

1 Understanding Black Racial Identity

As the tragic events surrounding the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, unfolded in the fall of 2014, much of the mainstream print and television media's portrayal of events focused on issues of black and white. In much of this rhetoric was a presentation of the "black" view as a single, unified voice surrounding the tragic, complicated, and often confusing events of the death of Michael Brown and the subsequent protests and riots, followed by the non-indictment by the grand jury, which fostered more protests and riots. When former National Basketball Association (NBA) star and current NBA analyst Charles Barkley spoke out against the protests and riots, it stirred a controversy. In a series of back-and-forth open letters between Barkley and current cohost and former NBA player, Kenny Smith, Barkley said, "Listen man, I know that I'm Black and I'm always going to be. I know anytime I disagree with Black people I'm going to be a sell-out or an Uncle Tom."¹

During the 2012 presidential election, actor Stacey Dash, most notably from the movie *Clueless*, endorsed Mitt Romney for president. This endorsement by a black celebrity for a white candidate over a very popular black incumbent president set off a firestorm. Comments on social media ranged from calling Dash an "airhead, a "nobody," and an "indoor slave," to suggesting she was "no longer Black." Even Samuel L. Jackson posted on Twitter: "Is Stacey Dash crazy?" There was so much animosity, Dash responded by saying, "The fury, I really don't understand the fury. I don't understand it. I don't get it. . . . But you know what, you can't expect everyone to agree with you. I was shocked, saddened. Not angry."² She went on to argue that

It's my right as an American citizen, it's my constitutional right to have my choice to who I want to vote for President. And I chose him not by the color of his skin, but the content of his character.³

When Barack Obama announced that he was entering an already-crowded field of contenders vying to be the president of the United States, he attracted a great deal of attention from political pundits and white Democrats. However, there was some ambivalence among blacks toward his candidacy. According to the *Washington Post-ABC* poll taken December 2006 and January 2007, Hillary Clinton was “preferred” three to one over Obama by black Democrats, and four out of five black Democrats viewed her “more favorably” than Obama.⁴ Even in the early primary season, some black legislators endorsed Clinton instead of Obama, and the chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick, said she was “99 percent sure her group would not support Obama *en masse* the way the powerful women’s political organization Emily’s List was backing Hillary Clinton.”⁵ It was certainly not the type of reception the black electorate often gave to a black Democratic candidate. Based on precedent, black Democratic candidates have often enjoyed strong support among blacks and have struggled mightily to gain support among whites. In this case, oddly enough, Obama found himself as a stranger working diligently to gain the support of blacks.

What then was holding blacks back from supporting Obama? Was it his policies? Voters didn’t clearly know what those were early on. So it was difficult to say that was the reason. Was it his political inexperience? There had been other black candidates with less political experience. Neither Jesse Jackson nor Al Sharpton held elected positions, but they, while unsuccessful, ran for the presidency. So that didn’t seem like a probable reason. Was it his race? While no one in the black community questioned whether Obama was black (regarding skin color), there was a considerable amount of questions surrounding his “blackness.” In other words, was he “black” enough?

Some suggested that questions regarding Obama’s blackness were linked to his background. Obama was born to a white mother from Kansas and a black Kenyan father, raised in Hawaii by his white grandparents, and had spent a few years in Indonesia with his Indonesian stepfather. Even Obama realized “there were elements within the black community who might suggest ‘Well, he’s from Hyde Park’ or ‘He went to Harvard’ or ‘He was born in Hawaii, so he might not be Black enough’” (Fletcher, 2007). However, Obama explained in his book, *The Audacity of Hope*, “I’ve never had the option of restricting my loyalties on the basis of race, or measuring my worth on the basis of tribe.” Nevertheless, his background and experiences had created a situation in which Debra J. Dickerson,

a black author and essayist, declared that “Obama isn’t Black”⁶ in the American racial context, “because he does not embody the experiences of most Blacks whose ancestors endured slavery, segregation, and the bitter struggle for civil rights.”⁷ Dickerson further explained

I’ve got nothing but love for the brother, but we don’t have anything in common. His father was African. His mother was a white woman. He grew up with white grandparents. Now, I’m willing to adopt him. He married black. He acts black. But there’s a lot of distance between black Africans and African-Americans.⁸

According to Ron Walters, “They [blacks] have a right to be somewhat suspicious of people who come into the country and don’t share their experiences.”⁹

These cases show opposing views within the black community, which is often a surprise to many, since generally it has been portrayed that all blacks think alike. Prior research has shown that black intragroup racial identity differences exist, and, consequently, in this chapter we discuss the following: 1) theories and conceptualizations of black racial identity, 2) black racial identity formation, and 3) its effect specifically on politics and measurement of black racial identity (both multidimensional and unidimensional). Beyond simply outlining the difference between the type of measures, this chapter lays the foundation for the movement away from a sole reliance on unidimensional measures to the adoption of multidimensional measures in political research.

