

# Development and Validation of the African American Women's Shifting Scale (AAWSS)

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**Objective:** The purpose of this research was to develop and validate an instrument to measure shifting or self-altering strategies among African American women. **Method:** A 13-item instrument was developed to measure aspects of shifting phenomena based on the empirical literature, feedback from focus groups, and cultural experts. The initial validation study, using principal axis analysis, was conducted with a national sample of 318 African American women. A second independent national sample of 190 African American women provided data for a confirmatory factor analysis. **Results:** Results indicated that the inventory was composed of the following 3 factors: Strong Black Woman, Awareness of Shifting Behavior, and Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks. **Conclusions:** A structural model was developed based on the Multicultural Assessment-Intervention Process (MAIP) framework that allowed for the exploration of the shifting construct. Implications for future research are discussed.

**Keywords:** African American women, shifting, acculturation, ethnic identity, coping, sexism, MAIP

The present study reports the development and validation of the African American Women's Shifting Scale (AAWSS) as a measure of how African American women alter their self-presentations to fit in with the perceived demands of their social surroundings. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) recognized this phenomenon in their African American Women's Voices Project. Their qualitative examination of 404 African American women indicated a pervasive tendency to alter their presentation of self (e.g., changing their tone of voice, altering their hair style) sometimes without conscious awareness in a variety of social and interpersonal circumstances.

The development of an assessment tool to measure an individual's use of shifting may provide practitioners with a means to explore issues with clients who have difficulty adjusting to varying circumstances at home, work, and so forth. To guide both the development of this instrument and its validation, the Multicultural Assessment-Intervention Process (MAIP) model (Dana, 1993, 2000; Gamst, Liang, & Der-Karabetian, 2011) was used as a basis

to identify constructs that facilitate shifting among clients. The MAIP addresses important cultural variables associated with mental health treatment outcomes. Through seven culturally sensitive phases, the MAIP client-practitioner variables articulate cultural processes that affect behavioral health service outcomes that are presumably influenced by shifting. These MAIP phases include culturally sensitive intake contact (décor, screening interview), client match preference (cultural, gender, language, etc.), client multicultural status assessment (acculturation, racial attitudes, coping, perceived discrimination, etc.), provider multicultural training, ethnic-specific and/or general interventions, and clinical outcome and service satisfaction assessment (Gamst et al., 2011).

While the MAIP has historically been used to examine the effects of fundamental constructs such as client-practitioner ethnic/racial match (e.g., Gamst, Dana, Der-Karabetian, & Kramer, 2000; Gamst et al., 2003), acculturation and ethnic identity (Gamst et al., 2002), and practitioner self-reported cultural competence (Gamst et al., 2004; Keyser, Gamst, Meyers, Der-Karabetian, & Morrow, 2014) on clinical outcomes, the client multicultural status assessment phase of the MAIP model can also be expanded to other contexts and phenomena in which cultural variables impact actions and thoughts. One such expansion is the phenomenon of shifting, particularly with respect to African American women.

Alterations in African American women's self-presentations appear to emerge from several contextual and cultural factors, two of which are directly implied within the MAIP framework (Gamst, Dana, Meyers, Der-Karabetian, & Guarino, 2009; Gamst et al., 2011; Pieterse & Miller, 2010). One such factor is African American acculturation; it is predicted that African American women who display less orientation to mainstream White American cul-

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ture while concomitantly accommodating to African American cultural norms will exhibit a stronger tendency to engage in shifting behaviors as part of their individual racial identification and acculturative process. A second factor implied by the MAIP model addresses the personal history of individuals who have experienced bias. Theoretically, those who are treated in a stereotypical manner based on their race or gender develop some degree of discriminatory expectations (Thomas, Hoxha, & Hacker, 2013). Hence, it is predicted that higher levels of such expectations will lead to a stronger tendency to engage in shifting behaviors in an effort to minimize the degree of discriminatory behavior directed toward them.

Although we specifically focus on African American women, shifting occurs within other cultural groups as well as males (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). However, due in part to this concept's recent development and the limited amount of research into its prevalence or psychosocial impact within other groups, our focus is solely upon African American women. The present study describes the development of a scale that assesses the extent of shifting within African American women's daily activities. Additionally, some of the cultural variables within the multicultural status assessment phase of the MAIP model, namely acculturation, stereotype concerns, racial attitudes, perceived sexist discrimination, and coping, as well as social desirability effects, were measured in conjunction with shifting. These constructs, together with the potential role they may play in predicting shifting, are reviewed in the following sections.

### African American Acculturation

While acculturation is often applied to immigrants, the construct is applicable to African Americans, as White Americans are the distinct dominant group (Landrine & Klonoff, 1994; Thompson, Lightfoot, Castillo, & Hurst, 2010). Early conceptualizations viewed acculturation as a unidirectional process where individuals adapted to White American culture (Gordon, 1964; Landrine & Klonoff, 1994, 1995). However, these conceptualizations were criticized and replaced with bidirectional theories. Current bidirectional conceptualizations view the acculturating individual as simultaneously adapting to his or her culture of origin and the new culture (Cole & Jacob Arriola, 2007; Kim & Abreu, 2001; Obasi & Leong, 2010; Zane & Mak, 2003). As a multidimensional process, acculturation can include changes within individuals and families that involve distinct changes in language, behaviors, and identity (Birman & Simon, 2004) and occurs in interaction with multiple social contexts (e.g., home, school, community, and work; Kim & Abreu, 2001; Yoon et al., 2013).

A content analysis of acculturation research in counseling psychology (Yoon, Langrehr, & Ong, 2011) indicated that most studies focused on Latino/a and Asian Americans, but few studies focused on African Americans (Obasi & Leong, 2009). Landrine and Klonoff (1994) suggest that the limited acculturation literature is due to the identification of African Americans as a racial group as well as an ethnic and cultural group. A related construct, *enculturation*, refers to the process by which individuals learn the requirements of their heritage group and acquire the values and behaviors that are appropriate or necessary for their particular cultural group (Grusec & Hastings, 2007). Some investigators (e.g., Cokley & Helm, 2007) prefer the construct of enculturation

when referring to nonimmigrant African Americans to emphasize the explicit socialization into their cultural group (Iwamasa, Regan, Subica, & Yamada, 2013). Researchers have examined dimensions of African American acculturation that relate to traditional practices, beliefs, and values regarding religious beliefs, food preferences, and socialization practices, as well as media preferences (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Obasi & Leong, 2009; Reid, Brown, Andrew Peterson, Snowden, & Hines, 2009).

African Americans may experience acculturative stress because their beliefs, values, and behaviors are incompatible with White Americans' beliefs (Anderson, 1991). It is possible that acculturative stress among African American women is associated with shifting behaviors, particularly college students. For instance, Thompson, Anderson, and Bakeman (2000) observed that family pressure (as well as peer and other social group pressures) not to acculturate, linguistic expectations, perceptions of acting White, and acculturation level were associated with greater acculturative stress among African American college students (see also, Steele & Aronson, 1995).

