

Using Group Consciousness Theories to Understand Political Activism: Case Studies of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Ingo Hasselbach

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ABSTRACT I describe and integrate several theories of group consciousness and collective action, along with 3 case studies of political activists. I have 2 goals: (1) to use the theories to help us understand something puzzling about each life and (2) to use the cases to complicate and expand the theories. Barack Obama's case raises the question of how someone with a politicized Black identity evolved into a politician working for all oppressed people and complicates racial identity development theory. Hillary Clinton's case raises the question of how a middle-class White girl raised in a conservative family became a prominent Democratic Party politician and complicates group consciousness theories by demonstrating the importance of generation and personality. Ingo Hasselbach's (a former German neo-Nazi leader) case illustrates relative deprivation theory and raises the question of whether theories developed to explain subordinate group consciousness can be applied to movements of dominant group consciousness.

We have all seen too much, to take my parents' brief union—a black man and white woman, an African and an American—at face value. . . . When people who don't know me well, black or white, discover my background (and it is usually a discovery, for I ceased to advertise my mother's race at the age of twelve or thirteen, when I began to suspect that by doing so I was ingratiating myself to whites), I see the split-second adjustments they have to make, the searching of my eyes for some telltale sign. They no longer know who I am. Privately, they guess at my troubled heart,

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I suppose—the mixed blood, the divided soul, the ghostly image of the tragic mulatto trapped between two worlds.

(Obama, 1995/2004, p. xv)

I wasn't born a first lady or a senator. I wasn't born a Democrat. I wasn't born a lawyer or an advocate for women's rights and human rights. I wasn't born a wife or a mother. I was born an American in the middle of the twentieth century, a fortunate time and place. I was free to make choices unavailable to past generations of women in my own country and inconceivable to many women in the world today. I came of age on the crest of tumultuous social change and took part in the political battles fought over the meaning of America and its role in the world.

(Clinton, 2003, p. 1)

I began developing right-wing extremist ideas in 1987, when I was nineteen years old and sitting in an East German prison. . . . I wanted the German empire a former Gestapo officer had told me about in prison. . . . We shared . . . a hatred for the government . . . , a belief that our freedoms and traditions as white men . . . were being infringed on by a multicultural society.

(Hasselbach & Reiss, 1996, pp. vii–viii)

The three quotations above came from the autobiographies of three early 21st-century political activists. Two, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, are prominent U.S. Democratic Party politicians. The third, Ingo Hasselbach, is a mostly unknown (in the United States) former German neo-Nazi who repudiated his extremist politics and became a vocal opponent of such ideologies. Each of these cases presents a puzzling central question about the person's political development that could be elucidated by understanding theories of motivation for collective action. Each case also presents problems with the theories that complicate our understanding of political development. In this article, I review and integrate several theories that are relevant to understanding motivation for participation in collective action (that is, political actions taken by a group on behalf of group members to try to change society at large). I begin with a review of psychological theories developed to explain participation in collective action.

PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

Research by personality psychologists on motivation for participation in collective action has generally used individual differences in personality characteristics and life experience variables to explain involvement in collective action (e.g., Block, Haan, & Smith, 1973). This tradition, while allowing psychologists to identify individual differences in personality characteristics that distinguished activists from nonactivists, did not inform us about *why* these individual differences in personality characteristics were associated with collective action. In contrast, most research on collective action by social psychologists was rooted in theories of social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and provided an obvious motive for individual participation in collective action. However, this tradition largely ignored individual difference variables that could tell us why some group members developed group consciousness whereas others did not. Duncan (1999) presented a model that integrated these two lines of research.

Group Consciousness and Collective Action

The model presented in Figure 1 shows that personality characteristics and life experiences are related to participation in collective action both directly (through Path C) and indirectly, through the development of group consciousness (Path B). In this schematic

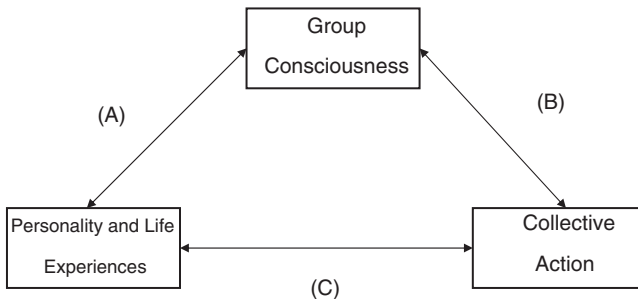


Figure 1

Mediation model of group consciousness and collective action.

Note. Adapted from “Motivation for collective action: Group consciousness as mediator of personality, life experiences, and women’s rights activism” by L. E. Duncan, 1999, *Political Psychology*, 20, p. 613. Copyright 1999 by the International Society of Political Psychology.

diagram, group consciousness is hypothesized to mediate (Baron & Kenny, 1986), or give psychological meaning to, intrapersonal variables that result in participation in collective action. In this model, group consciousness is defined as a politicized group identity. Politicization of identity means that the individual has incorporated into that identity a critical analysis of the group's relative position in the societal power hierarchy. This definition of group consciousness was based on the integration of three related social psychological theories: stratum consciousness (Gurin, Miller, & Gurin, 1980), relative deprivation (Crosby, 1976), and nigrescence (Cross, 1971, 1991, 1995). I refer to these theories collectively as group consciousness theories. (See Duncan, in press, for an integration of personality and social psychological theories of collective action.)

Duncan's (1999) model shows that personality and life experiences can have direct as well as indirect effects on collective action. For example, individuals affected by life-disrupting situations might follow the direct path from life experiences to collective action (Path C). The model might be used to explain social movements arising out of spontaneous expressions of discontent. During periods of social turbulence, collective action may be taken in a disorganized manner by members of a group, without the benefit of an articulated ideology or a politicized group identification. For example, during the violence in Los Angeles following the 1992 acquittal of four white police officers accused of beating Rodney King (an African American), participants may not have been acting on an articulated ideology of race consciousness so much as they were acting on a diffuse feeling of anger or frustration. On the other hand, for activists whose basic needs are met, group consciousness may mediate the relationship between intrapersonal variables and activism (Paths A and B).

The arrows in the model are also bidirectional, indicating the possibility of reciprocal influences or reverse effects. That is, it is likely that group consciousness and collective action can affect personality and life experiences, collective action can contribute to the development of group consciousness, and collective action can affect intrapersonal variables through group consciousness. It is probable that such reciprocal effects depend on the context of the social movement. Returning to the Los Angeles riots, the experience of the riots, undertaken with no particular ideological convictions, generated a lot of discussion among White people and people of color that has quite possibly led some participants and observers to

develop group consciousness. Thus, according to the current model, collective action might very well result in increased group consciousness (reversed Path B). For another example, see Agronick and Duncan (1998), who documented personality changes as a result of participation in the women's movement (reversed Path C).

