

Generativity and Social Involvement among African Americans and White Adults

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The study examined the relation between generativity and social involvement in a sample of 253 community adults, approximately half African American and half White, between the ages of 34 and 65 years. For the sample as a whole, individual differences in generativity were positively associated with social support from family and friends, involvement in religious activities, and political participation, and generativity among parents was associated with emphasizing prosocial values and viewing oneself as a role model and source of wisdom for one's children. Controlling for mean education and family income differences between Blacks and Whites, African American adults scored significantly higher than Whites on measures of generative concern and generative acts as well as on indices of social support, religious participation, and parenting as a role model and source of wisdom. The results are discussed in terms of contemporary psychological research on the social ecology of generative lives and sociological studies of personal resources and adaptive coping among African American families. © 2001 Academic Press

Generativity is an adult's concern for and commitment to the well-being of youth and subsequent generations of human beings, as evidenced in parenting, teaching, mentoring, and other activities and involvements aimed at passing a positive legacy on to the next generation (Erikson, 1963; Kotre,

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1984; McAdams, Hart, & Maruna, 1998). In his eight-stage model of psychosocial development, Erikson identified *generativity versus stagnation* as the central developmental issue of the middle-adulthood years. As people move into and through midlife, Erikson argued, they are increasingly challenged to provide care, guidance, and inspiration for the next generation and to adopt productive roles in society that aim to foster continuity and development from one generation to the next. While parenting may be its prototypical expression, generativity should broaden in midlife to encompass projects and involvements at work and in the community, as society more generally comes to expect and depend on the leadership, commitment, and overall generative investment of mature men and women in their 30s, 40s, 50s, and older (Cohler, Hostetler, & Boxer, 1998; McAdams, 2001a).

Recent years have witnessed a flurry of research on the construct of generativity, as personality and developmental psychologists have formulated reliable self-report (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992), Q-sort (Peterson & Klohnen, 1995), projective (Peterson & Stewart, 1996), and interview-based (Bradley & Marcia, 1998) measures for assessing individual differences in adults' generative attitudes and orientations to life. Some studies have examined Erikson's developmental hypotheses about generativity (e.g., McAdams, de St. Aubin, & Logan, 1993; Stewart & Vandewater, 1998), but the bulk of research has focused on how adults differing in the overall strength of their generative attitudes and orientations display corresponding differences in behavior and in psychological well-being. For example, McAdams and colleagues have shown that individual differences in self-report generative concern, as assessed on the Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992), are positively associated with exhibiting behaviors indicative of generativity over a 2-month span, setting generative goals for daily life, and incorporating themes of generativity into narrative accounts of important autobiographical episodes from the past (McAdams et al., 1998). Studies have consistently shown that self-report generative concern is moderately but significantly positively correlated with self-report measures of life satisfaction, happiness, self-esteem, and sense of coherence and negatively associated with depression and with the Big Five trait of neuroticism (Ackerman, Zuroff, & Moscovitz, in press; de St. Aubin & McAdams, 1995; McAdams et al., 1998; Peterson, Smirles, & Wentworth, 1997). In a nationwide sample of over 2000 American adults, Keyes and Ryff (1998) found that self-report measures of concern for the next generation, providing emotional support for young people, and seeing oneself as a generative resource were all associated with psychological and social well-being. The authors concluded that "generative behavior, generative social obligations, and generative self-definitions are key ingredients in the recipe for psychological well-being" in adulthood (Keyes & Ryff, 1998, p. 249).

Social Involvements

As a psychosocial concept, generativity should be implicated in the ways in which adults involve themselves in family and friendship relations, in neighborhood and community activities, and in societal institutions. While virtually any social behavior is overdetermined by a multitude of forces and factors, we would expect that the concern for and commitment to the well-being of the next generation might prove an important motivational force in such activities as parenting, providing social support, volunteerism, and civic and religious activities. For example, a 35-year-old woman's decision to teach Sunday school at her church may be motivated by a host of internal and external factors—she was asked to teach, the church needs teachers, she feels guilty for having said “no” to similar requests in the past, she knows she is effective as a teacher, she is well versed in the relevant religious traditions, her husband wants her to do it because then he won't have to, and she has a child in the class she would be teaching and would enjoy spending this time with her child and the child's peers. Included in the mix, furthermore, might (or might not) be a concern for passing on something of value to the next generation. Therefore, while Sunday-school teaching is not itself “generativity,” it is an example of a social involvement that might potentially be motivated, in part, by generative concern. A similar logic might be applied to a wide range of social involvements, especially those that we commonly associate with the social prototypes of “good parent,” “good citizen,” and even “good person.”

A handful of studies have examined the relation between generativity and social involvements, focusing mainly on parenting and politics. Peterson and Klohnen (1995) found that highly generative mothers invested considerably more energy and commitment in parenting and showed an “expanded radius of care” (p. 20) compared to less generative mothers. Pratt, Norris, Arnold, and Gilyer (1999) found that parents scoring high in generativity were more likely than those scoring low to impart to their adolescent children moral lessons from their own past. Generativity in parents has also been associated with an *authoritative* approach to parenting, emphasizing high standards and discipline on the one hand and a warm and child-centered approach to parenting on the other (Peterson et al., 1997). In a large-scale study of children enrolled in public and private elementary schools, Nakagawa (1991) found that parents scoring high on the LGS tended to help their children with their homework more, show higher levels of attendance at school functions, and evidence greater knowledge about what their children were learning in school compared with parents scoring low in generativity. In the political realm, Cole and Stewart (1996) found that generative concern among both African American and White women in midlife correlated highly with measures of sense of community and political efficacy, suggesting that adults

with strong generative concerns also tend to express strong feelings of attachment and belongingness in their communities and tend to view themselves as effective agents in the political process. Peterson et al. (1997) showed that generativity is positively associated with interest in political issues.

