

The Transformation of a White Supremacist: A Dialectical-Developmental Analysis

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This paper pursues 3 basic aims. First, it outlines a relational model of extremist ideology and ideological transformation. The relational model holds that ideological transformation can occur when ideological advocates are engaged in ways that (a) preserve their dignity, (b) acknowledge and address their interests and grievances, (c) create contradictions internal to their ideological systems, and (d) provide resources for constructing alternative systems that addresses the interests served by the extremist ideology. Second, the paper describes a dialectical-developmental method for tracking the ways in which conflict prompts changes in systems of meaning through 4 dialectical moments: thesis → antithesis → conflict → synthesis. Using this method, third, the paper tracks the process of ideological transformation as represented in a narrative entitled “Confessions of an Ex-White Supremacist” posted on *The Experience Project*, a website devoted to anonymous discussions of personal experiences. The developmental changes represented in “Confessions” illustrate the circumstances under which conflict generated within an ideological system can motivate transformation and renunciation of that system.

Keywords: White supremacy, prejudice, extreme ideology, dialectical analysis, discursive analysis

This paper has three purposes. The first is to examine the processes by which changes in extremist identifications (e.g., White supremacy, religious fundamentalism, etc.) can occur. The second is to outline a dialectical-developmental approach to tracking developmental changes in systems of meaning over time. The third purpose is to illustrate the relational model of ideological transformation through the dialectical analysis of a narrative entitled “Confessions of an Ex-White Supremacist.” This narrative was posted anonymously on *The Experience Project*, a website that allows viewers to post stories about personal events in their lives. In this narrative, the narrator described the process by which he renounced his ideological identification as a White supremacist through the process of forging relationships with African Americans, including an African American

female whom he would later wed. The narrator’s developmental narrative provides a window into the processes by which conflict internal to a closed ideological system can foster developmental transformation.

The Structure and Functioning of Extreme Ideologies

An ideology is a system of thoughts, values, and beliefs that provide a comprehensive way to understand some broad area of the world. They are holistic and comprehensive systems of belief about the proper organization of social relations (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Extreme ideologies are difficult to change. This is because adhering to an extreme ideology is not simply a *cognitive* process; it is a *socioemotional* processes of *identification* motivated by concerns related to *individual* and *group identity*. Ideologies are composed of cognitive, moral, motivational, emotional, and programmatic and solidarity aspects. Extreme ideologies take many forms that are organized around racial superiority, hate, political and religious beliefs, terrorism, and armed political resistance.

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A Relational Model of Extremist Ideology

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Figure 1 provides a relational model of extremist ideology. In this model, extremist identifications are constituted by four interrelated classes of elements: (a) an identity-related belief system defined with reference to (b) a particular social group, (c) grievance-mediated emotional processes that provides the affective and motivational undergirding of ideological identifications, and (d) the sociocultural contexts in which individuals live and act. Extremist identities have their origins in the process of identifying with the particular social groups (Doosje, van den Bos, Loseman, Feddes, & Mann, 2012). Research suggests that extremist ideologies tend to be organized around a series of master frames (Berlet, 2004; Vysotsky, 2004) organized around interconnected themes. While there is diversity among White supremacist ideologies (Berlet & Vysotsky, 2006), they nonetheless tend to be organized around the *sacred principle* of the superiority and purity of the “White race,” which has its alleged basis in heredity (Jayaratne et al., 2006). A strong *duality* arises between the alleged superiority of Whites and the assumed inferiority of Blacks and others (gays, Jews, other non-Whites). Whites become “heroic warriors” who must constantly battle less pure non-Whites (Vysotsky, 2006). As in other extremist groups, discourse among White supremacists dehumanizes outgroups as a way of main-

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taining distance (Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008). White supremacy tends to be accompanied *conspiratorial* themes in which threats to supremacy are seen as arising from collusion of outgroups (e.g., Jews, liberals, and gays). Conflict between good (Whites) and evil (Blacks) is often understood as moving toward a grand confrontation, often understood as a form of an apocalypse or Armageddon (Berlet & Vysotsky, 2006).

Although supremacist ideologies operate as conceptual systems, they are not simply cognitive structures. They tend to arise from a deep-seated *grievances* involving strong emotion. Emotion thus plays a central role in the construction, operation and dismantling of extreme ideological identifications. Current emotion theory (Mascolo, Li, & Fischer, 2003; Moors, Ellsworth, Scherer, & Frijda, 2013) suggests that emotion is composed of three broad and overlapping sets of processes: *appraisals* of the significance of events relative to one’s motives (e.g., grievance, actual or perceived), *affective* (phenomenal) experience (e.g., feelings of anger, resentment, hate), and *action tendencies* that function in the service of one’s motives (e.g., a desire to retaliate against outgroups). Appraisals that give rise to extreme ideologies tend to take the form of *threat* to one’s identity and/or to the social group. They often arise from some form of threat or victimization

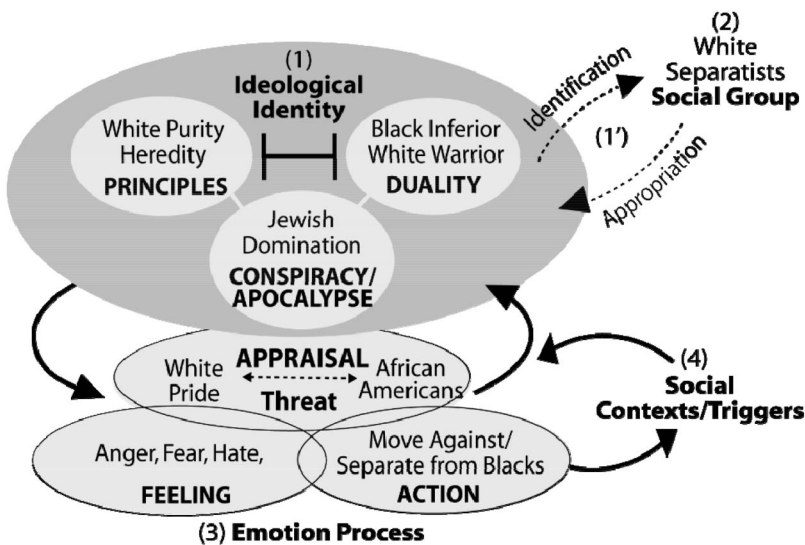


Figure 1. The structure of extreme ideological identifications.

that results in harm, threat, humiliation, debase-ment, or stigma to ingroup members (Berbrier, 2000), and are exacerbated under conditions of *uncertainty* regarding core group concerns (Hogg, 2014).

As shown in Figure 1, the grievances (ap-praisals) that organize extreme ideologies gener-ate strong emotion. In White supremacy, these include experiences of *fear* (e.g., of social displacement or perceived Black aggression) and *anger* (e.g., in response to perceptions of disenfranchisement or decline in social position; Dasgupta, Desteno, Williams, & Hunsinger, 2009), *hate* (e.g., in reaction to per-ceived powerlessness), Pearson, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2007), and *disgust* (e.g., over perceived racial impurity of lack of moral virtue). Such emotions are important because they amplify the importance of ideological grievances and imbue them with passion (Rip, Vallerand, & Lafreniere, 2012) while simultaneously gener-ating action tendencies toward targets of ideolo-gical grievance. Among White supremacists, these action tendencies range from the desire to separate from and marginalize Blacks, to the spreading of hateful messages, to, at their most extreme, acts of violence and terror (Blee, 2008). Theorists have proposed models that describe the progression of ideological member-ship from nonmember to ideological adherent through to committed terrorist (Moghaddam, Warren, & Love, 2013).

