

A PSYCHO-SOCIAL APPROACH TO ECONOMIC
ACHIEVEMENT FOR ETHNIC WOMEN

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Abstract

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In order to shift paradigms to match current social trends for achievement amongst minority women, it is necessary to understand the implications of social transactions from the past to the present, as it relates to ethnic women. The central phenomenon for failings amongst ethnic women within the broader culture relates to psycho-social issues interwoven around the past which perpetuates a lack of identity, apathy toward achievement, and results in a cycle of economically impoverished females. When minority women perpetuate outdated sociology or give external sources power to shape their identity, then, self-concepts that are learned, believed, and ingested often lead to a maligned identity that relates poverty. A transformational medium that can point these women in the direction of self-actualization, achievement and economic success comes through an ontological approach. Self-reflection, then, becomes the power of enablement to relate more successfully. This discussion leads ethnic women into a more accurate portrait of a 21st century ethnic female; one that exhibits a different sociology for acculturation within this progressive era.

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Chapter One: Introduction

A diverse society has its social tensions and empowering ability working simultaneously. Equating cultural awareness can be mistaken as equity or success, and it is very possible to be deluded into maintaining a warped sense of accomplishment. If cultural awareness is properly understood, however, it can be a tool that helps ethnic groups move forward and self-actualize in the broader culture.

Within this age of social progression and cultural awareness, a great portion of minority women remain behind economically in comparison to others. The central concern of minority women being constrained and failing economically is related to a lack of self-identification; this leads to apathy towards achievement and a lack of self-actualization, which in turns perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

Statement of the Problem

What is the relationship between an identity crisis amongst ethnic women in the 21st century that perpetuate a lack of economic power and low quality of life within the broader culture?

Definition of Terms

Complexities: a reference to the degree of difficulty in focusing on one aspect of a thing as an absolute source or cause due to “changes according to the context so that . . . meanings are never fixed” (Hoeverler & Boles, 2001, p. 9).

Ethnic: The definition has changed over the years and should be understood as a combination of ideas: Described in the 15th century as “nation” - “Not to a political

unity, but the unity of persons of common blood or descent” (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 16-17).

20th Century reference: “Ethnicity referred to a particular way of defining not only others but also ourselves, and this is how it entered sociology” (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 16-17).

Classical Sociologist Definition has several tenants:

What matters is not whether a blood relationship actually exists, but whether it is believed to exist . . . Ethnicity is a subjective matter; the crucial issue is how we see ourselves. The potential bases of this belief in common descent are multiple, varying from physical resemblance to shared cultural practices to a shared historical experience of intergroup interaction. An ethnic group exists wherever this distinctive connection – this belief in common descent – is part of the foundation of community, wherever it binds us to one another to some degree (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 16-17).

Identity: reference made when “people identify themselves in certain ways in order to protect their way of life” and to be accepted within a group for “value” (Hoeveler & Boles, 2001, p. 10 in original study (Klor de Alva, 1993, p. 57, secondary source)).

Economic Achievement: It is an economic system that defines groups by purchasing power and ability to transact within markets locally or globally (Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures, 2003).

Delimitations of Research

The references used for the review of literature were collected over a period of 40 days using the resources of the Karmann Library at the University of Wisconsin Platteville, Wyllie Library at the University of Parkside in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and Gateway Technical Library in Racine, Wisconsin. The several search engines provided by EBSCOHOST, ERIC, and Wilson were used. The key search terms were: ideology,

minority women, acculturation, disparity, minority, ethnic, co-dependence, identity, females, achievement, and crisis.

Methods of Approach

A brief review of the definition of ethnicity and mental construction within society was conducted. After a review of literature relating to studies on feminists scholars, social sciences and anecdotal evidence of psycho-social situations found relating to minority females, social states for ethnic women was realized. Additional research relating to economic situations that affect employment for minority women and education was also conducted. A review of current events further necessitated research that suggest a paradigm shift to meet the demands of emerging social trends for ethnic women. The results were synthesized to encourage ethnic females to become empowered in order to actualize their true selves, and achieve more.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Over the years various factors have perpetuated a misconception of minority women in society. This research is geared towards the undoing of social orientations that frame mental constructs correlating to psycho-social states of ethnic women and lack of achievement. As a multi-dimensional discussion on ethnic females, perspectives explored herein attempts to explain social literature from a historical; intra-psychic, domestic, media based and feminist points of view. An ontological conclusion has been drawn as a means to help minority women shift paradigms.

Ideas and Origins of Ethnic Identity

As a social organism, factors of identity help people to know how they will interact with each other. However, ethnic identity is not static, and tracing how such interactions are formulated and reacted upon is complex.

The definition of identity has evolved over the centuries. To begin, a 15th century definition suggests ethnic consideration as a “nation,” “persons of common blood or decent” (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 16). Next, a 20th century classification says it is a “particular way of defining not only others but also ourselves, and this is how it entered sociology” (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 16). Thinking in terms of classical sociologists, “ethnicity is determined from an inner cognizance, and also refers to people that look alike or have lineage and agree on customs” (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 16-17).

Historical Social References

A synopsis of history shows how certain images for ethnic females developed. In the 1900s, some whites in America encountered, for the very first time, various ethnic groups by the masses. It was the era when horrific images were manufactured and assigned to groups including ethnic females. Depending on who was in the neighborhood, often determined social labels or name calling attributed to minority groups.

