

Racial/Cultural Minority Identity Development

Chapter Learning Objectives

On completion of this chapter, the reader will be able to:

1. Recognize factors that are influential in the development of racial/cultural identity in people of color.
2. Examine how sociopolitical forces come into play in the identity development of people of color.
3. Assess how one's stage of racial identity development affects one's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward oneself, toward members of one's own and other minority groups, and toward majority group members based on the racial/cultural identity development model.
4. Assess how the racial consciousness of a person of color influences the social work helping relationship.
5. Assess the challenges in the social work helping relationship that are most likely to occur when working with a client of color in the conformity stage, dissonance stage, resistance and immersion stage, introspection stage, and integrative awareness stage.

Content in this chapter supports the following Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) Core Competencies (Council on Social Work Education, 2015):

Competency 2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Competency 6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

OVERVIEW

This chapter summarizes research and anecdotal findings to clarify the parameters of the competing theories of racial identity development. Although the various theories and their pros and cons are discussed, the major emphasis in this chapter is on presenting an integrative model that describes the various stages involved in racial identity development and their implications for assessment and therapeutic intervention. Racial/cultural identity development emphasizes between- and within-group differences that social workers must acknowledge if they are to provide all groups with culturally relevant services.

WHO AM I?

For nearly all my life I have never seriously attempted to dissect my feelings and attitudes about being a Japanese American woman. Aborted attempts were made, but they were never brought to fruition, because it was unbearably painful. Having been born and raised in Arizona, I had no Asian friends. I suspect that given an opportunity to make some, I would have avoided them anyway. That is because I didn't want to have anything to do with being Japanese American. Most of the Japanese images I saw were negative. Japanese women were ugly; they had "cucumber legs," flat yellow faces, small slanty eyes, flat chests, and were stunted in growth. The men were short and stocky, sneaky and slimy, clumsy, inept, "wimpy looking," and sexually emasculated. I wanted to be tall, slender, large eyes, full lips, and elegant looking; I wasn't going to be a typical Oriental!

Yesterday, I had a rude awakening. For the first time in my life I went on a date with a Filipino boy. I guess I shouldn't call him a "boy" as my ethnic studies teacher says it is derogatory toward Asians and Blacks. I only agreed to go because he seemed different from the other "Orientals" on campus. He's president of his Asian fraternity, very athletic and outgoing. . . . When he asked me, I figured, "Why not?" It'll be a good experience to see what it's like to date an Asian boy. Will he be like White guys who will try to seduce me, or will he be too afraid to make any move when it comes to sex? . . . We went to San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf for lunch. We were seated and

our orders were taken before two other White women. They were, however, served first. This was painfully apparent to us, but I wanted to pretend that it was just a mix-up. My friend, however, was less forgiving and made a public fuss with the waiter.

This incident and others made me realize several things. For all my life I have attempted to fit into White society. I have tried to convince myself that I was different, that I was like all my other White classmates, and that prejudice and discrimination didn't exist for me. I wonder how I could have been so oblivious to prejudice and racism.
(excerpted from a Nisei student journal)

From reading the preceding journal entry, it is not difficult to conclude that this Nisei (second-generation) Japanese American female is experiencing a racial awakening that has serious implications for her racial/cultural identity development. Her previous beliefs concerning Euro-Americans and Japanese Americans are being challenged by social reality and the experiences of being a visible racial/ethnic minority. It is very important for social workers to understand issues of racial/cultural identity development if they hope to relate to diverse groups in our society. Let us briefly use this case to identify themes that are important for such understanding.

- First, the impact of stereotypes on minority groups cannot be underestimated. Societal portrayals of Asian Americans are clearly expressed in the student's beliefs about racial/cultural characteristics: She describes Asian American men and women in a highly insulting fashion. More important, she seems to have internalized these beliefs and to be using White standards to judge Asian Americans as being either desirable or undesirable.
- Second, her insistence that she is not Asian American is beginning to crumble. Being immersed on a campus that many other fellow Asian Americans attend has forced her to explore ethnic identity issues—a process she had been able to avoid while living in a predominantly White area. In the past when she encountered prejudice or discrimination, she had been able to deny it or to rationalize it away.
- Third, the student's internal struggle to cast off the cultural conditioning of her past and the attempts to define her ethnic identity are both painful and conflicting. When she refers to negative images of Asian American men but

winds up dating one, when she uses the terms *Oriental* and *boy* (in reference to her Asian male friend) but acknowledges their derogatory and racist nature, and when she describes Asian men as “sexually emasculated” but sees her Filipino date as attractive, we have clear evidence of the internal turmoil she is undergoing.

- Fourth, it is clear that this Japanese American woman is a victim of ethnocentric monoculturalism. As we mentioned previously, the “problem” the student is experiencing resides not in her, but in our society. It resides in a society that portrays racial/ethnic minority characteristics as inferior, primitive, deviant, pathological, or undesirable.

RACIAL/CULTURAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODELS

Have you ever wondered why members of the same racial/ethnic group can vary so much in outlook and values? What makes Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas so different from the Reverend Jesse Jackson and both different from President Barack Obama? What makes some women so outspoken about sexism, while others seem oblivious to it and even deny its existence? What makes some gays proud of their sexual orientation, while others seek reparative therapy?