Transforming Adherence to Extremist Ideologies

Encounters with racism and extremist ideol-ogy bring forth strong reactions in their targets and with the public at large. The desire to re-duce racism, hate crimes and ideological ex-tremism is a central one in public discourse. Despite its importance, research assessing the weakening of extremist identifications is largely in its infancy. Research on *prejudice reduction* and *deradicalization* from extremist social groups are relevant to this issue. Table 1 re-views research assessing the effectiveness of prejudice reduction techniques. Table 2 summa-rizes research related to the usefulness of dif-ferent strategies for fostering ideological de-tachment. Research in these areas suggests that success of prejudice-reducing and deradicaliza-tion interventions depend on the extent to which

an intervention introduces *gradual challenge to core biases* over time, and the degree of *degree of organismic involvement* recruited by the in-tervention (Lai et al., 2014; Sarbin & Allen, 1968). The transformation of deep ideological biases tends to occur slowly over time as ideolo-gical adherents are able to experiences inter-actions with members of outgroups who pro-vide salient counterexamples to ideological beliefs. The most effective interventions are those that engage whole persons in actual social interactions with outgroups rather than those that focus on isolated psychological processes (e.g., changing particular beliefs, attitudes) in contexts that are far removed from actual en-counters with others. This work suggests that the most effective strategies for ideological transformation may be the most difficult. They involve seeking ideological transformation through deep engagement with those advocat-ing extreme views.

This work suggests a four-pronged relational model for fostering transformation in extreme ideologies.

Engage advocates of extreme ideologies in ways that acknowledge, preserve, and enhance their dignity, humanity, and social identities. As indicated above, extremist ideolo-gical identifications are typically organized around some set of grievances, which often are organized around a sense of humiliation or marginalization of identity (Fattah & Fierke, 2009; Shapiro, 2010). As indicated in Table 1 (Strat-egies 1 and 2) and Table 2 (Strategies 1 and 5), strategies for ideological transformation that foster stigmatization or feelings of marginaliza-tion typically produce reactions of defensiveness that increase rather than diminish extremist identification. While the tendency to directly oppose and stigmatize advocates of extremism creates solidarity around those who are the tar-gets of extremist groups, engaging advocates of extremist ideologies in ways that acknowledge and preserve their social identity is often necessary to initiate and sustain problem-solving dialogue.

Identify, acknowledge, and seek ways to address the interests, grievances, and needs that underlie the ideology without compromising or giving in on one's own core interests. As indicated in Table 2, conflict management theorists have proposed principles and strategies that are directly relevant to the

Table 1
Strategies for Reducing Prejudice

Strategy	Effects
1. <i>Direct confrontation</i> : Opposing communicator of prejudicial remarks (with or without hostility)	Direct confrontation fosters self-correction and feelings of guilt/offense (Czopp & Monteith, 2003); is often more effective when performed by a member of the same ingroup of the confronted individual (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006). Also more likely to foster defensiveness in targets, especially when delivered with hostility (Czopp & Monteith, 2003).
AQ: 30 2. <i>Diversity training/didactic instruction</i> : Direct instruction and training (coursework, workshops; mandated or nonmandated)	Effectiveness depends on the goals and strategies of the instruction (Roberson, Kulik, & Tan, 2013). Programs directed at changing bias through training, rule enforcement, and performance evaluations tend to be ineffective; programs designed to engage managers in promoting workforce integration (mentoring, collaboration with diversity staff) are more effective, primarily in the short term; evidence supporting long term change is lacking (Dobbin & Kalev, 2013).
AQ: 31 3. <i>Political activism, social movements, legislation</i> : Protest, consciousness raising, collective movements	Social movements promote change in racial attitudes consensus once they begin to form. Effects of social movements is not always clear, linear, or predictable (Juris et al., 2014); social movements can foster reactive and other unanticipated modes of collective thinking (Adams & Roscigno, 2005).
4. <i>Normative influences</i> : Influence of receiving information about normative beliefs of others	Normative influences, including manipulations that vary normative expectations about racial stereotypes, being told that racial stereotyping is not normative for one's peer group, are effective in reducing stereotyping (Crandall & Stangor, 2005).
AQ: 32 5. <i>Perspective taking</i> : Prompting attention to views and experiences of outgroups	Some studies suggest promoting perspective taking can produce greater empathy toward outgroups and can produce reductions in prejudicial judgments (Shih, Wang, Trahan Bucher, & Stotzer, 2009); other studies show no effect, particular with respect to reducing implicit prejudice (Lai et al., 2014).
6. <i>Imagining social contact</i> : Imagining concrete interactions with members of outgroups	Mixed but largely supportive results suggest that imagining interactions with outgroups increases favorability, reduces stereotypical thinking, and prompts behavioral changes (Crisp & Turner, 2007). Research suggests that reading and other forms of imaginary engagement can foster reductions in prejudice (Cameron & Rutland, 2006).
7. <i>Salient counterexamples</i> : Experiencing disconfirmation of explicit or implicit stereotypical beliefs	Exposure to moderately inconsistent disconfirmations of stereotypes (Tausch & Hewstone, 2010), conceptual conjunctions that contradict stereotype (e.g., male kindergarten teacher; Simpson & Kashima, 2013), contradictions of central versus peripheral aspects of stereotypes (Wyer, Sadler, & Judd, 2002), and similar interventions (Garcia-Marques & Mackie, 2001) are capable of reducing prejudice and increasing favorability of outgroups.
8. <i>Collaborative social relations</i> : Interactions with outgroups, including cooperative problem solving and action-based recategorization	Meaningful contact with outgroups diminishes prejudice, reduces anxiety and increases intergroup relatedness (Collier, Bos, & Sandfort, 2012; Cook, 1978; Foster, 2005; Turner, Hewstone, Voci, Paolini, & Christ, 2007). Activities that involve cooperation among mixed race groups or are structured in ways that challenge racial stereotypes reduce prejudice and increasing the quality intergroup relations (Lai et al., 2014; Turner & West, 2012).

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processes of transforming extremist identifications (Cohen & Arnone, 1988; Foster, 2005; Louis, 2009). Conflict management theorists maintain that conflicts can be transformed when social partners negotiate from *interests* rather than *positions* (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011; Shapiro, 2012). Often, although the stated *posi-*

tions of two parties may be in conflict, the underlying *interests* that motivate divergent positions may not. It is thus often possible for opposing groups to acknowledge and even embrace the underlying *interests, concerns* and *pains* of the other, even if they experience the other's *positions* as hateful, repugnant, or even

