



Shades of Black: Diversity in African American Identity

William Cross

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In this controversial and path-breaking book, William E. Cross, Jr., presents the diversity and texture that have always been the hallmark of Black psychology. "Shades of Black" explodes the myth that self-hatred is the dominant theme in Black identity. With a thorough review of social scientific literature on Negro identity conducted between 1936 and 1967, Cross demonstrates that important themes of mental health and adaptive strength have been frequently overlooked by scholars, both Black and White, obsessed with proving Black pathology. He examines the Black Power Movement and critics who credit this era with a comprehensive change in Black self-esteem. Allowing for a considerable gain in group identity among Black people during this period, Cross shows how, before this, working and middle class, and even many poor Black families were able to offer their progeny a legacy of mental health and personal strength that sustained them in their struggles for political and cultural consensus. Author note: William E. Cross, Jr., is a psychologist and Associate Professor in the Africana Studies and Research Center of Cornell University.

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