PREJUDICE

THE TARGET'S

PERSPECTIVE

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IMPLICATIONS OF CULTURAL CONTEXT

AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY AND POSSIBLE SELVES

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INTRODUCTION

One's everyday choices and behaviors appear idiosyncratic, the result of highly personalized goals, desires, and motivations. Yet research and theorizing in social (e.g., Haslam, Oakes, Turner, & McGarty, 1996; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994) and cultural psychology (e.g., Kagitcibasi, 1996; Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996; Oyserman & Markus, 1993) suggests that these choices may in fact be colored by social representations of what it means to be a successful person, a good or moral person, a person of worth. The ways we organize experience, how we make sense of ourselves, our goals and motivations, all importantly depend on the ways these concepts are socially represented within a society and the sociocultural niches we occupy within that society (e.g., Kagitcibasi, 1996; Oyserman & Packer, 1996; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; Shaver, Wu, & Schwartz, 1992).

The role of cultural context in the everyday understandings of individuals has been highlighted in cross-cultural work suggesting that cultures differ both in the

ways life tasks are structured and the normative role of individual difference and
social embeddedness (e.g., Hofstede, 1991; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis,
1989). More and more the insights gained from this cross-cultural work on indi-
vidualism and collectivism are being utilized to make sense of the personal and
social identities individuals within heterogeneous societies such as that in the
United States create to organize experience, regulate affect, and control motiva-
tion and behavior (e.g., Cameron & Lalonde, 1994; Gurin, Hurtado, & Peng,
1994; Kowalski & Wolfe, 1994; Oyserman, 1993; Oyserman, Sakamoto, &
Lauffer, in press). Thus, who one is and might become is importantly a social
product that, we will argue, has important motivational and self-regulatory
consequences.

In this chapter we first describe the individualism and collectivism as cultural
frames, emphasizing the collectivist roots of racial and ethnic identity. Then we
discuss the social representation of race and ethnicity and how this representation
influences racial and ethnic identity for African Americans. We then explain how
racial and ethnic identity can function to moderate the risk of individualistic
cultural frames for minority group members, buffer individuals from racism, and
motivate minority group members to achieve their goals. We propose that this
resiliency-promoting function is most likely to happen when ethnic or racial
identity is chronically or situationally salient and when this identity includes
three components: a sense of connectedness to other African Americans, an
awareness of racism or structural barriers, and achievement as centrally con-
nected to being an African American. While African American identity is our
specific focus, we see the insights gained from this work as providing insight into
other ethnic identities and the broader social identity of being American (e.g.,
Hudson, 1995).

A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

AMERICAN INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM

Cultural psychology has highlighted the diverse nature of cultural assumptions
as to what is considered central, moral, and good, and what is the basic unit of
analyses in understanding human behavior. One of the more fruitful lines of
research in this area has been contrast between cultural individualism and col-
lectivism in terms of their divergent social representations of personhood (e.g.,
Oyserman, 1993; Schwartz, 1990; Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Triandis, 1995).
What is the social representation of personhood within American society? Amer-
ican society is generally considered to be an individualistic one (e.g., Triandis,
1995). Individualism as a cultural lens focuses attention on the individual rather
than the context within which the individual is embedded. That is, Americans are
said to focus primarily on individual traits and attributes, to view personal inde-
pendence as an important value, to believe that individuals are defined primarily

by their achievements, and to believe that the individual is the causal agent, not his or her circumstances (Hsu, 1983). Within this cultural frame, individuals rather than contexts, roles, and processes are viewed as the nexus of causality. Following from this social representation of personhood, individuals are more likely to utilize information about the person than the situation in making causal attributions, often underestimating the influence of context (Ross & Nisbett, 1991).

