The
**SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF RACE
AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS:**
A Review of Measurement Instrumentation

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INTRODUCTION

As we move into the twenty-first century, the mainstream discourse on race in the United States is firmly committed to a "color-blind" ideal. This color-blind narrative is both supportive of racial equality and against public policies that would guarantee equal opportunity (Schuman et al. 1997). Therefore, while most report that they do not treat racial groups differently, there continues to be a gap between blacks and whites on various indicators of quality life. Explanations for this mismatch between ideals and reality vary. Some suggest that it is due to the reluctance of black people to embrace the American creed and employ it to successfully compete in the free market. Others contend that the difference in resource attainment is the result of "the" racial discrimination that continues to restrict the life chances of African Americans. Given the contemporary debate on race, it is important to consider the ways in which black youth think about and experience race and how these thoughts and experiences might shape their sexual and political decision-making. The thoughts and feelings of this first cohort to be born into the post–civil rights period are likely to be predictive of African American racial ideology in the twenty-first century. This paper is therefore a review of theory and research concerning the social psychology of race among African Americans.[2]

This review focuses on three subfields within the more general field of the social psychological race. These subfields are the perception of racial discrimination, racial identity, and racial attitudes among African Americans. In this opening section of the review I discuss the definitions of these terms, and in the sections that follow I discuss the ways in which these concepts have been measured. I also highlight some of the key findings and debates in

[2] This review was conducted to inform the development and selection of items to be used in the National Survey for the Black Youth Project.

each of these subfields. I conclude with some hypotheses on how perceptions of racial discrimination, racial identity, and racial attitudes influence the sexual and political decision-making of African American youth.

Defining Perceived Racial Discrimination

The study of racial discrimination emerges amid the debate concerning the continuing significance of racism in the post–civil rights period. Gary (1995) defines racial discrimination as "a behavior in which an individual or group treats people of a particular ethnic group unfairly on the basis of their race." Feagin and Eckberg (1980) suggest that "isolated"discrimination "consists of intentionally harmful action by a dominant-group individual against members of a subordinate group when that action is not embedded in a large-scale institutional or organization setting" (p. 11). In 2004 the National Research Council of the National Academies identified two forms of racial discrimination: "(1) differential treatment on the basis of race that disadvantages a racial group and (2) treatment on the basis of inadequately justified factors other than race that disadvantages a racial group." Since most of the social psychological work on racial discrimination among African Americans is concerned with the perception of racial discrimination, it is important to note this difference in our definition. The perception of racial discrimination simply refers to the perception of differential treatment that results in perceived disadvantage on the basis of race or the perception that treatment on the basis of inadequately justified factors other than race results in the disadvantages of a particular racial group.

Defining Racial Identity

The study of racial identity is a derivative of social science research on the self-concept and personal identity. There are four major research paradigms concerning the study of black racial identity. Although definitions provided in each paradigm are similar, there are important differences in terms of what is considered "the stuff" of racial identity. The four paradigms of black racial identity research are double consciousness, self-hatred, Nigrescence, and dynamic-multidimensional.[3] In 1903 W. E. B. Dubois established the double-consciousness paradigm and the study of black racial identity in the book *The Souls of Black Folks*. In the opening chapter Dubois remarks, "One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." It is this challenge of understanding oneself as a "free person" in the historical context of nonhuman chattel slavery that frames the double-consciousness paradigm. The implicit definition herein is that black racial identity is composed of the awareness of being black in a racially stratified society and at the same time being an American with all the privileges of full citizenship. In this paradigm black racial identity is considered to be a source of irony and ambiguity among African Americans.

The self-hatred and Nigrescence research paradigms use similar definitions of racial identity that both build on the notion of "two-ness." First, Kenneth B. and Mamie K. Clark (1939) provide a definition of racial identity for the self-hatred paradigm. In their study, they define racial identity as "…consciousness of self as belonging to a specific group which is differentiated from other groups by obvious physical characteristics. It is hereby assumed

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[3] There is more on the substantive distinction between these research paradigms in the section on the measurement of racial identity.

that race consciousness and racial identification are indicative of a particularized self-consciousness" (p. 594). After the Clarks, William Cross (1971, 1991) established the Nigrescence paradigm. The term *Nigrescence* refers to the process of one developing a uniquely African American psychology. Cross (1991) provides a definition of racial identity that is slightly modified from the self-hatred paradigm. In doing so, he considers racial identity to be a "composition of reference group orientation (or self-concept), personal identity and the interaction between reference group orientation and personal identity." Here reference group orientation refers to "…how children or adults orient themselves toward their socially ascribed [racial] group." Personal identity is the final outcome of several different contributions to our global sense of self. In this light, racial identity is understood as a contributor to the more general sense of self through reference group orientation (p. 157). If we take the definitions from these two paradigms together, black racial identity would be described as a unique form of self-consciousness that emanates from the use of race as a reference group. That is, racial identity describes people's orientation to themselves as members of their racial group.

The most recent paradigm to emerge in the study of black racial identity is the dynamic-multidimensional paradigm. The central figures in this paradigm are Robert Sellers and his colleagues, who employ two essential questions that contextualize their definition: (1) "How important is race in the individual's perception of self?" and (2) "What does it mean to be a member of this racial group?" They therefore define racial identity as "the significance and qualitative meaning that individuals attribute to their membership within the black racial group within their self-concepts" (Sellers et al. 1998, p. 23). This definition is different from prior definitions because it differentiates importance from meaning. That is, while others

have focused on what it means to be black in America, Sellers and his colleagues introduce the idea of importance into their definition of racial identity. In sum, the study of black racial identity has transitioned from notions of two-ness and reference group orientation to making distinctions between the importance of and the meaning attached to the reference group.

Defining Racial Attitudes

The first survey that collected information on black racial attitudes was conducted in 1942 at the National Center for Public Opinion. The systematic study of black racial attitudes is shaped by previous research on white racial attitudes, and it emerges as a result of the urban rebellions of the late 1960s. Research on white racial attitudes is a derivative of social attitude research. A social attitude is "a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of an object. The object may be a person, a group, a policy, an idea or indeed anything at all that can be evaluated" (Schuman et al. 1997, p. 1). Therefore, racial attitudes concern the formulation of a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of a people or person, based on their ascribed racial group membership. There is less change in the definition of racial attitudes over time because research on social attitudes was both well developed and not sufficiently complicated by the notion of having attitudes toward people on account of their racial group membership.

