Abstract

Minorities who live in a society whose values and belief systems are incongruent with those of their indigenous culture are likely to lose their ‘true’ racial identity. Lost from their own cultural identity may make them susceptible to identifying with the majority’s race and eventually rejecting their own race. The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a significant relationship between racial identity and internalized racism. Racial Identity was defined as the degree to which one’s race is central to his/her self-identity. The Nigrescence Model proposed that racial identity is a progression from being naïve about one’s race to having an understanding and a commitment to one’s race. The four developmental stages are pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, and internalization. Internalized racism is an attitude seen in some minorities that believe the stereotypes about their own culture. Fifty-one African American participants completed the Racial Identity Attitude Scale and the Nadanolitization Inventory (a measure of internalized racism). A Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationship between racial identity and internalized racism. As hypothesized, there was a significant correlation between internalized racism, \( r = .45, p = .001 \) and pre-encounter racial identity and between internalized racism and immersion/emersion racial identity, \( r = .40, p = .004 \). Participants with non Black oriented racial identities had the highest levels of internalized racism. This finding indicates that they are most likely to reject the Black race and identify with the White race.

Keywords: Racial Identity, Internalized Racism

Introduction

Racism is defined as the beliefs, attitudes and actions which damage the character of an individual or a group of people. According to D’Augelli and Hershberger, 41% of African American college students reported occasionally hearing disparaging racial remarks, 41% reported frequently hearing such remarks, and 59% reported that they had been the targets of racial insults at least once or twice. There is almost a 22% chance of racism occurring in a community dominated by one race, rather than if the cultures are equally throughout the community.

Azibo and Baldwin, Duncan, and Bell asserted that being in a society whose belief system is not with the African belief system may lead African Americans to lose their true African identity and lower their defenses against racism. According to Azibo in such a society individuals assume values and beliefs alien to those that are traditionally African. Jones believes that African Americans who adopt anti-African values and beliefs internalize the racist conceptions of their intrinsic worth and abilities held by the oppressor. Parham and Helms found that non African American centered racial identities were associated with low levels of self-esteem. Taylor proposes that Blacks who feel estranged from their culture are most vulnerable to internalized racism. Also, Blacks who internalize racism do not respect members of their ethnic group or themselves. Internalization leads them to deny their culture and identify with the oppressor, taking on their values, beliefs, and personal appearance. These Blacks
are at greater risk for depression, low self-esteem, aggression against other Blacks, and alcohol abuse. According to Jones, internalized Blacks devalue themselves through the use of racial slurs as nicknames, and the rejection of their African heritage.

The contrary has been shown for African American centered identities. African American centered racial identities have been associated with mature psychological defenses in managing stimuli that produced negative emotions; academic performance of African American college students; anger control and moral development and favorable lifestyle practices. Racial profiling by Black policemen can cause as much stress to Blacks as racial profiling carried out by White policemen. Blacks who discriminate against other Blacks do so because of Internalization. Internalized Racism refers to an attitude seen in some individuals who come to believe the stereotypes about their own culture.

Racial Identity

Racial identity refers to the degree to which one’s race is central to him/her self-identity. According to Cross’ Nigrescence Model of Racial Identity, Black racial identity is described in four developmental stages: Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and internalization. During the Pre-encounter developmental stage, African Americans attempt to identify with Whites. During the Encounter developmental stage, African Americans encounter a racial event and become confused about their identity. During the Immersion-Emersion Developmental stage, there is an internal battle resulting in periods of extreme excitability and periodic bouts of mild depression. According to Cross’ Nigrescence Model of Racial Identity, the final developmental stage is Internalization, which deals with the individual beginning to feel comfortable with their race and at the same time, respecting other races.

The purpose of this experiment is to examine the effects of gender and racial identity on internalized racism. It was hypothesized that Pre-encounter and encounter racial identities would be positively correlated with internalized racism.

Methodology

Participants

Fifty-one African American men and women participated in the study. The participants were 18 years of age and older.

Apparatus

The internalized racism scale of the Nadanolitization Scale was used to measure internalized racism. The scale was designed to estimate the extent to which African Americans have internalized racist stereotypes about African Americans. The inventory contains twenty-four items, each rated on a scale of 0-8 and internal reliabilities exceeding .80. High scores on the scale indicate high levels of internalized racism.

The Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS) was used to measure Black racial identity. The RIAS was used to measure Black racial identity. The scale consisted of 50-items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Helms and Parham reported internal consistency reliabilities of .67, .72, .66, and .77 for the pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization attitude scales, respectively.

Procedure

After the consent form was finished, the participants completed the RIAS and the Nadanolitization Scale.

Results and Discussion

A Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationship between racial identity and internalized racism. As hypothesized, there was a significant correlation between internalized racism and pre-encounter racial identity \( (r = .45, p = .001) \) and between internalized racism and immersion/emersion racial identity, \( (r = .40, p = .004) \) and between internalized racism and internalization \( (r = .30, p = .030) \). These findings indicate that participants with high levels of pre-encounter, immersion/emersion and internalization racial identities were most likely to reject the Black race and identify with the White race. As hypothesized, African Americans with pre-encounter and
immersion – emersion racial identities tend to internalize racist stereotypes about their race and identify with the White race/culture. Surprisingly, participants high in internalization racial identity had high levels of internalized racism. This may be due to the respect and appreciation they have for other cultures.

Table 1. Intercorrelations of Black racial identity and internalized racism

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<th>Immersion/Emersion</th>
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References


