
Thus the picture of Black males that dominates popular media as well as the conceptualization that is generally advanced in the scholarly press is a picture of pathology bordering on hopelessness -- sometimes found even among those whose motivations appear to be humane and sympathetic (Gordon, 1999).

Reconsidering the African-American Adolescent Male: An Exercise in Responsible Psychology

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Overview

- The identity of African-American adolescent males extends beyond pathology.
- A different way of approaching research concerning African-American adolescent males must be utilized.
- Race-self complexity/double-consciousness aids in capturing a broader understanding of African-American adolescent males.

Ethics, Morality and Pedagogy

- It is *unethical* and *immoral* to engage the African-American (adolescent) male based on the *tangled pathology* documented by the *academy*, reinforced by the *media* and practiced by *society*.
- To do so *ignores* the individual, suggesting that behavioral abilities are based on the experience(s) of the whole person by *relegating to an entity* that is *strange* -- placing in a category that is “other”.
- Pedagogically, to operate under the assumption of the typically presented social science depiction of the African-American adolescent male is to be *ineffective* because you’ve not considered the *person* with respect to teaching *about, through* or *to* the individual/group.

Tangled Pathology (Gordon, Gordon & Nembhard, 1994)

- Demographic and Statistical Issues
- Psychosocial Issues
- Political/Economic Issues
- Educational Issues

Irresponsible v. Responsible Psychology

X African-American
adolescent males

*psychopaths/sociopaths,
conduct disorder*

- ✓ Necessitated use of judgment in approaching African-American adolescent males
- ✓ New questions (double-consciousness)
- ✓ New ways of seeing African-American adolescent males
- ✓ Employ different strategies in the capturing of the true identity of the individual (discourse analysis)
- ✓ Toward existentialism, a lived experience v. an objective, removed approach
- ✓ Authenticity v. inauthenticity

Approaching Existentialism

You can't see me (hip-hop lingua franca, circa 1993 - present).

The stone deaf do not listen, for there are no sounds for them to hear. But men who can listen perfectly are nevertheless likely to hear with effectiveness only words and sentences which seem to them to have relevance and meaning. A message may be lost for at least two reasons: because it is expressed in a code too hard to decipher, or because it appears to have no significance that is worthwhile (Niblett, 1954)

Come experience life as we know it -- as some of you should know it (Carter, 1997).

Existentialism as it Relates

- Not from outside/to be analyzed
- Thinker is always involved
- Commitment, responsibility
- Real experience, never fully comprehended by reason
- Balance

Toward a more Whole AAA Male

- Examining identity construction among African-American adolescent males using their interpretations.
- Committing one's self to hearing and understanding their voices.

Theoretical Framework

- Double-consciousness
- Universal Context of Racism
- Race Self Complexity
- Identity Construction
- Discourse Analysis

In this perilous world, if a Black boy wanted to live a halfway normal life and die a natural death he had to learn the art of how to get along with white folks (Mays, 1971).

Theoretical Framework

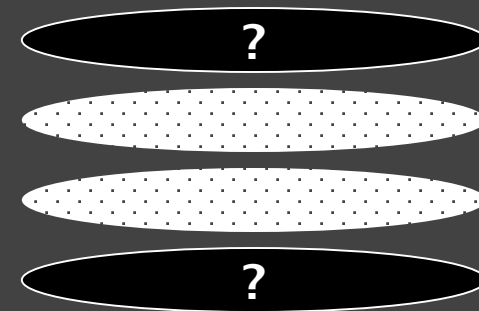
Universal Context of Racism & Double-consciousness

- Posits that racism is a psychological context/reality at any given time for African Americans (Jones, 2003).
- Within a universal context of racism, the process by which an individual negotiates mainstream and Black cultural (Boykin & Ellison, 1995; Jones, in press) experiences in an attempt to achieve a relatively stable unified identity (ISRL, 2004).