The first aim of the current study is to expand the investigation of generativity's association with social involvements. Moving outward from the family to the social ecologies of friendship networks, religious groups, and broader civic activities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the study examines four kinds of social involvements: parenting, social support, religious activity, and political participation.

With respect to parenting, the current study examines the relationship between generativity and the extent to which parents view themselves as role models and sources of wisdom for their children. While a positive association would be hypothesized, no previous study has directly examined the relation between generativity and this dimension of parenting. Similarly, no previous study has examined the conjunction of generativity and social support. Do highly generative adults enjoy wider and more satisfyingly supportive relationships with their family and friends? Given generativity's positive association with subjective well-being, such an empirical relation might be expected and hypothesized. At the same time, generativity is mainly aimed at fostering the well-being of subsequent generations, whereas social support may apply to a wide range of interpersonal relationships scattered across the full life course and many different social ecologies. Furthermore, highly generative adults are assumed to be actively involved in supporting others, whereas enjoying high levels of social support suggests that one is readily the *recipient* of such support. A case can certainly be made for the idea that providing support for the next generation might not be associated in any systematic way with receiving support from others more generally.

Previous studies have not examined generativity's relation to religious activities. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Erikson's (1969) flesh-and-blood paragon for a generative life was Mahatma Gandhi, a profoundly religious (and political) man. (As interesting, perhaps, is Erikson's observation that Gandhi was not an especially effective *parent* with his own children.) Religious involvement may be one of the most complexly overdetermined human activities (Allport, 1950; Emmons, 1999), and there is little doubt that an adult could readily adopt a highly generative lifestyle without a shred of religious belief. Nonetheless, religious institutions in America are often viewed as arenas that foster intergenerational relations, seek to pass on valuable traditions from the older to the younger generation, and work, at least in principle, to encourage prosocial behavior and responsible adult commitments (Sherkat & Ellison, 1999). Are highly generative adults more involved in religious institutions? The current study is the first to examine this question. The study also examines the links between generativity and

politics. In this case, previous studies have suggested that adults high in generativity are more involved in the political process. The current study extends the investigation to examine voting behavior, working for the election of a candidate, and contacting politicians about personal and civic concerns.

Race in America

The second aim of the current study is to examine the role of *race* with respect to generativity and social involvements. In a society whose history has been dominated by the contentious and complex dynamic between African Americans and White Americans of European descent, it is surprising that personality psychologists have done so little research explicitly targeting the issue of race in America. Sociologists often place race and class at the center of their research (e.g., Wilson, 1987); literary scholars and cultural historians explore the role of race in American letters (e.g., Gates, 1997); investigative journalists examine changing patterns of race relations in the United States (e.g., Shipler, 1997); and public discourse returns again and again to the cultural divide between American Whites and American Blacks (*New York Times* series, 2000). Yet, personality psychologists have had virtually nothing constructive to say about this topic (McAdams, 2001b). The current study goes against the grain in personality psychology by directly addressing how generativity is related to social involvements among both African American and European American adults.

With the exception of Cole and Stewart (1996), no measurement-based social-science research has examined generativity among African Americans. Indeed, the self-report, Q-sort, projective, and interview-based measures developed by psychologists over the past decade to assess individual differences in generativity have all been constructed and utilized with mainly White American samples. With the exception of one rarely read passage in *Childhood and Society* (Erikson, 1963, Ch. 6), Erikson had virtually nothing to say about psychosocial development among African Americans, and with the exception of one case study presented by Kotre (1984), generativity theorists and researchers following Erikson have had little to say about the topic as well. (By contrast, generativity researchers *have* shown considerable interest in the issue of *gender*, e.g., MacDermid, Franz, & DeReus, 1998; Peterson & Stewart, 1990; Stewart & Ostrove, 1998.)

Do African Americans and White Americans differ with respect to overall levels of generativity? And do the relations between generativity and social involvements differ as a function of race? The latter question seems especially apt, given the extensive sociological literature on the black family and on the role of religion in African American communities. Going back to Frazier (1939), social scientists have described patterns of family life in African American households that are often perceived to differ, sometimes sub-

stantially, from patterns described in White households, even when households are matched with respect to social class. Two kinds of differences repeatedly appear in the literature (Hill, 1997; Taylor, Chatters, Tucker, & Lewis, 1990). Some researchers have underscored perceived disorganization and social pathology in Black families, pointing to high incidences of out-of-wedlock births, unstable marriages, and social problems associated with poverty (Anderson, 1989; Schoen & Klugel, 1988). A second perspective has emphasized the resilience and adaptive resources of Black families, pointing to extended kin networks of care, flexible family roles, and the powerful role of religion in the Black community (Bowman, 1990; Hill, 1997).

Quantitative studies and ethnographic accounts suggest that, compared to White families, American Black families show a more diffuse pattern of caregiving, whereby grandmothers, uncles, aunts, and fictive kin may share child-raising responsibilities with the biological parents of children (Boyd-Franklin, 1989; Hill, 1997). Survey studies have also consistently shown that African Americans hold stronger religious beliefs and attend religious services more regularly than do White Americans (Hill, 1997; Taylor et al., 1990), while their involvement in conventional political activity, such as voting, may be lower. Are Black Americans more likely than Whites to translate their generative concerns into religious activities? Are Whites more likely to express generativity through political and civic activities? Given what sociologists have documented as important mean differences between Black and White Americans on social involvements related to parenting, religion, and political participation, therefore, the question of whether race moderates generativity's association with these kinds of involvements becomes an especially important one for psychological research and for understanding contemporary American society.