The MAIP model maintains that acculturation into mainstream or Black American cultural norms plays an essential and pervasive role in the lives of African American women from childhood through adulthood, and is therefore an important and direct predictor of shifting.

### Racial Attitudes

Racial attitudes, both positive and negative, include beliefs, prejudices, and stereotypes and their various manifestations (e.g., racism) in social practice (Allport, 1954; Dovidio, 2001). Much of this literature has focused on White Americans' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors toward African Americans, with fewer studies having examined perceived racism and discrimination from an African American perspective (Norwood, 2014; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Undergirding African American racial attitudes is their unique cultural and historical experiences in developing their racial identity, or the salience of race in defining themselves (Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998). One model in particular, the multidimensional model of racial identity (MMRI; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) may offer insight into the development of African American racial attitudes and their subsequent impact on various dimensions of shifting or situational salience of identity among African American women.

The MMRI identifies four primary components of African American identity: centrality, regard, ideology, and salience (Yip, Douglass, & Sellers, 2014). These racial identity components reinforce the constellation of racial attitudes of African American women and their experience of others. Because situational salience is conceptualized as the degree to which African Americans are aware of their African American identity during their daily activities, this awareness may drive shifting behavior among African American women. At times shifting is a function of pressure to adapt or fit in within a racist White American-oriented society. Sometimes African American women shift to "protect" African American men who are often under assault by an oppressive mainstream society. At other times, shifting is a healthier and adaptive mechanism when moving between roles such as mother or work professional, or friend versus coworker. These unique dimensions of shifting or situational salience correspond to and

reflect African American women's ethnic/racial identity development and subsequent racial attitudes.

The identity salience and racial identity process of African Americans is also influenced by colorblind racial attitudes (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000; Neville, Worthington, & Spanierman, 2001). Core aspects of colorblind racial attitudes include denial, distortion, and minimization of racism (Neville et al., 2000; Neville et al., 2001). Individuals with colorblind racial attitudes often endorse the notion that their race is not an important component of their identity. Neville et al. (2001) suggest that the function of colorblind racial attitudes may protect the group interests of White Americans, such as White privilege, and also legitimize the experience of racism. However, colorblind racial attitudes may work against the individual and group interests of ethnic minorities through the denial of racism and harmful behaviors. They are particularly deleterious for African Americans, as colorblindness may prevent them from developing protective coping strategies to guard against the negative effects of racism or perpetuate racial inequality (Neville, Coleman, Falconer, & Holmes, 2005). However, protective racial socialization from parents is inversely associated with colorblind beliefs and greater awareness of institutional racism (Barr & Neville, 2008, 2014). It is probable that African American women who experience negative racial attitudes attempt to reduce its negative consequences and also attempt to cope with the stress of these attitudes. One such strategy is shifting. Thus, the extent to which African American women experience the effects of negative racial attitudes increases their likelihood of shifting behaviors. Further, such negative experiences may mediate the influence of acculturation in predicting shifting.

### Stereotype Concerns

Stereotypes are categorizations that minimize within group differences while simultaneously maximizing between group differences (Bridgman, 2012). Stereotypes often reflect beliefs and expectations concerning characteristics of other groups (Fiske, 1998). These stereotypes provide individuals with cognitive schemas that can be accessed automatically (Chang & Kleiner, 2003). African American women have historically dealt with several negative images because of the confluence of their gender and race. The media often portrays African American women as dominant, rebellious, rude, and aggressive (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). In fact, Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight (2008) described three dominant stereotypes of African American women: a Mammy image of an asexual nurturing woman; a Sapphire image of a nagging, loud, argumentative, and emasculating person (Jewell, 1993; Mitchell & Herring, 1998; West, 1995); and a Jezebel image of a very sexual and seductive female (Mitchell & Herring, 1998).

To counteract these negative stereotypes and highlight positive attributes of African American women, the concept of the Superwoman and a related construct, the Strong Black Woman (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003) were developed (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Woods-Giscombé & Lobel, 2008). Therefore, African American women who have been affected by such stereotyping, may be more likely to behave in less stereotyped ways, that is, they may engage in shifting behaviors. Additionally, similar to the effects of negative racial attitudes, the consequences of prior

stereotyping may also mediate the effects of acculturation in predicting shifting.

### Perceived Sexist Discrimination

Girls and young women are regularly exposed to messages of presumed gender-appropriate behavior, appearance, and role expectations (Chrisler, 2008), but such subtle forms of sexism (e.g., cultural, institutional, interpersonal) can affect their physical safety and economic security (Gamst et al., 2011). Attempts to conform to gender role expectations lead some women to experience gender role strain (Levant & Philpot, 2002) and role overload (Hochschild, 1989).

These challenges apply to most women, but for African American women, the struggle for gender equality is inseparable from their struggle against racism, classism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression (Collins, 1990; Comas-Díaz, 1991; Nettles & Balter, 2012). It is suggested that African American women experience gendered racism and racialized sexism (Essed, 1991), a unique form of bias that occurs because of the simultaneous experience of both racism and sexism. Gendered racism relates to perceptions, stereotypes, or images of specific groups that uniquely impact their mental health (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Thomas et al., 2008). Gendered racism among African American women is associated with psychological distress, symptoms of depression, sexual objectification, physical safety concerns, disordered eating, and challenges within interpersonal relationships (Carr, Szymanski, Taha, West, & Kaslow, 2014; Szymanski & Stewart, 2010; Thomas et al., 2008; Watson, Robinson, Dispenza, & Nazari, 2012).

As with stereotype concerns, perceived sexist discrimination may be addressed by African American women in a variety of ways that include active engagement of the source of the stereotype or discrimination experience, while conversely, more passive or subtle approaches to these same stimuli may be deemed appropriate. The allocation of cognitive resources to make these judgments may in turn drive shifting phenomena. Thus, increased experiences of sexist discrimination increases their likelihood of shifting in various problematic situations, and mediates the effects of acculturation in predicting shifting.

### Coping

Racial discrimination is a chronic stressor for African Americans (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; LaVeist, 2002), and the effects of this trauma on physical and mental health are well documented (Clark et al., 1999; Brondolo et al., 2011; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Williams & Mohammed, 2009). It appears that individuals learn to cope with discrimination by changing their cognitions and behaviors in response to internal and external demands that are considered stressful (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984); in fact, the concept of shifting can be construed as a special case of coping. African Americans appear to use a wide range of coping strategies, including active forms of coping such as confrontation, as well as less active forms of coping, such as withdrawal (Clark et al., 1999; Lewis-Coles & Constantine, 2006). However, most coping literature regarding African Americans indicates the importance of social support and religiosity (Shorter-Gooden, 2004), particularly among African American women.

