Negotiation of African American Identities
in Rural America: A Cultural Contracts Approach

Ronald L. Jackson II

Pennsylvania State University

James B. Stewart

Pennsylvania State University

Three in 10 people in this country are minorities and 6.8 million people identified themselves as multiracial when filling our the 2000 U.S. Census form (Kasindorf & Nasser, 2001).

Of 281 million U. S. citizens, Kasindorf & Nasser claim that over nine million are minorities according to the U.S. Census data. Then again, there have been multiple claims that the 2000 U. S. Census is questionable because of ambiguity about how "minority" is defined when using a "multiracial category" census form. For the first time in the history of the United States, census-takers were allowed to mark more than one racial category when identifying their ethnic identity. About 2% (or 6.8 million) of all U. S. citizens did just that. The effect this has had on rural populations is still unclear; it is not yet being reported in the data. Nonetheless, the U. S. Census report of 1990 estimates the total U. S. population was at 248 million people.

Of the 248 million citizens, 61 million lived in rural areas: 55% percent of U. S. rural citizens lived in the South or South Atlantic regions; 20% lived in the Midwest; and 23% lived in the New-England States and the Northeast including Ohio (combined) and 2% were dispersed in rural areas throughout the remainder of the country. Although the population has grown by 40 million people in the 2000 census report, the rural population percentages have remained about the same. The 1960 census data indicates that the rural population was 54 million, so in 1990, after 40 years the rural population only changed by 7 million people and just as in 1960, the majority of rural America continues to be comprised of the South, Northeast and the Midwest. Meanwhile, the "urban sprawl" or retreat from urban centers to exurbs, suburbs and outer dwellings has barely impacted the demographics of rural communities throughout the country.

The U. S. Census Bureau (1995) defines "rural" for the 1990 census as the opposite of "urban," which is determined by assessing total occupation of territory, population,

and housing units. The language used to describe criteria for being "urban" is as follows:

> 1. Places of 2,500 or more persons incorporated as cities, villages, boroughs (except in Alaska and New York), and towns (except in the six New England States, New York, and Wisconsin), but excluding the rural portions of "extended cities."
>
> 2. Census designated places of 2,500 or more persons.
>
> 3. Other territory, incorporated or unincorporated, included in urbanized areas.

Of course, federal dollars are allocated to rural communities based on their growth and demographically determined community needs such as funding of programs related farming, employment, and psychological healthcare. Although the statistics seem to be the primary interest of many researchers of urban communities, the central concern of this essay and the entire special issue of the journal is the people who live in those communities. Of particular interest are the challenges to cultural identities and cultural communities in rural areas.

Smith (1998) argues that there is a growth of a rural underclass happening in the U. S. This term is used to designate those who are "high school dropouts, on public assistance, unmarried mothers, or (if male) suffering long-term unemployment" (p. 22). He claims that in 1990, three million adults aged 19 to 64 were part of the underclass. Smith further contends that approximately 65% of the rural underclass was comprised of African Americans in the South. Likewise, among rural Hispanic populations, 45% were underclass. This is important because underclass citizens tend to have poor healthcare provisions, including psychological healthcare. Smith points out four "ethnic subpopulations" with critical healthcare needs [in order of most need]: Native Americans, Southern Blacks, Hispanics or Chicanos, and Appalachian and Ozark Whites. With limited educational access, poor healthcare, low employment rates and poor housing, these four groups struggle for survival. Part of that survival is mental health and sense of social identity fit. Rather than attempting to explore all four cultural groups and their identity concerns, our aims are modest; therefore, we will discuss five aspects related to African American rural identity development. We begin by examining the psychological approaches to the study of identity followed by some discussion of distinctions between the radical and reformist schools of identity researchers, negotiability of rural African American cultural identities, and an introduction of the newly theorized cultural contracts paradigm. We will conclude with a discussion of overall effects on rural African American identities.

Relating Nigrescence to Identity Development Among Rural African Americans

The studies of the psychology of rural cultural identities in this volume, including that of African Americans, contribute significantly to the broader body of research

examining the psychological, social, and political dimensions of racial/cultural identity among peoples of African descent. The essays raise important questions about the general applicability of the two most popular psychological models currently providing the frameworks of analysis for the study of Black identity dynamics, characterized by Karenga (1982) as the "reformist" and the "radical" schools of thought.