Table 2
Deradicalization Strategies

Strategy	Effects
1. <i>Stigmatization</i> : Intentionally or unintentionally communicating hostile messages that are experienced as humiliating, degrading, offensive, or that marginalize group identity	Antiterrorist initiatives and attempts to prevent radicalization often run the risk of fostering reactive resistance by involved social groups. Such initiatives have evoked accusations of surveillance and profiling, charges of the attempt to engineering or usurp group values and related charges (Pyszczyński, Rothschild, Motyl, & Abdollahi, 2009).
2. <i>Social movements</i> : Social movements, protests, sociopolitical activism, legal means	While organized movements (e.g., the civil rights movement) and sociopolitical activism can shift collective attitudes (Roy, 2010), they can also galvanize counterreactions in the form of extremist ideology (Vysotsky, 2006, 2008).
3. <i>Coordinated counternarratives</i> : Providing alternative representations to extreme ideologies, especially as promulgated by neutral parties or individuals affiliated in some way with extremist groups	In contrast, evidence suggests that (a) sensitive provision of counternarratives to extremist ideology (Demant & Graaf, 2010) and (b) “soft power” (economic support for groups at risk for radicalization, condolence payments for families killed soldiers, and other measures to win the “hearts and minds”) can lower the number of new recruits attracted to a cause (Aldrich, 2014).
4. <i>Detachment without deradicalization</i> : Becoming disillusioned with the means or ends of the group, particularly with the possibility of achieving group success or achieving personal advancement	Detachment from violent extremism often occurs without deradicalization. Members often leave extremist groups because they become (a) convinced that the group’s goals are unachievable, (b) lose faith in the role of violence in achieving group ends, (c) frustrated with the failure to advance in the organization, or (d) wish to remove the burdens of radicalism and return to a “normal” life (Borum, 2011; Horgan, 2008).
5. <i>Deep engagement and conflict resolution</i> : Conflict management involving deep engagement of beliefs, needs, perspectives of outgroups; developing direct or indirect relationships with outgroup members	A growing literature suggests that long-term conflict resolution processes can produce meaningful transformation in individuals who hold extremist and terrorist ideologies. Such programs focus on enhancing the identities of each adversary and addressing legitimate needs (Cohen & Arnone, 1988; Foster, 2005; Louis, 2009; Vysotsky, 2008); enfranchising constructive constituencies within groups (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2013; Louis, 2009), empathic engagement (Seu & Cameron, 2013), and humanization of the other (Ganor & Falk, 2013).

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evil. The benefits of negotiating from interests include the fostering of *trust* and *empathy* (Kelman, 2005) that are often preconditions for reconciliation (Ashy, Mercurio, & Malley-Morrison, 2010).

Perturb representational biases and narratives in ways that create contradictions internal to the ideological systems themselves, thus motivating efforts toward revision over time. Ideologies function as relatively closed systems that operate in the service of deeply felt socioemotional needs. As post hoc explanatory systems that absorb challenges by adjusting existing beliefs, ideologies are resistant to direct confrontation. As shown in Table 1, strategies that gradually disconfirm and offer rich counterexamples to stereotypical modes of thinking are most effective in reducing prejudicial attitudes. As self-contained, self-serving systems, extremist ideologies often allow adherents to

“explain away” external challenges to ideological beliefs. Conditions most likely to motivate ideological change are thus those that create contradictions from *within* the ideology itself. The promotion of inner conflict has been shown to foster constructive change in cognitive structures over the course of development (Becker, 2004; Inhelder, Sinclair, & Bovet, 1974). Allport (1979) suggested that conflict internal to prejudicial belief systems fosters transformation of prejudicial beliefs through a series of steps from repression to defensive rationalization to compromise solutions to full integration of a novel system of belief.

Provide resources that facilitate the extremist’s own emergent efforts to construct alternative systems of belief and action. The awareness of unresolvable inner conflicts within an ideological system can motivate attempts to reorganize, abandon, or construct alternative

systems of meaning. However, mere awareness of contradiction is not always sufficient to promote ideological transformation. It is difficult to construct alternatives to an ideological system. It is thus important to provide social, intellectual, motivational, emotional, and social resources that support the process of constructing novel systems of meaning that can resolve the internal ideological contradictions, meet the grievances that initially fostered the ideology, while simultaneously meeting the interests of the targets of extremist ideologies (Aldrich, 2014; Demant & Graaf, 2010; Shapiro, 2010).

Confessions of an Ex-White Supremacist: The Developmental Analysis of a Developmental Narrative

The following contains a description of a dialectical method for tracking the role of conflict in organizing changes in the development of structures of meaning over time. The method is used to track the process of ideological transformation as described in an anonymous narrative entitled “Confessions of an Ex-White Supremacist.” In this narrative, an anonymous narrator described how he began to question and ultimately transformed his identity as a White supremacist as a result of interactions with African Americans during his college years. Analysis of self-described processes through which the narrator gradually came to question and ultimately abandon his White supremacist identity provides a means for understanding the relational processes that mediate ideological transformation.

Method

The object of the study is a narrative entitled “Confessions of an Ex-White Supremacist,” posted on a social networking site called the *Experience Project* (www.ExperienceProject.com). The Experience Project was founded in 2007 and has since accumulated millions of personal stories, “confessions,” and descriptions of personal experiences. The narrator of the “Confessions” is identified by the website as an 18–21-year-old male who posted the narrative on January 2008 under the username *blondeblue*.

The TACS System

TACS system provides a method for tracking the differentiation and integration of higher order structures of meaning as they evolve over time (Basseches & Mascolo, 2010). TACS stands for thesis → antithesis → conflict → synthesis. Figure 2 illustrates the TACS analysis of the development of meaning structures. A *thesis* consists of any statement, proposition or assertion that provides the starting point of a given developmental process. A thesis stands alone in the sense that it is not proposed as a response to a previous statement, or is the product of abstracting, generalizing, or synthesizing a new meaning from previous thesis–antithesis relations statements. For example, as depicted at Step I in Figure 2, the statement “Blacks are not beautiful” functions as a *thesis* when it is put forth as starting point in a given discourse. A thesis is indicated by numeral in the form of T.0 (e.g., 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, etc.).

An *antithesis* is any statement that makes a differentiation in a thesis (or in another antithesis). There are two types of antithesis. The first indicates *opposition*, which is a statement that refutes, opposes or conflicts with the meaning of a particular thesis. For example, as shown in Figure 2, the statement “She is a beautiful Black woman” is an antithesis to thesis that states “Blacks are not beautiful” (1.0). Antitheses are indicated in the form of T.A, where T indicates the number of the thesis and A the number corresponding to the antithesis (e.g., 1.1, 1.2). The statement “She is a beautiful Black woman” would be indicated as (1.1) to indicate the *first* antithesis relative to Thesis 1—“Blacks are not beautiful” (1.0). A second type of antithesis involves a simple *distinction* in the meaning of a given thesis. The statement “Black skin is unattractive” reflects a *distinction* relative to the thesis “Blacks are not beautiful.” A *distinction* is indicated using a lower case *letter* to mark each distinction relative to a thesis. Thus, “Black skin is not beautiful” would be indicated as 1a to mark the *first distinction* made with reference to the *first thesis* “Blacks are not beautiful” (1.0). Antitheses can also generate their own antitheses (both oppositions and distinctions). “She has a beautiful smile” marks a *distinction* relative to the *antithesis* “She is a beautiful Black woman” (1.1), and is indicated as 1.1a.

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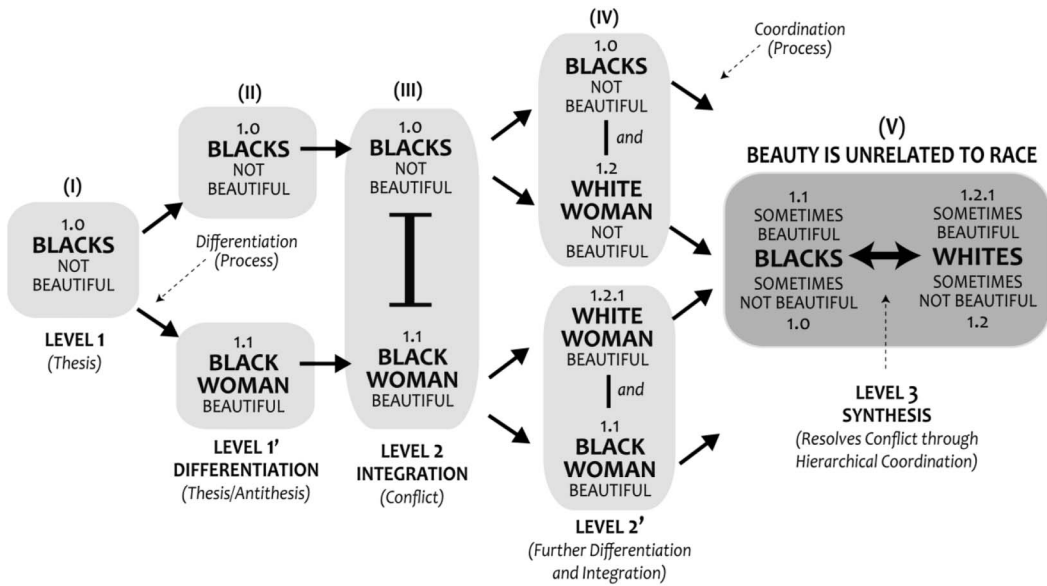


Figure 2. A TACS analysis of the synthesis of higher order meanings through the coordination of conflict. TACS = thesis → antithesis → conflict → synthesis.