Accordingly, the current study assesses individual differences in generative concern (via the LGS) among a community sample of African American and European American adults, ranging in age from 34 to 65 years and drawn predominantly from working-class and middle-class families. In addition to generative concern, the researchers follow past studies (e.g., McAdams et al., 1998) to obtain measures of generative behaviors, general goals, and generative themes in autobiographical recollections and to assess if generative concern predicts generative behavior, goals, and themes among African Americans to the extent it has done so in past studies among White Americans. In other words, do different measures purporting to assess different features of generativity relate to each other in comparable ways for Blacks and Whites? With respect to social involvements, the study examines individual differences in (1) parents' views of themselves as role models and sources of wisdom, (2) social support from friends and family, (3) church attendance and involvement in other religious activities, and (4) voting and other forms of political expression. The study examines mean differences

among these social involvements for Blacks and Whites and assesses the extent to which these variables are associated with generativity for the entire sample, among Blacks, and among Whites. Finally, the study considers gender as well, as it relates to generativity and social involvements.

Method

Subjects

Participants in the study were originally recruited through the Northwestern University Survey Laboratory, employing random digit dialing procedures to sample an approximately equal number of Black and White residents of Evanston, Illinois, male and female, approximately evenly distributed across the age span of 35 to 65 years. In an effort to focus on working-class and middle-class participants and to minimize mean social class differences between White and Black subsamples, participants' annual family income could not exceed \$100,000 (for 1993 or 1994).

Evanston is a racially heterogeneous suburb of Chicago with approximately 75,000 residents, over 20% of whom identify themselves as African American. Individuals who indicated they were interested in participating in the study were mailed packets of written measures, and when the completed packets were returned they were paid \$40 each for their participation. Although the Survey Laboratory endeavored to recruit equal numbers of Black and White participants, the original procedure netted only 35% African Americans. Consequently, the researchers recruited an additional 38 (of the total 114) African American participants through personal contacts in Evanston. Comparison of the 38 personally recruited African American participants to the original group of African American participants recruited by the Survey Laboratory indicated no significant differences in mean age, education, or income between the two African American groups.

A total of 253 adults between the ages of 34 and 65 years participated in the study. Mean age was 48.5 years ($SD = 8.7$). The sample included 114 African American (45%) and 139 White (55%) participants. The sample was 53% female. A majority of the participants were married (61.3%), while 19.8% reported being divorced or separated, 13.4% single, and 5.1% widowed. In addition, most participants were parents (81.4%). Of those who had children, the mean number of children was 2.5 ($SD = 1.4$). Over 84% of the sample had continued their education past high school. Nonetheless, White participants showed a significantly higher mean level of education than Black participants [$F(1, 247) = 84.46$, adjusted $\beta = .48$, $p < .001$], with 83.4% of White participants having completed college over and against 32.5% of Black participants. At the other end of the spectrum, while 27.2% of Black participants reported having a high school education or below, only 5% of the Whites fell into this category. Similarly, Whites showed significantly higher levels of annual family income [$F(1, 244) = 53.85$, adjusted $\beta = .38$, $p < .001$], averaging \$60–70K over and against the black average of \$30–40K. Therefore, although the sample as a whole showed a good deal of demographic heterogeneity and although the SES distributions of Black and White subsamples overlapped considerably, an accurate characterization of the subject pool is that it combines a mainly working-class (with some middle-class) subsample of Black adults and a predominantly middle-class subsample of White adults. In addition, women showed significantly lower mean levels of education [$F(1, 247) = 6.97$, adjusted $\beta = .14$, $p < .01$] and family income [$F(1, 244) = 21.11$, adjusted $\beta = .26$, $p < .001$] compared to men.

Measures

The packet participants received included written measures of generativity, social involvements, personality variables, mental health variables, and demographics. Measures relevant to the current study are described below.

The Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS). The main measure of generativity was the LGS, which asks the respondent to rate each of 20 statements on a 4-point continuum from *statement never applies to you* (0) to *statement very often or nearly always applies to you* (3). Each was designed to get at the extent to which an adult expressed generative concern; the items include statements such as "I try to pass along knowledge I have gained through my experiences" and "I do not feel that other people need me" (reverse scored). The LGS shows high internal consistency (α around +.83) and moderately high test-retest reliability ($r = +.73$ over a 3-week interval) (McAdams et al., 1998). Substantial evidence for the measure's construct validity has been garnered in studies showing that generative concern is positively associated with generative behaviors, goals, and autobiographical themes among predominantly White, middle-class samples of adults (McAdams et al., 1998).

Generative behaviors, goals, and autobiographical themes. The packet included measures of generative acts, daily strivings, and autobiographical memories coded for generative themes, following procedures developed in previous studies (McAdams et al., 1998).

A 50-item act-frequency checklist asked participants to survey the past 2 months of their lives and indicate whether they had displayed each of the acts more than one time (score +2), one time (score +1), or not at all (score 0). Of the 50 acts, 40 were activities that might commonly be viewed as indicating generativity (e.g., "read a story to a child," and "taught somebody a skill") and 10 were neutral filler acts (e.g., "attended a movie"). Scores on the 40 generativity acts were summed for each subject to achieve a generative act total.

Following a procedure developed by Emmons (1986), each participant described (with one sentence each) 10 *personal strivings*, or "things you are typically trying to do in your everyday life." The strivings were scored for generativity according to a procedure developed by McAdams et al. (1993), through which 1 point is given for each of three generativity ideas—connection to next generation, providing care or assistance, and creative contribution—that might appear in a given striving response. Two scorers coded the striving protocols for generativity, achieving a reliability of $r = +.86$.