In the reformist model the process of racial identity development is interwoven with the processes by which individuals develop the general capacity to function in the general social milieu. The development of a "Black identity" requires "transformation" of a pre-existing identity structure that occurs largely in reaction to a particularly traumatic event. Theorists in this tradition generally focus little attention on the extent to which earlier negative experiences either enhance or retard receptivity to transformation. The term "reformist" appropriately conveys the implicit assumption that an individual will continue to operate primarily within the same socio-environmental context both before and after the transformation process is initiated even though her/his mental processes are altered.

The most prominent example is the "nigrescence" model by Cross (1971; 1978). Cross's analysis is grounded in a conception of self-concept that has two components - personal identity and reference group orientation. Cross (1991) introduces the possibility that an individual can be mentally healthy in terms of personal identity while, at the same time, not having a strong orientation toward a concept of African Americans as a distinct cultural collective. Reference group orientation, according to Cross, encompasses a variety of constructs including racial identity, group identity, race awareness, racial ideology, race evaluation, race esteem, race image and racial self-identification (Cross, 1991; p. 42). Reference group orientation, according to Cross (1991, p. 41), is the "ethnographic dimension of the self-concept" and focuses on "the content, context, symbols, values and reference groups for the self." Although Cross does not explicitly discuss potential variation in these constructs across subgroups defined over region, residence, gender, education or other categorizations, there is good reason to expect that such variations would exist.

Cross's model of nigrescence focuses on the concept of "becoming Black" from a tranformational perspective." Thus, "Nigrescence is a *resocializing* experience; it seeks to transform preexisting identity (a non-Afrocentric identity) into one that is Afrocentric" (Cross,1991; p. 190). The barriers to wholesome identity development consist of social forces that generate socializing experiences that induce an identity that reflects deracination and/or deculturation (Cross, 1991, pp. 148-9,190). The model posits that individuals go through several stages in developing an awareness of individual and collective racial identity, i.e. pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization/transformation. Cross (1991, p. 190) states that "the focus of the Pre-encounter stage is the pre-existing identity, the identity to be changed" and that "persons in the Pre-encounter stage hold attitudes toward race that run from low salience to race-neutral, to anti-Black." The encounter stage centers on "those circumstances and events that are likely to induce identity metamorphosis in an

individual" (Cross, 1991; p. 198). Cross maintains that the Encounter entails two steps: experiencing an encounter and personalizing it. The third stage, immersion-emersion, first involves total submersion into "the world of Blackness" pursued in a highly emotional manner (Cross, 1991; p. 203). Ideally, this is followed by a "leveling-out" period during which an individual uses a more intellectually driven approach to the pursuit of Black interests. This process "results in the discovery that one's first impressions of Blackness were romantic and symbolic, not substantive textured and complex . . . [and leads] toward association with groups or persons who are demonstrating a 'more serious' understanding of, and commitment to, Black issues" (Cross, 1991; p. 207). The intensity of this phase can also lead some individuals to regress to earlier stages (Cross, 1991; p. 208).

The fourth stage involves the internalization of the new identity. Cross (1991; p. 210) maintains, "For the 'settled' convert, the new identity gives high salience to Blackness, with the degree of salience determined by ideological considerations. At one extreme are nationalists, whose concern for race leaves little room for other considerations; for others Blackness becomes one of several (biculturalism) or many saliences (multiculturalism)." He also insists, however, that "internalization is not likely to signal the end of a person's concern for nigrescence. As one continues along the life span, new challenges (e.g., a new Encounter) may bring about the need to recycle through some of the stages. Finally, the successful resolution of one's racial identity conflicts makes it possible to shift attention to other identity concerns, such as religion, gender and sexual preferences, career development, social class and poverty, and multiculturalism" (Cross, 1991; p. 210).

Research focusing on this model has been limited largely to the testing of the accuracy of the stage definitions through the development of batteries of questions and the administration of instruments containing these questions to carefully selected samples of African Americans. One insight that has emerged from this research is that individuals may recycle through earlier stages on a periodic basis (Helms, 1990). Of equal interest is the phenomenon of "dropping out" or "regression" described by Cross (1991).

