religious transmission (church attendance,
religious denomination, and the concept of God) is a strong predictor of adolescent religiosity, especially when the latter perceives their mother as “supportive and accepting” (Wan-Ning et al, 1999; Gur, et al 2005). However, contrary to previous research, single-female headed family structure was not linked to low religiosity among adolescents. It was the nature and quality of parent-child relationship that mattered most.

Among the African American church males, the strength of relationships with parents or other significant adult figures did not translate into adherence to similar religious views. These young men asserted their own religious beliefs and values that were dissimilar from their parents.’ Among the contributing factors to religious autonomy as described by Smith and Denton (2005), the dominance of youth activities were relevant in this study. In particular, these young men reported to holding leadership positions and participated more frequently in religious camps and retreats. They were also part of youth performance groups and spent most of their weekends and weeknights at church rehearsals and bible study sessions. Both good and poor quality of parental–adolescent relationships was associated with high religiosity among church female respondents. While for some, religiosity function to strengthen strong relationships, for others it serves to heal tensions stemming from changes in the family structure and adolescent transitioning into adulthood.

Within the South African context, most school males hailed from extended family structures that were strongly matriarchal and religious. These young men expressed continuing commitment to the familial inherited religious values, beliefs and practices, but approached these as routine, customary and habitual. This is different from the
females who were more devoted and derived deeper meanings from their religiosity. Although raised by strongly religious single-parents and extended kin, these young women have since abandoned their parental religious ideologies in favor of more conservative evangelical beliefs.

Within the church setting, males reported to have been raised by strongly religious parents who were strictly insisted on regular church attendance and participation. However, their religiosity decreased during early adolescence with the increase in peer pressure and subsequent delinquent behavior. Steinman and Zimmerman (2004) also found a correlation between religious disengagement and increase in delinquent behavior among the males in their sample. While it was association with negative delinquent peers that led to religious disengagement among the church male sin South Africa, it was association with non-delinquent peer that led to religious re-engagement among this group. Once they revived their religious values, they became even more devoted and enacted a more autonomous faith. As with their African American school counterparts, the quality of relationships with parents, particularly mothers, was strongly associated with high religiosity among the church female respondents in the South African sample.

Further exploration of personal meanings of religiosity among the Black youth revealed interesting insights. Among African American respondents from the school (those who are actively religious) and church sample, the central role or significance of religion in their lives is that it affords them access to God with no strings attached. What is more important is that they nurture a relationship or bond with God who in their view
is loving and nurturing as opposed to punitive and imposing. The church also provides a safe space from the harsh realities of the outside world that put Black youth people at risk for maladjustment. For the South African youth, the church was also viewed as a platform on which to praise and nurture a strong bond with God. God here is not only viewed as a force that provides spiritual healing and fulfillment, but He functions to deter the youth from negative influences they are exposed to in their surrounding communities. Within the South African context, God was viewed in both a therapeutic sense as a source of strength on one side providing security in times of pain and struggles as well as a regulator of behavior on the other. Thus, unlike their African American counterparts, for Black youth in South Africa, God was very much involved in their lives functioning as a deterring force that restored them on track each time they swayed. For these youth, having a relationship with God comes with rules or a code of conduct which entails a reject of deviant behaviors.

Another interesting and unique dynamic that emerged in the narratives of Black South African youth, particularly the school females and both male and female respondents in the church, was the issue of religious syncretism. What is more pronounced is their strong position that this practice is necessary and feasible in the South African context. This is because a) it gained momentum during colonial time and has endured through the Apartheid era, and b) African traditional practices are crucial to their identity formation as well as familial, and communal affiliation, and can therefore never be abandoned.
The purpose of this investigation was to explore, qualitatively, the ways in which individual and collective racial identity perceptions and religiosity, as informed by family background and community contextual factors, matter or not, in the lives of African American and Black South African youth as they navigate change. Of particular interest is how these youth draw upon their religious and racial socialization experiences and perspectives in coping with issues of mental health, self-esteem and risk-related behaviors their development.

6.1 Religiosity, Racial Identity, and African American Youth Developmental Outcomes

6.1.1. Mental health

Overall, the perceived mental health status of the African American respondents was positive. For instance, when asked if they were satisfied with how their lives are going thus far, most said they were satisfie.

Zenith: Mmmm, in a way I am [satisfied]. I believe, yeah cause I am only 16, so I have plenty of time to face whatever, whatever needs to be faced, you know it could be better, but it could be worse, so I am grateful for my, where I am right now, the opportunities I have and what I am doing, so I believe that right now, I think right now I am on the bridge, I am on the
bridge of life right now, you know I came from the bad side and I created this bridge for myself where, what I did this past year was creating my bridge, and I am half way across now, I have to just realize whether or not do I wanna go back, you know what I am saying or do I wanna be strong and continue to go forward.

*Khosi:* Go back to what?

Go back to the negativity which is almost kinda impossible because of my understanding of everything, but I mean like negativity like things that are trying to suck you in like drugs, breaking the law, you know what I saying, friends, you know violence. Just kind of setting myself away from it, you know, kind of trying to be more of the individual instead of being like what everyone else wants me to be or what everybody else is, you know you got be yourself, it’s the only person you can.

Zenith employs an analogy of the “bridge” as the symbolic illustration of his perceived state of life. He feels he is transitioning from a) childhood to adulthood, b) delinquency to good behavior, and c) negative peer influence and conformity to a life in which he is able to assert his individuality while avoiding negative influence. In Will’s case, being somehow satisfied signify that his life is transitioning in a desirable path:

*Will:* Em, I am not exactly where I want to be, but I am happy in the direction that I am going and I have moved far from where I used to be and that gives me somewhat of a peace of mind, it doesn’t take off my focus where I break down and make me like lazy or anything so, no it does make me calmer and it does make me feel better.

When asked what he perceives as the “right direction” that he is moving toward, he said:

*Will:* I see myself going to college, actually to, I actually plan on being a psychologist have a lot of things I wanna do, I wanna own my own business , I just haven’t decided on one thing yet.

For most of these males however, it was their racial identity and not religious beliefs that informed their outlook in life. For example, Zenith said that his beliefs enable him “to read between the lines,” which makes aware of the hidden, “subliminal” messages with
regards to race. He is able to discern what he perceives as the double standards, covert vs. overt racism which would require that one is able to read between the lines. He has now been able to reach a point where he is able to master the art of reading between the lines and reading behavior and responding to it.

**Zenith:** Mmm, they do because I am not blind, I am not as blind to certain subliminal messages I am not, I am not blind to subliminal people, I am not blind to those things that most people don’t see or understand, you know I am aware of so at all times I am constantly focused, the third eye is open.

While we learn from Zenith’s narrative that racial identity beliefs enable youth of color to become aware of subtle manifestations of racial situations, in Will’s case we discover the coping mechanisms that youth of color may use in such conditions. For instance, as far as Will is concerned, part of having a positive and healthy outlook in life as a young Black man entails being confident, while at the same time being cautious of one’s behavior and what one projects as they navigate the mainstream culture. The latter means one has to possess coping skills that may necessitate “putting on an act.”

**Will:** Mmm, Em like people say that I have a lot of confidence about myself and you know I would have to say they are right, I am pretty confident in myself, I don’t believe there is many things I cannot do and if I can’t do it then I am gonna work at it until I can do it, and you know just basically looking at the world I see that I have to be careful about myself like if I get pulled over by an officer off-course I have to put on, em, how do I say this an Uncle Tom act, basically because I know that if I have my music blasting Hip Hop music, have my hat to the back, like ‘Yo Yo Yo what’s up dog, what’s happening can I help you?’ that gonna be a problem, so there are times.

**Khosi:** What is an Uncle Tom act?

An Uncle Tom act is like basically like, it’s almost like putting, I would have to say it’s almost like putting on a mask and just projecting
...the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p.3).

Du Bois highlights the notion of “twoness,” or double consciousness in order to illustrate how African Americans navigate the two worlds by putting on the veil. In essence, the veil functions as a barrier that allows African Americans to hide their true self from white America. From a mental health standpoint, therefore, one may argue that Will’s code switching, as per Cross’s model of Nigrescence (1971), and adopting an “Uncle Tom” identity, is his way of coping in the “American world, “which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world.” Du Bois views the ability to enact a double consciousness as a gift, a second sight necessary to cope with discrimination.

More recent research (Harrell, 2000) shows that feelings of distress that may be generated by daily “micro stressors.” such as being closely monitored, followed, or interrogated in public, may have harmful effects on the psyche of African American
teenagers. Scott, (2003) points to the value of employing coping strategies when faced with discriminatory situations and the implication of such strategies on mental health outcomes. Moos, (2002) distinguishes between two types of coping strategies adolescents of color may implement in response to race-salient situations, namely, Approach and Avoidance coping strategies. While the former involves actively confronting the perceived stress generating the discriminatory situation, the latter involves avoiding the situation and later dealing with the resulting emotions. The methods of coping may involve cognitive or behavioral efforts.

In Will’s case, taking on an “Uncle Tom” identity means that when he enters the mainstream American world, in which the chances of being confronted and interrogated by authority figures are high, he has to adjust his behavior (avoid playing Hip-Hop music in high volume), his appearance (not wearing his hat backward) and his manner of speech (avoid using slang). These changes may be prompted by Will’s awareness of the stereotypes attached to being a young Black male in America. As scholars such as Cunningham (2001) have observed, African American males are the most stereotyped group in America. They are more likely to be perceived as tremendously athletic, unlawful, gangster, or hypersexed. The mainstream American perceptions of African American youth based on these stereotypes, may inform society’s response to these youth in public spaces. Therefore, young Black males such as Will enter American society with these expectations and awareness in mind.

Perceived mental health among female school respondents was generally positive. They all felt their lives were in good places and headed in a positive direction. Even
though at times, they had moments of sadness and dejection, these never led to deep depression.

**Simone:** Happy and sad. There are some days that I don’t wanna get out of bed because of just not feeling like getting out of bed, there are things that make you sad like people will talk about you and that makes you feel sad, but other than that I am a happy person, I make sure that I am happy, I try not to focus on other people, what they think. You have to love yourself and who you are and I am learning to love myself as a Black person more and more each day. My family is always making sure that they instill that pride in me.

Here it was religious beliefs more than racial identity beliefs that were central in how these young women perceived their wellbeing. Specifically it enabled them to know who they were, which contributed to their happiness. It also enables them to resist negative peer influence, and assert their individuality, in turn avoiding anti-social behavior:

**Wanda:** Yeah…Like in certain situations I might do something different and my friends might do something different. Like maybe they would wanna cheat and I don’t wanna cheat.

**Nikki:** Mmm, em, I know I shouldn’t, well not only is it the law, but really I put the bible first, I know I shouldn't steal, I shouldn’t drink, I shouldn’t be doing adultery, you know, no false Gods or idols, you know just I follow basically all the commandments.

By putting God first, Wanda was able to resist temptations and engagement in anti-social behavior. In their analysis, Grasmick et al., (1992) found that individual religiosity leads to conformity to social norms not only through an externally enforced control procedure in the form of sanction and imposed embarrassment, but also through an internal control process through the sanction of self-inflicted a sense of disrepute.
Church male respondents also reported positive perceived mental health statuses. They expressed that they were satisfied with the way their lives are going since they feel as though they are on the right path, knowing that God has good plans for them:

David: Right now I feel I am on the right track.

Timothy: I mean sometimes terrible events happen when you like you feel like “why is this happening to me, why am I in this situation?” you know things like that. But I am satisfied because I feel that God had a plan, so I can’t just go by my plan I have to go by what he has in store for me, so I feel that basically if it comes it usually comes when it’s supposed to.

For this group, it is their faith more than their racial beliefs that influence their outlook on life. It is their strong relationship with and trust in God that guides their approach to life in general. They are able to discern between right and wrong. They find a safe haven in the church environment wherein they feel safe. They are also able to cope with depressive moments based on the faith that God will see them through. Their outlook in life is essentially positive because of their faith:

Terrence: Oh Yeah cause when I get depressed I tend to shut everybody off, there was a time where like I didn’t care about dying and like God just showed me a way that ‘if you go with this is what you will get’ it’s like he shows me the good and bad, it’s like don’t ever take it for granted cause it’s the way you could be, now that we are out here I look back on that like Dang, we have come a long way.

Tyler: Definitely my faith helps me get through troubling times because it helps me realize… our preacher said one time that no matter what I am going through God has really been too good just to be sitting around depressed about one thing that happened. It may have been detrimental for me, but God will get me through.

For the church females, both their racial identity and faith beliefs were key in their perceived mental health status. From Sondra and Virginia, for instance, we learn that: a)
being aware of one’s position and how one is perceived and thus treated within the American social structure as a young Black woman is key to coping with oppressions, and b) awareness of one’s disadvantaged position in society as a young Black woman requires one be assertive at all times so as to sustain mental health:

**Virginia:** My parents have taught me that not everyone will accept you as you are as an African American, be mad at them for that but understand that that’s how they are.

