Examining a Sample of Black Deaf Individuals on the Deaf Acculturation Scale

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Abstract

The current study sought to identify and analyze how Black deaf and hard-of-hearing people conceptualize their deaf and hard-of-hearing identities. That is, what cultural and linguistic factors are involved and how do they interact? An existing measure of Deaf cultural identity, the Deaf Acculturation Scale (DAS), was used to evaluate these questions. Review of the measure’s normative sample (n = 3,070) indicated that fewer than 300 self-identified as racial/ethnic minorities (Hispanic/Latino, Black, or Asian). Results of a preliminary study revealed that Non-White deaf individuals responded to DAS items in ways that significantly differed from responses provided by White deaf individuals. Moreover, the existing 5-factor correlated model of the DAS did not fit well with the Non-White group. The current study administered the DAS to a new sample of 106 Black deaf individuals. Principal components analysis determined an appropriate factor structure for this population. In addition to the existing 5 factors, a sixth factor emerged that appears to reflect identity concerns specific to Black deaf people. Ideas for future research, including how to examine the intersections of Deaf identity and racial identity, are discussed.

Identity Development in Context

Because racial identification and identity changes over time and across such contexts as the neighborhood, school, family, and peer group, we must consider the impact of context.
on development. Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological systems theory argues that we cannot understand human development without examining these crucial elements. Human development takes place through processes of reciprocal interaction between a person and the people, objects, and symbols in his or her environment. Most salient for identity development are the microsystems, including the peer group, family, and neighborhood, which collectively make up the mesosystem. When the values (e.g., those relating to education, community, or religion) of the different microsystems are consistent, the mesosystem is harmonious and positive development becomes a relatively straightforward task. However, if the values in the microsystems are incongruent, the individual’s mesosystem is dissonant and it may be more challenging to stabilize relationships and develop positively (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). For example, the protagonist in Jay MacLeod’s ethnography Ain’t no makin’ it (2004), a Black student from an economically disadvantaged family won a scholarship to a prestigious school and soon experienced conflict between the values of his school peer group and his home peer group. Mesosystem consistency also determines how an adolescent responds to stressors (McLeod & Edwards, 1995).

A racially incongruent context can lead to negative outcomes (e.g., disillusionment, limited support systems, and academic disengagement).

Marcia (1966) takes a more individual perspective on identity, delineating four statuses of “ego identity” (p. 551) that range from least to most advanced: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement. A person experiencing identity diffusion seems detached and uncommitted to learning more about and incorporating new experiences into his or her identity. A Black person in this stage exhibits nonchalance or indifference about Black cultural identity (Phinney, 1990). Next, individuals experiencing identity foreclosure feel that they do not fit well in either of their two cultures. Black people may confront conflicts between the culture of their families and friends and that of corporate America. The former may feel more comfortable, but the latter permits greater flexibility in a working world where few businesses are minority owned. Marcia’s moratorium stage manifests itself among Black individuals as total immersion in their cultures. A sudden precipitating event (e.g., experiencing racial discrimination) inspires an oppositional perspective that produces an unflagging allegiance to their minority culture, even when association with this culture fails to meet expectations or yields negative outcomes.

The last status in Marcia’s theory is identity achievement. Not everyone reaches this status, but those who do tend to interpret their identities with nuanced and according to Phinney (1990), identity-achieved Black people treat supportive non-Blacks in an affirmative way and display confidence in their own identity as Black. Identity development has a cyclical orientation and that achievement can occur repeatedly through existing social roles in new contexts. Although Marcia intended for his theory to apply to the general population, later researchers have utilized his work as a basis for creating measures of identity development that focus on specific groups; examples of such measures are discussed further below.

Cross’s (1971, 1991) theory of nigrescence (i.e., “turning Black in French”) focuses on the means through which Black Americans develop healthy and affirmative identities. The original model (Cross, 1971) included five stages, ranging from not salient, through progressively more salient, to being fully incorporated as part of one’s identity. Individuals in the first stage (i.e., “Pre-Encounter”) have identities that are supportive of mainstream “White” culture and are anti-Black. Cross characterizes these individuals as having low self-esteem and mental health difficulties. In the second stage (i.e., “Encounter”), Black people experience one or more events that introduce concern about the purpose of race in American society. These events can trigger a re-evaluation of an individual’s racial identity, which occurs in the third stage (i.e., “Immersion–Emersion”). The Immersion–Emersion stage has two parts: first, Immersion involves increasing participation in Black cultural activities and beliefs while developing a staunchly anti-White perspective; second, Emersion involves further examination of previous race-related experiences and the dissolution of anti-White attitudes. Individuals in the fourth stage (i.e., “Internalization”) integrate their pro-Black perspectives into their overall identities. Here, the Black identity does not predominate but instead interacts with other elements of a person’s identity to form a cohesive whole. People who proceed to the final stage (i.e., “Internalization–Commitment”) become active in arenas of public policy and social change to advocate further for more equality of opportunity and less discrimination for Blacks.

More recent work by Cross and colleagues (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver, Phagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001; Worrell, Vandiver, Schaefer, Cross, & Phagen-Smith, 2006) has shifted from the paradigm of identity “stages” to that of identity “attitudes.” This term, borrowed from Helms (1995, 2007), is intended to signify that identity development is more fluid and dynamic than a stage metaphor allows. Cross’s expanded nigrescence model includes three groups with a total of six attitudinal subscales that indicate variations in attitudes. According to Cross and Vandiver (2001), the names of the three groups refer to their thematic content: “Pre-Encounter” attitudes have low salience or negative associations with being Black, “Immersion–Emersion” attitudes have highly polarized associations with being Black, and “Internalization” attitudes involve Black self-acceptance. The first attitudinal subscale, “Pre-Encounter Assimilation,” is characterized by low salience of a Black identity, instead focusing on the self as American rather than African-American. The second attitude, “Pre-Encounter Miseducation,” involves acceptance of and belief in negative, stereotypical views of Blacks found in American society. The third attitude, “Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred,” extends the miseducation perspective to the self; that is, an individual applies those negative social views of Black to oneself, which results in unhappiness about being Black. The fourth attitude, “Immersion–Emersion Anti-White,” involves substantial negative views of White/European Americans. The fifth attitude, “Internalization Afrocentricity,” is characterized by strong positive views of Black and African (Afrocentric) cultures and beliefs. The sixth attitude, “Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive,” incorporates pro-Black attitudes with respect for other cultural groups.