The mediational role of group consciousness has been supported in at least two empirical articles (Duncan, 1999; Duncan & Stewart, 2007). In two samples of adult women, Duncan (1999) found that feminist consciousness mediated the relationship between several personality and life experience variables and women's rights activism. Specifically, feminist consciousness mediated the relationships between participation in women's rights activism and the personality and life experience variables of low authoritarianism or moral traditionalism, personal political salience (the tendency to attach personal meaning to the larger political environment), experiences with sexual oppression (sexual harassment or identification as a lesbian), and education about women's position in society through women's studies classes or consciousness-raising groups.

Below, I review and integrate the three social psychological group consciousness theories mentioned above. Integrated into Duncan's (1999) model, these theories can help elucidate, on an individual level, why some people in a particular context develop group consciousness and become politically active. In addition, there are a variety of personality and life experience variables that are relevant to the development of group consciousness and collective action (see Duncan, in press, for a review). In this article, I consider how one personality variable (personal political salience) and one life experience variable (generation) affect the development of group consciousness (in the form of stratum consciousness, relative deprivation, and nigrescence) and collective action.

Stratum Consciousness

Stratum consciousness was described by Gurin and her colleagues (Gurin, 1985; Gurin et al., 1980) as composed of four elements: (1) *identification with a group*, that is, recognition of shared interests among the group or a sense of common fate; (2) *power discontent*, or belief that one's group is deprived of power and influence relative to a dominant group; (3) *rejection of legitimacy*, or belief that disparities based on group membership are illegitimate (often called system

blame); and (4) *collective orientation*, or belief that members of one's group should pool their resources to eliminate those obstacles that affect them as a group. Central to stratum consciousness is the awareness of the relative positioning of various groups (i.e., strata) in a societal power structure. Most studies of stratum consciousness involve members of subordinate groups: members of groups that have been oppressed or have traditionally not had a lot of access to power and resources in society (Gurin, 1985; Gurin et al., 1980). Evidence supporting this model was found in several empirical studies (Banks, 1970; Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; Cole & Stewart, 1996; Dizard, 1970; Gerlach & Hine, 1970; Gurin, 1985; Gurin et al., 1980; Hall, Cross, & Freedle, 1972; Stone, 1968).

Relative Deprivation

Crosby's (1976) formulation of relative deprivation provides a social psychological theory that links group consciousness to collective action. Relative deprivation describes the negative emotions experienced by individuals who feel unjustly deprived of something they desire. In this way, Crosby distinguished between *relative* (comparisons with similar others) and *objective* (the realities of material circumstances) deprivation, showing that relative deprivation was more likely to result in resentment than objective deprivation. According to Crosby's (1976) model, relative deprivation occurs when five preconditions are met: (1) seeing that other possesses X, (2) wanting X, (3) feeling that one deserves X, (4) thinking it feasible to obtain X, and (5) lacking a sense of responsibility for failure to possess X. For example, in the case of civil rights, gay and lesbian people might agitate for the right to marry based on feelings of being unjustly deprived of such a right. Using Crosby's preconditions, they might see that straight people in committed relationships frequently marry (Precondition 1), they would want the legal protections and privileges offered by a state-sanctioned relationship (Precondition 2), and, given recent advancements in gay rights (e.g., gay marriage being legalized in Massachusetts), they would feel that they deserved these rights and think it feasible to gain them (Preconditions 3 and 4). Finally, they must blame systemic forces for their lack of marital rights (Precondition 5). In this way, Crosby's construct of relative deprivation overlaps with Gurin and colleagues' (1980) notion of stratum consciousness, in that it articulates and elaborates

the negative emotions involved in power discontent and system blame.

In Crosby's early work, group identification, a central element of Gurin and colleagues' (1980) model, was not mentioned as a necessary precondition for the experience of *personal* relative deprivation; however, in later work on fraternal (group) deprivation, Clayton and Crosby (1992) discussed the essential role of group identification. When justification for inequity is explicitly political, the relative deprivation that develops can almost be equated with Gurin and colleagues' (1980) notion of stratum consciousness (except that Crosby does not assume a collective orientation). If a group identification becomes politicized through the process of group comparison (group identification), awareness of inequities (power discontent), and rejection of responsibility for these inequities using a political analysis (rejection of legitimacy), then relative deprivation and stratum consciousness look very similar.

In an expansion of Crosby's (1976) model, Crosby and Gonzalez-Intal (1984) included feelings of deprivation on behalf of members of other groups ("ideological deprivation," Clayton & Crosby, 1992) and resentment over a third party's undeserved possession of goods. Jennings (1991) posited that these two extensions of relative deprivation theory might account for participation in social movements by members of groups that do not directly benefit from the achievement of the movement's goals.

In addition, Crosby (1976) outlined the possible outcomes for the individual and society after relative deprivation. Depending on personality and environmental factors, relative deprivation could lead either to nonviolent personal or social change or violence against the self or society. In group consciousness terms, and assuming a collective ideology, personal and environmental conditions could stymie the expression of group consciousness or channel group consciousness into nonviolent or violent collective action.

Nigrescence

Cross's (1971, 1991, 1995) psychological theory of nigrescence describes the developmental process of group consciousness, or politicizing a group identification. Although Cross's model was originally developed to describe the development of a politicized Black identity, his model has been adapted to describe the development

of other, mostly subordinate, types of group consciousness as well (e.g., ethnic consciousness, feminist consciousness, gay or lesbian consciousness; see Constantine, Watt, Gainor, & Warren, 2005, for a review). There are, of course, differences in the oppressive circumstances facing different subordinate groups; thus the process of politicization of any given identity may deviate from Cross's description. This model, however, may be especially appropriate for describing the process of subordinate group consciousness, especially for identities that are visible to others. Cross's model involves five stages and documents the development of new, subordinate group-centered ideologies.

Briefly, the *pre-encounter* stage describes the worldview of a non-politicized individual. The pre-encounter person views being a subordinate group member as either irrelevant to his or her daily life or as an "obstacle, problem or *stigma*, and seldom a symbol of culture, tradition or struggle" (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1992, p. 6). The *encounter* stage marks the awakening of individuals to the realities of the unequal position of their group in society, and often involves anger at society and dominant groups (similar to Gurin et al.'s, 1980, power discontent and rejection legitimacy). The encounter stage begins the process of identity change to accommodate a new, collective ideology that interprets personal experiences of oppression as due to group membership rather than personal characteristics. Encounters can also involve reinterpretations of past experiences with a new framework of analysis (see, e.g., Downing & Roush, 1985). *Immersion/emersion* involves a total rejection of dominant culture values and an uncritical acceptance of those of the subordinate group. Successful negotiation of this stage involves heavy reliance on the collective, where the individual finds companionship, solace, and models of "how to be Black." Cross's Stage 4 involves *internalization* of the new identity, which "signals the resolution of conflicts between the 'old' and 'new' worldview" (Cross et al., 1992, p. 9) and describes the worldview of the newly politicized person. Individuals no longer rely on the collective for self-definition; they have internalized the meaning of their group identification and are willing to interact on equal terms with non-group members. Finally, *internalization-commitment* is characterized by an active and continuing commitment to redressing injustices encountered by the group and is not embraced by every group member.

