Chapter 3: Self-Attributes and Identity

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Chapter Overview

“The fowl does not act like the goat.” –Ghanaian proverb

- Definitions of Self-Esteem, Self-Concept, and Self-Identity (Race and Ethnicity)

- Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Black Self-Concept

- Development of Self-Identity (Eurocentric vs. Afrocentric)
Definitions

- **Self-Esteem**: A person’s overall emotional evaluation of his or her own self worth.
  - “One’s affective or emotional reaction toward and feeling about oneself that is also evaluative” (66)

- **Self-Concept**: One’s beliefs about oneself; attempt to answer the question, “Who am I?”
  - “Involves beliefs and knowledge about the self and organizes and manages information about how we see ourselves” (66)

- **Self-Identity**: Awareness of and identification with oneself as a separate individual.
Identity Specifics

- **Social Identity**: The portion of an individual’s self-concept derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group
  - “Self-ascribed definitions that include social roles, reputation, values, and possibilities…nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, health status, and racial and ethnic identity” (67)

- **Racial Identity**: A sense of collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group
Other forms of relevant identity...

- **Sexual Identity**: Sexual orientation and one’s believes and feelings about the individual or individuals to whom one is sexually and romantically attracted.

- **Gender Roles**: The expectations and beliefs that people hold as to how males and females are supposed to feel, think, and act.

- **Gender Identity**: The individual’s sense of being psychologically male or female.
Self-concept Among African Americans

- Historically, African Americans have been portrayed as having a negative self-concept.
  - In modern cross-cultural studies, African Americans were shown to exhibit a more positive self-concept.

- Kardiner and Ovesey: Negative self-concept of African Americans is due to oppression, discrimination and inferior status in the United States.

  - Doll Studies
Models of Black Self-Concept

- Nobles’s Model of the Extended Self (1991): Asserted that people of African descent exhibited an extended self-concept that involving one’s community and family
  - “I am because we are, and because we are I am” (Mbiti, 1991, p. 106)

- Adelbert Jenkins’s Model of Self As an Agent of Change (1995): Defines the self as an active agent to promote change etc.

- Agentic personalities Vs. Collective personalities
Discussion Questions 1:

- What do you think the largest contributing factor is to one’s identity today? (Racial, social, familial etc.)
Identity Development

- Forms throughout a child’s life

- Initially base identity off of their surroundings, primarily their friends and family

- Eventually move on and understand themselves through individual external characteristics that primarily focus on internal, multidimensional, and situational factors.
Erik Erikson

Pre-School Stage (3-5 years old)

- Initiative vs. Guilt
- Interaction with environment

Adolescent Stage (12-18 years old)

- Identity vs. Role Confusion
- Self identity is determined
Marcia

Researched Erik Erikson’s ideas further in order to incorporate race and ethnicity

Four main identity statuses for adolescents:

1. Identity Achievement
2. Identity Moratorium
3. Identity Foreclosure
4. Identity Diffusion
Research on Adolescents

French, Seidman, Allen, and Aber (2006)

- Conducted studies about identity development instead of identity status
- used data from Adolescent Pathways Project

Yip, Seaton, and Sellers (2006)

- Explored Marcia’s four developmental stages further with studies among different age African Americans
- Found that most adolescents were in the moratorium stage
Nigrescence Models of Racial Identity

- Developed by African American psychologists Charles Thomas, William Cross, Janet Helms, and Thomas Parham
- Focuses on the role of race and ethnicity within identity development
- Five Stages:
  1. **Pre Encounter**: may feel embarrassed about being African American because of influence of White culture
  2. **Dissonance**: encounter an event that brings race to the forefront of their consciousness
  3. **Immersion and Emersion**: establishes a new way of thinking
  4. **Internalization**: internalizes new identity and lets go of anxiety about old one
  5. **Internalization Commitment**: possesses all characteristics of new identity and has full understanding of what it means to be Black
Discussion Question 2:

- Do you think other races experience a similar sort of “awakening” in terms of their racial identity and the impact it has on their life?
Racial and Ethnic Identity
Psychological Well-Being

