The Personal is Political: Conceptualizing Black Womanhood and Civic Engagement

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Introduction

Study question: How does social identity inform upon Black women's civic engagement?

- Studies have shown that ethnic identity mediate community engagement for adolescents of color (Lardier et. al, 2021).
- Critical reflection of social inequalities is correlated with voting behaviors for Black young adults and other sociopolitical actions (Banales et. al, 2019).
- Psychological sense of community has 4 dimensions: 1) membership, 2) needs fulfillment, 3) influence, and 4) emotional connection (McMillan, 1996).
- Using Black women as the sample allows us to 1) study the variations in identity and political action between Black women, and 2) analyze potential reasons for why Black women engage politically as they currently do.

The current study

- **The current study follows a mixed methods approach to better understand the relationship between Black women's conceptualization of their identity and their civic engagement.**

Methods

Sample

- Data were collected and analyzed from *Our Story, Our Voices*, a longitudinal study (N=947) on Black women.

- Participants were asked a series of closed and open ended questions related to their health, interpersonal relationships, civic engagement, and experiences of discrimination.

Coding and Statistical Analysis

- Pearson correlations were obtained using SPSS
  - Example Syntax:
CORRELATIONS
  /VARIABLES=ID_20_Womanist CIVENG_20_VOTE CIVENG_20_PETIT CIVENG_20_PROT CIVENG_20_DONATE CIVENG_20_DONATE CIVENG_20_COMWORK CIVENG_20_ONLINEACT CIVENG_20_LOBBY CIVENG20_OTH
    /PRINT=TWOTAIL NOSIG
  /MISSING=PAIRWISE.

- Open ended responses from participants were coded using standard protocol to identify thematic patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

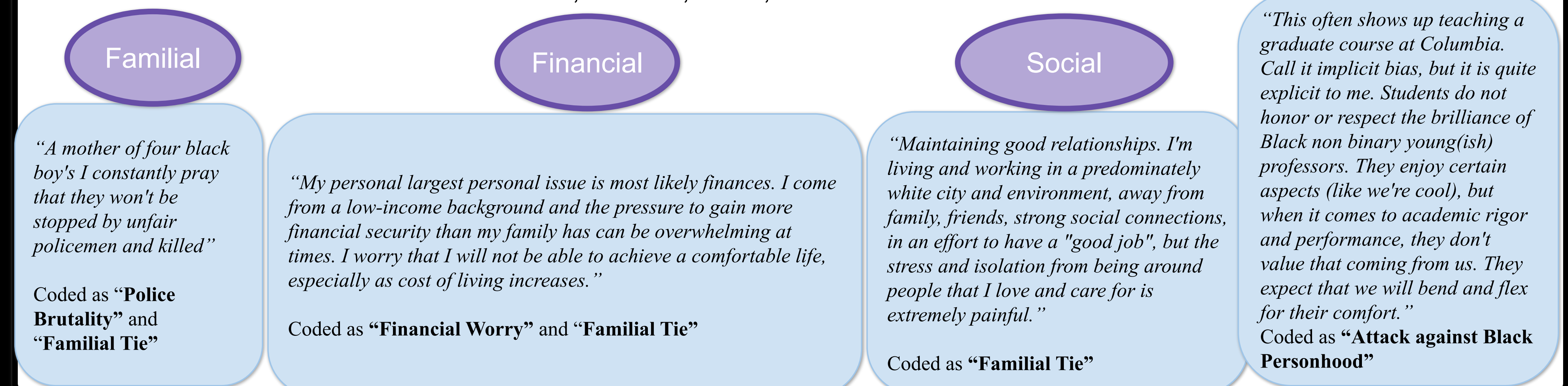Survey response coded as "familial tie" and "financial concern":

"Finances, unfortunately my husband is incarcerated and I have for the first time in my adult life one income."