Although African American women must manage the challenges of gendered racism, few studies have examined how they cope with gendered racism (Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Nonetheless, Thomas et al. (2008) found that African American women coped with gendered racism by avoiding and minimizing the situation. Although avoidant strategies are often regarded as ineffective or passive (Thomas et al., 2008), African American scholars suggest that these strategies are efficacious for some African American women (Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Browne Hunt, 2013; Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Thomas et al., 2008) in that they temporarily minimize their pain when a stressor is perceived as uncontrollable (Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Thomas et al., 2008) and have buffering effects (Neal-Barnett, 2003) that enable them to shield themselves from the cumulative negative effects of discrimination (Lewis et al., 2013).

The MAIP model suggests that the coping strategies utilized by African American women should shape the complex cultural dynamics observed in many multicultural interactions. It therefore appears that greater reliance on various coping strategies will amplify the degree of shifting, as these strategies are employed against the backdrop of acculturation. Therefore, it is expected that coping strategies mediate the effects of acculturation on shifting.

### Social Desirability Effects

Social desirability effects or bias can threaten the validity of self-report measures. This occurs when respondents answer questionnaire items that may not reflect their true attitudes (Gamst, Meyers, Burke, & Guarino, 2015). The result of such contamination is often spurious or creates reduced covariance and unstable response distributions (Ganster, Hennessey, & Luthans, 1983; Presser & Stinson, 1998). Stocké (2007) found that many group differences in racial attitude self-reports are a function of social desirability bias. Regardless of the source, it is useful to attempt to control for social desirability contamination when measuring culturally sensitive self-report measures (Gamst & Liang, 2013; Gamst et al., 2015; Klesges et al., 2004).

### The Scale Development Process

#### Generation of the Initial Item Set

The development of the AAWSS followed established scale development procedures (e.g., Clark & Watson, 1995; Dawis, 1987; DeVellis, 2011; Gamst et al., 2015) and validation procedures (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2013a, 2013b; Reise, Waller, & Comrey, 2000; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). First, we conducted a thorough literature review on the construct of shifting beginning with the seminal work of Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) and continued with a search of several interdisciplinary databases (i.e., psychology, sociology, education, etc.). Cultural constructs that were potentially related to shifting as hypothesized from the MAIP model (acculturation, stereotype concerns, racial attitudes, perceived sexism) were also identified.

The second phase involved developing items for the initial version of the AAWSS. Based on the book *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America* (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003), an outline highlighting the major tenets and themes of each chapter was produced. Open-ended questions were formulated

from the outline to help guide one of the authors in leading a group discussion. An email was sent to current and former African American female students from a clinical psychology doctoral program, requesting their voluntary participation in a focus group with the purpose of discussing issues pertinent to African American women. Six women responded to the email and participated in the group that met twice.

At the initial meeting, the women were briefly informed about the current research project and received a short description of Jones and Shorter-Gooden's (2003) book. Participants were asked open-ended questions that tapped into many of the book's major themes, including their experiences with altering aspects of themselves in various contexts, of being perceived as strong and invulnerable, the complex interplay within their relationships with African American men, and the pressure to conform to the beauty ideals of either mainstream society or their communities of color, among others. The leader asked questions to clarify a point when needed, but otherwise allowed the women to lead the discussion. The participants' responses, which were recorded verbatim, together with information gleaned from the literature review, were integrated thematically and rephrased to form 155 declarative statements.

In the third phase of scale development, a panel of four multicultural experts (all doctoral-level psychologists, one Asian American male, two Latinas, one African American female) received a brief description of "shifting" and were asked to evaluate each of the 155 items for its appropriateness for a scale attempting to capture this phenomenon on a 4-point summative response scale ranging from 1 (*very inappropriate*) to 4 (*very appropriate*). A total of 72 items were rated as a "1" or a "2" by at least one panel member and were eliminated from the item pool. This process resulted in an 83-item AAWSS prototype scale.

### The Strategy for Analysis and Instrument Validation

The 83-item AAWSS prototype scale together with a set of other measures assessing cultural constructs based on the MAIP framework and the literature review were compiled into an online questionnaire for Study 1. Data analysis began by reducing the 83-item AAWSS prototype scale to fewer items with a viable factor structure. In Study 2, a second limited round of online data collection using only the reduced AAWSS item set was implemented for the sole purpose of independently confirming the factor structure. Data analysis then concentrated on the data set from Study 1 by configuring and evaluating a structural model relating the assessed cultural constructs to shifting.

## Study 1

### Method

**Participants.** All participants were African American women who were recruited online mainly through postings on the social networking sites of Facebook and Twitter. One of the authors entered the terms "African American women" and "Black women" on the Facebook search engine, and visited multiple group pages catering to various segments of said population. Once there, the author posted a brief overview of the study along with a link to the questionnaire, and also placed an advertisement in an online mag-

azine created for African American women. Additionally, psychology departments of various historically Black colleges and universities were contacted about the possibility of disseminating the questionnaire to their students. Participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that their responses would be anonymous. As an incentive, all participants received the option of entering a drawing for one of 50 \$20.00 Target gift cards.

The recruitment efforts resulted in a national convenience sample of 554 African American women who provided at least some responses to the items on the questionnaire. However, many response protocols were reasonably incomplete, rendering them unusable in the data analysis. Removing these resulted in a final sample size of 318 African American women who ranged in age from 18 to 72 ( $M = 36.60$ ,  $SD = 11.62$ ). Several other demographics describing the sample are shown in Table 1.

**Measures.** The online questionnaire contained 193 items comprising a demographic sheet and seven scales.

**Demographic sheet.** The demographic sheet contained seven items regarding the participants' gender, age, U.S. residency, marital status, region, education, and employment status.

**The African American Women's Shifting Scale.** The prototype AAWSS was an 83-item scale that measured the extent to which African American women change or alter various parts of themselves such as their speech or dress, in order to placate both mainstream society and their own communities of color. Items were measured on a 4-point summative response scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). An example statement is, "There is a way to act at home and a different way when I am away from home."

**The Africultural Coping Systems Inventory.** The Africultural Coping Systems Inventory (ACSI; Utsey, Adams, & Bolden, 2000) is a 30-item self-report measure of culture-specific coping strategies used by African Americans in times of distress and includes four subscales: Cognitive/Emotional Debriefing,

Spiritual-Centered Coping, Collective-Centered Coping, and Ritual-Centered Coping. Individuals were asked to briefly describe a stressful situation that they experienced within the past week and responded to the extent to which they engaged in various coping strategies. The items were measured using a 4-point summative response scale that ranged from 0 (*did not use/does not apply*) to 3 (*used a great deal*). Higher mean scores on each subscale indicate greater use of the coping strategy. Acceptable internal consistency values were reported by Utsey et al. (2000) in their sample of African American adults; Cognitive/Emotional Debriefing ( $\alpha = .80$ ), Spiritual-Centered Coping ( $\alpha = .79$ ), Collective-Centered Coping ( $\alpha = .71$ ), and Ritual-Centered Coping ( $\alpha = .75$ ). However, for the present study, internal consistency values included Cognitive/Emotional Debriefing ( $\alpha = .83$ ), Spiritual-Centered Coping ( $\alpha = .82$ ), Collective-Centered Coping ( $\alpha = .80$ ), and Ritual-Centered Coping ( $\alpha = .67$ ). Due to the relatively low reliability of the Ritual-Centered Coping subscale, it was eliminated from all subsequent analyses in the present study.