If awareness of different worldviews is an important component of culturally competent social work practice, then an understanding of identity development among minorities becomes crucial. One of the most promising approaches to developing an understanding of worldviews is the increasing and important work on racial/cultural identity development among minority groups (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998; R. T. Carter, 1995; Casas & Pytluk, 1995; Choney, Berryhill-Paapke, & Robbins, 1995; Cross, 1971, 1995; DuBray & Sanders, 2003; Helms, 1984, 1985, 1993; Parham, 1989; Parham & Helms, 1981; Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001). The cornerstone of racial identity development models is their acknowledgment of sociopolitical influences in shaping minority identity (à la the Nisei Japanese student). The early models of racial identity development all incorporated the effects of racism and prejudice (oppression) on the identity transformation of their victims. Vontress (1971), for instance, theorized that African Americans moved through decreasing levels of dependence on White society to emerging identification with Black culture and

society (colored, Negro, and Black). Other similar models for the African American population have been proposed (Cross, 1971; Hall, Cross, & Freedle, 1972; Jackson, 1975; Thomas, 1970, 1971).

The fact that other racial/ethnic minority groups, such as Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (Maykovich, 1973; D. W. Sue & S. Sue, 1972; S. Sue & Sue, 1971); Latinos/Hispanics (Ruiz, 1990; Szapocznik, Santisteban, Kurtines, Hervis, & Spencer, 1982); women (Downing & Roush, 1985; McNamara & Rickard, 1989); LGBTQ individuals (Cass, 1979); and individuals with disabilities (Collins, Valentine, & Welkley, 2005; Olkin, 1999), have similar processes may indicate experiential validity for such models as they relate to various oppressed groups. Social workers who work with racially/ethnically marginalized groups may benefit from understanding how racial/ethnic and cultural identity is formed, what factors influence its development, and what implications it may have for their work. In this chapter we focus on the early developmental formation of Black identity development, drawing parallels to identity development among other diverse groups (e.g., feminist identity development), and then propose a working racial/cultural identity development model. In Chapter 7 we will extend our examination of racial/cultural identity development by asking the question, What does it mean to be White? The rationale for exploring this specific dimension of White identity development and its relevance to social work practice will be presented in that chapter as well. This examination of racial/cultural identity development is done to give attention to not only the ways in which ethnocentric monoculturalism influences the development of a sense of one's racial and cultural self but also the impact of this sense of self on the social work helping relationship.

Although the single dimension of race, culture, and ethnicity may be a salient if not a primary factor in a person's sense of personal and social identity, we also recognize that people have multiple and layered identities derived from a variety of social relationships and group memberships. We further understand that these social relationships and group memberships exist and are positioned and embedded within varied historical, social, economic, and political contexts. As these contexts are shaped and influenced by structures of social, economic, and political power, individuals may be exposed to different types of discrimination and experiences of oppression as they traverse the landscape of their daily life (Symington, 2004). In other words, racial identity cannot be isolated from these other aspects of social identity (Miller & Garran, 2008).

Black Identity Development Models

Early attempts to define a process of minority identity transformation came primarily through the work of Black social scientists and educators (Cross, 1971; Jackson, 1975; Thomas, 1971). Although there are several Black identity development models, the Cross model of psychological nigrescence (the process of becoming Black) is perhaps the most influential and well documented (Cross, 1971, 1991, 1995; Hall et al., 1972). The original Cross model was developed during the civil rights movement and delineates a five-stage process in which Blacks in the United States move from a White frame of reference to a positive Black frame of reference. The stages are preencounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. In the *preencounter* stage, individuals (African Americans) consciously or unconsciously devalue their own Blackness and concurrently prize White values and ways. There is a strong desire to assimilate and acculturate into White society. Blacks at this stage evidence self-hate, low self-esteem, and poor mental health (Vandiver, 2001).

In the *encounter* stage, a two-step process begins to occur. First, the individual encounters a profound crisis or event that challenges his or her previous mode of thinking and behaving; second, the Black person begins to reinterpret the world, resulting in a shift in worldview. Cross (1991) pointed out how the slaying of Martin Luther King Jr. was just such a significant experience for many African Americans. The person experiences both guilt and anger over being brainwashed by White society. In the *immersion-emersion* stage, the person withdraws from the dominant culture and becomes immersed in African American culture. Black pride begins to develop, but internalization of positive attitudes toward one's own Blackness is minimal. In this stage, feelings of guilt and anger begin to dissipate, and there is an increasing sense of pride. The next stage, *internalization*, is characterized by inner security as conflicts between the old and new identities are resolved. Global anti-White feelings subside as the person becomes more flexible, more tolerant, and more bicultural or multicultural. The last stage, *internalization-commitment*, speaks to the commitment that individuals in this stage have toward social change, social justice, and civil rights. This commitment is expressed not only in words but also in actions that reflect the essence of their lives. It is important to note, however, that Cross's (1971) original model includes a major assumption: that the evolution from the preencounter to the internalization-commitment stage reflects a movement from psychological dysfunction to psychological health (Vandiver, 2001).

Other Racial/Ethnic Identity Development Models

Asian American and Pacific Islander identity development models have not advanced as far as those relating to Black identity. One of the earliest heuristic “type” models was developed by S. Sue and Sue (1971) to explain what they saw as clinical differences among Chinese American students treated at the University of California Counseling Center: (1) *traditionalist*—a person who internalizes conventional Chinese customs and values, resists acculturation forces, and believes in the “old ways”; (2) *marginal person*—a person who attempts to assimilate and acculturate into White society, rejects traditional Chinese ways, internalizes society’s negativity toward minority groups, and may develop racial self-hatred (à la the Nisei Japanese student); and (3) *Asian American*—a person who is in the process of forming a positive identity, who is ethnically and politically aware, and who is becoming increasingly bicultural.