**Sondra:** Well I know being Black has taught me how to be strong. I can’t be no weak African American chick out here cause I would get walked all over, so it does help to be strong, it helps me to defend myself and being a young African American female you can’t fight back with your hands and so you need to learn so you can fight back with your words.

In her work, *Raising Resisters: The Role of Truth-telling in the Psychological Development of African American Girls*, (Ward, 1996) explores how “race related resistance strategies” are transmitted by Black parents to their daughters. Resistance refers to the strength to not only ward off, but more importantly, challenge the widespread negative images and judgments Black people are subjected to and replace them with “…an identity that includes Blackness as positive and valued” (p87).

Borrowing from bell hook’s notion of the “oppositional gaze”, (1992) the author argues that this process of reconstruction or “self-creation” calls upon Black people to “observe the world critically and to oppose ideas and ways of being that are disempowering to the self” (p87). For hooks (1992) “oppositional gaze” is an act of defiance with the intent of bringing about change. In her book *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992) she proclaims:
Since I knew as a child that the dominating power of adults exercised over me and over my gaze was never so absolute that I did not dare to look, to sneak a peep, to stare dangerously, I knew that the salves had looked. That all attempts to repress our/Black people’s right to gaze had produced in us an overwhelming longing to look, a rebellious desire, an oppositional gaze. By courageously looking, we defiantly declare: “Not only will I stare. I want my look to change reality.” Even in the worse circumstances of domination, the ability to manipulate one’s gaze in the face of structures of domination that would contain it, opens up the possibility of agency (p115-116).

At the center of this process of resistance is the whole idea of “Truth Telling”. Again, Ward draws from bell hooks to point out how parents, especially Black mothers “tell it like it is” as a way of invoking this sense critical perception of reality in their daughters so that the latter can be in a position to “dismantle futile idealism, unmask illusions, and ultimately strengthen character” (p94). Therefore, by telling their daughters the truth about the realities of oppression and discrimination they are more likely to encounter outside their home space, Virginia and Sondra’s parents are teaching them “resistance for liberation”, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that they “empower [them] …through confirmation of positive self-conceptions…[which] replaces negative critique with positive recognition” (Ward, 1996:95). Thus, Virginia learned to resist by not internalizing the negative perceptions attached to being African American and Sondra knows she needs to be strong and defy the stereotypes that present “African American chicks” as weak.

When it comes to the question of religiosity and their outlook in life, all female shared that religion plays a central role in their lives:

**Sondra:** Yeah it does because, Um I talk to God all the time, I can’t do nothing without him, little things. I just, Well you know what, actually yesterday I was having like my friend was upset, so I was feeling a little
down so I just asked God like ‘give me joy’ cause you could be happy but when you have joy that’s a whole another thing like, you might be having a bad day but if God gives you joy then you always have that joy even if you are not having a good day, and I asked God to give me joy cause, I mean that’s probably why I am happy because he is a big part of my life

**Maya:** My faith in God helps me because it always pulls me through. When I read the bible when I talk to God it always helps me get through and helps me overcome my sadness.

The personal relationship they have cultivated with God which, the nature of which they have defined for themselves, enables them to have conversations with him, as their confidant, whenever they are faced with tough decisions or challenges.

6.1.2. **Self Esteem**

The sense of worth as young Black men was very high among the African American school males in the study. This was manifested by their unequivocal self-affirmation of who they are and the positive qualities they possess. Their positive sense of self is defined in terms of their ability to interact with other people. They cited their good sense of humor and kindness, good communication skills, athleticism, having creative business sense, being intelligence and motivated, and having appealing aesthetic beauty. They all associated these qualities with being Black stating that their exposure to Black historical culture at school and home is what they appreciate:

**Leon:** Minor things like helping grandpa out, I am getting my cousin back on track, my mom is proud of me. I mean like, I am a smart person, I am motivated, even like, I motivate differently sometimes you gotta get people upset to get them to do what they are should be doing, some people would take it as harsh, but when you come right back to it it’s a good thing.

**Will:** Absolutely, I would say that a natural thing in Black people is entrepreneurship and I believe that I have that as a matter of fact I used to
sell CDs and DVDs and make a killing, you know and support myself you know I just think being Black and just and something I read in the blood like melanin in the skin you know that’s something I am proud of, I believe that being Black you know it gives me an edge over other races and stuff I have my own unique qualities and specialties that other people don’t have.

Studies that focus on the relationship between perceived racial discrimination and racial socialization have found this self-affirmation to be useful among African American youth self esteem. A distinction is made between types of racial socialization messages and how these differ in their function and effectiveness. It has been found that those massages that tend to emphasis racial pride (proactive) are more effective than the ones that aim to prepare children for racial bias (reactive). In their recent study Harris-Britt et al, (2007) found that those adolescents who received racial pride messages were more likely to have high self esteem, while those who were less exposed to messages of racial and cultural pride were more likely to have low self-esteem.

Similar self affirmation response emerged from the narratives of school African American females respondents. They cited their sense of determination and focus, intelligences and more importantly to them, respect for everyone. This is a quality they believe to be associated with Blackness. It is important for these young women as Black people to respect their own culture and that of others and at the same time celebrate their uniqueness and individuality:

**Brianna:** Yes….I am proud of, I mean if you study the culture before like, the Black culture it makes you proud as a person. It teaches you to treat everybody fairly, I don’t judge somebody before I meet them, I don’t talk about people. I have also learned not to be. Not being like everybody else. Being successful going to school, having goals in life
Among the church male respondents, reports of perceived high self esteem were evident as well. A strong sense of positive self outlook was expressed by these young men who take pride in their sense of endurance and compassion. They also expressed confidence and high expectations and standards of achievement in life:

**Bobby:** I feel am very worthy. I am very good to my friends. I have away cheer people up when they are feeling down. If I fail in one thing, I know there is something else I will succeed in. My mom taught me that a lot. She wanted me to have a better life than her, especially as a young Black man. So she has been a great influence.

**David:** Overall I think I got my head in the right place. I think I am moving in the right. I am not gonna settle for anything. I am always looking for more experiences. I try to better myself every day. I try to be better than yesterday. Yes you have days when you fall back, but you just gotta keep moving on. It will hurt a little bit, but it will get better.

The narrative of church female respondents also showed high sense of self esteem. Their positive view of themselves is evidenced by their descriptions of themselves as good people who work hard:

**Virginia:** Yes, Just my overall personality and how I demonstrate that hard work will pay off in school, you know I study hard, I make good grades I am well rounded person, in the end that’s what I want people to see when they look at me, not I am Black, not because I am female, but a well rounded person.

**Sondra:** Well I am very understanding and you can come and talk to me about anything and I won’t judge you but I’ll pray for you and everything will be alright.

**Maya:** Umm, um I’m just really I think I’m a good friend and I give good advice to everybody because everybody comes to me and asks me, well tells me about their problems I guess I’m a good listener

What appears to be their best quality however, is being a reliable friend who listens and provides advice to their troubled friends.
6.1.3. **Risk-Related Behavior**

Igra and Irwin (1996) define Risk-related behavior among adolescents as “potentially health damaging behavior” that includes substance abuse, early sexual activity, reckless driving, suicidal tendency, eating disorders, delinquency etc. These behaviors are considered risky because they are potentially detrimental on long term personal well-being. This is because early engagement in risk related behaviors increases the chances of long-term health problems in adulthood. More specifically, risk related behavior among adolescents is often associated with negative outcomes such as unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, addiction, disability, incarceration and even death.

Recent scholarship has pondered the motives behind youth engagement in risk-related behaviors. According to Dworkin, (2006), knowing the risks associated with certain behaviors is not the only determinant of youth action. Rather, decision-making regarding behavior is informed by an individual’s personality, stage of development, level of maturity, social and emotional development, family and peer relations, as well as cognitive development. The point is that adolescents evaluate risk differently from adults.

Caffray and Schneider (2000) focused on the role of ‘Affective Motivators’ when assessing adolescent engagement in risk behaviors. They identified three types of affective motives, namely: those that augment pleasant affective states, those that lessen chances of negative affective states, and those that encourage risk behavior by increasing chances of negative or harmful affective states. The authors observed that the extent to
which these motivators will matter is determined by the level of previous experience with, and the type of, risk behavior. In other words, adolescents who have never been involved in risk behavior were more likely to be deterred by the anticipated negative consequences associated with that behavior. In contrast, those with prior experience are more likely to believe that engaging in such behavior could lead to positive consequences or positive affective states and thus may decide to take chances.

Rodham et al, (2006) argue that in order to comprehend adolescent risk related behavior we have to find out how adolescents themselves understand the meaning of risk. In their qualitative study, the authors found that adolescents view the negative consequences of risk behavior as something they cannot control. Nevertheless, the decision to engage in such behavior comes after careful consideration and involves the weighing of risks and benefits. They refute the prevailing belief that depicts adolescents as incompetent with no capacity to make cogent behavioral decisions. The adolescents in their sample were very much aware of the complicated processes involved in reaching a decision to or not to engage in certain risk behaviors and seemed convinced of their aptitude to make wise choices. Despite these youths conviction, Rodham and colleagues still argued that the lack of life experience and knowledge may lead to errors in judgment among the adolescents.

Similar to Rodham et al (2006) the current study explored the issue of risk related behavior through qualitative means. The authors saw this approach as a “…valuable method of accessing the social world of adolescents, their underlying values and the context of their comments” (p.269) and I concur. From their responses, therefore, we
will discover whether or not their racial identity and religious beliefs factored into how these young people assess risk behavior and how they deal with it. The questions related to risk behavior in this study included those regarding engagement in substance or alcohol abuse, delinquency and early sexual activity.

Some evidence provided from the literature on alcohol and substance use/abuse among adolescents show that early exposure to drinking and smoking may be a predictor of long-term problems with addiction. Evidence of the “Gateway Effect” (Sen et al, 2001), has been cited, which describes how the process of long term addiction begins with alcohol and cigarette consumption, which is then followed by the use of marijuana and other ‘harder’ drugs.

When asked if they have ever had any drink of beer or any other alcoholic beverage, most male respondents from the school sample said they have. In addition, the same respondents indicated they have smoked marijuana:

**Leon:** It was two summers ago, I smoked some Pot. We just happened to smoke, we just like, my mom was gone, we were just partying had some weed. I always wanted to try it, so one day we [him and his friends] were at my house and my mom went out and we were chilling and had a smoke.

**Khosi:** How was it?

It was okay, it was actually fun. Honestly, when you smoke it’s actually like a stress reliever.

**Khosi:** Do you still smoke pot?

No, my mom caught me, well somebody snitched on me and then I don’t like making my mom stressed or nobody in my family, so I stopped.

Leon clearly made a rational decision to smoke marijuana as “a stress reliever” thus exemplifying the experience of an augmented affective state (Caffray and Schneider,
2000) and thrill seeking intent (Kloep et al, 2009). The other two males stated that peer pressure did play a role in their decisions to engage in such a behavior. However, after weighing the costs and benefits they realized that they have a lot to lose than gain if they continue to engage in such behavior. They figure smoking marijuana is detrimental to their health, to their wellbeing and it is immoral behavior that is antithetical to their religious beliefs:

**Will:** Mmm, em, I know I shouldn’t, well not only is it the law, but really I put the bible first, I know I shouldn't steal, I shouldn’t drink, I shouldn’t be doing adultery, you know, no false Gods or idols, you know just I follow basically all the commandments. Somewhat like my conscious told me it was wrong and you know I read in the bible that it’s wrong to poison to your body with that type of stuff and you know and so I would resist it. I do still smoke, I shouldn’t but I do. I don’t really smoke weed anymore, it’s basically just cigarettes.

**Zenith:** Not necessarily, it’s just that, It’s just I don’t need things, of course with my age being you know what I am saying, you know everybody gets exposed to things, they are suddenly exposed I just felt like it’s something I don’t necessarily need right now in my life.

Engagement in sexual behavior during adolescence is also classified as risky. This is because the early onset of sexual activity is often associated with the risk of exposure to sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy; subsequent and chronic engagement in unprotected and promiscuous sexual behavior as well as substance abuse. Furthermore, early sexual behavior is also associated with negative psychosocial changes including low locus of control and self-esteem, poor academic performance, and exposure to negative peer influence (Houlihan et al, 2008). In particular, some studies on African American adolescents (Ellen in Salazar et al, 2004) report that compared to their male counterparts, females have the highest rates of sexually transmitted diseases.
Although, early engagement in sexual activity is often associated with long-term health and psychosocial risks, it appears to be a significant developmental trajectory during adolescents. Among the cited risk behaviors—smoking, drinking, drug use, delinquency—sexual activity seems to commence more quickly during adolescence (Regnerus, 2007).