As a good example, Asian immigrants were heavily populated in parts of California in the 1900s. Asian differences compared to the popular culture, made Asians the talk of the town. The contemptuous title, “*chink*,” was assign to Asian groups despite their usefulness in working to build the American railroad system. (Funk & Wagnall New International Dictionary of English Language, 2001, p. 232).

Black women were notoriously portrayed, for instance, as the “*mammy face*” which is a black-as-tar cartoon face with protruding shiny red lips. The “*mammy*” face actually became synonymous with the underclass or servitude (Funk & Wagnall New International Dictionary of English Language, 2001, p. 772) (<http://dictionary.infoplease.com>).

In Mexico, because the sun was too hot at noon, businesses would close for a siesta (break) and re-open later in the day. Many concluded that a siesta proved Mexican women to be lazy, but “not all Mexicans take a siesta everyday” (Schon, 1978, p. 24).

Jewish women, too, have been called names. In early American history, Jewish women were responsible for family businesses. Gender roles, in this case, were reversed. Jewish women were often labeled as bossy and overbearing females because

they were entrepreneurs. “The historically important role women played in managing many Jewish-owned business [cannot be ignored] while their men [inundated with the Torah] studied & prayed” (Rivo, 1998, p.34). Actual film depictions in the 1920’s show Jewish “[m]others [as] hardworking, independent . . . figures [while their daughters] takes risks [and] defy . . . traditional authorities” (Rivo, 1998, p. 35). As cutting edge business women, Jewish women were shunned for their aggressive attitudes toward achievement.

Over time, these hurtful approaches to ethnicity became obsolete or less prominent as cultures began to reciprocate respect for differing values.

An Up-to-Date Perspective on Ethnicity

It is no wonder that Sanders (2002) describes ethnicity differently. Adding to other defining moments, Sanders finds that a focus on “patterns of interaction” in terms of ethnic identity must be understood as the medium that “links groups” together rather than of summarizing “key cultural behavior components” (2002, p. 328). For example, there are sub-groups amongst African Americans in which one group might not associate with another group of blacks. “[M]embers [of a group] may self-identify” differently (Sanders, 2002, p.328). To further explain, an inner city single mom would not be identified with the same sense of “blackness” as an accomplished black female CEO, for example. The CEO, in this case, can easily be seen as adding to diversity or multicultural-ness. On the other hand, the inner city mother is more likely to be viewed as a stereotype. In addition, amongst Latinos, sub-groups of Spanish decent shun Puerto Ricans and vice versa. So, then, all members within a group do not perceive themselves the same way. It is better to look at ethnicity in terms of the “social space”

(Sanders, 2002, p. 328-9) that focuses or gives reference on the specificity of how or where a group formulate within society.

Sanders (2002) also proposed that social constructs are affected by every day demands that call for acculturation for the moment. Notably, articulating the unwritten code for cross racial relations in everyday life can further explain Sander's more up-to-date concept of ethnic identity. Consider two different interracial marriages. A white female handles black in-laws on one set of constructs, but she switches her approach in dealing with white counter parts. A black female in a similar situation, as another example, may or may not be able to relate to Caucasian in-laws. In addition, both women would need to identify what is socially acceptable, and consider norms in dealing with extended family. Another important factor here is that the Caucasian female married to an African American man may be considered a minority, too, simply by association (Sanders, 2002, p. 328-9).

Social Science and Mental Constructs: Who Makes the Rules

Faulty images and labels have had a share in altering the true condition of ethnic women. So, it is important to have discussions on how minority women perceive themselves today, and to scrutinize more closely ideological roles and how ideas are bestowed on women.

Augustine Brannigan, author and professor, at the University of Calgary, Canada has reported on the over use of the scientific method and the waning effectiveness of the social sciences. His (gender identification is important) commentaries claim that there are gaps within the social science due to faulty methodologies

(www.ucalgary.ca/criminal/).

In one of many studies, Brannigan (1997) presents the case that traditional debates in the science of social psychology have not really explained social-psychological phenomenon in context of the realities that people experience on a day to day basis. The researcher advocates that studies are biased to the true condition of psycho-social states under investigation. Brannigan's findings do encompass the social situation for minority women.

Brannigan (1997) also makes references to Gould's *The Mismeasure of Man* as theoretical support for his argument on social situations and problems within social science (Brannigan, 1997). Gould, a Harvard Paleontologist, elaborates extensively on the subject of "biological determinism" in which he believes that inferiority and oppression are innate as described in his work, *The Mismeasure of Man (1981)*. Gould expresses an agreement with Brannigan by saying, "the most interesting case of scientific bias . . . is more insidious than individual hoax or deceit since it operates unconsciously" (Brannigan, 1997, p. 595). Brannigan goes on to explain that at the onset of various studies a built in slant of theory explains, to a certain degree, the diminishing respect for social science, (p. 594-597) and is, thus, framing social outcomes.

These studies point to a means for describing situational constructs that determine the way minority women have related over the years. A definition of ontological argument: proposition that suggest, "objective existence of [a thing] is necessarily involved in the existence of the very idea of [it]" (Funk & Wagnall New International Dictionary of English Language, 2001, p. 883). This definition, in agreement with Brannigan's research, means that some roles and dispositions acted upon by ethnic women are contrived. It seems that in some instances ethnic identity is

an assigned set of social constructs instead of a reality about how minority women relate to each other or within the broader society.

