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## **European American (White) Racial Identity Development, Mental Health, and Prejudice**

Historically, in the progression of the psychology and education professions, White racial identity development models were developed after minority identity development models. Whereas the psychology literature in the early 1970s introduced models of Black racial identity development (e.g., Cross, 1971; Dizard, 1970), the late 1970s and 1980s witnessed the introduction of racial identity models focused on White persons (e.g., Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1984; Ponterotto, 1988; Terry, 1977). The Black identity theories focused on the “oppressed”—individuals who were in a numerical minority; who had less power, fewer resources, and diminished life-quality access; and who had been the subject of violent physical and psychological torture for centuries. White racial identity models focused on the “oppressors”—individuals who were in the numerical majority; who had power, resources, and countless unearned life privileges; and who were responsible for racism in the United States (see D’Andrea & Daniels, 2001; Sue, 2003).

There was a sense among White identity theorists, who, interestingly, were both scholars of color (Janet Helms) and scholars of White European ancestry (Rita Hardiman and Joseph Ponterotto), that if American society were to improve with regard to racial equality and respectful and appreciative interracial interaction, White Americans would have to take stock in, and responsibility for, their legacy of oppression and their ongoing participation in an oppressive society either directly or through passive acceptance of the racist status quo (Sue, 2003). This perception was relevant to society

in general and to the counseling and education professions, particularly as the overwhelming majority of mental health professionals and educators at the time were of White racial heritage. As a result of the influence of the White identity theorists, a good amount of empirical research has been conducted on the study of White identity development and its psychological correlates. We will review and integrate this research later in the chapter. First, it is important to review some of the theoretical assumptions inherent in all theories of White racial identity development.

Whites, because of their privileged status in society (Helms, 1995; Neville et al., 2001) have not been led, or forced, to examine their own roles in race relations in the United States (Sue, 2003; Sue et al., 1998). The White racial identity development process involves coming to terms with one's own unearned privilege in society, followed by an honest self-examination of one's role in maintaining the status quo and ending with a balanced identity perspective characterized by self-awareness and commitments to social justice for all groups.

Sue et al. (1998) provide more specific and detailed assumptions of White racial identity models, as follows:

- Racism is integral to U.S. life and permeates all aspects of our institutions and culture.
- Whites are socialized into society and therefore inherit the biases, stereotypes, and racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the larger society.
- How Whites perceive themselves and process their reactions as racial beings follows an identifiable sequence that can occur in progressive (linear) or nonprogressive (nonlinear) fashion.
- White racial identity status will affect an individual's interracial interactions and relationships.
- The desirable outcome of the White racial identity development process is that individuals accept their status as White persons in a racist society and define their identity in a nonracist manner (p. 56).

As the theoretical assumptions of White racial identity theory have now been elaborated, it is appropriate to review popular and often-referenced models of White identity development. In subsequent pages of this chapter we review the models of Rita Hardiman, Janet E. Helms, Joseph G. Ponterotto, and Wayne Rowe and his colleagues. We then review two integrative models of White racial identity development presented by Haresh B. Sabnani and colleagues and Derald Wing Sue and colleagues.

### **Hardiman's White Identity Development Model**

To examine White racial identity development in the context of social identity theory, Hardiman (1982) studied six autobiographies written by White

authors describing their experiences and lives as White Americans. Each author discussed her or his growth and development regarding racial issues and racism. Represented among the six authors were four women and two men, and various regions of the country were represented in the stories. The autobiographies examined by Hardiman were *Killers of the Dream* (Smith, 1963), *The Wall Between* (Braden, 1958), *Confessions of a White Racist* (King, 1971), *The Education of a WASP* (Stalvey, 1970), *Hey, White Girl* (Gregory, 1970), and *White on White: An Anti-Racism Manual for White Educators in the Process of Becoming* (Edler, 1974).

One strength of the Hardiman (1982) study is its creative and descriptive methodology. Hardiman used qualitative methods to read, study, and integrate major themes, insights, and experiences from the six autobiographies. The result is a stage model that is highly descriptive and poignant. In the next section, you will read exact quotes from the six authors that help capture the emotion and thinking of the time. Hardiman's qualitative study (like Kim's 1981 study, described in the previous chapter) is refreshing in that the overwhelming majority of identity research in psychology has relied on quantitative methods and the use of survey instruments.

Hardiman's (1982) model consists of five stages, the names of which correspond to the social identity stage names listed previously.