**The African American Acculturation Scale.** The African American Acculturation Scale (Reid et al., 2009) is a brief 10-item self-report measure of acculturation and includes three subscales: Media Preferences, Social Interaction Patterns, and Attitudes. All items were rated on a 4-point Likert-type summative response scale with values ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Lower mean scores on each subscale indicate greater acculturation to the dominant culture.

Reid et al. (2009) did not report Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the African American Acculturation Scale total score or its three subscale scores. However, Snowden and Hines (1999) reported a coefficient alpha of .75 for its unidimensional predecessor that included the same 10 items. For the present study, internal consistency values included Media Preference ( $\alpha = .82$ ), Social Interaction Patterns ( $\alpha = .73$ ), Attitudes ( $\alpha = .48$ ), and ( $\alpha = .78$ ) for the total score. Due to the relatively low reliability of the Attitudes subscale, it was eliminated from all subsequent analyses in the present study.

**The Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale.** The Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (Neville et al., 2000) is a 20-item self-report measure of cognitive aspects of colorblind racial attitudes and includes three subscales: Racial Privilege, Institutional Discrimination, and Blatant Racial Issues. All items are rated on a 6-point Likert-type summative response scale with anchors of 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 6 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate higher levels of colorblind racial attitudes. Neville et al. (2000) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients for multiple samples that ranged as follows: total score = .84 to .91, Racial Privilege = .71 to .83, Institutional Discrimination = .73 to .81, and Blatant Racial Issues = .70 to .76. For the present study, internal consistency values included Racial Privilege ( $\alpha = .72$ ), Institutional Discrimination ( $\alpha = .56$ ) and Blatant Racist Issues ( $\alpha = .56$ ). Due to the relatively low reliabilities of the Institutional Discrimination and Blatant Racial Issues subscales, they were eliminated from all subsequent analyses in the present study.

**The Stereotype Confirmation Concern Scale.** The Stereotype Confirmation Concern Scale (Contrada et al., 2001) is an 11-item self-report measure that assesses the extent to which a person experiences concern over behaving in ways that might confirm racial stereotypes during the past 3 months (Gamst et al., 2011). All items are rated on a 7-point Likert-type summative response

Table 1  
Demographics of the Study 1 and Study 2 Samples

Demographic	Categories	Study 1		Study 2	
		n	%	n	%
Region	South	128	40%	98	52%
	West	104	32%	51	27%
	Northeast	51	16%	23	12%
	Midwest	34	10%	17	9%
Education completed	Some high school or less	5	2%	1	1%
	High school	17	5%	6	3%
	Some college	140	45%	30	16%
	Bachelor's degree	69	22%	47	25%
	Master's degree	68	22%	93	49%
Employment status	Doctoral degree	19	6%	11	6%
	Employed	193	61%	146	77%
	Self-employed	16	5%	8	4%
	Student	56	18%	21	11%
	Homemaker	16	5%	8	4%
	Unemployed	23	7%	6	3%
Marital status	Retired	14	4%	1	1%
	Married	101	32%	75	40%
	Widowed	5	2%	5	3%
	Divorced	49	16%	21	11%
	Separated	20	6%	6	3%
	Never married	142	44%	82	43%

scale that ranges from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*), with higher scores indicating greater concern over confirming stereotypes. [Conrada et al. \(2001\)](#) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .91 for ethnic minorities and .89 for White Americans. For the present study, a Cronbach's alpha of .88 was obtained.

**The Schedule of Sexist Events–Revised.** The Schedule of Sexist Events ([Klonoff & Landrine, 1995](#)) is a 20-item self-report measure that examines both recent and lifetime experiences of sexism. In their study of gendered racism with African American women, [Thomas et al. \(2008\)](#) revised the scale to read “Black woman” instead of “woman.” The Schedule of Sexist Events–Revised ([Thomas et al., 2008](#)) is a 20-item unidimensional scale that requires respondents to rate how often they have experienced certain sexist events on a 6-point Likert-type summative response scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*almost all of the time*); the last item assesses the extent to which a woman experienced gendered racist events across her lifetime. Higher scores are indicative of more experiences of discrimination. [Thomas et al. \(2008\)](#) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .93 for the Schedule of Sexist Events–Revised total score, and a Cronbach's alpha of .93 was also obtained for the present study.

**Social desirability.** Respondent social desirability bias was measured with the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale–Short Form (MCSDS-SF; [Reynolds, 1982](#)). The MCSDS-SF is often used as an adjunct measure to assess the impact of social desirability bias upon self-report tools. Participants responded to 13 true/false statements. Higher scale scores indicate a greater social desirability response tendency on the part of the respondent. Many studies have reported consistently high levels of reliability (>.70) with the MCSDS-SF (e.g., [Zook & Sipps, 1985](#)), and this scale has been used reliably with diverse African American samples ([Benkert, Templin, Schim, Doorenbos, & Bell, 2011](#); [Obasi & Leong, 2010](#); [Peek, Nunez-Smith, Drum, & Lewis, 2011](#)). For the present study, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .62 was obtained. Due to the relatively low reliability, the MCSDS-SF was eliminated from all subsequent analyses in Study 1.

## Results: Exploratory Factor Analysis for Study 1

The process of reducing the size of the 83-item set while simultaneously determining the underlying dimensional structure of the AAWSS began by examining the data of the 318 participants. Prior to running analyses the data were screened by examining descriptive statistics and potential univariate and multivariate assumption violations for the initial 83-item scale. Eight items were deleted due to low variability heavily concentrated about the mean. Furthermore, one member of any item pair that was relatively highly correlated, indicating item redundancy, was eliminated. This resulted in the elimination of an additional seven items, reducing the number of items to 68.

The next step in the item-reduction process began with a set of principal axis factor analyses. The results using all 68 items yielded 15 components with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 and, as anticipated, the promax rotated solutions with three to six components were all unwieldy; many of the items either did not correlate very strongly with any component or correlated relatively substantially with more than one component, that is, a reasonable approximation to simple structure was not obtained. However, these preliminary analyses provided the starting point for an iterative

process of limited item removal followed by reanalysis followed by further item reduction and so on.

