

White Racial Identity Development

Janet E. Helms, Ph.D. (1984)

Contact Status

- ⊙ Minimal experiences with people of color
- ⊙ Brings up many feelings towards Blacks e.g., curiosity, trepidation, timidity
- ⊙ Unaware of racism
- ⊙ Believes in level playing field
- ⊙ Professes to be color-blind
- ⊙ Lack understanding of prejudice and discrimination



Disintegration Status

- ⊙ Beginning to become aware of racial issues, and start to experience conflict (e.g., not a racist but don't marry my daughter or deny oppression exists)
- ⊙ Person becomes aware of their Whiteness and begins to experience dissonance and conflict resulting in guilt, depression, helplessness, etc.
- ⊙ There is a breakdown of the denial system which provokes anxiety and pain that can be difficult to face

Reintegration Status

- ⊙ Regression to the most basic belief of White superiority and minority inferiority
- ⊙ Idealize the White Euro-American group and the positives of White culture and society
- ⊙ There is an intolerance of other minority groups. Ethnic minorities are blamed for their own problems

Pseudo-Independence Status

- ⊙ Person is often propelled into this phase by a painful or insightful encounter
- ⊙ Has an awareness of the unfair treatment of people of color
- ⊙ Tries to understand racial, cultural and sexual orientation differences. (Intellectual experience)
- ⊙ Conscious decision to interact with minority group members
- ⊙ May unintentionally perpetuate racism when trying to be socially conscious and helpful

Immersion/Emersion Status

- ⊙ Explores him/herself as a racial being and what it means to be white
- ⊙ More than an intellectual experience. Includes changing self not others. Experiential and affective understanding is now present
- ⊙ A willingness to confront own biases, becomes more active in directly combating racism and oppression

Autonomy Status

- ⦿ Increased awareness of one's own Whiteness, reduced feelings of guilt, acceptance of one's role in perpetuating racism
- ⦿ Knowledgeable about racial, ethnic and cultural differences
- ⦿ Values diversity
- ⦿ No longer fearful, intimidated, or uncomfortable with the experiential reality of race
- ⦿ Explores issues of racism and personal responsibility without defensiveness

White Identity Development

Bennett Model Adapted by Dr. Leticia Nieto, Psy.D.



Denial of differences or racism

- ⊙ Doesn't recognize differences or racism because of isolation or intentional separation from people of color.
- ⊙ Attributes deficiency in intelligence, morality, or personality to people of color.
- ⊙ Tendency to dehumanize "the other".

Defense against difference and against the awareness of racism

- ⊙ Recognizes difference but couples it with a negative evaluation or stereotype of people of color.
- ⊙ Holds white supremacy in obvious and overt ways.
- ⊙ Reversal: Expresses overt messages of appreciation for people of color while communicating white supremacy through context and/or nonverbal signals.
- ⊙ Tends toward cultural appropriation. Ex: "I love your people; I have your artifacts."

Minimization of difference and racism

- ⊙ Recognizes and accepts superficial differences and experiences of oppression while holding that all human beings are essentially the same (like white people) and that all human beings suffer equally regardless of their race, thus negating the reality of racism.
- ⊙ Tends to offer "reversal" examples as evidence of the universality of suffering in order to avoid awareness that racism benefits white people while oppressing people of color. Can appear as transcendent universalism. Ex: "We are all children of God".

Acceptance of difference and the reality of racism

- ⊙ Recognizes and appreciates differences and accepts that oppression operates in systematic, pervasive, restricting, hierarchical, complex and internalized ways.
- ⊙ Works from a place of curiosity and inquiry, with a willingness to believe people of color as experts in their own oppression.
- ⊙ May overvalue the opinions of people of color, shying away from critique.
- ⊙ Understands that the most anti-racist action they can take is to maintain an awareness of racism.
- ⊙ Tend toward a relative and open stance regarding values and behavioral differences. Begins to acknowledge the implications of white privilege.

Adaptation to difference and sustained awareness of racism

- ⊙ Develops communication and allyship skills towards social change.
- ⊙ Makes effective use of empathy, or frame of reference shifting, to understand and be understood across differences.
- ⊙ Maintains sensitivity for experiences of people of color, acknowledges internalized dominance and supremacy, owns privilege and entitlement and uses them for social change.
- ⊙ Challenges other white people, white cultural norms, and institutional racism.
- ⊙ May distance self from other white people.
- ⊙ Consistently speaks to the underlying, inherent inequality of systemic oppression. Tends towards allyship, advocacy and action.