In this study, questions regarding youth sexual activity and attitudes were ventured into more general questions (to capture their attitudes) to more specific and personal one (to capture personal experiences). Specifically, the youth in both countries and research sites were asked: a) what they thought about people their age having sex, b) what they thought about the belief that people should wait until they get married before engaging in sexual activity, and c) whether they have engaged in intimate or sexual relations in their personal lives.

A recurrent theme across the narratives among African American school respondents when it comes to the question of adolescent sexual behavior is a matter of Personal Choice. Regardless of sexual experience or lack thereof, both male and female respondents perceived themselves (as well as other adolescents in general) as capable of and entitled to make their own choices. Even though in some instances these choices can work against or for the parson it still remains an issue of personal discretion. It is not so much the choice of engaging in sexual behavior that causes distress but it’s the consequences of engaging in that particular behavior. From their narratives we find that it is their religious beliefs and values, and not so much their racial concept or beliefs that become salient as they ponder their sexual behavior choices and attitudes.
Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action, which describes how attitudes translate to behavior, would be useful to consider in this analysis. This theory is widely credited and has been applied in studies on adolescent health behavior. Its central premise is that the extent to which an individual will engage in a behavior is dependent upon intention. The latter is a function of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control with regards to the behavior in question. Attitudes are based on a belief that a particular behavior leads to a certain outcome. If the outcome seems favorable to the individual, he or she may then intend to or actually participate in a particular behavior. Subjective norm, on the other hand, is based on an individual’s concern about obtaining approval or validation from their peers, family, community, religious leaders, and society. Perceived behavioral control is centered on a sense of self-efficacy wherein a person is certain of their ability to perform a given behavior effectively. In essence there, this theory predicts that the more encouraging the attitude and the subjective norm, and the greater the perceived control the stronger should the person’s intention or inclination to engage in an act.

All males in the African American school sample revealed that they were not longer virgins. They seemed self-assured as they asserted their sense of maturity when they engage in sexual intercourse, i.e., always using protection:

Leon: It’s fine

Khosi: Did you say fine or fun?

Both

Khosi: In what way?
Its pleasure. I don’t have a problem with it, but you should always use condoms.

**Zenith:** You know it’s not good, but you can’t necessary, you can tell people what’s not good, but you can’t, like I say you can lead a horse to the water but you can’t make him drink. I can’t talk too much cause then I would be a hypocrite, but it’s not necessarily good because we have kids now who go to our school, a couple of kids graduating, still in school that are pregnant or have babies you know it’s not only here it’s even worse in other schools but it’s not good you know, too young to have sex, I mean, but it’s their decision.

Zenith’s opening line of “You know it’s not good” indicates his recognition that sexual activity among adolescents is widely frowned upon as unacceptable. However, believes that such a norm does not necessarily serve as a deter youth (including himself) against sexual behavior. Interestingly, although he does not want to impose any judgment on anyone who chooses this route given that he is also sexually active, he seems to believe that early sexual activity is more detrimental to females than males since the latter risk the consequence of pregnancy. As a male, he believes himself to be immune from such a negative and outcome, which has life-long detrimental effects (dropping out of school).

Will is convinced he, along with his peers, is capable of distinguishing between what is right and wrong. In their view, youth sexual activity should not elicit any judgment because it’s not wrong behavior as long as one is responsible and uses protection.

**Will:** I really don’t have a problem with it, I believe that we are at the age now where we can make decisions for ourselves and we know that what we are doing, we know right from wrong, and we know what we are supposed to be doing and when we are making wrong choices, you know, I can’t, you know condemn or judge anybody for that.
When asked to share his thoughts about the idea that youth should wait until they get married before having sex Will’s response was:

**Will:** That’s actually something in Christianity, you shouldn’t have sex until you are married and no adultery and I believe that you know, that is something that can be, you know, how can I say, that something that somebody can be proud of, that’s something, that a good thing that you have waited all the way until marriage know that you gonna spend the rest with this person before you lay on the bed with, that a very respectable thing, and you don’t really see that too often in our days.

**Khosi:** Does it apply to you?

No

**Khosi:** You don’t believe in waiting until you get married

No I believe in waiting for the right girl

All five female respondents in the school sample said they have never had any alcohol, smoke or any drugs for various personal reasons. In some cases such behavior was viewed as going against their religious beliefs:

**Jasmine:** Yes, well it’s my faith, I just know that, that’s not the right way to go, so I don’t, I stay away from people that bring in that negative energy.

**Wanda:** I just don’t hang around people who do those things because I have goals and I feel like if they drink and smoke, they must not have respect for themselves. My mom taught me to strive to be excellent and do better for myself.

**Simone:** One of my associates offered me to drink with them and I told them no. Because drinking is not all that and besides I had school work that night, and I just don’t like drinking because I saw people die from it, so I am scared to drink myself, I saw my grandfather of drinking too much alcohol he had alcohol poisoning.

Furthermore, unlike the males all none of the females in the school sample has ever engaged in premarital sex in their lives. The reason cited by most is that they are not
ready and consider such behavior as morally wrong. Similar to the males however they maintain that engaging in sexual activity during adolescence is a matter of personal choice, albeit not a “good” or “smart” one. This is because it is risky to have sex when you are still in high school and not in a long-term relationship:

**Jasmine:** Umm, I don’t think, personally I don’t think it’s a good idea because it’s a risk that you are taking and it would destroy your life over one little moment… They can well, I mean relationships it’s how people feel about each, but it doesn’t have to be sexually active.

**Wanda:** I think it’s not a very smart choice, cause a lot of things could happen, I just don’t think it’s very smart right now as a high school.

**Simone:** I really care, but I don’t because it’s not my business, but certain people shouldn’t be doing it because it’s not, you have time for it, it does not automatically mean that because you are older you should e doing it , you should be with a person that you really know is gonna be there for life

Most church male respondents admitted having had alcohol and even used drugs.

Terrence even stated that his heavy drinking and smoking was a part of his delinquent past:

**Khosi:** You said you used to got into a lot of trouble?

Yes, a lot of trouble

**Khosi:** What kind of trouble?

**Terrence:** Yeah because I had charges like disorder kind of charges, misdemeanors. It ain't serious now, the only serious thing on there in all these kinds of charges was from fighting and then I had a felonious assault, which was a felony, but then it got dropped down to a misdemeanor. So drinking, smoking, popping pills, drinking, was all a part of it. So yeah. But, well all the trouble I was getting into stopped. I was still smoking weed and drinking, but when that stopped I was trying to get into the Navy cause you gotta be clean in order to get into the Navy. I don’t do that anymore. I feel that God has taken me to the military for a reason, so I guess yeah. But I still drink, it’s okay to drink, but no more getting pissy drunk, I just get a nice little buzz, chill watch TV,
occasionally go to white castle get something to drink, have someone drive me home.

David also revealed that he gave in to peer pressure on several occasions when he was entering his teenage years. However, he soon experienced negative consequences (which he did not specify) that “freaked him out” and he stopped. For him, it was important to change his ways and engage in more positive behavior because he viewed his experimentation with drugs as potentially harmful to him down the road:

David: I did a lot of bad things when I was younger, but now I am changing…Like during the preteens, like peer pressure was really setting in. Um, I kinda smoked for the first time, like the first and last time, I kinda ended up freaking out a little bit after that, I quit.

Bobby, on the other hand, admitted that he was still struggling to resist negative temptation because he faces it in his daily life. He constantly has to make a choice not to conform to negativity when he is around his delinquent friends:

Bobby: Honestly I have, I am still kinda dealing with those things cause I am around it a lot and whether it has to do with friends I know or people I hang around with is always something coming out with that. I mean I am not saying I haven’t done it or what not, it’s just like, I choose not to do it. There would be times when I would slip up and not think about what I am doing and then I would think about it and stop myself.

When it comes to sexual activity, the majority of these young men indicated that they are sexually active. They perceive teenage sexual engagement as a reality in contemporary society and believe that young people should be educated to take more responsibility for their lives.

Tyler: I believe they should not, everybody wants young people to wait until they get married to engage in sexual activity, but you have to be real about these things you can’t be naïve with the way things are now, young people, it is real they are having sex and I feel like instead of being naïve about it and acting like it’s not happening, we need to
encourage people to ‘if you are having sex get tested for AIDS and other STDs and wear a condom.’

**Timothy:** I feel like over time more and younger people like not just my age like if you look at it now, I have seen stuff on TV, girls getting pregnant. But you still have people that don’t care girl or male, it’s just like ‘Oh whatever’. I also see people that care about it that still wanna do something about it. I feel like it’s not right, it just makes everything worst.

The majority of the female church respondents indicated that they have never been interested in drinking alcohol or drugs. It is something that they do not find appealing and have always been able to resist any temptations and pressures from their peers to experiment. To these young people such behavior would be personally harmful to one’s body and goes against their moral and religious beliefs:

**Virginia:** I am an athlete and you know I don’t think that is helpful for my body.....To an extent I mean people do know that I am Deacon’s daughter and I go to church.

**Maxine:** I have never been tempted to drink beer, I think beer is nasty even though I haven’t had it just stinks, I can’t stand the smell of smoke, especially since I have asthma, I just don’t like it because I don’t wanna grow up having cancer or having a drinking problem and we are taught in health class that it’s not healthy. Also being a Christian we know that smoking and drinking isn’t the right thing to do, selling drugs or buying drugs is not God’s way so therefore it’s not supposed to be done, people do that, people so make mistakes and do things like that but they repent for it and I just don’t wanna have anything to do with it at all.

Interestingly, however, of the five females in the church sample, three indicated that they have had sex before, a decision which they now deeply regret. In the conversations that follow, Maya and Pamela provide insight into how their decision to have sex was a function of a pressure they felt to please their partners. We also learn that this experience has left an indelible mark in their lives, albeit in distinct ways:
Maya: Uh, I think… I think it’s not good, but I know that girls are out there doing it. I mean personally have had sex before…Umm well I think it was pressure because I really didn’t want to, but I really liked him and he was really nice.

Khosi: Was it with the current boyfriend?

No. Um but um I think it was just him pressuring me into doing it

Khosi: So you found yourself…

Yeah and I just, it just happened.

Do you regret it?

On the one hand yes, but on the other hand no, I don’t regret it because I learned from it and I haven’t done it since, so

So you’ve only done it once? So with your current boyfriend you don’t…

No. I told him we not going to do it because I didn’t like it at all. And I found myself crying like ‘cause I really didn’t want to do it. But the fact that I had done it I felt like I betrayed my family, the Lord, myself so I just didn’t want to go through that anymore.

Pamela: Em, I don’t really, I mean, that I guess it is your decision and I am not a virgin actually and that’s why I have not been on a date in a year because I don’t wanna fall into that and I feel that was a mistake and I don’t wanna make that same mistake. It just like, it wasn’t worth it.

Khosi: How did it come about that you found yourself in that situation?

I was actually somewhere I wasn’t supposed to be, I was actually dating this guy for about six months and I ended up, I was supposed to be with y friend and I was walking to stop by and see her, she ended up leaving me there and so one thing led to another.

Khosi: Do you still have regret or have you moved on?

Em, I have regrets because I ended up getting pregnant and I had an abortion a year ago, I think the abortion is what probably had the most effect on me
The regret expressed by Maya and Pamela may have been prompted by their feelings of powerlessness when they first had sexual intercourse. Kelly and Morgan-Kidd (2001) concluded that one of the determinants of adolescent girl’s sexual behavior is the power dynamics within relationships and their quest for romance. The power dynamics, which the authors cite as functions of inherited traditional gender roles, refer to the girl’s fundamental propensity to perceive sex as something boys needed, are entitled to, and should get:

They described how they helped or deferred to their boyfriends and seldom mentioned their own needs or desires. Girls expressed resignation to male behaviors, no matter how egregious (a brother and his friends getting a girl drunk and having sex with her in the family’s living room). Perhaps because they described themselves as “fragile”, ideas about resisting, standing up to males, or saying no were seldom mentioned (p.484).

In other words, they may feel compelled to please their boyfriends and thus give into having sex, only to later regret their decision. The girl’s yearning for romance is another key factor influencing their decision to engage in sexual activity. This stems from an intense need to be loved and the hope that sex would bring them closer to it. Kelly and Morgan-Kidd (2001) believe these romantic ideals to be misleading in that they are nothing but “… a kind of glue that held misinformation, judgmental attitudes, and illusion together. Love was both a romantic illusion and a basic need that girls sought. It functioned as an irrefutable rationale for sexual relations, often in spite of logic, judgment, or sense that they believed their actions to be wrong.” (p.485)
6.1.4 Educational Experiences

It is important at this point to highlight some of the site specific differences that may have inform the nature of responses regarding schooling experiences among the youth in this study. The first set of differences to be considered is in school sites across the two countries. The school respondents were based in a predominantly Black school located in a large city just outside the downtown area, whose teaching philosophy is based on African-centered holistic pedagogy. While the school in the South African context is also predominantly Black, the latter is not so much determined by a teaching philosophy, but physical location. It is located in a township that was designated for Black Africans during the Apartheid era.