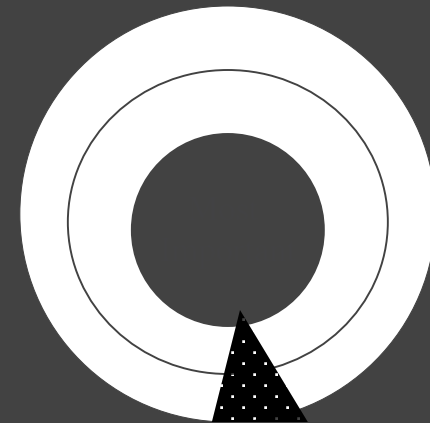
Theoretical Framework

Race Self Complexity (Winston, et. al, 2004)

- Race adds layer of complexity to the self system.
- Cultural Historical, unique historical experiences gives race psychological meaning incorporated into cultured patterns of thought, feelings and actions.
- Biopsychological, phenotypic visibility and variation provide links between biology and the psychological functioning of African-Americans.



Multi-Layered Self System



One Self Layer

Theoretical Framework

Identity Construction

- Individuals design who they are through narrative form (Bruner, 1986, 1990, 1993, 1999; Carr, 1986; MacIntyre, 1981; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Polkinghorne, 1988; Sarbin, 1986).
- Has a theoretical anchor that integrates narrative theories of personality, the internal life story, with discourse analysis.
- Narrative theories of personality explain that during adolescence, internalized narratives of self are created. This is motivated by a basic need that human beings have to create psychological unity and purpose (Singer, 1995; McAdams, 2001).

Theoretical Framework

Identity Construction (continued)

- Identity is something that is constructed for some purpose or to fulfill some psychological function.
- An act that is carried out by an individual within a particular social context.
- Discourse analytic orientation helps to get at the identity; language, text and talk are a tool that allow for the understanding of the dynamics of identity construction.

Theoretical Framework

Discourse Analysis

- Discourse analysis focuses on close analysis of talk and text.
- Method *and* perspective re: nature of language and its relationship to central issues of social science (Wood and Kroger, 2000).
- Language, text and talk are the pivotal piece(s)
- Focus on LTT allows for identity to be understood as a tool versus an achievement.

Activity

Exploration of African-American adolescent male identity via double-consciousness and narrative data.

Method

Participants

- Were not intended to be representative of a population
- Instrumental/advance double-consciousness theoretically
- Six African-American male students
- Range in age from 14 - 18 years
- Public and private high schools
- Selected based on interviews and individual discussion