### **Lack of Social Consciousness**

Stage 1 individuals are unaware of the complex codes of appropriate behavior for White people. Individuals in this first stage naïvely operate from their own needs, interests, and curiosity. As a result, they break many social rules and are chastised for their thoughts and actions. It is at this point that White people begin to learn what it means to be White and what other Whites consider appropriate attitudes and behaviors with regard to racial issues. Hardiman (1982, p. 159) cites the autobiography of Anne Braden (1958), in which the author recalls a childhood conversation with her mother. During the course of this conversation, Anne happened to use the term "colored lady," at which point her mother quickly retorted, "'You never call colored people ladies, Anne Gambrell [maiden name]. I can hear her voice now. 'You say colored woman and white lady—never a colored lady'" (p. 21).

Hardiman's Stage 1 covers birth to about 4 or 5 years of age. The White authors recall this period as the time that awareness of racial differences began. Given the early-life period of this stage, the authors recalled the time as confusing. During this early stage, White children do not feel hostile, fearful, or superior to Blacks, but they may experience some discomfort in interracial situations. The authors also described this period as one in which they were curious about racially diverse persons.

### Acceptance

The transition to Stage 2, *Acceptance*, occurs as a result of socialization by parents, educators, peers, the church, the media, and the larger surrounding community (Hardiman, 1982). In the transition period, White children quickly learn the systematic ideology of race. They learn what shared opinions and behaviors (with regard to racial issues and interactions) are acceptable and unacceptable—which will be met with punishment and derision and which will be met with glowing approval. This powerful socialization results in the staunch acceptance of behavior and beliefs that support the social codes. The dominant belief system becomes internalized, and no conscious effort is needed to remind the individual what thoughts or actions are socially appropriate. The prevailing unspoken attitude with regard to Black and White racial beliefs was captured in Braden's autobiography (1958).

It was most regrettable that the Negroes had ever been brought to this country in the first place and slavery had certainly been wrong. The presence of the Negroes in the South today was probably our punishment for the sins of our forefathers in bringing them here as slaves. . . . Negroes were really not bad creatures and certainly they had their uses, as they were available as domestic servants so white women could be freed from the burden of housework. . . . The point was to treat them kindly, not only because this was of course right according to Biblical teaching but also because if you treat a Negro with kindness he is also good to you—somewhat in the way a pet dog is good to the master who is good to him. And of course, the Negro people are happy in this relationship, there is not a reason to feel sorry for them—goodness, they are more carefree and there's nothing they like better than having some white folks who will take care of them. (pp. 19–21, cited in Hardiman, 1982, pp. 170–171)

Hardiman (1982) notes that unlike Stage 1, which is relatively brief in duration, Stage 2 can last many years, even a lifetime. Most of the autobiographies describe this stage in great detail, and many of the authors were in their adult years before encountering circumstances that would facilitate the transition to Stage 3.

### Resistance

The transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3 is often a confusing and painful one. It is at this point that the White authors acknowledge the reality of the Black experience in America. The transition to Stage 3 is frequently stimulated by interaction with people, social events, or information presented in the media or in books. For example, King (1971) found his acceptance-stage belief system challenged by reading a library book:

I was a grown man before discovering that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson (those wise, saintly men whose pronouncements on liberty and justice leaped from my textbooks and echoed from the mouths of our Independence Day orators . . .) had owned slaves. It was shocking to learn that demigods who had influenced documents affirming the thrilling, limitless doctrine that *all men are created equal* had been otherwise capable of holding men in bondage for the profit from their sweat. I well remember discovering these new lessons in the Midland County Library, in my twenty-first year, and then standing outside, looking up at the windswept streets, and thinking, "Hell, if they lied to me about *that*, they've lied to me about everything." (p. 17, cited in Hardiman, 1982, p. 180)

Hardiman notes that Whites experience painful emotions during the transition to Stage 3. These feelings range from guilt and embarrassment at having been foolish enough to believe the racist messages they received to anger and disgust at the system and the people who lied to them. Stage 3 individuals acknowledge their Whiteness, and they understand that they have been socialized by a racism woven into the fabric of American society. Individuals come to understand minority group anger at White society, and they see all minority groups as victimized in some way by White racism.

White people in Stage 3 are not sure what their role should be in addressing racism. Feelings of guilt emerge as they contemplate their previously held Stage 2 identity. They harbor negative feelings about Whiteness, and they are angry at themselves and at other Whites. Resistance individuals are likely to attempt to reeducate themselves and other Whites about racism. They will devote time to learning accurate information about other cultures. They may challenge and confront racist institutions through letter writing, boycotts, and demonstrations. At times, the Stage 3 individual feels ostracized from other Whites and uncertain about being accepted by minority peers. Stage 3 can be both emotionally draining and stimulating.

