

Introduction

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Between 1960 and 1980, the psychology of oppressed groups—Blacks, Chicanos, LGBTQ individuals, Native Americans, and Puerto Ricans—underwent fundamental change. Historically silenced through domination, stigmatization, social customs, religious bigotry, and state-sanctioned terrorism, each group took turns—in domino like fashion—finding voice through collective protest, cultural awakening, and an *über consciousness* fueled by a loss of fear, a searing desire for change, and a love of group that in time would inspire new poets, new novelists, new political theories, and new intellectual disciplines (women’s and gender studies, gay-lesbian studies, Black studies, Native American studies, etc.). Generally speaking, “new” actually meant rediscovered, as the cultural fog, induced by a drive to assimilate and find acceptance within White society in general and from powerful heterosexual White males in particular, *lifted*. Revealed was one’s extant history and culture, previously disfigured by the forces of shame and false consciousness, a mindset inculcated through the culturally destructive process known as public education, and distorted, even further, with exposure to the traditional college curriculum and graduate studies.

From the very beginning, psychologists were present within each movement, helping members self-reflect and transcribe their identity change as a “multistage” process, commencing with an identity-frame shaped by the larger society and built around fear, fatalism, intimation, submission, sociopolitical compliance, and opaque lenses that limited one’s vision of what is possible. On the heels of an encounter unique to each group that triggered the need for change (i.e., Stonewall; Assassination of MLK, Jr.; AIM confrontation at Wounded Knee; outcry at Gallaudet University over a presidential candidate who did not favor ASL, etc.), members entered

a transitional stage during which the tenacious grip of the old was eventually swarmed over and devoured by the oceanic lure of the new. This transition stage or “state of in-betweenness” produced an ever-fluctuating psychological profile, for which the insecurity associated with the new was camouflaged by edgy in-your-face symbolism and daredevil militancy. Proving one’s Blackness (Blacker-than-thou), coming out of the closet (Gay-Lesbian Movement), going braless and challenging sexual objectification (Women’s Movement), breathing life into Indigenous and nearly defunct languages (Native American Movement) captured the drama, symbolism, performance, and ritualization of change, as identity insecurity gave way to praxis and psychological homeostasis. The final stage of internalization saw the bombast, tumult, and fury characteristic of identity in transition replaced by resolve, intentionality, stoicism, focus, patience, a capacity for long-term struggle, new ways of thinking (i.e., Afrocentricity and Feminist Thought) and a drive to build alternative institutions, publications, curricula, and new art forms (Feminist art; Black Art, Gay-Lesbian literature, Native American Talking Stick Ceremony, etc.).

This movement from old to the new, from point A to B, from a prior perspective to inculcation of a radically reshaped identity, was depicted in descriptive models for which the appellation “development” seemed appropriate, i.e., identity development models. However, developmental psychologists protested the lack of an ontogenetic basis for these identity change schemas, which leads one to make the following distinction: ontogenetic identity development (OID)—as theorized by Erik Erikson, James Marcia, and Jean Phinney—involving the mapping or evolution of identity between childhood and early adulthood, as compared to *social movement identity change* (SMIC), the process undergirding most of the social movements referenced previously.

OID explicates the unfolding (ontology) of one’s “original” or first identity. OID is the identity foundation from which any future identity change is launched. It is the point of departure for an epiphany, an awakening or radicalization that takes place later in life. OID involves the person’s increased capacity for self-reflection that is associated with maturation and changes in the neurological system (development of the frontal cortex, and more particularly, the prefrontal cortex). With this handle on the nature of OID, one can better comprehend that SMIC models begin with a description of the preexisting identity—crafted by OID dynamics—and end with the internalization of the new, symbolized by the labels linked to the before-and-after process: Negro to Black conversion experience; Female/Girl to Feminists; Hispanic to Spanish/Chicano; Crippled to Disabled; Native to

First Nation; Homo to Gay or Queer, etc. As an important aside, the two systems will overlap, if during mid to late adolescence (ages 15 to 25), the developing person is engaged by a social movement. Social movements often attract a great many youth between the ages of 15 and 25.