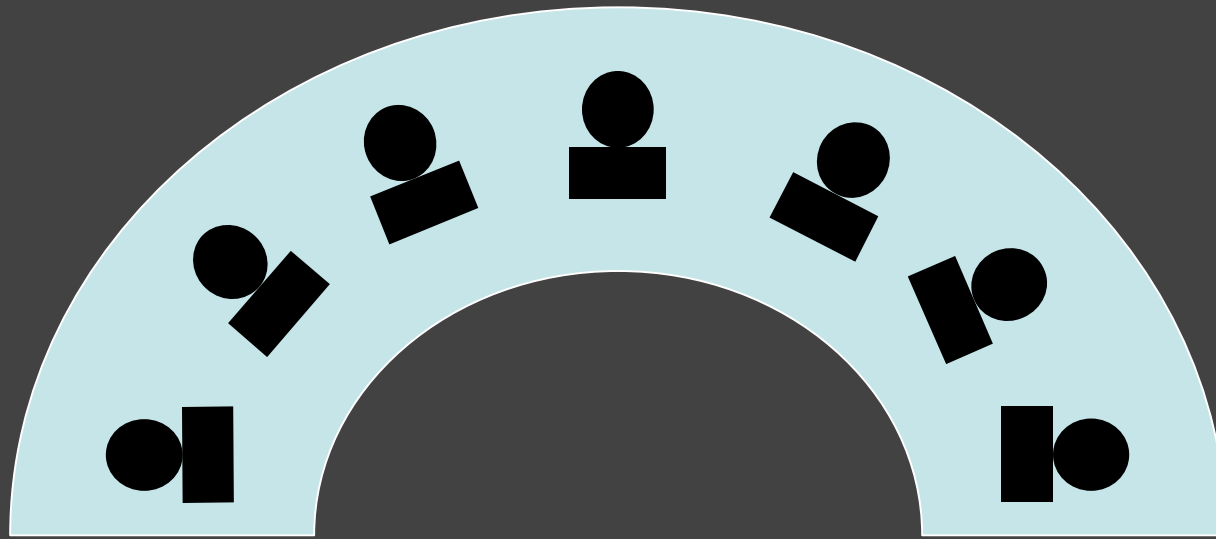
Method

Case Study

- To capture the complexity of identity
- Instrumental

Method

Case Study: *focus group*

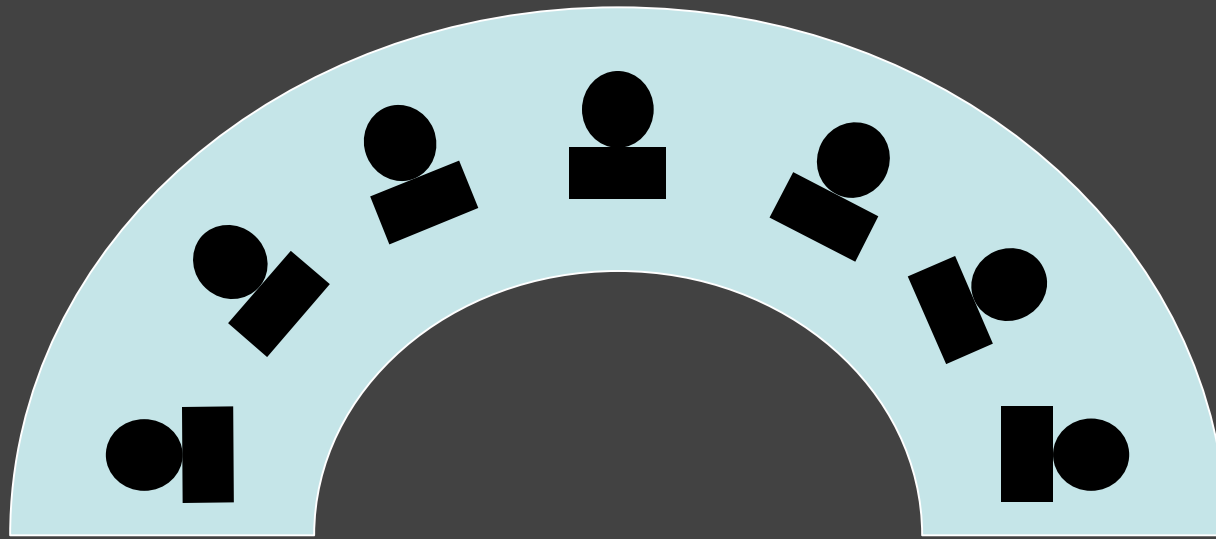


- Tool to capture identity construction in adolescents' discourse
- To gain an understanding of self through unique life experiences
- Discuss pre-determined topic areas linked to goal of the research study
- Led by a moderator.



Method

Procedure: *focus group*



- Twice a week, 1 hour, 4 weeks
- Life story-telling
- Audio and video
- Jeffersonian transcription
- Rules re: colloquial representations of words, pauses, conclusions, elongation of sentences and word emphasis represented in the transcript



Method

Discourse Analytic Strategy: *levels one through four*



- Transcripts
- Video
- Audio

Method

Discourse Analytic Strategy: *levels one through four*



- Transcripts
- Video
- Audio
- Determine bifurcation
- Congruence with double-consciousness

Method

Discourse Analytic Strategy: *levels one through four*



- Transcripts

- Video

- Audio

- Determine bifurcation

- Congruence with double-consciousness

- Data segments

- Conceptual tags for DC

- Formal definitions

Method

Discourse Analytic Strategy: *levels one through four*



- Transcripts
- Video
- Audio

- Determine bifurcation
- Congruence with double-consciousness

- Data segments
- Conceptual tags for DC
- Formal definitions

- Recycling, scaffolding and reframing
- Meaning and use of words/DC
- Small chunks of data

