Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Models

Overview

The following charts summarize several frameworks that have been developed to describe stages of racial and ethnic identity development. We found them mostly in the psychology and therapy literature. Some were developed as a way to expand on Erik Erickson’s model of human development (which goes from infancy to old age), taking into account factors such as race, gender and sexuality. Some of the frameworks are used to help therapists understand their patients more fully. The models also have broader applications for understanding how individuals function in community, family and organizational settings.

Most of the framework carry the same few cautions. Not every person will necessarily go through every stage in a framework. Many of the authors specifically acknowledge that the stages might also be cyclical, that people might revisit different stages at different points in their lives.

The frameworks summarized here describe people who are situated in many different ways, but they do not describe all of the possibilities. We have listed a few different frameworks that focus on the experiences of people of color, biracial people and white people in the U.S. We think they can be useful tools for self reflection and for building empathy and understanding of people who are situated differently from ourselves.

People of Color
• Asian American Identity Development Model (Kim). p. 2
• Black American Racial Identity Model (William Cross, originally developed as the Nigrescence Model of African American Identity). This framework (referenced by Barbara Burke Tatum in the companion reading) focuses on the process by which African Americans come to understand their identity. p. 2
• Ethnic Minority Identity Development (John W. Berry). This framework focuses on the experiences of ethnic minorities, particularly immigrants to the U.S. p. 2
• Filipino American Identity Development (Kevin Nadal). This framework focuses on Filipino Americans, highlighting the experience of cultural assimilation/acculturation of a distinct ethnic group. p. 2
• Latino/a Racial Identity Orientations Model (Ferdman and Gallegos , 2001). p. 3
• Latino/a American Identity Development Models (Ruiz, 1990). p. 3

Bi-racial People
• Biracial Identity Development (W. S. Carlos Poston). Stages of identity development of biracial people. p. 4
• Continuum of Biracial Identity Model (Kerry Ann Rockquemore and Tracey Laszlof). Continuum rather than staged model. p. 4
• Resolutions of Biracial Identity Tensions (Maria P. P. Root). Description of possible positive resolutions of biracial identity tensions. p. 4

White People
• White Racial Identity Model (Janet E. Helms, reference in Tatum article). This framework identifies a continuum that leads to developing an anti-racist identity. p. 5

Integrated Model (John and Joy Hoffman)
• This framework begins and ends with stages that are thought to be the same for all people. In between, different stages are articulated for People of Color and White People. p. 6

Ethnic Identity Development (Jean Phinney)
• A model of ethnic identity development in adolescence based on existing models of ego identity and ethnic groups. p. 7
Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Models

People of Color

Asian American Identity Development Model [Kim, J.]
1. THE ETHNIC AWARENESS STAGE begins around the ages of 3-4 when the child’s family members serve as the significant ethnic group model. Positive or neutral attitudes toward one’s own ethnic origin are formed depending on the amount of ethnic exposure conveyed by the caretakers.
2. THE WHITE IDENTIFICATION STAGE begins when children enter school where peers and the surroundings become powerful forces in conveying racial prejudice, which negatively impacts their self-esteem and identity. The realization of “differentness” from such interactions leads to self-blame and a desire to escape their own racial heritage by identifying with White society.
3. THE AWAKENING TO SOCIAL POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS STAGE means the adoption of a new perspective, often correlated with increased political awareness. Kim believes that the civil rights and women’s movements and other significant political events often precipitate this new awakening. The primary result is an abandoning of identification with White society and a consequent understanding of oppression and oppressed groups.
4. THE REDIRECTION STAGE means a reconnection or renewed connection with one’s Asian American heritage and culture. This is often followed by a realization of White oppression as the culprit for the negative experiences of youth. Anger against White racism may become a defining theme with concommitment increases of Asian American self and group pride.
5. THE INCORPORATION STAGE represents the highest form of identity evolution. It encompasses the development of a positive and comfortable identity as Asian American and consequent respect for other racial/cultural heritages. Identification for or against White culture is no longer an important issue.