THE MEASUREMENT OF PERCEIVED RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

The stage for the scientific study of perceived racial discrimination was set by scholarship on the declining significance of race during the post–civil rights period (Patterson 1998; Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997; Wilson 1978). Therefore, this subfield is largely a reaction to scholars who have begun to suggest that the social mobility of African Americans

is becoming less dependent on racial discrimination and more dependent on macroeconomic

factors (Wilson 1978). As a result, several scholars began to document reports of racial

discrimination among African Americans. This line of inquiry has employed several different

research methodologies, including ethnographies (Lewis 2001), focus group interviews

(Utsey and Ponterotto 1996), in-depth face-to-face interviews (Essed 1991; Gardner 1980;

Feagin and Eckberg 1980; Feagin and Sikes 1994) psychometrics[4] (Landrine and Klonoff

1996; McNeilly et al. 1996; Seaton 2003; Utsey and Ponterotto 1996), and survey research

(Bobo and Suh 2000; Broman et al. 2000; Brown 2001; Forman et al. 1997; Herring et al.

1998; Pavalko et al. 2003; Sigelman and Welch 1991; Welch et al. 2001; Kessler et al. 1999).

As a result of these various approaches to the study of discrimination among African

Americans, there are a myriad of measurement frameworks that attempt to quantify the

perception of racial discrimination among African Americans. As a means of understanding

the most recent trends in this subfield, I conduct a brief overview of the major psychometric

frameworks[5] used in survey research.

The Psychometric Measurement of Racial Discrimination

There are at least seven different frameworks in the psychometric study of perceived racial

discrimination. I review four of the most recent and empirically validated models:[6] the

Perceived Experiences of Racism as Stressful Life Events (PERSLE), the Perceived Racism

Scale (PRS), the Schedule of Racist Events (SRE), and the Index of Race-Related Stress

(IRRS). These measures consider the sociobehavioral forms of racial discrimination

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[4] Psychometric studies employ structured interviews to assess psychological phenomenon. These types of studies generally include between twenty and one hundred questions on any one psychological phenomenon.

[5] This means that I review the frameworks that have been systematically tested for measurement accuracy.
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(Landrine and Klonoff 1996; Seaton 2003; Utsey and Ponterotto 1996), the sociobehavioral responses to racial discrimination (i.e., behavioral coping; McNeilly et al. 1996), the psychological affect associated with the experience of racial discrimination (i.e., stress, depression, and anxiety; Landrine and Klonoff 1996; McNeilly et al. 1996), the cues employed by African Americans in the identification of racial discrimination, the various sites and sources of racial discrimination (McNeilly et al. 1996; Seaton 2003; Utsey and Ponterotto 1996), the targets of racial discrimination, the frequency of these experiences, and the cultural components of racial discrimination (Utsey and Ponterotto 1996).

Perceived Experiences of Racism as Stressful Life Events

Sanders-Thompson (1996) developed the PERSLE. In the study, respondents first reported whether they had experienced racial discrimination in the last six months. Experiences considered by the respondent to be an "unfavorable, unfair or insulting event or action that occurred due to their skin color or group membership" qualified as the perception of racial discrimination (Sanders-Thompson 1996, p. 228). Examples of particular types of racial discrimination were provided if the respondent requested clarification. The author reported two such examples: "the loss of a job due to race" and "refusal of housing due to race or being referred to by derogatory names that were racial in nature." If the respondent reported an experience with racial discrimination in the last six months they were asked to write a brief description of the incident(s). The author then classified these descriptions as minor, moderate, or severe/major instances of racial discrimination. Minor incidents referred to "name calling, gestures, obscure or offensive language that was racially motivated or had racial overtures" (p. 228). Moderate incidents referred to "unfavorable work assignments,

grades, evaluations, or treatment that was believed to be racially motivated" (p. 228). Last, severe/major incidents referred to "loss of job, wages, housing etc. due to race" (p. 228).

These reports of racial discrimination were then considered in terms of their level of intrusion and avoidance. Intrusion refers to "unbidden thoughts and images, troubled dreams, strong pains or waves of feelings and repetitive behaviors" (Sanders-Thompson 1996). Intrusion also can be thought of as the degree to which the respondent was affected by the incident. Avoidance refers to "ideational construction, denial of the meanings and consequences of the event, blunted sensation, behavioral inhibition and awareness of emotional numbness" (Sanders-Thompson 1996). Avoidance considers the degree to which the respondent attempted to reduce negative psychological affect (i.e., feeling bad or stressed). Therefore, the PERSLE considers racial discrimination in terms of affect, response behavior, and degree of impact on the life of the respondent. Findings conclude that the more severe the discrimination, the more intrusive.

Perceived Racism Scale

McNeilly and colleagues (1996) developed the PRS.[7] Their study does not include complete descriptions of the sentence structure for the fifty-one items used to measure the perception of racial discrimination. Nonetheless, they do report brief descriptions of what they consider to be the four domains and three dimensions of racial discrimination (McNeilly et al. 1996, p. 157). The four domains include employment, academics, the public, and racist

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[7] Again, this is not the first attempt at the psychometric measurement of perceived discrimination. It is also important to note that this attempt is informed by prior work that used focus groups and nonstructured interviews.

statements.[8] Their three dimensions are time, type, and response. Time refers to when the incident occurred. Type refers to whether or not the incident was perceived to be interpersonal or institutional, overt or covert, or attitudinal or behavioral. The interpersonal type of discrimination[9] refers to discrimination being attributed to an individual actor at a particular point in time and space. This is compared to an institutional attribution in which the respondent might identify a policy or a systematic set of behaviors that create or maintain racial inequality. The overt or covert component refers to the extent to which the discrimination is made explicit. That is, while some instances of discrimination are more obvious and therefore easier to perceive (i.e., overt), other forms are more difficult to identify and might require a more sophisticated understanding of what constitutes racial discrimination (i.e., covert).[10] The attitudinal or behavioral category refers to the identification of racial discrimination in the form of ideas and feelings that people hold toward African Americans (i.e., attitudinal) or deeds and actions that the respondent identifies as racist (i.e., behavioral). Finally, responses are considered in terms of affective and behavioral responses to the perception of racial discrimination. Affective responses are the emotions and/or feelings commonly associated with such encounters. The feelings considered in the instrument are anger, frustration, sadness, powerlessness, hopelessness, shame, and feeling strengthened. Behavioral responses to the perception of racial discrimination are those things that people *do* to cope with what they perceive to be unfair treatment on account of their race. These coping behaviors include speaking up, accepting it,

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[8] I do not review these domains because they are defined by their "face value."

[9] Throughout the literature, interpersonal racial discrimination has also been variously referred to as isolate or individual discrimination.

[10] The covert nature of discrimination can be either intended or simply latent in the form. The covert dimension as discussed by the authors does not consider this distinction.

ignoring it, trying to change things, keeping it to myself, working harder to prove "them" wrong, praying, avoiding it, getting violent. and forgetting.