Ethnic Females and Identity in Crisis

Failures for ethnic women are often associated with distorted self-perceptions, along with ideas falsely injected from others or the environment. In determining the real state and ideological condition for minority women, it would be helpful to critique assumptions some of these women make, and discuss how their thinking is lived out in society.

Branningan's goes on to say on how some myths are ingested into minority thoughts. He comments on the nature of trickery concocted within social research laboratories in an effort to explain minority social patterns (Branningan, 1997). According to Branningan, social researchers trick people into ways of thinking. But, surprisingly "[it] is possible that [subjects] have duped [the researcher]" by acting out roles to appease a system of ideas (Branningan, 1997, p. 601). Additionally, methods of experimentation and analysis amongst theorists have "illustrated how [ethnic] perceptions are mediated by others and how [research] can be used [to establish faulty] paradigms" (Branningan, 1997, p. 597-601). Another way to explain the crisis of some ethnic women in conjunction to these statements is to say that these women have been conditioned to perceive themselves at the standard ascribed which, in turn, leads to a diseased mentality.

Social Detriment Marked by Traditional Roles for Ethnic Women

Crime against women in India is yet another proof of sickened social constructs amongst ethnic women. Countless crimes, for example, referred to as “dowry deaths” (Lee & Srinivasan, 2004, p. 1109) are on the rise in India. It is sad to say, despite the number of deaths and the risk involved, but marriage dowries will not disappear in India because it has been a long tradition and way of life for centuries.

Unlike the U.S. – which affords the pursuit of happiness and upward mobility – the caste system in India does not consider the plight of poor females. In India, surrounding marriage is the philosophy that women are not equal to men, and thus, status greatly affects every detail of female life for Indian women. It is almost impossible for a really poor girl in India to have much aspiration for affording a happy life outside of her economic origin at birth (Lee & Srinivasan, 2004, p. 1108).

It is no wonder, then, that the price of dowries has risen over the years. As status hungry parents make dowries priority, and they are willing to pay big bucks to rid themselves of their dependent girls through arranged marriages, many are willing to kill, steal and go beyond the law to ensure that Indian girls become a modern day *Cinderella* – “jumping the broom” with a wealthy man. However, many females in India are not happy with the decision making and arrangements for their lives in the hands of parents or husbands. The “glass slipper” of a royal arrangement does not fit (Maass, 1985, p. 5, 15-17) the innate desires of some of these women and they live a cramped social life because their opinions do not matter.

It is astounding to find that the cultural madness of arranged marriages is so deeply ingrained within the psychosis of the women in India. A prime example of psychosis gone awry is when Indian women were offered a choice: the dowry system or

to acquire an education and other modern elements (Lee & Srinivasan, 2004, p. 1114-1115). The dowry system was preferred (Lee & Srinivasan, 2004, p. 1114-1115). Instead of updating and making changes to living differently, and despite personal convictions that may not coincide with the caste system, Indian women decided to maintain the status quo. It seems that some of these women have been pushed so deeply psychologically that they are no longer thinking for themselves, but their thinking has become united with a stifling social system. Simply put, some Indian women do not foresee success or meanings outside of their culture. In fact, any potential that these women may have to change their economic status, live independent, and upgrade social roles will most likely never become a reality as long as they accept the dowry system.

False Assumptions and Subliminal Expectations: Misconceptions on Love, Beauty, and Relationships

Undermining and subverting is a way to describe factors that frame ethnic women's thoughts. "Fairy tales are powerful instruments that, like myths, "consciously and subconsciously" guide [people]" (Maass, 1985, p.9 as original source (Frey, 2000, p.11, as secondary source)) and is apparent when indoctrination comes to the masses, early in life, through storybooks and fairytales like *Cinderella* (Maass, 1985, p.9). According to Maass's critique in, The Cinderella Test: Would You Really Want the Shoe To Fit, the *Cinderella* syndrome relates to damaging imaginations that can transfer unconsciously into female adult life which reinforces a co-dependent mind-set.

According to Maass's theory, fantasy is ripe soil for co-dependent types of belief systems which are perpetuated amongst ethnic females who feel like they have no choice other than to live a second hand life and dance to the tune of others (1985, p. 7). In

addition, it is stories like *Repunzel, Snow White and The Princess and the Frog* that cause women to grow up with an unrest about themselves if they do not achieve finding, sooner or later, a “prince in shining armour” (Maass, 1985, p. 7-43). But, the truth is “the premise of finding true love has proven difficult to sustain” (Maass, 1985, p.23).

Problems do surface in the face of the *Cinderella* story, and similar stories. Especially for ethnic females, the vicissitudes of life have presented challenges different to those of others in society, and simultaneously, it seems that these fairytales also help to lay the psycho-social foundation for women to lead an anesthetized life through the incumbencies of domestication (Maass, 1985, p. 23-25). For example, often females succumb to putting their life on hold. They began to live life without clear goals or aspirations while sacrificing for others (Maass, 1985, p.11). In this way, these women are missing the chance of scoring a home run for themselves in achievement.