The second set of differences to be considered are in the church cites in both nations. The church site in the United States is located in a predominantly Black community. Here there was variation in the type of schools that the youth attended. Most were likely to attend racially mixed public schools. The church in South Africa was also based in predominantly Black community. However, most of the respondents attended predominantly Black schools in various surrounding Townships. There were a few who attended multi-racial schools in various surrounding suburban areas. These schools tended to be more expensive, which means attendance to these schools was determined by higher parental income.

Exploring the educational experiences and outcomes of African ancestry youth in this study (both in the United States and South Africa) became an imperative part of the investigation. This is because it is one area in which this group has unique experiences
compared to their peers of European decent. Their educational experiences have been tied to their historical, structural and unique developmental changes in their lives and Black youth. Of particular interest in this study is how, given their familial racial and religious socialization experiences and their own sense of self, these young people navigate their schooling lives. There is ample empirical evidence from the United States that links parental racial socialization practices centered on African American cultural values and traditions adolescent grades. These African centered values were also linked to greater academic self-efficacy and achievement goals among African American students (Brown et al, 2009; Constantine and Blackmon, 2002). Religious socialization experiences have also been associated with academic achievement among this and other minority group. In their analysis of minority youth, particularly those from disadvantaged neighborhoods, Regnerus and Elder (2003) found that being strongly active in religious activity (especially regular church attendance) among this group contributed to academic advancement, compared to their counterparts from higher-income neighborhoods. Furthermore, an association has been found between strongly religious and intact family backgrounds and academic achievement among Blacks and students from other minority groups (Jeynes, 2003).

Most school male respondents described their schooling experiences as positive. Generally they get along well with their teachers whom they find helpful whenever they needed them because. The small school size makes it possible to get individual attention from teachers and the school’s African centered approach that emphasizes success and achievement keeps them driven to perform well:
Zenith: It’s not a big school on a high school level period, we only have 300 students so its, every teacher knows almost every student’s name and every student know every teacher so it’s like, it’s more of a family...They are helpful because they like to help because they understand who we are we are mostly Black.

Leon: it is very different from other schools, you know we don’t really have gangs here and you know all the people here are really about success, it’s really a good thing to be able to come to a class and be like ‘hey I got a 3.0 , I got a 4.0’ that’s something to be proud of when in other schools that would be something to tease somebody about and we actually learn more about our culture look at this classroom you got Kwanzaa, you got a picture of Africa up there and the African statue, you would not see that I really other school in Columbus I can guarantee you that.

For most of the females being in this kind of a schooling environment has nurtured their sense of self as Black people:

Wanda: It teaches me things about myself and about being Black compared to. I have learned a lot about my African heritage than in my last school.

Brianna: Em the school is basically filled with Black people, there is no white students, Em I mean I like it, I just feel that it’s the best school for me right now because I manna graduate and go to college and this school is helpful for that if you want to do those thing, that’s why I manna stay.

Unlike the males, however, they seem to be dissatisfied with their performance. Most described themselves as average students whose GPA ranging from 3.2-3.8. This is something they strongly feel determined to change. It was church male respondents who experienced discrimination in their schooling lives. These were coming from teachers who devalued their abilities through demeaning comments:

Tyler: I have had experiences with Caucasian teachers who told me that I will not amount to anything, ‘you won’t graduate from high school’ and they told me I was not going to make it out of high school.

Khosi: What brought on those comments, do you think?
There were some subjects that I just wasn’t the best at them, I did pass them but I wasn’t getting the As in those classes, like Math, so it was like ‘you won’t make it in high school, you won’t make it out of high school’ and that sort of made me wanna do more. It made me wanna keep on going and the funny thing about it was I was in a school were 98% of the students were Black, but a lot of the teachers were Caucasian. You had to get on the waiting list, not everybody was accepted, and me and my brother got accepted and we just went.

Scholars have documented the challenges that Black males are subjected to in public schools, which in turn negatively affect their educational outcomes. This group is more likely to be placed in the lowest tracks, they are often labeled as delinquent, are subjected to more detention for behavioral problems, and are erroneously with regards to their performance (Rosella and Albrecht, 1993).

They also had to contend with racial as well as slurs from peers. In such situations, as shown in David’s account below, the employment of avoidance coping strategies, in which they decided to shrug the abuse for the sake of maintaining their sanity, seem to work. One strategy that David used was to divert the negativity back to those who made the comments and perceive them as the ignorant:

David: I was the only Black on my wrestling team in the 8th grade, and heard the N-word around a couple of times. During practice or I would be walking in the hallway and I would hear things like ‘Oh here is my N-word’ it happens a lot… I would always confront them and say you ‘you just have no clue what you are saying, you are just saying it because you hear your grandparents or your parents say that just cause that’s what they used to say in slavery, you have no clue what that word means’ I used to be bothered by that a lot, not I just kinda laugh it off and people would just look at me and say ‘dude he just called you the N-word, what are going to do about .. I would just say ‘no it’s not about me, they are just ignorant.’…. I kinda did things and I always pushed myself a little harder, like if somebody is better than me I would pushed myself to be better than them. I just have a sense of knowing that am not just gonna settle. I feel like there is something better I can do. I will keep doing better. I will try my best to excel.

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These incidences, however, did not serve to demoralize these young men. Rather they served as impetus propelling them to move forward and work even harder to succeed.

The majority of the female respondents attend racially mixed, college preparatory academies.

**Maya:** And, um we well I don’t think they really look at the race thing because you have to be on the waiting list to be to get in the school they actually take through everybody they don’t really look at the race. So um…I don’t know.

**Sondra:** Mmm, it depends on the, the teachers some teachers are have that attitude like ‘I am the teacher, you are the student so shut up’ but that’s not gonna work because in order to get a good relationship it has to come respectfully from both ways, but you have teachers that are really good and sometimes it depends on the student and how the student is if they are like just rebellious and don’t wanna obey the teacher that’s trying to help them out and sometimes the teachers are harder on you because they want you to succeed

As was the case with the school females, the church female respondents felt that their grades could be higher than where they are at the moment:

**Maxine:** Um I have one C, two A’s and three B’s I know I can do a lot better

**Pamela:** Yeah I wish would have got an A in Chemistry though, but I got, I have all A-s right now so.

**Maya:** No, not really because I’m really not good in math at all. Yes, So my grade right now is a low C.
6.2 Religiosity, Racial Identity and Black South African Youth Developmental Outcomes

6.2.1. Mental health

Most school male respondents reported to have a general sense of mental wellbeing. They were less likely to have depressive moments and indicated that they were satisfied with their lives and generally happy. Neither their racial outlook nor their religious beliefs influenced had any impact on their well being.

Similarly, the majority of the school female respondents were more likely to feel satisfied and happy most of the time. They did however report that they have, on occasion, experienced some form of depression. These were caused by problems within their families, be it a loss of a loved one or conflict within their families. None of the school females viewed their outlook in life and how they deal with mental health issues as a function of their racial identity beliefs and values. Rather, faith seemed to matter because it enables them to remain grounded in face of challenges. It also serves as a deterrent against engaging in risk related behavior like drinking alcohol:

Cikiza: Ja, I always, when I face challenges I always tell myself that no, this will also pass, like I always say no it’s just a, I always take a problem as a challenge. As I have said that God is always giving me strength, and I always pray to God that I should not fall because of challenges, like I don’t see myself falling because of this challenge because I know God is always there.

Thandeka: In a positive manner because it prevents me from causing damage. Like my friends and I don’t because I am young and I doubt if I will ever drink alcohol.
Faith seemed to play a very important role in the way the church male respondents’ perceived mental health. Most were likely to report a positive outlook in life in which they are more often happy than sad. There was a strong sense of contentment and faith:

**Khaya:** When you are religious you can handle situations, even if the situation is hard, but you tell yourself one thing, you won’t give up because you have come very far here you come from, so you are here because you have come from afar, a place that is not pleasant, so it helps in that way.

Similar sentiments regarding the significance of having strong faith in perceived mental health were found in the narratives of the church female respondents. Most were likely to report a positive outlook in life wherein in they are more often happy and never depressed. This is due to a strong connection they have with and faith in God:

**Thembela:** Ja like I connect with God and then I am like, I like tell him that I am going through this and this and this and the like after I have done that I feel a bit free because I have told him what I am going through and my problems and all that stuff.

6.2.2. Self Esteem

Most school male respondents reported high perceived self-esteem wherein they consider themselves to be worthy with good qualities and talents. They were also less likely to feel as failures. They cited that they have a lot to be proud particularly, having a family who support they can always rely on.

Reports of perceived self-esteem were evident among the school female respondents as well. A strong sense of worth and pride in the way they carry themselves in social settings with grace, morality and respect, were the themes in their narratives. However, despite a good sense of self and their pride in their Black identity and culture,
there were some elements of self-doubt among this group. Most were likely to feel like failures when they compared themselves to their white peers.

**Precious:** Yes, let’s say I participate in some kind modeling competition where there are white people and I do not win, I feel as though I m a failure and get easily discouraged not to try again. Yes sometimes, especially when there are white people in that competition. You always compare yourself.

Church male respondents also reported a strong sense of worth, pride and good qualities as indicators of perceived high self esteem. They take pride in their good leadership qualities and strong religious beliefs and were less likely to feel like failures.

**Themba:** I would say my self esteem is high because last of last year2006 or 5, at school I was in the SCO

**Khosi:** What is SCO?

Student Christian Organization and we went to a camp where I was the only one from the AME. So in the morning we were given a word/gospel/topic and we had to discuss as groups. After that we had to elect one parson to go and present our ideas. I was not shy and told myself that will stand up and speak. So I volunteered.

Similar reports of positive sense of worth and good qualities were found in the narratives of the church female respondents. In particular, they cite their strong suit as confined in their vocal and assertiveness, compassion, friendliness. This is something they feel proud of as young Black women. They were less likely to feel like failures:

**Nomathamsanqa:** Yes. Ja. I am very loving, I very joking and I am very open and am sometime shy when I am around people, when I am meeting people for the first time and I am very talkative if I am with someone I am used to.

**Athi:** Em Ja, qualities like I have got lots of friends I am a friendly person, I am talkative person. I know how to like interact with people.
6.2.3. Risk-Related Behavior

Similar questions concerning risk related behavior (drinking, smoking and engaging in early sexual behavior were posed to Black South youth respondents in the school and church settings. Most of the school males said they have had a drink of beer and alcohol, but have never experimented with any drugs. These young men were more likely to emphasize that he is only an occasional drinker “Like I don’t drink during the year, I drink during December and when I am having fun”

With regards to their perceptions on sexual behavior, the majority of male respondents from the school said they have had sex. However, still maintain that its risky, especially for girls who are more likely to get pregnant at a young age. They therefore do not advise it.

**Dumile:** Its wrong. There people who get pregnant and still come to school. That thing as you said faith it’s not right like a Black girl, it’s not a woman it’s a girl to have a baby at school, what are they thinking about their future. They are only focusing on the present and when it has past she does not think about the future.

**James:** I think it’s bad because they get pregnant and they have diseases.

The majority of the female school respondents indicated that they have never felt the urge to experiment with any drugs or alcohol. Furthermore, all five females indicated that they were still virgins. Mostly because: a) they feel they are too young, b) they do not want to get pregnant as they teenage girls who have sex early on run the risk of becoming parents early and contracting diseases,-

**Thandiswa:** It’s not right because if you have sex you can catch diseases and you can get pregnant and having a baby is not a child’s play.
-and c) for some having sex goes against their moral and religious values. There were varying perceptions, regarding when one should have sex. Most, except for Precious-

**Precious:** Okay, no what if you wait and wait and then not get married? Because there are those who don’t get married. So if you tell yourself that it is the right thing to do, you can do it. I think it’s wrong because you may get pregnant, so what will you do with a baby. They should wait until they are 21 years old.

- discouraged premarital sex for religious reasons:

**Thandeka:** What if you get pregnant? I think teenagers should wait until they get married. According to Christianity, you are not supposed to have sex because you are still young, even if you are 20 you have to get married first before you can do that. But some people abused these teachings. For me they are still important. I told myself that I would still abide by them.

Confessing that sex is very difficult to resist as a teenager because, as Vivian points out:

**Vivian:** I don’t think teenagers should do it, I don’t think they should have sex, but because of our nature, like our nature is very fast, it’s very fast so I don’t think that we can help it.