Integration of difference

- ⊙ Internalizes an anti-racist identity of what it means to be white, founded in an understanding of personal, cultural and institutional privilege.
- ⊙ Advocates for justice for our collective humanity, not simply for the benefit of people of color.
- ⊙ Allyship becomes a daily way of being, not something that is “done”.

Minority Identity Development Model

Atkinson, Morten, & Sue (1989, 1993)



Conformity

- ⊙ Unequivocal preference for values and norms of the dominant culture
- ⊙ Strong desire to assimilate
- ⊙ Negative, self-deprecating attitudes towards themselves and others, racially
- ⊙ View of other groups based on dominant groups views

Dissonance

- ⊙ Begins to question their conformity
- ⊙ Gradual process often stimulated by racial experience
- ⊙ Transitional stage – straddling appreciation and depreciating attitudes
- ⊙ State of flux and confusion

Resistance and Immersion

- ⊙ Embraces own group completely
- ⊙ Blanket endorsement of one's groups and all the values and attitudes attributed to that group
- ⊙ Rejection of dominant culture norms and values
- ⊙ Accepts reality of racism/oppression
- ⊙ Guilt over past conformity
- ⊙ Anger and rage towards oppression
- ⊙ Negative attitude towards dominant group, positive attitude towards own group
- ⊙ Conflicting attitude toward other groups – ethnocentric

Introspection

- ⊙ Rigid ethnocentric views begin to ease
- ⊙ Comfort and security with identity
- ⊙ Conflict between one's allegiance to his own group and personal autonomy
- ⊙ Views towards dominant group are conflicted. There is still a distrust of the "system"
- ⊙ Individual variation acknowledge

Synergetic Articulation and Awareness

- ⊙ Confident and secure with their racial identity
- ⊙ Desire to eliminate all forms of oppression towards any group
- ⊙ High positive regard towards self and one's group
- ⊙ Respect and appreciation for other cultures
- ⊙ Receptive to dominant culture persons seeking to end oppression

Asian American Identity Development

J. Kim (1981)



Ethnic Awareness

- ⊙ Begins around age 3 or 4 when the individual first comes to know his or her ethnic origins.
- ⊙ Child's family members serve as the significant ethnic group model.
- ⊙ Positive or neutral attitudes toward one's own ethnic origin is formed depending on the extent of family involvement in ethnic activities.

White Identification

- ⊙ Begins when the child enters school
- ⊙ Peers and the surroundings become powerful forces in conveying racial prejudice that negatively impacts their self-esteem and identity.
- ⊙ A realization of "differentness" primarily resulting from negative encounters with other children's racial prejudices. These interactions result in internalization of the problem, self-blame, and a desire to escape a racial heritage by identifying with White society.
- ⊙ Internalize overt, positive White images, especially regarding standards of physical beauty and attractiveness. Hence, alienation from oneself is experienced primarily as a negative self image focused around physical attributes.
- ⊙ The person buys into White society's view that Asian Americans are less attractive and therefore the student is less involved in dating during adolescence and instead focuses their energy towards involvement in formal organizational roles and academic pursuits.
- ⊙ Vary based on active, passive and neutral responses of "White identification."
 - ◆ *Active identification*: those who consider themselves as very similar to White peers and not consciously acknowledging cultural differences. These individuals do not want to see themselves as Asian in any way.
 - ◆ *Passive identification*: those who do not consider themselves as White, although do accept it as a reference point.
 - ◆ *Neutral identification*: (those whose families were not very involved in Japanese ethnic culture and activities) are more likely to actively identify with Whites.

Awakening to Social Political Consciousness

- ⊙ There is an adoption of a new perspective, often correlated with increased political awareness.
- ⊙ Often a significant event (e.g., moving to the west coast and having increased contact with politically conscious Asian Americans) initiates the awakening to political consciousness.

- ⊙ The person sheds their previously White-identified values and reassesses the merits of White standards. Their identification changes from White-oriented to minority oriented.
- ⊙ It is during this stage that self-concept becomes more positive.

