

Study on the importance of race and ethnicity



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Racial and ethnic identity, commonly defined as the significance and meaning of race and ethnicity to one's self-concept (Phinney, 1996; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998), represent crucial components of adolescent development and exploration among youth of color (W. E. Cross & Cross, 2007).

Cross, W. E., Jr., & Cross, T. B. (2007). Theory, research, and models. In S. M. Quintana & C. McKown (Eds.), *Race, racism and developing child* (pp. 154-181). New York, NY: Wiley.

Cross, W. E., Jr., Parham, T., & Helms, J. (1991). The stages of Black identity development, Nigrescence models. In R. L. Jones (Ed.), *Black psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 319-336). Berkeley, CA: Cobb & Henry.

Use of “ Racial” and “ Ethnic” Identity

Racial identity has been historically understood as relating to responses to racism and prejudice (Helms, 2007), while ethnic identity has included a sense of belonging to a group connected by heritage, values, traditions, and often languages (Phinney & Ong, 2007), although both terms are acknowledged as socially constructed (W. E. Cross & Cross, 2007; Helms, 2007; Markus, 2008; Omi & Winant, 1986).

Helms, J. E. (2007). Some better practices for measuring racial and ethnic identity constructs. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 54, 235-246.

Phinney, J. S., & Ong, A. D. (2007). Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*, 271-281.

Markus, H. R. (2008). Pride, prejudice, and ambivalence: Toward a unified theory of race and ethnicity. *American Psychologist, 63*, 651-670.

Consistent with these definitions, Markus (2008) argued that race should be conceptualized as distinct from ethnicity because of its historical and contemporary racial hegemony related to power and privilege. However, as Cokley (2005) noted, there is great variability in how these constructs are operationalized, with much complexity and definitional overlap (Trimble, Helms, & Root, 2003; Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006).

Cokley, K. (2005). Racial(ized) identity, ethnic identity, and Afrocentric values: Conceptual and methodological challenges in understanding African American identity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*, 517-526.

Trimble, J. E., Helms, J. E., & Root, M. P. P. (2003). Social and psychological perspectives on ethnic and racial identity. In G. Bernal, J. E. Trimble, A. K. Burlew, & F. T. L. Leong (Eds.), *Handbook of racial and ethnic minority psychology* (pp. 239-275). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Worrell, F. C., & Gardner-Kitt, D. L. (2006). The relationship between racial and ethnic identity in Black adolescents: The Cross Racial Identity Scale and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research, 6*, 293-315.

W. E. Cross and Cross (2007) further argued that regardless of these theoretical differentiations, racial and ethnic elements interact within individuals' lived experiences and should not be artificially isolated from one another, as in the exploration of ethnic features of African American racial identity (Cokley, 2005). This may be especially relevant for adolescents, who are often early in their exploration of racial and ethnic identity, and whose own constructions of racial and ethnic identity may diverge from researchers' categorizations and assumptions (W. E. Cross & Cross, 2007).

Theoretical Perspectives

Several theories help to explain racial- ethnic importance and the phenomenological meanings that minority adolescents attribute to their racial- ethnic identity.

Stryker's (1987) identity theory proposes that individuals may attribute different levels of importance to various aspects of identity (e. g., race and gender).

However, Sellers and Shelton (2003) pointed out that group identification alone cannot encompass identity and that individuals who share a common level of group identification may attribute their engagement to different underlying reasons.

Spencer, Dupree, and Hartmann (1997) expanded on Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological developmental framework by integrating the role of meaning making in shaping individuals' self-concepts, resulting in the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST). Spencer et al. asserted that these processes are more complex for American ethnic

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minorities, particularly in adolescence, in part because of potentially stressful environments, which combine with phenomenological experiences of emergent identities to shape one's self-concept.

These theories contend that the importance of group identification and the meanings behind these identifications together provide a fuller picture of the motivations that drive racial- ethnic identification than would importance alone.

Worrell F. C. (2008). Nigrescence Attitudes in Adolescence, Emerging Adulthood, and Adulthood. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 34, 156-179

Cross's Nigrescence Theory

Cross's (1971) original nigrescence theory (NT-O) emerged out of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s and was described as a " psychology of Black liberation" (p. 13) in five stages:

Pre-Encounter,

Encounter,

Immersion-Emersion,

Internalization, and

Internalization Commitment.