Schedule of Racist Events

Landrine and Klonoff (1996) developed the SRE, which is composed of eighteen items. Each item is used three times: once to measure the frequency of racist events in the past year, again to measure the frequency of racist events in the lifetime of the respondent, and finally to assess the stressfulness of the racist event. For example, the first item in the instrument is, "How many times have you been treated unfairly by teachers and professors because you are black?" This item and each item afterward are then followed by the same set of probes: "How many times in the past year?" (frequency), "How many times in your entire life?" (lifetime), and "How stressful was this for you?" (stressfulness). Thus, the SRE considers the perception of racial discrimination along what are essentially two dimensions: frequency/time and appraisal/affect.[11] The items on the measurement instrument include teachers/professors, employer/boss, colleagues, service jobs, strangers, helping others, neighbors, institutions, friends, accused/suspected, intentions, wanting to tell someone off, feeling angry, taking drastic steps, being called racist names, being involved in an argument or fight, and being made fun of or harmed. Landrine and Klonoff (1996) also investigated the construct validity of the SRE and found three dimensions or subscales: lifetime racist events, recent racist events (i.e., in the past year), and the appraisal of racist events (i.e., or the stress associated with the racist event).[12]

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[11] Here "appraisal" is very similar to the affective dimension proposed by Green (1995).
[12] Construct association is a scientific test to see what other psychological traits might be associated with—in this case—racial discrimination.

Index of Race-Related Stress

Utsey and Ponterotto (1996) developed the IRRS. Four dimensions were identified from

focus group interviews and statistical analysis. Each item had four response options: this has

never happened to me, the event happened but did not bother me, the event happened and I

was upset, and the event happened and I was extremely upset. The four dimensions, or

different types of racial discrimination, considered in the IRRS are individual, institutional,

collective, and cultural. The individual dimension is similar to the interpersonal

discrimination considered by McNeilly and colleagues (1996) and refers to discrimination at

the interpersonal level. Items for this aspect of discrimination reflect an interpersonal

behavior intended to denigrate the respondent and are essentially consistent with others.[13]

Some examples of items used to measure this dimension include: "Sales people/clerks did

not say thank you or show other forms of courtesy and respect (i.e., put your things in a bag)

when you shopped at some white/nonblack-owned businesses," "While shopping at a store,

the sales clerk assumed that you couldn't afford certain items (i.e., you were directed toward

items that were on sale)," and "While shopping at a store or while attempting to make a

purchase you were ignored as if you were not a serious customer or didn't have any money."

Again, similar to McNeilly and colleagues (1996), the institutional dimension refers to

discrimination that is related to institutional policies and refers to policies that create or

maintain racial inequality. This dimension is also consistent with previous research that

considers the perception of institutional discrimination. Some examples of items used to

measure this dimension include: "You were passed over for an important project although

you were more qualified and competent than the white/nonblack person given the task,"

"You were refused an apartment or other housing; you suspect it was because you are

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[13] This dimension coincides with the individual and interpersonal dimensions that are considered in the above.

black," and "You have been subjected to racist jokes by whites/nonblacks in positions of authority, and you did not protest for fear they may have held it against you." The collective dimension of the IRRS refers to the perception of racial discrimination at the hands of groups of people working collectively to restrict the rights of African Americans. In consideration of previous psychometric work on perceived racial discrimination, this dimension is somewhat novel. Some examples of items used to measure the collective dimension include: "You have had trouble getting a cab to go certain places or even stop for you," "You were the victim of a crime and the police treated you as if you should just accept it as part of being black," and "You have attempted to hail a cab, but they refused to stop, you think because you are black." Finally, the cultural dimension is also novel and refers to the perception of one's culture being degraded or maligned. Some examples of items used to measure this dimension include: "You notice that the media plays up those stories that cast blacks in negative ways (child abusers, rapists, muggers, etc.) or as savages (Wild Man of 96th Street, wolf pack, etc.), usually accompanied by a large picture of a black person looking angry or disturbed," "You notice that crimes committed by white people tend to be romanticized, whereas the same crime committed by a black person is portrayed as savagery and the black person who committed it is an animal," and "You have observed that white kids who commit violent crimes are portrayed as 'boys being boys' while black kids who commit similar crimes are wild animals."

Utsey and Ponterotto (1996) also conduct the most extensive statistical analysis in demonstrating the validity of the IRRS. The items are also more nuanced than other measurement frameworks. For example, while other frameworks ask, "Have you ever been treated unfairly by the police?" items in the IRRS include more descriptions of particular

types of incidents than some of the other measures. This might be considered a unique mix between the open-ended form of the PERSLE and the structural consistency of the PRS and SRE. It could also represent a weakness if items from this measure were used on a national survey. That is, on a survey there are fewer items by necessity and these items are so specific that without the full complement of items, many instances of racial discrimination would likely go unreported.

The Survey Measurement of Racial Discrimination

The study of perceived racial discrimination in survey research has most often been limited to the use of single-item indicators. The use of single-item indicators results in conservative estimates concerning the prevalence of discrimination (Brown 2001). Therefore, more recent studies have begun to employ multiple indicators of discrimination. In part, these differences in measurement have resulted in differences in findings across studies (Brown 2001). There is not yet a standard way of measuring perceived discrimination in survey research. However, a pattern is beginning to develop. This pattern includes the evaluation of three dimensions of discrimination: lifetime, major life, and everyday (Forman et al. 1997; Kessler et al. 1999). While some studies include all three dimensions, others might consider only one or two dimensions. Although several studies measure discrimination in this way, there is also some variance in the number of items and in item wording across studies.

The experience of discrimination is important even if it occurs only once in life. The lifetime dimension of discrimination refers to people who have had *at least one* discriminatory experience in their lifetime. For example, discrimination might be reported by a fifty-year-old who was called a racial epithet as a child, a twenty-five-year-old who thought that the

graduate requisite exam was racially biased, or a new home-seeker who felt she was only shown homes in black neighborhoods. It is important to note that the lifetime dimension refers to the perception of at least one experience with racial discrimination during the life course. The typical item for this question is, "Have you ever been treated unfairly because of your race?" The typical response options for this question are simply "yes or no."

Experiences with discrimination have a significant impact on the social mobility of African Americans (Herring et al. 1998). The major life experiences dimension of discrimination refers to moments in time when the respondent has encountered restrictions in mobility as a result of racial discrimination, for instance, being unfairly fired from a job or being denied a promotion. There are six quasi-standard items for this dimension of racial discrimination; some examples include: "Do you think you have ever been unfairly fired or denied a promotion?" "For unfair reasons, do you think you have ever not been hired for a job?" and "Do you think you have ever been unfairly discouraged by a teacher or advisor from continuing your education?" This dimension also uses the yes/no response option for each question. It is important to note here that there is some debate concerning the distinction between lifetime and major life discrimination. The distinction is that the lifetime dimension is an indicator of general prevalence for any type of discrimination and the major life type of discrimination is less general and identifies specific types of discrimination that have happened over a lifetime.