The final version of the AAWSS resulting from this iterative process contained 13 items that appeared to offer a viable and interpretable structure. Hence, 55 items were eliminated, six with uniformly low (<.20) structure coefficients and 49 items with “cross loadings” of .35 or greater. The principal axis factor analysis for the final set of 13 items yielded three initial factors with eigenvalues over 1.00, cumulatively accounting for 55.94% of the total variance. The structure coefficients for the promax rotated solution together with the principal axis factor extraction results are presented in [Table 2](#). Factor 1 was represented by Items 1, 3, 7, 9, and 11 and was labeled as Strong Black Woman. Item 11 for example, reads, “I deny my own feelings of pain and sadness most of the time,” and Item 1 reads, “I cannot show weakness to my family.” Factor 2 was represented by Items 2, 4, 6, 10, and 13 and was labeled as Awareness of Shifting Behavior; an example is Item 4, “I have needed to change who I am in different contexts.” Factor 3 was represented by Items 5, 8, and 12 and was interpreted as Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks; an example is Item 8, “I feel pressure to prove to Black friends and family that I have not ‘sold out.’” Correlations between these three components ranged between .36 and .40. Internal consistency as indexed by coefficient alpha for Strong Black Woman, Awareness of Shifting Behavior, and Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks was .78, .74, and .73, respectively.

## Study 2

### Method: Participants and Materials

Participants for Study 2 were recruited via a second search on Facebook, using the search terms “African American,” “Black,” “African American women,” and “Black women.” Again, one of the authors posted a brief description of the study on various group pages, along with the link to participate. Although care was taken to select different sites for posting, repeat postings were made on the same group pages as described for Study 1. Moreover, due to the anonymous nature of the survey, participants were not screened to ensure that they did not participate in both studies. A convenience sample of 202 African American women responded to a shorter questionnaire consisting of just two inventories, a reduced set (13 items) of AAWSS items resulting from the analysis of the AAWSS items of Study 1 and the MCSDS-SF. Of these respondents, 12 were eliminated based on incomplete data, leaving a final sample of 190 African American women ranging in age from 18 to 73 ( $M = 37.16$ ,  $SD = 11.10$ ). As can be seen in [Table 1](#), the demographics of the participants were similar to those reported for Study 1. In comparison to the national average, participants in both studies matched in terms of marital status ([United States Census Bureau, 2010](#)). Our present samples, however, had slightly higher than average rates of employment ([United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011](#)) and educational attainment ([United States Census Bureau, 2011](#)).

### Results: Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Study 2

In Study 2, only the 13 AAWSS items shown in [Table 2](#) were administered (in addition to the MCSDS-SF). The goal here was to

Table 2  
Promax Rotation (Study 1,  $N = 318$ )

Item	Wording	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	$h^2$	CITC
Strong Black Woman						
11	I deny my own feelings of pain and sadness most of the time.	<b>.74</b>	.24	.29	.55	.63
1	I cannot show weakness to my family.	<b>.69</b>	.29	.36	.49	.58
7	I must always be strong for my friends and family.	<b>.61</b>	.25	.21	.37	.54
3	The image of the Strong Black Woman makes it difficult for others to see my pain and struggles.	<b>.60</b>	.38	.35	.40	.52
9	Others rarely see me as vulnerable or in need of support.	<b>.60</b>	.15	.17	.37	.52
Awareness of Shifting Behavior						
10	I have a different self at school (or work) than at home.	.26	<b>.66</b>	.29	.43	.56
2	I consciously change the tone of my voice when in the presence of non-black people.	.29	<b>.65</b>	.35	.44	.53
4	I have needed to change who I am in different contexts.	.17	<b>.65</b>	.17	.43	.54
6	There is a way to act at home and a different way when I am away from home.	.29	<b>.60</b>	-.04	.36	.47
13	I effortlessly shift between the different sides of me.	.18	<b>.54</b>	.25	.30	.45
Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks						
8	I feel pressure to prove to Black friends and family that I have not "sold out."	.22	.23	<b>.72</b>	.53	.57
5	I edit how much I share about my successes to Black friends/family that may not be doing as well.	.30	.23	<b>.69</b>	.48	.55
12	I feel I need to downplay my achievements/strengths in relationships with Black men.	.36	.30	<b>.66</b>	.45	.53
PAF eigenvalues		3.34	1.25	1.01		
PAF % of variance		25.72	9.59	7.74		

Note. Factor 1 = Strong Black Woman; Factor 2 = Awareness of Shifting Behavior; Factor 3 = Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks;  $h^2$  = communality; CITC = corrected item total correlation with subscale score; PAF = Principal Axis Factoring. Boldfaced values indicate highest factor structure coefficients.

perform a confirmatory factor analysis on the 13 items to evaluate the quality of the hypothesized three-component structure based on data from an independent sample. As an initial step to verify that the three-component solution replicated, a principal axis factor analysis was first applied to the data. Three initial factors with eigenvalues over 1.00 were obtained; these cumulatively accounted for 53.62% of the variance, a value similar to that obtained in analyzing the first data set.

The promax rotated structure coefficients and the principal factor analysis extraction results are shown in Table 3, indicating that the previously obtained factor structure was duplicated. However, the factors were more highly correlated in this analysis, ranging between .53 and .62. Reliabilities for the subscales of Strong Black Woman, Awareness of Shifting Behavior, and Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks in this second data set were .74, .80, and .56, respectively, suggesting that at least the Strong Black Woman and Awareness of Shifting Behavior subscales were very stable; the means and standard deviations for these scales were 2.69 (0.57), 2.67 (0.62), and 2.17 (0.63), respectively. Given the acceptable level of reliability observed in the first data set but its relatively low value in the present analysis, it appears that the three-item Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks subscale may be less than fully stable and the results reported below should therefore be treated with some degree of caution.

Coefficient alpha for the MCSDS-SF in Study 2 was .716, with a mean and standard deviation of 20.47 and 3.11. Social desirability correlated with Strong Black Woman, Awareness of Shifting, and Sensitivity to the Perception of Blacks  $-.137$ ,  $-.226$ , and  $-.187$ , respectively. Thus, although the shifting subscales did

correlate with social desirability, these relationships were not particularly strong, and so it appears that the influence of socially desirable responding on the subscale scores is modest at best. It is also possible that participants engaged in shifting as they responded to the different measures. However, given that the MCSDS-SF did not exhibit satisfactory reliability in Study 1, it is not clear that the correlations obtained here may be fully generalizable.

A confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the data of the 190 Study 2 respondents to the 13 AAWSS. Our purpose was to determine if the subscale structure emerging from the analyses in Study 1 could be validated with a second independent sample. An examination of the proposition that the scale is sufficiently unidimensional to warrant a single composite score representing the entire set of items can be addressed through a full information bifactor analysis (e.g., Gibbons et al., 2007; Reise, Morizot, & Hays, 2007), but this issue, although an interesting one for future research, was beyond the scope of our present analysis.