SMIC models incorporate a range of positive identities each representing a meaning-making system that links self, community, and the larger social order. The phrase *range of positive identities* is meant to convey the point that for all the groups referenced in this essay, none professes to a single notion of what it means to be a positive and productive group member. In other words, there is *no one way* to be Black, Feminist, First Nation, Gay or Lesbian, etc. Within each group there is an ongoing and sometimes intense debate on what kind of social identity best promotes community vitality, at the group level, and personal well-being and self-esteem at the level of the individual. Different stances are captured through typologies; for example, within the Jewish community different types of Jewish identities are Orthodox, Ultra Orthodox, Zionist, Liberal-Zionist, Observant, Non-Observant, etc. Within the Black Community, identity debates can occur between: Colorblind-Conservatives; Afrocentrists; Integrationists, Black-Multiculturalists; Biracial or Multiracialists, etc. In order to discern how different identity content is related to outcomes (i.e., self-esteem, community vitality, etc.), it is necessary to incorporate very specific identity content within one's research methodology. Consequently, SMIC research tends to employ group-specific measures, the results of which cannot be generalized to the psychology of different groups. The results of a study of Black identity may not be applicable to an understanding of the psychology of gay-lesbian identity.

In addition it is critical to point out that the nature of social movement identity change (SMIC) attempts to reconfigure—sometimes radically—a person's personal meaning-making system so that the person not only strives for personal improvement and self-enhancement, but also deeper involvement in the affairs, culture, and problems faced by one's social group. The movements were not simply about personal change per se, but personal change resulting in a stronger community (i.e., community vitality). By way of example, a Black person holding a degree in psychology could lead to a career as a psychologist, with attendant social benefits. The movement raised awareness and that same person became a "Black" psychologist; Black psychologists banded together and formed the *Association of Black Psychologists*, leading to a new journal on Black psychology and the production of new knowledge about the Black experience. When this same process was repeated by [Black] sociologists, artists, politicians, economists, community

leaders, etc., the summative effect was a stronger Black community. This process of individual consciousness leading to greater connectivity with like-minded persons and, eventually, enhancement of the “health” or vitality of the community in question is *central* to SMIC research and theorizing. As will be pointed out shortly, OID research tends to limit its analysis to the well-being of the individual, forgoing any serious concern for the person-community connection (i.e., community vitality).

As the period of social activism waned, the SMIC and OID discourses were *bridged* by the appearance of articles, parenting workshops, “how to” books and, eventually, websites dedicated to explicating how to raise a Black child, how to parent a disabled child, how to parent a female child, how to parent a gay-lesbian youth, and how to parent a biracial or multiracial child, etc. In effect, social movements influenced the zeitgeist, and some of the identity themes, self-images, and social representations once unique to social movement cultures were baked into the contemporary discourse on how to raise the progeny of historically oppressed groups, inclusive of all the groups highlighted in this essay. The social movement ethos became embedded in the OID process, and parents and community sought to intentionally raise their progeny to be the new Black person, the new woman, the new First Nation person, a disabled person rather than a cripple, and/or an openly gay or lesbian person, although the trend for the latter was longer in the making.

The dual concern of SMIC—personal as well as group vitality—got lost in translation, when SMIC dynamics became embedded in OID process. OID scholarship drifted toward a *personological* orientation, where the primary concern is the self-esteem or well-being of the individual. In point of fact, OID research has produced an abundance of evidence that racial-ethnic group members, who evolve a racial-ethnic identity in accordance with the stages explicated in the writing of Erik Erikson, James Marcia, and Jean Phinney, show evidence of strong identity development. The dynamics of OID have been tested with many international (cross-cultural) samples, elevating the finding of an OID-positive self-esteem connection to the status of a psychological theorem. Although OID research, with its exaggerated emphasis on the individual, can and will continue, this volume seeks to give greater focus to the need for SMIC research that tends to stress both personal well-being and the person-community connection that undergirds community vitality.