Over time, individuals bring differentiated elements of meaning into correspondence with each other through acts of *coordination*. Meaning elements can be coordinated in either conflicting or nonconflicting ways. As meanings develop, individuals can invoke a thesis and its antithesis without being aware any conflict between them. A person might state, “Blacks are not beautiful” (1.0) in one context, and “She is a beautiful Black woman” (1.1) in another, without awareness or acknowledgment of their contradiction. The explicit representation of conflict is a form of coordination. A *conflict* between meanings occurs when the opposition between thesis and antithesis are brought together and represented in awareness. Conflicts are indicated by the symbol “—|—”. The coordination of “Whites are beautiful” (1.0) and “Blacks are not beautiful” (1.1) into a *conflict* is indicated at Step III in Figure 2. A nonconflicting coordination is indicated using the symbol “—|—”. For example, the statement, “A Black women can be beautiful *just like* a White woman” marks a relation between based on similarity. Examples of nonconflicting forms of coordination are indicated at Step IV in Figure 2.

A *synthesis* consists of a higher order meanings structure that transcends, explain or otherwise resolves a conflict between thesis and antithesis. To create such a synthesis, it is typically necessary to make further differentiations in the meaning elements that form a given conflict. Step IV in Figure 3 describes a series of differentiations (and further conflicts) that set up the construction of the higher order synthesis that occurs at Step V. In particular, at Step IV, the statement “Blacks are not beautiful” (1.1) is opposed by the generation of the statement “There is a beautiful Black woman” (1.1.1). Similarly, the statement “Whites are beautiful” (1.0) is opposed by the observation “That White person is not beautiful” (1.2). These distinctions meanings provide novel meanings that are ultimately reorganized and coordinated into the higher order synthesis shown at Step V: “Whites and Blacks can be both beautiful (1.0, 1.1.1) and not beautiful (1.2, 1.1). Therefore, race is irrelevant to beauty.”

Procedure

The narrative was analyzed by a single individual (the author). Using the TACS system, units of meaning are defined in relation to each

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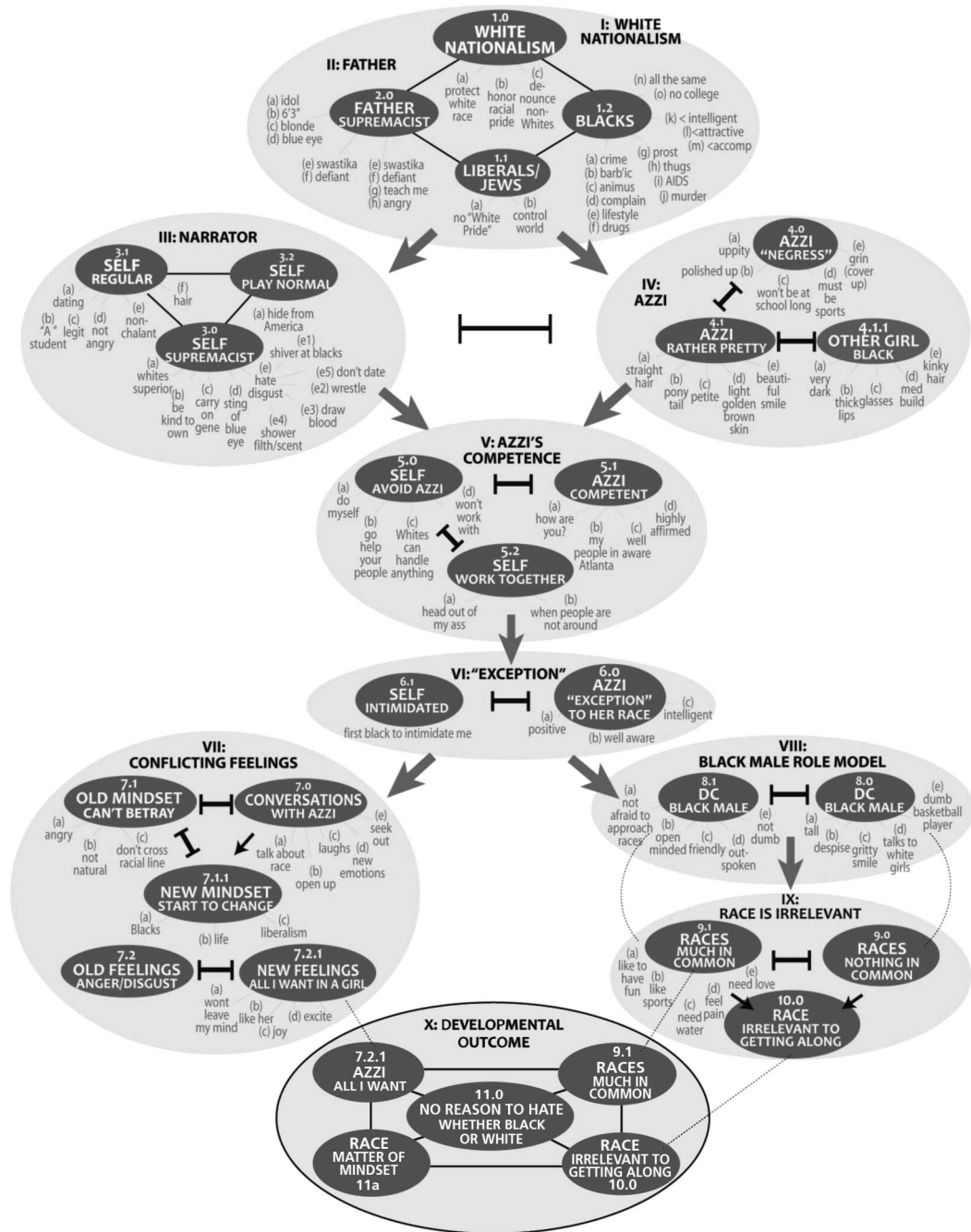


Figure 3. The transformation of an ex-White supremacist.

other. An antithesis, for example is defined in contradistinction to a particular thesis; a conflict in terms of the relation between thesis and antithesis, and so forth. Starting with an initial thesis, the coder identified each unit of text as either an *opposition*, *distinction*, or new *thesis* (i.e., a new topic). The text was divided into a series of broader episodes or steps. Novel episodes or steps arose as the narrator introduced a new topic (e.g., moved from a broad focus on his father to himself), shifted focus to a new time period (e.g., childhood to college), or transitioned from one broad setting to another. The numerical codification of units of text provides a public accounting of the pattern of oppositions and distinctions made over the full course of the analysis.