Method

Validity and Reliability

- Found in the systematic level of analysis.
- Discourse is used because of the theoretical question asked (Hinton, 1995) v. statistical analysis.
- Reliability found in repetition in concepts or meanings (Wood & Kroger 2000), v. statistical appreciation of result replication.
- Validity found in the words used by the person and the common acceptability and warranting of those words.
- Degree to which a researcher is able to warrant the analysis in that vocabulary and common usage drives the validity.

Forms of Double-consciousness

Three forms of double-consciousness were interpreted from selected segments of focus group data:

- (1) Identity Dilemma Articulation;
- (2) an Unadulterated Presentation of Self; and
- (3) Burden of Proof

Double-consciousness

Identity Dilemma Articulation

the realization of a bifurcation of identity that creates a dilemma. This bifurcation of identity is interpreted through the realization and explanation of the twoness that the individual is charged to negotiate within the universal context of racism (ISRL, 2004).

coltrane.session.6 I was talking about, like, Black identity and stuff. And like if you wanna, you can't really keep your identity and try to (0.2) like (0.5) to like be successful, it's not, it's not that easy because, you know like, America doesn't really accept (0.3) Black people, you know (0.5) like (1.0) in that, like (1.0) since always that's, that's why like there's racism, you know? That's like because (0.5) Europeans thought we were inferior and that's why, you know, like their, they just thought their culture was just so, superior to ours and that's why we are always (1.0) like you know that's how like our culture isn't accepted here. That's why, you gotta go get a suit if you want a job and you can't be, °what else what was going to say? (heh, heh, 3.0)

Double-consciousness

Identity Dilemma Articulation

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- Evolving/stacked interpretation
- Positions “Black identity” against trying to be “successful”
- Bifurcation - there is a twoness created by a dilemma related to “Black identity” and “success”
- Introduces the need to unify two identities, one that is at once “Black” and “your[s]” and one that is in line with *success* or perhaps more importantly “America[’s]...accept[ability]”
- Cannot just be; activity must be assumed “and try to (0.2) like (0.5) to like...” “try” is an indication of agency

Double-consciousness

Identity Dilemma Articulation

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- Bifurcation - twoness is a conflict between being able to “keep your Black identity” and “European thought” of Black people being “inferior”
- Dilemma - success lies in the realm of “European thought” and such thought views Black culture and therefore Black identity as “inferior”
- “Europeans...culture” and “ours” setting a mark for the separation that the person describes between Black culture and the mainstream or White culture

Double-consciousness

Identity Dilemma Articulation

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- “keep[ing] your identity” is couched within a universal context of racism
- This “America” that “doesn't accept Black people” has done so “since always...that's why, like, there's racism.” This represents a position related to time that is fundamental in the experience of a universal context of racism
- extended to a physical manifestation of negotiation; “you gotta go get a suit if you want a job”
- the need to add on, dress up or to present differently, if there is the task of being accepted by the mainstream

Double-consciousness

Identity Dilemma Articulation

the realization of a bifurcation of identity that creates a dilemma. This bifurcation of identity is interpreted through the realization and explanation of the twoness that the individual is charged to negotiate within the universal context of racism (ISRL, 2004).

miles.session.7 °sometimes when you go like, uh, to White Flynt Mall or somethin', it's just different than going to PG (0.6) when you go, like, certain places. It'll kind of suck the black out cha though, sometimes. You know sometimes.yeah, it'll feel like, like what you're wearing if you're in a room full of, of other people who are dressed a different way, it don't, it don't feel right. °

Double-consciousness

Identity Dilemma Articulation

◦ *sometimes when you go like, uh, to White Flint Mall or somethin', it's just different than going to PG (0.6) when you go, like, certain places. It'll kind of suck the black out cha though, sometimes. You know sometimes.yeah, it'll feel like, like what you're wearing if you're in a room full of, of other people who are dressed a different way, it don't, it don't feel right. ◦*