Following a procedure used extensively by McAdams in studies of life stories (e.g., McAdams, 1993; McAdams, Hoffman, Mansfield, & Day, 1996), each participant was asked to provide a written narrative account of two meaningful autobiographical episodes from his or her past—a peak experience (a high point scene in the life story) and a turning-point event. For each episode, the participant was asked to write at least five to seven sentences describing what happened in the event, who was there, what the person was thinking and feeling at the time, and what, if anything, the participant thinks the event says about him or her. Two independent scorers coded each episode on a 5-point scale for generativity content, developed by McAdams et al. (1993). The highest possible score (+5) for a given episode would include the generative themes of (1) creating something new, (2) maintaining something old, (3) helping and offering, (4) intergenerational involvement, and (5) a concern with symbolic immortality. Interscorer reliability was $r = +.84$.

Social involvement. Social involvement was conceptualized as encompassing the proximal context of parenting in the family and the successively more macrolevel contexts of social support among family and friends, involvement in church and religious groupings, and participation in society's political process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Consequently, the study employed measures of parenting viewpoints, social support, religious activities, and political participation.

For parenting, the study employed four of Hirsch's (1995) short self-report scales, measuring the extent to which parents report that they (1) try to teach their children *social concern* (four items; e.g., "I encourage my child to do things that will have a positive impact on others") (2), try to pass along life lessons and *wisdom* to their children (four items; e.g., "I try to pass on to my child the wisdom I have acquired in life"), (3) see themselves as *role models* for their children (three items; e.g., "For the really important things, I am a role model for my child"), and (4) try to share *intimate* feelings and concerns with their children (three items;

e.g., "My child often shares with me private things in his or her life"). In the current study, intercorrelations among these four short scales are all statistically significant, ranging from $+ .23$ ($p < .001$) for the correlation between intimacy and role model to $+ .61$ ($p < .001$) for the correlation between wisdom and social concern. To arrive at an overall score, then, standard scores of each of the four subscales were summed for each subject.

For social support, the study employed two well-established measures: (1) the Social Support Questionnaire, short form (SSQ3: Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983), measuring both quantity and level of satisfaction of overall social support received from family and friends, and (2) Hirsch and Rapkin's (1986) Quality of Social Support questionnaire, which assesses the quality of five current support relationships (closest co-worker, supervisor, closest friend, spouse or intimate other, and adult family member). The three indices of social support—SSQ3 quantity, SSQ3 satisfaction, and social support quality (Hirsch & Rapkin, 1986)—were significantly intercorrelated, ranging from $r = .29$ ($p < .001$) for quantity and satisfaction to $r = .35$ ($p < .001$) for satisfaction and quality. Consequently, the three indices were each standardized and summed to arrive at a composite social support score for each subject.

Religious involvements were measured by eight items taken from the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA; Jackson & Gurin, 1987). Participants were asked to rate how frequently they attend religious services, read religious materials, watch or listen to religious programs, pray or meditate, talk about their faith with others, and ask others to pray for them. In addition, they are asked to rate "How important going to church or a place of worship is to you?" and "How religious would you say you are?" Each of the eight items were standard scored and then summed to arrive at a general religious involvement index. The α for the eight item scale was $+ .91$.

Finally, political participation was measured using a four-item scale. The four yes/no items asked the participant if he or she (1) voted in the last national election, (2) voted in any state or local elections during the past 2 years, (3) worked for a political party or political campaign, and (4) has ever written to or called an elected official about a concern or issue. Scores (yes = 1, no = 0) were summed across the four items to arrive at a total score. The α for the political participation scale was $.59$.

RESULTS

Generativity

The study's main measure of generativity was the self-report Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS), which measures individual differences in adults' generative concern. For the entire sample of Black and White participants, generativity on the LGS was unrelated to age and to education level. The correlation between LGS scores and income was $+ .12$, $p = .053$, indicating a marginally significant positive association between generativity and family income. Measures of generative acts reported over a 2-month period, generative daily goals, and generative themes in autobiographical narratives were unrelated to education, income, and age, with the exception of a positive association between generative goals (operationalized as personal strivings coded for generativity content) and family income: $r = + .14$, $p < .05$. Not surprisingly, education and family income were highly positively correlated ($r = + .56$, $p < .001$), but age was unrelated to education or to income.

To test the effects of race and gender on generativity, a series of two-way

analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were performed, employing race (Black or White) and gender (male or female) as the dichotomous independent predictors of LGS scores and of scores on the three subsidiary generativity measures. Because education and income were associated with race, furthermore, a series of ANCOVAs were also performed, using education and family income as the covariates. In these hierarchical ANCOVAs, the effects for education and income are determined first, to be followed by main effects and interaction effects regarding the independent predictors (gender and race).

The results of the ANOVAs showed a statistically significant main effect for gender on generative acts only [$F(1, 249) = 8.53$, adjusted $\beta = .17$, $p < .01$]. Women reported a greater number of generative acts than men, summed over a 2-month period. Controlling for education and income via the ANCOVAs, however, yielded more significant effects. The main effect for gender on generative acts remained significant after controlling for education and income [$F(1, 242) = 10.92$, adjusted $\beta = .22$, $p < .01$]. In addition, ANCOVAs showed a main effect for race on both generative acts [$F(1, 242) = 5.52$, adjusted $\beta = .18$, $p < .05$] and on the LGS [$F(1, 242) = 7.69$, adjusted $\beta = .21$, $p < .01$]. Controlling for education and income, African American adults showed significantly *higher* scores on generative concern (LGS) and reported significantly *more* generative acts over a 2-month period compared to White participants. No significant gender or race effects were shown in the analyses of generative goals or generative themes in autobiography.