Having classified all codable units of text in the narrative, higher order relations among evolving meanings were identified. *Conflicts* were identified when the narrator explicitly represented a particular thesis and antithesis in opposition to each other (e.g., “there was a side of me that *didn’t actually want to admit that she was rather pretty, you know, for a Black*”). *Syntheses* were identified as a larger units of text in which the narrator explicitly connected or coordinated present or previous statements in ways that resolved the previously stated conflicts (e.g., “I started to realize that I had *no real reason to hate her, whether she was Black or not*. That it was only my *mind frame* and how I *viewed the world*. I *admired* her, hell I *liked* her. *No sense in hiding out*.”). Temporal changes in the evolving structure of theses, antitheses, conflicts and syntheses were organized visually into a *developmental map* (see Figure 3). The developmental map identifies the specific pathways through which structures of meaning became successively differentiated and integrated toward formation of the final higher order synthesis that resolved the conflicts represented throughout the narrative.

Results

The structural changes through which the narrator’s identity was dismantled and reconstructed are represented in the developmental map provided in Figure 3. The developmental map is organized into 10 broad steps, each of which focus on a particular integrative moment. Each step is composed of a series of coordinated

meaning structures. *Theses* and *antitheses* (oppositions) are indicated using numerals; distinctions within a given thesis or antithesis are indicated using letters and are depicted in light font. The narrative begins with a description of the context and characters that figured in the development of the protagonist’s White supremacist identity. He began by describing what it meant to be a White supremacist as seen through the eyes of his father. He proceeded to describe how he appropriated his father’s beliefs over the course of childhood. This meaning structure reflect the initial state of the narrator’s belief system, and is the structure that was ultimately dismantled and reconstructed over the course of the narrative.

Steps I–III: Setting

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The narrative begins as follows:

All my life I’ve been taught the importance of *White nationalism* (1.0). To *protect and honor the White race* (1a), to be *proud* [of] our culture (1b), and to denounce (1c) *The Jews and Liberals* (1.1) that *tells us that we cannot have* “White Pride” (1.1a/1b.1). My dad watched and despised what *non-Whites* (1.1) were doing to our country—especially *Blacks* (1.2) with their high *crime rate* (1.2a) and *barbaric behavior* (1.2b); their *animosity* toward “The White man” (1.2c) and their unstoppable *complaining and charity* (1.2d). With all this talk by my father, I was also shown it as we trotted through the hells of Black neighborhoods which my dad loved to snicker as the “*inferior lifestyle of the negro*” (1.2e), *Drugs* (1.2f), *prostitutes* (1.2g), *thugs* (1.2h), *AIDS* (1.2i) and *murdering* (1.2j) is the negroes worth” he would refresh to me with every God given chance.

The structure of the ideas contained in this passage is indicated in Step I of Figure 3. This passage embodies relations among three basic ideas. The first consists of the idea of White nationalism, which provides the initial thesis of the passage (1.0). The various predicates that define White nationalism are indicated using small letters (e.g., a, b, c, etc.) The groups are identified in opposition to White nationalism. These include *liberals, Jews and other non-Whites* (1.1) on the one hand, and *Blacks* (1.2) on the other. Again, the various predicates ascribed to these two groups are indicated in lower case letters. In this structure, by virtue of inherent characteristics, Whites are viewed superior to Blacks, who exhibit a variety of devalued qualities. Liberals and Jews are also inferior to Whites, but have power and are able to

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stop Whites from showing the supremacy of their race.

At Step II (joined with Step I in Figure 3), the narrator moved on to describe his father, whom the narrator saw as the source of his own feelings of hatred for non-Whites.

Of course at 11 years old a boy's father (2.0) would be his idol (2a). I watched my dad stand above me at 6'3" (2b) with blonde hair (2c) and pure ocean blue eyes (2d) that shined with all the glory of the Aryan race (1.0); a dark swastika on his arm (2e) that reminded me of the superiority of the White race (1.0).

Invoking his father as his idol (2.0a), the narrator indicated that his own sense of White superiority developed as a product of his identification with his father:

White people are superior to all (1.0) especially Blacks (1.2) according to how I felt (3a) Not just because I'm White but because they are not equal to us in intelligence (1.2k), they are not equal to us in beauty (1.2l) and they are not equal to us in accomplishment (1.2m). I admired my father (2.0) and his strong spirit of PC defiance (2f). It showed the true dignity of the White man (1.0). He taught me (2g) to be kind to my own people (3b) ONLY, because those are your only people (1a), and to carry on the qualities if the White gene (3c/1a).

In this passage, the narrator did not introduce new themes; instead, he further elaborated upon his earlier characterizations of his father (2.0) and of White supremacy (1.0).

Moving on from his father, at Step III, the narrator described himself as follows:

I (3.1) started *dating* (3.1a) in high school of course; had *straight As* (3.1b) and was pretty *legit in character and behavior* (3.1c). I was not the *stereotypical* "angry tattooed bad attitude having skinhead supremacist" (3.1d/2h.1), unlike my father who was *halfway there* (2h). But rather *nonchalant* (3.1e) and *regular* (3.1c). I had dark brown medium slice cut hair (3.1g) and the sting of my father's (3b/2d) blue colored look in my eyes. I lived a pretty normal life in a suburban neighborhood and was brought up like any other kid on the block (3.0). I was taught to control (3.2) those feelings inside me for the sake of scrutiny from the liberal Jew controlled world (1.1) and not let "poor misguided America" (1.1) know. So I played the normal guy (3.2), but shivered at the sight of the few non-Whites at my school (3.1e1), and the trash White ***** who dated them (3.1e1).

In this passage, the narrator expressed tensions between three different aspects of his experience of self. On the one hand, the narrator described himself simultaneously in terms of his identification as a White supremacist (3.0)

who experienced hatred and disgust at Blacks (3e). However, he also described himself as a regular young man (3.1) with a "legitimate character" (3c) and not a typical "angry tattooed skinhead (3.1d/2h.1) like his father" (2h). Nonetheless, to hide his supremacist feelings from the "Jew-controlled world" (1.1) and "misguided America" (1.1), he had to *play the normal guy* (3.2).

The narrator explained how his supremacist ideology was played out in concrete everyday activity. In so doing, the narrator described his expressions of hate and disgust for Black people:

The only time I got to release my frustration was when I wrestled (3e2)—especially those Blacks in competition extra curriculum activities at school. I thought about my people and what their people were doing to mine (1.2). And I was satisfied at the sound and sight of making their face hit the mat and if I was lucky, drawing blood (3e3). Afterward I would run for the shower wiping away the filth of the disgusting contact and scent (3e4) scrubbing vigorously for almost an hour. They were one and the same (1.2n) and not my people (1c) I can give a damn about them (1c)

In describing how he released his frustration, the narrator indicated the hate and aggression that he leveled toward Blacks with whom he would wrestle in high school. By invoking the need to wash off the "filth" and "scent" that the narrator claimed resulted from physical contact with Black athletes' bodies, he indicated a visceral sense of *disgust* (3e2, 3e3, 3e4) with Blacks' bodies. He justified his aggression in term of his beliefs about *Black inferiority* (1.2) and their alleged infractions toward White people (1.2).

Step IV: Unexpected Attraction

At Step IV, the narrator described how, during his first year of college, he met and became attracted to Azziriyya, an African American young woman. This event provided the first of many experiences that stood in conflict with his White supremacist identification.

Azziriyya (4.0) was just another uppity (4a) imitation (4b) polished up (4c) Negress to me even then as a freshmen in college. I anguished at how she could even be here at this school 95% White. ***** have their own colleges, right? (1.2n) So why do they insist on mixing everything up with us! (1.2d) She was a Black (1.2), not measurable to the White person's intelligence (1.2k). She will not make it here long I said to myself (4c). Afterall, she's not that smart (1.2k). She

just had to be on a sports scholarship or something like most of her people (4d), the few that were actually in college (1.2o). Though there was a side of me that didn't actually want to admit that *she was rather pretty, you know . . .* for a Black (4.1).

