

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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Increasingly, areas of mainstream psychology that concern the study of interpersonal or social psychological processes such as clinical, developmental, and social psychology have shown an interest in ethnic identity and, generally, topics pertaining to culture. This growing concern with ethnicity, particularly as it pertains to social identity, doubtless stems largely from the growth of the ethnic minority population in this country. This population has been estimated at about 22% of the entire U.S. population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986). Projections of the proportion of ethnic minorities in the population range from a conservative 26.3% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986) to 30% (American Council on Education, 1983). Thus, within a few years, better than one of every four people in this country will be of ethnic minority background. This growth has created a need to extend scientific study to groups that are culturally different from the Anglo-American, middle-class population which has been the focus of psychological study in this country.

Ethnic identity is one aspect of the important question, "Who am I?" It constitutes a basic part of the ethnic individual's personality, and is a powerful contributor to ethnic group formation, maintenance, and social ties. It is a psychological construct, a set of self-ideas about one's own ethnic group membership, and it is multidimensional in that it has several dimensions or components along which these self-ideas vary. For instance, one dimension along which people's views of their ethnic selves vary is self-identification. Self-identification refers to the ethnic labels or terms that people use in identifying themselves, and to the meaning of these labels. Another dimension is people's knowledge about their ethnic culture: its traditions, customs, values, and behaviors. In order to know who they are, ethnic people need

to have some degree of information about their culture. A third dimension is the preferences, feelings, and values that people have about their ethnic group membership and culture. Ethnic people may embrace, reject, or have neutral feelings and preferences about their ethnic families, companions, and cultural values. These ethnic identity components have in common that they vary between as well as within ethnic groups.

Why is it important to study ethnic identity? One answer is that, in order to understand the psychology of ethnic minority people, it is essential to attend to critical information about their differences and distinctiveness. These differences and distinctiveness are related to culturally based behaviors, customs, languages, values, and cognitive styles. Unless one appreciates these differences, efforts to relate important psychological variables to cultural groups will be fruitless. Ethnic minorities in this country constitute a large number of highly heterogeneous groups that are culturally different from one another. It is insufficient to differentiate among the groups by means of the standard labels such as Asian American or Hispanic American, or even the finer distinctions afforded by labels such as Chinese American or Mexican American. Such labels merely describe the national or ethnic origin of group members; they say little about their psychological characteristics. The distinctiveness of these ethnic minority groups and of their members is based on two criteria: an objective criterion of descent from an earlier cultural group as indicated by name and genealogy, and a subjective criterion of identity with and attachment to the group (Berry, 1984). Within groups, it is important to recognize that members vary widely in the degree to which they identify as members of their ethnic group, as well as in the extent to which they engage in traditional ethnic customs, behaviors, beliefs, and language. Thus, their ethnic identity is one key to differences between them and members of their own group, and to differences between them and other ethnic minority groups as well as the dominant cultural group.

The prediction that ethnic minority groups will blend into a melting pot of other ethnic and national origin groups in this country and lose their identity and distinctiveness has not been borne out (Glazer & Moynihan, 1970, 1975; Maldonado, 1975). For many reasons, ethnic minority group identities have persisted, and the extent of their tenacity is unknown and unpredictable. This persistence of ethnic minority identities has multiple social, political, economic, and psychological

implications. For example, the count of ethnic minority people in the U.S. is based on the Census Bureau's use of self-identification methods in which respondents indicate their own racial and ethnic background. This count is used to allocate national social and economic resources, as well as to guide the establishment of voting district boundaries. Thus, since ethnic identity is an important determinant of a citizen's self-identification as an ethnic group member, the scientific study of the causes of its persistence is a useful goal in the understanding of future population trends and their implications for the distribution of societal resources.

Two basic processes may be especially useful in understanding the persistence of ethnic identity. The first of these processes is enculturation, or ethnic socialization, which refers to the cultural teaching that parents, families, peers, and the rest of the ethnic community provide to children during the childhood years. Few would disagree that the ethnic community, especially families, transmit ethnic identity to their children, who in turn transmit it to their own children, and that its persistence owes a large debt to the effectiveness of this transmission process. It is important to point out, however, that the understanding of this process and the competence of family members in communicating ethnic identity to their children require an appreciation of ethnic identity from a developmental perspective, since the incorporation of content about ethnic identity is bound to vary with age. To be effective, parents have to teach about culture and ethnicity using age-appropriate content and methods.

The second process that affects the persistence of ethnic identity is acculturation, which refers to the adaptation of ethnic minority people to the dominant culture and its members. In the process of adaptation, there often is some sort of cultural change that occurs in people, and that change could affect their ethnic identity. Thus, for instance, their values and even the labels they use in self-identifying may change. Furthermore, when ethnic minority individuals intermarry with dominant group members, or with members of other ethnic minority groups, there often is cultural exchange, and an effect on ethnic identity. These basic processes operate across ethnic minority groups, and profoundly affect the survival of their sense of belonging and loyalty to the group, as well as their feelings about group membership.

Many interesting research topics are to be found in the study of the formation and transmission of ethnic identity. For example, there

is now a small but growing literature on the development of ethnic identity in ethnic minority children (e.g., Aboud, 1984, 1987; Rotheram & Phinney, 1987; Vaughan, 1987). The expansion of this research to include children of different ethnic groups as well as adolescents who struggle with increasingly complex and intrusive identity problems is both needed and important. Those whose interest lies in intervention will welcome the application in the future of this basic developmental work to the problems of the adaptation of ethnic minority children and youths to settings such as schools, families, and communities. Despite this growing basic literature on ethnic identity development, however, there is extremely limited information about the transmission of ethnic identity either within the family or across generations.