Defining and Conceptualizing Black Racial Identity

Generally, the concept of black racial identity is ambiguous and socially constructed. It implies a “consciousness of self within a particular group.” It has been viewed as the “meanings a person attributes to the self as an object in a social situation or social role,”¹⁰ and it relates to a “sense of people-hood, which provides a sense of belonging.”¹¹ Black racial identity is “emerging, changing, and complex,”¹² and “there is no one identity among Blacks that can be delineated, as social scientists have sometimes suggested, but many complex and changing identities among them.”¹³ The “level of uncertainty about the nature of Black racial identity”¹⁴ and the “indicative confusion about the topic”¹⁵ is illustrated by the lack of a standard definition. Nevertheless, according to symbolic interactionism, “racial identity is treated as one of the many identities contained within

self,”¹⁶ and it is given fundamental and overriding importance in the United States. Winant (1995) explained

Racial identity outweighs all other identities. We are compelled to think racially, to use the racial categories and the meaning systems into which we have been socialized. . . . It is not possible to be “color blind,” for race is a basic element of our identity. . . . For better or worse, without a clear racial identity, an American is in danger of having no identity.¹⁷

Due to its multifaceted nature, black racial identity has been conceptualized by scholars in a variety of different ways, including “racial categorization,” “common fate or linked fate,” “racial salience,” “closeness,” “Black separatism,” “racial self-esteem,” “Africentrism,” “racial solidarity,” and “racial awareness and consciousness.”¹⁸ Others suggest that black racial identity has “multiple dimensions,” and formation occurs over time through various “stages.”¹⁹

Some researchers studying racial identity have focused on universal aspects of group identity, using blacks as an example. Gains and Reed (1994) refer to this work as part of the mainstream approach.²⁰ Researchers of the mainstream perspective typically employ measures of group identity that are applicable to a variety of groups.²¹ Much of the early mainstream perspective research defined racial identity based on a group’s stigma and status in society. The earliest sociological research investigated the racial preferences and self-identification of children, which was determined by having children select between white and black stimuli such as dolls.²² Based on this work, researchers concluded that black children had a more negative orientation to their own race than white children. Consequently, blacks’ “self-hatred” became a staple in much of the early work from the mainstream perspective.²³

In the late 1960s, researchers began to redefine black racial identity based on the uniqueness of black oppression and cultural experiences. William Cross (1971) defined the concept as stages of identity that change across an individual’s lifetime. He called this process “nigrescence” or a resocializing experience that “seeks to transform a preexisting identity (a non-Afrocentric identity) into one that is Afrocentric.”²⁴ This research constituted an Afrocentric approach, or what Gains and Reed referred to as the “underground perspective.”²⁵ The underground (or Afrocentric) approach emphasizes “the experiential properties associated with the unique historical and cultural influences associated with the African American

experience,” and for this reason, Afrocentric theorists argue against using models based on other racial or ethnic groups to explain the experiences of blacks.²⁶

Afrocentric researchers have defined racial identity based on physical characteristics, cultural and political alliances, ancestry, and history. Sanders Thompson defined it as “a psychological attachment to one of several social categories available to individuals when the category selected is based on race or skin color and/or a common history, particularly as it relates to oppression and discrimination due to skin color.”²⁷ For Sanders Thompson, racial identification is particularly significant for blacks because it provides insight into the unique psychological orientation resulting from sustained disparities in the historical conditions of racial groups in American society.

A pivotal component of Afrocentrism is the measure of adherence to the seven principles (or *Nguza Saba*) of the Afrocentric worldview. These Afrocentric principles are essentially “codes of conduct for daily life” that “represent guidelines for healthy living.”²⁸ The main tenets include *umoja* (unity), *kujichagulia* (self-determination), *ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *nia* (purpose), *kuumba* (creativity), and *imani* (faith). These tenets are symbolic and philosophical and not empirical and materialistic, as many consider the Eurocentric model.²⁹

Research in the underground approach has also defined racial identity by describing what it means to be “black.” For example, Sellers, et al., referred to racial identity as “the significance and meaning that African Americans place on race in defining themselves.”³⁰ Put another way, this research provides “identity profiles” regarding individuals’ feelings about their racial group membership. These profiles can vary “as a function of identity development,” as described in Cross’s nigrescence model, “or exposure to a fostering sociocultural environment,” as seen in Baldwin’s African Self-Consciousness model.³¹ Together, the diversity in these definitions illustrates the complexity of racial identity among blacks. Recognizing this complexity, scholars have developed different measures that tap identity. These measures are often clumped into two major categories—multi-dimensional and unitary measures.