Black American Racial Identity [William Cross]
1. PRE-ENCOUNTER: absorbed many beliefs and values of the dominant white culture, including the notion that “white is right” and “black is wrong”; de-emphasis on one’s racial group membership; largely unaware of race of racial implications.
2. ENCOUNTER: forced by event or series of events to acknowledge the impact of racism in one’s life and the reality that one cannot truly be white; forced to focus on identity as a member of a group targeted by racism.
3. IMMERSION/EMERSION: simultaneous desire to surround oneself with visible symbols of one’s racial identity and an active avoidance of symbols of whiteness; actively seek out opportunities to explore aspects of one’s own history and culture with support of peers from one’s own racial background.
4. INTERNALIZATION: secure in one’s own sense of racial identity; pro-black attitudes become more expansive, open, and less defensive; willing to establish meaningful relationships with blacks who acknowledge and are respectful of one’s self-definition.
5. INTERNALIZATION-COMMITMENT: found ways to translate one’s personal sense of blackness into a plan of action or a general sense of commitment to concerns of blacks as a group, which is sustained over time; comfort with one’s own race and those around them.

Ethnic Minority Model [Berry]
1. ASSIMILATION: valuing the majority culture over one’s own culture.
2. SEPARATION: preserving one’s culture while withdrawing from the majority culture.
3. MARGINALIZATION: losing cultural contact and identification with one’s culture as well as the majority culture.
4. INTEGRATION: valuing and integrating one’s culture as well as the majority culture.

Filipino American Identity Development [Nadal]
1. ETHNIC AWARENESS: neutral or positive feelings about all ethnic groups including one’s own; little exposure to prejudice.
2. ASSIMILATION TO DOMINANT CULTURE: views only whites as positive, negative toward other ethnicities.
3. SOCIAL POLITICAL AWARENESS: negative views toward whites; positive toward other ethnicities.
5. ETHNOCENTRIC REALIZATION: views oneself and other communities of color as empowering.
6. INCORPORATION
Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Models
People of Color (cont’d)

**Latino/a American Identity Development Model [Ruiz]**

1. CASUAL: During this period messages, injunctions from the environment or significant others, or both either affirm, ignore, negate, or denigrate the ethnic heritage of the person. Affirmation of 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.

2. COGNITIVE: As a result of negative/distorted messages, three erroneous belief systems about Chicano/Latino heritage becomes incorporated into mental sets: [a]association of ethnic group membership with poverty and prejudice, [b] assimilation to White society is the only means of escape, and [c] assimilation is the only possible road to success.

3. CONSEQUENCE: Fragmentation of ethnic identity becomes very noticeable and evident. He person feels ashamed, 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.

4. WORKING THROUGH: 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.

5. SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION: This last stage is exemplified by greater acceptance of his or her culture and ethnicity. There is an improvement in self-esteem and a sense that ethnic identity represents a positive and success-promoting resource.

**Latino/a Racial Identity Orientations Model [Ferdman and Gallegos]**

This theory does not discuss whether a person may have elements of multiple orientations, movement between orientations or the influence of other key external variables such as threats, violence, the use of the term Latino or language ability. We also do not know the strengths associated with each orientation, how orientations influence institutional participation or one’s role within the institution or broad indicators distinguishing people of different orientations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Lens</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Identify as/prefer</th>
<th>Latinos are seen</th>
<th>Whites are seen</th>
<th>Framing of Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latino-Integrated</td>
<td>Wide</td>
<td>understanding of racial constructs and ability to challenge them</td>
<td>Individuals in a group context</td>
<td>Positively</td>
<td>Complex</td>
<td>Dynamic, contextual, socially constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino-Identified (Racial/ Raza)</td>
<td>Broad</td>
<td>acceptance of the races Latino and White and identification with Latino</td>
<td>Latinos</td>
<td>Very positively</td>
<td>Distinct; could be barriers or allies</td>
<td>Latino/not Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subgroup-Identified</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>identification of multiple Latino races and identification with a regional subgroup</td>
<td>Own subgroup</td>
<td>My group OK, others maybe</td>
<td>Not central (could be barriers or blockers)</td>
<td>Not clear or central; secondary to national identity, ethnicity, culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos as Other</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>identification as a generic Latino due to mixed heritage</td>
<td>Not white</td>
<td>Generically/fuzzily</td>
<td>Negatively</td>
<td>White/not white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undifferentiated/Denial</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>colorblindness, adherence to dominant culture, and tendency to attribute failure to the individual rather then racial constructs</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>&quot;Who are Latinos?&quot;</td>
<td>Supposed color-blind [accepts dominant norms]</td>
<td>Denial, irrelevant, invisible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Identified</td>
<td>Tinted</td>
<td>acceptance of White and Latino races and identification with White and rejection of Latino.</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>Negatively</td>
<td>Very positively</td>
<td>White/Black, either/or, one-drop or &quot;mejorar la raza [i.e. improve the race?&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Models