An aversion to this idea of fairytales adding depth to the complex social issues facing ethnic females, or women in general is understandable. It is problematic and would elicit repudiation by the public, of course, as there is a lack of pragmatic understanding that links fairytale stories to childrearing or effects on adult psychosis. It is plausible that different variables work on ethnic female distortion, too, and fairytales could be low on the totem pole as an indicator or impact on failing females. At the same time, it is problematic also, year after year when fairytale stories are re-read and taught as classics and become an ingrained stimulus for females to be “pathological” in nature, according to Maass (1985, p. 7-43).

Unfortunately, similar to the psychological hold dowries have in India, the culprit, fairytales, is very rarely mentioned in the U.S., due to the magnanimity of institutions and the traditions of Western education. “Like rumors [fairytales get]

credibility and mythic power from repetition. But to remain powerful, they . . . conform . . . and reconfirm the cultural values of generations,” comments Maass (1985, p. 9).

Paralleling the plight of some women in India, the tradition of presenting fairytales to little girls in the U.S. can be just as damaging as outdated concepts in other countries.

Perhaps it would be too distressing for Western minds, and ethnic thought, to rid themselves of the effect the Cinderella story plays on the libido. Yet, the thought cannot be ignored that *Cinderella* or *Snow White* are stories, on the surface, that have more reaching implications than innocent child’s play (Maass, 1985, p. 19). This whole psychological phenomenon has gone unchecked for generations because most Americans are familiar with the plot and ultimate point of the *Cinderella* story. Boy meets girl and lives happily ever after. But, according to Maass, Cinderella can be summed up as a man coming to rescue a “helpless” or needy “heroine” (1985, p. 24-26). It is also unreal to think that a quick shift of thinking about success can take place, if women are continuously socialized as little girls to be pathologically dependent on others. Similar to the girls in India, when a system of thinking has become so ingrained, if girls are given a choice to change their status and way of life they may refuse.

If on the other side of the coin, the paradigm shifted and Cinderella was re-written as a woman who reached personal benchmarks, financial goals, and achieved outside of a domestic or lesser role as the norm, then ethnic women might achieve more. If “happily ever after” (Maass, 1985, p. 10-11) was snatched from the walls of our daughter's imaginations and straight talk about life and earning a living as an independent woman were the norm, that would change the face of ethnicity and are females, undoubtedly. If the U.S. changed its approach in socializing girls, and the

“criteria [for excelling was based on constructs] determined by the individual woman,” (Maass, 1985, p. 17) women’s rights activist would not have such a difficult fight. Girls’ psychosis would more readily move from a princess mentality to a more independent paradigm. Girls growing up with a boss lady mentality would override the image of a lady in distress and need of rescue. Furthermore, if the concept of the educated and independent ethnic female became the norm and bore hard into the ethnic mind, men (and society at large) would have to re-think power plays that solely rely on physical beauty as strength.

But, women in Ecuador seem to be consumed in psycho-social babble on beauty. In a study, Erynn Masi De Casanova, from the University of California, San Diego reports on the needy and co-dependent predicament of some ethnic women. For example, women in Ecuador believe strongly that beauty and image is social power. Masi De Casanova says,

[My] research shows that beauty, understood here as an attractive or above-average appearance, has significant social and economic implications for women...it is “a currency system like the gold standard [which assigns] value to women in a vertical [way]...it is a route to power ... [they] are more likely to marry men of higher socio-economic status...more often hired...promoted [and get] higher wages. (Gender and Society, 2004, p.289)

This report clearly identifies the misaligned ideas some women have about physical beauty and success. Too many females have been convinced that “beauty leads to wealth” (Maass, 1985, p.25). For example, when women depend on men for a substantive life as a reward for physical beauty, it is simply another hold on females psychologically. This, too, reinforces female pathology because the intellectual ability, and other assets of women, has little or no merit for success.

The Media and Portraits of Ethnic Females

Didactic in nature is the ability of the media to situate ideological constructs about ethnic women into the public mind. It is true that “[a]ttractiveness and desirability as shaped by the media have a particularly strong influence [on the public mind]” (Maas, 1985, p. 22). Portrayal in film, music and theatre, for instance, is yet, another venue that expresses how society perceives ethnic women and “offers a rich field in which to investigate issues of feminine representation and reception” (Roberts, 1993, p.3). The discussion of three *Broadway* plays can articulate the differences society makes between gender and ethnicity amongst females.

First, from the Hispanic descent one may look at the musical opera, *Carmen*. It was at the time of “world War II, [when] Carmen Miranda, the ““Brazilian Bombshell,”” appeared in eight Hollywood musicals and two Broadway musical revues . . .” (Roberts, 1993, p.3). The main character, Carmen, was an exhilarating and promiscuous woman. She was ultimately punished for her *liaise fair* attitude about sex and the story ends with Carmen dying violently.

Madame Butterfly is another narrative to an Asian play that presents the deep seated cultural tensions within a biracial marriage. The story unfolds as an Asian prostitute has an affair with a man she finally marries. But, sadly, in the end she commits suicide because she cannot deal with the pressures of an interracial relationship (Bailey-Harris, 2007, p.157).

Lastly, in the La Boheme opera musical (Madsen, 1997, p. 80-89), *Rent*, is a plot surrounding the ups and downs of a Caucasian prostitute who dies from tuberculosis.