Kitano (1982) also proposed a type model to account for Japanese American role behaviors with respect to Japanese and White cultures: (1) *positive-positive*, in which the person identifies with both Japanese and White cultures without role conflicts; (2) *negative-positive*, in which there is a rejection of White culture and acceptance of Japanese culture with accompanying role conflicts; (3) *positive-negative*, in which the person accepts White culture and rejects Japanese culture with concomitant role conflicts; and (4) *negative-negative*, in which the person rejects both.

Although a number of ethnic identity development models have been formulated to account for Latino/Hispanic identity (Bernal & Knight, 1993; Casas & Pytluk, 1995; Szapocznik et al., 1982), the one most similar to those for African Americans and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders was proposed by Ruiz (1990). His model was formulated from a clinical perspective via case studies of Latino/Hispanic subjects. Ruiz made several underlying assumptions. First, he believed in a culture-specific explanation of identity for Latino/Hispanic clients. Although models addressing other ethnic groups’ development or the more general identity development models were helpful, they lacked the specificity to Latino/Hispanic culture. Second, he saw the marginal status of Hispanics/Latinos as highly correlated with maladjustment. Third, he believed that negative experiences of forced assimilation are destructive to an individual. Fourth, he saw having pride in one’s cultural heritage and ethnic identity as positively correlated with mental health. Last, he maintained that pride in one’s ethnicity affords the Latino/Hispanic individual greater freedom in expressing his or her cultural and ethnic heritage.

Feminist Identity Theory

An identity development model comparable to that for racial/ethnic minority groups has been developed for women by McNamara and Rickard (1998). Feminist clinicians believe that the patriarchal aspect of U.S. society is responsible for many of the problems faced by women. They believe that women show a variety of reactions to their subordinate status in society. (McNamara & Rickard, 1998) This feminist-based identity development model included the following stages.

1. *Passive acceptance.* During this stage, the female accepts traditional gender roles, sees them as advantageous to her, and considers men to be superior to women. She is unaware of or denies the existence of prejudice or discrimination. She values male contributions to the arts and business more than those of women.
2. *Revelation.* Events involving sexism occur in a way that cannot be denied or ignored. The individual becomes personally awakened to prejudice, becomes angry, and feels guilty at being previously unaware. There is intense self-examination and dichotomous thinking. All men are seen as oppressive and all women as positive.
3. *Embeddedness-emanation.* The woman begins to form close emotional relationships with other women. With their help she is able to express her emotions in a supportive environment. Her feminist identity is becoming solidified, and she engages in more relativistic rather than dualistic thinking in regard to males.
4. *Synthesis.* During this stage, a positive feminist identity is fully developed. Sexism is no longer considered to be the cause of all social and personal problems, and other causal factors are considered. The woman can take a stance different from that of other feminists and still maintain her feminist identity.
5. *Active commitment.* The woman is now interested in turning her attention toward making societal changes.

WORKING RACIAL/CULTURAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Earlier writers (Berry, 1965; Stonequist, 1937) have observed that minority groups share similar patterns of adjustment to cultural oppression. In the past several decades, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Latinos/Hispanics, and Native Americans/First Nations Peoples and Alaska Natives have experienced sociopolitical identity transformations such that a “Third World consciousness” has emerged,

with cultural oppression as the common unifying force. As a result of studying these identity development models and integrating them with their own clinical observations, Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1998) proposed a five-stage minority identity development (MID) model in an attempt to pull out common features that cut across the population-specific models. D. W. Sue and D. Sue (2013) later elaborated on the MID model, renaming it the *racial/cultural identity development (R/CID) model* to encompass a broader population. As discussed in Chapter 7, this model may be applied to White identity development as well.

The R/CID model proposed here is not a comprehensive theory of personality, but rather a conceptual framework to aid helping professionals in understanding their culturally different clients' attitudes and behaviors. The model defines five stages of development that racially/ethnically marginalized groups in our society experience as they struggle to understand themselves in terms of their own culture, the dominant culture, and the oppressive relationship between the two cultures: *conformity, dissonance and appreciating, resistance and immersion, introspection, and integrative awareness*. At each stage of identity development, four corresponding beliefs and attitudes that may help social workers and other clinicians better understand their minority clients are discussed. These attitudes or beliefs are an integral part of the minority person's identity and are manifested in how he or she views (1) himself or herself, (2) others from the same minority group, (3) others from another minority group, and (4) majority individuals. Table 6.1 outlines the R/CID model and the interaction of stages with the attitudes and beliefs.

Conformity Stage

Similar to individuals in the preencounter stage (Cross, 1991), minority individuals in the conformity stage are distinguished by their unequivocal preference for dominant cultural values over their own. White Americans in the United States represent their primary reference group. Lifestyles, value systems, and cultural or physical characteristics that most resemble White society are highly valued, whereas those most like their own minority group may be viewed with disdain or may hold low salience for the person. It is important to note that minority people at this stage can be oriented toward a pro-American identity without subsequent disdain for or negativity toward their own group. Thus, it is possible for a Chinese American to have positive feelings about U.S. culture, values, and traditions without evidencing disdain for Chinese culture or having negative feelings about himself or herself (absence of self-hate). Nevertheless, these people probably