Perceptions of Being Deaf

According to the Centers for Disease Control, over 45 million Americans experience some form of hearing loss (Pleis & Lucas, 2009). On the Deaf Acculturation Scale (DAS: outlined in greater detail below), Maxwell-McCaw (2001) found that 52% of a sample of over 3,000 deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals scored as Deaf Acculturated, 39% scored as Bicultural, 8% scored as Hearing Acculturated, and 1% scored as Culturally Marginal. Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals with parents who also have a hearing difference (“deaf of deaf”) were significantly more likely to score as Deaf Acculturated than their counterparts with parents who did not have a hearing difference (“deaf of hearing”). Conversely, deaf of hearing individuals were significantly more likely than deaf of deaf individuals to score as
Hearing Acculturated. Although these figures were obtained from a sample of individuals who were diverse in their reported level of residual hearing, the participants were fairly homogeneous in their racial and ethnic background (i.e., White/Caucasian) and preferred method of communication (i.e., American Sign Language [ASL]). Still, this serves as a basis for understanding the proportion of people with a hearing difference who identify as culturally Deaf. To clarify, “big-D Deaf” people share a strong pride and group affiliation that resembles those of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States (Phillips, 1996, p. 138). In contrast to “little-d deaf” people who are solely audiologically deaf and who do not identify as members of a Deaf community, Phillips contends that big-D Deaf people are united not just by a common language but also by values, norms, and traditions. These features set Deaf individuals apart from the hearing population. Leigh (2009) notes that within this cultural subgroup, however, the meaning of big-D Deaf tends to reflect a culture that is predominantly based on White Deaf experiences.

It is useful to mention here that although the big-D Deaf and little-d deaf binary is useful for describing cultural and audiological aspects, respectively, of self-identification as a deaf or hard-of-hearing person, it is important to note that other researchers suggest that the binary may be better conceptualized as a Venn diagram. Brueggemann (2009) suggests that, “[i]n the case of deaf people who are both audiologically deaf and self-identified as Deaf, and those who are audiologically deaf and do not identify as Deaf, the intersection of these two sets can be represented as a ‘gray zone’.”

Leigh (2009) notes that within this cultural subgroup, however, the meaning of big-D Deaf tends to reflect a culture that is predominantly based on White Deaf experiences.

Measures of Deaf Identity

One of the first available measures of Deaf identity was Glickman’s Deaf Identity Development Scale (DIDS: Glickman, 1993; Glickman & Carey, 1993). Glickman created the DIDS to categorize the stages of identity development in Deaf people, a group that was previously thought to be unidimensional in its attitudes and values. His four categories of cultural orientation included people who consider themselves culturally Hearing, people who are immersed in Deaf cultural beliefs and activities, people who are culturally marginal (i.e., do not fit clearly into either Hearing or Deaf cultural groups), and people who are fluidly bicultural. The normative sample for this scale limits its applicability, particularly with Non-White populations. Specifically, the normative sample was composed of 161 participants, of which 144 (i.e., >89%) self-identified as non-Hispanic White. Subsequent revision by Leigh et al. (1998) featured a slightly larger percentage of non-Hispanic White participants; of 244 participants, 91.4% (i.e., 223) self-identified as “Caucasian.” This article mentioned “ethnic cultures” only in passing (Leigh, Marcus, Dobosh, & Allen, 1998, p. 330) and failed to address potential problems with the homogeneity of their sample. Fischer and McWhirter (2001) revised the DIDS further, and 86–90% of their samples self-identified as Caucasian.

Maxwell-McCaw and Zea (2011) have critiqued the DIDS for describing Deaf identity using a single continuum because more respondents obtain “bicultural” results than what the factor analysis suggests. The authors suggest that the urge for a socially desirable outcome may have led to them endorsing more bicultural traits than they actually have. To address this concern, Maxwell-McCaw and Zea developed a multidimensional and bilinear measure, the DAS (Maxwell-McCaw, 2001; Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, 2011). The first version of the DAS (Maxwell-McCaw, 2001) consisted of 78 items that were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items were organized on two acculturation scales: one for acculturation to Deaf culture (DASd) and one for acculturation to Hearing culture (DASH). An individual can score high (i.e., 3.0 or above) or low (i.e., 2.9 or below) on both scales, which correspond to her or his relative acculturation within Deaf and hearing cultural spheres. Additionally, each scale contains five subscales that address various elements of an individual’s identity (i.e., Cultural Identification, Cultural Involvement, Cultural Preferences, Cultural Knowledge, and Language Competence), which allows for more specific analysis of an individual’s beliefs and practices. In a subsequent study (Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, 2011), the researchers revised the DAS to eliminate items that loaded on more than one subscale or that had factor loadings below .50, resulting in a 58-item measure. Interested readers can review these 58 items in this publication.

Although Maxwell-McCaw and Zea’s respondent pool was large (n = 3,070), 88.4% (over 2,700 respondents) self-identified as Caucasian, whereas only 3.4% (about 104) identified as Latino, 2.3% (about 71) identified as Asian, 2.2% (about 68) identified as Black or African American, 1.2% (about 37) identified as Native American, and 2.5% (about 77) identified with other ethnic backgrounds. Further research on this and larger samples of ethnic minority Deaf individuals is needed to explore the applicability of the DAS with these populations.

Preliminary Study

Nelson Schmitt (2011) utilized archival data from Maxwell-McCaw’s (2001) study to examine the following questions:
1. Whether self-identification as a member of an ethnic minority group impacts the tendency to score a certain way on the DAS;
2. Whether self-identification of deafness (i.e., the descriptor that respondents use to describe themselves: “deaf,” “Deaf,” “hearing impaired,” “hard-of-hearing,” or “bicultural”) impacts score on the DAS within ethnic minority respondents;
3. Whether the DAS’s existing five-factor correlated model (described above) fit well to the data from the ethnic minority group of respondents.