There is no reason to expect that the dynamics described by Cross will be invariant across sub-populations socialized in very different contexts. As an example, it may well be the case that African Americans socialized in rural areas were forced to develop a greater tolerance to oppression, and as a consequence, would require a more traumatic event than an urban-socialized counterpart for the transformation process to be initiated. An examination of the patterns of involvement of "northern" and "southern" African Americans in the various protest activities during the Civil Rights Movement could generate useful insights regarding regional differences in responses to oppression.

In many respects the orientation of the Civil Rights Movement, i.e. eliminating barriers to equal treatment highlights the differences between the reformist and radical approaches. The radical school of Black psychology maintains that restoration of

mental health requires reorientation, i.e. complete immersion in an authentic African definitional system, recognizing that different types of intervention may be required to address different types of misorientation. One dimension of such an African definitional system is a community-based system of African-centered lifestyle rituals that span the life cycle. The effectiveness of the challenge by the radical school hinges on documentation of the claim that "Africans living in the Western world and in contemporary times still have or maintain an African philosophical definition" (Nobles, 1980; p. 31). Thus, from the vantage point of the radical school the ideals of integration associated with the Civil Rights Movement is problematic.

Differentiating Radical & Reformist School of Thought

There are at least three major differences between the approaches of the radical and reformist schools. First, radical models are "developmental" in focus rather than transformational. Radical models focus on What Kambon (1993, p. 37) describes as "the 'Natural' or 'Normal' psychological functioning and behavior, independent of White/European supremacy, domination or racism and racist oppression." Williams (1981; p. 107) maintains that "psychological Blackness is defined as a collective corpus of attitudes, beliefs, preferences and behaviors undergirded by Afrocentric philosophy transmitted through the genetic, cultural and spiritual transmitters and bound together within a system of natural rhythm."

The second major difference between the radical and reformist approaches to identity analysis is the former's de-emphasis on individual personality. As a case in point, Kambon (1993, p. 40) insists that "personality is essentially a social or collective phenomenon [and], therefore, . . . cannot be described and explained outside of a social-collective context (as opposed to the unique-individual context)."

A third difference between the radicals and reformists is the radicals' emphasis on spirituality as a critical dimension of identity dynamics. From this vantage point Kambon (1993, p. 48) observes, "Spirituality represents a dynamic synthesizing energy that allows/propels the Self to extend/merge into the totality of communal phenomenal experience, transcending time and space, and with the ability to achieve cosmic synthesis in its optimal state."

Negotiating African American Cultural Identities in Rural America

Translating the constructs highlighted by the radical school into operational terms could lead to the identification of several key features of rural African American culture. As an example, Southern rural African American culture is heavily influenced by notions of a homestead tied to historical emphasis on rural land ownership and farming (for analyses of the contemporary status of African American farmers see Stewart and Allen-Smith, 1995). It also embodies a very traditional conception of religion that emphasizes an external locus of control, influenced by the limited options for self-efficacy that existed during the slavery era. The extended family and self-reliance are also important dimensions of African American rural identity. African

American rural culture also has a tendency to exhibit more civility than urban culture, more respect, politeness. However, African American rural culture is also slow to accept outsiders. African American rural culture was less influenced by patterns of residential segregation than urban culture so there was more inter-cultural borrowing than in urban areas. The critical question, however, is that these cultural elements, while exhibiting African cultural patterns, are not Afrocentric in the sense employed by the radical theorists. Even in the case of the Gullah populations in the Georgia Sea Islands, although isolation from many of the influences that shaped the evolution of black identity in most of southern Georgia allowed the survival of many elements of traditional African culture that are more sublimated among mainland residents, the characterization "Afrocentric" is not appropriate. Some prominent scholars have questioned the extent to which African survivals had any significant influence on the development of African American culture. As an example, Frazier (1966) argued, in fact, that ". . . as regards the Negro family, there is no reliable evidence that African culture has had any influence on its development."