TABLE 6.1 Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model

Stages of Minority Development Model	Attitude toward Self	Attitude toward Others of the Same Minority	Attitude toward Others of a Different Minority	Attitude toward Dominant Group
Stage 1—Conformity	Self-deprecating or neutral due to low race salience	Group-deprecating or neutral due to low race salience	Discriminatory or neutral	Group-appreciating
Stage 2—Dissonance and appreciating	Conflict between self-deprecating and group-appreciating	Conflict between group-deprecating views of minority hierarchy and feelings of shared experience	Conflict between dominant-held and group-deprecating	Conflict between group-appreciating and group-deprecating
Stage 3—Resistance and immersion	Self-appreciating	Group-appreciating experiences and feelings of culturocentrism	Conflict between feelings of empathy for other minority	Group-deprecating
Stage 4—Introspection	Concern with basis of self-appreciation	Concern with nature of unequivocal appreciation	Concern with ethnocentric basis for judging others	Concern with the basis of group depreciation
Stage 5—Integrative Awareness	Self-appreciating	Group-appreciating	Group-appreciating	Selective appreciation

Source: From Donald R. Atkinson, George Morten, and Derald Wing Sue, *Counseling American Minorities: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, 5th ed. Copyright © 1998. Wm. C. Brown Publishers, Dubuque, IA. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

represent a small proportion of persons of color at this stage. The conformity stage continues to be characterized by individuals who have bought into societal ideas about their minority status in society. Because the conformity stage represents, perhaps, the most damning indictment of White racism, and because it has such a profound negative impact on nearly all minority groups, we spend more time discussing it than the other stages. Let us use a case approach to illustrate the social-psychological dynamics of the conformity stage.

WHO AM I—WHITE OR BLACK?

A seventeen-year-old White high school student, Mary, comes to the social worker for help in sorting out her thoughts and feelings concerning an interracial relationship with an African American student. Although she is proud of the relationship and feels that her liberal friends are accepting and envious, Mary's parents are against it. Indeed,

the parents have threatened to cut off financial support for her future college education unless she terminates the affair immediately.

During sessions, Mary tells of how she has rid herself of much bigotry and prejudice from the early training of her parents. She joined a circle of friends who are quite liberal in thinking and behavior. She recalls how she was both shocked by and attracted to her new friends' liberal political beliefs, philosophies, and sexual attitudes. When she first met John, a Black student, she was immediately attracted to his apparent confidence and outspokenness. It did not take her long to become sexually involved with him and to enter into an intense relationship. Mary has become the talk of her former friends, but she does not seem to care. Indeed, she seems to enjoy the attention and openly flaunts her relationship in everyone's face.

Because Mary wants John to also attend counseling, the social worker sees them together. John informs the social worker that he came solely to please Mary. He sees few problems in their relationship that cannot be easily resolved. John seems to feel that he has overcome many handicaps in his life and that this represents just another obstacle to be conquered. When asked about his use of the term *handicap*, he responds, "It's not easy to be Black, you know. I've proven to my parents and friends in high school, including myself, that I'm worth something. Let them disapprove—I'm going to make it into a good university." Further probing reveals John's resentment over his own parents' disapproval of the relationship with Mary. Although his relations with them have worsened to the point of near-physical assaults, John continues to bring Mary home. He seems to take great pride in being seen with a "beautiful blond-haired, blue-eyed White girl."

In a joint session, Mary's desire to continue counseling and John's apparent reluctance become obvious. Several times when John mentions the prospect of a "permanent relationship" and their attending the same university, Mary does not seem to respond positively. She does not seem to want to look too far into the future. Mary's constant coolness to the idea and the social worker's attempt to focus on this reluctance anger John greatly. He becomes antagonistic toward the social worker and puts pressure on Mary to terminate this useless talk "crap." However, he continues to come for the weekly sessions. One day his anger boils over, and he accuses the social worker of being biased. Standing up and shouting, John demands to know how the social worker feels about interracial relationships.

There are many approaches to analyzing this case, but we have chosen to concentrate on the psychological dynamics evidenced by John, the African American student. It is clear from a brief reading of this case that both John and Mary are involved in an interracial relationship as a means of rebellion and as an attempt to work out personal and group identity issues. In Mary's case, it may be rebellion

against her conservative parents and parental upbringing, and she may also enjoy the secondary shock value it has for her former friends and parents (appearing liberal). John's motivation for staying in the relationship is also a form of rebellion. There are many clues in this case to indicate that John identifies with White culture and feels disdain for Black culture. First, he seems to equate his Blackness with a handicap to be overcome. Is it possible that John feels ashamed of who and what he is (Black)? Although feeling proud of one's girlfriend is extremely desirable, does Mary's being White, with blond hair and blue eyes, have special significance? Would John feel equally proud if the woman were beautiful and Black? Being seen in the company of a White woman may represent affirmation to John that he has "made it" in White society.

Although John's anger in counseling is multidimensional, much of it seems misdirected toward the social worker. John may actually be angry at Mary because she seems less than committed to a long-term or permanent relationship. Yet to acknowledge that Mary may not want a permanent relationship will threaten the very basis of John's self-deception (that he is not like other Blacks and is accepted in White society). It is very easy to blame John for his dilemma and to call him an "Oreo" (Black outside and White inside). However, lest we fall prey to blaming the victim, let us take a wider perspective in analyzing this case.

John (and even Mary) is really a victim of larger social-psychological forces operating in our society. The key issue here is the dominant-subordinate relationship between two different cultures (Atkinson et al., 1998; R. W. Carter, 2005; Freire, 1970; Jackson, 1975). It is reasonable to believe that members of a non-dominant cultural group tend to adjust themselves to the group possessing the greatest prestige and power to avoid feelings of inferiority. Yet it is exactly this act that creates ambivalence in the minority individual. The pressures toward assimilation and acculturation are strong (the melting pot theory), creating possible cultural conflicts. John is the victim of ethnocentric monoculturalism, which includes belief in the superiority of one group's cultural heritage—its language, traditions, arts and crafts, and ways of behaving (White)—over all others; belief in the inferiority of all other lifestyles (non-White); and the power to impose such standards onto less powerful groups.