The models of race consciousness described by Cross and feminist consciousness described by Downing and Roush (1985) have been supported in several studies (Carter & Helms, 1987; Parham & Helms, 1981, 1985a, 1985b; Rickard, 1989, 1990). For example, Rickard (1989, 1990) showed that college women categorized as possessing pre-encounter identities were more likely to belong to conservative and traditional campus organizations, hold traditional views about dating, and endorse negative attitudes toward working women. College women categorized as having internalized a politicized (feminist) identity were more likely to belong to liberal and feminist organizations, hold nontraditional views about dating, and feel more positively toward working women. More recent research is consistent in linking feminist identities to political activism in White and Black women and men (Duncan, 1999; Duncan & Stewart, 2007; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004; White, 2006).

Personal Political Salience

There are important individual differences in how attuned individuals are to their social and historical environment (Stewart & Healy, 1986). Personal political salience is an individual difference variable that describes the “overall propensity to attach personal meanings to social events” (Duncan & Stewart, 2007, p. 145). In every group, there are individuals who seem to take personally events occurring in the social environment. These people should be high in personal political salience. Personal political salience has been shown to be a strong and reliable predictor of a variety of political actions (Curtin, Stewart, & Duncan, 2010; Duncan, 1999; Duncan & Stewart, 1995, 2007). For example, Duncan and Stewart (2007) found that, in four samples of educated midlife women, group consciousness mediated the relationship between personal political salience and activism related to the politicized identity. That is, for White women, feminist consciousness mediated the relationship between personal political salience and women’s rights activism. Further, for White women, politicized racial identities (as antiracists) mediated the relationship between personal political salience and civil rights activism.

Generation

Generational experiences have been shown to have powerful effects on behavior and personality. Stewart and Healy (1989) presented a

theory that argued that the intersection of one's life stage with the social environment has long-lasting effects on psychological development. They argued that events occurring in childhood determine one's fundamental values and expectations or "natural view" of the world. For example, people who were children during the Great Depression and suffered from shortages of food and other necessities would have particular views about wastefulness that might affect their lives many years later. Importantly, these values are mostly out of conscious awareness—they are, after all, just the way the world is. Events coinciding with young adulthood, on the other hand, tend to affect identity development and the perception of what types of work and relationship opportunities are available. For example, many young adults who came of age during the late 1960s defined themselves in terms of political activism, the Vietnam War, and the women's movement, even many years after these events (Braungart & Braungart, 1990; Cole, Zucker, & Ostrove, 1998; Stewart & Gold-Steinberg, 1990). Events experienced in early middle adulthood, after work and family commitments were made, should affect behavior but not necessarily identity. During World War II, middle-class women with young children may have left their homes to work in factories for the war effort, but they probably did not change their fundamental identities as mothers and housewives (Stewart & Healy, 1989). Finally, at midlife, when careers are typically well established and day-to-day care of children has diminished, social events could affect perceptions of new opportunities and choices, perhaps leading some people to reinvent themselves. Thus, midlife women with grown children may have seen the women's movement of the 1970s as offering opportunities to change their identities; they may have started careers, gone back to school, or ended unhappy marriages (Agronick & Duncan, 1998; Duncan & Agronick, 1995).

It follows from this work that an individual is more likely to develop group consciousness during *early adulthood* or *midlife*, when identity formation or revision is apt to occur; this is true for both dominant and subordinate group members. In addition, the likelihood of developing group consciousness should drastically increase if, during early adulthood or midlife, an individual experiences a social event focused on issues that resonate to a particular group membership. For example, research suggests that women who were young adults during the women's movement were more likely to develop feminist consciousness than women who were in early

middle adulthood at the time of the movement because the younger women were in a receptive developmental stage (Duncan & Agro-nick, 1995). Likewise, young adults growing up when there was no women's movement, or when there was a movement against gains for women, should be less likely to develop feminist consciousness (Duncan & Stewart, 2000). Thus, developmental stage may moderate the relationships between personality and life experiences and collective action (Paths A and B in Figure 1).

USING THE MODEL TO EXPLAIN THE GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOR OF ACTIVISTS WORKING FOR PROGRESSIVE AND REACTIONARY CAUSES

Each of the constructs described above is important for understanding individual paths to activism. Below, I present three case studies of political activists. The cases highlight something puzzling about the individuals that can be better explained by using these theories to understand their lives. In addition, each case presents problems and complications that encourage us to modify and expand these theories. The current article builds on the long and productive history of psychobiography in political psychology (e.g., George & George's 1956 study of Woodrow Wilson; Winter & Carlson's 1988 study of Richard Nixon). Case studies in the personological tradition (Murray, 1938) are particularly useful for understanding unusual behavior. In political psychology in particular, case studies allow us to study inaccessible individuals. In this case, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are prominent U.S. politicians and Ingo Hasselbach is a former neo-Nazi leader. Understanding how group consciousness theories operated in their lives provides us with information that can be used to generate research questions that can be studied in larger, more generalized samples. In each case, all of the constructs discussed earlier could be applied to understand their activism. However, because of space constraints, each case emphasizes one or two constructs and largely ignores the others (though they apply as well). For each of these activists, information was gleaned from a published autobiography.

Barack Obama

The first case study is of Barack Obama, the son of a Black African man and a White American woman. Born in 1961, Obama's mother

raised him with help from her parents (Toot and Gramps). Obama grew up in Hawaii and Indonesia and did not live in the mainland United States until he attended college. Obama attended Harvard Law School, worked as a community organizer in African American neighborhoods in Chicago, became a U.S. senator, and was elected the first African American president of the United States in 2008. Obama's racial identity development is a prominent theme in his autobiography, *Dreams From My Father* (1995/2004). The central puzzle raised by Obama's story is how his politicized Black identity is related to his evolution into a politician interested in helping all oppressed people. Obama's biracial and multicultural experiences complicate racial identity development theory.

There is evidence that Obama struggled to develop a racial identity in the absence (and shadow) of his African father, living mostly with White people in an era with no large-scale racial social movements. For example, Obama described the experience of trying to fit in with his privileged classmates at the Punahou school in Hawaii. Although complicated by the fact that Obama had recently moved from Indonesia and felt for many reasons that he did not fit in, this particular example is infused with racial overtones as Obama reports it. This incident illustrates Cross's *pre-encounter* stage as well as a failure by Obama to feel Gurin and colleagues' *common fate*. He recounted the myriad of ways he did not fit in, and then:

There was one other child in my class . . . who reminded me of a different sort of pain. Her name was Coretta, and before my arrival, she had been the only black person in our grade. She was plump and dark and didn't seem to have many friends. From the first day, we avoided each other but watched from a distance, as if direct contact would only remind us more keenly of our isolation. . . . During recess one hot, cloudless day, . . . she was chasing me around the jungle gyms and swings. She was laughing brightly, and I teased her and dodged this way and that, until she finally caught me and we fell to the ground breathless. When I looked up, I saw a group of children . . . pointing down at us . . . "Coretta's got a boyfriend!" . . . "I'm not her boyfriend!" I shouted. I ran up to Coretta and gave her a slight shove; she staggered back and looked up at me, but . . . said nothing. "Leave me alone!" I shouted again. And suddenly Coretta was running, faster and faster, until she disappeared from sight. Appreciative laughs rose

around me. . . . For the rest of the afternoon, I was haunted by the look on Coretta's face just before she had started to run: her disappointment, and the accusation. I wanted to explain to her somehow that it had been nothing personal; I'd just never had a girlfriend before and saw no particular need to have one now. But I didn't even know if that was true. I knew only that it was too late for explanations, that somehow I'd been tested and found wanting; and whenever I snuck a glance at Coretta's desk, I would see her with her head bent over her work, appearing as if nothing had happened, pulled into herself and asking no favors. My act of betrayal bought me some room from the other children, and like Coretta, I was mostly left alone. . . . But from that day forward, a part of me felt trampled on, crushed. (pp. 60–62).