Past studies have documented strong positive associations between LGS scores on the one hand and measures of generative acts, goals, and narrative themes on the other (McAdams et al., 1998). Table 1 shows a similar pattern of intercorrelations for the current study. For the sample as a whole, generative concern on the LGS was positively associated with generative acts ($r = .46$, $p < .001$), generative goals ($r = .29$, $p < .001$), and generative themes ($r = .27$, $p < .001$). Acts, goals, and themes were also all significantly positively intercorrelated with each other. Table 1 also shows the same intercorrelations for each of the two racial subsamples. In both subsamples, LGS scores significantly predicted scores on generative acts, goals, and themes, but the correlations tend to be much higher within the White sample. For example, the correlation between LGS and generative acts summed across 2 months was very high among White participants ($r = +.57$, $p < .001$). In the African American subsample, the correlation was still significant, but considerably lower in magnitude ($r = +.35$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, the intercorrelations among acts, goals, and themes were consistently statistically significant among the Whites, but in the Black sample generative acts and goals were not related ($r = .10$) and the other intercorrelations were more modest than what was observed in the White subsample, though still significant. The lower intercorrelations of the four generativity-related measures are reflected in the different alphas calculated for the two subsamples. Among the Whites,

TABLE 1
Intercorrelations Among Four Generativity Measures

	2	3	4
Entire sample ($N = 253$) ^a			
1. LGS: Generative Concern	.46***	.29***	.27***
2. Generative acts in two months		.26***	.32***
3. Generative daily goals			.34***
4. Generative themes in narratives			
White subsample ($N = 139$)			
1. LGS	.58***	.36***	.26***
2. Acts		.44***	.38***
3. Goals			.43***
4. Themes			
Black subsample ($N = 114$)			
1. LGS	.35***	.24*	.30**
2. Acts		.10	.23*
3. Goals			.20*
4. Themes			

^a Due to incomplete data on some measures, N s vary slightly from one analysis to another.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

the four measures yield an α of .74, whereas among the Blacks the α was .56.

In sum, the analysis of the LGS and the three subsidiary generativity measures suggests that when education and income are statistically controlled African American adults show significantly higher levels of generative concern and generative acts compared to White participants in this study. The differences do not hold up, however, when education and income are not used as covariates. In addition, women show higher levels of generative acts than men. Generative concern, acts, goals, and themes are significantly intercorrelated for the entire sample, as shown in previous studies, and the intercorrelations are especially robust among the White participants. In the Black subsample, the intercorrelations, while generally significant, are lower in magnitude. The data suggest a tendency for generativity indices to be more loosely connected to each other among African Americans compared to Whites.

Social Involvements

The study employed four summary measures of social involvements: parenting viewpoints, social support, religious activities, and political participation. For the entire sample, education level was significantly *negatively* asso-

ciated with parenting viewpoints ($r = -.17, p < .05$) and religious involvements ($r = -.29, p < .001$) and was significantly *positively* associated with political participation ($r = +.30, p < .001$). In addition, family income was negatively associated with religious involvement ($r = -.30, p < .001$) and positively associated with political participation ($r = .21, p < .01$). For the entire sample, age was negatively associated with religious involvement ($r = -.18, p < .01$) and positively associated with political involvement ($r = .31, p < .001$). Put simply, more highly educated participants were more politically active, but they were less involved in religious activities and (if they were parents) were *less* likely to see themselves as role models and sources of wisdom for children compared to less educated participants. Older participants were more politically but less religiously involved than younger participants.

To assess effects of race and gender on social involvements, a series of ANOVAs and ANCOVAs (with covariates of education and income) were again conducted, using the social involvement variables as continuous dependent measures. The results showed significant effects for race on all four social involvement variables and significant effects for gender on parenting and religion.

In both ANOVA and ANCOVA, African American parents showed much higher scores on perceiving themselves as role models and sources of wisdom [$F(1, 187) = 26.78$, adjusted $\beta = .42, p < .001$] for the analysis of covariance. Women also scored higher than men on this parenting dimension [$F(1, 187) = 9.49$, adjusted $\beta = .24, p < .01$] for the analysis of covariance. In addition, the ANCOVA revealed a significant interaction effect of gender by race on parenting. As Fig. 1 illustrates, African American mothers and fathers showed comparably high levels on this parenting dimension while White fathers scored much lower than White mothers (who themselves score significantly lower than African American mothers and fathers).

For social support, Blacks again scored higher than Whites, both with the ANOVA and when controlling for education and income on the ANCOVA [$F(1, 222) = 7.49$, adjusted $\beta = .21, p < .01$.] No gender or interaction effects were observed. For religious involvement, race effects were extremely strong, both with ANOVA and ANCOVA. African Americans showed remarkably higher levels of religious involvement compared to Whites [$F(1, 232) = 46.49$, adjusted $\beta = .46, p < .001$] for the analysis of covariance. Women tended to score higher than men as well, though the gender difference was not nearly as strong as that for race [$F(1, 232) = 3.80$, adjusted $\beta = .11, p = .05$]. No significant interaction effect was observed. Finally, White adults scored higher than African American adults on political participation in the ANOVA procedure [$F(1, 238) = 17.83$, adjusted $\beta = .27, p < .001$]. However, this strong race effect dropped in magnitude when education and income differences between Blacks and Whites were taken