Participants self-identifying as Native American or other were excluded from analyses because of issues with statistical power (Nelson Schmitt, 2011). The three remaining ethnic minority groups (Hispanic/Latino, Black, and Asian) were too small to analyze statistically. As such, they were combined into a single “Non-White” group (comprising 10.5% of the original sample) for analyses of how White participants and ethnic minority participants differ in responses and results on the DAS.

For research question 1, statistically significant differences in response patterns of the Non-White participant sample relative to the White participant sample were noted on the DASd and the DASH. Such findings were thought to reflect genuine differences in the ways in which people of color develop and describe their identities based on DAS attributes.

Regarding research question 2, results revealed statistically significant differences between White respondents and Non-White respondents on self-identification of hearing status and scores on the DASd and the DASH. That is, the distribution of Non-White respondents’ self-identified hearing statuses significantly differed from that of White respondents’ self-identified hearing statuses.

Related to research question 3, the preliminary study sought to determine the extent to which the five-factor correlated model of the DASd and the DASH fit the data collected from deaf people of color in Maxwell-McCaw’s (2001) study. Results of a confirmatory factor analysis suggested that this model did not fit well on the DASd or the DASH for the Non-White group according to multiple statistical indices of goodness of fit. A post hoc exploratory factor analysis on the Non-White sample revealed a sixth factor on the DASH composed of four items: I often wish that I could hear better or become hearing, I would prefer my children to be hearing, I would prefer my children to be hearing, and I often wish that I could hear better.

Additional analyses of the non-White sample indicated that participants use to describe themselves: “deaf,” “Deaf,” “hearing impaired,” “hard of hearing,” or “bicultural”) impacts DAS results within the sample of Black Deaf people.

The extent to which items on the DAS share statistical communalities, and what these communalities suggest about how Black deaf individuals form their deaf and hard-of-hearing identities.

Regarding DAS identities, it was expected that Black deaf individuals would be more likely than White deaf individuals to score as hearing-identified because of cultural perspectives of deafness as a disability. Cohen, Fischgrund, and Redding (1990) found parallels in educators’ perceptions of Black deaf students and Black hearing students (e.g., educators have lower expectations of Black students than they do of White peers). The researchers also indicated that these issues are magnified for Black deaf students, regardless of educational institution (i.e., mainstream school or school for the deaf), because they have two stigmatized identities (hearing status in addition to racial minority status). As such, Black deaf individuals experience a multiplicative effect of their minority statuses that result in a trajectory of identity development that differs from those of White individuals.

Work by Alston et al. (1996) supports Cohen’s findings, suggesting that the process of identity development differs between African Americans with and without disabilities because the stigma of disability can overshadow other characteristics (i.e., racial/ethnic background). The researchers state further that African Americans with congenital disabilities (e.g., individuals who were born deaf) can only explore their racial identity in the context of their disability. That is to say, the racial/ethnic component and the deafness component of a Black deaf individual’s identity are inextricably linked; they cannot be analyzed in isolation. By contrast, individuals with acquired disabilities (e.g., individuals who became deaf later in life) have identities that become more or less salient with environmental cues. Applied to the current study, Alston’s theory would suggest that a Black individual who becomes deaf later in life could choose to add a deaf or hard-of-hearing identity.
Method

Participants

Sapnas and Zeller (2002) indicate that a sample of between 50 and 100 participants is sufficient to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis based on power analysis. In contrast, studies by MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, and Hong (1999) and MacCallum, Widaman, Preacher, and Hong (2001) revealed that a range of 100–200 participants will yield a stable factor model. They suggest further that a ratio of 4:1 (i.e., four participants for every item) may be necessary if communalities are low. The DAS communalities are high. Maxwell-McCaw and Zea’s (2011) study described the development, reliability, and validity of the DAS. Analyses revealed that the original version of the DAS had internal consistency as well as criterion and concurrent validity. Subscales on the Deaf Acculturation Subscale (DASd) had alphas ranging from .77 to .94 and an overall scale alpha of .95. Subscales on the Hearing Acculturation Subscale (DASH) had alphas ranging from .32 to .83, with an overall scale alpha of .86 (Maxwell-McCaw, 2001). The current study utilized only the 58 items that remained in the 2011 version of the DAS (see below for the stronger 58-item reliability statistics: Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, 2011). Consequently, considering that the Black deaf population is quite small, it was determined that at least 100 participants would result in a stable factor model.

The current study recruited 106 participants. Inclusion criteria included: (a) age of 18 years or above, (b) self-identification as deaf or hard of hearing, and (c) self-identification as Black (e.g., African American, African, Black, Caribbean, or any permutation thereof). With regard to sex, 72% of the sample was female. See Tables 1 and 2 for additional demographic information.

Measures

Demographic questionnaire

Participants’ demographic data were obtained through a demographic questionnaire developed by Maxwell-McCaw (2001). Questionnaire items included age, sex, ethnic/racial background, place of birth, level of residual hearing, cause of hearing difference, age of onset of hearing difference, self-identity of hearing status, familial hearing status, familial knowledge of signed and spoken languages, educational background, communication style preference, and group/organization membership. One additional question about ethnic/cultural background was added. See below:

How do you ‘self-identify’ with regard to your racial/ethnic/cultural background?
(Pick one only):
Black
African American
African
Caribbean
Haitian
Jamaican
Other (please describe): _______________

It is important to note that while discussing the development of the racial/ethnic identity item with Black Deaf consultants, we learned that there was a substantial Jamaican contingent in the Black Deaf community, particularly in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. As such, we added “Jamaican” as a response option to encapsulate this idea. Incidentally, as detailed below, five of seven respondents from the Caribbean specifically indicated that they are Jamaican.

Deaf Acculturation Scale

To create the 58-item version of the DAS utilized in the current study, Maxwell-McCaw and Zea (2011) revised the original DAS to eliminate items that loaded on multiple subscales or that had factor loadings below .50, resulting in 58 items. Regarding the DASd subscale, the reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) were in the acceptable range as follows: Cultural Identity = .84, Cultural Involvement = .85, Cultural Preferences = .85, Cultural Knowledge = .92, Language Competence = .92, and Total Overall Acculturation = .95. Regarding the DASH subscale, the reliability coefficient for each subscale was as follows: Cultural Identity = .71, Cultural Involvement = .81, Cultural Preferences = .85, Cultural Knowledge = .85, Language Competence = .83, and Total Overall Acculturation = .91.