The psychological costs of racism for minorities are immense, and John exemplifies this reality. Constantly bombarded on all sides by reminders that Whites and their way of life are superior and that all other lifestyles are inferior, many minorities begin to wonder whether they themselves are not somehow inadequate, whether members of their own group are not to blame, and whether subordination

and segregation are not justified. Clark and Clark (1947) first brought this to the attention of social scientists by stating that racism may contribute to a sense of confused self-identity among Black children.

It is unfortunate that the inferior status of minorities is constantly reinforced and perpetuated by the mass media through television, movies, newspapers, radio, books, and magazines. This contributes to widespread stereotypes that tend to trap minority individuals: Blacks are superstitious, childlike, ignorant, and fun loving, or dangerous and criminal; Latinos/Hispanics are dirty, sneaky, and criminal; Asian Americans are sneaky, sly, cunning, and passive; Native Americans are primitive savages. Such portrayals cause widespread harm to the self-esteem of minorities, who may incorporate them. It is evident that many minorities do come to accept White standards as a means of measuring physical attractiveness, attractiveness of personality, and social relationships. Such an orientation may lead to the phenomenon of racial self-hatred, whereby people dislike themselves for being Asian, Black, Latino/Hispanic, or Native American. Like John, individuals operating at the conformity stage experience racial self-hatred and attempt to assimilate and acculturate into White society. People at the conformity stage seem tend to possess the following characteristics:

1. *Attitudes and beliefs toward the self (self-depreciating attitudes and beliefs):* Physical and cultural characteristics associated with one's own racial/cultural group are perceived negatively, as something to be avoided, denied, or changed. Physical characteristics (e.g., black skin color, "slant-shaped eyes" of Asians); traditional modes of dress and appearance; and behavioral characteristics associated with the minority group are a source of shame. There may be attempts to mimic what are perceived as White mannerisms, speech patterns, dress, and goals. Low self-esteem is characteristic of the person. The fact that John views his own Blackness as a handicap, something bad, and something to deny is an example of this insidious, but highly damaging, process.
2. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of the same minority group (group-depreciating attitudes and beliefs):* People at this stage also hold majority cultural beliefs and attitudes about their own minority group. These individuals may have internalized the majority of White stereotypes about their group. In the case of a Latino/Hispanic individual, for example, the person may believe that members of his or her own group have high rates of unemployment because they are lazy, uneducated, and unintelligent. Little thought or validity

is given to other viewpoints, such as unemployment's being a function of job discrimination, prejudice, racism, unequal opportunity, and inferior education. Because persons in the conformity stage find it psychologically painful to identify with such negative traits, they divorce themselves from their own group. The denial mechanism most commonly used is, "I'm not like them; I've made it on my own; I'm the exception."

3. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of different minority groups (discriminatory attitudes and beliefs)*: Because the person at the conformity stage most likely strives for identification with White society, he or she probably holds similar dominant attitudes and beliefs in regard to both his or her own minority group and other minority groups as well. Minority groups most similar to White cultural groups are viewed more favorably, whereas those most different are viewed less favorably. For example, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders may be viewed more favorably than African Americans or Latinos/Hispanics in some situations. Although socioeconomic stratification may exist, the reader is cautioned that such a ranking is fraught with hazards and potential political consequences. Such distinctions often manifest themselves in debates over which group is more oppressed and which group has done better than the others. These debates are counterproductive when used to (1) negate another group's experience of oppression; (2) foster an erroneous belief that hard work alone will result in success in a democratic society; (3) short-change a minority group (e.g., Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders) out of receiving the necessary resources in our society; and (4) pit one minority against another (divide and conquer) by holding one group up as an example to others.
4. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of the dominant group (group-appreciating attitudes and beliefs)*: This stage is characterized by a belief that White cultural, social, and institutional standards are superior. Members of the dominant group are admired, respected, and emulated. White people are believed to possess superior intelligence. Some individuals in this stage may go to great lengths to appear White. Consider *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Haley, 1965) in which the main character would straighten his hair and primarily date White women (as in the case of John). Reports that Asian women have undergone surgery to reshape their eyes to conform to White standards of female beauty may (though not in all cases) typify this dynamic.

Dissonance Stage

No matter how much a person attempts to deny his or her own racial/cultural heritage, he or she will encounter information or experiences that are inconsistent with culturally held beliefs, attitudes, and values. An Asian American who believes that Asians are inhibited, passive, inarticulate, and inept in interpersonal relationships may encounter an Asian leader who seems to break all these stereotypes (as with the Nisei Japanese student). A Latino/Hispanic who feels ashamed of his or her cultural upbringing may encounter another Latino/Hispanic who seems proud of his or her cultural heritage. An African American who believes that African Americans' problems are due to laziness, untrustworthiness, or personal inadequacies may suddenly encounter racism on a personal level. Denial begins to break down, which leads to a questioning and challenging of the attitudes and beliefs of the conformity stage. This was clearly what happened when the Nisei Japanese student encountered discrimination at the restaurant.

In all probability, movement into the dissonance stage is a gradual process. Its very definition indicates that the individual is in conflict due to disparate pieces of information or experiences that challenge his or her current self-concept. People generally move into this stage slowly, but a traumatic event may propel some individuals to move into dissonance at a much more rapid pace. Cross (1971) stated that a monumental event, such as the assassination of a major leader like Martin Luther King Jr., can often push people quickly into the dissonance stage.