The radical school shares the reformist school's relative inattention to external sources of oppression as an influence affecting the dynamics of identity formation, maintenance, and evolution. Thus, Kambon (1993, pp. 39-40) asserts, "personality is primarily a biogenetically or innately determined phenomenon, which in many respects defies social-environmental forces." Both give little attention to the possibility that sub-groups of African Americans may have had unique experiences that generated distinctive social identities. Over time inter-regional differences would be expected to decline as a result of migration, common exposure to similar popular culture media, and other factors but it is unlikely that the type of undifferentiated identity structure implicitly assumed by the reformist and radical schools of Black Psychology currently exists.

Attempts to create archetypical psychological profiles of rural and urban African Americans outside the field of psychology can help formulate a better understanding of the dynamics of identity development among rural African Americans. A useful starting point is W.E.B. Du Bois' famous statement about the psychic duality of African Americans:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness— an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts; two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (Du Bois,1897; 194-95).

Du Bois used the characters in his published and unpublished novels to explore variations in the psychological orientations of rural African Americans. In *The Quest of the Silver Fleece,* Blessed Alwyn and Zora Cresswell represent the extremes of personality types within the Black population in the post-Civil War Southern United States. Zora, a wild, sensual, uneducated girl raised in the swamp, had been exposed

neither to the socialization processes of the majority culture nor to the institutions indigenous to the Black plantation experience in the South. In contrast, Bles had been reared on a plantation, but reflecting Du Bois' own orientation, he had produced an intense commitment to formal education. However, Du Bois interestingly projects uncritical commitment to formal education as dysfunctional because the traditional content reinforced the status quo and inadequately prepared its recipients to address the realities of the subordination of Blacks. Thus elements of both the reformist and radical approaches are reflected in the implied optimal strategy for psychic liberation.

Du Bois suggests, however, that the capacity for psychic liberation is heavily conditioned by previous experiences and the strength of pre-existing reference group orientations. He presents the "Uncle Tom" psychological type as the model of dysfunctionality. In the *Quest of the Silver Fleece* he describes the character Johnson as a "faithful nigger" who was one of those constitutionally timid creatures into whom the servility of his fathers had sunk so deep that it had become second-nature.... To the Negroes he was a "White folk's nigger," to be despised and feared (Du Bois, 1974b; 396). Similar characters are introduced into his other novels, for example, Uncle Jasper in *Bethesda, A.M.E.,* who Du Bois indicates thought of white folk as "near to the throne of God" (Du Bois,1928, frame 570). Du Bois' disdain for this psychological disposition is shown through plot elements in which these characters are killed violently by the very supremacists whose values they had adopted.

The African conjure woman is the cement that binds the psyches of Du Bois' heroes and heroines, villains and villainesses into a coherent composite entity. In *The Quest of the Silver Fleece,* this character is Zora's mother, Elspeth. In *Dark Princess,* Matthew Towns' mother is the protector of the African heritage. Despite the importance of these "African" characters, their influence is largely restricted to the Reconstruction period. Du Bois signals the decline of African survivals as a direct influence on the behaviors of Black Americans by killing off these characters early in the various plots. This suggests a belief that while behaviors of African origin had survived the slavery experience, they were suppressed by the urban industrial experience and new patterns of socialization. This is not to say, however, that Du Bois viewed knowledge of contemporary Africa as unnecessary in the liberation of the psyche of Blacks. In addition, if the cultural influence represented by this character type is expanded to encompass the more general construct of the family matriarch, then clearly the cultural importance of this character type extends into the present and deserves a special study in its own right.

Using the individual components of the "aggregate character" as a guide, a summary profile of Du Bois' model of the psyche of Afro-Americans can be distilled. He viewed their psyche as under continuous assault throughout history. The most healthy psychological profile which emerged from the slavery era was "the race man" (or woman) who combined an appreciation of African ontology with the capability to use the training received via formal education to promote group uplift (see Moss, 1981). The probability of retaining psychological health was increased to the extent that a close personal relationship existed with "significant others" with comparable goals and

aspirations. The most dysfunctional psychological profile generated by slavery was that driven by such an intense self-hatred that racial solidarity became an alien concept, and a pathological consciousness emerged.