For the current sample of Black Deaf individuals on the DAS, Cronbach’s alphas were in the acceptable range. Specifically, regarding the DASd subscale, the reliability coefficient values were as follows: Cultural Identity = .71, Cultural Involvement = .73, Cultural Preferences = .85, Cultural Knowledge = .83, Language Competence = .79, and Total Overall Acculturation = .92. Regarding the DASH subscale, the reliability coefficient values were as follows: Cultural Identity = .66, Cultural Involvement = .77, Cultural Preferences = .87, Cultural Knowledge = .65, Language Competence = .87, and Total Overall Acculturation = .89.

Procedures

To maximize the diversity of participants based on levels of residual hearing, communication preferences, and educational backgrounds, participants were recruited using postings on the National Black Deaf Advocates’ (NBDA) website and through their e-mail newsletter. Additionally, recruitment efforts were targeted to members of Gallaudet University’s Keeping The Promise organization, a mentoring and tutoring program designed to enhance academic success and reduce attrition of Black deaf college students. Flyers were also posted on campus at Gallaudet University and notices about the study were
included in the Gallaudet Daily Digest e-mail disseminated on campus.

The 58-item DAS was converted into an online format managed by PsychData, an Internet software company that maintains the security of respondents’ survey input and then collates it for export into a statistical software package. Participants were not asked for personally identifying information (e.g., name, date of birth, or address). Each participant read an informed consent on the screen; after doing so, they clicked a button to endorse consent to participate in the study. There was no financial incentive for participants, but they could request a summary of aggregated findings when the study was complete. Due to the lack of financial compensation and the 30-min average length of time it took to complete the survey, it is unlikely that respondents would complete the survey more than once. After Gallaudet University Institutional Review Board approval was granted, data collection was completed. Even though a paper version was available, no participant elected this option.

Statistical Analyses

Regarding research question 1, per Maxwell-McCaw’s (2001) and Maxwell-McCaw and Zea (2011) guidelines, participants’ scores on each subscale (i.e., the DASd and the DASH) were utilized to classify them into one of the four acculturative styles using a median-split procedure. Participants with scores above the median on the DASd and below the median on the DASH were classified as Deaf Acculturated. Participants with scores below the median on the DASd and above the median on the DASH were classified as Hearing Acculturated. Participants with scores above the median on the DASH and below the median on the DASd were classified as Bicultural. Participants with scores below the median on both the DASd and the DASH were classified as Marginal.

For research question 2, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine the extent to which self-identification of hearing status impacts scores on the DASd and DASH within the Black Deaf respondent sample. That is, which hearing status identifiers (i.e., “deaf,” “Deaf,” “hearing impaired,” “hard-of-hearing,” and “bicultural”) are associated with high scores and low scores on the DASd and the DASH. These meanings of these status identifiers were unchanged from Maxwell-McCaw’s (2001) study. It is important to note that respondents in both studies likely ascribed their own meanings to each status identifier.

Regarding research question 3, a principal components analysis was conducted on the data to determine an appropriate factor structure for the Black deaf population, so that the DAS would have greater utility and applicability to Black deaf people. The resultant factors were analyzed for communalities and then named to reflect response patterns of the sample.

Post hoc analyses were conducted based on specific demographic information, such as: How well do self-identification of hearing status and DAS acculturative styles align? Do age cohort (i.e., generational) effects impact results on the DAS? For example, with more accommodations for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in mainstream schools, younger participants may be more likely to endorse bicultural traits.

Results

The present study sought to establish a new normative sample for Black deaf individuals on the DAS. A preliminary study (Nelson Schmitt, 2011) revealed statistically significant differences between White deaf individuals and non-White deaf individuals in response patterns on the DASd and on the DASH. For research question 1, per Maxwell-McCaw’s (2001) and Maxwell-McCaw and Zea (2011) guidelines, participants were classified into one of the four acculturative styles using a median-split procedure. Acculturative styles of the current sample of Black deaf participants as well as the overall normative sample and the Non-White group from 2001 are presented in Table 3.

Compared to the normative sample, the distribution of acculturative styles in the Black deaf sample varied. Although 52% of the normative sample scored as Deaf Acculturated, only 16% of the Black deaf sample scored this way. Additionally, although 8% of the normative sample scored as Hearing Acculturated, 34% of the Black deaf sample was classified this way. Though only 1% of the normative sample scored as culturally Marginal, 19% of the Black deaf sample scored this way. Lastly, the two samples percentage-wise were closer for the Bicultural category (normative sample: 39%; Black deaf sample: 21%).

Regarding research question 2, a one-way MANOVA was conducted to assess the extent to which self-identification of hearing status impacts scores on the DASd ($\bar{X} = 105.71$, standard deviation [SD] = 11.41) and on the DASH ($\bar{X} = 114.85$, SD = 11.74) to score highly on the DASd (i.e., more Deaf were more likely to endorse bicultural traits.

Table 3. Acculturation styles of Black deaf participants and Maxwell-McCaw’s (2001) overall and non-White samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acculturation style</th>
<th>Black deaf</th>
<th>Overall sample</th>
<th>Non-White sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Acculturated</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf Acculturated</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicultural</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1,207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3,070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of hearing (\(\bar{X} = 95.70, SD = 12.30\)) to score highly on the DASd (i.e., less Deaf Acculturated: \(p < .001\)). Another Tukey HSD test indicated that people who self-identified as deaf (\(\bar{X} = 91.14, SD = 18.2\)) were less likely than those who self-identified as hard of hearing (\(\bar{X} = 109.5, SD = 12.2\)) to score highly on the DASh (i.e., more Hearing Acculturated: \(p = .001\)).