Philomena Essed (1991) defines everyday racism as "the integration of racism into everyday situations through practices that activate underlying power relations" (p. 50). She continues by suggesting that "this process must be seen as a continuum through which the integration

of racism into everyday practices becomes part of the expected, of the unquestionable and of what is seen as normal by the dominant group. When racist notions and actions infiltrate everyday life and become part of the reproduction of the system, the system reproduces everyday racism" (p. 50). This definition of everyday racism describes how African Americans might experience the racist social structure in daily life through "simple" interactions with whites.[14] Although different studies use somewhat different measures of everyday racial discrimination, there are nine quasi-standard questions. The nine items are given after one set-up item. The set-up item is, "How often have any of the following things happened to you?" Three examples of the nine items that follow are: "You are treated with less courtesy than other people," "You are treated with less respect than other people," and "You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores." The response options for these questions are in terms of frequency and include very often, somewhat often, not too often, and never.

Some Basic Findings Associated with the Perception of Racial Discrimination in Survey Research

The perception of racial discrimination has been found to be associated with several social background characteristics and measures of psychological well being. The findings associated with age and discrimination are complex; however, age has been categorized in many different ways.[15] This fact notwithstanding, several different relationships have been found. Sigelman and Welch (1991) found that older African Americans report more racial discrimination. Adams and Dressler (1988) find the inverse of this relationship, with older

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[14] In this study whites are the only out-group discussed.
[15] Because age can be broken into any number of categories it is difficult to compare findings across studies. For example, while some scholars might consider age in terms of four categories—18–34, 35–54, 55–64, and 65+—other studies might use 18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 55–64, and 65+. These differences mean that comparing these two studies is at least difficult, if not technically inappropriate.

people reporting less discrimination than younger people. In an all-male study, Gary (1995) also finds this inverse relationship, with younger African American males reporting more discrimination then older African American males. However, Schuman and Hatchett (1974) find a relationship that is curvilinear, that is to say that African Americans between the ages of 25 and 54 reported the most discrimination. They suggest that this finding is associated with racial discrimination in employment markets. Although studies tend to vary, we might expect young adults to report more discrimination than adolescents given the association between employment and discrimination and the fact that older people are generally more socially aware.

Additional social background and psychosocial characteristics also have been considered in the study of perceived racial discrimination. African Americans with more education report more discrimination (Bobo and Suh 2000; Broman et al. 2000; Brown 2001; Forman et al. 1997; Gary 1995; Herring et Al. 1998). There is a curvilinear relationship between income and discrimination, such that in general as income increases reports decrease, but as African Americans reach the higher income brackets (e.g., $60,000 and above) reports of discrimination suddenly increase (Forman et al. 1997; Kessler et al. 1999). In general, after considering the effects of age, income, and education, there is no relationship between occupational status and reports of discrimination (Bobo and Suh 2000; Herring et al. 1998). Psychological well being also has been found to be associated with perceived racial discrimination. All findings point to the same relationship. More discrimination is associated with lower psychological well being (Forman et al. 2003; Kessler et al. 1999). Finally, the perception of racial discrimination is also associated with racial identity (Bobo and Suh 2000;

Sellers and Shelton 2003) and therefore is likely to be indirectly associated with sexual and political decision-making.[16]

Debates and Future Directions

At this point it has been well documented that African Americans in general and African American youth in particular report that racial discrimination continues to be a significant part of their lived experience. While there will continue to be debates on the degree to which African Americans are over-reporting these experiences, more work still needs to be done on the social psychology of racial discrimination among African American youth. Findings from qualitative research have done well to explore many of the psychological processes involved in the perception of racial discrimination. In order to produce statements that are more generalizable, scholars will need to employ survey research to better understand the processes involved in the perception of racial discrimination. Last, while many studies have focused on African American adults, more studies are needed that focus on African American adolescents and young adults.

THE MEASUREMENT OF RACIAL IDENTITY

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and
> Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the
> Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a
> veil, and gifted with second-sight in this
> American world—a world which yields him
> no true self-consciousness, but only lets him
> see himself through the revelation of the
> other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this
> double-consciousness, this sense of always

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[16] There is no clear theoretical or existent empirical support that directly connects the perception of racial discrimination to sexual and political –decision-making. However, there is support for connections between the perception of racial discrimination and racial identity and for connections between racial identity and sexual and political decision-making. Therefore, I discuss these complex relationships in the section on racial identity.

looking at one's self through the eyes of
others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of
a world that looks on in amused contempt
and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an
American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts,
two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals
in one dark body, whose dogged strength
alone keeps it from being torn asunder. – W.
E. B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folks*, 1903, p.
5.

With these words, in 1903 Dubois begins the study of racial identity in the United States.

This early contribution is the first attempt not merely at understanding African American

racial identity but at understanding racial identity altogether in the United States. In fact, the

theory of double consciousness has informed theory and research on racial identity

throughout the twentieth century. Nonetheless, this "two-pronged," double-referent, or

paradoxical view of black racial identity has received a dignified commentary and ample

reformation. There are at least three paradigms that consider black racial identity.[17] These are

self-hatred (Clark and Clark 1939), Nigrescence (Cross 1971; Parham and Helms 1985; Cross

and Vandiver 2001), and dynamic-multidimensional (Sellers et al. 1997).

The Self-Hatred Paradigm

The self-hatred paradigm is predicated on the two doll studies conducted by Kenneth and

Maime Clark (1939, 1940). These studies yielded several publications. Findings from these

studies were cited in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, which

ended legal segregation in American public schools. The basic finding from these studies was

that when African American children were asked to identify dolls that represented their

racial group, some of them selected white dolls instead of black dolls. The conclusion drawn

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[17] The double-consciousness paradigm is not discussed below because this paradigm never developed
measurement instrumentation.

from these studies was that as a result of the historic and systematic unfair treatment of black people in the United States (i.e., racism and racial discrimination), black children had developed a contempt for being black and thus sought to be white. This was referred to as "wishful thinking" and is associated with wanting to be white both to acquire full personhood and to avoid discrimination. There are, however, several challenges to this paradigm. First, the entire paradigm was based largely on two studies, both conducted by Kenneth and Maime Clark. Second, this finding pertained to African American children and was inappropriately generalized to the wider African American population. And last, upon further investigation into the social science behind these studies, there is some evidence that various standards were not upheld.[18]

The Nigrescence Paradigm

Following the double-consciousness and self-hatred paradigms, William Cross introduces the Nigrescence paradigm (Cross 1991). Without question the Nigrescence paradigm has been the most active and most widely cited in the study of black racial identity. This paradigm has also been reviewed and reconsidered several times. In short, the term Nigrescence refers to the process of one developing a uniquely African American psychology. In general, this paradigm considers racial identity to be a "psychogenic process." Cross (1991) describes the psychogenic process as a "remobilizing experience" whereby the cognitive processes associated with racial identity formation iterate between what is already known and what is experienced.[19] While the double-consciousness and self-hatred paradigms describe black

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[18] For an extended review of the self-hatred paradigm, see Cross, William E. 1991. Landmark Studies of Negro Identity. In *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American Identity*. Second ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 3–38.