Redirection to Asian-American Consciousness

- ⊙ Individuals begin to embrace their Asian American identity, self-concept is positive, and individuals feel good about themselves and are proud to be Asian American.
- ⊙ Their political and social involvement in the previous stage bolstered their self-concept, and now they desire to embrace their own racial/ethnic identity and immerse themselves in the Asian American heritage.
- ⊙ Individuals may feel very angry and outraged at white society. They realize that White racism was the foundation for their negative experiences and their previous identification with White standard and values.

Incorporation

- ⊙ In this final stage individuals come to a healthy and secure balance, feeling comfortable with their own identify yet appreciative of other racial groups.
- ⊙ The person in this stage does not feel the driving need to either identify with or against White people. They develop a realistic appraisal of all people.
- ⊙ Asian American identity is still important but is seen as only one aspect of their overall identity (e.g., religious, political, sexual, sex role orientation, career/professional identities).

Latino/Hispanic American Identity Development

A.S. Ruiz (1990)

Causal Stage

- ⊙ During this period messages or injunctions from the environment or significant others' either affirm, ignore, negate or denigrate the ethnic heritage of the person.
- ⊙ Affirmation about one's ethnic identity is lacking, and the person may experience traumatic or humiliating experiences related to ethnicity.
- ⊙ There is a failure to identify with Latino culture.



Cognitive Stage

- ⊙ As a result of negative/distorted messages, three erroneous belief systems about Chicano/Latino heritage become incorporated into mental sets:
 - ◆ Ethnic group membership is associated with poverty and prejudice.
 - ◆ Assimilation to White society is the only means of escape; and
 - ◆ Assimilation is the only possible road to success.

Consequence Stage

- ⊙ Fragmentation of ethnic identity becomes very noticeable and evident.
- ⊙ The person feels ashamed and is embarrassed by ethnic markers such as name, accent, skin color, cultural customs, and so on.
- ⊙ The unwanted self-image leads to estrangement and rejection of Chicano/Latino heritage.
- ⊙ It is during this stage that self-concept becomes more positive.

Working through Stage

- ⊙ Two major dynamics distinguish this stage:
 - ◆ First, the person becomes increasingly unable to cope with the psychological distress of ethnic identity conflict.
 - ◆ Second, the person can no longer be a "pretender" by identifying with an alien ethnic identity.
- ⊙ The person is propelled to reclaim and reintegrate disowned ethnic identity fragments.
- ⊙ Ethnic consciousness increases.

Successful Resolution Stage

- ⊙ This last stage is exemplified by greater acceptance of one's culture and ethnicity.
- ⊙ There is an improvement in self-esteem and a sense that ethnic identity represents a positive and success-promoting resource.

Black Identity Development

W.E. Cross, Jr., Ph.D. (1991)

Pre-Encounter

- ⊙ Pre-encounter attitudes vary from low salience to anti-Black
- ⊙ Shaped by early development in family, community and schools
- ⊙ Begins in childhood, extends through adolescence and early adult
- ⊙ Low Salience
 - ◆ Does not place a lot of emphasis on being Black.
 - ◆ Sees Black as a physical characteristic unrelated to their sense of happiness and wellbeing. (Higher salience placed on religion, social status, professions, or lifestyle)
 - ◆ Haven't given much thought to race, dumfounded and naïve during racial discussions or...
 - ◆ Has given some thought to being Black but focus on race as a problem, disgrace or dishonor
 - ◆ See race as a hassle that must be dealt with
- ⊙ High Salience
 - ◆ See being Black as very important but in a negative way
 - ◆ Anti Black, feels alienated from other Blacks, does not see Black community as a source of support



Encounter

- ⊙ Because current level of identity is resistant to change, an encounter of some form must catch the person "off guard" (e.g., assassination of King)
- ⊙ Can also be a series of small, eye-opening episodes that have a cumulative effect at some point person feels a strong push toward nigrescence
- ⊙ Can be negative or positive experience, e.g., informed of historical information about the Black experience, history, etc.
- ⊙ Encounter stage is a two-stage process: Person must experience an encounter and personalize it
- ⊙ The encounter leaves the individual experiencing rage at having been previously miseducated. Initially there may be alarm, confusion, depression, and guilt may set in at past naivety about racial issues
- ⊙ Anxiety and anger often develop