Post hoc analyses were conducted on self-identification of hearing status and DAS acculturative style to determine whether or not the DAS classifies participants based on their self-identification. There was a statistically significant difference between how Black Deaf individuals identified their hearing status and the acculturative style that they received on the DAS \(\chi^2 = 52.849, p < .0001\). In particular, more participants self-identified as Deaf than were classified as such by the DAS (49% self-identified, 16% were classified as Deaf Acculturated on the DAS). Fewer participants self-identified as bicultural than were sorted as such by the DAS (9% vs. 31%); additionally, fewer participants self-identified as hearing than the DAS would predict (2% vs. 34%).

Regarding research question 3, a principal components analysis was conducted to determine an appropriate factor structure for this sample of Black deaf individuals on the DAS. Maxwell-McCaw (2001) determined that a five-factor model described the construct correlations between items; however, a confirmatory factor analysis (Nelson Schmitt, 2011) of data from the DAS normative sample revealed that a sixth factor may be relevant to the conceptualization of a Deaf cultural identity in non-White deaf people. Utilizing the data obtained from the current sample of 106 Black deaf individuals, the DASd and the DASH subscales were factors analyzed using principal component analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation.

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .631 for the DASH items and .79 for the DASd items, both of which were above the commonly recommended value of .6 (Suhr, 2006). Moreover, Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant for the DASd subscale \(\chi^2(378) = 2173.443, p < .05\) and the DASH subscale \(\chi^2(435) = 2232.266, p < .05\). Finally, the criterion of .40, set by Hu and Bentler (1999) to determine whether communalities were sufficiently high, was met, with most of the communalities being over .60. This further confirms that each item shared some common variance with other items. Given these overall indicators, factor analysis was deemed to be suitable with all 58 items of the DAS.

The primary components analysis of the DASd yielded six factors, explaining a total of 69.98% of the variance for the Deaf culture-focused items. The sixth factor, called Black Deaf Sociopolitics, contains items and themes that support Corbett’s (2010) observations about Black Deaf people. In particular, they are active in spiritual and religious communities; they utilize the variant of ASL known as Black ASL; and they value knowledge of and involvement with social and political organizations. This factor specifically explains 4.02% of the variance on the DASd. The analysis of the DASH also yielded six factors, explaining a total of 66.74% of the variance for the mainstream Hearing culture-focused items; here, the Black Deaf Sociopolitics factor explains 5.25% of the variance on the DASH. With the exception of four items each from the DASd and on the DASH (Table 5), each of the items fell onto the same factors as in Maxwell-McCaw’s study (Maxwell-McCaw & Zea, 2011).

Additional post hoc analyses sought to investigate whether educational attainment was associated with self-identification of ethnic/cultural background or with self-identification of deafness. The sample was divided into two groups: those with a high school or vocational school education (i.e., low attainment) and those with a college or graduate education (i.e., high attainment). Results were not significant for effects of educational attainment on ethnic/cultural self-identification (\(\chi^2 = 10.312, p = .07\)) or self-identification of deafness (\(\chi^2 = 6.234, p = .28\)). That is, there were no statistically significant differences between the low attainment group and the high attainment group on how they self-identified on ethnic background or deafness.

### Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and Cronbach’s alphas of black deaf participants on the DAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
<th>Factor 5</th>
<th>Factor 6</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DASd</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>21.85</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>16.17</td>
<td>15.85</td>
<td>15.17</td>
<td>105.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DASH</td>
<td>13.48</td>
<td>16.33</td>
<td>19.02</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td>21.71</td>
<td>13.17</td>
<td>95.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale SD</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>17.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DASd</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>15.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DASH</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DASd</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DASH</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The factor titles are Factor 1 = cultural identity, Factor 2 = cultural involvement, Factor 3 = cultural preferences, Factor 4 = cultural knowledge, Factor 5 = language competence, and Factor 6 = Black deaf sociopolitics.

### Table 5. Items that load on the “Black deaf sociopolitics” factor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DASH</th>
<th>DASd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My deaf identity is an important part of who I am</td>
<td>I call myself hearing-impaired or hard of hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would prefer that my church/temple is mostly deaf</td>
<td>Enjoyment of participation in hearing political activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding other people using ASL</td>
<td>Knowledge of famous hearing actors and actresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of current ASL slang or popular expressions in ASL</td>
<td>Names of famous hearing political leaders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ASL = American Sign Language.
An independent samples t test failed to reveal a statistically significant difference between scores on the DASd for participants with lower ($\bar{X} = 110.32$, $SD = 14.60$) and higher ($\bar{X} = 103.06$, $SD = 18.64$) levels of educational attainment: $t(104) = 2.06$, $p = .170$, alpha = .05. By contrast, another independent samples t test on scores on the DASH did reveal a statistically significant difference between participants with lower ($\bar{X} = 89.10$, $SD = 15.88$) and higher ($\bar{X} = 99.33$, $SD = 14.86$) levels of educational attainment, $t(104) = 3.30$, $p < .001$, alpha = .05. That is to say, Black Deaf participants who completed college or professional school were significantly more likely than those who only completed high school or vocational training to endorse more hearing-acculturated items.

Discussion

Regarding research question 1 (i.e., how would the present sample be distributed among the four acculturative styles), this section will discuss the proportions of acculturative styles in the Black Deaf sample and potential explanations for these findings in the following sequence: Bicultural, Marginal, Deaf Acculturated, and Hearing Acculturated.

First, it is important to note that roughly the same proportion of Black Deaf individuals were classified as Bicultural as the overall sample in 2001 (Black Deaf: 31%, overall sample: 39%). One potential explanation for this finding may involve the social desirability of expressing bicultural traits (detailed in Leigh et al., 1998; Maxwell-McCaw, 2001). Another possible explanation may also reflect the increased integration of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals into mainstream education and the workplace. That is, deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals may feel that they must demonstrate skills with cultural fluidity to succeed in majority-hearing academic and occupational arenas. Black Deaf individuals get support for their deaf identities in tight-knit cultural groups, such as churches and cultural/activist arenas (e.g., NBDA). As an example, if a Black Deaf individual were the only deaf person in a mainstream school, developing a fluidly bicultural identity would be more challenging because of limited opportunities to share language and educational experiences with other deaf students. By contrast, a Black Deaf individual educated in a mainstream school with a program for deaf students, including a concentration of other Black Deaf students, may have an easier time developing a bicultural identity. That is, similar to ethnic enclaves in metropolitan areas, Black Deaf students in mixed (deaf/hearing; Black/other ethnicities) academic environments benefit from the chance to practice their culture with a supportive group of people who share their cultural and linguistic experiences.