Important implication from these plays: it is noted that in each play the women have the same occupations. But, an underlying understanding comes to the surface by describing how each woman died. For instance, in *Rent*, the character is just as promiscuous as *Carmen* or *Madame Butterfly*. But the Caucasian actor dies a gentler death. In other words, *Rent* allows the main character to die with dignity, honor – a soft gentile death.

It is also noteworthy to mention here that not all ethnic whores are created equal. Differences are also made between the Mexican whore versus the Asian whore. It's clear when the term Geisha, as a good example, has been used to romanticize promiscuity. Repeatedly in books and film, it seems that becoming a Geisha is almost a good vocation. The Geisha image is more notable because there is an element of loyalty and art attached to deviant behavior (<http://dictionary.infoplease.com>).

The implication to be understood through the various sources discussed for minority women at large are these: the status and reality of ethnic women is sometimes tied to external cues and involved with the dictates of others. When women no longer have the power to self-conceptualize, their potential may never be reached and frustration is unavoidable. Without a concrete sense of self it is easy for codependent psycho-social patterns to swallow individuality into patterns of a contrived life, putting a strain upon the individual, who believing that performance and living out the views of another is obligatory, is greatly oppressed.

The Relationship of Disparity to Ethnic Women

Having made significant strides in explaining the stereotypical images prescribed to African American females, Professor Debra Walker King has produced scholarly work on the ills of *The Culture of Pain* (www.english.ufl.edu/faculty/dking/-index.html).

Professor King explains that (2008), to be defined and labeled by others externally denotes a “culture of pain” or disparity. Black women take on what King refers to as “black pain” (2008, p. 1). In addition, black women are stereotyped as being angry women.

In actuality, close scrutiny reveals that apathy and frustration is a real reason for attitudinal females of any color. For instance, the dynamics involved in wearing too many hats and the need to take on different roles of responsibility in African American homes can explain why these women may have an angry disposition.

When minority women find themselves in circumstances in which they must give up legitimate care of themselves in order to care for others, it is socially depleting. Over time a warped sense of responsibility and relating will seem normal. The truth is, these women are caught up in a perpetual cycle of survival and playing the maternal role. Sometimes an entire co-dependent family may be dependent on a strong female figure, for example.

Instead of becoming creative or a healing agent within the community (Foil-Matta, 1996, p. 2), women of pain (King, 2008, p.1) will not be able to contribute or empower their children adequately by living within a cycle of social depletion.

Furthermore, if ethnic females insist that this sort of relating is the norm, “distillation of experience” saps life from them (Foil-Matta, 1996, p. 2-4).

The Correlation of Psycho-Social Dispositions and Economy

In their study, Blustein, et al. (2010) explains the cycle of self-depreciation amongst ethnic women. Actually this study describes why so many minority students grow up and struggle economically and in various other ways. They conclude that many minorities believe they will not be successful because of their ethnicity (Blustein, et al. 2010). An inherent self-fulfilling prophecy, the thoughts stemming from the belief in an inability to measure up, has been ingested from within and suggested from without and probably began well before young adulthood. In this case, if young adult females are prophesying doom internally, they have given credence to the glass ceiling; which accounts for even more numbers in poverty stricken minorities. It is not possible that ethnic women will be very successful or attain if subconsciously their sense of value contradicts their ability. Too, continuous self-defeating inner talk leaves the door open for others to contribute to failures.

Clearly, psycho-social issues are related to ethnic economy and achievements. It seems that within the market, mental issues and “gaps [have] emphasized the human and political capital disadvantages of [ethnic] women . . . in the reform era” (Yuping, Hannum, Meiyang, 2008, p.1). It is the way that some minority women think that is closely related to a lack achievement and financial opportunities. It is true, if minority women are discouraged or without motivation, that can lead to a lack of participation and disparity in the job market or generate a sense of apathy toward life in general. This is played out in instances when, if young adult women believe that having children is their lot in life, it is difficult to envision working a six figure job. The truth be told, some

minorities do not go further in life because they do not believe that they can, and it is obvious that identity is misaligned when women think they are incapable.

The Relationship of Poverty to Ethnic Women

Giving more fuel to reasons for apathy and adding to issues surrounding ethnic women, it is realized that a lack of economy due “to the extent that education is indicative of the social class of one’s family origin” (England, Carmen, ~~Ross~~, Ross, 2006, p.496). This statement means that not only are ethnic females overworked, they are also overlooked because “objective economic need is not the only” source effecting unemployment. “[The] women who [have] class [status] are now more . . . likely to be employed” (England et al., 2006, p.496). These statements imply, too, that it is less likely that minority women will have jobs with good benefits or an education. In conjunction, without jobs with benefits, these women will tend to have untreated health issues. Unhealthy socially and physically pushes minority women further down economically.

A real factor in the cycle of poverty is when ethnic women find themselves, generation after generation, reared in single parent homes or worst. Perpetuating the cycle, teen pregnancy and babies out of wedlock produce children in society without adequate parenting, resources and support (England, et al., 2004, p. 496-8). It is also difficult for a teen mom to move up the economic ladder when she has young children. Foremost, teen moms must consider the needs of their children. Being tied down with the responsibility of raising children too early in life might become an economic burden. Unfortunately, having children early in life limits and sets impoverished boundaries for

some girls. The case of raising a family versus becoming educated definitely strengthens the equation for poverty for ethnic women.