The second focus of the current volume is *internalized oppression*. For every social group mentioned previously, the well-being of the individual group member and the person-community connection can be vitiated by

internalized oppression. Because marginalized and historically oppressed groups often find themselves in less than optimal circumstances, the challenge is often to separate context from behavior in order to avoid the assumption that negative context automatically produces broken or damaged people. It is ironic that, while the SMIC models celebrated the emergence of the new, the models also encased the past in negative stereotypes, from which one was trying to escape in the first place. In the enthusiasm for the new, converts lost sight of the basic humanity of their progenitors, who in the midst of Faustian nightmares (i.e., sexism, racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, etc.), were forced to distort their otherwise strong and healthy personalities into sociopolitical sycophants. Pathologizing the behavior of people entrapped by unhealthy contexts created by social forces beyond their control is, simply put, bad social science. There is a need to revisit the discourse on internalized oppression and internalized racism to better separate mere stereotyping and simplistic overgeneralizations from fresh findings and new insights generated by innovative research. We hope the articles included in the current volume signal a fresh start on how to think about and research internalized oppression.

The first section of this volume explores meaning-making, that is, the importance, significance, and meaning of holding one type of racial-cultural identity as compared to another. In chapter 1, Neville et al. are primarily interested in connecting the salience and meaning one ascribes to being Black to his or her willingness to foster a deep commitment to the racial-ethnic community to which they belong. Using both theoretical and empirical literature and life stories, they offer guidelines to promote a positive internalized Black identity in which one has a deep commitment to improving the lives of other Black people. They discuss the guidelines for promoting positive Black identity which include the following: developing racial literacy, engaging in race talk, uncovering and celebrating accomplishments and contributions, finding community points of connection, and fostering civic and community engagement.

Also interested in Black identity, Barnett and Wout, in chapter 2, investigate the effect of social identity threat on Blacks' emotional and behavioral reactions to the stereotypic behavior of Black-White biracials. The results indicate that Blacks were aware of these stereotypes and felt ashamed for the negative actions of a Black-White biracial wrongdoer because they shared a racial group membership with him and viewed his behavior (being arrested on drug charges) as being consistent with stereotypes about their group. In contrast, given the same behavior, participants did not feel shame for the actions of a White person because participants did not share a racial group

membership with that person. Their research begins to fill an important gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence that Blacks consider Black-White biracials to be in-group members and experience group-based emotional and behavioral reactions as a result of their shared group membership with Black-White biracials.

Next, focusing on appearance rather than behaviors, in chapter 3, Flagen explores the relationship between parental self-hating, assimilationist, and Afrocentric racial identity attitudes and children's perceived physical appearance, racial identity and other indices of social adjustment. The sample included forty Black families with early adolescent (ages nine to thirteen years) children. Findings show the following: perceived physical appearance among adolescent participants was strongly related to perceived family and academic competence; perceived physical appearance was moderately related to racial identity among adolescents, indicating that physical appearance is an important dimension of personal identity that either supports or puts at risk the development of a healthy social identity; and finally, adolescents' perceived physical appearance was most strongly predicted by parents' racial self-hatred attitudes.

Based on the premise that identity is closely linked to spirituality, particularly in African-American culture, Hill et al., in chapter 4, propose that meaning and purpose mediate the relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem. Unlike most research in this area (which uses an adult sample), their sample includes 121 seventh- and eighth-grade students. The findings provide support for their hypothesis that a strong positive relationship between meaning and purpose and self-esteem emerged when controlling for the presence of ethnic identity, whereas ethnic identity did not significantly predict self-esteem when controlling for meaning and purpose. This may suggest that holding a group identity that is not necessarily defined by race is consistent with promoting a sense of optimism about the meaning in life and one's purpose in it, which leads to a positive evaluation of oneself.

Using phenomenological qualitative study, Jones and Brown, in chapter 5, also examine the role of meaning making in racial identity and racial awareness among Blacks living in the United States. Their primary goal was to gain a glimpse of the experiences that lead individuals to understand something new about themselves with regard to racial awareness and identity. The uniqueness of their research is the diversity of the participants in their study, which included self-identified Blacks, West Indian/Caribbean Blacks, Latina/Latino Blacks, and one African Black. The findings suggest that ethnically diverse Blacks shared similar racial experiences. However, experiences with racial socialization and the initial awareness of race and its

particular meaning in the American context varied for Blacks who emigrated to the United States from other countries.