With regard to the culturally Marginal classification, approximately 19% of the sample of Black deaf individuals in this study and 1% of participants in the normative sample (Maxwell-McCaw, 2001) were classified this way. One potential explanation for this finding in the Black deaf sample is that the marginal classification encapsulates the experiences of existing on the peripheries of Deaf culture and mainstream hearing culture. Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) describe how people with multiple subordinate-group identities become marginalized and invisible even within their subordinate groups. The authors utilize a model of androcentric (male-focused), ethnocentric (White/European-focused), and heterocentric (heterosexuality as normative) ideologies to explore intersections of subordinate-group identities. In this model, the prototypical person is a White heterosexual man; other identities are non-prototypical and subordinate.

To apply the intersectional invisibility model to the Black deaf individuals in the current study, it is necessary to add hearing status (i.e., hearing as normative) to the existing framework. Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) assert that their model focuses on sex, ethnicity, and sexual orientation because of the substantial existing literature in those areas; they suggest, however, that future research should incorporate disability status (typical physical functioning as normative) because of its effect on how individuals with disabilities are perceived and treated. Because data were not collected on participants’ sexual orientations, that element will not be discussed further in this study. As such, a prototypical person is defined here as a White hearing man: ethnic and racial minorities, people with a hearing difference, and females have non-prototypical, subordinate-group identities.

Black deaf people experience intersectional invisibility because their racial/ethnic background makes them non-prototypical with regard to race and their hearing difference makes them non-prototypical with regard to hearing status. Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) suggest that the impact of multiple subordinate-group identities is multiplicative rather than additive. The authors contend that identities interact, producing actions and responses that can further marginalize minority groups. For Black deaf people, this means feeling excluded from Deaf culture because it is based largely on White Deaf experiences (Leigh, 2009) and feeling excluded from Black culture because of hearing status and communication differences. It is important to acknowledge here, however, that hearing status and communication differences are not insignificant in their effects on dividing Black deaf and Black hearing people. That is, Black hearing people who might otherwise welcome interaction with Black deaf people (and vice versa) confront linguistic barriers that complicate these opportunities.

Another possible explanation for the 19% of the current sample that was classified as culturally marginal on the DAS may involve recognizing marginality as a valid identity: one in which people feel satisfied with their status of not identifying strongly with Deaf or mainstream Hearing cultures. Hintermair (2008) administered a translated version of the DAS and other measures to over 600 deaf individuals in Germany; 33 participants (5.2%) scored as culturally marginal on the DAS. Within this group, some respondents scored highly on measures of self-esteem and life satisfaction, suggesting that a culturally marginal classification does not necessarily connote social alienation or lack of cultural identity. On the contrary, Hintermair emphasizes that some respondents report deliberately refusing to participate in Deaf culture and mainstream culture. Instead, they cultivate a distinctly hard-of-hearing identity that involves a synthesis of elements from both cultures with other idiosyncratic aspects. Thus, a marginal classification on the DAS may reflect a valid form of cohesive identity outside of the Deaf/Hearing binary and related biculturalism.

Hintermair’s (2008) findings could support a third potential explanation for the substantial contingent of Black deaf individuals who scored as culturally marginal in the current study. These respondents may not perceive themselves to be on the periphery of cultural groups. Instead, they may think of themselves as having a different but equally valid form of Deaf cultural identity: one that is not evident from the dominant perspective of largely White and hearing-centric identity studies. Along these lines, future research should include measures of self-esteem, life satisfaction, and other relevant variables to better understand the characteristics of Black deaf individuals who score as culturally marginal on the DAS.
Regarding the Deaf Acculturation classification, considerably more of the normative sample was classified as Deaf Acculturated than was the case for the Black Deaf sample (Black Deaf: 16%, overall sample: 52%). Moreover, more of the Black Deaf sample than the normative sample scored as Hearing Acculturated (Black Deaf: 34%, overall sample: 8%). These two findings appear to reflect similar issues in identity development. As described above, the overall sample is almost 90% White/Caucasian and much of the literature on Deaf culture and identity has represented the White Deaf experience (Leigh, 2009). The Black Deaf respondents may associate Deaf culture with White Deaf people and therefore do not find personal relevance in the way Deaf cultural issues are described on the DAS. By contrast, there are many more representations of Black hearing people than Black deaf people in mainstream Western culture, so Black Deaf respondents may perceive hearing-related items on the DAS and mainstream hearing culture in general to be more affirming.

The proportions of Non-White participants in 2001, who were classified as Hearing Acculturated or Marginal mirrored rates seen in the normative sample at large. More Non-White respondents than White respondents were classified as Bicultural, whereas more White respondents than Non-White respondents were classified as Deaf Acculturated. Although the distribution of acculturative styles of the Non-White group from the normative sample differed from that of the Black deaf sample in the current study, it is important to note that the Non-White group is more heterogeneous because it consists of Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Black participants. If the normative sample had a more substantial number of Black respondents, more direct comparisons could be made between the 2001 and 2011 samples. It is possible that these two samples would have more similar distributions of acculturative styles.

Regarding research question 2 (i.e., which hearing status identifiers are associated with high scores and low scores on the DASd and the DASH), there were multiple interesting results; these findings and their potential implications will be discussed in turn.

Self-identification of hearing status was significantly related to scores on the DASd and the DASH. First, respondents in the current study who self-identified as “deaf” (audiolinguistically but not culturally Deaf) were more likely than participants who self-identified as “Deaf” to score below the median (i.e., less Deaf Acculturated) on the DASH subscale. This outcome aligns well with Maxwell-McCaw and Zea’s (2011) findings that self-identification as “deaf” is associated with analogous (less Deaf Acculturated) performance on the DAS.