Formation of Black Racial Identity

Black racial identity formation is produced by the everyday “interactions and challenges” that an individual encounters.³² It is “dynamic and changing over

time, as people explore and make decisions about the role of race in their lives."³³ It is affected by social and demographic factors, childhood socialization, interracial interaction, social class, age, family and friends, and socioeconomic status.³⁴ Broman, et al., found that people who were older, Southern, and less educated scored higher on an index measuring closeness to other blacks.³⁵ Demo and Hughes examined the social structural process and arrangements related to racial group identification. They found that group identity is shaped by the content of parental socialization. In particular, "feelings of closeness and Black group evaluation are enhanced by positive interpersonal relations with family and friends."³⁶

Interracial contact has also been found to shape black racial identity. Harris explored the impact of childhood interracial contact on adult black racial identity and found that "interracial contact in childhood weakens adult feelings of closeness to other Blacks."³⁷ Similar findings were also in Demo and Hughes's study, in which they discovered that the impact of interracial interaction depends on timing; specifically, "contact during childhood and adolescence has a negative impact on the Black group identity; however, interracial relationships during adulthood promote positive Black group evaluations."³⁸ Social movements have also been shown to affect black racial identity. In their study, Condi and Christiansen show a "significant shift in identity structure of Blacks and that the Black Power movement was an important causal factor in effecting change."³⁹

Residential racial composition, competition, and conflict have also been shown to affect black racial identity. Conflict theorists argue group identity and cohesiveness increase as a result of conflict with an adversary⁴⁰, and competition theorists argue competition among racial-ethnic groups in work and community settings also increases the likelihood that people will attach more importance to their racial-ethnic identity.⁴¹ Jaret and Reitzes suggest that black racial identity changes across various settings; specifically, identity is more important for blacks at work and less important at home. In addition, changes in black racial identity are affected by racial composition of the local area. They found that blacks

... living in areas that are "intermediate" in percentage Black say that their racial-ethnic identity is more important to them than do Blacks living in areas with "low" amounts of Black residents or with "high" amounts of Black residents.⁴²

Contrary to Jaret and Reitzes, the findings of Bledsoe, Welch, Sigelman, and Combs show those who live in neighborhoods with more blacks scored

significantly higher on a racial solidarity scale as mixed neighborhoods showed less solidarity than more heavily black neighborhoods.⁴³ The key reason was that “those who live in mixed-race neighborhoods have more frequent and intimate contact with Whites; surrounded by White friends, acquaintances, neighbors, merchants, and service providers, these Blacks may simply perceive less reason to engage in collective action on behalf of Blacks.”⁴⁴ This suggests racial identity sentiments and attitudes are heterogeneous even among people of the same race because individuals have different experiences and encounters.

Black Racial Identity Effects on Politics

There is a tremendous amount of research on the effects of black racial identity on black social attitudes and behavior. However, in this section we will focus on black racial identity and its effects on political views. A plethora of research has demonstrated the importance of racial identity as a factor influencing both individual and group political attitudes and behavior.⁴⁵ Blacks’ sense of racial identification influences both the degree and nature of their political participation. Those with a greater sense of racial identification are more likely to engage in a wider range of political activities.⁴⁶ For example, Olsen found that blacks who identify with the group are more likely to vote, discuss politics, engage in campaign activities, and contact government officials than other blacks.⁴⁷ Verba and Nie found that blacks who frequently mention race in their discussion of political issues are more likely to vote and engage in campaign activities than those who gave less race-oriented responses.⁴⁸ Tate found that “black identification was significantly related to Black political interest and to voter participation in congressional elections.”⁴⁹

Researchers have also examined the relationship between racial identity and several factors of psychological orientations (e.g., political interest, political awareness, political efficacy, and trust in government), and their influence on political participation.⁵⁰ They have found that “racial identity potentially heightens political interest and awareness, boosts group pride and political efficacy, alters perception of group problems, and promotes support for collective action.”⁵¹ For example, Shingles discovered that “Black consciousness has a dramatic effect on political participation because it contributes to the combination of a sense of political efficacy and political mistrust which in turn induces political involvement.”⁵²