At this point in the narrative, the narrator experienced the first genuine disconfirmation (conflict) of his conception of African American people. The narrator experienced Azzi as naturally inferior to Whites in beauty, intelligence, and a suite of other attributes. However, he nonetheless experienced her as “rather pretty” (4.1). It is important to understand that this conflict has its origins not simply in abstract cognition, but instead in the narrator’s *embodied emotional experience*, namely his *physical attraction*.

The narrator encountered Azzi 2 years later in a college history class, where he was assigned by his instructor to work with her on a joint project. In the passage that follows, the narrator again experienced an attraction to Azzi, which conflicts with his prior experience of disgust with Black bodies.

Out of all the people, I get stuck with the Black (4.0). I watched her as she walked up to me. She was not like the only other Black girl (4.1.1) in one of my classes who was very dark (4.1.1a), thick lips (4.1.1b), and glasses (4.1.1c), medium built (4.1.1d), with curly kinky hair (4.1.1e), but rather . . . different. She had medium straight dark hair (4.1a) that she always kept pinned in a ponytail with a few strands out up front (4.1b). She was rather petite for her age to be 21 (4c), and her skin was a light shade of golden brown (4.1d). I tried desperately to get a partner switch before she walked over to no avail. I was stuck. She walked up to me with that friendly grin on her face (4ef) which I seen as a cover up (4e) . . . *But her smile was rather beautiful* I thought (4.1a). Hey! I might have been tough (3a) but I knew *cute* when I seen it (4.1) . . . doesn't mean I would date one (3e7).

This step involves a series of conflicts that provide an initial challenge the narrator’s conception and experience of Black people. First, his experience of Azzi’s smile as “beautiful” stands in conflict with his prior denunciation of Azzi (4.0) and his previously stated sense that her smile is a “cover up” (4e). Second, his sense of being attracted to Azzi stands in conflict with his experience of other Black women (4.11). Most important, the narrator’s attraction to Azzi (4.1) conflicts with his feelings of hate and disgust for Blacks and their bodies (3e). This clash is indicated at Step III/IV in [Figure 3](#).

Step V: Unexpected Qualities

Having acknowledged his sense of Azzi as attractive, the narrator described the continued unfolding of his interaction with her in the context of the need to complete their joint project:

“Hi!” she started with that grin. “I really want to get this over with because I have a lot to do, so how are you?” (5.1a) *Why is she talking to me I thought*, like everything is ok (1.0). I waved her off and only replied when I seen the look of disapproval on her face appearing as her smile faded. “Look” I started. “I can do this alone by myself . . . you go over there with your people . . . (5b).” She looked at me awed. You know that look Blacks give you when you said something that “offended” them. “My people? Well my people are at home in Atlanta and I don’t see them in this classroom right now” (5.1b) . . . I looked at the requirements for the report as I sat in the lobby doing nothing and it was quite a lot. Maybe too much. (6a) But I could handle it. White men can handle anything (6b) . . . She seemed be well aware (6.1c) and very highly affirmed (5.1d). I decided that we could meet on certain days a week to do our report (1.2n.1)—and when people weren’t around would be best (1.2n).

Throughout this episode, the narrator sought to keep his distance (5.0) from Azzi as she sought him out in order to complete their project (5.1a). In their interactions, as the narrator found that Azzi is able to assert herself without intimidation, he began to experience her as “well aware” and “highly affirmed.” As a result of the instructor’s insistence, the narrator agreed to work with Azzi (5.2). Although the narrator’s decision to “get his head out my ass” (5.2a) conflicts with the desire to avoid Azzi (5.0), in suggesting that they meet “when people are not around” (5.2b), he nonetheless maintained distance from the perceived opprobrium of others.

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Step VI: “An Exception to Her People”

Over time, as they worked together, the narrator began to experience Azzi as “an exception to her people.” This constituted the first major synthesis in the narrative:

Days passed, then weeks. I had finally decided that she was an exception to her people (6.0). She was positive (6a), well aware (6b), and very intelligent (6c). She was the first girl—the first BLACK especially that made me feel intimidated (7.0).

Over time, the narrator described repeated experiences that disconfirmed his generalized beliefs about Black people. Unable to revise his

entire belief system about Blacks, the narrator resolved the disequilibrium by characterizing Azzi is an “exception to her people” (5.1). This marks a major transformation in the narrator’s representation of Azzi (6.0). She was no longer simply a “cute” (4.1) or “accomplished” (5.1) Black woman. Instead, the narrator described her qualities are *intimidating* (6.1)—a state that is the antithesis to the narrator’s stated feelings of superiority (3a). Nonetheless, to speak of Azzi as an “exception” defined this positive transformation in contradistinction to the assumed negative qualities other Black individuals.

Step VII: Shifting Perspectives

Over time, as the narrator worked with Azzi on their project, their interactions became increasingly congenial. However, throughout their interactions, the narrator experienced conflicting feelings and vacillated between his emerging feelings for Azzi and his still ongoing allegiance to White nationalism.

Several days passed and between conversations (7.0). We would talk about a lot of things including race (7a). I WAS surprised I had even opened up (7b). I learned a lot actually on what I didn’t know (7a). We would have laughs in between (7c) and even just chat about anything (7a). I had always had angry emotions when she walked up to me in the past (7.1a/7.2), but they were beginning to change into other emotions I didn’t recognize as she walked up to me this time (7d). Yes she did have a beautiful smile and her face . . . is rather beautiful (4.1). I was interested in what she would tell me about Black life or life in general (7a), things I thought I knew and things I wanted to know. Besides I didn’t have anything else to do, and she was a very good conversator. After turning in the report I would talk to her still even (7e), a little skeptical of what my friends were thinking however (7.1). *Why was she making me feel this way? (7.1a) It’s not natural . . . is it? (7.1b) She was not at all what I thought (7b). Or what I expected (7b). I never even expected to feel this way (7b) . . . to feel anyway positive about her (7b).*

As before, the narrator’s new feelings (3.1.2) stood in contrast with his previous feelings of anger and disgust toward Blacks (3.1), so much so that the narrator imagined his novel feelings to be unnatural (3.1.2.1). Through these clashing feelings, the narrator noted the changes in mindset that were beginning to arise within him:

My whole perception was starting to change (7.1.1). Not only on Blacks (7.1.1a), but on life (7.1.1b). I thought life was just one big liberal front (7.1.1c), but such weights were beginning to be lifted (7.1.1).

No! I couldn’t do it (7.1.c). I couldn’t betray my people! (7.1)

The narrator was unable to reconcile his prior feelings (7.2) and beliefs (7.1) with his emerging feelings of affection and respect (7.2.1) for Azzi. The disequilibrium associated with the narrator’s acknowledgment of the contradiction between past (7.1, 7.2) and present (7.2.1) feelings motivated a need for a change in perspective (7.1.1)—albeit one that was not without conflict.

Steps VIII and IX: A Black Male Role Model

At this point in the narrative, the narrator shifted his focus to a series of interactions with DC, a Black male student.

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There was this, umm, African American guy in my class (8.0). Tall guy (8a) they called DC (8.0). I despised even looking at him (8b) with his gritty smile (8c). He was always yapping to some White girl (8d). But the thing that interested me was he was never afraid to approach people at all (8.1a). Not even ones of another race (8.1a). I wondered how he could be so open-minded (8.1a) and lively to strangers (8.1a). A people he had no ties to (8.1a).