Second, respondents who self-identified as “Deaf” were more likely than those who self-identified as “hard of hearing” to score above the median (i.e., more Deaf Acculturated) on the DASd. Moreover, respondents who self-identified as “deaf” were more likely than those who self-identified as “hard-of-hearing” to score below the median (i.e., less Hearing Acculturated) on the DASH. These findings appear to reflect similar mechanisms; in particular, individuals who perceive themselves as having a more significant hearing difference (i.e., self-identify as “Deaf” or “deaf”) may not identify as strongly with mainstream hearing culture as those who have a mild or moderate hearing difference (i.e., self-identify as hard-of-hearing).

Another result suggests that people who self-identify with a Deaf culture obtain lower scores on hearing acculturation items than people who self-identify as only audiologically deaf. That is to say, respondents who self-identified as “Deaf” were also more likely than those who self-identified as “hard of hearing” to score below the median on the DASH (i.e., less Hearing Acculturated). This outcome reflects Maxwell-McCaw and Zea’s (2011) findings that self-identification as culturally Deaf is associated with lower scores on the DASH.

Relatively few respondents in the current sample self-identified as “hearing” (2%) or “hearing-impaired” (6%), compared to the 34% who were classified as Hearing Acculturated on the DAS. One potential explanation for this outcome involves lower salience or lower desirability to be perceived as hearing. Although this may appear counterintuitive given the above discussion about the social desirability of being fluidly bicultural, it is possible that the stated purpose of the study (i.e., to better understand the process of Deaf identity development for Black individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing) and the locations and means by which participants were recruited (i.e., via flyers posted at Gallaudet University and e-mail newsletters to deaf advocacy organizations) affected self-identification outcomes. If the current study was able to recruit participants who were not affiliated with Gallaudet University or the NBDA, the proportion of the sample that self-identified as “hearing” or “hearing-impaired” may have increased. In a study, Singleton and Tittle (2000) suggested that people who were late-deafened tended to be more likely to identify themselves as hearing rather than deaf because they had a hearing identity for most of their lives.

The findings for research question 2, described above, spurred additional consideration and theoretical explanation. First, it is possible that Black Deaf individuals are more likely to self-identify as hearing due to Black cultural perceptions of disability (Devlieger, Albrecht, & Hertz, 2007). In particular, Vernon (1998, 1999) posits that Black people who are also disabled will experience multiple forms of oppression simultaneously: from nondisabled Blacks, disabled Whites, and nondisabled Whites.

Black Deaf individuals who self-identify as Deaf may band together, as social identity theory (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971) suggests, to assert their minority identity. This may manifest through a shared communication method (i.e., Black ASL: McCaskill et al., 2011) as well as through similar educational experiences. Civil Rights-era discrimination and segregation in education extended to Deaf residential schools; as in mainstream education, schools for non-White students had fewer resources, less experienced teachers, and lower academic standards than schools for White students (Patterson, 2002). Moreover, a study indicated that White Deaf students graduate from high school with the equivalent of an eighth-grade reading level, whereas non-White Deaf students graduate with the equivalent of a first-grade reading level (Allen, 1986). As people of color, the Black Deaf individuals are racial minorities in America, and as deaf people, they are audiological minorities; this intersection places Black Deaf individuals on the fringes of mainstream American (i.e., hearing) culture.

Regarding research question 3 (i.e., determining an appropriate factor structure for the Black deaf population), the results of the principal components analysis of data revealed that a sixth factor emerged, called Black Deaf Sociopolitics. We speculate that items in this factor (Table S) reflect concerns and perspectives that characterize the Black Deaf population: activity in spiritual and religious communities, the variant of ASL known as Black ASL, and sociopolitical knowledge and involvement. Corbett (2010) notes that Black deaf people often have strong ties to religious organizations; such ties may be intensified in churches that have sizable deaf ministries because they facilitate social interaction and community integration. Political knowledge likely also plays a role for Black Deaf individuals in the light of the 2008 election of Barack Obama, the first Black
President of the United States. Moreover, participants in the current study were recruited through multiple sources, including the NBDA, which advocates for legal and educational opportunities for Black Deaf people; members of this group are more politically inclined.

We suggest that the emergence of the Black Deaf Sociopolitics factor in the current study supports the findings from the preliminary study (Nelson Schmitt, 2011) while clarifying the nature of the specific items that touch upon the cultural variables specific to Black Deaf people. Although Maxwell-McCaw and Zea’s (2011) underlying five-factor structure was supported, the factor of Black Deaf Sociopolitics supports Vernon’s (1998, 1999) theory that having multiple minority identities results in unique combinations of traits that do not occur in people with only one minority identity. Additional information, such as in-depth interviews or open-ended questions, should be included in future research to clarify these hypotheses.

With regard to the post hoc analyses that showed how respondents with higher educational attainment were more likely to endorse hearing-acculturated items, we return to Lane et al. (2011) for a potential explanation. The researchers contended that Deaf people comprise an ethnic group whose cultural attributes must be transmitted intentionally (e.g., deliberately seeking out Deaf clubs, sharing educational experiences, and learning ASL or another visual communication modality) rather than incidentally (i.e., as Spanish language and cultural traditions are transmitted through the family among Hispanic groups). Based on this perspective, it was expected that Black Deaf respondents with higher educational attainment (and/or were recruited via a Gallaudet recruitment stream) would be more likely to endorse deaf-acculturated items than hearing-acculturated items. As such, the current findings may reflect how thoroughly entrenched a hearing identity is in society.