Black racial identity has also been shown to be related to social movements, in that racial identity can motivate individuals to take part in social

movements and collective action. For example, blacks with a stronger sense of racial identity are more likely “to belong to an organization intended to improve the status of blacks, and to work in developing the black community rather than pursuing integration.”⁵³ The relationship to the women’s movement is also worth noting, as Simien finds black men who have a stronger race identification are also more likely to support pro-women causes.⁵⁴

In addition to the effects of racial identity on political participation and social activism, racial identity has also been shown to influence blacks’ voting choices and feelings toward electoral candidates and political leaders.⁵⁵ With regards to the effects of black racial identity on candidate evaluations and leadership preference, Sullivan and Arbuthnot found that racial identity influences blacks’ support for different candidates and influences how black respondents perceive white, biracial, and black candidates.⁵⁶ Specifically, “differences in how blacks feel about a black candidate will depend on the candidate’s racial background, their own attitudes and beliefs about being black, and where they fall on various demographic measures.”⁵⁷ In another study, Sullivan examined the effects of black racial identity (measured as racial salience and linked fate) on feelings toward black leaders using the 1996 National Black Election Study.⁵⁸ He found black racial identity was significant in predicting feelings toward liberal black leaders (i.e., Louis Farrakhan, Jesse Jackson, Carol Moseley Braun, and Kweisi Mfume) and not significant for conservative black leaders (i.e., Clarence Thomas or Colin Powell).

Besides influencing blacks’ feelings toward electoral candidates and leadership preferences, racial identity is also essential in accounting for their opinions on a range of policy issues. Researchers have found a relationship between racial identity and blacks’ support for affirmative action, social welfare programs, and reparations for slavery.⁵⁹ Dawson concluded that racial identity is a stronger influence than other identity categories, such as those based on class, gender, religion, or any other social characteristics on attitudes toward a range of policy issues.⁶⁰

Lastly, racial identity has been shown to impact a number of other political choices. For example, Dawson examined the role of racial identity and perceptions of group interests in the development of blacks’ connections to the major political parties.⁶¹ He suggests that blacks from various social classes form party attachments based on how well different parties pursue common black interests. This explains blacks’ enduring ties to the Democratic Party. Furthermore, Dawson’s

findings in *Black Visions* reveal the impact black racial identity has on support for various ideological beliefs.⁶² For example, he found believing one's fate is linked to his or her race is a strong predictor for economic nationalism, support for black feminist orientations and ideology, allowing more women to become members of the clergy, and acceptance of lesbians.

Measuring Black Identity: Multidimensional Measures

Scholars in the fields of psychology, education, and health have developed four major multidimensional measures of black identity. Within the areas of counseling and psychology, scholars have investigated black racial identity as a developmental process. In its original form, William Cross's nigrescence theory described an individual's progression from a preexisting state not connected with a positive reference group orientation to a self-actualized and healthy state of racial identity.⁶³ However, after research revealed that blacks' self-esteem does not change as they move through the stages of nigrescence, Cross revised his theory and later extended it in empirical work.⁶⁴

Many regard the nigrescence model as the foundation for a number of subsequent theories and measures of black racial identity.⁶⁵ The original nigrescence model proposed five stages of identity development. Pre-Encounter (Stage 1) describes black individuals who minimize the importance of race in their lives. During Encounter (Stage 2), the individual confronts an event, which challenges their Pre-Encounter attitudes about themselves and their understanding of the condition of blacks. This reexamination can propel them into Stage 3, Immersion-Emersion, in which individuals immerse themselves in blackness and feel liberated from whiteness. Internalization (Stage 4) describes the individual's acceptance of being black. Finally, in Stage 5, Internalization-Commitment, the individual incorporates their new identity attitudes into a commitment to social activism.⁶⁶

Parham and Helms designed the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS) to measure the original nigrescence model.⁶⁷ The RIAS measures various attitudes that individuals are likely to have as they move through the stages of nigrescence. Parham introduced a lifespan theory of racial identity development which challenged the nigrescence theory assumptions of a linear, unidirectional movement through the stages.⁶⁸ He suggested three alternative pathways to racial identity development: 1) stagnation (i.e., an individual maintains a single racial identity throughout their lifetime), 2) linear progression (i.e., an individual moves through

the stages as expected), and 3) recycling (i.e., an individual has moved through the identity stages but encounters an experience that causes them to reevaluate their racial identity and revert back to an earlier stage). Table 1.1 provides examples of question items and research findings for the RIAS.