Gurin et al. (1980) described a sense of common fate as integral to stratum consciousness. In the Coretta incident, it is clear that Obama actively disidentified with Coretta and that he suspected that his rejection of her was related to his desire to fit in; that if he stood by her as a Black person, he would not be accepted by his White classmates. This incident highlights the difficulty that members of subordinate groups might face in developing group consciousness—there are powerful incentives for subordinate group members to distance themselves from other members of their group (see, e.g., Hurtado, 1989, for a discussion of how this operates in the lives of White women versus women of color). In addition, Obama's situation was complicated by his biracial heritage in that being Black was not a salient factor in his life—he hadn't yet met his African father, he was living with his White grandparents, and there were not many Black people in Obama's life.

Cross (1991) described stage two of nigrescence—*encounter*—as catching a person unaware.

The encounter must work around, slip through, or even shatter the relevance of the person's current identity and world view, and at the same time provide some hint of the direction in which to point the person to be resocialized or transformed. (p. 199)

Obama described several negative encounters that led him to question how African Americans were treated in this country. In Gurin and colleagues' terms, these encounters led to power discontent and

system blame. In Crosby's terms, they led to feelings of relative deprivation. One of the first encounters he described occurred when he was nine years old. He was reading a magazine while waiting for his mother to finish up at work. In the magazine, he saw a picture of a Black man who had undergone a chemical peel in order to lighten his skin.

I felt my face and neck get hot. My stomach knotted; the type began to blur on the page. Did my mother know about this? What about her [Black] boss—why was he so calm, reading through his reports a few feet down the hall? I had a desperate urge to jump out of my seat, to show them what I had learned, to demand some explanation or assurance. . . . I had no voice for my newfound fear. . . . I know that seeing that article was violent for me, an ambush attack. (pp. 30, 51)

Over the next several years, Obama began the long process of developing a politicized racial identity, which involved reevaluating past and current experience through a politicized lens. In this case, it would involve Obama's awareness of how poorly Black people were treated and the unjustness of this treatment (Gurin's notions of power discontent and system blame, Crosby's notion of relative deprivation).

The initial flush of anxiety would pass. . . . But my vision had been permanently altered. . . . I began to notice that [Bill] Cosby never got the girl on *I Spy*, that the black man on *Mission Impossible* spent all his time underground. I noticed that there was nobody like me in the Sears, Roebuck Christmas catalog that Toot and Gramps sent us, and that Santa was a white man. (p. 52)

In the immersion stage of Black identity development, the overarching goal is to reject the old, pre-encounter identity and develop into the "right" kind of Black person. In this stage, there is often a wholesale rejection of anything that could be considered part of the dominant culture (in this case, Whiteness) and an uncritical acceptance of all things Black. Cross (1991) wrote,

There is nothing subtle about this stage . . . the new convert lacks knowledge about the complexity and texture of the new identity

and is forced to erect simplistic, glorified, highly romantic speculative images of what he or she assumes the new self will be like. This “in-between” state can cause someone to be very anxious about whether he or she is becoming the “right kind” of Black person. He or she is in need of immediate and clear-cut markers that confirm progression in the right direction. (p. 202)

As a teenager, Obama struggled with his newfound awareness; with his father in Africa, and no sustained contact with an African American community, he tried to figure out how to be a Black man by gleaning clues from pop culture and spending time with Black friends. Usually individuals politicizing their identities are involved with a community of similar others that provides solace and information that supports the emerging identities. In Obama’s case, this community was difficult to find.

TV, movies, the radio; those were the places to start. Pop culture was color-coded, after all, an arcade of images from which you could cop a walk, a talk, a step, a style. I couldn’t croon like Marvin Gaye, but I could learn to dance all the Soul Train steps. I couldn’t pack a gun like Shaft or Superfly, but I could sure enough curse like Richard Pryor. (p. 78)

He did find one supportive community on the basketball court. These friends were of similar age and were, like Obama, negotiating adolescent identity development and learning how to become Black men:

I was living out a caricature of black male adolescence, itself a caricature of swaggering American manhood. . . . At least on the basketball court I could find a community of sorts, with an inner life all its own. . . . And it was there that I would meet Ray and the other blacks close to my age . . . teenagers whose confusion and anger would help shape my own. (pp. 79–80)

During the encounter and immersion stages, Obama had always felt some discomfort with the rigidity of thinking that led to rejection of all things White. As a teenager, hanging out with his Black friends, he found that they would often disparage White people.

Obama, while participating in these conversations, always felt uneasy:

White folks. The term itself was uncomfortable in my mouth at first; I felt like a non-native speaker tripping over a difficult phrase. Sometimes I would find myself talking to Ray about *white folks* this or *white folks* that, and I would suddenly remember my mother's smile, and the words that I spoke would seem awkward and false. (pp. 80–81)

This example illustrates a complication of Cross's model posed by the identity development process of people with intersecting, but oppositional, identities. In Obama's case, he was viewed as Black by his appearance, his identification with his father, and U.S. laws that defined as "Black" anyone with any known Black African ancestry (Davis, 1991). However, he was most closely in touch with his mother's and grandparents' Northern European American culture. This mixed heritage posed huge problems for Obama during the immersion stage. He could not completely disidentify with or reject his White ancestry because that would mean rejecting the people he loved most in his life. Yet he was tasked with developing a new, positive racial identity.

When Obama entered Occidental College, a small, suburban, liberal arts college in Los Angeles, he continued his immersion into Black American culture. He at last found a community that could support his fragile new identity as a politicized Black man. As is typical in the immersion stage, Obama was very concerned that he be perceived as genuinely Black. Obama seemed to be especially concerned with issues of authenticity, probably because of his closeness to White American culture: "To avoid being mistaken for a sellout, I chose my friends carefully. The more politically active black students" (p. 100).

As he developed that first year at college, Obama began to come out of immersion into what Cross calls emersion, "an emergence from the emotionality and dead-end, either/or, racist, and oversimplified ideologies of the immersion experience" (1991, p. 207).

As Cross described it, "this leveling-off period is facilitated by a combination of personal growth and the recognition that certain role models or heroes operate from a more advanced state of identity development" (1991, p. 207). In Obama's case, he recounted inter-

actions with a couple of Black friends, Marcus and Regina, that eventually allowed Obama to expand his conception of identity to embrace all aspects of his heritage. It was a painful process.