[19] This supports the notion that racial socialization (what is already known) and racial discrimination (what is experienced) influence racial identity. My argument here is more complex but rests on this iterative orientation.

racial identity as a more monolithic and static concept, the Nigrescence paradigm provides a framework for understanding racial identity diversity within the African American community. This approach also allows for differences in racial identity formation between individual African Americans, and within the individual, throughout the life cycle. Although the original model includes five stages (Cross 1971), the revised model includes four (Cross 1991). Moreover, "unlike those of the original model, the names of the stages in the revised model do not represent identities; instead, the names describe the overarching theme of the stage" (Vandiver et al. 2002, p. 72).[20]

Although there were five stages in the original model, I review the four stages that are included in the current conceptualization of Nigrescence (Parham and Helms 1981; Vandiver et al. 2002).[21] These four stages are pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization (Cross 1991). The pre-encounter stage is composed of two orientations: pre-encounter assimilation and pre-encounter anti-black. Although there are two orientations, the basic theme during this stage is that race is not prominent in the construction of the more general self-concept. Pre-encounter assimilation "characterizes the adoption of pro-American or pro-mainstream identity, and race is not viewed as important" (Vandiver et. al. 2001, p. 168). This is juxtaposed with the pre-encounter anti-black component of the pre-encounter stage, which refers to "individuals who hate blacks and being black, and, as a result, being black carries a high negative [connotation] for them" (Vandiver et. al. 2002, p. 168). While respondents might demonstrate a mixture of both

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[20] In terms of measurement, the Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS; Parham and Helms 1981) and the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS; Vandiver et al. 2002) represent two measurement instruments that emerge within the Nigrescence paradigm.

[21] Because the measures developed for the Nigrescence paradigm are scales and not indexes, items are explicitly associated with any one stage. Therefore, I do not include examples of items for each stage. Instead I provide some examples for the entire scale after reviewing each stage.

orientations, the premise is that one orientation predominates. The encounter stage of the Nigrescence paradigm highlights the importance of an encounter with racial discrimination in the process of black racial identity development. This "encounter can be 'a single event' or a 'series of small, eye-opening episodes'" (Vandiver et. al. 2002, p. 168). Such experiences are associated with the emergence of the immersion-emersion stage. Like the pre-encounter stage, the immersion-emersion stage is composed of two orientations: anti-white and pro-black. The anti-white orientation refers to individuals who immerse themselves in anti-white ideologies as a result of experiences with racial discrimination. The pro-black orientation reflects black individuals who immerse themselves in a pro-black ideology as a response to racial discrimination. After some time spent being immersed in either of these orientations, the individual will "emerge" from the immersion-emersion stage and move into the internalization stage. The internalization stage is composed of three orientations: Black Nationalist, Bi-culturalist and Multi-culturalist. Regardless of the orientation in this stage, the black individual is comfortable with being black. The number and salience of identities that are internalized is what differentiates the three orientations in this stage. The Black Nationalist orientation refers to the internalization of a racial identity in which "being black is the only salient identity…and is actualized through social and political activism in empowering the black community" (Vandiver et. al. 2002, p. 169). The Bi-culturalist orientation refers to black individuals who internalize a black racial identity that also includes one other internalized identity. This other salient identity is usually of a mainstream American frame. Therefore this bicultural orientation to the internalization of racial identity can be compared to the concept of two-ness in the double-consciousness paradigm (DuBois 1903). However, what is different in this orientation is that within the Nigrescence paradigm this "two-ness" is associated with more self-actualization than perplexity (or self-hatred).

Finally, the Multi-cultural orientation within the internalization stage is associated with multiple identities being salient in the respondent at the same time. This might reflect a salient black racial identity, the understanding of oneself as an American, and an additional identity or identities. These additional identities might include gendered or sexual orientation identities.[22]

Thomas Parham and Janet Helms (1985) developed the Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS). The RIAS has been considered in both shortened and long forms (Helms and Parham 1996). The first four items from the RIAS are: "I believe that being black is a positive experience," "I know through experience what being black in America means," "I feel unable to involve myself in white experiences and am increasing my involvement in black experiences," and "I believe that large numbers of blacks are untrustworthy." These items are answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree with uncertain in the middle. In terms of construct validity the RIAS has received careful consideration and findings support the scale (Fischer et al. 1998).

The Dynamic-Multidimensional Paradigm

The most recent measurement paradigm in the study of black racial identity is the dynamic-multidimensional paradigm. This paradigm is associated with a plethora of measurement instruments. Of these, the most influential instrument is the Multidimensional Index of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers et al. 1997). The MIBI is the measure associated with the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers et al. 1997). The difference between the model and the index is that the model provides the theory that drives the

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[22] The examples I provide are only of potential additional identities associated with the internalization stage.

measurement index. The distinguishing difference between Nigrescence and the MMRI is that the Nigrescence model is both developmental and one-dimensional while the MMRI is a multidimensional model. That is, the former is associated with stages in the life cycle and the latter suggests that at any one point in time there are multiple dimensions to racial identity that should be considered. Accordingly, the MMRI is composed of four dimensions: salience, centrality, regard, and ideology. Salience refers to the quality or the significance of being black across situations. This dimension reflects the notion that at times being black might be a more prominent part of a person's consciousness. In addition to prominence, "what it means to be black" might also shift across situations. For example, when the respondent is in a mostly black environment, being black might be a less prominent or less important feature of the respondent's identity. However, when the person is in a predominantly white environment being black might not only be more prominent and important, but also assume a different meaning. While salience represents an important theoretical consideration, early empirical investigation suggests that salience is relatively constant across situations (Shelton and Sellers 2000). Therefore, while salience is a part of the MMRI, it is not considered in the MIBI.

The MIBI is composed of fifty-six items that measure three of the four dimensions associated with the MMRI: centrality, regard, and ideology. Centrality is a dimension of racial identity that is featured in much of the scholarship on racial identification. The idea is simple but has been found to have relatively broad-ranging implications. Centrality refers to the degree to which a person employs race to define themselves.[23] Some examples of the eight

[23] The difference between centrality and salience is that salience refers to the ways in which our thinking about race might change between different contexts. Centrality is one of the ways in which our thinking might change, based on the salience of race in any given social context. That is, while being black might be very

questions that are used to measure this dimension include: "Overall, being black has very little to do with how I feel about myself," "In general, being black is an important part of my self-image," and "My destiny is tied to the destiny of other black people." The last question presented here also represents "shared group fate" (Dawson 1994). Shared group fate is commonly investigated in survey research and has been found to be associated with a wide variety of attitudes and behaviors.