**Khosi:** What do you mean by nature?

I mean that uhm, our blood, like especially girls we grow up fast, and we begin menstruation very early and like our bodies change too early at 15 and then like most of the time at 16 you start to have age pimples, but now at 15 at 13 they have age pimples you know. So when you develop, when your nature develop when everything in your body changes all at once, you are becoming an adult, you develop these feelings that influence you and mostly people allow their these feelings to affect their mentality the way they think so they don’t think straight, they just do things and say it’s a mistake whereas it’s not a I mistake.

Some of these young women outlined the strategies they personally employ to cope with or evade sexual activity and its associated risks. For instance, when asked if she has personally had difficulties resisting “nature” in the past, she explained how much effort it takes in that she constantly has to weigh the risks and consequences of her choices.
During moments of temptation or weakness, she draws upon her religious faith and teachings to help her overcome the natural urges. The anticipated outcome of disappointing significant figures in her life serves as a powerful deterring force when she imagines distressing feelings of shame she would experience:

Hey its hard, it’s hard, it’s very hard, but a Christian right, in terms of sexuality and stuff, I read books most of the time. I buy books that are written by Reverends about sexual purity. I have learned that it’s not wrong to have sex, but it’s about doing it with the right person at the right time. That is what I tell myself, it’s not that I don’t want to do it, sometimes. I do want to do it you know, and like when the blood as I said when the nature takes course, and says ‘I am here now, [Chuckles] I am here, you can’t stop yourself, you can’t control yourself, but sometimes you can use your brain and control yourself you know Emh the consequences of this thing and the outcomes will be bad, so I should at least try to stop myself from doing this thing and do it when I control myself when I have got.

Vivian said she realized that if she takes risks her mother or aunt will suffer because of her actions. They will be disappointment in her because they raised her with strong moral value. This is how she copes with and is able to resist temptations “that is how I manage, that is how I stop myself by thinking about where I come from.”

Furthermore, in order to ensure celibacy and thus avoiding falling into the trap of physical temptation completely, Cikiza made the decision to break up with her former boyfriend and remain unattached to anyone:

**Cikiza:** I have been with my ex-boyfriend for about two years and we had to break up when I got saved. Actually in my religion we are allowed to love somebody but you are not allowed to have sex before marriage and another reason I think is that some guys would not be able to cope with that. Let’s say this boyfriend of mine whom I love, I love him and I try to make him understand that we cannot have sex before marriage and they are not born again like me, he will try hard to overcome me as girls are weak, so I just decided to stay single because immediately, as I keep talking to him he might want to try and get me to have sex with him.
Khosi: Has he ever tried that?

No, he has never done that, but like as we talk as young people, some are facing those challenges and I also feel that, seriously if it was up to me I would not have a boyfriend to begin with. When we are both sitting talking and we start kissing and then what is the next step, where are we going? So I try to avoid all those things.

Thandiswa felt the need to create a system for herself of what she considers to be different stages that lead to the ultimate act. She recognizes that there is a certain stage that one cannot go beyond. Each stage has specific type of physical contact.

Thandiswa: Yes, there will always be that thing inside of me that, Yes I want to do things you know, I want to kiss this person, I want to touch this person. Yes I can touch him by hand, we do touch by hand, we do hold hands and hug each other, body hugging only, but I have learned about the ten steps to sex, you know and I am always rating myself or I am always stopping at four.

Khosi: What is four?

Eh, it’s like when you are sitting with each other like more often like looking at each other and holding hands, and give each other brief hugs, and just fake kissing like [Demonstrates the latter] and these are the steps that I just go for not exceeding that, and moving towards those kind of hugs that we do not understand that just go too far and things like French kisses, leading to sex you know and touching all the time to you know.

Most church male respondents reported that their drinking and drug use, although a thing of the past, was very much a part of their participation engaged activities. They shared that their engagement in delinquent behavior took place when they began to stray away from the religious values that they were taught by their parents. They soon discovered however, that the life of crime was detrimental to their well being and put them at risk of incarceration. They cited that it was their association with delinquent peers that got them into trouble. However, once they decided to socialize with prosocial friends who were
religiously active, they were able to restore their moral behavior, which saved them from a life of crime, imprisonment or even death. The following were some of the insightful stories they told about their journey:

**Zoli:** Okay, in the past, I used to, as you know a child, I used to steal and steal

**Khosi:** At what age?

Age, Yo I was very young, maybe 10-11. I used to steal stuff, and I would be beaten. Then one day I stole R 200.00 at home. I was punished, but I realized that ‘no man being punished does not it’s in me now.

**Khosi:** When you say, it’s in you what do you mean?

It means I am used to it, I don’t feel anything/pain anymore. But then in 2005, I stole my father’s gun. I had friends who were older than me and who were gunslingers, I then took my father’s gun and as time went we became enemies, then I took the gun and to my friends ‘its go’ and that is how we started. Then I also became known as a gunslinger that was naughty.

**Khosi:** What is a gunslinger?

Like robbing and shooting people, basically behaving as animals where you want to have enemies when you go outside you want to shoot people.

**Khosi:** So when you go out with your gun you are looking for people who will annoy you.

Yes who will annoy you so that your name will be respected. But then one day in 2006 police were looking for me at home in 15 different police vans. They also looked for me at school. Even then I did not stop being a troublemaker.

**Khaya:** You see I have changed now I go to church so I stopped doing some of the things. The reason why I stopped drink, I used to drink because of peer pressure. In 2003 I used to have friends, three friends, but we formed a group and we were 20. Among our friends, we did not think in the same way. There are those who are always negative who think negative things, so they influenced us and said ‘no man, let’s get drunk,
lets rob and steal, and stuff” so I realized that ‘no man this life will not get me anywhere, so I would rather change and o things in God’s way’

Khosi: How did you come to that realization?

Because one of my friends was arrested and I was like ‘Wow, now I have to change my ways because I will be arrested in no time. I had to change no matter what and choose a better life than the one I had because if I was still on that path, maybe I would be dead or in prison.

With regards to sexual behavior, however, most of the church male respondents indicated that they are sexually active. They feel justified given their “maturity as men” and are convinced that they know what they are doing:

Khaya: The bible states that, I think Genesis chapter 3, whereby it says a human being should not live alone they have to have someone they can talk to so in that way it helps because I things I don’t like for instance, there is something that hurts me I speak to my chick. I would not say having sex is, I would not say its wrong, but according to Christianity you must, you should have sex when you are married, that is the right time to have sex, but things now are changing, things are now done differently having sex as a young person of my age, its fine, its fine, I can say that.

Themba: When a guy reaches age 17 they begin to feel like they are men…I think age 17 upward, it’s a good thing to have sex because we are human beings and this is how they feel at that point. Waiting until you get married is not realistic. What if you don’t get married? How long can you wait?

Themba insisted that one can uphold their religious values even in the context of engaging in pre-marital sex. He does not view these practices as contradictory. Here he describes how he negotiates sexual activity as a religious man in his intimate relationship:

Themba: When you are involved in a relationship, especially with someone who is also religious, sometimes when you do things you reference the bible, so when it comes to sex you can discuss that there was such a thing where a woman who was not married or a man who was not married and had sex with a woman who was not married and at that time, they were killed. I am just making an example, just because she fell pregnant. I would tell her that n ‘my fear is that we should use a condom
because I don’t want you to be pregnant and loose you, so let’s use a condom. So that is where religion comes in.

Furthermore, Zoli provides a clear insight into the role of peer pressure when it comes to decisions about sexual experimentation:

**Zoli:** I think its fine. Sex is great.

**Khosi:** There are those people who think that people your age should wait until they get married. Do you think people your age should wait until they are married to have sex?

No, no no.

**Khosi:** Why not?

No, no no that is not good because kids today, especially Blacks, do not like to wait because of peer pressure and they like to have fun and they cannot resist temptations. There are things they use that make them change and become wild. Also guys are also influenced by their friends. They would say ‘hey I saw this on TV and it looks great I want to try it’ you see. So he is influenced by his friends and then they in turn entice their girlfriends to try it and when they do, there is no turning back because it feels great.

**Khosi:** As you have fun are you using protection? Are you safe?

Yes of-course. I promised myself a long time ago that in life I would never stop using protection.

In this narrative, the strong influence of peers in risk related behavior is evident. Deviant Peers have been counted among the strongest models that reinforce sexual experimentation among adolescents. They provide selective encouragement in which they stress rewards or costs of sex as an important aspect of exploration. Furthermore, Benda and Diblasio, (1994) cited gender differences in the influence of peers. Being faced with realities of early pregnancy as well as cultural and familial prohibitions, girls are more likely to consider both rewards and costs when negotiating peer influence, while
for boys tended to downplay the costs and yield in to peer influence because they view sex as exciting and pleasurable.

Similar to their school counterparts, most church female respondents reported that they have never tried alcohol or drugs. They were more likely to stress the importance of morality in their lives. All five of them said they are still virgins, the reasons being that they consider themselves too young and inexperienced and that its “a wrong thing to do at my age” (Nomathamsanqa).

Thembela: Because they are too young and the only age that you legally allowed is I think its 18 because then by now you know everything you know the risks and the consequences and stuff. I think so because like I know what’s right and wrong and at home we usually have a meeting and my sisters and all my girl cousins and then we talk about things

Khosi: What kind of things?

Like when my there cousin fell pregnant. She was 29 and then she told us everything like ‘don’t do this now and then do it later’ like she told us, she, she was the youngest top have ea baby in your house.

6.2.4. Educational Experiences

Most school male respondents seem to have positive schooling experiences. They feel their school is generally a safe space, even though it is located in a township. They views their teachers in a positive light, stressing that in cases of tensions, its usually the students who are perpetrators, not the teachers:

James: Our school is safe because there are cameras everywhere no, and if you get robbed that may only take place outside the school premises. The cameras can see. I get along well with my teachers, but others don’t. They don’t listen to the teachers.

Rooi: Some teachers, not all the teachers are good. But I think students often cause the problem. We as students have issues and we give our teachers a tough time. For example a teacher would warn a student to stop
doing something they considered to be out of place/ wrong, the student would still insist on doing it. Others even go to the extent of beating up teachers. Yes. Me I do not want to a teacher seriously. Students do not have respect. Other even smoke marijuana in class. Students are really corrupt here.

The school male respondents had mixed views about their schooling experiences.

Although, they considered their performance in their studies as commendable and they were happy with their teachers whom they found helpful-

**Precious**: Yes, I am. I am doing well in my subjects like Accounting. I am getting code 4 (50-60%). My teachers the teachers helpful because if you do not understand something you can go to the teacher during lunchtime and ask for help.

**Thandeka**: If I did not well in a test, they [teachers] would ask me to find out what happened. I would tell them that I did not understand at that time, but now I do. I ask them to explain again if I still don’t understand anything so that I can do better the next time around. They would also sometimes give me another chance.

-they were more likely to feel unsafe in their schooling surroundings. The school is not safe because their at high risk of being victims of crime at the hands of some of their school mates.

**Vivian**: It’s a great school because ever since I started [names the school], its great the education, the studies are great the subjects are great the teachers are great, but the students are bad, the students are wrong, they always have bad things up their sleeves, they always got thing that ‘this year we will not just go without hitting somebody, without robbing someone. They rob you inside the school, but they mark you, when you come with a cell phone when you come with something they always mark you because I live in [names the township] especially if they know that you leave far, they wait for you at the station, they will go out of the school during lunch time and go and change out of their school uniform and they would wait for you.

**Thandeka**: No, because there are tsotsies (criminals, like I don’t want to carry my cell phone here at school, I don’t carry my cell phone here because they steal it. Also last year there was a group of young men who
came looking for one of the students they wanted to kill so that is why we have heavy security now.

Most church male respondents attended predominantly Black schools located in their townships of residence. Most were in senior grades and were looking forward to graduating and going to college.

Themba: This year they are good, than previous year. I am confident that I will pass and go to the next grade.

They cited that they were satisfied with their school performance, but were not happy with their teachers. There appears to be some tensions wherein the students did not seem to approve of the ways in which their teachers exercised their authority or communicate with them.

Mzi: the teachers they like to talk, like they would see students standing at the corner during lunch, then they would pass by and make snide comments like ‘get away from me you ugly things’

Khosi: A teacher talking like that to students?

Yes. That happens, but since I am able to talk back. I just respond. There are those students who are scared and freak out when the teacher talk to them like that. But recently there was an incident were a student beat up a teacher. What happened was that this student was hanging out outside with his friends and the teacher passed by and instructed him to go to class. He ignored the teacher. The teacher then went and grabbed him by his clothes. He pushed the teacher away and said ‘I don’t want to go to your class leave me alone’ the teacher said’ what did you say?’ and then slapped the student. The student responded by punching the teacher several times. He beat him up. People had to come and intervene. So the teacher did not have a chance with that student.