Collectivism conversely is often portrayed as prototypically emanating from non-Western European societies. It involves a focus on the interdependence between individuals, a sense of common fate, the centrality of family, and the importance of the social unity (Chan, 1991; Fugita & O'Brien, 1991; Lee, 1994; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Rosenberger, 1992; Takaki, 1994). Context is very important in the cultural lens of collectivism, each individual is viewed as part of the context, with a task of striving to fulfill his or her social roles as well as he or she can. Given this emphasis on fulfilling social roles, collectivists have been found less likely to make self-serving attributions. They are less likely to externalize causality for failure and internalize causality for success (e.g., Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

IMPLICATIONS FOR MINORITIES

Although America has often been used as the prototype of individualism, increased attention to the American multiethnic, multicultural population has led to consensus that many Americans, particularly minorities, are likely to be socialized into both individualistic and collectivist world views (e.g., Fowers & Richardson, 1996; Phinney, 1996; Sampson, 1988). Also, while individualism has been described as encouraging a focus on the individual and not the group, American society clearly does take social groups into account—especially ethnic and racial groups. This means that the collectivistic social representation of personhood continues to be elicited in American society. The social roles and memberships associated with ethnic and racial groups involve common fate and interdependence, aspects of collectivism (e.g., Phinney & Cobb, 1996). Ethnic and racial minority identity must take into account (1) the family-oriented focus of interdependence (e.g., Chan, 1991) and the more general influence of a collectivist world view on sense of common fate (e.g., Myers, 1993; Oyserman, 1993; Triandis, 1995); (2) a minority group member's need to take into account the possibility of negative stereotyping or devaluation of one's group by others in America (e.g., Crocker & Major, 1989); and (3) a minority group's need to integrate achievement and group identity (e.g., Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995). In fact, our research with African American and Asian American youth and young adults suggests that racial ethnic identity often does contain these three components (i.e., family relatedness and pride in heritage-connectedness to traditions, awareness of discrimination-barriers, and achievement as integral to group membership; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; Oyserman & Sakamoto, in press; Oyserman, Sanchez-Burks, & Harrison, 1997).

Given its collectivist roots, it is perhaps not surprising that racial and ethnic minority identity in the United States is likely to correlate positively with collectivism (Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997). Thus feelings of connectedness, awareness of obstacles, and embedded achievement, components of ethnic identity, correlate with the belief that individuals can be best understood as parts of social groups. Using Crocker's collective self-esteem scale (e.g., Crocker & Major, 1989), we also found that collectivism is correlated with positive feelings about one's ethnic group generally (Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997).

Our research suggests that acculturation leads to high levels of individualism among racial and ethnic minorities in the United States (Oyserman et al., 1995; Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997; Oyserman, Sakamoto, & Lauffer, in press; Rueda-Riedle & Oyserman, 1997). However, this research also suggests that collectivism continues to play a role in the life perspectives and everyday behaviors of minorities. That is, individuals are socialized in both worldviews and those high in collectivism have a greater sense of social obligation (Oyserman et al., in press) and have a more detailed representation of the specific roles and obligations they have toward family and other in-groups (e.g., Coon & Oyserman, 1997).

SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

In contemporary America, social representations of race and ethnicity carry with them presumptive knowledge about what an individual member of the race can or cannot do, should or should not do. Thus, young African American men are assumed to be ill-educated, non-middle class, dangerous, and potentially violent. Whether they choose this representation or not, that is who they *are* to others (Beale-Spencer, Cunningham, & Swanson, 1995). This social representation is so embedded into our popular culture that is used as part of the visual hook in a soft drink commercial that juxtaposes our fear of African American street youth with the commercial success of African American hip hop attire. Further, while individual assertion and striving achievement, intelligence, and academic skill are valued in the United States, those who are non-middle class, nonmale, and non-White are stereotyped as having fewer of these capacities (e.g., Steele, 1997). Yet these social representations of minorities do not necessarily take into account how minorities define themselves and their own group.

Class and race are deeply connected with larger society's social representation of race. Thus, in the course of his trial, O.J. Simpson was initially described as an "honorary White" to underscore his privilege. Later, his lawyers were accused of "playing the race card" when they reminded the jurors of his Blackness. Commentary and letters to the editor questioned whether O.J. was "Black enough" to be allowed use of this "card." Being African American, they felt, entailed a way of life that O.J was perceived as not embodying.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MINORITIES

Minorities must make sense of themselves in terms of what it means to be a member of a racial or ethnic group in contemporary American. They face the simultaneous task of creating a sense of self in terms of their own personal characteristics, traits and competencies and the content and nature of their social identities (Oyserman *et al.*, 1997). To be effective, one's personal identity must involve some sense of competence and efficacy now and in the future. But for minorities, one's self-concept is not solely personal: it is importantly social as well. A key social identity is one's gendered racial–ethnic identity. We propose that ethnic identity can reduce risk and promote positive outcomes for minorities to the extent that it buffers individuals from feelings of depression and anxiety, promotes feelings of competence and efficacy, and focuses attention on culturally central goals such as school achievement.