Likewise, in chapter 6, Quintana et al. also examines the experiences of bi/multiracial Black youth in order to provide a valuable perspective on Black racial identity formation and their performance of their racial identities. Their sample included primarily high school students, and, similar to Jones and Brown, they include a diversity of participants—those who self-identified themselves as: Black/White, Black/Hispanic, Black/Asian, and three or more races. The findings show the importance race plays in social interactions, among friends and strangers, by the mere fact that bi/multiracial youths' are asked "What are you?". Moreover, like actors in a play, bi/multiracial youth receive feedback, and sometimes criticism, about their performances of racial identities, allowing them to practice, sometimes perfect, these performances to be accepted by some audiences and also to realize that the performance of some racial identities may be unconvincing, at least to some audiences.

Nevertheless, the ways in which individuals make meaning of multiple identities is still not well-represented in research; consequently, Smith et al., in chapter 7, examine the multiple factors contributing to the way multiracial individuals understand their identity, make meaning of their experiences, and cope with the impact on their well-being. The findings show that the level of malleability in racial identity exceeds the level reported in other studies, and the majority of participants in this study described themselves as appearing racially ambiguous. In addition, the findings indicate that the experiences of having one's identity questioned, perceiving a lack of family acceptance, and feeling multiracial pride all impact variation in reported life satisfaction.

In chapter 8, Settles and Cole use qualitative focus groups to examine whether and how perceptions of race and racial identity are influenced by gender among Black people. Their research is based on intersectional theory. Their results show that race and racial identity are important to Black people, yet race is a source of vulnerability (stereotyping and discrimination). Furthermore, men and women perceive Blackness differently; family and the Black community were a resource for resilience for many, and they felt a sense of responsibility to these groups.

Also interested in gender, using an intersectional approach similar to Settles and Cole, Williams and Hussain, in chapter 9, explore the importance given to various group and personal identity traits among Black female college students. The findings show that the vast majority indicated a high level of importance to their talents and personality, two indicators of

individuality. At the same time, almost all women reported that race, ethnicity, and gender were of moderately high importance to their overall identity, and for some these domains were the most central. However, their findings also reveal that a very small group of Black women felt that these aspects of social identity were unimportant, and, instead, privileged their unique personality and talents as their most important defining characteristics. With respect to psychological functioning, no differences occurred across any of the identity profiles in measures of depressive symptoms or anxiety, signaling that whether low or high, the centrality of racial/ethnic group membership does not dictate psychological well-being of Black women.

Departing from gender and intersectionalities, Boykins et al., in chapter 10, introduces a new measure of identity, which seeks to identify expressions of cultural identity grounded in traditional African-American cultural experiences. Specifically, the measure has two distinct, yet related, domains—*fundamental culture* and *artistic-recreational culture*. In addition, they examine the interrelationships among responses to differing aspects of cultural and racial identity dimensions. The sample included 138 college students of African descent. Findings show the significant correlations between the CMI and the subscales of the CRIS, which indicate that higher levels of general mistrust toward Whites were associated with lower rates of assimilation and multiculturalist/inclusive attitudes, and also with greater feelings of self-hatred, anti-Whiteness, and Afrocentricity. When compared with the relationship between fundamental culture and cultural mistrust, the relationship is weaker with a more “cultural” measure than those examining racial identity.

Also sampling college students, in chapter 11 Taylor et al. examine questions of whether ethnic-racial identity and supportive relations with extended family enhanced students’ college and adjustment and coping, and whether students who have both, positive ethnic-racial identity *and* supportive extended family relations, are particularly well-adjusted. The sample included seventy-eight college students. Their findings suggest that among African-American college students, ethnic-racial identity and support from extended family may promote behaviors that are important for college success.

Finally, Payne, in chapter 12, calls for the radical reframing of Black masculinity overall and, specifically, for a sweeping reconceptualization of a street-identified Black male identity framework. He argues that this reconceptualization must begin with an analysis that incorporates the men’s viewpoints of their own masculinity. His study findings strongly suggest participants frame and express a street masculinity as a site of resilience in the context of structural and economic violence.