[Marcus's] lineage was pure, his loyalties clear, and for that reason he always made me feel a little off-balance, like a younger brother who, no matter what he does, will always be one step behind. And that's just how I was feeling at that moment, listening to Marcus pronounce on his authentic black experience, when Tim walked into the room. (p. 101)

Tim was a nonpoliticized African American student majoring in business. He asked Obama a question about an economics assignment. Obama was embarrassed to be seen as Tim's friend, and after Tim left, Obama "somehow felt obliged to explain. 'Tim's a trip, ain't he . . . should change his name from Tim to Tom'" (p. 102). Marcus

looked me straight in the eye. "Tim seems all right to me," he said. "He's going about his business. Don't bother nobody. Seems to me we should be worrying about whether our own stuff's together instead of passing judgment on how other folks are supposed to act." (p. 102)

This incident embarrassed and angered Obama because it exposed his insecurity about his racial identity. In retrospect, however, he realized that in his constant attempts to be the "right kind" of Black man he had been acting a role:

In fact, that whole first year seemed like one long lie, me spending all my energy running around in circles, trying to cover my tracks. . . . The constant, crippling fear that I didn't belong somehow, that unless I dodged and hid and pretended to be something I wasn't I would forever remain an outsider, with the rest of the world, black and white, always standing in judgment. (pp. 102, 111)

Later that year, he had a conversation with Regina, who had heard Marcus call him "Barack" (he had used "Barry" his entire life). After she asked him if she could also call him "Barack," they talked for hours, sharing their histories.

Her voice evoked a vision of black life in all its possibility, a vision that filled me with longing—a longing for place, and a fixed and definite history. As we were getting up to leave, I told Regina I envied her . . . for [her] memories. (p. 104)

Later, he reflected on their interaction:

Strange how a single conversation can change you. . . . I know that after what seemed like a long absence, I had felt my voice returning to me that afternoon with Regina. It remained shaky afterward, subject to distortion. But entering sophomore year I could feel it growing stronger, sturdier, that constant, honest portion of myself, a bridge between my future and my past. (p. 105)

In Cross's (1991) internalization stage, "the person feels calmer, more relaxed, more at ease with the self. An inner peace is achieved . . . a person's conception of Blackness tends to become more open, expansive, and sophisticated" (pp. 210–211). In Obama's case, internalization included an acceptance of himself as a complete person with a complicated racial and cultural history. The conversation with Regina shows that an important part of Obama's Black identity development was the establishment of a supportive Black community in which he could satisfy his "longing for place, and a fixed and definite history" (p. 104).

The fifth and final stage of nigrescence is *internalization-commitment*. In Obama's case, internalization-commitment seemed to have begun during his college years. Specifically, he pinpoints a conversation with Regina that occurred when he had been acting irresponsibly, causing a Latina maid to clean up a huge after-party mess. Regina called Obama on his irresponsible behavior, causing him to think twice about his life and commitments, and leading to this commitment to work to change society.

So Regina was right; it had been just about me. My fear. My needs. And now? I imagined Regina's grandmother somewhere, her back bent, the flesh of her arms shaking as she scrubbed an endless floor. Slowly, the old woman lifted her head to look straight at me, and in her sagging face I saw that what bound us together went beyond anger or despair or pity. What was she asking of me, then? Determination, mostly. The determination to

push against whatever power kept her stooped instead of standing straight. The determination to resist the easy or the expedient. You might be locked into a world not of your own making, her eyes said, but you still have a claim on how it is shaped. You still have responsibilities. (p. 111)

At the same time, Obama seems to have expanded his idea of common fate to include people of all races and ethnicities.

The old woman's face dissolved from my mind, only to be replaced by a series of others. The copper-skinned face of the Mexican maid, straining as she carries out the garbage. The face of Lolo's mother [Obama's Indonesian step-grandmother] drawn with grief as she watches the Dutch burn down her house. The tight-lipped, chalk-colored face of Toot as she boards the six-thirty A.M. bus that will take her to work. Only a lack of imagination, a failure of nerve, had made me think that I had to choose between them. They all asked the same thing of me, these grandmothers of mine. My identity might begin with the fact of my race, but it didn't, couldn't, end there. (p. 111)

After college Obama sought out opportunities to work with African American communities to improve living conditions, first through community organizing in Chicago, and then later through elected office. At the same time, he pursued personal connections to African American communities, looking for integration and acceptance.

The application of the group consciousness models helps us understand a puzzle posed by Obama's story: how his politicized racial identity was related to his evolution into a politician interested in helping all oppressed people. The dilemmas inherent in Obama's attempts to develop a Black identity seem to have contributed to his expansive sense of common fate.

Obama's case also complicates racial identity development theory for people with intersecting and oppositional identities. First, Obama's progression through the stages of racial identity development was complicated by his biracial heritage. In the pre-encounter stage, race was irrelevant to him, but this lack of consciousness might have had different origins, correlates, and outcomes than it would have for people of less obviously mixed backgrounds. This brings up a larger point about these models. How do people

negotiate their intersecting identities? Every person is a mixture of dominant and subordinate group memberships, and all operate in relation to the individual's other group memberships (Cole, 2009).

Second, because of his biracial heritage and multicultural history, Obama's experiences of "encounter" were probably more ambiguous and complicated than they would have been for people with less diverse experiences. For example, even many years later, Obama had trouble articulating exactly what it was about the teasing incident with Coretta, his Black schoolmate, that troubled him. Were his classmates simply teasing him because he paid attention to a girl? If so, this incident would not serve as an encounter. Were Obama's classmates focused on his interaction with Coretta because they were both Black? If so, this experience could serve as an encounter. In general, Obama was unsure whether his inability to fit in with his Punahou classmates was due to race or other differences (e.g., clothing, extracurricular interests).

Third, as discussed earlier, Obama's experience of immersion was difficult because he did not have a supportive African American community on which to rely, and because he could not, in good conscience, unequivocally reject the dominant (White) culture. This type of experience is probably similar for members of other subordinate groups whose lives are closely intertwined with the lives of members of dominant groups (e.g., feminist identity development in women; Gurin, 1985; Hurtado, 1989).

Finally, in terms of internalization and internalization-commitment, Cross's theory focuses on activism related to the politicized group identity. In Obama's case, his complicated position in relation to race, ethnicity, and culture allowed Obama to develop common fate with people of all races and cultures. This ability to see the fate of all people as being linked is probably one reason why Obama became a successful national politician. He expanded his work on behalf of African American communities to work for all oppressed people.

Hillary Rodham Clinton

The second case considers the life of Hillary Rodham Clinton, a White woman who graduated from Yale Law School in the 1970s (as one of 27 women in a class of 235), and who had a long history of working for powerless groups in society (children, African Americans, women). Clinton worked with Marian Wright Edelman on

issues related to childhood poverty, migrant children's issues, and segregation in schools. Clinton acted as first lady during the presidency of her husband, Bill Clinton, from 1992 to 2000, served as a U.S. senator, and came very close to winning the Democratic Party's nomination for president in the 2008 election (she lost to Barack Obama). She was then appointed to the post of Secretary of State in Obama's administration. Clinton's story raises the question of how a middle-class White girl raised in a conservative family became a prominent Democratic Party politician. Her case complicates group consciousness theories by demonstrating the importance of considering both generation and individual characteristics (i.e., personal political salience) for political development (Path A in Figure 1). All Clinton quotes are from her autobiography, *Living History* (2003).