In the 1990s, Cross's theorizing, which led to the development of the Cross Racial Identity Scale, was known as the revised model. The revised nigrance theory suggested that individuals' racial identity attitudes may change over time, and these changes (i.e., stages) "reflect a restructuring in the cognitive and affective approaches to self and society rather than an invariant developmental trajectory."⁶⁹ The Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) operationalized the latest version of the nigrance theory.⁷⁰ The current version of the CRIS measures six identities: three Pre-Encounter identities (Assimilation, Miseducation, and Self-Hatred); one Immersion-Emersion identity (Anti-White), and two Internalization identities (Afrocentricity and Multiculturalist Inclusive).⁷¹

Pre-Encounter Assimilation describes individuals with a pro-American or mainstream identity for whom race is not important. In contrast, the Pre-Encounter identity characterizes individuals who despise blacks and being black. Anti-Black racial identity is based on two factors: Miseducation, in which individuals hold negative stereotypical beliefs about blacks depicted by mainstream society, and Self-Hatred, in which individuals fuse negative stereotypes about blacks into their personal identity. Internalized Afrocentric identity is actualized through social and political activism in empowering the black community. Multiculturalist Inclusive identity includes a matrix of three or more cultural frames of reference (e.g., black racial identity plus gender, sexual orientation, sense of "Americanness," or racial reference group orientation other than black).⁷²

Another set of models describes the multidimensional structure and nature of racial identity. These instruments cluster questions to capture the different dimensions that may influence an individual's overall racial identity. This allows them to explore which factors are most influential and how the various elements of racial identity interact. Insofar as racial identity is multidimensional, its various elements may have different effects on political choice. These models are interested in the individual differences in racial identity. Demo and Hughes separated racial identity into three areas: 1) closeness (i.e., how similar an individual feels in their ideas, feelings, and thoughts to other blacks); 2) black separatism (i.e., commitment to African culture and the preference for separation between blacks and other groups in social and economic relations), and

TABLE 1.1 Multidimensional Measures of Black Racial Identity

MEASURE	ITEMS	FINDINGS
<p>Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS) <i>Parham & Helms (1981)</i></p>	<p>Fifty-item questionnaire that assesses four stages of the <i>original</i> nigrescence model: Pre-Encounter (e.g., “I feel black people do not have as much to be proud of as white people do”); Encounter (e.g., “I am determined to find my black racial identity”); Immersion-Emersion (e.g., “I believe everything that is black is good, and consequently, I limit myself to black activities”); and Internalization (e.g., “I feel good about being black but not limiting myself to black activities”).</p>	<p>Parham & Helms used the RIAS to assess the influence of racial identity attitudes on counselor race preferences and found that black clients with Pre-Encounter racial identity attitudes preferred white counselors. However, Want, Parham, Baker, and Sherman (2004) found that counselors with high-race consciousness were preferred over low-race-conscious counselors, and black counselors were preferred over white counselors. Black counselors with high-race consciousness were the most preferred.</p>
<p>Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) <i>Vandiver, et al. (2001, 2002)</i></p>	<p>Forty-item inventory that measures six of the racial identities described in the <i>expanded</i> nigrescence model: Pre-Encounter Assimilation (e.g., “I am not so much a member of a racial group as I am an American”); Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred (e.g., “I sometimes have negative feelings about being black”); and Pre-Encounter Miseducation (e.g., “blacks place more emphasis on</p>	<p>Anglin and Wade (2007) found that an internalized multicultural identity positively contributed to college adjustment, while pre-encounter miseducated racial identity and an internalized Afrocentric identity negatively contributed. Additionally, Awad (2007) found racial identity does not predict either GPA or GRE test performance among college students.</p>

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Table 1.1 (cont'd)

CRIS (cont'd)	having a good time than on hard work"); Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (e.g., "I have a strong feeling of hatred and disdain for all white people"); Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive (e.g., "I believe it is important to have both a black racial identity and a multicultural perspective that is inclusive of everyone"); Internalization Afrocentricity (e.g., "As black nationalists, we must work on empowering ourselves and not hating others").	Ferguson, Leach, Levy, Nicholson, and Johnson (2008) used the CRIS to revisit Parham and Helm's (1981) study of counselor preferences, and they found that racial identity predicts preferences for a black counselor.
Multidimensional Racial Identification Scale (MRIS) <i>Sanders Thompson (1995a)</i>	Thirty-item instrument that measures black racial identity based on four parameters: Physical (e.g., "black actresses, actors, models, etc., are as attractive as those of other groups in films and on TV"); Cultural (e.g., "blacks have a culture worth protecting and documenting"); Sociopolitical (e.g., "black representation is important in all occupations, activities, etc."); and Psychological (e.g., "There is more to like than dislike about blacks").	Sanders Thompson assessed predictors of the four parameters in a series of studies (1991, 1994, 1995b). She found that all four parameters were positively correlated with having had more family racial socialization. Also, psychological, sociopolitical, and cultural racial identities were positively related to political and community involvement. Lastly, physical racial identity was associated with having experienced racism at an older age, and psychological racial identity was related to having experienced more discrimination.