The massive migration of Blacks from the rural South to the urban North was seen by Du Bois as placing a new set of pressures on the psyche of Black people. Comparatively less overt oppression inhibited the emergence of "race man" among Black elites who selfishly sought individual advancement at all costs. New urban opportunities also corrupted preexisting patterns of cooperation among lower-class migrants. Even the true "race man" is subject to temptation, and preservation of the possibility of eventual psychic liberation requires retreat from the urban environment. Unlike Uncle Tom, however, the potentiality for psychic liberation was not wholly destroyed among urban Blacks forced to adjust their behaviors to conform to the dictates of urbanism. The African conjure woman, while successfully resisting cultural colonialism, cannot survive as the socio-economic system is transformed from a rural agrarian base to an industrial one.

All of Du Bois' characters demonstrate this trait, even the Uncle Tom caricatures. This ability is in line with Du Bois' belief that all human beings are active agents shaping the direction of history. General knowledge of the larger society alone, however, is not sufficient to allow an effective accommodation to the pressures of psychic duality. This must be combined with a positive perception of the Black Experience. Du Bois appears to adopt the position that balance in the "double-consciousness" is more sustainable if an Afro-centric appreciation of racial differences occurs early rather than later in an individual's life. In general, his heroines have developed a positive view of the Black Experience at an earlier point in their socialization than the male protagonists. Some sort of precipitating event is more likely to be needed by males, perhaps because women may be closer to organic Black culture, for example the Black church. The role of the matriarch requires special scrutiny.

For Du Bois, then, double consciousness is indeed a universal phenomenon among Blacks. The resistance to pressures to submerge the essence of Black identity varies across personality types and individual circumstances, but all face the problem of "warring ideals." It is from this vantage point that we can turn to the question of how initial accommodations can be transformed into an element of the process by which psychological liberation can be attained in rural settings.

The transformation of perceived accommodation into a strategy to produce psychic liberation requires detailed knowledge of the dynamics of dominant group— subordinate group interaction. Such an understanding allows effective maneuvering within an oppressive system in a way that preserves belief in the capacity to control one's own destiny.

Cultural Contracts Paradigm and Identity Negotiation

The I-Other dialectic that is implicit in the exploration of racially and socially asymmetrical identities can best be accounted for by examining the notion of cultural contracts as manifested products of identity negotiation during communication with others. With all identity negotiation, the assumption is that cultural difference translates into cultural conflict and therefore, something must be done with conflict. As a result, identity negotiation is about coordinating one's identity to match, compliment or not resist the presence of other cultural identities. As with any relationship, if others do not coordinate relationships with us in a fair, equitable manner, relational possibilities may dissolve. However, if one feels coerced and his/her life possibilities, financial means of survival or some other major factor is at stake, certain cultural contracts may be more appealing despite coercion.

Although seemingly simple in explanation, the cultural contracts paradigm was established to make sense of identity effects or outcomes as necessary end products of identity negotiation. This is accomplished by describing three contract typologies: ready to sign contract (assimilation), quasi-completed (contract adaptation), or co-created contract (mutual valuation). The tragic reality is that most people neither understand all of the contracts they have signed nor all of the implications of having signed them.

Generally, identity negotiation refers to a conscious and mindful process of shifting one's worldview and/or cultural behaviors, so it is possible to be cognizant of a choice to assimilate without understanding that your assimilation now has a direct effect on the next same-race applicant that interviews with your organization. Identity negotiation is about alterations in worldview. A shift in any one or any part of one of the cultural aspects of rural African American cultural identities constitutes the "signing" of a cultural contract. Everyone has "signed" at least one cultural contract in his/her life, and with every significant encounter, one or more of those cultural contracts is negotiated. For example, we mentioned earlier that the nigrescence model suggests that one can be mentally healthy with no orientation or commitment to African Americans as a reference group; therefore, it is possible that a Black person matriculates through a process at the end of which s/he becomes culturally Black. Although this idea of becoming "culturally Black" seems essentialist, what it suggests is that a person who has assimilated or adapted his/her cultural identity can, over time, become divorced from his/her indigenous cultural ways of knowing. Eventually, this would disable him/her from ever signing a co-created contract because mutual validation only occurs among relational interactants who value themselves first.