Clinton was extremely aware of her place in history (e.g., the title of her autobiography is *Living History*). In the opening quote of this article, she states that she "came of age on the crest of tumultuous social change and took part in the political battles fought over the meaning of America and its role in the world" (Clinton, 2003, p. 1). If we consider the social climate and significant historical events that occurred during Hillary Clinton's childhood and young adulthood, along with the recognition that she was personally attuned to social events, we can gain insight into her development as an activist and a politician.

Clinton was born in 1947 and grew up during the post-World War II baby boom, the child of an "up by your bootstraps" dominant Republican father and a socially conscious but quietly Democratic mother. From an early age, Clinton was trained to be independent by both parents. "Both my parents conditioned us to be tough in order to survive whatever life might throw at us. They expected us to stand up for ourselves, me as much as my brothers" (p. 12). Her household was explicitly political, with her father expressing strong ideological opinions. She learned that it was important to pay attention to what was happening in the larger social world.

In our family's spirited, sometimes heated, discussions around the kitchen table, usually about politics or sports, I learned that more than one opinion could live under the same roof. By the time I was twelve, I had my own positions on many issues. (p. 12)

She became active in Republican Party politics at a young age. Her father was particularly concerned about the spread of communism:

But the Cold War was an abstraction to me, and my immediate world seemed safe and stable. . . . I grew up in a cautious, conformist era in American history. But in the midst of our *Father Knows Best* upbringing, I was taught to resist peer pressure. (pp. 13–14)

Her upbringing during this time of relative stability and economic prosperity in the United States seemed to give Clinton an undying faith in her country as providing opportunities to those who worked hard. She learned that she could make a difference through party politics. This optimism and sense of efficacy was paired with a concern for those less fortunate than herself learned from her mother. Clinton's mother "was offended by the mistreatment of any human being, especially children. She understood from personal experience that many children—through no fault of their own—were disadvantaged and discriminated against from birth" (pp. 10–11). In Stewart and Healy's (1989) terms, Clinton's fundamental values and expectations of the world included the view of the world as a competitive but mostly fair place. However, some people were disadvantaged, and those who were fortunate enough to have gained success should help those who were disadvantaged.

Clinton's young adulthood coincided with the increasingly turbulent 1960s. She arrived at Wellesley College in 1965 "in the midst of an activist student era" (p. 28). The college's motto was "not to be ministered to, but to minister," and "many students viewed the motto as a call for women to become more engaged in shaping our lives and influencing the world around us" (p. 28). This was a change from Wellesley in the 1950s, when women "were more overtly committed to finding a husband and less buffeted by changes in the outside world" (p. 28). Clinton's natural tendencies to get involved were directed at Wellesley during the late 1960s toward making changes in student life and working for those less fortunate than herself. As president of college government, she worked to rid the college of *in loco parentis* regulations (e.g., curfews) and helped eliminate the required academic curriculum. Both of these goals were common ones for college and university student governments during that time. In her college graduation speech of 1969, Clinton described the

effects of the social environment on the activities and identities of her cohort. This speech earned a lot of press attention and reflects the sense that she is part of history:

I spoke about the awareness of the gap between the expectations my class brought to college and the reality we experienced. Most of us had come from sheltered backgrounds and the personal and public events we encountered caused us to question the authenticity, even the reality, of our pre-college lives. Our four years had been a rite of passage different from the experiences of our parents' generation, which had faced greater external challenges like the Depression and World War II. So we started asking questions, first about Wellesley's policies, then about the meaning of a liberal arts education, then about civil rights, women's roles, Vietnam. I defended protest as "an attempt to forge an identity in this particular age" and as a way of "coming to terms with our humanness." (p. 41)

Her participation in conversations and debates about Vietnam and reading she did for college classes led her to reject her Republican values and embrace Democratic ones. She resigned her presidency of the Young Republicans Club to become an active Democratic Party member. The assassinations of John F. Kennedy (which occurred when she was in high school), Martin Luther King Jr., and Bobby Kennedy, along with the student deaths at protests at Kent State and Jackson State, and her attendance at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago (all occurred when she was in college) affected her deeply. "In hindsight, 1968 was a watershed year for the country, and for my own personal and political evolution" (p. 32). These events reinforced her commitment to electoral politics as a way to improve the world.

I knew that despite my disillusionment with politics, it was the only route in a democracy for peaceful and lasting change. I did not imagine then that I would ever run for office, but I knew I wanted to participate as both a citizen and an activist. In my mind, Dr. King and Mahatma Gandhi had done more to bring about real change through civil disobedience and nonviolence than a million demonstrators throwing rocks ever could. (p. 37)

Her feminist identity was also formed in her young adulthood. There were few references in her autobiography to the process of politicization; however, she did discuss one formative experience that occurred when she read an essay by Jane O'Reilly published in *Ms. Magazine* in 1972. In this article, O'Reilly described moments in her life when she realized she was being devalued because she was a woman as "revelations" or "clicks" of insight. Cross would call these encounters. Clinton recounted a few of her own:

There were a few moments when I felt that *click!* I had always been fascinated by exploration and space travel. . . . President Kennedy's vow to put men on the moon excited me, and I wrote to NASA to volunteer for astronaut training. I received a letter back informing me that they were not accepting girls in the program. It was the first time I had hit an obstacle I couldn't overcome with hard work and determination, and I was outraged . . . the blanket rejection hurt and made me more sympathetic later to anyone confronted with discrimination of any kind. (p. 20)

Another experience:

In high school, one of my smartest girlfriends dropped out of the accelerated courses because her boyfriend wasn't in them. Another didn't want to have her grades posted because she knew she would get higher marks than the boy she was dating. These girls had picked up the subtle and not-so-subtle cultural signals urging them to conform to sexist stereotypes, to diminish their own accomplishments in order not to outperform the boys around them. (p. 20)

The women's movement, present at Wellesley in the late 1960s, provided Clinton with a feminist lens with which to reinterpret these childhood and adolescent experiences, and these reinterpretations served as encounters for Clinton. Because she was a young adult at the time of her feminist identity development, it is likely that feminism was incorporated into her identity and persists to this day. Because Clinton found social and historical events personally salient, and she came of age during a time of great social change, her story illustrates well how important the timing of social events is for the political development of individuals.

An application of these theories helps us understand how a middle-class White girl raised in a conservative family became a prominent Democratic Party politician. Her involvement in politics was defined not only by her family of origin's commitment to party politics, but also to the vibrant community of activists she encountered growing up in Chicago, and during her college years at Wellesley. During identity development, she was able to integrate the practical approach to solving social problems modeled by her father's participation in mainstream Republican Party politics with her mother's fundamental concern for helping others.

Clinton's case, however, points out two problems with group consciousness theories. First, for many people, encounters are not immediate and revelatory. Discriminatory experiences can be experienced as revelations at a later time, when a critical framework is in place (Downing & Roush, 1985). Second, the group consciousness theories do not explicitly recognize the importance of generation nor do they emphasize individual personality characteristics such as personal political salience. In Clinton's case, both of these were essential to her political development.