Evidence of student rebellious attitudes revealed in these narratives may provide a glimpse of the presence of relational tensions within teacher people relationships in the townships. One wonders as to the depth and circumstances that may cause these
tensions, an issue that warrants further exploration. Student rebellion is not a new phenomenon in South African Townships schools. During the 1980s, the height of Apartheid, there was a surge in student political activism whose main goal was to link educational struggles at that time with the political struggles nationwide. The main objective was to use education as an instrument of liberation. Therefore “…students have challenged the content, format, and goals of their education.” (Bundy, 1987: 328).

Student rebellion against authority within the schooling environment was part of a deliberate strategy of resistance. The key question that comes to mind when reviewing the narrative responses from these the youth in this study are: a) what are the schooling environmental circumstances that cause these student rebellious attitudes and teacher aggression in contemporary Township schools in South Africa? b) what is the meaning of these tensions in relation to the overall educational ideologies in contemporary South Africa, i.e. if the youth activists of the 1970s and 1980s were resisting a disempowering pedagogy, what are contemporary youth resisting?

Most of the church female respondents went to racially mixed schools (comprising most of Black and Colored racial groups), and their schooling experiences, however, were quite different. For instance, the stories told by the young women in the narratives below reveal environments characterized by racial tensions on the one hand, racial harmony on the other hand:

Nomathamsanqa: It’s a mixed school. Colored and Blacks. My school is corrupt. Gangsterism is high you will find a lot of colored gangsters and Black people. My school is corrupt shame, but at the same it’s the boys, we girls get along very well, we are friends. There was that thing of racial fights with Black people colored; it was even publish in daily voice, a local newspaper. Also, teachers and students don’t get along at
all when it comes to working …My grades have dropped. I used to get, my average was 87% now its 68%. But they are still good. Ja its just that I don’t get the certificate anymore because it is said that every year when you go up, you grades go down by 10%, so I would say its quiet normal

**Thembela:** My school is Black colored everybody is allowed to go there. It’s a fine, school it’s a nice school I might say, like we do activities sand stuff. Every Monday we go to the assembly and we read the bible, we pray and we sing, Ja that’s it….Ja we have a few people so Ja we are able to get the attention we need. They are quiet helpful because if you ask them a question, they explain it from the start…I am doing well because Ja, Em last term I got the principal’s award.

These diverse experiences have implications for both schooling experiences and performances. Nomathamsanqa’s performance has declined, while Thembela’s improved.

**Summary and Conclusion**

The youth respondents in this study were asked questions relating to their experiences with mental health, self-esteem, risk related behavior and schooling. The aim was to explore the extent to which they draw upon racial identity and religiosity knowledge and beliefs as they cope with their changing surroundings. Previous research has documented that racial socialization, in particular, enables African American youth cope with adjustment issues and racial discrimination (Miller and McIntosh, 1999).

Most school male respondents reported positive mental health. They felt their lives were headed in the right direction as they continue to change. It was racial identity, not religiosity that informed their outlook in life. They mentioned how it functions as a coping mechanism when they face or expect to face forms of racial discrimination. These young men also displayed high self-esteem in that they were self-assured with a strong
sense of personal worth and good qualities as Black males. For the females, their general positive outlook was nurtured by their religious faith. Although they do experience moments of sadness and minor bouts of depression, they find strength in their faith in God and are thus able to withstand and pull through. Determination and focus were associated with Blackness. Part of the high self esteem was cultivated by their respect for African American culture.

Church male respondents also indicated that they were in a good place mentally. They believed they were on the right path in life because they are obeying and following God’s guidance. Moral judgment based on faith and wisdom was central to their outlook in life. For the female church respondents, both racial identity and religious faith mattered for coping with discrimination and life challenges in general. The personal connection with God, whom they reared as their strong confidant is crucial in guiding their life through life changes and the challenges it brings.

Among South African respondents, males from the school context expressed contentment and a positive sense of mental health. Neither racial identity nor religiosity was attached to their experiences. Reports of high self esteem were also provided in the form of positive self-validation and assurance. Female respondents also felt positive about their mental health, despite occasional sadness due to familial challenges. Religiosity was more associated with a positive outlook in life as it helps them cope with difficulties. A strong sense of worth was important for the school females, which was key to making good impression as they interacting with others. However, self doubt in
their abilities, compared to those of whites was evident. Feelings of inferiority surfaced when they began to compare themselves white people they encounter.

The church males reported a strong sense of worth, pride and good qualities as indicators of perceived high self esteem. They accentuated their leadership qualities and strong religious beliefs and were less likely to feel like failures. Church females highlighted their vocal skills, assertiveness, compassion, friendliness as god qualities which were important for their self-esteem. When it comes to risk-related behaviors, most African American school male respondents admitted to have drunk alcohol and used drugs. The main reasons were experimentation and peer pressure. With regards to sexual activity, they all indicated that they were no longer virgins. They believed sexual intercourse is a personal choice and they seemed confident in their abilities and maturity to handle it in their intimate relationships. All females on the other hand, have never experimented with drugs or alcohol and expressed that they were still virgins. They do not feel ready to be physically intimate with anyone because they do not want to take the risk. Although they also believe teenage sexual intercourse based on personal choice, they still do not think it’s a smart choice.

Among the church respondents, church male respondents also admitted to drinking alcohol and drug use in their past. Most cited peer pressure as the cause, which for some is still a continued to struggle to resist. These young men were sexually active. They take the position that whether society likes it or not, teenagers will always engage in sex. It is a reality of contemporary American society. The females had no experiences with drinking and illicit drugs, but most did reveal that they have had sexual intercourse.
Their first experiences with sexual intercourse were traumatic and they regretted making the choice and giving in to pressure from their boyfriends.

Most of the school males said they have had a drink of beer and alcohol, but have never experimented with any drugs. They also said they have had sex. They believed that sex is risky for the females more than males because it can lead to early pregnancy. The majority of the female school respondents indicated that they have never felt the urge to experiment with any drugs or alcohol. They all chose to keep their virginity because they feel they are not mature enough to engage in sexual intercourse for the fear of early pregnancy and diseases. Most church male respondents reported that their drinking and drug use, although a thing of the past, was very much a part of their participation engaged activities. They revealed that they are sexually active and consider themselves mature enough as “men” to do so. It also does not go against their religious beliefs. Most church female respondents reported that they have never tried alcohol or drugs. They were more likely to stress the importance of morality in their lives. They were also still virgins and too young to have sex.

When it comes to schooling experiences, Most African American school males perceived it to be positive. They value the educational environment because it nurtures growth. They get individual attention from their teachers who set high standards for success. They were satisfied with their performance and achievements. For the females, the culturally sensitive philosophy of the school is most appealing for the sense of self. They were however, satisfied with their performance and feel the need to challenge themselves to improve their grades.
Some of the encounters with racial discrimination and attacks in schools were reported by some church males. In particular these came in the form of discouraging and bias teacher comments as well as racial slurs peers. In retrospect, these experiences were viewed as blessings for the males because they encouraged them to challenge themselves even more. They also learned to adapt coping strategies avoidance involving diverting the negative implications of the comments to those delivering them, labeling the latter as ignorant. Most female respondents were in college preparatory schools and shared that they were enjoying their schooling experiences. However, similar to the school females, they were not satisfied with their performance and felt they needed to obtain better grades in order to fulfill their college dreams goals.

Among the South African youth, most school male respondents seem to have positive schooling experiences. They felt safe in their environment and viewed their teachers in a favorable and respectful manner. While the school females felt content with their performance and enjoyed good relations with teachers, they did not feel safe in their school due to the presence of delinquent youth. Most church male respondents were seniors attending predominantly Black schools located in their townships of residence. They cited tensions in their relationships with teachers whom they felt often abused their authority. Nevertheless, they were enjoying their schooling experiences and were looking forward to graduate. Most of the church female respondents went multi-racial school dominated by Black and Colored student population which produced divergent experiences with elements of racial tension in some and racial harmony in others.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the dynamic ways in which African American and Black South African youth draw upon their racial and religious socialization as they engage in self-discovery and cope with their changing world. The unique historical and sociopolitical position of people of African descent in both countries and the role of race and religion in their collective experiences made these young people suitable for examining what it means to be Black in contemporary United States and South Africa. Through in-depth individual interviews, this study sought to understand how individual and collective racial identity perceptions and religiosity, as informed by family background and community contextual factors, shape developmental outcomes such as mental health, self-esteem, educational performance, and risk-related behaviors of this group.

The research questions this study explored included the following: 1) In what ways do family and community socialization characteristics and exposure facilitate and inform the development of racial identity perceptions and religiosity among contemporary Black youth in the United States and South Africa? 2) What constitutes a developed sense of racial identity and religiosity, that is, what are their components? and what is the nature, if any, of their relationship to each other, 3) What is the significant manner in which racial identity and religiosity matter or not for youth developmental
outcomes, including mental health, self-esteem, educational performance, and risk-related behaviors? 4) In what similar or distinct ways are these processes influenced by the unique historical and contemporary cultural, political and social characteristics of each of the two nations?

7.1 Family Racial Identity Socialization: Cultural Differences

From a cross-cultural lens, African American youth were more likely than Black South African youth to be exposed to racial identity socialization during their formative years. Consistent with previous research, most African American parents, who most probably have experienced negative racial treatment themselves, reckon it is inevitable to incorporate messages about race in their parenting practices. From the narratives of the youth in this study, we learn that parents felt the need to foster a sense of racial, cultural pride in their children that will enable them to navigate their racially diverse and changing world. They also sought to prepare their children for possible racial discrimination and barriers in mainstream American society.

Further examination revealed that male and female African American adolescents receive different messages. Given that they are already perceived as a threat to society and are at risk of clashing with the authorities, parents are more likely to encourage their male offspring to be cautious, expect possible racial harassment, and learn how to deal with those situations. The main guidance is to be careful and aware of what they project, and to avoid confrontations. Other males are taught to avoid engaging in behaviors that would make them the target of Black male stereotyping and focus on cultivating
diligence, hard work, and self direction. In other words, they are taught to strive to set themselves apart as individuals so that they are not defined by their race and gender. Female racial socialization, on the other hand, focused more on teaching compassion and respect for people regardless of their race.

The lack of exposure to racial socialization among Black South African adolescents in this study can be attributed to several factors. First, as noted by Hocoy (1999), the geographical location as well as the demographic position of Black South Africans is such that they are in the numerical majority and indigenous to Africa. It is foreseeable, therefore, that blackness is considered to be primordial and thus an axiomatic truth. Moreover, Black South Africans can be distinguished from other racial groups within the country by their practice of indigenous traditional rituals as a way of expressing their blackness and ancestry. These are deeply embedded in the sense of who they are. Another possible factor is the time period in which these young people are being raised. During the Apartheid era, the Black Consciousness ideology formed a central and critical part of the credo of most anti-Apartheid political and social movements, whose mission was to fight against the subjugation of Black people in the country. The objective was to raise racial awareness and critical consciousness among Black people, wherein the latter was encouraged to refute the perception perpetuated by the Apartheid government depicting Black people as unworthy as a racial group. These tactics served as impetus for the mobilization of the masses for political action in Black communities across the country. In the post-Apartheid era, beginning with the first democratic elections in 1994, however, Black Consciousness and radical political action
gave way to sentiments of national unity, reconciliation, interracial group tolerance, and contact. The majority of the Black South African youth respondents in this study were born during this era of racial reconciliation, also known as “the New South Africa” or “Rainbow Nation.” Farred (2006) describes the rainbow in this context as symbolizing “…the disjoining of the ‘old’ South Africa from the new; the rainbow of the present represents a ‘racially’ complementary harmony as opposed to the Apartheid past where the disunion of the various peoples was the predominant racist logic” (p. 231). The push for the creation of a nonracial nation, in essence, served as the substitution of race as a principal representation of identity, with racelessness. Thus advocating a racial identity premised on Black Consciousness would have defeated the purpose of cultivating a nonracial environment.

7.2. Cross-Cultural Variations of Nigrescence

Questions on Black racial identity development as depicted in William J. Cross’s (2001) model on stages of Nigrescence yielded divergent findings among the adolescents across the two nations. There were some of the common themes that emerged in the narratives that reflected the four stages of the Cross model, namely, Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion and Internalization. First, most of the youth in both countries stated that they do not believe race should matter, particularly when it comes to interpersonal relations and that it should not be used as a basis for judging human character and competency. Second, they said that they do not harbor any negative feelings about and are not ashamed of being Black.
Some of the marked differences were that the majority of the African American youth respondents exhibited a strong sense of collective identity. This was clear in their strong refutation of the prevailing stereotypes about Black people’s competence. Most of the Black South African youth, on the other hand, confirmed these stereotypes and were very critical of what they considered to be Black people’s lack of a work ethic and motivation. They were also more likely to express feelings of inferiority when they compared themselves to white people in the country. They viewed, and white people as more successful and attributed this success to the latter’s intelligence, motivations and innovation. Furthermore, similar to their African American peers, Black South African youth embraced a multiculturalist worldview, which emphasizes contact between Black people and other racial groups in order to increase cultural adeptness. However, the reasons for subscribing to such a universalist/humanist viewpoint varied across the two nations. African American youth believed that interracial group and integration would benefit both Black people and other racial groups. This is because it would ensure that common goals of socioeconomic progress are realized. In other words, it’s good to celebrate one’s blackness, but it is equally important to embrace other cultures. For the Black South African youth, multicultural cooperation is necessary because Black people are incapable of achieving any success on their own and that they need help from white people who have the skills and expertise that would guarantee prosperity and progress.