Table 1.1 (cont'd)

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) <i>Sellers, et al. (1998)</i>	Fifty-six-item measure consisting of seven subscales, including the following: Centrality (e.g., “Being black is important to my self-image”); Private Regard (e.g., “I feel good about black people”); Public Regard (e.g., “Others respect black people”); Nationalist Ideology (e.g., “blacks would be better off if they accepted Afrocentric values”); Oppressed Minority Ideology (e.g., “The same sources that have led to the oppression of blacks have also led to the oppression of other groups”); Assimilationist Ideology (e.g., “blacks should strive to be full members of the American political system”); and Humanist Ideology (e.g., “People, regardless of their race, have strengths and limitations”).	Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, and Smith (1998) found that private regard attitudes were strongly related to higher self-esteem in black adolescents. In another study, Sellers, Chavous, and Cooke (1998b) found that assimilation and nationalist ideology subscales were negatively associated with GPA, and an oppressed minority ideology was positively associated with GPA for students who scored high on racial centrality. The relationships found in both studies were moderated by racial centrality (i.e., no significant relationship was found for those with low racial centrality scores). Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis (2006) suggest an interrelationship among racial identity, racial discrimination, and psychological functioning. Specifically, “although individuals who believe that other groups hold more negative attitudes toward blacks (low public regard) were at greater risk for experiencing racial discrimination, low public regard beliefs also buffered the impact of racial discrimination on psychological functioning” (187).
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3) racial group evaluation (i.e., the belief that most blacks possess positive characteristics but do not possess negative characteristics).⁷³

Allen, Dawson, and Brown conceptualized racial identity as a black belief system based on five dimensions: 1) closeness to black elites (i.e., civic and political leaders); 2) closeness to black masses (e.g., blacks who are poor, religious, young, middle class, working class, and older); 3) positive stereotypes (e.g., “blacks are hardworking”); 4) negative stereotypes (e.g., “Most blacks are lazy”); and 5) black autonomy (i.e., an ideological position that advocates building political and social institutions based on the cultural values and interests of blacks).⁷⁴

The multidimensional models proposed by both Demo and Hughes and Allen, et al., reflect a similar conceptualization of racial identity and share common subscales. Both models recognize the importance of closeness in one’s racial identity, although Allen, et al., divide closeness into two components. One component, closeness to black elites, measures whether an individual believes that their personal political interests and the political interests of the black community are best met by supporting black leaders. The other component, closeness to the black masses, indicates an individual’s perception that blacks share a “common fate” as a group. Both models also emphasize the importance of how an individual feels about blacks as a group. Allen, et al., measured these feelings using the positive and negative stereotype dimensions, while Demo and Hughes used the racial group evaluation component. Lastly, both models contain subscales that measure an ideological position emphasizing Afrocentric values: Allen’s model includes a black autonomy scale and Demo and Hughes use a similar black separatism scale.

Sanders Thompson proposed another multidimensional model, the Multidimensional Racial Identification Scale (MRIS), which divides black racial identity into four distinct parameters: 1) Physical (i.e., acceptance and comfort with the physical attributes of blacks); 2) Cultural (i.e., awareness, knowledge of, and commitment to the cultural traditions of blacks); 3) Sociopolitical (i.e., commitment to resolving the economic, social, and political issues facing the black community); and 4) Psychological (i.e., concern for and pride in the racial group).⁷⁵ Sanders Thompson developed this model based on the notion that individuals can have varying levels of identification among different components of racial identity. Responses within the parameters describe which components of racial identity are most important to the individual and which areas are lacking in the overall identification. Examples of items from the MRIS and research findings are located in Table 1.1.

Another multidimensional model, and the one we use in our analysis, emerged from Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, and Smith in 1997.⁷⁶ The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) defines four dimensions of racial identity that capture “the significance and qualitative meaning that individuals attribute to their membership in the black racial group within their self-concepts.”⁷⁷ The MMRI includes racial salience and centrality, which measures the significance of race for the individual, and racial regard and ideology, which assesses the meaning of race for the individual. Examining both the meaning and significance of racial identity affords the opportunity to investigate the complexity inherent in the role that race plays in the lives of blacks. The MMRI theorizes individuals have multiple identities that are hierarchically ordered. In examining the hierarchy of identities, the MMRI focuses on the relative importance of race compared to other identities.