The narrator initially experienced DC in terms of his earlier stereotypes about Black males (8.0). The narrator despised DC (8b), and especially the way he talked to White girls (10d). On the other hand, he saw that DC got along with other people (8.1a), and particularly people of other races (8.1a). This conflict motivated a decision to “play liberal” (3.2) and find out how DC could be so open-minded (8.1b). The narrator continued:

Curiosity got the best of me and I decided to play liberal (3.2) and go ask him how he opens up to other races . . . What? I just wanted to know! “Hey man why are you always talking to White girls?” (8c) He looked at me conspicuously . . . He responded “Well it don’t look like I got many options at this school. Say man, you wanna give me a hand with this box?” (8.1c) On another day I would have obviously said “hell no” but I needed more answers. “Why do you get along with White people?” “(8.1a) Huh?” You have nothing in common with them . . . us,” (9.0) I replied calmly. He let out a slight chuckle before replying, “Sure we do (9.1), we usually like to have fun (9.1a) and play and watch sports (9.1e). I mean, what does race have to do with gettin’ along with people? (10.0)?” I gave no expression not wanting to admit that he had actually made a bit of a point. And even though he was a Black basketball player (8.e) he was not as dumb as I thought he would be (8.1e). “Dawg, I see you around campus

a lot. You be lookin' so mad and angry. I mean, what's with you?" (8.1c) I was awed at how he was so open-minded (8.1b), outspoken (8.1d) and friendly (8.1c). After hearing no response he finally asked, "You wanna come up to my dorm later and play some video games?" (8.1c) Although it sounded interesting, I declined and left.

This episode marked a deep transformation in the narrator's beliefs about race. Whereas the experience of being attracted to Azzi challenged the narrator's feelings of hatred and disgust for Black people, DC's challenge to the narrator's statement that Blacks and Whites have nothing in common provided the narrator with reasons for transforming his more general beliefs about relations among the races. Abstracting across a list of common experiences among Blacks and Whites—having fun, watching sports, feeling pain, needing water and love—DC suggests *Whites and Blacks have much in common*. Convinced by DC's argument, the narrator concluded that DC "wasn't as dumb as I thought he would be," a position that stood in opposition to the narrator's prior claims of Black inferiority in intelligence (1.2k).

Step X: The Final Synthesis—A New Mindset About Race

AQ: 11 At this point, the narrator refocused his narrative attention on his feelings of affection for Azzi, but this time by refocusing his attention on

AQ: 12 his new feelings for Azzi.

But she wouldn't leave my mind (7.2.1a). I was starting to like her more and more (7.2.1b), but I was cool enough for her not to notice it. She was everything I had ever wanted in a girl (7.2.1), but I was determined to compel myself not to cross those lines (7.1c). When I would first see her walking up to me in the past, I would immediately get these feelings of anger and disgust (7.2), but now . . . now it was different (7.2.1). It was turning into joy (7.2.1c) and excitement (7.2.1d).

DC's conclusion—"What does race have to do with getting along?"—provided an organizing principle for explaining the narrator's newly experienced feelings for Azzi. DC's statement provided the conceptual basis for the narrator's construction of a higher order synthesis that explained, transcended, and made sense of the conflicts described by the narrator over the course of his narrative:

I started to realize that I had *no real reason to hate her* (11.0) *whether she was Black or not* (10a). That it was

only my *mind frame* (10b) and how I viewed the world (10b). I admired her (7.2.1bc), hell I liked her (7.2.1b). No sense in hiding out.

If race has "nothing to do with getting along" (10.0), then the narrator *had no real reason to hate Azzi* (11.0). The conceptual development achieved in the narrator's interactions with DC explained why his feelings for Azzi were both possible and legitimate. The structure of the narrator's final synthesis is indicated at Step X in Figure 3. The dotted lines from previously constructed structures and meaning elements identify the proximal origins of the higher order synthesis described in Step X. These earlier meaning elements (from Steps VII, VIII, and IX) had their origins in the sequence of differentiations and integrations spurred by the conflicts described throughout the narrative. The final synthesis is the product of the intercoordination of prior meanings into a higher order structure that transcends earlier conflicts. At this point in the narrative, the narrator expressed his fear about having to expose his background as a supremacist to Azzi and having to communicate his affection for Azzi to his father. The narrator described having been beaten by his father after having revealed his affection for Azzi. Thereafter, Azzi and the narrator were married and had a daughter. The narrator no longer has contact with his father; the narrator and his family enjoy a close relationship with his mother.

Discussion

These changes and processes represented in the narrator's "Confessions" illustrates the four principles of the relational model of ideological transformation describe above. They also suggest that fostering conflict internal to an ideological system can play a role in ideological transformation. The analysis demonstrates the utility of the dialectical-developmental method for tracking transformations in emotionally grounded meaning structures as represented over time.

The Process of Ideological Change

The process of transformation described in the narrator's "Confessions" embodies key aspects of each of the principles of the relational model of ideological transformation described above. The first consists of the need to preserve

AQ:13,14 the dignity of the identities of advocates of extremist ideologies (Chatterjee, 2006; Louis, 2009). Throughout “Confessions,” the narrator described a series of social encounters that challenged his racist ideology but were unaccompanied by shame or humiliation (e.g., DC’s kindness even in the context of the narrator’s disparaging remarks). As a result, the narrator was able to question his ideological commitments while maintaining his sense of dignity (Kelman, 2005; Shapiro, 2010). The second principle states that ideological change is enhanced when the grievances, needs and emotional concerns of advocates of extreme ideologies are addressed (Fattah & Fierke, 2009; MacMillen, 2006). The narrator harbored deep-seated feelings anger, hate and disgust toward Blacks. As communicated in his remarks about wrestling Blacks in high school, the objects of the narrator’s disgust were the *physical bodies* of Black men and women. The primary impetus for the narrator’s ideological transformation was the internal conflict between *feelings of disgust for Black bodies* and the narrator’s *physical attraction to a Black woman*. In becoming an object of desire, the narrator experienced someone who initially evoked disgust as someone who could potentially fulfill an embodied need. The *narrator’s physical attraction* to Azzi created conflict internal to his ideological identification: The narrator’s supremacist ideology was inconsistent with a core embodied *desire*.

AQ: 15 The third principle stipulates the need to perturbing representational biases to foster internal ideological contradictions. The narrator’s feelings of attraction for a Black woman function as the initial perturbation to his ideological system. Over time, repeated interactions with Azzi and DC directly contradicted the narrator’s racial prejudices (Simpson & Kashima, 2013) on core dimensions (Wyer, Sadler, & Judd, 2002). As a result, over time, the narrator changed some aspects of his prejudicial beliefs before others. For example, prior to his final renunciation of racial superiority, the narrator experienced Azzi as an “exception to her race,” a finding documented in the literature on racial stereotypes (Allport, 1979; Deutsch & Fazio, 2008). The final principle for facilitating personal ideological transformation is to provide resources to facilitate the extremist’s emergent attempt to construct alternative systems of belief and action (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2013). DC’s interac-

tions with the narrator provide the clearest example of this principle. Through his capacity to explain, model and coach the narrator through the process of understanding the similarity of the races, DC functioned as a kind of role model. DC’s interactions provide a virtual microcosm of the four relational principles in action. DC treated the narrator with dignity (Principle 1). DC’s compassion and intelligence provided counterexamples (Principle 3) to the narrator’s prejudices, which invalidated the core grievances (Principle 2) that formed the basis of his White supremacist ideology. Through his compassionate modeling, DC provided the narrator with resources for constructing a novel system of beliefs (Principle 4).