### **Redefinition**

Having experienced conflict in Stage 3 between their own values and values deemed appropriate by their racial group, Whites at Stage 4 now begin to search for a new White identity. Whites at the redefinition stage acknowledge the reality and pervasiveness of racism and act to change undesirable situations. This involvement facilitates the development of a more positive White identity. Whites in redefinition begin to search out aspects of White identity not linked to racism, they learn more about their culture (e.g., Western philosophy, art, and music), and they develop a sense of pride in their group. It is important to note that there is a recognition that cultures may vary in values, but no culture or race is superior to another and they all contribute to the enrichment of human life. The redefinition person is aware of the strengths and limitations of White history and culture. She

or he has a desire to help other Whites redefine themselves, has empathy for the difficulties Whites have at earlier stages, and sees that it is in Whites' self-interest to eradicate racism.

### **Internalization**

Having established a sense of pride in their identity during the previous stage, White people in internalization integrate and incorporate this new racial identity into their overall social identity. A positive White identity is now a healthy part of the individual; it is natural and spontaneous; it requires no conscious thought or effort.

The internalized individual has balanced his or her racial identity with other aspects of identity. Energy is directed toward liberating other Whites from racism and educating oneself about other forms of oppression (e.g., sexism, homophobia, ageism) and their relationship to race (e.g., the interaction of racism and sexism). Internalized Whites voluntarily alienate themselves from some aspects of the social environment and actively engage with other aspects. The placement of Hardiman's stages in relation to Marcia's (1980, see Chapter 4) general stages and other race-based models is shown in Table 5.1.

## **Helms's White Racial Identity Model**

Helms (1984) was working independently of Hardiman (1982) when she developed and presented her initial model of White racial identity development. Over two decades, Helms has continued to elaborate and refine her model (e.g., Helms, 1990, 1995, 2005; Helms & Cook, 1999), and her theoretical model is by far the most discussed and researched in the psychological literature. The process of White racial identity development involves abandoning one's racism and developing a realistic and self-affirming racial identity. Because Whites are socialized in an environment in which they are privileged relative to other groups, they internalize a sense of entitlement and learn to maintain their privilege by distorting race-related reality and, at times, by aggressive actions against perceived threats to the racial status quo. Helms's latest formulation of her White identity model (see Helms & Cook, 1999) consists of seven ego statuses. Helms notes as important that individuals may simultaneously exhibit characteristics of multiple statuses but that one status may be more dominant.

### **Contact**

Contact is a primitive status characterized by denial of or obliviousness to White privilege. Thus when this status is dominant in a White person, she or he will react to racial stimuli (e.g., discussion about racism) with avoidance,

**Table 5.1** Models of White Identity Development

<b>General Identity Model</b>		Foreclosed identity	Moratorium	Achieved identity
Marcia (1980)	Identity diffusion			
<b>White Racial Identity Development Models</b>				
Hardiman (1982)	No social consciousness	Acceptance	Resistance	Internalization
Helms & Cook (1999)	Contact Disintegration	Reintegration	Pseudo-independence	Autonomy
Ponterotto (1988)	Pre-exposure	Exposure	Zealot-defensive	Integration
Sabnani et al. (1991)	Pre-exposure or precontact	Conflict	Prominority and antiracism	Redefinition and integration
Sue et al. (1998)	Conformity	Dissonance	Resistance and immersion	Integrative awareness
<b>White Racial Typology Model</b>				
Rowe et al. (1994, 1995)	Conflictive	Dominative	Reactive	Integrative
LaFleur et al. (2002)	Racial justice (conflictive and reactive types)		Racial acceptance (dominative and integrative types)	

denial, or obliviousness. Understandably, as these individuals do not acknowledge the reality of racism in society, they take no action to understand their own privilege or work toward creating a more just society.

### **Disintegration**

This status is characterized by disorientation, guilt, and anxiety as the realities of racism seem to break through the obliviousness of the contact stage. The individual is caught between wanting to be accepted by the normative (White) group and at the same time experiencing a moral dilemma over treating (or considering) Blacks as inferior to Whites. One solution to mitigating the anxiety of this stage is to reembrace the ideology of the normative White group and its racist social pressure. If a person in disintegration adopts this solution to dealing with her or his ambivalence and anxiety, the reintegration status has been entered.

### **Reintegration**

Reintegration is characterized by denigration of and intolerance toward non-White groups and by the forceful protection of one's privilege and the racial status quo. Reintegration represents the purest racist status in the Helms model. Negative conditions associated with minority individuals are thought to reflect their own failings or lack of effort. The residual feelings of anxiety and guilt from the previous status are now transformed into anger and fear of minority group individuals.

### **Pseudoindependence**

In pseudoindependence, the individual acknowledges the responsibilities of Whites for past and ongoing racism. These individuals are not comfortable with a racist stance and begin the search for a new White identity. However, in this status Whites operate more from an intellectual understanding of racism rather than from a sense of personal responsibility based on their own racism. Attention is directed more toward dissatisfaction with other Whites rather than a deep level of personal self-analysis with regard to their own socialized racism.