It is important to note that the word "cultural" in cultural contracts is deliberate. It is impossible to exist without culture. Even if one is unable to articulate the particularities of the cultural value system to which he or she subscribes, there are still cultural patterns of interaction, rules, and norms that guide everyday behavior. So, with this cultural contracts paradigm, there is no such thing as a non-cultural or culturally generic contract and everyone has at least one cultural contract.

Everyone has identified or aligned him or herself with others throughout his/her life. This alignment is usually both, behavioral and cognitive. The Cultural contracts paradigm is most concerned with sustained alignments, whether short or long-term. As with any negotiation, one can either choose to abide by an existing contractual arrangement or sign another contract. Although the concept of identity negotiation is simple, it is not always clear what is being negotiated, especially since identities are non-material. The cultural contracts paradigm has been introduced to make sense of what is actually being negotiated. The fundamental principles of cultural identity negotiation are summarized in the following list of theoretic assumptions and propositions of cultural contracts.

Core Theoretical Assumptions and Propositions and Assumptions

Assumptions 1-5

In assumptions 1-5, the rudiments of initiating a cultural contract are outlined. Think of negotiating a material item such as a house or an automobile. The first exposure one has to the item up for negotiation is usually via a one-way communicative venue such as advertising. So, if you are a prospective buyer, you contact the person with the product you want and begin to talk about points of sale. In human interaction processes, and particularly as it relates to cultural communication, the process is wholistically the same, but differs in form. Instead of seeing an advertisement, the body, voice or written message becomes the mediated stimulus. Our bodies signify racial meaning and our minds comply with social meaning that is culturally constructed. So, in a rural community, an African American cultural identity is signified via the body as a visual cue and secondarily by the values, norms, behaviors and practices that constitute cultural understanding. As human beings, we ritualistically enact these cultural practices and our social perceptions facilitate everyday living. They give us a sense of belonging and attachment. This is especially important among minorities who are marginalized and treated as abnormal because of their difference. Their attachment to culture is a matter of survival and yet there is always a need for marginalized persons to seek centrality and to associate with members of the dominant and mainstream culture. Doing so is healthy, but frequently deleterious, because it reproduces the same anxieties and reinforcement of social positioning when their cultural identities are not treated as normal, legitimate, or okay. In the latter case where they are not dialectically approved by the dominant other, marginalized group members must make a choice to resist assimilation and maybe a certain measure of life satisfaction or to sign that ready-to-sign contract in the absence of mutual validation. The assumptions are as follows:

Assumption 1: Human beings cannot exist without culture; culture is the basic organizing unit of social processes (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Assumption 2: Cultural contracts are necessary for the sake of preserving, protecting, and defining the self, hence everyone has at least one. (There is no such thing as not

having one, although you may not be aware of what your contract requires you to do. All contracts have fine print that may be overlooked without careful reading).

Assumption 3: Cultural contracts can be either temporary/episodic or long-term/enduring.

Assumption 4: Cultural difference among human interactants presupposes a need for coordination which is manifested in cultural contracts (Cronen, Chen, & Pearce, 1988).

Assumption 5: Although important, there is not necessarily a mutual interest in relational coordination, identity negotiation or intercultural competence among all human interactants (Jackson, 1999a). With these persons, "signing' is not the goal.

Assumptions 6-11

Assumptions 6-11 are designed to address the means, modes and functioning of cultural contracts as a communication product. Identities are communicated everyday in multiple ways. It would be nice to presume that we are simply exchanging ideas or just living without any need to deal with culture, but the reality is that we are all cultural beings and this gets accented every time we come in contact with cultural others. Their identities help them to make sense of the world. This is not new; Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf talked about this almost fifty years ago. They suggested that language determines thought. That is, the words, sounds and structure of language in a given culture help a person to articulate what they are experiencing. The typical example is that there are cultures where there are over one hundred words describing snow. That culture sees and understands snow much differently than North Americans who might have about ten words for snow. The language is only feature of culture that helps form identities. History is another. Personal and cultural histories offer a baseline for social cognition. Without history, one becomes confused about what to do in a given situation. They seek to reduce uncertainty and gain some control over how they will proceed. Rural African American identities are in a state of flux, as stated earlier in this essay. The duality is embedded in the Africanity of African American culture and the effect of being an African ancestor forcibly brought to the American context. So, there is both an African American resistance to and move toward being White, which means being a normal U. S. citizen. The resistance is due to a perceived need to maintain some attachment to the cultural community that supports African Americans and other minority rural inhabitants when dominant cultural others will not. The assumptions 6-11 are listed below.