What could explain such divergent viewpoints? I would argue that the answer lies in the familial, historical, and sociopolitical conditions and positions of Black people in both countries. First, as noted by Hocoy (1999), the divergent findings can be due to the
fact that the Cross model was originally tailor-made for African Americans and therefore cannot adequately explain the unique nature of racial identity development in the South African context. Second, exposure to racial socialization among African American youth may have provided a strong foundational sense of confidence and pride in their capacity to thrive and not feel inferior relative to their peers from other racial groups. The feelings of inferiority among the Black South African youth may be amplified by the fact that although they are growing up in a new South Africa where racial tolerance is embraced as a cultural value, they continue to experience socioeconomic hardships, relative to their white counterparts, that have been carried over as a residue from the old South Africa.

Moreover, it has been over forty years since the Civil Rights Era began in the United States versus sixteen since the Apartheid system was dismantled in South Africa. African American youth are therefore more likely to have a more established awareness of historical and contemporary structural conditions that have kept minorities in underprivileged positions. Black South African youth, however, may not have sufficient background knowledge and understanding of the historical complexities of the structural patterns that continue to keep the majority of Black people in positions of powerlessness and impoverishment.

7.3 Multifaceted, Agentic Meanings of Religiosity among Black Youth in Cross-Cultural Contexts

The majority of youth respondents from both countries and across school and church sites was raised with strong Christian values within families dominated by women
and other extended kin. Most of them continue to adhere to these familial religious belief systems as they transition into adulthood. Furthermore, the findings confirm the argument that the Christian faith is still strongly embedded within the cultural, familial, and community lives of Black people in both the United States and South Africa.

However, the Black youth narratives in both countries revealed multifaceted, agentic meanings of religiosity. First, African American school males fit the description of Spiritual Seekers (Smith and Denton, 2005), with their denunciation of organized religions in favor of spirituality. They are in the process of exploring different faiths. On the other hand, most Black South African school female respondents declared that they have since become Born-Again Christians, which for them signaled a kind of a spiritual rebirth. The religiosity of church-going female respondents from both countries, however, was still very much tied to their familial relationships. They still attended the churches of the same denominations as their parents and extended kin and they considered their religion as a family practice. Another notable finding was that Black South African youth practice a form of spiritual syncretism in which they infuse their Christian practices with their family and culturally inherited African traditional practices. They argue that the blending of these two practices is not only possible, but it is necessary for their identity.
7.4. The Value of Race and Religion in Navigating Black Adolescence within Distinct Cultural Contexts

One of the major goals of this study was to bring to light the complex and overlapping nature of the racial identity and religiosity and their significance in the lives of Black youth as they navigate change. Of particular interest was whether or not racial identity and religiosity matters in their perceived mental health, self-esteem, risk related-behavior, and educational experiences. Direct and open-ended questions about their perceived mental health, self-esteem, and educational experiences yielded mostly positive responses from African American and Black South African youth. Most stated that they were satisfied with their lives thus far and considered themselves in the process of growth and self-discovery. They also believed themselves to be worthy as human beings. Most attributed their positive outlook to their religious faith more than racial identity. They stated that being closer to God and in constant communication with Him makes them feel safe and helps them overcome tough life situations. They also shared that they feel protected from negative temptations and influences, with God serving as their personal guide in a positive and moral path.

Previous research has consistently presented evidence of an association between high religiosity and abstinence from risk-related behaviors such as delinquency, substance abuse, and early engagement in sexual activity among African American teenagers (Regnerus, 2003; Amey et al., 1996; Johnson et al., 2000). These authors discovered that when the youth reduce their religious activities, they become more vulnerable to negative temptations (Steinmann and Zimmermann, 2004). This latter finding was evident among the church males in the South African sample. However, the
viewpoints expressed by the respondents in this study across the two nations present a
ccontradiction in perceptions wherein religiosity only matters selectively in providing
spiritual growth and fulfillment, as well as a deterrent from anti-social, deviant behavior
such as substance use and criminality. However, it was deemed irrelevant when it comes
to premarital sex, even though biblically is discouraged. In other words, these young
people tended to adhere to certain rules of moral conduct set by their churches, scriptures
and parents. However, they chose to exercise agency in defining their sexual lives. Here,
sexual behavior among teens was approached rationally as opposed to morally, as a
function of personal choice and a response to natural biological changes. The Black
youth seemed confident and believed they knew what they were doing when it comes to
sex. Kloep et al., (2009) proposed that varying types of behaviors serve different
functions for individual youth. They classified these functions in three categories. First,
adolescents may knowingly engage in irresponsible behaviors regardless of the risks as a
means to an end. Second, youth may get involved in audience-controlled risk-related
behaviors, that is, their behavior is primarily motivated by the desire for acceptance and
conformity. Finally, youth may be drawn to thrill-seeking behaviors to overcome
boredom and experience excitement derived from testing one’s limits. It would be
interesting to find the motives of these youth when it comes to their decision to engage in
sexual activity.
7.5 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study brought to bear some implications for continued discussion on the issues surrounding the developmental well-being of youth of color. First, as indicated in the earlier, one of the major goals of this study was to provide a more rich understanding of the simultaneous and reciprocal impact of racial identity and religious socialization of Black youth across two different cultural contexts. The findings show that although both racial identity and religiosity have strong familial foundations (this was certainly the case in the United States) during the youth’s formative years, religiosity becomes more salient in the lives of youth in both countries as they transition to adulthood. This could be attributed to the unique dispositions of Black people, that is, the historical tradition that is implanted in the Black church is reflective of the history, the culture and overall experiences of Black people. As Edwards (2008) argued, it is within the Black church that Black collective identity is solidified.

Second, the extent to which religiosity is salient in the lives of youth was also determined by the developmental outcomes. In other words, the youth decided when and how religious values mattered to them as they dealt with important events and experiences in their lives. It is interesting that the youth rely on their faith when dealing with issues of mental health and self esteem but dismiss it when it comes to specific behavioral choices (e.g. early sexual activity) indicates that sex is viewed more as a biological than a moral issue. This warrants further exploration and dialogue among scholars of youth development and religious leaders as to its long-term impact on Black youth well being.
The third implication has to do with the application of the Nigrescence model in the South African context. Although this model is derived from the historical experiences of African Americans, it has provided some important insights into Black South African youth and their sense of self. Their tendency to exhibit an inferiority complex in relation to whites warrants further examination. I submit that such attitudes stem from the past institutionalized discrimination and racist practices whose main goal was to accentuate white identity at the expense of Black people. The racially devaluing messages were deliberately perpetuated and deeply entrenched in important institutions such as education. Consider this famous quote from Hendrick Verwoerd (1948), one of the key architects of the Apartheid system, in which he unequivocally declared:

“There is no place for him in the European community above certain forms of labor. What is the use of teaching Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life. (1948, cited from www.forachange.co.uk).

This declaration represents the core creed of the Bantu Education system, which was designed to not only suppress Black South Africans ‘psycho-ideologically’ (Fataar, 1997), but in my view to dehumanize them. The system was therefore, meant to destroy rather than nourish the seeds of intellectual development in young Black South Africans, thus stripping them of opportunities to realize our unlimited potential.

In the conclusion of her seminal work Steering by the Stars: Being young in South Africa, Ramphele (2002) provides an insightful look at the plight and challenges of Black youth growing up in post-Apartheid South Africa. She concluded with an astute proposal of what she believed to be crucial ingredients required to cultivate a thriving
younger generation in South Africa. First, she stresses the need to acknowledge the legacy of Apartheid thus recognizing the inherited structural factors that still contribute to the continuing confinement of most Black people in underprivileged positions. By so doing, avoiding the blame game, stigmatization and shaming of the poor. Second, she instigates naming and then destroying those elements of Apartheid racism that still linger on in the psyche of Black people generating feelings of inferiority, fear of being stereotyped and dubbed as failures. Ramphele articulates this process of conscious, spiritual inner-reflection powerfully when she says:

Black people need to fight the enemy within that leads to self-doubt. They need to accept that they have not been accorded the opportunities to get high-quality education and exposure to experiences that facilitate the honing of critical skills needed at many levels in modern society. They need to accept that lack of education and experience is not equivalent to an inferior intellect. Lack of knowledge is very different from stupidity. Lack of knowledge can be addressed by making opportunities available to all to develop their talents and close whatever skills’ gaps that exist. (Ramphele, 2002: 162-163).

I submit that these key ingredients of liberation should also be integrated within the research and educational practices that strive to empower youth. South Africa is coming out of a condition of illness. A lot of healing still needs to take place. Therefore, understanding the mindset of the youth who represent the future will need lend itself to the construction of pathways towards healing and a restructuring of a society.
7.6 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This section present study addresses a number of limitations that will need to be addressed in future research. This study could have benefited more from extensive time spent in the field. Although the individual interviews and the field observations I conducted produced rich insights into the lives and perceptions of youth in both countries, these could have been more strongly illuminated given the opportunity to conduct multiple interviews and observations with each case. Moreover, spending more time in the field could have enabled me to expand the research sites and sample sizes that would reach youth with a wider range of sociodemographic characteristics. For instance, it would have been useful to have samples from both predominantly Black and mixed-race schools in the United States; a Township School and a multiracial school in South Africa; a predominantly Black church and a mixed race church in the United States; and a Township church and a multiracial church in South Africa. In addition, more time in the field and multiple research sites and expanded sample sizes could have enabled me to uncover the role and dynamics of the socioeconomic status in family racial and religious socialization, experiences, and expressions among youth in both countries. In this manner, the different contextual, cultural, and structural definitions, and manifestations and meanings of social class in both countries could have been more adequately accounted for.
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APPENDIX A:

RECRUITMENT FLIER
Participate in a research study on racial Identity and Religion. I would like to have a conversation with you about how your racial identity and religious beliefs help you cope with changes in your life and your environment, including mental health, physical health, and school, sexual and drug experiences.

You will be having a private conversation with me and even though the interview will be tape-recorded, everything we talk about will be kept confidential between you and me. You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable and you can withdraw from the study anytime.

If you are Black, 13-19, and still in high school, and are interested in participating in the study please contact me Alvina Kubeka via email at kubeka.1@osu.edu or come and talk to me when I come to your school/church to meet with you. Your principal/pastor will announce the date of my arrival. We can meet and talk in private

If you agree to participate in the study, you will receive $20.00 I am looking forward to meeting you!!!
APPENDIX B

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
The Ohio State University Parental Permission
For Child’s Participation in Research


Researcher: Alvina M. Kubeka

This is a parental permission form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you permit your child to participate.

Your child’s participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to discuss the study with your friends and family and to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to permit your child to participate. If you permit your child to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:
The purpose of the study is to understand your child’s views and experiences of racial identity and religious beliefs and the role these aspects play in their life as a young Black person. More specifically, we are interested in how your child’s racial identity and religious beliefs help them cope with changes in their life and environment, including mental health, physical health, and school experiences. Your child is being asked to participate in this research because their experience and perceptions as a young person entering adulthood will be valuable in understanding the experiences and perceptions of other young people who may be going through the same changes as they are.

Procedures/Tasks:
In-depth individual interviews will be conducted in which your child will be having a private conversation with a researcher. In addition, with your permission, the researcher would like to observe your child as they engage in their school and religious activities. Although the interviews will be tape reordered to retain accuracy and the observations noted down on paper, all that information will be kept in private by the researcher. Your child’s identity and personal information will not be disclosed throughout the whole study.

Duration:
The in-depth interviews will last for about 2 hours and the observations will consist of at least two visits to the church and school where your child spends most of their time. Your child may leave the study at any time. If you or your child decides to stop participation in the study, there will be no penalty and neither you nor your child will lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.
Risks and Benefits:
The interviews and the observation will not pose any harm to you or your loved ones. Should your child feel harmed in anyway during the interview or observation processes, they may withdraw their participation any time. Although your child will not directly benefit, the information you provide will shed light on the different and similar ways in which Black youth in the United States and South Africa perceive race and religion and how these affect their developmental well being.