Findings

Correlations

	CIVENG_20_VOTE	CIVENG_20_PETIT	CIVENG_20_PROT	CIVENG_20_DONATE	CIVENG_20_COMWORK	CIVENG_20_ONLINEACT	CIVENG_20_LOBBY	CIVENG20_OTH
	697	697	697	697	697	697	697	697
CIVENG_20_PETIT	.169**	1	.256**	.157**	.089*	.276**	.293**	.028
	<.001		<.001	<.001	.019	<.001	<.001	.463
	697	697	697	697	697	697	697	697
CIVENG_20_PROT	.045	.256**	1	.126**	.173**	.307**	.276**	.110**
	.231	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.004
	697	697	697	697	697	697	697	697
CIVENG_20_DONATE	.108**	.157**	.126**	1	.226**	.101**	.128**	-.011
	.004	<.001	<.001		<.001	.008	<.001	.768
	697	697	697	697	697	697	697	697
CIVENG_20_COMWORK	.002	.089*	.173**	.226**	1	.057	.185**	.054
	.954	.019	<.001	<.001		.133	<.001	.154
	697	697	697	697	697	697	697	697
CIVENG_20_ONLINEACT	.006	.276**	.307**	.101**	.057	1	.203**	.042
	.869	<.001	<.001	.008	.133		<.001	.270
	697	697	697	697	697	697	697	697
CIVENG_20_LOBBY	.093*	.293**	.276**	.128**	.185**	.203**	1	.108**
	.014	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		.004
	697	697	697	697	697	697	697	697
CIVENG20_OTH	-.125**	.028	.110**	-.011	.054	.042	.108**	1
	<.001	.463	.004	.768	.154	.270	.004	
	697	697	697	697	697	697	697	697
ID_20_Womanist	-.025	.130**	.234**	.094*	.081*	.232**	.103**	.062
	.514	<.001	<.001	.013	.033	<.001	.006	.102
	697	697	697	697	697	697	697	697
ID_20_Feminist	.068	.121**	.224**	.047	.042	.148**	.098**	-.014
	.075	.001	<.001	.213	.270	<.001	.010	.706
	697	697	697	697	697	697	697	697
ID_20_BlackFeminist	.034	.157**	.215**	.092*	.085*	.216**	.066	.037
	.373	<.001	<.001	.015	.025	<.001	.084	.335
	697	697	697	697	697	697	697	697
ID_20_IntersectionalFeminist	.012	.145**	.248**	.081*	.031	.295**	.149**	.064
	.743	<.001	<.001	.032	.407	<.001	<.001	.093
	697	697	697	697	697	697	697	697

Table 1

4 major themes arose from thematic analysis surrounding concerns Black women have: familial, financial, social, and discrimination.

Familial

"A mother of four black boy's I constantly pray that they won't be stopped by unfair policemen and killed"

Coded as **"Police Brutality"** and **"Familial Tie"**

Financial

"My personal largest personal issue is most likely finances. I come from a low-income background and the pressure to gain more financial security than my family has can be overwhelming at times. I worry that I will not be able to achieve a comfortable life, especially as cost of living increases."

Coded as **"Financial Worry"** and **"Familial Tie"**

Social

"Maintaining good relationships. I'm living and working in a predominately white city and environment, away from family, friends, strong social connections, in an effort to have a "good job", but the stress and isolation from being around people that I love and care for is extremely painful."

Coded as **"Familial Tie"**

Discrimination

"This often shows up teaching a graduate course at Columbia. Call it implicit bias, but it is quite explicit to me. Students do not honor or respect the brilliance of Black non binary young(ish) professors. They enjoy certain aspects (like we're cool), but when it comes to academic rigor and performance, they don't value that coming from us. They expect that we will bend and flex for their comfort."

Coded as **"Attack against Black Personhood"**

Conclusions

- In summary, certain self-conceptualizations mediated different types of civic engagement.

- Sense of community was considered a central focus in participants' lives and mental well-being.

- Furthermore, sense of community empowered them to engage civically through means like voting and expressing their views via social media (hashtag activism).

References

Lardier, D. T., Opara, I., Garcia-Reid, P., & Reid, R. J. (2020). The Mediating Role of Ethnic Identity and Social Justice Orientation Between Community Civic Participation, Psychological Sense of Community, and Dimensions of Psychological Empowerment Among Adolescents of Color. The Urban Review, 53(3), 403–. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-020-00573-z

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.