However, research to date has not focused sufficiently on ways ethnic identity may function to motivate action in important life domains. The research literature suffers from lack of uniform definitions as to what ethnic identity is and how it can be measured. Ethnic identity is commonly defined as positive in-group attitudes and in-group identification. Thus defined, it is correlated with higher self-esteem, less stress, and less delinquent involvement (McCreary, Slavin, & Berry, 1996; Beale-Spencer, Cunningham, & Swanson, 1995). Further, Bat-Chava and Steen's (1996) recent meta-analysis of doctoral and master theses studies suggests a moderate connection between various measures of ethnic identity and self-esteem. Individuals who feel that being a member of their group is important, feel connected to their group, and carry out behaviors to make this connection clear, tend to feel good about themselves. However, we propose that ethnic identity is an important part of self-concept and as such does more than promote as sense of well being.

SELF-CONCEPT STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

Self-concept contains a store of autobiographical memories but it is not simply a store of autobiographical memory. The self functions to (1) lend meaning and organization to experiences—thoughts, feelings, and actions; and (2) to motivate action by providing incentives, standards, plans, strategies, and scripts for behavior (Oyserman & Markus, 1993). Thus the self-concept is both content—who I am now, who I was and who I might become, and a motivated process—seeking out, organizing, and storing information about the self (Oyserman & Markus, 1993). Possible selves, the future oriented component of self-concept, are particularly important to this motivational function of the self. Possible selves can be one's positive expectations as well as one's feared or to-be-avoided selves. Having detailed positive expected selves provides one with a goal to approach. Having strategies to work toward these selves and believing that one is currently working

toward becoming like one's positive expected selves is implicated with better outcomes (Oyserman & Saltz, 1993). Similarly, having strategies to avoid becoming like one's feared selves reduces risk of negative outcomes (Oyserman, Sanchez-Burks, & Harrison, 1997). Because possible selves often involve goals that can be attained or avoided only as the result of sustained action over time, preservation of motivation and the ability to seek out alternative routes to moving toward one's positive and away from one's negative possible selves over time is critical. We have termed "balanced" the situation in which one has both a positive expected self and a feared or to-be-avoided self in the same domain. Having both positive, approach motivation, and negative, avoidance motivation in the same domain is related to better attainments in that domain (Oyserman & Markus, 1990a).

IMPLICATIONS FOR MINORITIES:
THE TRIPARTITE MODEL OF IDENTITY

We propose that for African American and other racial and ethnic minority individuals, racial-ethnic identity is integral to the process of developing possible selves and reducing negative consequences of stereotypes. The sense one makes of what is possible and plausible in the future for oneself is contingent on one's vision of what is possible and plausible for people like oneself—one's sociocultural group. Other researchers have noted that a positive sense of one's group membership and connectedness to one's ethnic or racial group is central to well-being (e.g., Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994; Cross, 1991). Further, an awareness of racism and the obstacles that it may create provides a means of shielding ones' sense of competence by providing a nonself-denigrating explanation for failures and setbacks (e.g., Cose, 1993; Essed, 1990; Parham & Helms, 1985). However, these two components of identity alone do not provide motivational direction or goals. Because achievement is both central to individualism and a key component of stereotypes, issues related to achievement need to be answered at this basic level. We propose that by viewing achievement as part of being African American, identification with this goal is facilitated. Such identification promotes school and academic achievement and persistence and reducing risk of disidentification with school and "cultural inversion" of these values by which school is viewed as not "African American" (e.g., Ford, 1992; Fordham, 1988; Steele, 1988).