### **Immersion**

During immersion, individuals immerse themselves in the search for accurate information about race and in a deeper understanding of their own racist socializations as White people in America. An individual in immersion might be involved in social activism to fight racism.



### **Emersion**

In Helms's latest model (Helms & Cook, 1999), emersion involves a withdrawal from the previous frantic search for a new identity that is characteristic of immersion and the embracing of a community of reeducated Whites where one can be rejuvenated and empowered in continuing one's identity development.

### **Autonomy**

Autonomy is the most advanced status of racial identity development for White Americans. The autonomous person is cognitively complex and flexible and may avoid life options that involve participation in racial oppression. Such individuals have the capacity to relinquish White privilege. The autonomous person is humanistic and involved in activism regarding many forms of oppression (e.g., fighting sexism, ageism, homophobia). It is the autonomy status of Helms's model (1995; Helms & Cook, 1999) that closely resembles aspects of the multicultural personality discussed in Chapter 7.

## **Ponterotto's White Racial Consciousness Development Model**

Ponterotto (1988) presented a four-stage model of racial consciousness development for White counselor trainees. Unlike the majority of models reviewed in this chapter, which focused on White identity in the general public, Ponterotto was specifically interested in the racial consciousness development of counselor trainees. At the time he began work on his model, Ponterotto was a professor at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, working primarily with White graduate students. Building on the landmark White identity work of Janet Helms and Rita Hardiman (reviewed earlier in this chapter) and contextualized within his experiences as a White man teaching multicultural counseling to numerous White students, Ponterotto sketched a progressive model with the following four stages: pre-exposure, exposure, zealot-defensive, and integration.

### **Pre-exposure**

In the pre-exposure stage, White graduate students have given little thought to multicultural issues. They are generally naïve about both racial issues and their inherited, unearned privileges (see Neville et al., 2001; Vasquez, 2001) as White people in America. Students in this stage often believe that racism no longer exists or that if it does exist, it does so only to

a limited degree with the few remaining Americans who are “old-fashioned bigots” (refer back to Chapter 2). White students in this stage are unaware of the concepts of subtle racism or modern racism (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2000; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986) or of institutional and cultural racism (Jones, 1997).

### **Exposure**

Students enter the exposure stage when they are first confronted with multicultural issues. In the Ponterotto (1988) model, this occurred when they began their Multicultural Counseling course. At this point, students were exposed to the realities of continuing racism in the United States. They began to understand the nature of modern racism, as well as the individual, institutional, and cultural manifestations of racism. Students then acknowledged that Whites and minority group members were treated differently (regardless of the person’s economic status) and that minorities faced barriers with which White people never had to deal. This newfound insight was enlightening to the students, and they initially felt a sense of empowerment over their new and accurate knowledge.

Quickly, however, White students in exposure began to realize that they had been lied to throughout their education. They learned that even the counseling profession, which professed to be objective and fair to all, was a tool of institutional and cultural racism because of the profession’s centering on White middle class values (refer back to Chapter 1). Whites in this stage begin to experience anger and guilt over their naïveté in accepting without question myths and stereotypes of minorities fostered by the education and counseling profession. The students began to see how they themselves were subtly racist. During exposure, the students also felt some ambivalence as they contemplated whether to share their newfound insights with family and friends and to confront them with their prejudicial beliefs. Doing so risked alienation from other White people they had been close to for years. They risked inciting family or friendship conflict, as they might be seen as “going native” or turning too liberal (or simply being insulting). White students’ processing of and responses to the multitude of strong feelings emerging during exposure signaled their entrance into Stage 3.

### **Zealot-Defensive**

Ponterotto (1988) observed that White graduate students in the counseling field often responded to their array of newfound mixed feelings in one of two ways. Some became very zealous about the multicultural topic. These students dove head first into minority issues, studied the topic extensively, and became very prominent in philosophy. Ponterotto (1988) states that “this pro-minority directed energy enables the student to deal with his or her

personal, or White society's collective, guilt in regard to being a White member of society" (p. 152).

Other students responded to their anger and guilt in a very defensive manner. Some students took the criticisms of the "White system" very personally and begin to withdraw from the multicultural topic. Ponterotto (1988) observed that students in this stage stopped participating in class discussions, moved to sit in the back of the classroom, and seldom made eye contact with the professor. These students were quite angry at the professor and saw him (in this case) as anti-White.