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis model based on the Study 2 data set are shown in Figure 1. After adding correlations between two pairs of error factors, each pair within a single factor, the model appeared to be a good fit to the data based on most of the fit indexes we used. The chi-square value was not statistically significant ( $60, N = 190 = 72.69, p = .126$ , the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), the Incremental Fit Index (IFI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) were .944, .979, and .978, respectively, and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was .033. It therefore seems as though the subscales of Strong Black Woman, Awareness of Shifting Behavior, and Sensitivity to

Table 3  
Promax Rotation (Study 2, N = 190)

Item	Wording	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	$h^2$	CITC
Awareness of Shifting Behavior						
10	I have a different self at school (or work) than at home.	<b>.76</b>	.39	.50	.58	.66
6	There is a way to act at home and a different way when I am away from home.	<b>.70</b>	.44	.34	.52	.60
2	I consciously change the tone of my voice when in the presence of non-black people.	<b>.65</b>	.31	.45	.43	.57
13	I effortlessly shift between the different sides of me.	<b>.61</b>	.24	.38	.39	.53
4	I have needed to change who I am in different contexts.	<b>.61</b>	.41	.46	.39	.54
Strong Black Woman						
11	I deny my own feelings of pain and sadness most of the time.	.37	<b>.71</b>	.45	.52	.57
3	The image of the strong Black woman makes it difficult for others to see my pain and struggles.	.46	<b>.63</b>	.52	.44	.52
7	I must always be strong for my friends and family.	.28	<b>.60</b>	.27	.36	.49
9	Others rarely see me as vulnerable or in need o support.	.28	<b>.58</b>	.23	.35	.49
1	I cannot show weakness to my family.	.24	<b>.50</b>	.25	.26	.44
Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks						
8	I feel pressure to prove to Black friends and family that I have not “sold out.”	.35	.24	<b>.62</b>	.39	.42
5	I edit how much I share about my successes to Black friends/family that may not be doing as well.	.38	.39	<b>.54</b>	.31	.34
12	I feel I need to downplay my achievements/strengths in relationships with Black men.	.39	.33	<b>.50</b>	.26	.35
PAF Eigenvalues		3.77	0.96	0.45		
PAF % of variance		29.03	7.40	3.47		

Note. Factor 1 = Awareness of Shifting Behavior; Factor 2 = Strong Black Woman; Factor 3 = Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks;  $h^2$  = communality; CITC = corrected item total correlation with subscale score; PAF = Principal Axis Factoring. Boldfaced values indicate highest factor structure coefficients.

the Perceptions of Blacks are viable measures of African American women’s shifting, despite the less than acceptable level of reliability for the Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks subscale in Study 2.

**Results: Structural Model for the Study 1 Data Set**

Given the confirmation of the factor structure of the AAWSS, our statistical analysis refocused on Study 1. Our goal in this

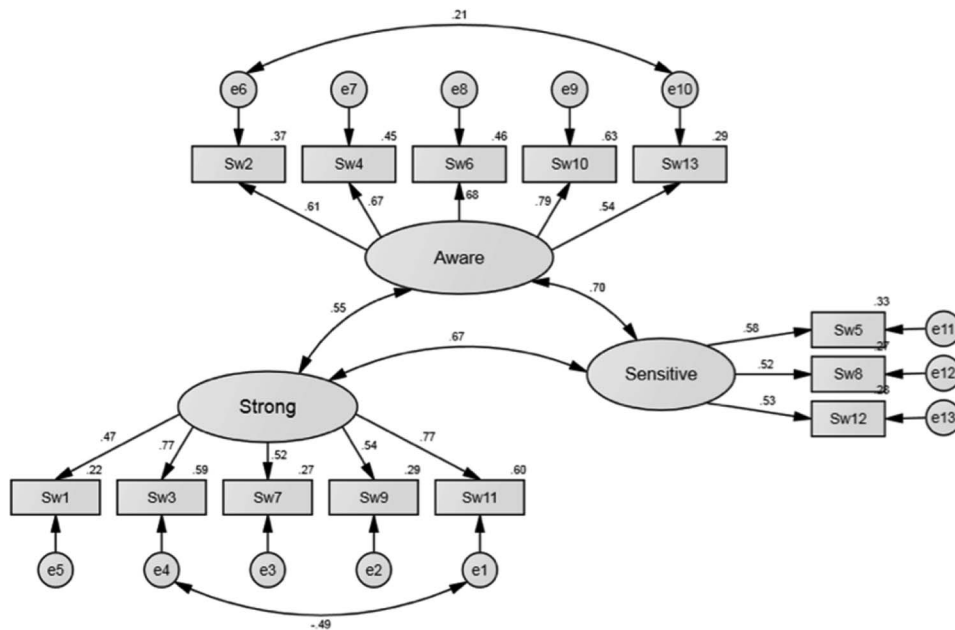


Figure 1. Standardized coefficients and factor correlations for the confirmatory factor analysis model.



portion of the data analysis was to hypothesize a structural model that predicted shifting.

### Descriptive Statistics

The means and standard deviations for the scales and subscales used in Study 2 are presented in Table 4. These values are generally in the range of those reported in the literature. Table 4 also shows the value of coefficient alpha for each of the measures. Using .70 as a minimally acceptable value for internal consistency, Ritual Centered Coping, Institutional Discrimination, Blatant Racial Issues, Acculturation Attitudes, and Social Desirability were judged to exhibit unacceptably low levels of reliability and were excluded from all subsequent analyses, rather than correct them for attenuation in that we were not interested in what reduced error measures might have theoretically yielded, but rather, we were concerned with the observed relationships with the other constructs and so we were focused on the observed reliability.

Correlations between the measures demonstrating acceptable levels of reliability are shown in Table 5. These measures generally correlated modestly across the inventories, with most of the bivariate correlations being less than .30; however, the Stereotype Confirmation Scale and the Racial Privilege subscale of the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale correlated .48 and  $-.41$  with the Schedule of Sexist Events–Revised, respectively. Within the major inventories, correlations of the AAWSS subscales ranged between .27 and .35, correlations between pairs of the coping subscales ranged from .41 to .59, and the two acculturation subscales correlated .33. The coping scales also correlated modestly with the Stereotype Confirmation Scale and the Schedule of Sexist Events–Revised.