The dimension of regard is divided into two subscales: public and private. Public regard refers to how the respondent thinks others feel about black people. Private regard refers to how individuals feel about black people and the importance and meaning they associate with being black. Both public and private regard are measured on a continuum that ranges from positive to negative regard. That is, does the respondent think that others view black people in a positive or negative light (public regard), and does the respondent think that being black is a positive or negative and important aspect of their identity (private regard)? One critique of the regard dimension is that some of the items measure the respondent's attitudes toward other black people. Therefore, select aspects of the private regard dimension might be better understood as measures of racial attitudes instead of a component of racial identity.[24] This is an important consideration because it also suggests that the way any one black person feels about herself or himself is not related to how he or she may feel about other black people. Some examples of items that probe public regard are, "Overall, blacks are considered good by others," "Blacks are not respected by the broader society," and "Society views black people as an asset." Example items for private regard include, "I feel good about black

important or central to the individual while in an all-white context, it might be much less important or central while in an all-black context.

[24] This aspect of private regard should be considered a racial attitude if the attitude is driven by an evaluation of a person based on their racial group membership.

people," "I often regret that I am black," and "I feel that the black community has made valuable contributions to this society."

Ideology is a dimension that is composed of four subscales:[25] assimilationist, humanist, minority, and nationalist.[26] These four worldviews are associated with the way in which respondents think about political and economic development, cultural and social activities, intergroup relations, and perceptions of the dominant group.[27] Assimilationist ideology describes a worldview in which there are very few and subtle distinctions made between African Americans and the rest of American society. Some examples of items that measure an assimilationist ideology include: "Blacks who espouse separatism are as racist as white people who also espouse separatism," "A sign of progress is that blacks are in the mainstream of America more than ever before," and "Because America is predominantly white, it is important that blacks go to white schools so that they can gain experience interacting with whites." Humanist ideology refers to an orientation that focuses on the similarities among all humans. A humanist does not think in terms of race, class, or gender. Instead, the humanist is concerned with what is good for humanity in general. Both the humanist and the assimilationist would be expected to have relatively lower scores on the centrality measure than those who hold minority and nationalist ideologies. Examples of items that reflect a humanist ideology include: "Black values should not be inconsistent with human values," "Blacks and whites have more commonalities than differences," and "Blacks

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[25] Here Sellers is using a different definition of racial ideology than I define for use in this paper.

[26] In some ways the ideology dimension of racial identity reflects the effort to create systematic measurement frameworks for black racial attitudes. The subtle and important difference is that items that attempt to measure racial ideologies are items that measure the attitudes to explanations for the racial status quo and toward potential ways of "fixing it." Pure black racial attitude measures do not include items concerning explanations.

[27] Michael Dawson (2001) presents a working definition of political ideology that might aid in understanding exactly what is meant here by ideology. Moreover, he suggests several political ideologies himself. There is also some overlap between the ideologies of Sellers and the ideologies presented by Dawson.

would be better off if they were more concerned with the problems facing all people rather than just focusing on black issues." The minority ideology refers to a focus on the oppression of African Americans and people of color. This is different from the nationalist ideology because nationalists focus on the uniqueness of African descendants and their unique oppression and the development of a pro-black political and economic agenda. Examples of items that probe minority ideology are: "The same forces which have led to the oppression of blacks have also led to the oppression of other groups," "The struggle for black liberation in America should be closely related to the struggle of other oppressed groups," and "Blacks should learn about the oppression of other groups." Example items associated with a nationalist ideology are: "It is important for black people to surround their children with black art, music, and literature," "Black people should not marry interracially," and "Blacks would be better off if they adopted Afrocentric values." Although Sellers and colleagues (1997) do well to advance research on racial identity by providing for a more nuanced measurement of racial identity, the measure could capture additional complexity if it were to incorporate work on black political ideology (Dawson 2001; Harris-Lacewell 2004).

Some Basic Findings Associated with Racial Identity

In general, survey research has considered racial identity in terms of single-item indicators.[28] Clifford Broman, Harold Neighbors, and James Jackson (1988) use the National Study of Black Americans to draw correlations between social background demographics and racial identity. In this study, racial identity was framed in terms of racial solidarity in various conditions. The question was, "How close do you feel in your ideas and feelings about things to black people who are: (a) poor, (b) religious, (c) young, (d) middle-class, (e) working-class,

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[28] Discussed later.

(f) older, (g) elected officials, and (h) professional black people?" Respondents were given a four-point Likert scale ranging from (4) very close to (1) not close at all. From these items a racial solidarity scale was developed. The sociodemographic characteristics that they consider include age, sex, education, income, urbanicity, and region. Their findings include three primary tables: bivariate correlations, a regression model, and a regression model with interaction terms for education/urbanicity and education/region. In general they find that racial identity in terms of closeness in ideas and feelings is positively related to age, with younger adults between the ages of 18 and 29 feeling the least close and those aged 60–69 feeling the closest. This relationship is positive and somewhat curvilinear, such that 70+ is the oldest age group and they feel less close than the 60–69 group, but all ages younger than 60 feel less closeness than the people in the 60–69 age bracket. There is no correlation between sex (i.e., being male or female) and feelings of closeness to other African Americans. There is a negative correlation between both education and urbanicity and this form of racial identity. Increased education is accompanied by lower solidarity. More urbanicity was associated with less racial solidarity.

Racial identity is also associated with the perception of racial discrimination (Bobo and Suh 2000; Shelton and Sellers 2003). In general, "more" racial identity is associated with the perception of more racial discrimination (Bobo and Suh 2000). That is, "the significance of one's group to the self-concept (i.e., racial centrality/group identification) is positively associated with how much discrimination individuals indicate they have experienced. At the same time the meaning and affect (i.e., racial ideology and public regard) associated with one's racial group seem to protect individuals from the negative mental health consequences of perceived discrimination" (Sellers and Shelton 2003, p. 1087). More specifically, Seller and

Shelton (2003) find that racial centrality and Black Nationalism are associated with increased reports of racial discrimination. They also find that humanists and those who believe that others have a positive view of black people (high public regard) report fewer experiences with racial discrimination. Last, black nationalists and those with low public regard are least affected by their experiences with racial discrimination.

Debates and Future Directions

There are several key debates in the study of racial identity among African Americans in general and African American youth in particular. First, what is the difference between racial identity and ethnic identity? Second, is it better to consider African American racial identity in terms of an ethnic identity? Third, to what degree are thoughts about other African Americans a component of African American racial (or ethnic) identity? In order to best answer these questions, more theory and research are needed in this area. In lieu of this future work I will briefly discuss each of these questions.