### **Integration**

Ponterotto (1988) noted that as students were led to process and express their feelings (guilt, anger, defensiveness), they began to demonstrate a renewed interest and openness to multicultural issues. The intense feelings of Stage 3 were attenuated to a large degree, and students achieved a more balanced perspective on the topic. At this point the integration stage was achieved. Students then accepted the realities of modern racism (refer back to Chapter 2), acknowledged their own subtle racism, and felt a sense of empowerment about eliminating racism in themselves and in society. Students at this point felt good about themselves as individuals and as members of the White cultural group. They often developed a renewed interest in their racial group (White) and in their ethnic roots (e.g., Italian, Polish, Irish). There was an appreciation of other cultures and a desire to learn more about various groups. Students also begin to devote energy to other identity commitments, such as gender and lesbian or gay identity, where effort was directed toward understanding and combating sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia (see Croteau, Lark, Lidderdale, & Chung, 2005; Moradi, Subich, & Phillips, 2002). It is the integration stage in this model that is reflected in the multicultural personality discussed in Chapter 7.

### **Rowe, Bennett, and Atkinson's White Racial Consciousness Model**

The most recent comprehensive model of White racial consciousness was introduced by Wayne Rowe, Mark Leach, and colleagues (LaFleur, Rowe, & Leach, 2002; Leach, Behrens, & LaFleur, 2002; Rowe, Behrens, & Leach, 1995; Rowe, Bennett, & Atkinson, 1994). Part of the stimulus for their model came from a dissatisfaction with the identity theory aspects of existing White race-based conceptualizations (e.g., Helms, 1990, 1995; Sabnani, Ponterotto, & Borodovsky, 1991). Rowe and his colleagues were of the opinion that how Whites felt about their own racial group and other racial groups did not follow a linear or progressive developmental process.

They believed that anchoring Whites' racial attitudes in developmental psychology (e.g., variations of social identity theory; refer back to Chapter 4) was not justified empirically. These authors believed that identity theory was too abstract and intangible (LaFleur et al., 2002) to serve as a conceptual anchor for understanding racial beliefs and that a more parsimonious understanding of Whites' racial attitudes could be studied through social-cognitive psychological research on attitude development and expressions (see Ponterotto, Potere, & Johansen, 2002, on measuring the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of racial attitudes).

Therefore, Rowe and colleagues set out to develop a concise and parsimonious model that accurately classified commonly held racial attitudes that White people have toward persons of color. They defined attitudes as the "affective orientation regarding the favorableness of a thing" (LaFleur et al., 2002, p. 148), and they assumed that "attitudes are most frequently acquired through observational learning, are rather impervious to verbal persuasion, and, subject to situational influences, tend to result in intentions that guide observable behaviors" (p. 149). Furthermore, the model specifies that attitudes can change in the face of direct or vicarious experience that is dissonant or inconsistent with previously held attitudes. The focus of the Rowe et al. (1994) model is to label empirically identified constellations of racial attitudes held by White people in the United States. In essence, the model is an attitude typology model rather than a sequenced developmental model.

The initial explication of the Rowe et al. (1994, 1995) model specified seven *types* or constellations of racial attitudes. The types were organized into two groupings, *achieved* and *unachieved*. These terms were borrowed from the identity literature (see discussions of Erikson, Marcia, and Phinney in the previous chapter), which is surprising, because the authors seem to want to stay away from identity conceptualizations. In identity studies, achieved types have both explored and committed to their racial attitudes and unachieved types lack personal exploration, commitment, or both. We now briefly summarize achieved and unachieved types.

### **Achieved Types**

*Dominative* persons hold White ethnocentric attitudes, believe in the superiority of Whites, and may act out racist attitudes passively or directly.

*Conflictive* individuals do not support obvious racism or inequality yet still value a Eurocentric worldview (e.g., individualism) over alternate worldviews (e.g., collectivism).

*Integrative* persons hold positive racial attitudes, relate to a variety of racial and ethnic issues, and are rational and pragmatic in orientation.

*Reactive* individuals hold strong prominority attitudes yet may be unaware of their personal responsibility in maintaining a racist status quo.

### **Unachieved Types**

*Avoidant* persons have not explored racial issues and appear to ignore, deny, or minimize racial issues.

*Dependent* types hold a narrow and limited understanding of racial issues that are heavily influenced by others.

*Dissonant* individuals are conflicted between their racial beliefs and some contradictory experiences that call into question their belief system; they are wavering in their racial attitudes.

### **A Revised White Racial Consciousness Conceptualization**

One great strength of the Rowe et al. (1994, 1995) White racial consciousness model is that it has been closely linked to empirical research at the outset. We will talk more about instruments used to operationalize White racial identity and consciousness theory later in this chapter and in Chapter 15. Suffice it to say that as a result of systematic research on their model, Rowe and colleagues have recently revised it (see LaFleur et al., 2002). The revised model now centers on two broad constructs: *racial acceptance* and *racial justice*, each the result of an integration of typologies discussed earlier.