Assumption 6: Identities are dynamic, not static; and they are influenced during interaction with others (Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993).

Assumption 7: Every time people communicate, they are communicating their identities by expressing how they see the world (Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

*Assumption 8***:** Communicators' personal histories and antecedent interactions influence the degree to which they are open to entering into identity negotiations with others (Jackson, 1999a; Jackson, 2000b; Jackson et al, in press).

*Assumption 9***:** Because multiple identities are functioning simultaneously within communicative contexts, they may also be negotiated simultaneously (Collier & Thomas, 1988).

*Assumption 10***:** The attempt to function as a "free agent" and "join" another culture is not always as profitable as it sounds; it is often stressful, shocking and isolating (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

*Assumption 11***:** A contract will only be completed or "tendered" if there is a strong desire or perceived need for it, even if it is forcibly signed for the sake of survival (Jackson et al, in press).

Propositions 1-3

During the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the rural south was in an uproar due to rural African Americans who could tolerate their secondary social positions no longer. The movement ended with some who forfeited their lives for the cause and others who lived to continue the legacy. Nonetheless, the movement was a lesson in the politics of identity and cultural contract negotiation. Asymmetrical power does not always translate into inferiority. Civil rights protestors proved that if principled protest is sustained, organized and lawful, results will be obtained. However, those who placed their locus of control externally never saw liberatory change. Returning to the negotiation of a material item such as a car, if you are emotionally invested or tied to a certain price for the car, it is highly unlikely you will sell it at a discount price. This example is not to illustrate that identities have pricetags, but that if one is strongly committed to and strongly values one's own culture, there will likely be a greater sense of self-efficacy and a reduced desire to assimilate or adapt. Propositons 1-3 are below.

*Proposition 1***:** When there is unequal power among interactants, strategic communication will take place (Giles et al, 1987).

*Proposition 2***:** There is a direct and proportionate relationship between power and self-efficacy (Orbe, 1994; 1998; Ting Toomey, 1999).

*Proposition 3***:** If there is no perceived need to relationally coordinate, then there will also be a greater resistance to co-creating cultural contracts (Orbe, 1998). (These persons will either expect you to sign their contract or have none at all.)

Propositions 4-7

Propositions 4-7 are the final statements related to the cultural contracts typology. Given that we have already discussed power as a variable that contributes to signing a cultural contract, with all other things being equal, one's cultural loyalty or ethnolinguistic vitality, especially in a rural community will be high if living in close contact with members of the same culture. For example, no matter whether it is Creoles and Cajuns of New Orleans and its rural communities, Geechi and Gulllah speaking communities in Georgia or South Carolina or Black Appalachians in Pennsylvania, linguistic communities are perpetually faced with the survival of language. As a result, their use of non-mainstream English, as African American rural inhabitants, represents a contract breach. Their lives, in part, depend on adaptation, but assimilation is heavily resisted and co-creation is not a first option, because it implies that their cultural identity is being called into question and may be eventually dissolved. The propositions 4-7 are below.

Proposition 4: As cultural loyalty and power increases, so does the likelihood that "ready-to-sign" cultural contracts will be prepared for other cultural relationships in advance (See Giles, et al.discussion of ethnic vitality).

Proposition 5: There are at least three types of cultural contracts: "ready-to-sign,"(i.e. not budging; closest to win-lose) co-created (i.e. win-win and interdependent self-construal), and quasi-completed.

Proposition 6: If contracts are breached, there are penalties associated with this "rule" violation, one of which may be the cost of community ostracism. (Of course, there are "escape clauses" in fine print).

Proposition 7: When a breach or violation occurs, one of three actions will take place in varying degrees: termination or rupture of the relationship, tendering of a new or revised contract, or settling without penalty due to perceived high value of the relationship and low assessment of damage.