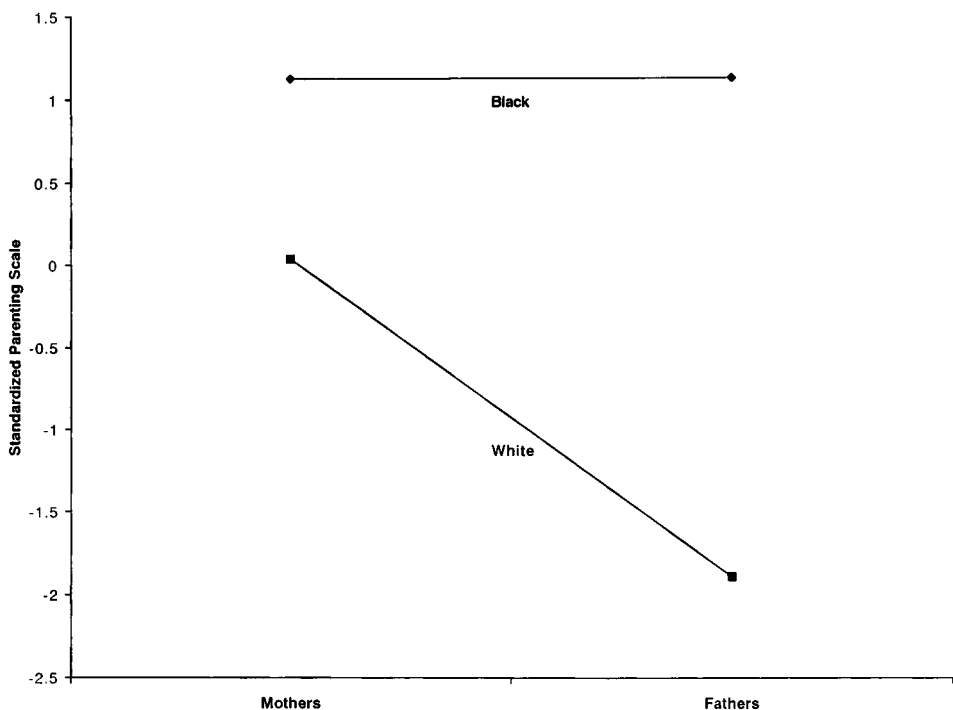


FIG. 1. Parenting, race, and gender: Viewing oneself as a role model and source of wisdom and values for one's children as a function of race and gender.

into account. Therefore, the analysis of covariance showed strong effects for both education and income on political participation and rendered the main effect for race a statistically nonsignificant trend [$F(1, 231) = 3.53$, adjusted $\beta = .14$, $p = .06$].

Table 2 shows intercorrelations among the four social involvement variables for the entire sample and for each race subsample. For the entire sample, political participation was unrelated to the other three social involvement variables, but the three—parenting, social support, and religion—were positively associated with each other at statistically significant levels. The two subsamples revealed somewhat different patterns of intercorrelation. Among Whites, the only statistically significant relation was between parenting and social support. Among African American adults, parenting was positively associated with both religious and political involvement at the $p < .05$ level.

In sum, African Americans are more likely than Whites to see themselves as role models and sources of wisdom for their children, and they tend to report higher levels of social support and religious participation compared to the White participants in this study. Whites show higher levels of political

TABLE 2
Intercorrelations Among Indices of Social Involvement

	2	3	4
Entire sample ($N = 253$)			
1. See self as role model as parent ^a	.25**	.32***	-.04
2. Social support		.18**	-.05
3. Religious activities			-.11
4. Political participation			
White subsample ($N = 139$)			
1. Parenting	.30**	.15	-.03
2. Social support		.05	.10
3. Religious activities			.05
4. Political participation			
Black subsample ($N = 114$)			
1. Parenting	-.08	.23*	.22*
2. Social support		.15	-.11
3. Religious activities			.03
4. Political participation			

^a $n = 196$ parents.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$.

participation, but when education and income effects on political participation are entered first, this difference become less substantial. Women score higher than men on the parenting and religion variables. For the sample as a whole, three of the four social involvement variables appear to be positively intercorrelated—parenting, social support, and religious involvement—while political involvement appears to be unrelated to these three.

Generativity and Social Involvement

Table 3 shows correlations between generativity as assessed on the LGS on the one hand and the four social involvement variables on the other, broken down for the whole sample, for Whites, and for Blacks. Overall, generativity is positively and significantly associated with each of the four social involvement variables, ranging from a $+ .16$ ($p < .05$) correlation for political participation to a $+ .35$ ($p < .001$) correlation for viewing oneself as a role model and source of wisdom for children. The patterns of correlations for the two subsamples were fairly similar, with correlations reaching statistical significance in two of four cases for Whites (parenting and social support) and three of four cases for African Americans (parenting, social support, and political participation). Correlations between generativity and social involvement were also computed for female and male subsamples separately, again

TABLE 3
Correlations Between Generativity (LGS) and Social Involvements

Social involvements	Whole sample (<i>N</i> = 253)	White subsample (<i>N</i> = 139)	Black subsample (<i>N</i> = 114)
Parenting as role model ^a	.35***	.38***	.33**
Social support	.30***	.33***	.21*
Religious activities	.16*	.15	.13
Political participation	.16*	.16	.22*

^a For entire sample, *n* = 196 parents.

* *p* < .05.

** *p* < .01.

*** *p* < .001.

showing comparable results. Among women, three of four correlations were statistically significant (parenting, social support, and political participation), and for men two out of four reached significance (parenting and social support).

Income, education, and the four social involvement variables were entered into a simultaneous multiple-regression model to predict scores on generative concern (LGS). The combination of the six variables accounted for 21% of the variance in LGS scores. In descending order of strength, parenting as a role model ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$), social support ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$), and political participation ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) each accounted for significant amounts of variance in generativity. In the multiple-regression analysis, religious involvement, however, did not account for a significant amount of variance in LGS scores and neither did education and income.

In sum, the correlational analysis shows that generativity (as assessed on the LGS) is positively associated with all four social involvement variables for the entire sample and that the patterns of correlations are similar for the Black and White subsamples, though correlations within subsamples are not always significant. The multiple-regression procedure shows significant effects for the parenting, social support, and political participation variables on generativity, but the index of religious involvement fails to account for a significant portion of LGS variance in the multiple regression.