A Pre-Encounter identity was thought to be indicative of Black self-hatred, and consequently, poor psychological functioning, and an Internalization

identity was believed to be indicative of Black self-acceptance, self-actualization, and psychological well-being (Cross, 1971).

Cross, W. E., Jr. (1971). The Negro-to-Black conversion experience: Toward a psychology of Black liberation. *Black World*, 20(9), 13-27.

Cross, W. E., Jr. (1978). The Thomas and Cross models of psychological nigrescence: A review. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 5, 13-31.

Thus, movement through the stages was indicative of moving from self-denigration and low self-esteem to self-acceptance and psychological well-being. Although actual ages were never assigned to the stages, a tacit assumption was that a greater number of adolescents were in the Pre-Encounter stage and a greater number of middle-aged and older adults were in the Internalization stages, with individuals in the intervening developmental periods being predominantly in the Encounter and Immersion-Emersion stages.

In 1991, Cross made several substantive revisions to the nigrescence model. He merged Internalization (Stage 4) and Internalization-Commitment (Stage 5) into a single stage, so that the revised nigrescence model (NT-R) consisted of four rather than five stages.

Second, he decoupled social identity or reference group orientation from personal identity (PI) or psychological well-being. This change was based on an extensive review of the Black racial identity literature which revealed no consistent relationship between racial identity attitudes and psychological functioning. Thus, Cross (1991) conceded that individuals' racial identity

stages had no bearing on their self esteem. Finally, Cross contended that there were multiple identities at each of the Pre-Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization stages.

Cross, W. E., Jr. (1991). *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

In 2001, Cross and colleagues (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Worrell et al., 2001) proposed an expanded nigrescence model (NT-E). Although they retained the names used for the stages in the earlier nigrescence models, Pre-Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization were no longer considered developmental stages; rather, they were described as “ frames of reference or identity clusters through which the world is viewed” (Worrell et al., 2001, p. 208).

The Pre-Encounter frame of reference includes attitudes in which being Black is given low or negative salience, whereas the Internalization attitudes accord high and positive salience to Blackness. The Immersion-Emersion worldview includes high salient attitudes toward Blacks and Whites. These attitudes are more emotionally volatile, in part because they develop as much in response to inequities and discrimination in society as to a commitment to a pro-Black orientation.

Nine unique nigrescence attitudes have been described in NT-E (Worrell et al., 2001):

(a) three Pre-Encounter attitudes (Assimilation, Miseducation, and Self-Hatred),

(b) two Immersion-Emersion attitudes (Intense Black Involvement and Anti-White), and

(c) four Internalization attitudes (Nationalist, Biculturalist, Multiculturalist Racial, and Multiculturalist Inclusive).

An important aspect of this revised framework is that individuals are assumed to have some levels of all of these attitudes. Thus, an individual's racial identity is based on the pattern of racial identity attitudes that they manifest rather than on any single attitude. Indeed, Cross and Vandiver (2001, p. 388) argued that no subscale score on the CRIS should be interpreted "in the absence of the other subscale scores." Recent research has provided support for the hypothesis that there are generalizable Black racial identity attitude clusters (Worrell, Vandiver, Schaefer, Cross, & Fhagen-Smith, 2006) in the population.

Cross, W. E., Jr., & Vandiver, B. J. (2001). Nigrescence theory and measurement: Introducing the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS). In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (2nd ed., pp. 371-393). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Worrell, F. C., Cross, W. E., Jr., & Vandiver, B. J. (2001). Nigrescence theory: Current status and challenges for the future. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 29, 201-213.

Worrell, F. C., Vandiver, B. J., Cross, W. E., Jr., & Fhagen-Smith, P. E. (2004). Reliability and structural validity of Cross Racial Identity Scale scores in a sample of African American adults. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 30, 489-505.

Worrell, F. C., Vandiver, B. J., Schaefer, B. A., Cross, W. E., Jr., & Fhagen-Smith, P. E. (2006). Generalizing nigrescence profiles: A cluster analysis of Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) scores in three independent samples. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 34, 519-547.