1. *Attitudes and beliefs toward the self (conflict between self-depreciating and self-appreciating attitudes and beliefs):* There is now a growing sense of personal awareness that racism does exist, that not all aspects of the majority (minority) culture are good (bad), and that one cannot escape one's cultural heritage. For the first time the person begins to entertain the possibility of positive attributes in the minority culture and, with it, a sense of pride in self. Feelings of shame and pride are mixed in the individual, and a sense of conflict develops. This conflict is most likely to be brought to the forefront quickly when other members of the minority group express positive feelings toward the person: "We like you because you are Asian [or Black, Native American, or Latino/Hispanic]." At this stage, an important personal question is being asked: "Why should I feel ashamed of who and what I am?"
2. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of the same minority group (conflict between group-depreciating and group-appreciating attitudes and beliefs):* Dominant

views of minority strengths and weaknesses begin to be questioned as new, contradictory information is received. Certain aspects of the minority culture begin to have appeal. For example, a Latino/Hispanic male who values individualism may marry, have children, and then suddenly realize that Latino/Hispanic cultural values that hold the family as the psychosocial unit possess positive features. Or the minority person may find certain members of his or her group to be very attractive as friends, colleagues, lovers, and so forth.

3. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of different minority groups (conflict between dominant-held views of minority hierarchy and feelings of shared experience):* Stereotypes associated with other minority groups are questioned, and a growing sense of comradeship with other oppressed groups is felt. It is important to keep in mind, however, that little psychic energy is associated with resolving conflicts with other minority groups. Almost all energies are expended toward resolving conflicts in regard to the self, one's own minority group, and the dominant group.
4. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of the dominant group (conflict between group-appreciating and group-depreciating attitudes and beliefs):* The person experiences a growing awareness that not all cultural values of the dominant group are beneficial. This is especially true when the minority person experiences personal discrimination. Growing suspicion and some distrust of certain members of the dominant group develop.

Resistance and Immersion Stage

The minority person at this stage tends to endorse minority-held views completely and to reject the values of the dominant society and culture. The person seems dedicated to reacting against White society and rejects White social, cultural, and institutional standards as having no personal validity. A desire to eliminate oppression of the individual's minority group becomes an important motivation behind the individual's behavior. During the resistance and immersion stage, the three most active feelings are *guilt*, *shame*, and *anger*. There are considerable feelings of guilt and shame around the idea that in the past the minority individual has "sold out" his or her own racial and cultural group. The feelings of guilt and shame extend to the perception that during this past sellout the minority person was

a contributor to and participant in the oppression of his or her own group and other minority groups. These feelings are coupled with a strong sense of anger at the oppression and feelings of having been brainwashed by the forces in White society. Anger is directed outward in a very strong way toward oppression and racism. Movement into this stage seems to occur for two reasons. First, a resolution of the conflicts and confusions of the previous stage affords the person greater understanding of social forces (racism, oppression, and discrimination) and his or her role as a victim. Second, a personal questioning of why people should feel ashamed of themselves develops. The answer to this question evokes feelings of guilt, shame, and anger.

1. *Attitudes and beliefs toward the self (self-appreciating attitudes and beliefs):* The minority individual at this stage is oriented toward discovery of his or her own history and culture. There is an active seeking out of information and artifacts that enhance this person's sense of identity and worth. Cultural and racial characteristics that once elicited feelings of shame and disgust become symbols of pride and honor. The individual moves into this stage primarily because he or she has asked the question, "Why should I be ashamed of who and what I am?" The original low self-esteem engendered by widespread prejudice and racism that was most characteristic of the conformity stage is now actively challenged to raise self-esteem. "Black is beautiful," for example, represents a symbolic relabeling of identity for many Blacks. Racial self-hatred begins to be actively rejected in favor of the other extreme: unbridled racial pride.
2. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of the same minority group (group-appreciating attitudes and beliefs):* The individual experiences a strong sense of identification with and commitment to his or her minority group as enhancing information about the group is acquired. There is a feeling of connectedness with other members of the racial and cultural group, and a strengthening of new identity begins to occur. Members of the person's group are now admired and respected, and are often viewed as constituting the new reference group or ideal. Cultural values of the minority group are accepted without question. As indicated, the pendulum swings drastically from original identification with White ways to identification in an unquestioning manner with the minority group's ways. Persons in this stage are likely to restrict their interactions as much as possible to exchanges with members of their own group.

3. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of different minority groups (conflict between feelings of empathy for other minority group experiences and feelings of culturocentrism)*: Although individuals at this stage experience a growing sense of comradeship with persons from other minority groups, a strong culturocentrism develops as well. Alliances with other groups tend to be transitory and based on short-term goals or some global shared view of oppression. There is less of an attempt to reach out and understand other racial/cultural minority groups and their values and ways, and more of a superficial, surface-level feeling of political need. Alliances generally are based on convenience factors or are formed for political reasons, such as combining together as a large group to confront an enemy perceived to be larger.
4. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of the dominant group (group-depreciating attitudes and beliefs)*: The minority individual is likely to perceive the dominant society and culture as an oppressor and as being primarily responsible for the current plight of minorities in the United States. This stage is characterized by both withdrawal from the dominant culture and immersion in one's own cultural heritage; there is also considerable anger and hostility directed toward White society. The minority individual distrusts and dislikes all members of the dominant group—an almost global anti-White demonstration of feeling. For example, the individual believes that White people are not to be trusted because they are the oppressors or enemies. In the extreme form of this stage, members may advocate complete destruction of the institutions and structures that have been characteristic of White society.