### Analysis of the Structural Model

To explore and validate some of the dynamics of the shifting construct, only those measures achieving an acceptable level of reliability were used as the basis for configuring a structural model. It was presumed at the outset of the study that shifting would be the outcome variable; that acculturation would be the

Table 5  
*Correlations of the Reliable Measures in Study 1*  
( $N = 275$  to  $318$ )

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Strong										
2. Aware	.31									
3. Sensitive	.35	.27								
4. CogEmD	.26	.16	.19							
5. SpiritCope	.11	-.17	.04	.40						
6. CollCope	.05	-.08	.13	.44	.59					
7. AccMed	.14	.25	.22	.14	.05	.13				
8. AccSoc	.16	.16	.01	.13	.04	.06	.33			
9. Stereo	.31	.25	.36	.30	.08	.10	.21	.12		
10. Sexism	.35	.19	.36	.29	.20	.22	.11	.13	.48	
11. RacePriv	-.17	-.19	-.14	-.09	.04	-.11	-.24	-.07	-.20	-.41

*Note.* Strong = AAWSS Strong Black Woman; Aware = AAWSS Awareness of Shifting Behavior; Sensitive = AAWSS Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks; CogEmD = Cognitive/Emotional Debriefing; SpiritCope = Spiritual-Centered Coping; CollCope = Collective-Centered Coping; AccMed = Acculturation Media Preferences; AccSoc = Acculturation Social Interaction Patterns; Stereo = Stereotype Confirmation Concerns Schedule; Sexism = Schedule of Sexist Events Revised; RacePriv = Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale Racial Privilege.

predictor variable; and that coping, concern over stereotyping, and experience with sexism would be potential mediator variables.

In the process of specifying a serviceable model, two issues became apparent and were resolved in the following ways. First, because the coping measures were not significantly related to most of the other constructs including shifting, it was determined that coping would not be included in the model (the measurement model indicated a poor model fit with coping included). Second, stereotype concern and experience with sexism were strongly enough correlated and conceptually enough related to suggest that the two of them should be treated as indicators of a more general latent variable rather than treating them as separate measured variables in the model.

With the above considerations in mind, the structural model was configured as shown in Figure 2. The latent variable of

Table 4  
*Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities of the Scales (Study 1,  $N = 318$ )*

Scale	Subscale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$
African American Women's Shifting Scale	Strong Black Woman	2.72	0.62	.78
	Awareness of Shifting Behavior	2.56	0.59	.74
	Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks	1.98	0.66	.73
Africultural Coping Systems Inventory	Cognitive/Emotional Debriefing	21.18	7.01	.83
	Spiritual-Centered Coping	18.56	6.04	.82
	Collective-Centered Coping	16.9	5.43	.80
	Ritual-Centered Coping	3.56	1.49	.67
Color-Blind Racial Attitudes	Racial Privilege	19.26	6.65	.72
	Institutional Discrimination	19.52	5.87	.56
	Blatant Racial Issues	12.39	4.42	.56
African American Acculturation Scale	Media Preferences	2.38	0.86	.82
	Social Interaction Patterns	2.65	0.82	.73
	Attitudes	2.13	0.69	.48
Stereotype Confirmation Concerns Scale		2.10	1.06	.88
Schedule of Sexist Events–Revised		2.16	0.70	.93
Social Desirability		18.52	2.70	.62

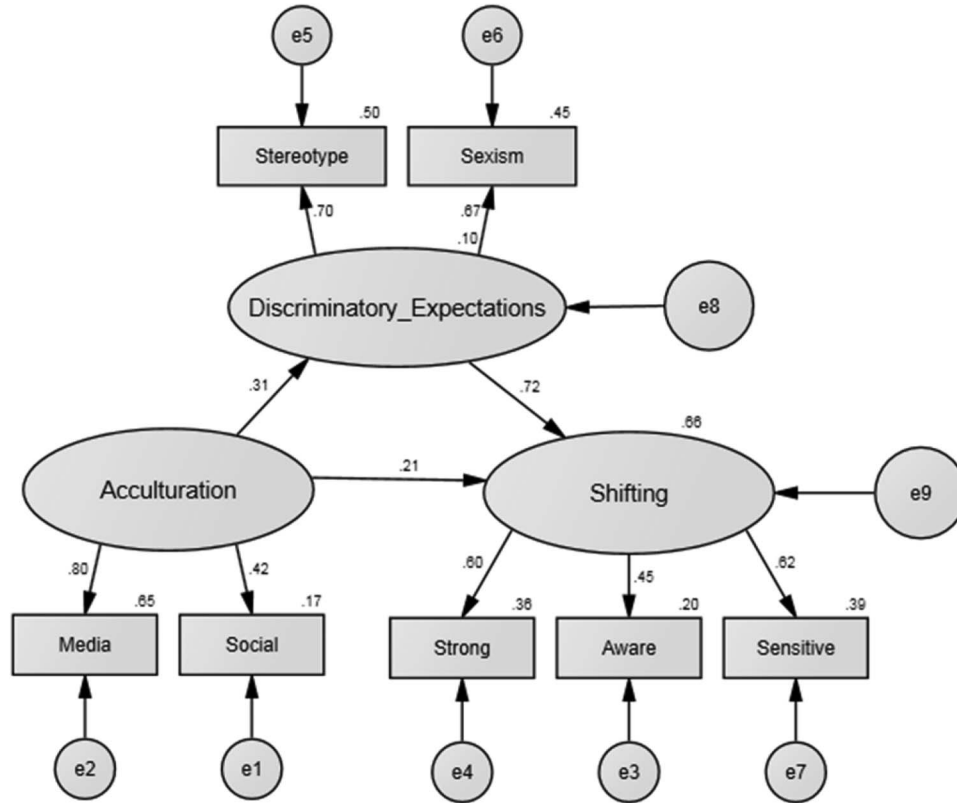


Figure 2. Standardized coefficients and squared multiple correlations for the structural model.

acculturation was established as the predictor variable using as indicators its two subscales, Media Preferences and Social Interaction Patterns. Strong Black Woman, Awareness of Shifting Behavior, and Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks were specified as indicators of the shifting outcome latent variable. Stereotype concern and experience with sexism were treated as indicators of a latent mediator variable that we labeled as discriminatory expectations.

The model yielded a very good fit to the data. Although the chi-square value was statistically significant ( $11, N = 269$ ) = 20.262,  $p = .042$ , the GFI, IFI, and CFI were .979, .966, and .965, respectively, and the RMSEA was .056. Figure 2 presents the standardized coefficients and squared multiple correlations associated with the model. The paths from acculturation to discriminatory expectations (standardized path coefficient = .312, unstandardized path coefficient = .694 with a standard error of .237,  $p = .003$ ) and from discriminatory expectations to shifting (standardized path coefficient = .720, unstandardized path coefficient = .252 with a standard error of .056,  $p < .001$ ) and from acculturation to shifting (standardized path coefficient = .212, unstandardized path coefficient = .165 with a standard error of .082,  $p = .044$ ) were all statistically significant. The Aroian (1947) test, one variation of the Sobel (1982, 1986) test family, was used to evaluate the statistical significance of the indirect effect, and it showed that the indirect effect of acculturation through discriminatory expectations to shifting was statistically significant,  $z = 2.41, p = .015$ . Approximately 10% and 66% of the variance

of discriminatory expectations and shifting, respectively, was explained by the model configuration.