#### *Racial Acceptance*

The racial acceptance construct results from the bipolar placement of the dominative and integrative typologies. The main theme here appears to be acceptance of racial minorities, characterized by strong positive views at one pole (integrative attitudes) and highly negative views at the opposite pole (dominative attitudes).

#### *Racial Justice*

The theme of racial justice stems from the perception that conflictive and reactive typologies both possess an underlying focus on justice. In the conflictive typology, Whites condemn racism and racial oppression but feel that efforts to assist minorities (such as affirmative action) constitute reverse discrimination and therefore serve as an injustice to White people. On the other hand, in the reactive typology, Whites believe there are unearned advantages to being White in America (see discussions of White privilege in Neville et al., 2001; Sue, 2003; and Vasquez, 2001) and that therefore ameliorative efforts to help minorities achieve equality (e.g., affirmative action) are more justified.

In Rowe et al.'s revised model (LaFleur et al., 2002), the distinction between achieved and unachieved types has been discontinued. Instead, racial acceptance and racial justice are regarded as one's orientation regarding racial attitudes, and statuses formerly labeled as unachieved measure

simply the degree to which one admits to being unconcerned about racial issues (avoidant), being uncertain about such issues (dissonant), or basing racial attitudes on the influence of others (dependent).

## **Integrative Models of White Racial Identity**

Two teams of authors have integrated the various models of White racial identity and consciousness in an attempt to explicate a more general and inclusive model. Sabnani et al. (1991) examined the models of Hardiman (1982), Helms (1984, 1990), and Ponterotto (1988) and extracted a five-stage developmental model: pre-exposure or precontact, conflict, prominority and antiracism, retreat into White culture, and redefinition and integration. Sue et al. (1998) examined the models of Hardiman (1982), Helms (1990, 1995), and Rowe et al. (1994) to arrive at a five-stage descriptive model: conformity, dissonance, resistance and immersion, introspective, and integrative awareness. As these models are integrations and extensions of preexisting models, we will review them only briefly here.

### **Sabnani et al.'s White Racial Identity Model**

#### *Pre-exposure or Precontact*

The chief characteristic of this stage is a lack of awareness of oneself as a racial being. The White person in pre-exposure or precontact is unaware of social expectations and roles with regard to race and is generally oblivious to cultural or racial issues. Persons in this stage have not yet begun to explore their own racial identity, nor have they given thought to their roles as White people in a society with a history and ongoing legacy of White oppression and racism (see D'Andrea & Daniels, 2001; Sue, 2003). At this point there is also an unconscious identification with Whiteness and an unquestioned acceptance of stereotypes about minority groups.

#### *Conflict*

Stage 2 of this integrative model centers on the experience of emotional conflict over developing race relations knowledge and an evolving perspective on race relations. At this point there is an expansion of knowledge about racial matters that is facilitated by interaction with members of minority groups or by information gathered elsewhere (e.g., independent reading, a multicultural counseling or education course). New information challenges individuals to reconsider the status of race relations in the United States (and elsewhere) and to reflect on what it means to be a White person in a country with a legacy of oppression of non-White groups. The

central feature of this stage is conflict between wanting to conform to majority norms (i.e., peer pressure from some White friends, colleagues, and family members) and a desire to uphold humanistic, nonracist values. Key affective components of the conflict stage are confusion, guilt, anger, and depression.

#### *Prominority and Antiracism*

Sabnani et al. (1991) posit that White people often have one of two reactions to emotional outcomes central to Stage 2. The first response (characterizing this stage) is a strong prominority stance, during which Whites begin to resist racism and identify with minority group members. This behavior serves to alleviate the strong feelings of guilt and confusion arising in the previous stage. White people in this stage experience self-focused anger and continuing guilt over their previous conformity to White, Eurocentric socialization, as well as anger directed outward toward the White culture in general.

#### *Retreat Into White Culture*

Stage 4 is marked by the second of two extremes that are a response to the conflict stage. Whereas some Whites deal with Stage 2 conflict by identifying with minorities, others deal with it by retreating from situations that would stimulate such conflict. This latter response is characterized by a behavioral and attitudinal retreat from interracial contact back into the comfort, security, and familiarity of same-race contacts. White people in Stage 3 are often challenged on their prominority views by White peers who sense a racial disloyalty or betrayal. Moreover, these Whites may be confronted by minority peers who question their newfound supportive attitudes. As a result of peer pressure and minority group rejection, some White people feel life will just be easier and less complicated if they retreat into the "White world." Stage 4, therefore, is characterized by an overidentification with Whiteness and a defensiveness about White culture.