The importance of defining school and academic achievement as central to one's social identity as an African American, can be seen in case studies of successful male African American students as described by Bowser and Perkins (1991). These students describe the ways in which significant others in their lives centralized school success, making it an important part of what it meant to be a good son, brother, student, and so on. Within this relational context, youth came to view themselves as someone who could and must do well in school. Further, these African American males stated that it was in the context of these relation-

ships that they came to believe that school success was possible for them in the future—that they could develop strategies to do well and avoid failure. In this way, working hard and getting good grades became integral to their social identity and resulted in academically focused possible selves that kept the youths focused and persistent in their efforts to attain school success. Similarly, in exploring underachievement at the university level, Steele and his colleagues (Aronson *et al.*, this volume; Steele *et al.*, 1995; Steele, 1997) have suggested that being African American is an example of a socially marked identity. Making marked identities such as femaleness or Blackness salient elicits vulnerability to academic underachievement. Those with marked identities who wish to succeed are not able to pursue success single-mindedly because their "marked" identity provides explanations for failures and setbacks, suggesting that failure is unavoidable.

Thus, for minorities, knowing how one is viewed by others allows one to take this into account in making sense of one's experiences, regulating affect and making choices about one's goals and behaviors. We propose that racial and ethnic identity require at least three components in order to fulfill these functions. These components have been alluded to above; they are: an awareness of obstacles, stereotypes, racism; a sense of connectedness; and embedded achievement. An awareness of racism must be incorporated into the self-concept because it is part of everyday life and therefore must be taken into account if one is to make sense of one's experiences. Such an *awareness of racism,* together with a sense of *connectedness*—a positive sense of one's group membership; serve the affect regulation function of the self—maintaining personal well-being. Further, knowing that one is likely to be viewed as a member of a stigmatized group rather than as an individual, knowing that feedback may be ambiguous or misleading due to one's category membership, and so on, provide a means to create a sense of self as competent and capable in spite of negative feedback one might receive due to group membership.

While an awareness of racism is important, this awareness alone does not foster self-regulatory focus on the achievement domains centralized by individualistic society. In order to do that, African American identity must contain a self-relevant goal of being smart and doing well in school and believing that school success is part of one's racial or ethnic identity ("It is important that we do well; We can succeed at school, we are smart"). Together with an awareness of obstacles brought on by the awareness of racism component, this *embedded achievement* component will organize experience and regulate affect in the service of this goal.

The content of African American identity can therefore motivate positive self-regulatory focus in the very domains that form the basis of stereotypes about African Americans. Because it is rooted in collectivist traditions, racial or ethnic identity is also likely to contain a sense of connectedness, obligation, and common fate with other group members. Although it is an identity and therefore can be studied within the same framework as other identities, we focus specifically on racial and ethnic identity due to the problematic and controversial nature of having a nonmajority race or ethnicity.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SELF-CONCEPT

ETHNIC IDENTITY AS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

In creating a sense of self, one must balance the selves one would like to become with those one believes one is likely to become (Oyserman & Markus, 1990b). But who does one want to be and how does one gauge the plausibility of attaining such a self? The process of identifying such self-guides is intimately socially embedded (e.g., Higgins, 1996; Oyserman & Packer, 1996). That is, the issues and vocabulary of one's time and place in the world are raw materials informing one of the selves that are worthy and important, the traits and attributes that go with these selves, and the nature of the relationship between individuals and situations (e.g., Hwang, 1987; Showers, 1995). In this way, like other identities, the content and structure of ethnic identity are a product of both micro contexts—here and now and face-to-face contexts; and macro contexts—historical and political, contexts within which individuals and groups create, maintain, and foster their identities (e.g., Oyserman & Packer, 1996). For this reason, both the specific content of one's racial and ethnic identity, one's valuation of the identity, and the chronic and situational salience of the identity are likely to vary across time and place. This socially constructed sense of self as having a racial or ethnic identity is especially important as individuals seek to make sense of what they are good at, and what they should be focused on. Thus, a student can know how many problems he or she solved on a math task or the number of homework assignments he or she handed in on time; but the meaning of these behaviors is a social construction that is linked to racial and ethnic identity.