- Bifurcated - identification bound in two, competing mall experiences
- “White Flint mall” is representative of the white cultural experience and “PG [mall]” represents the Black cultural
- “different” indicates an unfamiliarity or lack of comfort in “certain places”.
- The polarity explicit in “White Flint” different than going to PG” and intimated in “different when you go certain places”
- “...Suck the Black out ‘cha” indicates that there is a volume of “Black” that can be removed depending on how and, “when you go certain places”
- Identity Dilemma Articulation is negotiating mainstream identifications that facilitate “feel[ing] different” and Black cultural identifications that allow for fit and a full volume of “Black” to be maintained

Double-consciousness

Burden of Proof

the individual negotiates a stereotype imposed by the universal context of racism to confirm or disconfirm as correct or incorrect.

Parker.session.5 *And I just want to prove everybody wrong who believes in the saying of the stereotypical Black man (0.3) cornrows.*

You know, prove them wrong, just because of the way that I look, some people have that first sight thought. When they first see you they think that (0.5) they think that they know what you're capable of, but then as soon as you get to talkin' you show them differently. Because you're showing them that you're smart but you're still being who you are (0.5) being who you want to be.

Be who you're comfortable being, like I'm comfortable with the way that I dress and I'm comfortable with my hair style, the way I choose to wear my hair, but I still want to be successful but then (0.5) it's a stereotype of what successful people look like and then it's, it's, it's.it's a stereotype of your average, your average African American male.

Double-consciousness

Burden of Proof

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- Explicitly represented in, “*I just want to prove everybody wrong who believes in the saying of the stereotypical Black man – cornrows*”
- Cornrows are the Black cultural manifestation of the stereotype that the person, wants to disconfirm
- Positioned relative to a universal context of racism and expresses a specific readiness to respond to his position within this context by utilizing himself as the demonstration that will “prove”
- *Cornrows* v. [not] *capable of* - positions the person within a dichotomous identification because his relationship to the symbolic stereotype is that he has cornrows. This is the physical representation of disconfirmation of the stereotype that he chooses to assume

Double-consciousness

Unadulterated Presentation of Self

a form of double-consciousness in which the individual negotiates a need to maintain fidelity to how and who one is within a universal context of racism.

Parker.session.5 *And I just want to prove everybody wrong who believes in the saying of the stereotypical Black man (0.3) cornrows.*

You know, prove them wrong, just because of the way that I look, some people have that first sight thought. When they first see you they think that (0.5) they think that they know what you're capable of, but then as soon as you get to talkin' you show them differently. Because you're showing them that you're smart but you're still being who you are (0.5) being who you want to be.

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Double-consciousness

Unadulterated Presentation of Self

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- negotiation of fidelity in terms of his “dress” and “hair”
- agency can be interpreted in his use of the word “choose” that is expressed in “the way I choose to wear my hair”
- grounded in the active link between the Black cultural and the mainstream
- “...but I still” may indicate that despite his exercise of choice that may be contradictory to the mainstream, he “still” wants to be “successful”
- to “be who you're comfortable being”, can compromise mainstream success, still maintaining the Black cultural physical appearance remains paramount

Psychological Function

Appeared as a valve by which identification relative to race was positioned in an effort to maintain identity equilibrium and healthy psychological functioning by enhancing and/or shielding identities relative to realities informed by a universal context of racism.

Implications

- Double-consciousness as a process, represented in the identity construction of adolescent males, extends theory concerning Black identity
- An enhanced interpretation of this race self complexity through a different understanding of double-consciousness
- The representation of the complex negotiation of two identities allows for an appreciation of why researchers need complex strategies of inquiry, such as discourse analysis to fully capture the phenomena

Concluding Thoughts

- These kids are not pathological
- A more invested approach yields more accurate findings
- Inventory results alone could yield accurate interpretations
- Changes in the questions asked are paramount
- More complex than surface representations
- Correcting current assumptions of AAA Male identification