The MMRI is operationalized using the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI), which encompasses a total of seven subscales. The first dimension, centrality, measures the extent to which an individual normatively defines him or herself with regards to race. The second dimension, regard, is divided into two subscales: private regard (i.e., an individual’s evaluative judgment about their race) and public regard (i.e., how an individual perceives that others view their group). The other four subscales are based on ideologies that capture blacks’ views on what it means to be a member of their racial group: nationalist (i.e., the extent to which one’s philosophy stresses the importance and uniqueness of being of African descent), oppressed minority (i.e., the extent to which one’s philosophy emphasizes the commonalities between blacks and other oppressed groups), assimilationist (i.e., the extent to which one’s philosophy emphasizes the commonalities between blacks and the rest of American society), and humanist (i.e., the extent to which one’s philosophy emphasizes the commonalities among all human beings). Sellers, et al., have reported valid and reliable scores for the MIBI, and these have been validated in various additional studies since the introduction of the model.⁷⁸ See Table 1.1 for sample items and research findings of the MIBI.

Although each of the models emphasize different elements of racial identity and have unique features, they actually complement one another.⁷⁹ For example, while the developmental models characterize individuals’ racial identity according to where they reside along the developmental sequence, the multidimensional measures provide a rubric for describing the significance and meaning

of race at various points on these developmental trajectories. Using one of the multidimensional models along with a developmental model could help validate the assumptions of both approaches and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and development of black racial identity.

Measuring Black Identity: Unitary Measures

In the area of political science, scholars have typically relied on one of three items to measure racial identity: 1) self-identification with one's racial group; 2) a feeling of closeness to one's group; and 3) a belief that one's fate is linked to that of the group. Table 1.2 provides a summary of these measures and the corresponding research findings. Much of the early published work in this area determined racial identity based on a single item, asking whether a respondent identified as a member of a certain group. For example, Olsen asked respondents whether they identified as a member of an "ethnic minority."⁸⁰ Verba and Nie used an index that tallied the number of times black respondents referred to race in answering various open-ended questions, and Jones-Correa and Leal asked respondents whether they identified as a member of a certain group.⁸¹

However, self-identification indicates little about an individual's racial identity. Identifying with a racial group only demonstrates that an individual is aware that he or she is black; it says nothing about how the individual feels about being black (e.g., Are they proud to be black? Is race even important to that individual?). It is possible for two individuals to be equally identified with their group but to have very distinct ideologies about the meaning of their membership in that group, in addition to having different feelings about their group and beliefs about how others view that group.⁸² Thus, according to Miller, et al., "There is no theoretical reason to assume a direct connection between basic group identification and individual political attitudes and behavior."⁸³ Hence, self-identification/classification is too basic and subjective to qualify as a valid measure of racial identity.

The second way that political scientists measure black racial identity is in the form of group closeness, i.e., the extent to which individuals feel that their ideas, feelings, and thoughts are similar to that of other blacks.⁸⁴ However, "close to" ratings are prone to intersubject variability. It is possible an individual could be psychologically attached to a group, but, on the other hand, closeness may merely "indicate feelings of sympathy, proximity, or even empathy for the group."⁸⁵

The conceptualization of racial identity as closeness brings up another issue of measurement within the literature. Even when political scientists agree on the conceptualization of racial identity, they sometimes use different measures to tap the same component. This is often because the specific item measures depend on which of the surveys researchers use.⁸⁶ For example, when black racial identity is conceptualized as closeness, the American National Election Studies (ANES) asks respondents to rate their closeness to blacks as a whole; the National Survey of Black Americans assesses closeness with subgroups of blacks such as poor, middle class, religious, elected officials, or the elderly; and the 1984 and 1988 National Black Election Studies (NBES) asked respondents to rate their closeness to blacks in Africa, the Caribbean, and America.⁸⁷ These are three very different psychometric questions that measure the same element of racial identity. This inconsistency has sometimes produced divergent results in political research. For example, although Tate, using the 1984 National Black Election Study, found a relationship between racial group closeness and blacks' support of social welfare programs, Kinder and Winter (2001), using the 1992 ANES, found little correlation between group closeness and preferences for social welfare policies.⁸⁸ Table 1.2 provides a breakdown of the three different measures of closeness.