Ingo Hasselbach

The final case study is of Ingo Hasselbach (born in 1967), a former neo-Nazi who grew up in East Berlin in the 1970s and 1980s, before the wall dividing the East from the West came down. The question raised by Hasselbach's story is how a committed neo-Nazi leader came to actively repudiate this former identity. His case illustrates the importance of *relative* deprivation for the development of group consciousness and raises the question of whether theories developed to explain subordinate group consciousness can be applied to movements of dominant group consciousness. All quotes come from Hasselbach's (1996) autobiography *Führer-ex: Memoirs of a Former Neo-Nazi*.

Hasselbach's pre-neo-Nazi identity was primarily apolitical, but extremely oppositional. As a young man living in an East German environment that expressed a strong anti-Fascist ideology in an authoritarian manner, where dissent was not tolerated and there were few occupational opportunities, Hasselbach saw hypocrisy all around him and could find little in which to believe. Living with a passive mother and a physically abusive stepfather, Hasselbach

began hanging out in the streets, doing drugs, drinking, and fighting with a group of people who were, over time, hippies, punks, and skinheads. Hasselbach's biological father was a committed Communist who had his own pro-Communist radio program, but was largely not present in his life, except for a 9-month period when Hasselbach was a teen and was sent to live with his father after being arrested for stealing. Hasselbach's pre-encounter identity was based on hatred of father figures and the control they represented:

My father's voice *was* the state, and I directed all my rage at it, rather than at him. . . . He'd become an upstanding citizen through his propaganda radio show. He resented the West system for what it had done to him, and now his whole identity was bound up with the success of Communism in East Germany. He worshipped the state that had respected and elevated him. And so my rebellion against it was the ultimate personal insult to him, a real slap in my father's face. . . . I'd fought the State, and now the State had put me in with its ultimate embodiment: my father. (pp. 22, 35)

Hasselbach's father threw him out of his house after 9 months for breaking the house rules, and Hasselbach soon started hanging out with his skinhead friends again. Some of them

had taken to watching the *German Weekly Show* from the Nazi era—we didn't really know what we were doing, it was simply another way to rebel. . . . It was cool to watch weapons being used and fascinating to see a time when German men had been on the move. It was the opposite of the stagnant national pool in which we'd grown up. (p. 38)

Though not linked to ideology (yet), the Nazi propaganda served as an encounter experience for Hasselbach, one that presented an alternative positive image of German manhood that he could embrace and in which he could believe. More ideologically based encounters occurred when Hasselbach was sent to prison for destruction of property.

Prison was . . . the ideal environment for acquiring the rudiments of Nazism. During my stay in various East German prisons, I met several old Nazi war criminals who were more than happy to

explain the “glorious cause” to me. Although they were called “war criminals,” sentencing was so arbitrary in the GDR [German Democratic Republic] that I took that designation to simply be another injustice of the “anti-Fascist” state. I was looking for a new oppositional ideology and was eager to listen to them. (p. 60)

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Hasselbach spent time in a refugee camp for East Germans in Hamburg. The West German neo-Nazis recruited young men at these camps, providing them with Holocaust denial literature. This erroneous propaganda served as a powerful encounter for Hasselbach, seemingly opening his eyes to a reevaluation of the German past and allowing him to take pride in his identity as a White German man.

This was a revelation beyond words. No gas chambers! No mass murder of the Jews! It had all been Communist lies, like so much else. . . . And in this moment of relief and joy for me and other new recruits, I think we passed from being simply rebels against the GDR to being true neo-Nazis. Even as citizens of the GDR, we’d grown up with German Guilt. We’d been told that millions of innocent people had been gassed by our grandparents, and even though we were always told that *our* Germany—the anti-Fascist Germany—had not been to blame, that it had itself been a victim, like the Jews, we still felt guilty. . . . Now this guilt was lifted. (p. 88)

He immersed himself in reading the classic literature of the Third Reich. “There was an enormous amount of stuff to wade through, and we studied and digested it as though we were learning a new language” (p. 88). Hasselbach spent the next few years immersed in neo-Nazism, founding a political party, National Alternative, in East Berlin. During this time, he found himself the charismatic leader of the party and spent his time recruiting young men much in the way he was recruited. By providing new recruits with a sense of power discontent and an alternative explanation that rejected the legitimacy of existing explanations for their own lack of success, Hasselbach was extremely successful in his role as leader. He described the education process, which provided recruits with a

sense of relative deprivation, or power discontent and rejection of legitimacy:

Together we'd look at the map showing Germany in 1937 and Germany today, and I'd say, "Look at the Poles, they took this from us . . . the Czechs took this . . . and Austria too belonged to the German Reich. All this is gone. It was stolen, taken unlawfully from us Germans." You inflamed the recruit's feeling of injustice. And you began to draw all the strings connecting everything to the Jews. The land was gone because the Jews had stabbed Germany in the back in the First World War and then created the lie of the Holocaust in the Second. (p. 233)

During the time when Hasselbach was a leader, a German filmmaker living in France (Winfried Bonengel) contacted Hasselbach to make a film about neo-Nazism in Germany. Hasselbach developed a friendship with Bonengel, who often questioned Hasselbach's neo-Nazi ideals. When the film was completed and Hasselbach saw himself and his Kamerads on film, he was ashamed.

As I listened to them go on and on for the camera, I began to identify more with Bonengel and his team than with my Kamerads. It was a terrifying moment, for I suddenly felt cut loose and adrift. My home was in the Movement. Outside was nothing. Yet now the Movement seemed to be closing to me, the doors closing at the end of a tunnel, and it was much too far to run fast enough to slip out in time. (p. 292)

The experience of watching himself on film served as yet another encounter for Hasselbach. This time it led to efforts to rid himself of his neo-Nazi identity. He found himself identifying with the filmmakers and disidentifying with his Kamerads. Bonengel and his crew

were utterly nonviolent and nonmilitant, yet they weren't bourgeois suck-ups any more than the rest of us. . . . I was beginning to wish I'd followed a path like his, where I could express my dissent in a more individual way. (p. 298)

Hasselbach described the neo-Nazi movement as one that did not allow participants to move beyond the immersion stage. That is, it is

a movement that thrives on hatred and anger, and the wholesale rejection of the “other.” Perhaps the inability of the movement to accommodate the complexities inherent in identity explains in part why White supremacy movements have trouble keeping large numbers of members actively involved over time (Ezekiel, 1995). In addition, the overwhelming experience of anger in this stage is difficult to sustain over the long term (Cross, 1991). As Hasselbach tried to move to the emersion stage, developing a deeper, more nuanced view of German history, neo-Nazism could not accommodate such questioning.

I began trying to do things with some of my Kamerads without talking about rightist politics. . . . But it was impossible. They always came back to “politics.” If we went for a coffee, they’d say, “It’s not German coffee.” If there was trash in the street, they’d say, “Damn foreigners.” If they didn’t have enough money for a drink, they’d curse the “Goddamn rich swine Jews!” They’d use every little thing as an excuse to bring the topic back to some person or group they condemned. (p. 326)

Spending more time with Bonengel in Paris exposed Hasselbach to new experiences that served as critical encounters for a new nonracist identity.