As is illustrated in the following example, racial and ethnic identity are both uniquely personal and private and uniquely social and public in nature. Tiger Woods, the young golf star, described himself as Cablinasian rather than African American in order to demonstrate his multiracial background (see Pinderhughes, 1995). In doing so he unleashed highly vocal positive and negative responses in editorials, letters to the editor, and conversations among individuals. His claim to a multiethnic identity was welcomed by those who saw this statement by a public figure as legitimizing their own sense of self. Others decried his statement as a blow for Black racial solidarity, an effort on his part to ward off the subtle detrimental effect of being Black on assessments of excellence (see Biernat, Vescio, & Green, 1996) and therefore disloyalty to the group, an effort to reject group membership (see Ng, 1989). Being of African descent in America clearly is a marked category, it is a social category that is represented in the culture, it carries meanings and behavioral scripts. Numerous studies documenting popular knowledge of stereotypes about African Americans (e.g., Judd, Park, Ryan, Brauer, & Kraus, 1995) drive home the point that race and ethnicity are clearly social identities in that they carry shared meaning not only for members of the in-group but also to members of the larger society.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY AS SOCIAL IDENTITY

Like any other social identity, individuals both claim and are claimed by others to be bearers of racial and ethnic identities (e.g., Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Phinney, 1996). Social representations of race include who is and who is not a member and what that identity means in terms of the behaviors, characteristics, goals, and attributes of the individual (e.g., Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Banaji, Hardin, & Rothman, 1993; Phinney, 1996). Social psychological and sociological research and theorizing about the content and structure of racial and ethnic identity, often based in social identity theories (Taylor & Dube, 1986; Turner et al., 1987), assumes that individuals have a basic need for a positive sense of self (e.g., Taylor & Brown, 1988; Tesser, 1986) and that social identities also serve this need. Individuals are assumed to strive to create a positive sense of themselves and their groups to the extent that the group is self-defining. This basic formulation of positive social identity is utilized explicitly in social psychological formulations of ethnic identity (e.g., Crocker & Major, 1989; Oyserman et al., 1995). In addition, the situation of groups devalued by powerful others has been fruitfully examined within this model. Important insights from work in this tradition are that while individuals can discount both general and specific feedback from out group members (Landrine, 1992); they may face vulnerability to stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes when this is made salient (e.g., Steele, 1997).

Unfortunately, when the out-group is also larger society—the majority—it will naturally claim as self-describing those attributes most valued in the larger society (Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; see also Branscombe & Ellemers, this volume). Thus, for example, in the case of African Americans and European Americans, academic attainment and intellect, valued by both groups, were claimed by the European Americans. Some interesting work on African American youth asks whether being African American is a social identity that competes with a personal identity of being successful in school (e.g., Fordham, 1988; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Graham, 1994; Hudson, 1991; Ogbu, 1991; Tripp, 1991). As yet evidence for such competition is inconclusive (Ford, 1992; Wong & Eccles, 1996) in that it appears that African American youth value education and aspire to the kind of jobs that require higher education but they are also vulnerable to stereotypes about their ability as African Americans (Steele, 1988; Oyserman & Harrison, 1997).

Social identity theory in fact describes a number of identity management options that can be applied to the situation of minorities within a majority context (Haslam et al., 1996; Ng, 1989; Tajfel, 1978; van Knippenberg, 1989). Individualization and individual mobility are individual strategies based on rejection of any group membership and personal movement to a more privileged social group respectively. Social change, social competition, and social creativity are collective strategies. Taken in order, they refer to methods of improving the in-group's valuation by changing the way one's group is viewed by society, directly challenging the position of the in-group on attributes valued by larger society, and

improving the in-group's valuation by changing the attributes used to evaluate the in-group.

Following these collective strategies, African Americans could contest negative perceptions and stereotypes about individuals of presumed African heritage. They could contest academic achievement and intellect as defining individuals of presumed European heritage and claim these attributes as defining themselves. Or, alternatively, African Americans could contest the value of these attributes altogether, centralizing other traits and attributes. To the extent that these processes of social identity creation work, both groups could agree that African Americans were defined by a number of positive attributes. However, attributes centrally valued as part of the Protestant work ethic within American society— striving achievement, hard work, and pursuit of academic, intellectual, and work-related goals (e.g., Tropman, 1989), have also been preserved as European American social identities, particularly for middle class male European Americans. Because that which is quintessentially American had been co-opted as also White, male, and middle class, others have to create social identities that can integrate both American-ness and the other component of who they are, be that an ethnic, racial, or gender group. This in fact may be partially at least a reasonable model of some forms of identity construction among African Americans (see Oyserman, Sanchez-Burks, & Harrison, 1997, for a review).