#### *Redefinition and Integration*

In this final stage, White individuals come to redefine what it means to be White in today's society. There is a transition to a more balanced and healthy racial identity. Whites acknowledge their responsibility for maintaining racism and at the same time identify with a White identity that is nonracist and healthy. They see good and bad in their own group as they do in other groups. Large-scale ethnic and racial categorization and stereotyping is consciously avoided. Energy is now devoted to nonracial issues, and there is an interest in fighting all forms of oppression (e.g., sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim sentiments, ageism, and so on). White

people in redefinition and integration are flexible and open with regard to culture-learning activities, both from their own racial group and other groups. This stage represents components of the multicultural personality presented in Chapter 7.

### **Sue et al.'s Descriptive Model of White Racial Identity**

The goal of the Sue et al. (1998) model was to integrate the strengths of the more developmental models (Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1995) with those of the consciousness typology model (Rowe et al., 1994, 1995). According to Sue et al. (1998), the strength of the developmental identity models is that they provide a historical framework for the process of developing a healthy White identity. On the other hand, the strength of the typology model is that it allows for greater conceptual latitude, as it is independent of developmental sequencing. In fact, even developmental theorists (e.g., Parham, 1989) acknowledge that identity attitudes recycle and that identity development is not a linear process moving from one stage to another. Furthermore, the typology model is less bound by time frames and social movements (see Rogler, 2002) that may affect developmental models.

#### *Conformity*

In conformity, the White person is ethnocentric and possesses minimal awareness of him- or herself as a racial or cultural being. Individuals at this stage have limited knowledge of other racial or ethnic groups, and whatever impressions they have of culturally different persons is often stereotypical, inaccurate, and overgeneralized. They espouse a "colorblind" approach, valuing individualism and denying (or being unaware of) the existence of White privilege. They tend to believe that racism is a thing of the past and that everyone in the United States has an equal chance of success if they just worked hard enough and stopped complaining about civil rights.

#### *Dissonance*

During dissonance, the White person experiences internal conflict between a previously held belief and contradictory evidence regarding the existence of racism. For instance, a person who thought that racism was a practice of the past may witness an act of racism. This individual may be confronted with her or his own racism; for example, if anxiety is raised at the knowledge that a new neighbor may be African American or Puerto Rican. Whereas this person had denied having racist attitudes, she or he now realizes and acknowledges personal discomfort about a culturally different person moving next door. Such a realization may result in feelings of guilt, shame, depression, or anger. What does the White person now do with these unwelcome strong emotions? Sue et al. (1998) say that the person will



either retreat back to the conformity stage or will process these emerging emotions and move toward Stage 3, resistance and immersion. Whether a White person retreats back into the denial of conformity or forward to the insight and personal responsibility of resistance and immersion will depend on individual personality traits (e.g., cognitive flexibility, self-esteem; see discussion of the multicultural personality in Chapter 7) interacting with social forces (e.g., family and peer group attitudes).

For example, if an emotionally insecure person's immediate environment is characterized by conformity attitudes and the person risks ostracism, criticism, and isolation for acknowledging racism, she or he may re-embrace the denial and racial obliviousness of the previous conformity stage. On the other hand, if the person has enough internal strength of character or has allies in acknowledging and discussing the ongoing realities of racism, she or he may enter Stage 3—resistance and immersion.

#### *Resistance and Immersion*

In this third stage, the individual considers and acknowledges the realities of ongoing White racism (see D'Andrea & Daniels, 2001; Sue, 2003) in the United States (and elsewhere). This person begins to contemplate and understand how she or he has perpetuated racism, either overtly or covertly. It is important to note that the resistance and immersion person comes to understand and acknowledge his or her own unearned White privilege (see Neville et al., 2001). According to Sue et al. (1998), White persons in this stage feel both anger at having been misled about the notion of equality and justice for all and guilt for not being aware of their own White privilege and their socialized participation in oppression.

Some individuals in this stage operate out of guilt and become overzealous in their non-White identifications. They may become the paternalistic or maternalistic "protector" who consistently champions minority causes and sees racism readily in many venues. Alternatively, such individuals may overidentify with minority groups, to the point of rejecting their own Whiteness.

#### *Introspection*

The introspective White person strikes a balance or compromise between the naïve unconditional acceptance of Whiteness characteristic of the conformity stage and the rejection of Whiteness that characterizes the resistance and immersion stage. Stage 4, as its name implies, involves introspection and relative quiescence as individuals reformulate what it means to be a White person who has participated in the oppression of others and has benefited from White privilege. These individuals acknowledge that racism continues to be an integral part of U.S. society. However, introspective individuals are less motivated by guilt and defensiveness about their Whiteness and are actively

engaged in a personal search for deeper understanding and meaning as a White person in this society. Individuals in this stage may experience some existential angst characterized by feelings of isolation, confusion, and loss. This angst is due to the realization that they will never fully understand the “minority experience” and due also to the feeling that they are disconnected from their own European American group.