Cycles of poverty do not strengthen chances for employment or progress amongst minority women (England, Garcia, Ross, 2004, p. 495). It has been proven that a lack of education is closely related to impoverished females. England, et al (2004) is right on target when associating lack of employment with education, childbearing and other factors. Significantly, some cases appear as a negative revolving door, especially when: women are reared in poverty only to find that a lack of education and a lack of knowledge for self-improvement maintains an impoverished state.

In their study, England, et al., worked to determine the differences amongst the factors influencing ethnic employment negatively. The study revealed a definite relationship between race and employment. Appendix A charts the results contrasting between opportunities to work and different amount available between cultural groups.

England, et al's undertaking makes interesting correlations amongst factors influencing ethnic females and work. Their study also discussed averages between races and employment opportunities. As an example, a simple break down of the report might suggest: weeks of work used as a dependent variable. In other words: the amount or opportunities to work a lot is dependent upon influences such as education or skill. On the flip side of the equation, family of origin, marital status, children, education, and race are all factors that were used to describe the independent variable. The independent variable (education, race, marital status etc.) works on or influences the dependent variable like job opportunity (England, Garcia, Ross, 2004, p. 495 -502). England et al's study clarified that employment opportunities were not influenced for women with husbands. Surprisingly, marital status was a moot point in their study.

To further explain, the study suggests a linear relationship in terms of employment and the various influences that impact work opportunities. The correlation is that if one factor in economy increases, there is a great likelihood that another factor in the equation of ethnic female economies will increase, and vice versa. The illustration in Appendix A (England, et al, 2004, p. 496-8) also supports the idea that having children too early in life is closely related to empty pocket books for ethnic women.

Positions of Power in the Workplace and Ethnic Women

Discrimination on the job certainly does not give ethnic women a push up financially. Realizing that there are “inequities in the American labor market”, it often appears that ethnic women are willing to work for less and settle for intolerable working environments rather than to work at companies that show bias (Grant, Kathuria, Renzulli, 2006, p. 504-05). The rejection and shunning that minority women find as they push to higher levels of pay is not worth the hassle.

College statistics further prove problems ethnic women experience at work: pay has remained unequal between genders and race, and amongst white colleges and black colleges (Grant, et al., 2006, p. 504-5). This same pattern of discrimination mirrors what has been going on within the labor market in general (Grant, et al., 2006, p. 504-5). “[R]ecruitment or retention biases might affect the composition of faculties at” black colleges and white schools is the reason Grant, et al., (2006) gives for unequal pay (p. 504-5). “In PWIs [predominately White historic schools], the relative scarcity of ethnic means that those working there may face overload . . . alienation may be higher for women of color in PWIs than in HBCUs [historically Black colleges or universities],

despite evidence of gender-based discrimination in HBCUs,” comments Grant, et al. (2006, p. 504-5).

If minorities within the general market are already apathetic and attitudinal, those with greater education only magnify the disparity, as it is quite possible that they find certain markets are impenetrable. This whole idea has not put a dent in the glass ceiling of some colleges and, as this review discloses, this same process can be identified within society at large. It is no wonder that ethnic females do not want to go to work.

The Mark of Feminist: A Demand for Role Change

The idea of taking a stand for women surfaced in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Initially, woman’s suffrage began by ignoring race. Back then Sojourner Truth was a significant voice for Black females. There was a push for men of color to get their rights, “but not a word about the colored women’s [rights] ... I am for keeping the thing going while things are stirring ... if we wait ‘till it is still, it will take a great while to get it going again” (<http://www.fembio.org/english/biography.php/woman/biography/sojourner-truth/>). Consequently two major events thrust ethnic women into a new era. Firstly, a multi-racial feminism was established in the U.S. during the 1900’s (Skinner, 2011, p. 39). Secondly, the League of Mexican-American Women was established refusing to be ignored in society (Skinner, 2011, p.39).

Feminism has had some successes in the past and is well intentioned scholarships, however, feminist have missed the mark in regards to ethnic women. As much as minority feminists would like to believe that their long and arduous efforts are successful, past global efforts have fostered a dichotomy in the movement (Desai, M., 2007, p. 797-802).

A dichotomy comes into focus concisely within the light of the “have” and the “have-nots.” The perfect example is when the women’s movement decided to go global years ago (Desai, 2007, p. 797-802). It is within the international arena that feminist concepts are not effective in reaching the pulse of those women that really need to hear or have exposure to them. A good example is found when international conferences are scheduled in hopes of informing and stirring women into more independent thinking: how are the masses of slum ridden Brazilian women, for instance, able to take a plane across countries and participate? It is absurd to think that feminists are accomplishing significant social change for women of a lesser economic status.

A good look at the international market actually reveals that women and their ideas of their rights is simply another commodity within the global market (Desai, 2007, p. 797-802) and feminism sales are up. Feminists have been welcomed with arms wide open because the market is about capitalism and greed. Thus, another issue for minority women is that of becoming a lucrative platform for others to pounce on.

A Time for Ethnic Progression and Achievement

Today, time has changed for minority women, and events have brought to the forefront the dawn of a new day. Today minority women should feel better about themselves, make more money, and accomplish much more than previous generations. The previous review of literature has clearly shown that the pathological state for many ethnic women is attached to a different age. Despite this dilemma existing amongst some ethnic women, it cannot be ignored in light of current trends. In fact, drastic social shifts have removed, demanded a change, and made obsolete various ideologies for these women.