In the second section of the volume, the chapters examine innovative research and theorizing about internalized racism. In chapter 13, Ajayi and Syed examine the nature and process by which members of marginalized groups may come to internalize the negative messages about their non-dominant social identity (i.e., internalized oppression). The findings point to three important manifestations of internalized oppression: psychological maladjustment, acting-out mechanisms, and identity disintegration. In addition, they identify three mechanisms by which oppression becomes internalized: notions of prototypicality, sociopolitical invisibility, and the absence of counterspaces.

Next, Cross and Frost, in chapter 14, explore the interplay between the three identity orientations, internalized oppression, and self-esteem. The sample included 320 college students. Bivariate relationships show that higher scores on the CRIS dimensions of *Miseducation*, *Self-Hatred*, *Anti-White*, and *Afrocentricity* were associated with lower levels of self-esteem. Furthermore, mediation analyses show that a negative association between *Afrocentricity* and self-esteem was fully mediated by internalized oppression in the form of *Self-Hatred* and *Miseducation*. However, the association between Multicultural Inclusive identity and self-esteem remained positive and was not mediated by indicators of internalized oppression.

Also debunking conventional explanations, Perkins, in chapter 15, sheds light on some of the psychological mechanisms that contribute to the maintenance of false consciousness among low-status groups. The sample included 192 individuals of African descent—native- and foreign-born. The findings show native-born participants had significantly higher ratings of Afrocentric ideology and higher ratings of assimilation ideology. Immigrant participants had significantly higher ratings on comparisons with other minorities, and immigrants compared themselves more with Whites and Blacks. The results suggest that in many cases, immigrant and American Blacks understand their identity and their status in society in differing ways.

Then, in chapter 16, Banks et al. presents a recently developed model of colorism and explores the ways in which the construct reflects a form of internalized oppression that interacts with racial identity to contribute to negative outcomes. The sample included 155 Black respondents. Results suggest that colorism is a construct endorsed by African Americans regardless of their racial identity. This form of internalized oppression does not disappear when an individual seeks to be a part of the mainstream, desires separate institutions for Black people, connects with other oppressed groups, or does not define oneself with regard to race.

In chapter 17, Chew and Quintana conducted meta-analyses of the connection between each of the racial identity attitudinal scores from the CRIS with psychological adjustment. Consistent with Nigresence theory, they expected there to be psychological costs associated with the more maladaptive forms of Pre-encounter (Self-hatred and Miseducation), but neither benefits nor costs were associated with Pre-encounter Assimilation. Instead, the findings show psychological costs associated with immersion-emersion focused on Anti-White attitudes; and psychological benefits associated with Internatnization subscales including Multicultural Inclusiveness and Afrocentricity.

Results in the study discussed in chapter 18 also bring about surprising results. Here, Foster adds to the structural and theoretical discourse on identity differentiation among college students and Black attendees. The findings show mixed results. Specifically, Assimilation and Afrocentric were significantly negatively correlated; there was a positive correlation between Afrocentric and Multicultural, albeit not statistically significant; and no correlation was found between Assimilation and Multicultural. This trend was found in the aggregate and within the two groups investigated. In addition, the student subsample was found more likely to identify with earlier stages—and respective dimensions—than their older counterparts. The two groups diverged most on stage 2, immersion-emersion. The student group also scored higher on Self-Hating and Afrocentric, the latter being a seemingly inconsistent finding. In addition, the traditional assumption that Black identity is directly correlated with self-esteem was neither debunked nor adequately supported. While identity influences have engrossed scholars, research on the factors that shape racial identity itself is scant in political science literature.

In chapter 19, Sullivan and Winburn, begin the process of developing a theoretical understanding of the ways in which discrimination affects feelings of linked fate (the most commonly used measure of identity in political science). They argue that both the presence and strength of linked-fate feelings are dependent on the types of discrimination experienced. The types of discrimination in the analysis include day-to-day discrimination, lifetime discrimination, and discrimination specifically identified due to race. The findings show that all three of these types of discrimination increase the presence and strength of linked-fate feelings. Their research further solidifies findings in social psychology that intra-group racial identity attitudes are heterogeneous because individuals' experiences and encounters differ.

In chapter 20 (Conclusion), Cross recaps each of the chapters in this volume, exploring racial identity as meaning-making and identity as

internalized racism. Consequently, the central contribution of this volume is to continue in the development of new and alternative theories in the general area of racial identity.