



The Role of Technology in Identity Formation among Daughters of African Immigrants



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Introduction

Generation Z has grown up in what is known as the “digital age,” a period characterized by the rapid development of technology. Many would agree to say that as technology developed, so did the children who are part of this generation. From iPhones to social media, these rapidly developing technologies and Gen Z’s interactions with them played a part of the formations of their identities. This project explores the specific role that technology played in the identity formation of female children of African immigrants, exploring their information seeking and other similar behaviors that have influenced their identities.

Site Information:

UMD’s iSchool
 4130 Campus Drive, College Park, MD 20742
 Dr. Ana Ndumu, supervisor

Site mission: *Improving lives and opportunities for people through information; harnessing data and technology for social good*

Goal: *To learn about qualitative research methods with a research topic of my own choosing*

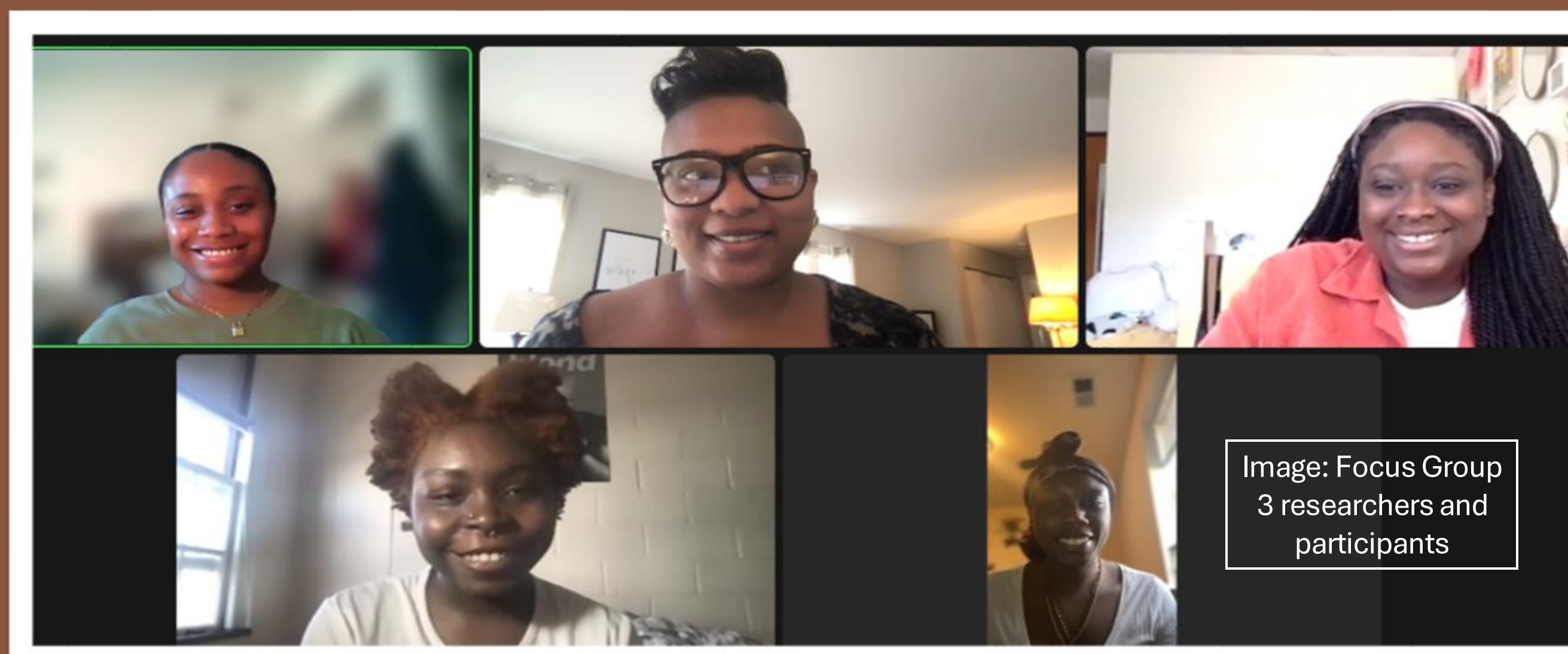


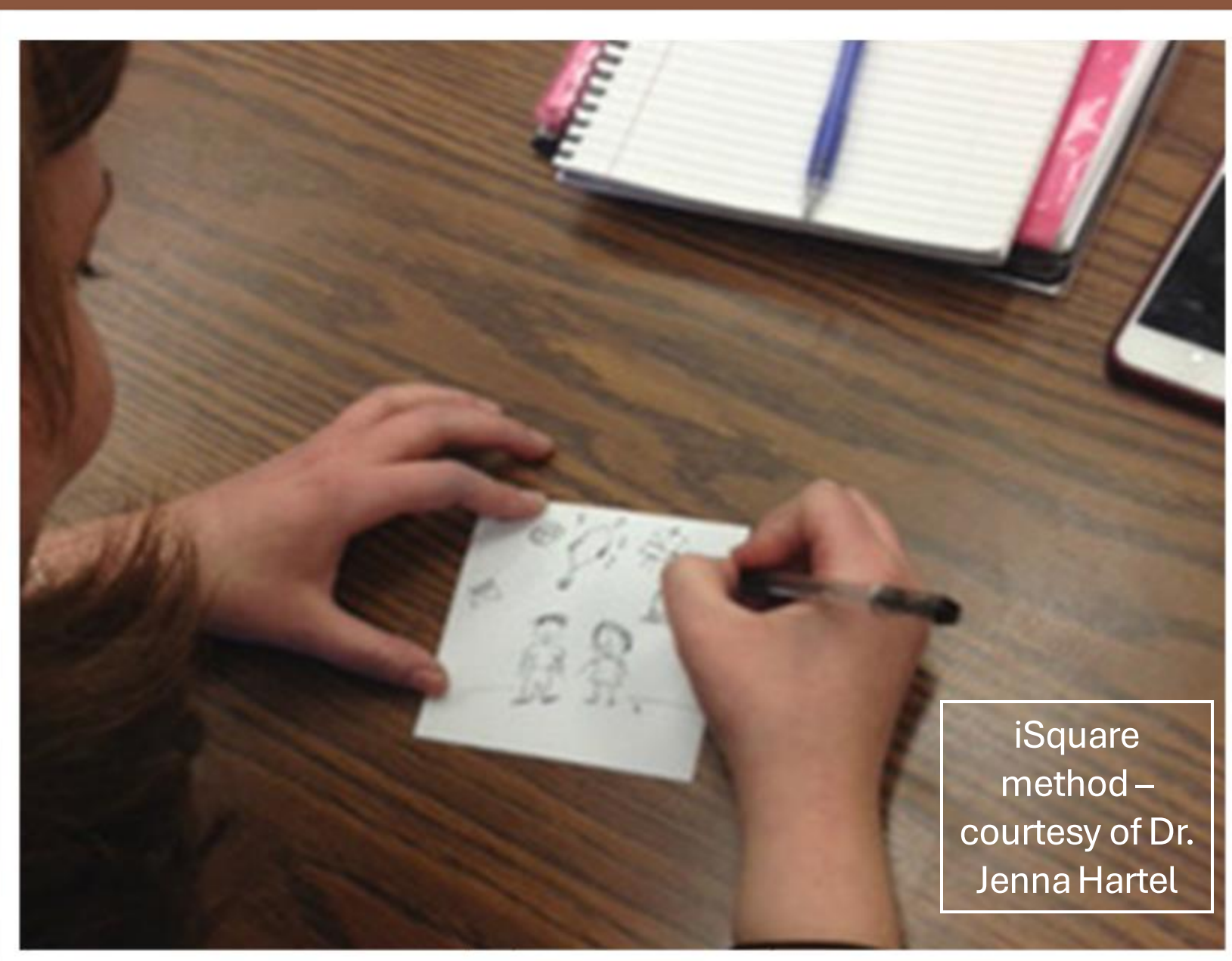
Image: Focus Group
 3 researchers and participants

Materials and Methods:

Doing qualitative research requires extensive reading and literature reviews. I found that many scholars, such as Mary C. Waters and Msia Kibona Clark, have defined how children of Black diasporic immigrants identify themselves. After literature review was finished, and I had gotten IRB approval, I created a survey that was sent to all the ASA/BSU organizations in the DMV region to gather participants for the 5 focus groups that were essential for the research study.

Acknowledgments:

I would first like to thank Drs. Holtz and Merck for making the past two years so engaging, despite the circumstances. I would also like to thank Dr. Ana Ndumu for being my supervisor during this project and being such a great mentor and friend. And finally, I would like to thank all the participants of the study who shared their stories with me.



iSquare method – courtesy of Dr. Jenna Hartel

Anticipated Results and Discussion:

- Technology affords a private, low-stakes medium for identity exploration among Black college women of African heritage
- Social media use, or casual browsing, appears to be more influential than purposive searching (mass media, social media, books, articles, search engines).
- There was overlap, however. Twitter was used to explore academic topics.