Immersion-Emersion

- ⊙ Person commits to a transformed identity
- ⊙ Person begins to demolish old perspective and simultaneously tries to construct what will become his/her new frame of reference

- ⊙ Often there is a frantic identity search as the individual is still more familiar with the old identity but is trying to transition to the new

Immersion—1st Phase of This Stage

- ⊙ Immerses self into an Afrocentric world
- ⊙ Becomes politically and socially active in the Black cause
- ⊙ There is a positive association with being Black and a negative association with anything White (strong anti-White sentiment)
- ⊙ Assesses and evaluates their “level of Blackness” in relation to other Blacks
- ⊙ This immersion is a strong, powerful, dominating sensation that is constantly energized by rage (at White people and culture), guilt (at having once been tricked into thinking Negro ideas), and a developing sense of pride (in one’s Black self, Black people, and Black culture.)

Emersion—2nd Phase of This Stage

- ⊙ Conclude that immersed impressions of Blackness were romanticized and exaggerated
- ⊙ Begins to demonstrate more serious understanding of Black issues
- ⊙ Regains control of emotions and intellect
- ⊙ Levels off the intense emotions

Internalization

- ⊙ Marks stage where a new identity is incorporated
- ⊙ Person feels more relaxed, calmer, and more at ease with self
- ⊙ An inner peace is achieved, as there has been a shift
- ⊙ No longer has the uncontrolled rage towards Whites. Shift to controlled anger at oppressive systems and racist institutions
- ⊙ Shift from symbolic, boisterous rhetoric to serious analysis and quiet strength
- ⊙ Shift from anxious, insecure, rigid pseudo Blackness based on the hatred of Whites to proactive Black pride, self-love, and a deep sense of connection to, and acceptance by, the Black community
- ⊙ Secure in his/her Blackness and open to new experiences
- ⊙ Internal security and comfort with his/her racial identity nourishes experimentation with new experiences – becomes bi/multicultural
- ⊙ Transitioning from Emersion/Immersion to Internalization reduces psychological stress but doesn’t change their personality e.g., still shy

Internalization-Commitment

- ⊙ Similar to previous stage
- ⊙ Key marker: Sustained long-term commitment to activity in Black issues

Biracial Identity Development

W.S. Carlos Poston (1990)



Personal Identity

- ⊙ Individuals at this stage are often very young
- ⊙ Their sense of self is somewhat independent of his or her ethnic background
- ⊙ Their reference group orientation (RGO) is not yet fully developed, so their identity is primarily based on personal identity (PI) factors such as self-esteem and feelings of self-worth that they develop and learn in the family

Choice of Group Categorization

- ⊙ Pushed to choose an identity, usually of one ethnic group in order to participate or belong to peer, family, and/or social groups
- ⊙ Can be a time of crisis and alienation
- ⊙ Hall (1980) said that biracial individuals have two possible choices, choose a multicultural existence, emphasizing the racial heritage of both parents or choose one parent's culture or racial heritage as dominant over the other. Several factors important in making this choice:
 - ◆ *Status factors*—group status of parents' ethnic background, demographics of home neighborhood (i.e., ethnicity of neighbors and parental peers), and ethnicity and influence of peer group
 - ◆ *Social support factors*—parental style and influence, acceptance and participation in cultures of various groups, and parental and familial acceptance
 - ◆ *Personal factors*—physical appearance, knowledge of languages other than English (if any), cultural knowledge, age, political involvement, and individual personality differences

Enmeshment/Denial

- ⊙ This stage is characterized by confusion and guilt for having to choose one identity
- ⊙ Often have feelings of guilt, self-hatred, and lack of acceptance from one or more groups
- ⊙ May feel shame and embarrassment toward parent whose ethnicity differs from the norm
- ⊙ Feelings of guilt and anger for feeling this way

Appreciation

- ⊙ Individual begin to appreciate their multiple identity and broaden their reference group orientation
- ⊙ May learn about their racial/ethnic heritage and cultures, but they still tend to identify with one group
- ⊙ May become involved in culturally relevant activities

Integration

- ⊙ Experience wholeness and integration
- ⊙ Tend to recognize and value all of their ethnic identities
- ⊙ Develop a secure, integrated identity