Confidentiality:
Efforts will be made to keep your child’s study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your child’s participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your child’s records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives:
Upon completion of the interviews and observation, your child will receive $20.00 for agreeing to participate in the study. Should your child decide to withdraw during an interview or observation, they will still receive the full amount for participating in the study.

Participant Rights:
You or your child may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you or your child is a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status. If you and your child choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights your child may have as a participant in this study. An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.
Contact and Questions
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact:
Dr. Price-Spratlen at 00-1-614 292-5598
For questions about your child’s rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.
If your child is injured as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related injury, you may contact Dr. Price-Spratlen at 00-1-614 292-5598 or price-spratlen.1@sociology.osu.edu
APPENDIX C

YOUTH CONSENT AND ASSENT FORMS
The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research


Researcher: Alvina M. Kubeka

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:
The purpose of the study is to understand your views and experiences of racial identity and religious beliefs and the role these aspects play in your life as a young Black person. More specifically, we are interested in how your racial identity and religious beliefs help you cope with changes in your life and your environment, including mental health, physical health, and school experiences. You are being asked to participate in this research because your experience and perceptions as a young person entering adulthood will be valuable in understanding the experiences and perceptions of other young people who may be going through the same changes as you are. We are interested in knowing what you honestly feel or think. There are no right or wrong answers.

Procedures/Tasks:
In-depth individual interviews will be conducted in which you will be having a private conversation with the researcher. In addition, with your permission, the researcher would like to observe you as you engage in your school and religious activities. Although the interviews will be tape reordered to retain accuracy and the observations noted down on paper, all that information will be kept in private by the researcher. Your identity and personal information will not be disclosed throughout the whole study.

Duration:
The in-depth interviews will last for about 2 hours and the observations will consist of at least two visits to the church and school where you spend most of your time. You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.
Risks and Benefits:
The interviews and the observation will not pose any harm to you or your loved ones. Should you feel harmed in anyway during the interview or observation processes, you may withdraw your participation any time. Although you will not directly benefit, the information you provide will shed light on the different and similar ways in which Black youth in the United States and South Africa perceive race and religion and how these affect their developmental well being.

Confidentiality
Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives:
Upon completion of the interviews and observation, you will receive $20.00 for agreeing to participate in the study. Should you decide to withdraw during an interview or observation, you will still receive the full amount for participating in the study.

Participant Rights
You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status. If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.
Contacts and Questions
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact:
Dr. Price-Spratlen at 00-1-614 292-5598
For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If you are injured as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related injury, you may contact Dr. Price-Spratlen at 00-1-614 292-5598 or price-spratlen.1@sociology.osu.edu

Signing the Consent Form
I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

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The Ohio State University Assent to Participate in Research

Racial Identity, Religiosity and Adolescent Development: A Comparative Analysis of African American and Black South African Youth Experiences.

Researcher: Alvina M. Kubeka

- You are being asked to be in a research study. Studies are done to find better ways to treat people or to understand things better.
- This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to participate.
- You should ask any questions you have before making up your mind. You can think about it and discuss it with your family or friends before you decide.
- It is okay to say “No” if you don’t want to be in the study. If you say “Yes” you can change your mind and quit being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.
- If you decide you want to be in the study, an adult (usually a parent) will also need to give permission for you to be in the study.

1. What is this study about?
   We would like to interview you and get your views and experiences of racial identity and religious beliefs and the role these aspects play in your life as a young Black person. More specifically, we are interested in how your racial identity and religious beliefs help you cope with changes in your life and your environment, including mental health, physical health, and school experiences.

2. What will I need to do if I am in this study?
   We would like you to answer some questions and allow us to observe you when you engage in school and church activities.

3. How long will I be in the study?
   The interviews will take about 2 hours and the observations will consist of at least two visits to your school and church.

4. Can I stop being in the study?
   You may stop being in the study at any time.

5. What bad things might happen to me if I am in the study?
   Some of the questions I will ask you may be sensitive and uncomfortable. You have the right to refuse to respond and stop the interview at any time.
6. **What good things might happen to me if I am in the study?**
   Although you will not directly benefit, the information you provide will shed light on the different and similar ways in which Black youth in the United States and South Africa perceive race and religion and how these affect their developmental well being.

7. **Will I be given anything for being in this study?**
   Yes, you will be given $20.00 for agreeing to participate in the study. You will still receive the full amount even if, for some reason, you decide to withdraw from the study.

8. **Who can I talk to about the study?**
   For questions about the study you may contact Dr. Price-Spratlen at 00-1-614 292-5598.
   To discuss other study-related questions with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.
**Signing the Assent Form**
I have read (or someone has read to me) this form. I have had a chance to ask questions before making up my mind. I want to be in this research study.

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**Investigator/Research Staff**
I have explained the research to the participant before requesting the signature above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

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This form must be accompanied by an IRB approved parental permission form signed by a parent/guardian.
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**Family Background Characteristics**
Who do you live with?
How long have you lived with them?

What is the highest grade completed by your mother/father?
Less than high school
Some high school, no diploma
High school diploma/GED
Some college/university, no degree
Associate degree (AA, AS)
Bachelor’s degree
Master’s degree
Professional degree (MD, DDS, LLB, JD)
Doctorate degree
Don’t know

What is your current mother/father’s employment status?
Working full time
Working part time
With a job, but on medical leave, vacation or strike
Unemployed, temporarily laid off or looking for work
Retired
Homemaker/Stay-at-home mom/Stay-at-home dad
In school, also working full time
In school, also working part time
In school, not working for pay
Disabled/unable to work

Have there been any changes in your home life within the past couple years?
What were the reasons for the (family life change)? How has this change affected your life?
Have you ever lived with your mother/father (absent from home)? If so, when was this?
What is your home life like?
  a. Does everyone get along? What does getting along look like?
  b. Is there a lot of fighting? Can you give me an example?
Describe your relationship with your mother, father or guardian?
a. Do you feel close to him/her? Can you talk to his/her about pretty much anything? What sorts of things do you talk about?

**Family Racial & Religious Socialization**
Growing up, did your parents teach you about racial issues?
If so, What type of messages do they tell you about being Black/African American?
Do you feel that it is important for your parents to teach you about racial issues? Why?
Why not?
How have these messages informed your perceptions, expressions and experiences as a Black young person?

Do you have a particular religious faith? What is your faith?
Do you and your mother/father/guardian share the same faith?
Does your faith (or not having a particular faith) affect your relationship with your mother? If so, how?

**Community Characteristics**
Where do you live?
How would you describe your neighborhood?
   a. Racial composition, housing type?
   b. Do you think the neighborhood is a pretty safe place to hang out?
How does living in your community affect your racial beliefs?
Do you think living in this community allows you or not to express your religious beliefs?
Do you think living in this community allows you or not to practice your religion/faith?

**Components of Racial Identity**
How would you describe yourself in terms of race?
What does it mean to be Black/African American to you?
What kind of things, other than skin color, set you apart from other racial groups?
What kind of things do you do to express your Blackness?
Do your racial beliefs as a Black person affect the way you live your life? How so?

**Nigrescence**

**Stage 1: Pre-Encounter**
Do you think race matters? i.e. do you think people should be judged by race?
Some people believe and say that Black people tend to place more emphasis in having a good time than hard work, what do you think about that statement?
Do you sometimes have negative feelings about being Black? Why? Why not?
If I were to ask you to tell me about the history of Black people in America/South Africa, what would you tell me?
How important is it or not to you to know about Black history in America/South Africa? Do you think the history of Black people in this country had any impact in your life? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?

**Stage 2: Encounter**
Do you think being Black is a positive experience? If yes, in what ways, if no why? In your experience, what is it like to be Black in America/South Africa? Do you believe that you because you are Black you have many strengths?

**Stage 3: Immersion-Emersion**
How do you feel about white people? Do you hate them? Why? Why not? How do you feel about Black people in general? Do you feel joy and excitement in Black surroundings? Do you feel a social pressure to be Blacker than you are? Why? Why not?

**Stage4: Internalization**
There are those Black people who believe in having Black pride Black economic, political, social and/or cultural independence from white society and there are those who believe in having both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective that includes other racial groups. Which one would you say describes you best and why? As a Black person, do you feel comfortable where you are in terms of your identity? Do you feel that certain aspects of the Black experience apply to you and not others? If yes, which aspects of the Black experience do not apply to you and which one do?

**Contextual Experiences of Race**
Do you think race makes a difference in how Black people are treated in America/South Africa? Can you give me an example? Do you think Black people are treated the same way that other racial groups in America/South Africa are treated?

**Racial Identity and Religiosity**
Does your faith matter in how you see yourself as a Black person? If yes, inn what ways does faith matter in your how you view yourself as a Black person? Does your faith matter in your experiences as a Black person growing up in America/South Africa?

**Components of Religiosity**

*Religious Life and Perspective*
Earlier you said that you are (religious faith), when did you become (religious faith)? Are you a part of a particular denomination or group? What is that? Do you attend church/religious service? How often?
What do you like about your religion?

**Religious Practices**
Do you pray? How often do you pray? What kinds of things do you pray about?
Have you ever had a prayer answered that you know of? If so, can you tell me about one instance?
Do you read the Bible? How often? Why?
Are there other religious practices you participate in?
Is religion an important part of your family life?

**Religious Beliefs**
What does being religious mean to you?
  a. Are their "duties" or "demands" that a person must do to be religious? What are some examples of these?
Is there a difference between being religious and being spiritual? If so, what is the difference? Or, what does being spiritual mean to you?
Do you consider yourself religious or spiritual?
If you were to put a number on the intensity of your faith (0% is having no faith, 100% is having unquestioned faith), what number would you give it? Why does this number fit you best?

**Religiosity and Racial Identity**
Do you think your racial beliefs as a Black person have an impact on your religious beliefs?
How do your racial beliefs as a Black person relate or not to your religious beliefs?

**Developmental Outcomes**

**Mental Health**
Would you say you are generally happy or generally sad?
Have you ever been depressed? What was it that led you to be depressed?
Do your racial beliefs as a Black person affect your outlook in life?
Does your faith affect your outlook on life? How so?

**Self Esteem**
Would you say that as a Black person, you are a person of worth at least on an equal basis with others?
Would you say as a Black person you have good qualities? What are those?
Are you inclined to feel that you are a failure as a Black person?
Do you feel as a Black person you have much to be proud of? What do you feel the most proud of?
Educational Experiences
What grade are you in?
What is your school like? (size, racial composition, cliques, gangs)?
Do you feel safe at your school?
Would you say the teachers and students get along, overall?
What kind of grades are you getting? Are you satisfied with your grades?
Are your teachers helpful? If so, how do they help you?
Do your racial beliefs and experiences as a Black person affect your educational performance and experiences in school? How so?
Does your faith affect your educational performance and experiences in school? How so?

Risk-Related Behavior
Have you ever had a drink of beer, wine or other alcohol?
Why did you start drinking alcohol? Have you ever drank alcohol since this?
How often do you drink alcohol?
Have you ever been in a situation where you were offered drugs, besides alcohol? What kind of drug(s)? How did this situation come about? What did you do?
Do you feel that your faith helps you deal with situations where you are offered to drink or take drugs? How does it help?

I am now going to ask you some questions about romantic relationships and sexual involvement among teenagers. I want to remind you that you do not have to answer a question if you feel uncomfortable. Just tell me and I will move on. Also, I want you to know that anything you say is confidential - unless you tell me that you are going to badly hurt someone else or yourself, or that an adult is badly hurting you - otherwise all that is said during the interview is kept completely confidential.

Have you ever gone out on a date? If so, what did you do?
Are you dating someone now? How long have you been dating?
How many dating relationships have you had?
How important are your racial beliefs when it comes to your dating decisions?
How important is your faith when it comes to your dating decisions? How does faith matter?

What do you think about people your age having sex?
Do you think people your age should wait until they are married to have sex?
If so, are there certain kinds of physical involvement that are OK for people your age to do? What are they?
When is it OK for teens to be physically involved this way?
Have you ever gotten physically involved in way that you do not think is OK for teens? If so, What kind of physical involvement was this? How old were you? How did it come about? Have you ever had sex? If so, How old were you when you first had sex? What kind of sexually activities have you participated in? How did it come about that you had sex the first time? How often do you have sex now? Do you use any kind of birth control? What kind(s) do you generally use? If no, why? Has there ever been a time when you regretted having sex? When did this happen? What about it did you regret?

Should your racial and religious beliefs as a Black person matter in your decisions about sex? Are there times when these should matter more than others? Can you give an example of how your racial beliefs as a Black person and your religious beliefs affected your decisions about physical or sexual involvement?

**Closing Remarks**
That is all the questions I have. Is there anything you wanted to talk about that we didn’t discuss? Is there a question you wanted to revisit? Thank you very much for your time. I really enjoyed hearing about your experiences and opinions. I want to remind you again that everything you have shared with me today will remain confidential.