Contents of This Book

The chapters in this volume were originally solicited from social scientists from the United States and Canada who are known for their theoretical and empirical work on the topic of ethnic identity. These scientists were invited to present working papers of their chapters at the Second and Third Symposia on Ethnic Identity held in 1988 and 1989 at Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona. The chapter by Frances E. Aboud, who was invited to present at the Third Symposium but was out of the country when it was held, was solicited later. The list of contributors does not include all presenters at the Symposia; we included chapters by contributors whose works best represent the state of research in the area and that best fit into an integrated book.

There are four parts in the book. Part I deals with the development of ethnic identity in children and adolescents. Ocampo, Bernal, and Knight discuss theory and literature on the development of ethnic identity in relation to two other important identities, gender and race, noting similarities and differences in the sequencing of their emergence. Children's cognitive developmental capacity for understanding ethnicity and race, in addition to gender, is important information that lays the foundation for expectations about their social identity. Bernal, Knight, Ocampo, Garza, and Cota present a conceptual framework for the development of ethnic identity in ethnic minority children and an instrument for its assessment in Mexican American children. They report on some of the psychometric properties of the instrument and on their results for children 5 to 10 years of age which indicate a relationship

between ethnic identity development and age. In the third chapter on children's ethnic identity development, Aboud and Doyle discuss their cognitive developmental theory, which predicts that the development of ethnic identity and prejudice parallels comparable developments in social cognition. Their data on black and white Canadian children address predictions arising from the theory.

Turning to adolescence, Phinney presents a model of ethnic identity development in adolescence that is based on ego identity theory. She reviews the related literature and provides supporting evidence for the model, including results from her own research on Asian American, black, Mexican American, and white youth, and then discusses implications of the stage model for psychological adjustment. In the last paper in this part, Rotheram-Borus examines the reference-group orientation of black, Puerto Rican, and Filipino adolescents. She relates adolescents' choices of orientation to other ethnically related cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal aspects of their ethnic identity, as well as to psychological adjustment.

In Part II, the chapters are integrated around three themes that are involved in cultural transmission: the ethnic socialization of children by their parents, the transference of ethnic identity within the family, and the impact of family acculturation on ethnic identity. Knight, Bernal, Cota, Garza, and Ocampo discuss ethnic minority children's socialization, and empirically assess the relationship between parental teaching about ethnicity and culture, as well as ethnic pride, and Mexican American children's ethnic identity. Their results show that what parents teach and model to their children is reflected in their children's ethnic identity. Hurtado, Rodriguez, Gurin, and Beals are concerned with intraethnic group differences that are related to critical differences in adults' views of the ethnic socialization of children. In order to assess these differences, they contrast two groups, Mexicanos and Chicanos, which differ by their recency of immigration and loyalty to Mexico, within the framework of a model of ethnic socialization of their children. They also examine the ways in which adults' own ethnic identities influence the identities of their children through parental socialization.

Estrada, a demographer, uses U.S. Census Bureau data to examine parental definition of their children's ethnic identity, the effects of ethnic intermarriage on this definition, and the maintenance of ethnic identity within the family. His presentation highlights the tenacity of Hispanic ethnic identity. Marin addresses issues related to the effects of family

acculturation on ethnic minority values and identity. He reviews the literature and presents data concerning the influence of generation in the U.S., an index of acculturation, on the important Hispanic value of familism and on self-identification as Hispanic. In the last chapter in this part, Buriel and Cardoza report on their research using ethnic labels as a measure of ethnic identity. They collected ethnic label data from Mexican American seventh graders and their parents in Southern California. They examine how parents' preferred ethnic labels are related to their children's ethnic labels, and how these intrafamilial labeling patterns change across successive generations.

In Part III, Knight, Bernal, Garza, and Cota present a model of the socialization of ethnic identity and ethnic behaviors in ethnic minority children that is based on social learning and cognitive developmental theories. This model attends to the social ecology, including influences of the family, the media, and members of the dominant culture. Then Devos analyses social and developmental processes in ethnic adaptation. He addresses concepts and paradigms discussed by some other authors in the book within psychoanalytic and Piagetian perspectives.

Finally, in Part IV, Berry discusses the implications of the cultural and political context for the ethnic identity of ethnic groups and for cultural maintenance and adaptation. He first presents a conceptualization of interactions between ethnic groups and government policy that describes the nature of possible adaptive ethnic group responses to policies that value as well as devalue ethnic group differences. Of special relevance to scientific research on ethnic identity is his discussion of the relationships among government policies and scientific paradigms, and their consequences for ethnic groups. Drawing examples from chapters in the book, he points up the effects of an assimilationist policy, such as exists in the United States, on research design and results, and on the generalizability of research findings across plural societies that espouse perspectives other than assimilation.

The formation and transmission of ethnic identity are research areas for which there is a limited knowledge base. Further, this knowledge base has been generated by researchers from a variety of social science disciplines. Although much of the research on the formation of ethnic identity has been conducted by psychologists, the research on the transmission of ethnic identity has largely been conducted by anthropologists, demographers, and sociologists. Perhaps one of the

most unusual features of this volume is the inclusion of theoretical and empirical chapters on both the formation and transmission of ethnic identity. We hope that the theoretical positions and the research approaches described in this volume will serve to stimulate the expansion and elaboration of these research areas.

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