With all of the paths being statistically significant, the possibility of having obtained a partial mediation effect was raised; hence, the unmediated model (in which acculturation predicted shifting in isolation) was evaluated. In the unmediated model, the direct path between acculturation and shifting was statistically significant (standardized path coefficient = .452, unstandardized path coefficient = .392 with a standard error of .117,  $p = .001$ ), and a Freedman-Schatzkin (Freedman & Schatzkin, 1992) test comparing the two coefficients verified that the direct path coefficient in the unmediated model was significantly greater than the corresponding coefficient in the mediated model,  $t(267) = 5.68, p < .001$ . In summary, taken in isolation, greater levels of African American acculturation lead to higher levels of shifting. However, the dynamic becomes more complex when expectations of discrimination are taken into account. In this latter case, it appears that the effect of African American acculturation on the shifting tendencies of African American women is partially mediated by their expectations and experiences of discrimination. Specifically, higher levels of acculturation were associated with higher levels of expectations of or sensitivity to discrimination that in turn were associated with greater levels of shifting. Based on the ratio of the strength of the standardized indirect effect to the strength of the unmediated standardized effect (.225/.452), we may conclude that about half (49.78%) of the isolated direct effect of acculturation on shifting is mediated through discriminatory expectations.

## General Discussion

Support for the development and construct validity of the AAWSS was obtained in the present study. Through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, three unique dimensions of shifting phenomena among African American women (Strong Black Woman, Awareness of Shifting Behavior, Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks) were identified. The Strong Black Woman construct was consistent with Jones and Shorter-Gooden's (2003) findings of women who endorse cultural mandates prohibiting vulnerability and expressing need. This construct reinforces an attitude held by some African American women who feel they must manage all challenges and demonstrate strength in the face of adversity, without showing weakness (Abrams, Maxwell, Pope, & Belgrave, 2014; Harrington, Crowther, & Shipherd, 2010).

The Awareness of Shifting Behavior construct reflects attentiveness to a need to alter various aspects of their self-image in response to the demands of a particular context. This supports prior research (Bell, 2004; Hall, Everett, & Hamilton-Mason, 2012; Hassouneh-Phillips & Beckett, 2003), highlighting self-altering strategies commonly used by African American women including biculturalism, code switching, and "wearing masks."

The third subscale, Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks, deals with shifting in response to one's own home community. Rather than retreating to the African American community as a place of safety, some African American women feel pressured to prove that they primarily identify as African Americans. Thus, while shifting to placate the demands of the dominant society in terms of speech, dress, and behavior, some African American women feel that they must also placate the demands within their home communities to avoid being perceived as "sell outs" or that they have "forgotten where they came from."

The content of the Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks subscale also highlighted an additional facet of shifting that some African American women adopt in response to home codes within Black culture that are defined by race, gender, and class (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003) by downplaying their accomplishments when interacting with African American men. Many African American men must often contend with an unjust and discriminating society and are bombarded with negative messages about their personhood (Harper, 2006). In response to this, some African American women may feel their accomplishments might further exacerbate men's feelings of inadequacy and may consequently suppress parts of themselves in order to maintain harmony.

The present study, informed by the MAIP framework, provides support for one apparent dynamic underlying the shifting phenomenon. In isolation, it appears that African American women with higher levels of acculturation tend to exhibit greater levels of shifting. Presumably, higher levels of adaptation to White American culture may increasingly sensitize African American women to the need to modify how they appear to the outside world. But this isolated effect appears to belie a more complex dynamic. Using the present data set, we were able to account for one additional factor, African American women's experience with and expectations of discrimination based on their race and/or gender. With that factor in the model, a portion of the direct effect of acculturation was diverted through a filter of a society that was seen as biased. Thus, higher levels of acculturation also appeared to produce greater expectations of racial biases and sexism and

these negative experiences and cognitive appraisals in turn mediated the tendency to engage in shifting behaviors. Greater levels of acculturation lead to stronger discriminatory expectations which in turn produce higher levels of shifting and suggest the possibility that shifting may be one way for African American women to cloak themselves in the ways of the dominant society to potentially minimize the degree to which racial biases and sexist attitudes might be directed toward them.

Surprisingly, analysis of the structural model indicated that our measure of coping (embodied in three of four ACSI subscales) was not related to shifting or any of the other constructs measured in the present study. These ACSI subscales represent an increased awareness within the literature on the importance of African-centered coping that emphasizes West African cultural values and traditions (Heppner, Wei, Neville, & Kanagui-Muñoz, 2014). This may suggest that the three coping subscales utilized in the present study (Cognitive/Emotional Debriefing, Spiritual-Centered Coping, and Collective Coping) may be tapping different coping mechanisms than the type of coping embodied in the shifting construct. Furthermore, participants completing the ACSI are asked to identify a stressor at the beginning of the scale and to rate their coping based on that stressor. Hence, unless an experience of racism or sexism was specifically targeted, the relationship between shifting and coping may have become attenuated.

## Limitations and Future Directions

Our national convenience sample of African American women was recruited through social media and no sample stratification strategy was employed. As a result, participants were largely in their mid-30s and relatively well educated and may not fully represent all African American women. In fact, these young and relatively well-educated African American women may represent a cohort effect who have experienced unique historical events during their formative years and that may have influenced their perceptions of shifting phenomena. Underlying the present findings may be a constellation of different shifting patterns in respondents' pressures, experiences, and opportunities to shift across various life span stages. Additionally, the use of six African American college students to help generate the initial item pool may have limited the range of concepts that could be generated given that their experience may be different from the general population. Similarly, the use of only one African American female cultural expert (out of four) in the third stage of scale development is problematic given that the present study focused on how shifting occurs with African American women.

Further exploration of the influence of various sociodemographic variables such as age, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment, is therefore warranted to begin to tease out potential cohort effects with regards to shifting. Perhaps other segments of this population may have contrasting views on shifting or may interpret their interactions with White Americans and African Americans differently than those presently surveyed.

The current studies provide an instrument (the AAWSS) with sound psychometric properties, and the only instrument to measure shifting phenomena with African American women. Use of the AAWSS with other people will aid in examining the stability of the Sensitivity to the Perceptions of Blacks factor. The next steps

in future systematic research on this construct and with the AAWSS should explore the predictive utility of various MAIP constructs as additional potential mediators of shifting behavior. Additional constructs and/or measures beyond those used to form the conceptualization of the scale should be examined for possible relationships to the shifting construct. It may be beneficial to explore the experience of shifting within a mental health services delivery context and if it can aid in examining the challenges that accompany this self-altering strategy. More specifically, clinicians can use the AAWSS to better understand shifting's impact on psychological distress of African American women. Lastly, shifting phenomena needs to be explored within a wider multicultural context to determine its applicability to African American men or other ethnic minority women such as Latina Americans, Asian American/Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans.

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