Biracial People

Continuum of Biracial Identity Model (Kerry Ann Rockquemore and Tracey Laszloffy)
Does not seek to categorize individuals into a single identity; acknowledges continuum;
• Some people may choose to identify singularly with one of their identities;
• Some may blend with a primary emphasis on one identity and a secondary emphasis on the other
• Some may blend two (or more) identities with equal emphasis

Biracial Identity Development (Poston)
1. PERSONAL IDENTITY: sense of self unrelated to ethnic grouping; occurs during childhood.
2. CHOICE OF GROUP: as a result of multiple factors, individuals feel pressured to choose one racial or ethnic group or category over another.
3. CATEGORIZATION: choices influenced by status of the group, parental influence, cultural knowledge, appearance.
4. EMESHMENT/DENIAL: guilt and confusion about choosing an identity that isn’t fully expressive of all their cultural influences; denial of differences between the racial groupings; possible exploration of the identities that were not chosen in stages 2 and 3
5. APPRECIATION: of multiple identities
6. INTEGRATION: sense of wholeness, integrating multiple identities.

Resolutions of Biracial Identity Tensions (Maria P.P. Root)
1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE IDENTITY SOCIETY ASSIGNS: identifying with the group into which others assume the biracial individual most belongs, usually with family support.
2. IDENTIFICATION WITH BOTH RACIAL GROUPS: Identifying with both (or all) heritage groups, depending on social and personal support.
3. IDENTIFICATION WITH A SINGLE RACIAL GROUP: Choosing one group, independent of social pressure, to identify him/herself in a particular way.
4. IDENTIFICATION AS A NEW RACIAL GROUP: Move fluidly among racial groups but identifies most strongly with other biracial people, regardless of specific heritage backgrounds.
Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Models
White People

White Racial Identity Model (Helms)
Helms’ stages are about both finding a positive racial identification and becoming an active antiracist.

1. CONTACT: Adheres to the ‘colorblind’ motto. Sees racial difference but does not find it salient and in face may feel that racism is in fact propagated by the discussion and acknowledgement of race as an issue. There is no conscious demonstration of racism here. This seemingly non-racist position can cover unconscious racist beliefs. When confronted with real-world experiences or knowledge that uncovers the privileges of white skin, they may move into the disintegration stage.

2. DISINTEGRATION: Because the person has new experiences or information that confronts prior conception of the world, the person is often plagued by feelings of guilt and shame. These emotions can be modified when the person decides to channel these emotions in a positive way. When guilt and shame continue to dominate, the person may move into reintegretion stage.

3. REINTEGRATION: Marked by ‘blame the victim’ attitude that’s more intense than anything experienced in the contact stage. May feel that although whites do have privilege, it is probably because they deserve them and are in some way superior to minority groups. If the person is able to combat these feelings, they may be able to move on to the pseudo-independence stage.

4. PSEUDO-INDEPENDENCE: This is the first stage of positive racial identification. Although the individual does not feel that whites deserve privilege, they look to people of color, not themselves, to confront and uncover racism. They approve of these efforts and they comfort the individual as these effort’s validate the individual’s desire to be non-racist. Although this is positive white racial identity, the person does not have a sense of how they can be both white and non-racist together.

5. IMMERSION/EMERSION: Makes a genuine attempt to connect to their own white identity and to be anti-racist. This stage is usually accompanied by deep concern with understanding and connecting to other whites who are or have been dealing with issues of racism.