Literature describing African American identity suggests that some positive yet less centrally valued attributes such as athletic and musical ability and personal style were centralized within African American identity. This process allowed African Americans to claim positive social identities as athletes, musicians, and arbitrators of personal style (Dyson, 1993). Yet it did not deal with the central issue of academic and intellectual achievement as main pathways to socio-economic and political power. In attempting to make sense of African American underachievement in academic domains, scholars in the area began asking if African American peer culture actively discouraged school success through a process of "cultural inversion." That is, being African American was understood to be that which was "not European American" such that when school success was claimed by European Americans, African American peer culture discouraged it. To the extent that academic achievement was not contained within the social identity of African American youth, then those youth who did attempt to do well in school might be labeled as "acting White," "oreos," and other terms meant to highlight the perception of others that they were attempting to be White or leave the group.

Individually, African Americans could attain academic achievement, thus improving their personal sense of self and perhaps gaining enough cultural and economic capital in the process to provide more flexibility in self-definitional choices (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Ogbu, 1991) but such individual movement requires a particular stance with regard to the nature of the relationship between the in-group and larger society (see Cross, 1991). If doing well in school was defined as being White, an African American child could attempt to reconceptual-

ize himself or herself as mostly defined by membership in a superordinate category such as "American" or member of humanity at large. But the chance to redefine oneself without regard to one's racial or ethnic group may be more genuinely afforded only to those who have sufficient cultural capital due to membership in middle and upper socioeconomic classes. Further, stereotypes about African Americans are class linked; when asked to describe middle class characteristics, respondents mention being White while when asked to describe lower class characteristics, being a minority member or an African American is a descriptor (Hoyt & Miller, 1996). Thus bringing to mind famous African Americans makes respondents view the category of Blacks more favorably (Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Wanke, 1995). Success, middle class, and professional status are not part of majority social representations of African Americans. Thus, because their "fit" with the social representation of Blackness is problematic, middle- and upper-class African Americans may be less likely to be always perceived as and responded to in terms of their Blackness.

RACE AND ETHNICITY AS CHRONICALLY OR SITUATIONALLY SALIENT COMPONENTS OF IDENTITY

When race and ethnicity are perceived as likely to matter, to be used to make sense of who a person is, might do, think, or feel (e.g., Wittenbrink, Gist, & Hilton, 1997; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 1997); then race or ethnicity is likely to be part of one's definition of oneself. In such circumstances, not defining oneself in terms of race or ethnicity would reduce one's ability to make sense of and to predict responses of others to the self, a key function of self-concept.

While racial and ethnic identity are ingroup products, they are constrained by social context (Hogg & Abrams, 1990). Under certain circumstances, race and ethnicity and therefore racial and ethnic identity may become a component of one's sense of self as a chronically salient self-schema (Markus, 1977). However, like any other component of self-concept, situational variation in accessibility of racial and ethnic identity as well as variability in the chronic salience and centrality of this component of identity are to be expected (e.g., Hogg & Abrams, 1990; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994; Stryker & Serpe, 1994). In spite of this variability, we propose having some representation of oneself in terms of one's ethnic or racial group membership is likely because of the marked status of ethnic and racial group membership. Perhaps only those minority group members who are otherwise privileged may have a chance to consider having or not having racial identity as part of their self-concept. While race and ethnicity and the implications and meaning these constructs have for oneself may rarely be accessed as part of working self-concept (e.g., Markus & Kunda, 1986); racialized self-views can be accessed under certain conditions (e.g., Kunda, Sinclair, & Griffin, 1997).

Thus, like all components of self, racial and ethnic identity is situationally dependent and can be activated by constraints and demands in the context even

when this identity is not chronically salient. While an individual may not always be defined by his or her racial and ethnic group membership, when membership is made salient, a racial or ethnic identity seems to be waiting in the wings and can easily be made situationally salient.

RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR THE TRIPARTITE MODEL

Research and theorizing in sociological and social psychological traditions has made clear that identity is complex, and that components of identity can be chronically or situationally salient or central. From the early work of Rosenberg (1979) it was also clear that members of stigmatized groups can maintain a positive sense of personal esteem. Crocker and her colleagues showed that minorities can also maintain a positive sense of group or collective esteem in the face of prejudice (Crocker et al., 1994). However, this research tradition has not provided specific insights into the content of ethnic or racial identity.

Some theorists of African American identity propose that it is the process of noticing that race matters and one's stance with regard to being African American, being a minority, and being a member of society at large that form the content of African American identity (e.g., Cross, 1991). More recent formulations of African American identity modify the specific ways in which African Americans can define what it means to be an African American; with responses ranging from assimilation into majority society to a humanistic approach (e.g., Sellers, 1993; Sellers et al., in press). These formulations focus on the stance of the minority with regard to relations with the majority and with larger society. While useful, these formulations do not provide a basis for specific hypotheses about the ways ethnic and racial identity can serve the basic functions of self-concept—organize experience, regulate affect and motivation—promoting successful goal attainment within American individualistic society.

Therefore, we developed our tripartite model of African American identity, proposing that African American identity promotes a sense of well-being and effective self-regulation when it contains three elements: a belief that achievement is part of being African American, a sense of connectedness to the African American community and heritage, and an awareness of obstacles and the possibility of racism (Oyserman et al., 1995). Specifically, we proposed that African Americans develop a gendered African American identity schema to (1) make sense of the self as a group member; (2) lend meaning and organization to current and historical racism, limited opportunities and successes of African Americans; and (3) organize self-relevant knowledge about personal effort and its meaning as an African American male or female (Oyserman et al., 1995). We view these components of identity as serving the well-being and motivational functions of the self.

In a series of preliminary studies we found that African American identity is particularly important for youth low in academic efficacy. Using this tripartite model of racial–ethnic identity, we have shown that African American identity is related to having more achievement related possible selves, increased feelings of perceived competence and efficacy, reduced depressive symptomatology and increased school effort—more study time and more persistence on school tasks (Oyserman et al., 1995; Oyserman et al., 1997).

Specifically, we hypothesized that racial–ethnic identity can have a positive influence on both academic outcomes and psychosocial well-being if it contains three components—a sense of connection to and identification with African American community and heritage, identification with learning and school achievement as part of being African American, and an awareness of obstacles and barriers that one may encounter because of one's group membership (e.g., Oyserman et al., 1995; Oyserman et al., 1997).

We suggest that ethnic identity serves as a connecting link between the individualistic achievement frame of majority society and the more collectivist heritage of ethnic minority youth. In this way it makes achievement a part of social identity, enhancing its value and reducing possible conflict between personal and social goals. Ethnic identity is also posited to serve as a mechanism to highlight the possibility of racism, stereotyping, and prejudice, thereby framing causal reasoning along these lines and reducing vulnerability to stereotyping. Finally, ethnic identity is posited to enhance goal attainment by highlighting the importance of persistence.

In a series of studies (Oyserman et al., 1995; Oyserman et al., 1997; Oyserman & Harrison, 1997) using experimental and survey methodologies (both cross-sectional and prospective across one school year) and involving approximately 400 middle school youth in Detroit, we found evidence for the impact of African American identity on school performance, depressive symptoms, school attachment, and possible selves. First, when identity is made salient, youth whose sense of self as an African American contains all three identity components—connectedness, awareness of racism, and embedded achievement—persist significantly longer at school tasks than do youth whose sense of self as an African American does not contain all three components. The embedded achievement component was found to be of particular importance for persistence.

Second, repeated measures analyses of variance showed that being high in all three components of African American identity significantly predicted both more time spent in homework in the late fall and an increase in study time over the school year. In contrast, youth low in all three identity components both spent less time studying in the late fall and actually reported decreased time spent in homework over the school year. By the end of the school year, youth differing in African American identity reported widely divergent time in homework, with the low-identity group reporting an average of about 5 minutes a school night in homework and the high-identity group reporting an average of about 20 minutes a school night in homework.