Here [Black people] were real people—an entire world taking place in many languages and skin colors—a world as real as my own lily-White neo-Nazi world. It was as though I’d stepped out of a cartoon universe into real life and was seeing it before me in its staggering complexity. Where before I’d seen everything in terms of certainties, I now saw it as an endless string of questions. (p. 341)

In January 1993, Hasselbach renounced neo-Nazism on television. His old Kamerads responded by labeling him a traitor and threatening the lives of Hasselbach and his family. Hasselbach spent 2 years underground, surfacing only to speak to school groups about his experiences and to testify about the criminal activity of his old Kamerads and neo-Nazis in the United States, Germany, and Denmark.

The application of group consciousness theories to Hasselbach’s case allows us to understand how a committed neo-Nazi leader came

to actively repudiate this former identity. When neo-Nazism could no longer accommodate Hasselbach's changing identity, he was unable to proceed to the internalization stage of Cross's model. His new experiences then served as encounters that challenged his neo-Nazi identity, and he was able to immerse himself in, and then internalize, a new, antiracist identity.

Psychological research on right-wing activists is rare. What is interesting about Ingo Hasselbach's story is that the development of his neo-Nazi identity parallels in some important ways the development of politicized subordinate group identities. In particular, the core aspects of politicized identities—relative deprivation (Crosby, 1976), encounters and immersion (Cross, 1971, 1991, 1995), and power discontent and rejection of legitimacy (Gurin et al., 1980)—are all represented in Hasselbach's account. Whether all right-wing movements are based on a perceived subordinate group identity is an empirical question. However, case studies of prolife activists and other White supremacist groups indicate that members of both groups seem to feel themselves under attack, or threatened, and define themselves as subordinate (see, e.g., Blee, 2002; Ezekiel, 1995; Ginsburg, 1998). This suggests that feelings of relative deprivation (i.e., perceiving one's group as powerless) may be more important than objective deprivation (i.e., the realities of the group's power) to motivating activism.

Another benefit of applying these theories to right-wing identities is that it can explain puzzling phenomena. What makes White supremacy such a transitory movement? One explanation was given above, that such a movement is based on recruits staying in the immersion stage. In contrast to the politicization of some subordinate group identities, the facts on which White supremacy movements are based do not stand up well to scrutiny or critical thinking. As individuals grow through the stages of politicizing their identities, the facts cannot support deep intellectual inquiry. There also may be some limits to movements based on hate because hate is difficult to sustain over the long term for most people (Cross, 1991).

CONCLUSION

In this article, I argued that group consciousness theories, along with a consideration of personality and generation, are critical for understanding individual motivation to participate in collective action.

The basic model shown in Figure 1 was meant to orient readers to the notion that collective action can develop both directly from personal experiences and indirectly, through group consciousness. In my own work, I have found Gurin and colleagues' (1980) measures of aspects of stratum consciousness to be excellent predictors of collective action. However, Crosby's (1976) description of relative deprivation is useful in understanding the emotions and elements involved in Gurin's power discontent and rejection of legitimacy, and Cross's (1971, 1991, 1995) description of the development of politicized group identities seems to reflect the lived experiences of many activists. Contextualizing individual personality and development in their social and historical contexts is vital for understanding why some people in particular contexts become politically active.

In the process of writing these case studies, I needed to emphasize different elements of these models to explain political activism. In Barack Obama's case, his politicization was almost a textbook example of Cross's Black identity development. In terms of the model presented in Figure 1, Obama's experiences as a Black man looking for a racial identity led him to develop group consciousness (Path A), which then led to collective action as a community organizer and politician (Path B). However, Obama's politicized racial identity development was complicated by his biracial and multicultural statuses. In Hillary Clinton's case, I needed to bring in the notions of generation and the importance of being in tune with one's social and historical environment. In the model, a personality characteristic (personal political salience) interacted with generation to produce group consciousness (Path A), which was then related to political behavior (Path B). Hasselbach's case illustrated how these theories could be successfully utilized to understand the politicization of a dominant group identity. In Hasselbach's case, his life circumstances led directly to collective action (Path C), which then led to the development of a politicized White identity (reversed Path B). His neo-Nazi identity exposed Hasselbach to new life experiences (of leadership, ideologically inspired violence), and these experiences led to personality change (reversed Path A). These experiences then resulted in the development of a nonracist identity (Path A) and antiracist political behavior (Path B).

In discussing these individuals, I do not claim to have explained their activism or politics comprehensively. Future work involving case studies of activists could help elaborate other important factors

involved in the politicization of identities. For example, in all three of the cases described above, early childhood environment played a role in the activists' political development. In all three cases, fathers and father figures were involved. In Obama's case, his racial identity development was centrally concerned with how to be a Black man in America, absent the daily presence of his father. In Clinton's case, her father treated her as capable and independent (for a girl). In Hasselbach's case, father figures were his oppositional targets.

These cases highlighted the central role of identity development. In all three cases, major ideological changes happened during young adulthood, during the time that personality theorists have identified as critical for identity development (Erikson, 1963). However, in all three cases, stasis was reached only when disparate parts of their identities were integrated in a way that was comfortable and acceptable to the person. In Obama's case, it was the integration of his Black appearance with his White upbringing. In Clinton's case, it was a combination of her father's mainstream political party approach to solving problems consistent with her mother's values. In Hasselbach's case, it was the integration of his rebellious, antiauthority side with a larger worldview represented by Bonengel.

These cases also implicate the complexities of intersecting identities for political development (Cole, 2009; Stewart & McDermott, 2004). In Obama's case, because people treated him as Black, he wanted to learn how to be a Black man. However, he was raised by White people and grew up in Indonesia and Hawaii, both of which were ethnically diverse environments. In Clinton's case, her gender intersected with her middle-class upbringing and her dominant race to allow her to attend Wellesley, an elite college for women that heavily influenced her politicization. In Hasselbach's case, the intersection of dominant racial and gender identities with a working-class identity resulted in the curious phenomenon of a politicized dominant identity recast as a subordinate one. The group consciousness theories described in this article do not explicitly address intersectionality. However, attending to the complexities involved in people's negotiation of group memberships could deepen our understanding of motivation for collective action.

In addition, it would be useful to study more in depth the importance of community for these activists. It is clear in Obama's and Hasselbach's cases that search for a community that would accept them was a motivating force in their group consciousness.

Communities play an important role in providing alternative frameworks with which to understand experiences, they direct the energies of recruits to appropriate actions, and they provide solace and rejuvenation that allows individuals to maintain their involvement in the community and its causes (Andrews, 1991; Fitzgerald & Spohn, 2005; Somma, 2009).

People are complicated and individuals unique. Nonetheless, theories of group consciousness explain well why some individuals get involved politically. Examining individual cases allows us to develop a deeper understanding of what motivates some people in particular contexts to get involved politically, while at the same time, identifying ways in which the theories need expansion.

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