Introspection Stage

Several factors seem to work in unison to move individuals from the resistance and immersion stage into the introspection stage. First, individuals begin to discover that the level of intensity of their feelings (primarily anger directed toward White society) in the former stage is psychologically draining and does not permit them to really devote more crucial energies to understanding themselves or their own racial/cultural group. The resistance and immersion stage tends to be a reaction against the dominant culture and is not proactive in allowing the individual to use all energies to discover who or what he or she is. Self-definition in the previous stage tends to be reactive (against White racism), and a need for positive self-definition in a proactive sense emerges.

Second, the minority individual experiences feelings of discontent and discomfort with group views that may be quite rigid in the resistance and immersion stage. Often, to please the group, the individual is asked to submerge individual autonomy and individual thought in favor of the group good. Many group views may now be seen as conflicting with individual ones. A Latino/Hispanic individual who has formed a deep relationship with a White person, for example, may experience considerable pressure from his or her culturally similar peers to break off the relationship because that White person is the enemy. The personal experiences of the individual, however, may not in fact support this group view.

It is important to note that some social workers often confuse certain characteristics of the introspection stage with parts of the conformity stage. A minority person from the introspection stage who speaks against the decisions of his or her group may often appear similar to the conforming person. The dynamics are quite different, however. Whereas the conforming person is motivated by global racial self-hatred, the introspective person feels no such global negativity toward his or her own group.

1. *Attitudes and beliefs toward the self (concern with the basis of self-appreciating attitudes and beliefs):* Although originally, in the conformity stage, the person held predominantly to majority group views and notions to the detriment of his or her own minority group, the person now feels that he or she has too rigidly held on to minority group views and notions, thereby submerging personal autonomy. The conflict now becomes quite great in terms of responsibility and allegiance to his or her own minority group versus notions of personal independence and autonomy. The person begins to spend more and more time and energy trying to sort out these aspects of self-identity and begins increasingly to demand individual autonomy.
2. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of the same minority group (concern with the unequivocal nature of group appreciation):* Although attitudes of identification continue from the preceding resistance and immersion stage, concern begins to build up regarding the issue of group-usurped individuality. Increasingly, the individual may see members of his or her own group taking positions that might be considered quite extreme. In addition, there is now increasing resentment over how the group may attempt to pressure or influence the individual into making decisions that are inconsistent with his or her values, beliefs, and outlook. Indeed, it is not unusual for members of a minority group to make it clear to other members that if they do not agree

with the group, they are against it. A common ploy used to hold members in line is exemplified in such questions as “How Asian are you?” and “How Black are you?”

3. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of different minority groups (concern with the ethnocentric basis for judging others):* There is now greater uneasiness with culturocentrism, and an attempt is made to reach out to other groups in finding out what types of oppression they have experienced and how they have handled this. Although similarities are important, there is now a movement toward understanding potential differences in oppression that other groups may have experienced.
4. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of the dominant group (concern with the basis of group depreciation):* The individual experiences conflict between attitudes of complete trust in the dominant society and culture and attitudes of selective trust and distrust according to the dominant group’s demonstrated behaviors and attitudes. Conflict is most likely to occur here when the person begins to recognize that there are many elements in U.S. American culture that are highly functional and desirable, yet feels confusion as to how to incorporate these elements into the minority culture. Would the person’s acceptance of certain White cultural values mean that the person is selling out his or her own group? There is a lowering of intense feelings of anger and distrust toward the dominant group but a continued attempt to discern which elements of this group are and are not acceptable.

Integrative Awareness Stage

Minority persons in this stage have developed an inner sense of security and now can own and appreciate unique aspects of their culture as well as those of the dominant U.S. culture. They do not feel that racial/ethnic minority cultures are necessarily in conflict with dominant White cultural ways. Conflicts and discomfort experienced in the previous stage become resolved, allowing greater individual control and flexibility. There is now the belief that there are acceptable and unacceptable aspects in all cultures, and that it is very important for the person to be able to examine and accept (or reject) those aspects of a culture that he or she does (or does not) see as desirable. At the integrative awareness stage, the minority person has made a significant commitment to eliminating all forms of oppression and has a strong desire to so.

1. *Attitudes and beliefs toward the self (self-appreciating attitudes and beliefs):* The culturally diverse individual develops a positive self-image and experiences a strong sense of self-worth and confidence. Not only is there an integrated self-concept that involves racial pride in identity and culture, but also the person develops a strong sense of autonomy. Indeed, the person becomes bicultural or multicultural without a sense of having sold out or of having compromised his or her integrity. In other words, the person begins to perceive himself or herself as an autonomous individual who is unique (individual level of identity), a member of his or her own racial/cultural group (group level of identity), a member of the larger society, and a member of the human race (universal level of identity).
2. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of the same minority group (group-appreciating attitudes and beliefs):* The individual experiences a strong sense of pride in the group without having to accept group values unequivocally. There is no longer the internal conflict over disagreeing with group goals and values. Strong feelings of empathy with the group's experience are coupled with awareness that each member of the group is also an individual. In addition, the individual is likely to express tolerant and empathic attitudes toward members of his or her group who may be responding in a less adaptive manner to racism and oppression.
3. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of different minority groups (group-appreciating attitudes and beliefs):* The individual now reaches out to different minority groups to understand their cultural values and ways of life. There is a strong belief that the more one understands other cultural values and beliefs, the greater the likelihood of fostering understanding among the various racially/ethnically marginalized groups. Support for all oppressed groups, regardless of similarity to the individual's minority group, tends to be emphasized.
4. *Attitudes and beliefs toward members of the dominant group (attitudes and beliefs of selective appreciation):* The individual experiences selective trust of and liking for members of the dominant group who seek to eliminate that group's oppressive activities. The individual also experiences openness to the constructive elements of the dominant culture. The emphasis here tends to be on the fact that White racism is a sickness in society and that White people are also victims who are in need of help.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MULTICULTURAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