Identity Effects of Blacks in Rural Communities

The preceding discussion illustrates that contemporary rural African American culture, identity, and social psychology have been deeply influenced by historical developments. The struggles for a wholesome social psychology, political, economic, and social liberation profoundly affected family life among African Americans. Both W.E.B. Du Bois and E. Franklin Frazier believed that efforts by African-Americans to adopt the values, mores, and patterns of familial organization and functioning that were developing among white Americans were necessarily distorted by the institution of slavery. Both scholars also emphasize that there were early patterns of class differentiation among Black families conditioned by slavery (Stewart, 1990). For Du Bois and Frazier, although slavery constituted the ultimate human indignity, once it had occurred, the forced introduction of Western mores and values was seen as a positive development militating against social anarchy. Frazier pushes this idea further than Du Bois does, but it is present in the analyses of both. To illustrate, Du Bois

(1908,21) argued ". . . on the whole it is fair to say that while to some extent European family morals were taught the small select body of house servants and artisans, both by precept and example, the great body of field hands were raped of their own sex customs and provided with no binding new ones. Slavery gave the monogamic family ideal to slaves, but it compelled and desired only the most imperfect practice of its most ordinary morals." We know that plantation culture and the system of debt peonage continued to condition various aspects of the culture of many rural African Americans well into the 1950s when the mechanical cotton picker was invented (see for example Johnson, 1934).

In describing the urbanization of blacks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Frazier argued that it would be difficult to maintain family organization in an urban setting without substantial economic and cultural resources. Frazier further maintained that ". . . the most significant element in the new social structure of Negro life is the Black industrial proletariat. As the Negro has become an industrial worker and received adequate compensation the father has become the chief breadwinner and assumed a responsible place in his family" (Frazier, 1966; 367). Du Bois saw the proletarianization of African-Americans in industrial America differently. He argued that economic conditions were influencing the distribution of labor across gender in two ways; ". . . low wages and a rising economic standard is postponing marriage to an age dangerously late for a folk in the Negro's present moral development [and] present economic demand draws the [N]egro women to the city and keeps the men in the country, causing a dangerous disproportion of the sexes" (Du Bois,1908; 36).

The differences in Du Bois' and Frazier's views of the impact of industrialization and urbanization on Black families reflect differences in their perceptions of the ideal model toward which family patterns should be evolving. For Frazier, the ideal pattern involved the progressive assimilation of the mores, values, and folkways of the majority culture. The assimilation process was juxtaposed to a pattern of progressive disintegration that accelerated with the end of slavery. In Frazier's words: "When one views in retrospect the waste of human life, the immorality, delinquency, desertions, and broken homes which have been involved in the development of Negro family life in the United States . . . the Negro has found within the patterns of the white man's culture a purpose in life and a significance for his strivings which have involved sacrifices for his children and the curbing of individual desires and impulses indicates that he has become assimilated to a new mode of life" (Frazier, 1966; 367).

Du Bois did not view the wholesale assimilation of the culture of the larger society as the ideal developmental path for Black families. In discussing sexual mores, he (1908, 42) argued: "The Negro attitude in these matters is in many respects healthier and more reasonable. Their sexual passions are strong and frank . . .The Negro motherlove and family instinct is strong, and it regards the family as a means, not an end, and although the end in the present Negro mind is usually personal happiness rather than social order, yet even here radical reformers of divorce courts have something to learn."

The liberation struggles of the twentieth century of course altered many of these historical patterns of oppression but their legacy could well be persisting differences in the social psychology of rural and urban African Americans. Contemporary patterns of return migration and urbanization in the South along with the greater cross-fertilization of regional influences through the media are reducing some of the differences between the identity configurations of rural and urban African Americans.

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Ronald L. Jackson II (Ph.D., Howard University), Assistant Professor of Culture and Communication Theory, Department of Speech Communication, Pennsylvania State University, James B. Stewart (Ph. D., Pennsylvania State University), Professor of Labor and Industrial Relations, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Pennsylvania State University. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ronald L. Jackson II, Department of Speech Communication, Pennsylvania State University, 234 Sparks Building, University Park, PA 16802. Electronic mail may be sent via Internet to rlj6@psu.edu.