With respect to the question of racial identity or ethnic identity, it is clear that both identities will continue to be present as long as racial discrimination is a prominent feature of black life in America. Although many scholars confound the terms race and ethnicity, there are important differences between these two social scientific terms. While racial identity most accurately refers to the ways in which African Americans understand themselves in a country where there are clear barriers to their social mobility, ethnic identity most accurately reflects the degree to which African Americans identify with African American customs. Therefore, while racial identity is a product of racial stratification and reflects an identity that is shaped and informed by interactions with other racial groups, ethnic identity is the product of

historical forces that have both created and maintained African American customs that are unique to and largely practiced by African Americans.

Second, while it is necessary to differentiate these two forms of identity, it is best to employ both terms if we want our scholarship to most accurately reflect the landscape of African American identity. That is, the need for social scientists to measure racial identity among African Americans is reflective of the need for African Americans to understand themselves in comparison to other racial groups. For example, when notions of black inferiority are no longer present in the American mainstream, there will be less need for African Americans to compare themselves to other people based on their ascribed racial group. With respect to ethnic identity, African Americans will continue to create and maintain unique customs as long as they are restricted from full access to the American dream and it is useful to remember their history of subjugation in the United States. For example, when African Americans achieve racial equity and are assimilated into the American mainstream, they will be likely to identify less with customs that are considered to be uniquely functional for African Americans.

Last, the thoughts and feelings that African Americans have about other African Americans are best understood in terms of racial attitudes. An identity is different from an attitude. That is, an identity represents the set of characteristics or attributes that somebody recognizes as key components of his or her person. As mentioned in the introduction, an attitude reflects thoughts and feelings about an object. Humans tend to think of themselves subjectively, not objectively. Objects tend to exist beyond the self, not within the self. Thus, while African American identity is likely to be correlated with attitudes toward other African

Americans, racial attitudes are not the same as racial identity. Asking someone about other people is not the same as asking them about themselves. When these thoughts toward other people use race as a primary qualifier, these thought reflect racial attitudes.

These distinctions are subtle but have important implications. Until we decouple notions of racial identity from notions of ethnic identity, we will not be able to disaggregate the ways in which people understand and make judgments about their membership in a racial group from the values and behaviors with which they identify. It is important to understand that people can believe they are targets for racial discrimination and/or compare themselves to others based on racial group membership while not valuing customs they consider to be uniquely African American. The latter might also be thought of in terms of a reluctance to consider any customs to be uniquely African American or belonging to African Americans. For instance, as hip hop has emerged from the black and Latino neighborhoods of New York to become a dominant aspect of American life, many older African Americans do not consider themselves to be part of the "hip hop movement or culture" but still clearly consider themselves to be black. Moreover, young people from all racial groups consider themselves to be practitioners of a hip hop culture that is widely held as synonymous with "black" or "African American" culture and yet they do not consider themselves to be black.

THE MEASUREMENT OF BLACK RACIAL ATTITUDES

The study of black racial attitudes emerged just after the urban rebellions of the late 1960s. It is a derivative of research on white racial attitudes in particular and social attitude research in general. Although there are a great many studies on white racial attitudes, there has been considerably less work on black racial attitudes. Moreover, much of the early work on black

racial attitudes uses questions that were developed to study white racial attitudes and therefore tend not to reflect the potential for a unique set of black racial attitudes.[29] This fact notwithstanding, there is at least one example of a systematic attempt to understand black racial attitudes. The basic reason for the few studies on black racial attitudes is that they tend to be relatively consistent over time, and the study of African Americans has been mostly concerned with the study of racial discrimination and black social pathology. Nonetheless, Schuman and colleagues (1997) do chronicle trends in black racial attitudes toward blacks and whites; Bobo and Johnson (2000) document black racial attitudes toward whites, Latinos, and Asians; and Schuman and Hatchett (1974) do well in developing a pioneering measurement framework for black racial attitudes in the United States. The current research canon is entirely too extensive to be reviewed in any detail in this paper (Schuman et al. 1997). Therefore, I review the first measurement framework,[30] a brief review of the trends in black racial attitudes toward whites, and some important components of black racial attitudes in a multiracial context.

The Alienation Index

 Schuman and Hatchett (1974) employ data from two Detroit Area Studies[31] in their construction of the alienation index. The eleven items that are included in the index are: (1) "Some people say that over the last ten or fifteen years, there has been a lot of progress in getting rid of racial discrimination. Others say there hasn't been much real change for most

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[29] Such a unique set would consider the unique history of being black in the United States. While this history is parallel to "white history," it might also include subjects that are not important to whites or that have not been considered by whites. It is important to understand that more recent work does consider the uniqueness of the black experience in the composition of racial attitude research.

[30] Although there is a great deal of racial attitude research, I have found only one framework for measuring black racial attitudes. That is, while a wide variety of racial attitude questions have been asked, there is only one attempt to measure a set of questions in the aggregate.

[31] The data are from the 1968 and 1971 Detroit Area Studies (DAS). The DAS is a multistage area probability sample that uses face-to-face interviews.

Negroes over that time. Which do you agree with most?" (2) "On the whole do you think most white people in Detroit want to see Negroes get a better break or do they want to keep Negroes down, or don't they care, one way or another?" (3) "Do you personally feel that you can trust most white people, some white people, or none at all?" (4) "Do you think Negro customers who shop in the big downtown stores are treated as politely as white customers or are they treated less politely?" (5) "How many places in Detroit do you think will hire a white person before they will hire a Negro even though they have the same qualifications…many, some, or just a few places?" (6) "Do you think Negro teachers take more of an interest in teaching Negro students than white teachers do?" (7) "Would you personally prefer to live in a neighborhood with all Negroes, mostly Negroes, mostly whites, or a neighborhood that's mixed half and half?" (8) "As you see it, what's the best way for Negroes to try to gain their rights—use laws and persuasion, use nonviolent protest, or be ready to use violence?" (9) [Asked of those who did not answer "violence" on the previous question:] "If law and persuasion/nonviolent protest doesn't work, then do you think Negroes should be ready to use violence?" (10) "Some people say there should be Negro principals in schools with mostly Negro students because Negroes should have the most say in running inner-city schools. Would you agree with that or not?" (11) "If our country got into a big world war today, would you personally feel the United States is worth fighting for?"