The present work provides some support for Allport’s (1979) suggestion that inner conflict generates constructive modification of prejudicial beliefs through four basic steps (repression → defensive rationalization → compromise solutions → full integration). In “Confessions,” upon first encountering Azzi and DC, narrator produced a variety of defensive rationalizations that functioned to “explain away” challenges to his prejudicial beliefs. For example, in expression his initial attraction to Azzi, the narrator described her as “rather pretty . . . for a Black.” The phrase “for a Black” functions to mitigate his feelings of attraction. Additional feelings of defensiveness were revealed in the statement, “I knew *cute* when I seen it . . . doesn’t mean I would date one.” Later in the narrative, the narrator proposed a series of “compromise solutions” to explain challenges to his belief system. He agreed, for example, to meet with Azzi in private rather than in public to work on their project; still later on, he described Azzi as an “exception to her people.” These compromise solutions preceded full transformation of his prejudicial belief system at the end of the narrative.

Few instances of development follow a fixed or linear progression (Mascolo & Fischer, 2015). Rather than thinking of Allport’s (1979) steps in terms of a fixed or linear sequence, it is perhaps better to think of them as a loosely ordered set of processes that can arise at various points in a developmental process. Individuals tend move forward and backward through any particular developmental progression depending upon the demands of context or the particular aspect of a prejudicial belief being ad-

dressed (Granott, 2002). This occurs in “Confessions,” for example, when after beginning to see Azzi as an “exception to her people,” the narrator returns to a more primitive level of prejudicial functioning when he described his first encounters with DC. An additional modification of Allport’s system, consistent with the idea that development does not follow a linear sequence, involves the role of *vacillation* in the process of producing novel integrations. This is indicated, for example, at Step VII in Figure 3. After experiencing Azzi as an “exception,” the narrator engaged in a dialectical process of moving back and forth between conflicting feelings and positions (e.g., “My whole perception was starting to change . . . but I couldn’t betray my people!”) before moving on to integrate those positions into a higher order structure. In this way, although Allport’s sequence described a general set of progressive movements, the actual process through which individuals move in dismantling a prejudicial system is dynamic and nonlinear.

Internal Conflict and Ideological Transformation

Perhaps the most immediate and common response upon encountering an extremist ideology is to confront, condemn or retaliate against it (Fischer, Haslam, & Smith, 2010). This is especially the case when encountering movements that practice violence or terrorism (Ferguson & Kamble, 2012). However, direct confrontations, whether they occur in interpersonal interaction (Czopp & Monteith, 2003) or between ingroups and outgroups (Nevin, 2004), tend to promote defensiveness at the least and a cycle of violence at worst (Pyszczynski, Rothschild, Motyl, & Abdollahi, 2009). Conflict resolution principles may provide a more effective—albeit more difficult—way to approach ideological clashes (Cohen & Arnone, 1988). Research suggests that deep and collaborative engagement between members of in- and outgroups is the most effective means of transforming prejudicial beliefs (Allport, 1979; Cook, 1978; Turner, Hewstone, Voci, Paolini, & Christ, 2007). Collaborative problem solving among disputants gives them the opportunity to have their genuine grievances and interests heard and addressed. Such processes promote

empathy, trust and the possibility of reconciliation (Kelman, 2005).

When antagonists find that they can express their genuine interests without fear of humiliation or punishment, they often become open to new solutions to old problems (Coleman & Deutsch, 2000). The present research suggests that, in such circumstances, processes that foster internal ideological conflict can motivate ideological doubt and transformation. The idea of *internal* ideological conflict is important (see Allport, 1979, Chapter 20). There are many ways in which events can conflict with an ideological system. Direct confrontations, disagreements, debates and retaliatory attacks are sources of conflict that typically fail to induce ideological transformation. Because ideologies are emotionally grounded systems, an evolving awareness of contradictions within one’s ideological system can have the effect of challenging deep-seated identity-related interests. When internal conflicts are fostered in interpersonal exchanges organized around an explicit desire to promote mutual gain, they may be more likely to foster change (Shapiro, 2012).

Dialectical-Developmental Analysis as a Research Method

The dialectical-developmental analysis provides tools for tracing changes in the structure of meaning, whether those changes occur microdevelopmentally over short periods of time or macrodevelopmentally over longer periods of time. The approach is *developmental* in the sense that it provides ways of tracking increasing differentiation and integration of systems of meaning as they move toward a real or hypothetical developmental outcomes (Raeff, 2011). It is *dialectical* in the sense that it traces how conflict motivates and organizes the synthesis of higher order structures (Druyan, 2001). Within the dialectical analysis, the conflicts that motivate development can originate either within or between persons, and involve many forms of opposition—between representations, emotions, motives, actions, and so forth. The TACS system for tracing dialectical movements numerically provides a way to track the differentiation and integration of qualitative components of meaning with precision.

Assessing development means accounting for changes that take place over *time*. Narrative is

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among the most basic linguistic tools for representing events over time. However, a narrative is not simply a recording of discrete sequences of events. Narratives are selective and interpretive renderings of events. They are organized with reference to temporal-causal principles, the purposes of the narrator, and the anticipated demands of the audience. Narratives are organized around different trajectories, including progress, redemption, decline, and so forth. To say that “Confessions” is a *developmental* narrative implies that it documents progressive movement toward some outcome, endpoint or goal state—real or imagined (Gergen & Gergen, 1997). The developmental movement conveyed in “Confessions” involves transformations *away* from a racist and supremacist mindset and *toward* one of acceptance and racial equality. It only by keeping the *outcome* of a developmental process in mind that we can judge whether we can identify any particular change as a progression, regression, digression or as sometime else.

If nonfictive narratives are *selective renderings* of events as *experienced* and *interpreted* over time, what can we learn from the developmental analysis of a developmental narrative? This depends largely on one’s view on the function of narrative in the processes of communication. There are at least three ways to think of the role of narrative in representing our relations to the world. The first treats narrative as an *objective* means for representing an independently existing world. From this view, narrative is worthy only as a means for identifying real events that occur independent of the narrative as interpretive vehicle. The second treats narrative as a *subjective* means for organizing personal experience. From this view, narrative is of interest for how it reflects the personal ways individuals make sense of their worlds, regardless of whether narratives refer in any systematic way to actually occurring events. The third way is based on the idea that narrative functions as an *intersubjective* means for making our experiences-of-the-world intelligible to one another. From this view, narratives are neither reflections of the subjective interior of individual persons nor of objectively disclosed events. Instead, they are representational vehicles that draw upon common frames of meaning and reference that allow us to make experiences understandable both to others and to ourselves.

If we approach “Confessions” from this view, we can resist the temptation to dismiss them either as biased depictions of a real world or as subjective products of an individual mind. Instead, we can view them as *sincere* attempts to depict an actually experienced world using a shared and intersubjectively grounded system of interpretive resources. From this view, narrative accountings can function as a source of evidence whose merits can be judged in terms of their corroboration with other forms of mediated observation.

Future Directions

The dialectical-developmental method provides a precise, theoretically grounded way to track the structures and processes of developmental change in virtually any area of inquiry. In employing this method in the study of extremist ideology, a suite of questions emerge: How can members of outgroups effectively introduce inner conflict into the ideological narratives of members of extremist groups? How do different individuals and members of different ideological groups respond to the introduction of internal conflict into an ideological system? Are some forms of inner conflict more effective if fostering ideological change than others? What socioemotional and political conditions are necessary to support individuals in responding constructively to the introduction of inner conflict? In addressing these, it would be helpful to track the process of development, whenever possible, in moment-by-moment *in vivo* exchanges that occur between people over time. The dialectical-developmental method provides a way to track the structures and processes of developmental change in particular individuals and social interaction as they unfold over time. As such, it provides a complement to methods that operate at more collective levels and that involve aggregation over multiple individuals and interactions.

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