DISCUSSION

The first aim of this investigation was to examine the relations between individual differences in adults' generativity on the one hand and social involvements concerning family, friendship networks, religious activities, and political participation on the other. The results document a positive association between generativity, as assessed on the self-report Loyola Generativity Scale, and all four forms of social involvement studied. Adults high in gen-

erativity were more likely than those scoring low to score higher on a composite of social support quantity and satisfaction; they reported higher levels of religious activities, such as church attendance and prayer; and they were more likely to be actively engaged in the political process, as indicated by voting and participating on political campaigns. In addition, parents high in generativity tended to view themselves as role models and sources of wisdom for their children, emphasizing the extent to which they sought to pass their values down to the next generation.

The findings speak to the social ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) of generative lives in contemporary America. Highly generative men and women appear to be more engaged in some of the civic and religious traditions in American society that have typically been associated with psychosocial maturity and societal integration. Their views of their own parenting tend to emphasize the responsibility they feel to provide guidance and wisdom for the younger generation. They also enjoy a wide and supportive circle of interpersonal relationships more generally, as suggested in this study's finding of a positive relation between generativity and social support. The findings on social involvement and generativity flesh out further the emerging portrait of highly generative adults articulated in empirical research conducted over the past 10 years. They also contribute to the construct validity of the Loyola Generativity Scale as a sensitive and practical measure of individual differences in generative concern. Past research has shown that LGS scores predict psychological well-being and behaviors associated with responsible parenting (e.g., McAdams et al., 1998). The current study extends the measure's predictive reach by more fully exploring extrafamilial social involvements and participation in societal institutions.

The significant association shown between LGS scores and measures of social involvement cannot be dismissed as an artifact of item overlap between measures. LGS items do not address political and religious concerns; they do not tap into social support; and the only LGS item that directly addresses parenting asks the subject if he or she might wish to adopt a child should having a biological child be impossible (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). Furthermore, while the LGS items tap into a generalized *attitude* of concern and responsibility for the well-being of the next generation, the measures of religious and political involvement employed in the current study mainly tap into self-reported *behavior*—church attendance, prayer, voting, and so on. Of course, it makes good theoretical sense that highly generative adults *should* see themselves as role models, integrate themselves within a wide range of socially supportive relationships, and involve themselves deeply in religious and political institutions and traditions. Yet these social involvements do not in and of themselves constitute generativity per se. They are more in the order of predicted *correlates* of the construct, based on the theoretical writings on generativity provided by Erikson (1963), Kotre

(1984), and others. Furthermore, these are correlates with substantial societal consequence obtained in a relatively large sample of community adults. Personality research is sometimes criticized for focusing on relatively trivial items endorsed by 19-year-old adolescents living on college campuses (e.g., Carlson, 1971) or for obsessing over the intercorrelations of reified trait adjectives (e.g., Block, 1995). By contrast, the current study explores self-reported parenting, friendship support, religious behavior, and voting in the lives of midlife adults—adults who are reporting on their daily lives at home, in the family, and in the context of societal institutions.

Having said this, it must be acknowledged that while the statistical associations shown between generativity and social involvements were generally significant, they were hardly robust. Especially in the case of religious and political involvements, generativity proved to be a very modest predictor. Indeed, in the multiple-regression analysis, the religious involvement index failed to account for a significant portion of generativity variance when variance accounted for by parenting, social support, and political involvement were all added in. Religious and political involvements are complexly determined behavioral patterns, motivated and shaped by a wide range of internal and external factors. People attend religious services (or not) and vote (or not) for a wide range of reasons. Yet generativity, as assessed on the LGS, would appear to play a small but still notable role in predicting religious and political behavior. Given how overdetermined these kinds of behavior are, it is perhaps surprising that generativity should play any role at all.

The second aim of this investigation was to examine the role of race with respect to generativity and social involvements. With the exception of Cole and Stewart (1996), no empirical studies have examined the meaning, measurement, and manifestations of generativity among African American adults, and none have compared Black and White American adults to each other. The current study gathered a sample of mainly working to middle-class Black adults and mainly middle-class White adults, ranging in age from 34 to 65 years. Although relatively wealthy households were excluded from the study, the two racial groups differed substantially on education and family income in ways reflective of contemporary American society. The class by race confound is surely a problem for the current study, as it is in most any social science study examining White and Black Americans. The investigators dealt with the problem by statistically controlling for education and income differences between the two groups in some analyses. The solution is by no means perfect, but it provides a reasonable approach for beginning to examine how generativity and social involvements play themselves out in the lives of contemporary Black and White American adults in their midlife years.

The results on race suggest four interesting points. First, generativity would appear to predict the same kinds of social involvements among both

Blacks and Whites. The patterns of correlations between generativity on the one hand and parenting, social support, religious activities, and political involvement on the other were roughly comparable, as is evident in Table 3. In both subsamples, highly generative adults showed significantly higher scores on role model parenting and social support compared to less generative adults. For religious and political participation, the subsample correlations were also positive but lower, reaching statistical significance for political involvement among Blacks and barely falling short of statistical significance in the other three cases (political involvement among Whites, religious involvement among Blacks, and religious involvement among Whites). There is no evidence in these data, then, that African American and White adults channel their generative inclinations in distinctively different ways, at least as far as the four social involvement variables are concerned.

Second, generative concern on the LGS predicts self-reported generative behaviors summed across 2 months, generative goals, and generative themes in autobiographical narratives for both White and Black subsamples, but the intercorrelations among these generativity-related measures are rather lower (though generally still statistically significant) for Blacks. Past research has shown that the LGS predicts acts, goals, and narrative themes related to generativity, but no study before now has examined these intercorrelations among African American adults. It is not clear why generativity measures should appear to be somewhat more loosely tied together among African American adults compared to White adults. Why, for example, are generative acts summed across a 2-month period unrelated to generative daily goals in the African American subsample ($r = .10$) while the same association appears quite robust among the White subjects ($r = .44, p < .001$)? One possibility may relate to the greater sense of control middle-class White Americans may feel over their lives compared to mainly working-class Black Americans. Perhaps, the former group is more able to match up their generative desires, goals, and behaviors in more predictable ways than the latter group, whose daily goals may not as readily be translated into behavior because of the wider range of social constraints and frustrations that might attend working-class life for members of a racial minority. Other possible explanations could point to problems with the measures themselves, given that they were designed and initially validated on mainly White samples.