To understand just how important the times are for women of color, a reflection on the election of President Obama puts into context the opportunities available for them. First, the election speaks volumes to future generations about the realization of possibilities now afforded in the U.S. Never before in the history of this country has an African American man and woman, Barack and Michelle Obama, resided in the White House. This election and voting numbers have historic implications in the Western world unparalleled to times past, and in many facets, specifically in the minority vote (Bositis, 2009). This is a true indicator that psycho-social trends have changed and ethnic women now have greater opportunity to self-actualize their lives and make significant strides economically.

However, despite the social progress the last election might suggest to the nation, the case remains that some may not be aware of the times or the possibilities for a different future, socially and economically. Rather than being marooned in celebration of a minority President, it is both possible and needful to shift paradigm and embrace the emergent role of a 21st century ethnic woman and the resultant opportunities for economic growth.

Critiquing growth within the Cuban community further explains why women need to make a change to upgrade their image in society and decide for themselves who they are. Instead of progressive and effective political efforts, women in Cuban politics were limited to the confines of the “familiar and accepted” (Fabregas, 2010, p.2) out-dated stereotypes. Until they decided to put their foot down on social injustice during the 50’s, it was hard to believe that Cuban women could do more than cook, clean, and keep house. It was “hard to [find and] accept women in the role of [leadership] in national affairs” (Fabregas, 2010, p. 2). Ultimately, these women refused to allow

another source the say in how they would function or be looked upon with the Cuban society.

A Resurgence of Women's Activist and the New Voice of Ethnic Women

Hitting closer to home today and effecting change for females on many levels, the job of one women, Hillary Rodham Clinton, the U.S. Secretary of State, is at the helm of women moving forward globally(Lemmon, G.T. (2011, March14). The Hillary Doctrine. *Newsweek*, p. 44-5). Furthermore, and very significant to ethnic women, it has been reported that the feminist movement is in resurgence. Feminists have received a wakeup call, and ladies are having an evolution: "in a time of momentous change in the world . . . Hillary Clinton [is putting] women and girls at the forefront of the new world order" (Lemmon, G.T. (2011, March 14) The Hillary Doctrine, *Newsweek*, p. 44). Clinton's skill is realized in the "trajectory" of which she has immersed the argument of Women's rights in the defense of national security (Lemmon, G.T. (2011, March14) the Hillary Doctrine, *Newsweek*, p. 46-48). She also reminds the global community that Women's rights, "[are a] big deal for American values . . . policy . . . interest . . . [and] security. Because where women are disempowered and dehumanized, you are more likely to see . . . extremism that leads to security challenges for us," comments reporter Gayle Lemmon in *Newsweek*.

To further explain, a "Gender Metric" stick listing "payoffs" for "women's empowerment" were also listed in Lemmon's *Newsweek* report stating that:

- 1) Educating a girl one year beyond the national average boosts her earning power between 10 and 20 percent.
- 6) In the Asia-Pacific region, countries are losing between \$42 billion and \$46 billion a year, according to the WEF, by restricting women's access to the workforce.
- 8) Worldwide, companies perform better and produce better ideas when their highest ranks have gender diversity. (2011 March 14, *Newsweek*, p. 44)

These measures are samples of the dividends, pro and con, paid to society as a result of how women are handled. Also, this information, along with Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton's work, is a major note on the impact of current politics for women everywhere.

Another impressive *Newsweek* report consisted of 150 women from around the world that were considered 21st century "shakers" (2011 March 11) p. 52-65). For instance, it was reported that a woman from Cambodia rescued other women from the sex market; another women in Turkey stood up for legal rights; a Congolese woman is responsible for the restructuring an entire community (2011) p. 52-65).

The recent revolt and fiery protests in Cairo's Tahrir Square, is yet another move to help bring women's identity and rights up-to-date; the women in Cairo joined the revolution and made an outcry for more "Egyptian female power" (Rubin, E. (2011 March 11) p. 68).

Chapter Three: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

Events point to one fact: countless women are making the choice to rise above suppression in this age. News around the globe indicate that minority women can experience change, despite what has been their lot economically, if they choose to step up to the plate working to redefine and redirect their image. This research review shows that the face of 21st century ethnic women should look very different from past images.

Re-designing Self-concepts

Moving away from the “idea” of ethnic success is recommended in order to actualize progress amongst minority women. Psycho-social monologues, for instance, are key in equipping ethnic females in doing the hard work to establish functional interactions that make for a better economy in sync with the times. To further explain, self-communication that entails three major tenants are highly recommended: reflection, strengths perspective, and empowerment thinking. It should be noted, however, that these recommendations are not a cure all for ethnic issues.

Recommendations 1

Reflection: thinking about what to think, and replacing old (or unnecessary) frames of thought with new concepts. Minority women need to do the hard work on the self from an ontological (Sanders, 1996, p. 595-601) point of view and add new validity to social sciences by exhibiting their true identity. This is a shift in paradigms for achievements and attainable financial goals. Never have the possibilities been so many and the realization for masses of minority women to move up in society so close.

Also, engaging a conversation with the self in a reflective manner allows minorities to rid themselves of the peripheral haunt of traditional roles and stereotypes.

Actually, the idea of reflective thinking to prescribe one's self exemplifies goals used in writing curriculum in women's studies by Liza Fiol-Matta.

Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at the New Jersey City University, Mrs. Matta has made significant strides in multicultural studies and Latina identity. She is also noted for her guidance as Vice President of the National Women's Study Association in 2005-6 (http://web.njcu.edu/programs/wgstudies/content/liza_fiol_matta.asp).

Notably, this concept of a reflective approach used in college lessons can also be instrumental in helping ethnic women develop new images. A "develop[ment] of a complex notion of "self" [which] examines prejudices [,] assumptions, . . . gaps of knowledge, [and an] ethnic female "public voice" is important to giving definition to self (Fiol-Matta, 1996, p. 100-12). Reflection, then, is the conduit for prescribing images or ways of being which entail an understanding of social issues as they relate to current politics (Fiol-Matta, 1996, p.100-12). Instead of living simply to survive, women of color would be wise to begin creating social goals that link to a better quality of life. In conjunction, minority women can build a repertoire of social skills that work with self-actualizing goals.

This process of choosing who the players are within one's social circle gives direction to how social processes should be carried out and to finding acceptable norms amongst different cultures that initiates a new minority woman.

Recommendations 2

Strengths Perspective: Instead of focusing on the pathology, ethnic females can rely on their "resourcefulness" (Maluccio, 1992, p. 1-2). This type of thinking moves women

from psycho-social dependence to a focus on: talents, skill, ability, and self-sufficiency – personal power. In this phase, women are taking responsibility for themselves.

Next, authorship helps to rid ethnic women of the drag of disparity and disaffectedness that comes with trying to live a reality outside of or apart from the self. With the effort to have an identity intact, the possibilities for new image bearers can emerge with a forth-telling for successes. Ethnic women then can confidently speak for themselves and tell society how to engage them in a more productive and meaningful way rather than continue the cycle of masquerading social concepts that do not parallel their reality.

Recommendations 3

Empowerment: live intentionally by making conscious decisions. After setting the stage and thinking through goals and aspirations along with a sense of identity, ethnic women should be motivated for accomplishments. Stepping out of the box of the usual and from past experiences they are ready to make significant strides in life. Instead of passively sitting on the sideline in society, both personal achievements and economic growth will come about as women choose to voice their claims for more in life.

In the matter of ethnic females and re-definition, as recommended, empowerment and the “strengths” approach work in a reciprocal manner. When a person has strength (of the self, psychologically, physically, educationally, socially etc.) they can become empowered: to be empowered is to strengthen self. Also, to strengthen self is to be empowered. Also, it is strengthening for women when they decide to own themselves exclusively and manage other areas of life in a more wholesome way.

Summary

It seems logical that minority women would take advantage of opportunities that social trends afford today to get ahead in life. But on the contrary, too many women remain victims by accepting the dictates of others in holding to past trends, keeping the paradigm of the underclass woman intact. Even more stifling is how the psyche and emotions of these women lead to despair and keep them in situational poverty. The odds seemingly against these ethnic women, they grow up with a mantra of negative self-talk; it is easy to believe that their conditions will not change, so they do not try to better themselves. Their psychosis, in general, works against them socially, thus making it harder for them to achieve financially. A redefined self-portrait or re-directed women can shift into a different paradigm. Finding empowerment and strength via reflective thinking opens them up to a great resource: themselves. With an empowered self in place, new approaches can be applied to social situations that will push minority women forward. A change of mind and behavior affords an ability to project successes from within, and an enablement to experience achievement without.

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Appendix A.

by England, et al (2004)

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TABLE 1: Means on All Variables

	<i>White</i>	<i>Mexican</i>	<i>Puerto Rican</i>	<i>Cuban</i>	<i>Black</i>
Weeks employed	36.01	29.03	30.78	34.34	34.61
Native born (reference)	0.95	0.47	0.50	0.28	0.91
Immigrated before 1990	0.03	0.29	0.38	0.54	0.06
Immigrated from 1990 to 1997	0.01	0.17	0.08	0.13	0.02
Immigrated after 1997	0.01	0.07	0.04	0.06	0.01
Less than high school (reference)	0.08	0.45	0.29	0.16	0.18
High school graduate	0.33	0.28	0.31	0.36	0.35
Some college	0.32	0.20	0.26	0.23	0.32
College graduate	0.19	0.06	0.09	0.16	0.11
Advanced degree	0.08	0.01	0.04	0.08	0.04
Never married (reference)	0.20	0.26	0.30	0.27	0.41
Married, spouse present	0.62	0.57	0.41	0.54	0.32
No longer married	0.18	0.16	0.28	0.20	0.27
Husband's income ^a (\$)	38,533	20,958	18,894	30,454	13,991
Number of children younger than 6	0.22	0.45	0.29	0.12	0.25
Number of children 6 to 18	0.52	0.87	0.70	0.40	0.57
Age	41.29	35.65	38.01	41.86	39.40
Age squared	1,868.25	1,413.89	1,598.14	1,928.50	1,718.63
Midwest (reference)	0.27	0.10	0.10	0.02	0.20
Northeast	0.23	0.02	0.61	0.14	0.19
South	0.29	0.30	0.23	0.77	0.54
West	0.22	0.57	0.07	0.07	0.08
Full-time student	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.05
Sample size	27,570	4,098	726	265	4,160

a. Unmarried women or women with husbands without income enter this average with 0.

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