As you draw on cultural identity development models to inform your multicultural social work practice with diverse clients, you should take the following cautions into account:

1. Be aware that the R/CID model should not be viewed as a global personality theory, and that the specific identity stages should not be seen as fixed categories. The process of cultural identity development is dynamic, not static. In actuality, the model should serve as a conceptual framework for understanding identity development.
2. Do not fall victim to stereotyping in using any of the models presented in this chapter. In the case of the R/CID model, for example, most minority clients may seem to have characteristics primarily from one stage, but they are likely to exhibit characteristics from other stages as well. Furthermore, particular situations and the types of presenting problems may make some characteristics more manifest than others. It is possible that minority clients may evidence, for example, conformity stage characteristics in some situations but resistance and immersion stage characteristics in others.
3. Know that minority identity development models are simply conceptual aids, and that human development is much more complex than these models suggest. A question often raised when considering the formulation of cultural identity is whether identity development is a linear process. Do individuals always start at the beginning of these stages? Is it possible to skip stages? Can people regress? In general, our clinical experience has been that minority and majority individuals in this society do tend to move at some level through each of the identifiable stages of all the models presented. Some tend to move faster than others, some tend to stay predominantly at only one stage, and some may regress.
4. Know that identity development models begin at a point that involves interaction with an oppressive society. Most of these models are weak in formulating a stage prior to one involving conformity. Recent Asian immigrants to the United State offer a prime example of the inadequacy of cultural identity development models. Many Asian immigrants tend to hold very positive and favorable views of their own culture and already possess an intact racial/cultural identity. What happens when they encounter a society that

views cultural differences as being deviant? Will they or their offspring move through the conformity stage as presented in Table 6.1?

5. Be mindful of the implied value judgments present in almost all developmental models. They assume that some identity developmental stages are healthier than others. For example, the R/CID model obviously holds the integrative awareness stage as representing the healthiest form of functioning.
6. Be aware that racial/cultural identity development models lack an adequate integration of gender, class, sexual orientation, and other sociodemographic group identities. Intersectionality theory as discussed in Chapter 2 can provide a useful and complementary framework for understanding the interaction, intersection, and integration of multiple group identities.
7. Know that racial/cultural identity is not a simple, uniform concept. Mounting evidence suggests that although one's identity may move sequentially through identifiable stages, affective, attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioral components of identity may not move in tandem (Cross 1991). For example, it is entirely possible that a person will have the emotions and other affective elements associated with a certain stage, while not demonstrating behaviors that correspond to those affective aspects.
8. Begin to look more closely at the possible social worker and client stage combinations. The social work helping process and outcomes can be functions of the stages of identity development of both social worker and client.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have presented the integrative racial/cultural identity development model. An understanding of cultural identity development will sensitize social workers to the role that oppression plays in a minority individual's identity development. Further, the R/CID model aids social workers in recognizing differences between members of the same minority group with respect to their cultural identity. It also serves as a useful assessment and diagnostic tool, allowing social service providers to gain a greater understanding of their culturally different clients (Atkinson et al., 1998; Helms, 1985; D. W. Sue, Parham, & Santiago, 1998; Vandiver et al., 2001). In many cases, an accurate understanding and application of the dynamics and characteristics of the stages may result in better prescriptive interventions. Social workers who are familiar with the sequence of stages are

better able to plan effective intervention strategies for working with culturally different clients.

In summary, the R/CID model is a useful heuristic tool for social workers who work with culturally diverse populations. The model reminds social workers of several imperatives. First, within-group differences are very important to acknowledge when working with clients of color, because not all members of a racial/cultural group are the same. Depending on his or her level of racial consciousness, one client of color may have attitudes, beliefs, and views about the significance of race and ethnicity that are quite different from those of another. Second, a culturally competent social worker needs to be cognizant of and understand how sociopolitical factors influence and shape identity. Identity development is not solely due to cultural differences; it also is influenced by how those differences are perceived in our society. Third, the R/CID model alerts social workers working with clients of color to the challenges associated with each stage of racial/cultural consciousness. Not only may this model serve as a useful assessment tool, but also it provides suggestions as to what may be the most appropriate social work intervention. Fourth, the R/CID model offers a reminder that members of numerous marginalized, underrepresented, and/or devalued groups undergo similar identity development processes. Finally, the model allows helping professionals to recognize the potentially changing and developmental nature of cultural identity among clients. If the goal of healthy multicultural development is the client's movement toward the integrative awareness stage, then the social worker should be able to anticipate the sequence of feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that ideally will arise. The social worker, acting as a guide and providing an understandable end point, will be able to help the client more quickly understand and work through issues related to his or her own identity.

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the client's stage of racial consciousness affect the social work helping relationship?
2. What types of conflict and/or challenges may confront a White social worker when working with a client of color at the resistance and immersion stage of the R/CID model? How might they perceive one another? How might they respond to one another? What issues are likely to arise in

the social work helping relationship? What needs to be done for the social worker to be effective?

3. Can you discuss the other stages of the R/CID model and the implications for a White social worker and a client of color working with one another?
4. Can you discuss other stages of the R/CID model and the implications for a social worker of color and a client of color working with one another? Consider some of the issues that would emerge if both are at differing stages of racial/cultural identity development.
5. Does a social worker of color have to be at the integrative awareness stage to be helpful to a White client?

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