- Online identity formation can be seen as “everyday life information seeking” rooted in Black diasporic experiences.
- The digital iSquares method along with focus group interviews elicited multifaceted data whereby the participants built on one another’s accounts.
- The theory of online identity formation helps explain identity formation among daughters of African immigrants

IDENTITY FORMATION		
Race	Ethnicity	Affirmation
P8: "As far as race, I identify as Black."	P4: "I identify as both Ethiopian and also African American. My father is African American. And my mom is of Eritrean blood, but she was born and raised in Ethiopia."	P3: "I'm glad representation is there because when I was younger growing up I never saw people looking like me in media platform like music videos. And I find it pretty cool and positive."
RESOURCES (PURPOSIVE INFO BEHAVIOR)		
Wikipedia	Search Engines	Media
P1: "Even though everyone always says that "Wikipedia isn't a reliable source", I was like, "well, it's only thing giving me the breakdown." So when I went there, I was reading through it. I saw Generation 1.25 who migrated at six years and younger. ...For once like, I can actually use something to describe myself."	P9: "I see headlines on like Instagram, little snippets of news. And I'll research it a bit more on Google because non-western news isn't communicated in the same way as it is here."	P10: "I'd say the most common that I interact with or end up seeing when I look up things are news-focused websites, based in Nigeria. I typically look at Nigerian news when I'm trying to figure out the oil industry, elections, or just how everything is going over there."
SOCIAL MEDIA (CASUAL INFO BEHAVIOR)		
Instagram	TikTok	Youtube
P1: "When I look at the resources, it's mostly just comedic resources on Instagram or on Tik Tok, or Twitter. But I find it funny that a lot of us go through the same experience, regardless of whether we're Cameroonian or Nigerian or Ethiopian."	P10: "Things pop up on my TikTok about African children growing up Nigerian."	P2: "Generally, the media platform that I usually find stuff about my heritage would be YouTube. I have a habit of gravitating towards YouTube because it's really visual."

Impact and Future Work:

This project contributes to the growing literature about children of immigrants, particularly Black diasporic immigrants. I hope to expand on this line of study in graduate school by engaging with daughters of African immigrants across the country.



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