- high racial & ethnic identity = positive psychological well-being
- *R. Sellers et al. (2006)*: more positive attitudes towards African Americans = a more positive psychological well-being
- *Hurd, Sellers, Cogburn, Butler-Barnes and Zimmerman (2012)*: neighborhood context with belief that others held less-positive view of African Americans had two results:
  - 1. fewer Black residents = less depression
  - 2. more Black residents = more depression
Racial and Ethnic Identity
Academic Achievement

- findings between this relationship offer two perspectives
  - 1. *Fordham & Ogbu (1986)*: high ethnic identity did not correlate with high academic achievement
    - high achieving students perceived as sell-outs, “acting White”
  - 2. *Spencer, Noll, Stoltzfus, and Harpalani (2001)*: students with higher Africentric identity had higher achievement
    - *Adelabu (2008)*: ethnic identity was positively correlated with GPA within the total sample
Youth Construction of Ethnic Identity & Academic Achievement

● *Nasir, McLaughlin, and Jones (2009):* two main configurations by urban public high school students in East Bayside, CA.

● 1. Street Savvy African American Identity - “gangsta,” “street,” school is regarded as a place to socialize

● 2. School-Oriented and Socially Conscious - student committed to community and social change

● *youth described as moving between both identities*
Racial and Ethnic Identity
Problem Behaviors

- ethnic identity - alternative to poor behaviors and resisting negative forces
- positive ethnic identity = identification with parents
- *Corneille & Belgrave (2007)*: youth with high ethnic identity = higher self-esteem & confidence
Summary of Racial and Ethnic Identity with Other Factors

- positive attributes
- increased self-esteem
- psychological well-being
- academic performance
- reduced problem behaviors
Media and Technology Influence on Self and Identity

- negative impact - portrays negative stereotypes of African Americans
- damaging during childhood and adolescence (developing of identity)
- can lead to misconceptions of African Americans
Discussion Question 3:

- Are there other factors that are influenced by racial and ethnic identity? Can those vary by race?
Media and Technology Influence Self-Esteem

- Ward (2004): regular exposure to sports programming & music videos correlated with negative components of self-esteem
  - However, viewing mainstream programs & African American prime-time were not as strongly correlated

*media may not be universally negative*
Sexual Identity

- Most research in this area has been conducted on white LGBTQ women and men
- African American LGBTQ
  - McLean: Two Stigmatized Identities
    - Being a racial minority and gay
  - Crawford, Allison, Zamboni, Soto: having both a strong racial and positive sexual identity can be associated with having the best psychological well being
Acculturation

- "Refers to the extent to which ethnic minorities participate in the cultural traditions, values, beliefs, and practices of their own culture versus the mainstream White culture" (86).
  - Traditional Acculturated Individuals
  - Highly Acculturated Individuals
  - Bicultural Individuals
- Acculturation and Mental Health
Racial Socialization

- Involves messages and practices that provide information concerning one’s race as it relates to:
  - (a) personal and group identity
  - (b) inter-group and inter-individual relationships
  - (c) the position of the social hierarchy

- Different kinds of messages:
  - Socialize their children into mainstream society
  - Socialize their children as a minority
  - Socialize their children into orientation of Black culture

- Associated with better functioning among African children
Gender Roles

- **Feminine Roles**
  - Taking care of others and showing concern for others
- **Masculine Roles**
  - Leadership and Independence
- **Different with African Americans**
  - tend to be more assertive, independent, and nurturing
  - historical context of having to take care of family in the context of racism and oppression
Practices for Increasing Positive Self-Attributes

● Rites-of-passage
  ○ Modeled after programs and practices in Africa
  ○ Four Stages
    ■ First Stage: Preparation and Awareness
    ■ Second Stage: Separation
    ■ Third: Transition
    ■ Final: Reincorporation

● Strong African American Families Program
  ○ Intervention program
  ○ Control groups and Intervention groups
  ○ Improvement in the intervention groups
Increasing Racial Socialization

- **Parents**
  - Discussing with their children about achievements of African Americans
  - Engaging in cultural activities

- **Schools**
  - Emphasizing the idea of equality
  - Children of different backgrounds working together
  - Incorporating multicultural lessons fully integrated into curriculum and not just emphasized during Black History Month
Discussion Question

If racial socialization in African American families is good and useful, would it also be good and useful in White families? Why or why not? How would it be different? What about Asian-American families? Latino families?