Steinberg, Bain, Li, Delgado, and Rupert (2003) observed that Hispanic/Latino families grieved when a child’s hearing difference was identified and that they expressed a significant desire for him or her to learn spoken Spanish. The researchers further noted that several families ascribed a cultural meaning to their child’s hearing difference: a punishment from God for a family’s religious transgressions. It is possible that the desire among Hispanic families for a hearing identity may extend to Black families (and, in turn, our Black Deaf respondents) who share similar religious or karmic interpretations of a hearing difference. Additionally, because of the discrimination that too many Blacks experience, our respondents with higher educational attainment may perceive that being as hearing as possible might subject them to less discrimination or enable them to acculturate more readily into society at large.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the current study is among the first quantitative analyses of an ethnic minority group on the DAS, some limitations were noted. First, the present sample of Black Deaf individuals was more highly educated than the Deaf population as a whole. According to Marschark, Lang, and Albertini (2002), on average, 30% of deaf and hard-of-hearing students who enroll in 4-year colleges will graduate, whereas 70% of hearing students who enroll in 4-year colleges will graduate. This finding is in sharp contrast to the 42% of the present sample that reported having graduated from a 4-year college and the 21% who also completed a graduate or professional program. Another issue related to sampling involves the avenues through which participants were primarily recruited: flyers and e-mail newsletters through Gallaudet and the NBDA. Although participants recruited at Gallaudet were more likely than the average deaf individual to have completed high school and pursued higher education, the current study attempted to increase the representation of different educational backgrounds by reaching out to the NBDA. That said, it is possible that the NBDA and Gallaudet communities overlap significantly (i.e., NBDA members may be Gallaudet alumni). To limit the collection of personally identifying information, the current study did not ask participants about recruitment source or academic affiliation. This information may have provided additional insight into the characteristics of each recruitment source and further illuminated the overrepresentation of college-educated Black Deaf individuals in the present sample.

It is important to note, however, that the proportions of respondents’ educational backgrounds in the current study are highly comparable to those in the Maxwell-McCaw (2001) and Maxwell-McCaw and Zea (2011) studies. Regarding participants who reported their highest level of educational attainment as high school, this characterized 26% of Maxwell-McCaw’s participants and 32% of the current sample of Black Deaf respondents. Regarding those who reported their highest level of educational attainment as technical or vocational school, this characterized 7% of Maxwell-McCaw’s sample and 6% of the current sample. Regarding those who reported their highest level of educational attainment as a 4-year college degree, this characterized 41% of Maxwell-McCaw’s sample and 42% of the current sample. Lastly, regarding those who reported their highest level of educational attainment as graduate or professional school, this characterized 27% of Maxwell-McCaw’s sample and 21% of the current sample. Because the DAS was administered via an online survey, it excluded individuals who do not have access to a computer and the Internet. Future research should target individuals with less formal education and computer access, thus making the results more generalizable to and representative of the people who comprise most of the Black Deaf community.

Regarding other demographic data, over two thirds (72%) of the present sample was female; interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences between males and females on self-identification of hearing status $\chi^2(5) = 7.634, p = .18$ or on self-identification of ethnic background $\chi^2(5) = 2.469, p = .78$. Incidentally, this reflects very similar outcomes from Maxwell-McCaw’s (2001) study, in which 67.3% of the normative sample was female.

On another note, in a meta-analysis of theoretical works on third-wave feminism, Evans and Bobel (2007) note that an individual’s class, race, sex, and gender are inextricably linked: that each component acts as a lens through which the other elements can be viewed. Similarly, per the modified Purdie-Vaughn and Eibach’s (2008) intersectional invisibility model described above (i.e., a White hearing man is the prototypical person), a Black deaf woman has three subordinate identities, whereas a Black deaf man has two subordinate identities. As such, the majority of the current sample may differ significantly in terms of how they conceptualize their Black Deaf experiences. Future research should attempt to recruit a more balanced sample of male and female participants to further analyze these potential differences.

It is also important to note that only 18% of the current sample was over 40 years of age. Because older individuals were underrepresented in the current sample, future research should target these populations; cultural perspectives of Black identity and Deaf identity may differ greatly now from those common in previous generations and time periods.

As for geographic origins, 17% of the sample indicated that they were of international (mostly African) origin. Future
research could examine Black Deaf culture through an international lens. It is important to note here that African American culture is not a monolith and that there exist many ways to “be” Black (e.g., Alston et al., 1996; Gates, 2006). An ethnography by Womack (2010) describes several different Black presences in America. In particular, she cites the changing tides of Black spirituality, the proliferation of hip-hop music and culture since the 1980s and ongoing tension around its representation and appropriation in mainstream (White) America, disparities in educational opportunities for Black students, and the rise of a new wave of Black feminism. Regarding international groups, Womack (2010) also describes the struggles that Black people of international origin face upon immigration to the United States. Specifically, she mentions how Americans of all backgrounds tend to treat Blacks as though they share a single history of forced immigration from Africa through the slave trade, regardless of the actual times and reasons of their immigration to the United States. Overall, people who identify with a specific non-American nationality such as Jamaican may describe differently what it means to be Black in their countries of origin compared to what it means to be Black in the United States. Future research should focus on DAS response patterns within and across nationalities within the Black Deaf community.

Conclusion

In the 12 years between the normative sample (Maxwell-McCaw, 2001) and the current Black deaf sample, significant changes have occurred in technology, politics, and education; these changes have likely also affected White Deaf individuals’ processing of deaf and hard-of-hearing identity formation. Collecting a new sample of White Deaf individuals on the DAS could address the variability in responses between the current Black Deaf sample and the normative sample.

The intention of the current study was to establish a normative sample of Black Deaf individuals on the DAS. In the course of this investigation, however, it quickly became evident that Deaf cultural identity development for Black Deaf people involves intersections and interactions of myriad variables. Future research should examine the relationship between Deaf identity and racial identity by administering the DAS and an appropriate measure of racial/ethnic identity. For example, on the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-B: Parham & Helms, 1981), the different classifications are strictly hierarchical. Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion–Emersion, and Internalization reflect differing levels of acceptance and internalization of one’s Black identity as well as negative thoughts about White/mainstream identity and culture; an individual must pass through each stage to reach the idealized “Internalization” of a positive and stable Black identity. By contrast, the DAS is bimodal and less evaluative in its classifications. Though biculturalism is socially desirable, it is not necessarily the only satisfactory outcome; scoring high on the DASd (or being classified as Deaf Acculturated) indicates that a person has a positive perspective of his or her Deaf identity; this can exist independently of any explicit perspective of Hearing or mainstream culture. Understanding these intersections will provide valuable insight into how Black Deaf individuals construct and understand their identities.

Notes

1. Although it is important to acknowledge the important difference between the descriptors “African American” (i.e., a person who was born in the United States and who has ancestral roots in Africa) and “Black” (i.e., a person who shares genotypical and phenotypical traits characteristic of Africans and whose nationality or ethnic background may or may not include African roots: Herman, 2004), the present research will use the more inclusive term “Black.”

Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were reported.

References