Further, across the school year, African American identity was found to reduce vulnerability to depressive symptoms. Of particular importance were the connectedness and awareness of racism components. With regard to school bonding, the connectedness and awareness of racism components of identity were particularly important such that youth who felt connected and aware of racism also reported feeling closer to teachers and believed that school was relevant to their everyday lives. In addition, repeated measures analyses of variance showed that youth high in the three components of ethnic identity were significantly more likely to develop balanced possible selves across the school year. While feeling academically inadequate and having low academic efficacy was related to worse school outcomes, connectedness moderated this relationship, reducing risk of poor school performance among youth who felt academically inadequate. Finally, together with balance in academic possible selves, African American identity significantly predicted performance on standardized tests of academic ability as well as grade point average. These findings suggest that racial and ethnic identity can positively impact on academic outcomes as well as reduce the negative consequences of personal feelings of inadequacy.

In a separate study, we sought to explore the extent to which racial and ethnic identity may relate to feelings of academic efficacy. In this study, we manipulated identity salience and examined the impact of identity content and salience on feelings of academic efficacy. Using repeated measures analyses, we found that feelings of academic efficacy drop significantly over the course of 8th grade but that youth higher in African American identity have higher academic efficacy both in the fall and in the spring (Oyserman & Harrison, 1997). We further found that when racial and ethnic identity is made salient, youth low in African American identity feel less academically efficacious. This negative effect of identity salience is not found for youth high in African American identity. This effect was particularly strong in the end of the school year when youth may already have been more concerned about their academic competence as they faced the end of 8th grade and the transition to high school.

CLOSING REMARKS

In this chapter, we sought to highlight the social–cultural nature of the self-concept, with particular focus on the content and structure of racial and ethnic identity. Using the situation of African Americans as our prime example, we proposed that Americans who are also members of ethnic and racial minorities must forge a sense of self that takes into account a cultural heritage based in both collectivism and individualism. The collectivist social representation of personhood includes a focus on family relatedness, and interdependence among group members (e.g., Burlew et al., 1992; Min, 1995), while the individualist social representation includes a focus on striving independence, personal agency, and personal achievement (e.g., Oyserman et al., 1995; Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997).

This integration of individualistic and collectivistic social representations occurs within a context that traditionally stereotypes minorities as lacking in the valued attributes of majority society. We proposed that the individualistic social representation of personhood, with its emphasis on the individual as the basic unit, is risky for minority group members' sense of well-being, efficacy, and goal attainment. A collectivist social representation of personhood may serve to buffer individuals because collectivism promotes processing of context as important in causal reasoning.

This focus on context is especially important for minorities because contexts may be structured in ways that reduce group members' ability to succeed. In addition, for minority group members, focusing on one's self as causal axis is risky because members of minority groups are stereotypically perceived as less able to attain culturally valued goals than are majority group members (e.g., Steele, 1997). Therefore one's failures will be viewed as consonant with social representations of members of one's group rather than as unusual or uncharacteristic events that must be explained. When failure is attributed to stable characteristics about the self, motivation drops and effort over time flags (Dweck, 1996). Individuals may then stop trying, stop learning and persisting even in tasks in which they might be able eventually to succeed and instead focus on alternatives where success seems more likely. Because of this, minority group members must develop a sense of self that can both provide a means to reduce vulnerability to stereotypes and make salient contextually embedded structural barriers and also maintain focus on attaining successful outcomes such as academic achievement rather than only avoiding problems and setbacks in these domains (e.g., Higgins, 1997).

Taking this interaction into account, we proposed a model of ethnic and racial identity that contains a sense of connectedness to one's group, an awareness of obstacles for members of one's group and a belief that one can attain culturally valued academic achievement as a member of one's group. We proposed that racial and ethnic identity is likely to be part of the self-concept of African Americans and that the content of racial and ethnic identity is likely to have consequences for the everyday functions of self-concept, especially when this component of identity is chronically or situationally salient.

In a series of preliminary studies, we showed that components of ethnic identity are related to both individualism and collectivism and thus, do serve to connect individuals to their cultural heritage and to American society at large. In addition, ethnic identity as conceptualized here, does relate to academic performance and well-being. Our research group is now exploring the extent to which these components of identity can also be found to function similarly for minorities in other individual achievement oriented countries. If the ethnic identity components can be found and if they function similarly in countries other than the United States, it will suggest that ethnic identity serves both as a bridge between collective traditions and individualistic current contexts and as a buffer between the self and a negatively appraising context.

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