Third, comparing the mean scores on generative concern, acts, goals, and themes for Black and White subsamples showed no significant differences between the two groups as long as education and income were not taken into consideration. However, when education and income were employed as covariates, African Americans showed significantly higher scores on the LGS and on generative acts compared to White adults. (In addition, women scored higher than men on generative acts.) The study's sample of 253 adults does not even approach a representative sampling of European and African

American adults, so conclusions about mean differences between racial groups is unwarranted. But given that a *social-deviance* model of African American psychology has found so many adherents in the social sciences over the past decades, even a finding of “no difference” on a construct as important as generativity would itself be potentially important. At minimum, the results showing either roughly equivalent levels of generativity for Blacks and Whites or slightly higher levels for African Americans are simpatico with the emerging tradition in African American psychology and family studies that emphasizes the *personal resources* and *adaptive* coping strategies of African American adults and families (Bowman, 1990; Hill, 1997). Generativity would appear to be a personal resource for both Black and White adults, promoting a productive, caring, and empowered engagement of the social world.

A fourth point addresses further the issue of personal resources and psychosocial adaptation among African American adults. In the current study, African Americans described more extensive and satisfying social support from friends and family compared to White subjects and they reported substantially higher levels of religious involvements. Sociological research on the Black family has consistently underscored the supportive influence of extended kin networks and of family friends and neighbors identified as *fictive kin* (Hill, 1997). The sociological picture that is painted here is of more diffuse, flexible, and loosely organized support networks than would be the norm in middle-class White communities. While the current study did not directly examine the structure of the support networks, the data indicate that social support from family and friends is an especially salient personal resource among African American adults, and one that is positively associated with generative concern.

An even more characteristic personal resource for working-class Black families may be religion. Social science research in the past 20 years has repeatedly documented the psychological and social benefits of church attendance and religious beliefs (Putnam, 2000; Sherkat & Ellison, 1999). For example, religious involvement tends to be positively associated with positive emotions and subjective well-being, social support and integration, healthy lifestyles, and even longevity and negatively associated with substance abuse (Sherkat & Ellison, 1999). Survey studies have shown that U.S. Blacks are more likely to be church/synagogue members than Whites (Gallup, 1984) and are more likely to attend religious services on a regular basis (Beeghley, Van Velsor, & Bock, 1981). Blacks engage in more public and private religious behavior (Johnson, Mare, & Armbrrecht, 1991; Neff & Hoppe, 1993) and rate religious values higher than Whites do (Malpass & Symonds, 1974). They are also more intrinsically religious than Whites (Nelson, 1989). Historically, the Black church has proven to be an especially powerful force in the African American community, serving not only as a

house of worship but as a social services center and an agent for political activism and neighborhood empowerment (Hill, 1997). Religious involvement may be an especially salient source of personal meaning and adaptive coping for middle-aged African Americans and a strong support and catalyst for generativity.

While Black participants in the current study report higher levels of social support and religious involvement, Black parents are also more likely than their White counterparts to view themselves as role models and sources of prosocial values and wisdom for their children. The statistically significant interaction effect observed indicates, furthermore, that both Black mothers and fathers score high on this parenting dimension, while White fathers score especially low. The parenting scales used in the current study stress the extent to which parents say they strive to teach their children values, provide them with clear-cut moral lessons and standards for ethical conduct, and view themselves to be role models whose particular values and standards should be internalized by their children. While scores on this measure were positively associated with generative concern for both Black and White subjects, African Americans tended to score higher on the parenting measure itself compared to Whites, even when the effects of education and income differences were taken into account. The higher scores among African American parents may reflect a more *vigilant* approach to parenting in a social environment that, compared to that enjoyed by middle-class White participants, may be perceived as potentially dangerous. While middle-class White parents may bolster their children's self-esteem and encourage their children's achievement strivings and interpersonal competence in school and play, they may be somewhat less preoccupied with fending off the dangers of street life—gangs and drug involvement, for example. Of course, parents of all stripes in America today worry about deleterious influences that may be visited upon their children from the media and other threatening influences from the "outside." But given the legacy of racial discrimination in the United States and the gaping chasm between the two groups on such social indices as education, wealth, crime, and teenage pregnancy, it should not be surprising that Black parents would be especially preoccupied with teaching life lessons and cautionary tales in the face of adversity and working assiduously to pass on wisdom and advice to their children.

In conclusion, the current study is the first to examine the role of generativity in the lives of African American adults. For both White and Black Americans, generativity is positively associated with social involvements related to parenting, friendship and family support networks, religious activities, and political participation. The empirical associations between generativity and these social involvements are modest in magnitude but still suggestive of a positive role for generativity in promoting a productive, caring, and empowered engagement of the social world. Alternatively, it may be the case that

a productive, caring, and empowered engagement of the social world fosters the development of generativity itself. Suggestive differences emerge as a function of race. Different measures of generativity are more loosely linked to each other among African American adults compared to Whites. Yet when education and income differences are factored in, Blacks score somewhat higher on generative concern and self-reported generative acts shown over a 2-month period compared to Whites. Consistent with survey research, Blacks show dramatically higher levels of religious participation than Whites. They also report higher levels of social support and a parenting style that emphasizes explicitly passing on prosocial values and life lessons to their children. Future research is needed to examine how personality variables such as generativity play themselves out in the social ecology of everyday adult life and among the many and varied racial, ethnic, and religious subgroupings that make up contemporary modern societies.

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