6. AUTONOMY: This last stage is reached when an individual has a clear understanding of and positive connection to their white racial identity while also actively pursuing social justice.
Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Models

Integrated Model (John and Joy Hoffman)

**CONFORMITY** (Whites and People of Color): In the first stage of conformity, people of color and Whites feel that they are just “regular Americans.” Unconsciously, members of both groups strive to emulate Whiteness in actions, speech, dress, beliefs and attitudes because Whiteness is perceived as positive.

**People of Color**

**DISSONANCE:** Dissonance for people of color occurs when they want to get along and be Americans but discover that their race or gender may preclude them from the benefits that Whites or males get. They start to feel confused about the beliefs they held about America and themselves as they begin to see that racism and sexism may be impacting them.

**IMMERSION:** These questions and disillusionment can lead to the immersion stage where women and persons of color feel angry about racism and sexism. They feel that most White people and males are racists and sexists and thus part of the problem. What might people of color do with this anger?

**EMERGENCE:** The fourth stage for people of color is emersion where their anger about racism directed towards Whites leads them to feel that they can only belong with others in their own racial group which understands them. They avoid, as much as possible, contacts with Whites and seek out people of their own race or gender.

**INTERNALIZATION:** Internalization occurs when they realize that there are negative qualities among their own people and that all White people are not the enemy. They see racism and sexism as the enemy and as something that they can fight against. They also manifest the desire to have more control over who they want to be. They are more than just a person of color or a woman.

**INTEGRATIVE AWARENESS** (both): In the last stage of integrative awareness, Hoffman asserts that Whites and people of color both come to the conclusion that there is much more to them than their race or gender. Both groups are able to positively identify with their own racial group while also acknowledging that other aspects of their identity (their gender, their talents and abilities, their unique experiences) contribute to their personhood.

**White People**

**ACCEPTANCE:** In this stage, Whites can still dismiss or diminish comments or actions that indicate that racism is alive. They express the view that that everyone has struggles and people should just accept the way things are and try to be American. They expect of color to “get over it” and go forward as Americans which really means be more like White people.

**RESISTANCE:** Whites move from their acceptance stage to the resistance stage where they profess that racism is a thing of the past. Whites often express their belief that there is a new racism and that is the racism that they perceive is against Whites. This is popularly referred to as “reverse racism.”

**RETREAT:** If their assumptions are put people of color and their own lack of privilege are proven false, they may enter the retreat stage. They may feel guilty and ashamed by how hard life has been and still is for people of color. They are also frustrated by, annoyed, and impatient with other Whites who don’t get it.

**EMERGENCE:** After feeling guilty and ashamed, Whites may move into the emergence stage where they start to understand their privilege and how it has and continue to benefit them. They also now begin to take control over the type of White person they want to be.
Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Models

Ethnic Identity Model (Jean Phinney)

Phinney’s Model of Ethnic Identity Development [1995]

Three Stage Model:
Stage 1: Unexamined Ethnic Identity
Individuals fall into two categories based upon the influence or knowledge of the existence of ethnicity
• Diffusion – An individual has not encountered ethnicity as an issue or topic, ethnicity is not an issue of contention
• Foreclosure – An individual as collected information about ethnicity from family and peers and succumbs to information without interact with individuals of the ethnic group

Stage 2: Ethnic Identity Search/Moratorium
• Individuals encounters cause him or her to look into their own ethnicity, as well as, become aware of ethnicity
• Individuals continue to seek more information and a multitude of emotions during exploration

Stage 3: Ethnic Identity Achievement
• Individuals are suggested to have a positive, bicultural identity
• Individuals are informed about their own ethnicity but are aware and appreciative of all ethnicities
Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Models

Reading

Sources (accessed 7-15-11):
• http://tcpcg2010.wikispaces.com/file/view/PhinneyEthnicIdentity-1.ppt/78942517/PhinneyEthnicIdentity-1.ppt

Additional readings:
• W.S. Carlos Poston.
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_esSearchS earchValue_0=EJ424084&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ424084