Lastly, researchers often conceptualize racial identity through the notion of linked fate, or the degree to which blacks believe that their personal well-being is connected to that of other blacks. Dawson developed a framework for analyzing black political choice using the concept of linked fate. In Dawson's construction, racial identity is a function of self-interest and individual perceptions of racial group interests.⁸⁹ Among the three unitary measures, linked fate is largely regarded as the most valid measure of racial consciousness.⁹⁰ Blacks derive group consciousness and feelings of linked fate from a specific shared history and common experiences.⁹¹ The linked fate measure captures the intricate heuristic processes used by most voters, and it incorporates the feelings of in-group identification and an awareness of a shared group status with other members. However, the linked fate measure is problematic because the closed-ended questions used to measure linked fate only measure the presence and degree (strong or weak) of this link between the individual and the group, while neglecting to measure whether this attachment could be positive or negative.⁹² A description of the linked fate measure and research findings is located in Table 1.2.

TABLE 1.2 Unitary Measures of Black Racial Identity

MEASURE	OPERATIONALIZATION	FINDINGS
<p>Racial Categorization/ Identification</p>	<p>Olsen (1970) asked respondents whether they identify as a member of an “ethnic minority.” Verba and Nie (1972) used an index that summed the number of times black respondents referred to race when answering various open-ended questions. Hecht and Ribeau (1991) put together a short questionnaire that simply determined individuals’ self-labeling (referred to in the study as self-identification). Jones-Correa and Leal (1996) asked respondents whether they identify as a member of a certain group.</p>	<p>Olsen (1970) found that blacks who identified with the group were more likely to vote, discuss politics, engage in campaign activities, and contact government officials than were other blacks. Verba and Nie (1972) found that blacks who frequently mentioned race in their discussion of political issues were more likely to vote and engage in campaign activities than those who gave less race-oriented responses.</p>
<p>Linked Fate</p>	<p>Linked fate is the degree to which blacks believe that their own well-being is linked to that of other blacks (e.g., “Do you think what happens generally to black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?” and “People differ in whether they think about being black—what they have in common with blacks. What about you—do you think about this a lot,</p>	<p>Tate (1993) found that linked fate was significantly related to blacks’ opinions on affirmative action as well as their political interest and voter participation in congressional elections. Dawson (1994) suggested Africans Americans’ feelings of linked fate leads them to form party attachments based on how well the major parties pursue common black interests. This explains blacks’ lasting ties to the</p>

Table 1.2 (cont'd)

MEASURE	OPERATIONALIZATION	FINDINGS
Linked Fate (<i>cont'd</i>)	fairly often, once in a while, or hardly ever?”).	Democratic Party. Dawson (2001) concluded that racial identity is stronger than identities based on class, gender, religion, or any other social characteristics as appreciation of attitudes toward policy issues. Furthermore, believing one's fate is linked to that of their race is a strong predictor of various ideological positions (e.g., economic nationalism, showing support for black feminist orientations and ideology, allowing more women to become members of the clergy, and warmth for lesbians).
Closeness	The American National Election Studies ask respondents to rate their closeness to blacks as a whole. Respondents are given a list of groups and asked which ones they feel particularly close to—people who are most like them in their ideas, interests, and feelings about things. Once respondents have rated their closeness to all of the groups, they are asked to pick the one group to which they feel the closest.	Kinder and Winter (2001) found that group closeness is a strong predictor of blacks' preferences for racial issues like affirmative action policies, but it has little effect on blacks' opinions of implicitly racial issues like social welfare policies.

(continues on next page)

Table 1.2 (cont'd)

Closeness (<i>cont'd</i>)	<p>The National Survey of Black Americans assesses closeness to various subgroups of blacks such as the poor, middle class, elected officials, religious, or the elderly. Researchers sum up respondents' level of closeness to the different groups of blacks and use this single score as a measure of black racial identity.</p> <p>The National Black Election Studies ask questions of closeness to blacks in Africa, the West Indies, and America. "Please tell me if you feel very close, fairly close, not too close, or not close at all to the following groups. First, how close do you feel in your ideas and feelings about things to . . . West Indians—like black people from Jamaica, Bermuda, or Haiti? Black people in Africa? Black people in the United States?"</p>	<p>Broman, et al., (1988) found that blacks who were older, Southern, and less educated scored higher on the index measuring closeness to other blacks. They also found that childhood interracial contact decreases feelings of closeness to other blacks.</p> <p>Herring, et al., (1999) found less variance in closeness to blacks in the United States than in closeness to non-American blacks. Jackson, et al., (1991) used closeness ratings to measure in-group attachments and found that positive in-group orientations were weakly correlated to anti-white orientations.</p>
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In the use of unidimensional measures of racial identity, research has accounted for only a limited perspective of its multifaceted nature. To the extent that researchers have oversimplified the measurement of racial identity, they may have underestimated its effects on individual political attitudes and behavior. The effect of racial identity may vary depending on which conceptual element was measured and the specific items used to operationalize it. When researchers have relied on only one or two indicators of racial identity, it is possible that they