While many of these are now considered standard items on surveys that consider black racial attitudes, the question wording and response options are often different across studies. Not only has item format changed, but many additional items have been added to the black racial attitude "question matrix." There has been more attention paid to the construction of black racial identity measurement frameworks than to black racial attitude frameworks. Therefore,

what distinguishes the Schuman and Hatchett (1974) study from other studies of black racial attitudes is that they construct an index of black racial attitudes and then investigate correlations between this index and other sociodemographic variables.[32] They find that men report higher scores on the alienation index than women. Younger respondents report more "militant" and "separatist" scores.[33] The relationship between education and the isolation index is more complex. Therefore, Schuman and Hatchett analyze each relationship separately for each item in the index.[34] Respondents with more education were less likely to think that whites wanted to keep blacks down, less likely to trust whites, less likely to support black principals, and less likely to fight for the United States. Those with at least a high school diploma, but not any more education, were most likely to support violence. There is no clear relationship between the index and level of income.[35]

After Schuman and Hatchett (1974), Schuman et al. (1985, 1997)[36] conduct a meta-analysis of survey research on black racial attitudes. This meta-analysis includes findings from all surveys conducted in the United States that consider racial attitudes.[37] It considers racial attitudes in terms of principles and implementation of principles. Principled racial attitudes reflect thoughts and beliefs concerning race relations and racial inequality. Racial attitudes toward implementation of principles reflect support or nonsupport for public policy to

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[32] Although the MIBI includes some items that might be considered racial attitude items, there is no survey work yet that uses these items.

[33] There is no reference to what constitutes militant and separatist scores. The reader is left to infer what this means from the definitions of militant and separatist and the question set.

[34] I report only the relationships that are significant.

[35] This might be because the income categories are relatively acute and do not cover a wide range. For example, the income categories used by the authors are less than $4,000, 4,000 to 5,999, 6,000 to 7,999, 8,000 to 9,999, 10,000 to 14,999, and 15,000 or more.

[36] While the first edition of the book was published in 1985, there were major revisions done in 1997. Maria Krysan was not a co-author in the first edition of the book.

[37] While this book is comprehensive up until the mid-1990s, those who are interested can attain the updated information online at http://tigger.cc.uic.edu/~krysan/racialattitudes.htm.

guarantee racial equality. Principled racial attitudes have had relatively little variation; African

Americans tend to support the notion that blacks and whites should attend the same school,

support the idea of residential choice, say that if there were a black candidate they would be

likely to vote for him or her, be against laws that would prohibit intermarriage, and be in

support of desegregation.[38] With respect to the implementation of principles, the authors

note that "blacks have shown decreasing support over time for government intervention to

increase both school integration and 'fair treatment in jobs,' though the shift has not been

toward opposition to government action but instead toward responses claiming no interest

in these issues" (p. 276). The authors also carefully consider the relationship between

education and several types of black racial attitudes.[39] They find that African Americans with

more education tend to be more supportive of racial intermarriage; to favor open housing

laws; to believe that civil rights change has been too slow; to oppose preferential hiring; to

reject low motivation as an explanation of black disadvantage; to believe there is

discrimination in jobs, housing, and police treatment; and to believe that whites don't care

about blacks.

Asking Blacks about Blacks

There is some conceptual ambiguity concerning black racial attitudes toward other black

people. Some consider this an important dimension of racial *identity* (Sellers et al. 1997), and

others consider it an interesting aspect of black racial *attitudes* in the post–civil rights period

(Schuman et al. 1997). Nonetheless, findings from Schuman and colleagues (1997) suggest

one very interesting pattern. While in general the clear majority of blacks continue to report

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[38] Support for desegregation has noticeably diminished from 1964 to 1978. The question has not been asked by NORC since 1978.

[39] These OLS regression models are also controlled for age.

the cause for their problems to be racial discrimination, in recent years more have begun to blame black people. For example, in 1968 11% of blacks thought that blacks were to blame for their problems. In 1995 41% of blacks thought that black people were to blame for their problems. Although it is slight, there is a complementary trend with respect to the idea that blacks need to try harder to get ahead. In 1986 13% of blacks strongly agreed with the idea that blacks needed to try harder, and in 2000 26% strongly agreed (Krysan 2002; Schuman et al. 1997).

Asking Blacks about Latinos and Asians

Bobo and Suh (2000) conducted a study that investigated black racial attitudes toward both Latinos and Asians in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. This study asks African Americans to report the degree to which they believe that Latinos and Asians tend to be rich or poor, to be unintelligent, to prefer welfare, to be hard to get along with, to speak poor English, to be involved with drugs and gangs, and whether or not they tend to discriminate. Not only do Bobo and Suh (2000) consider each of these items separately, but they also develop an aggregate measure of these racial attitudes. In general, they find that black attitudes toward Latinos are not as pejorative as attitudes toward Asians. For Latinos, the aggregate scale is the only measure that is significant. This measure suggests that in general, blacks support the pejorative notions of Latinos that are mentioned above. For Asians, they find that not only do African Americans support these pejorative notions as reflected in the aggregate measure, but that several of the single-item indicators also reach significance. That is, African Americans tend to believe that Asians tend to be poor, are hard to get along with, speak

poor English, and are involved with drugs and gangs. They also find that African Americans with higher social economic status tend to think more negatively of Asians.[40]

Debates and Future Directions

There are two emerging debates in the field of black racial attitudes. The first concerns the notion of a "black-on-black racism," and the second concerns African American attitudes toward Latinos as a racial group. Black-on-black racism has been considered in many different ways. Some scholars have attempted to consider this phenomenon in terms of "colorism," in which attitudes toward others are largely shaped by skin tone (Bowman et al. 2004). In this framework, African Americans with lighter skin tones would be likely to treat African Americans with darker skin tones unfairly. This pattern also would be true in the opposite direction. Preliminary finding show that while these types of judgments are present within the African American community, they are not a significant component of intragroup dynamics. Others are beginning to consider the potential for a black-on-black racism that does not consider color but racial groups' status. This framework suggests that African Americans can be prejudiced toward other African Americans because they are African American. Early findings in this area suggest that while there may be some room for this consideration in theory, very few African Americans are prejudiced toward other African Americans (Bonilla-Silva and Embrick 2001).

Since Latinos are now the largest racial minority group in the United States and are demographically very similar to African Americans, African American attitudes toward Latinos are becoming interesting. The fundamental question here is, "Will African

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[40] Socioeconomic status does not determine attitudes toward Latinos.

Americans work with Latinos to better their collective lot, or will they compete against one another in a nation where it is perceived that there are limited resources?" This mode of investigation will begin with questions concerning African American attitudes toward Latinos, but will eventually consider the degree to which African Americans are willing to work with Latinos. Preliminary findings in this area suggest that at the very least, African American attitudes toward Latinos are less pejorative than they are toward whites and Asians (Bobo and Suh 2000).

BRIEF NOTE ON DECISION-MAKING

Given what we know about the social psychology of race, what is the relationship between these subfields and the sexual and political decision-making process for African American adolescents and young adults? First, the literature suggests that the relationship between the ways in which African American youth think about and experience race influences their sexual and political decision-making. Generally speaking, positive thoughts about black people and being black result in fewer reports of sexual intercourse and more reports of political participation. Since there is very little work in this area it will be important to consider perceptions of racial discrimination, racial identity, and racial attitudes in a study of black youth that is chiefly concerned with sex and politics among African American youth.

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