### *Integrative Awareness*

This final stage reflects the formation of a nonracist White European American identity. According to Sue et al. (1998), individuals with integrative awareness have a deep understanding of themselves as racial and cultural beings, are aware of racism socialization in society, value racial diversity in their personal lives, and fight multiple forms of oppression in society. These individuals have a strong inner sense of security even though they are a minority among their White peers. This stage is reflective of the multicultural personality discussed in Chapter 7.

## **Why Is White Racial Identity Development Important? What Does the Research Say?**

It has long been hypothesized that one’s racial identity attitudes relate to sense of self, comfort with one’s own racial group, and comfort with persons of diverse racial groups. Furthermore, level of racial identity has been hypothesized to correlate to a broader array of psychological variables. In this section, we briefly review the results of research on White racial identity development. Most of the extant research on White racial identity development has used Helms’s model and her White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (Helms & Carter, 1990). Table 5.2 summarizes the results of this research. Column 1 lists Helms’s (1990) White racial identity status, column 2 lists the variables that the statuses correlate with, and column 3 cites the source of the research findings.

As shown in Table 5.2, research has identified statistically significant correlations between statuses of White racial identity development and various measures of psychological health and prejudice. The trend in the findings is that White people in the higher statuses, particularly autonomy, tend to self-report higher levels of psychological health and quality of life, and they appear to be more comfortable in multicultural environments and exhibit less prejudice toward those who are culturally different. It is this autonomy status that is related to the multicultural personality discussed in Chapter 7.

If one reads the research studies listed in Table 5.2 in their entirety, one will notice that in addition to robust findings with the autonomy status,

there are also consistent findings with the reintegration status. Reintegration attitudes consistently correlate with prejudiced and racist views and with lower levels of psychological health. The accumulated findings relative to the other statuses are less consistent but tend in the direction of lower statuses (i.e., contact and disintegration), relating to lower levels of mental health and mixed attitudes about cross-cultural interaction. On the contrary, higher statuses (e.g., pseudo-independence) tend toward higher mental health indexes and positive views toward other racial groups.

As we will review in Chapter 7, racial identity is not without limitations; nonetheless, the study of White identity theory is critical to our understanding of prejudice and racism in White persons. As noted in Chapter 1, we believe that White racism constitutes a significant and widespread phenomenon in the United States. The study of White identity models, particularly those of Helms (1995) and Rowe et al. (1995), are critical to all parents, teachers, administrators, and mental health professionals.

**Table 5.2** Research Findings on White Racial Identity Development

<i>Helms's (1990) Stages of White Racial Identity</i>	<i>Research Findings</i>	<i>Research Studies</i>
Contact	Lower levels of inner directness and reduced capacity for intimate contact, more dualistic and rigid thinking, reduced capacity to consider past events and future goals when contemplating present state of affairs, lower levels of racism in women, more positive views of other racial and ethnic groups, lower levels of multicultural counseling competence (in counselors), higher working alliance perceptions in cross-cultural counseling, higher general identity achievement	Burkard et al. (2003); Carter (1990); Goodstein & Ponterotto (1997); Miville, Darlington, et al. (2005); Neville et al. (1996); Steward et al. (1998); Tokar & Swanson (1991); Vinson & Neimeyer (2000, 2003)
Disintegration	Lower levels of mature interpersonal relationships, lower ability to consider present circumstances in light of past events and future goals, more negative views of other racial and ethnic groups, lower multicultural counseling knowledge and negative perceptions of the working alliance in an analog counseling study, preferences for White counselors, and lower levels of general identity achievement levels	Burkard, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Alfonso (1999); Helms & Carter (1991); Goodstein & Ponterotto (1997); Miville, Darlington, et al. (2005); Tokar & Swanson (1991)
Reintegration	Lower capacity for intimate contact, lower levels of mature interpersonal relationships, more dualistic thinking, higher levels of racism and more negative attitudes toward other racial and ethnic groups, lower ratings of the therapeutic alliance regardless of client's race, and lower levels of multicultural counseling competence in counselors	Burkard et al. (1999, 2003); Carter (1990); Goodstein & Ponterotto (1997); Miville, Gelso, et al. (1999); Miville, Darlington, et al. (2005); Pope-Davis & Ottavi (1992, 1994); Steward et al. (1998); Taub & McEwen (1992); Tokar & Swanson (1991); Vinson & Neimeyer (2000, 2003)

(Continued)

**Table 5.2** (Continued)

<i>Helms's Stages of White Racial Identity</i>	<i>Research Findings</i>	<i>Research Studies</i>
Pseudoindependence	Higher levels of autonomy and mature interpersonal relationships; lower levels of racism in women; more positive views of other racial and ethnic groups; higher levels of self-reported multicultural counseling competence among counselors, as well as more positive expectations for the therapeutic alliance with potential clients across race; some preference for White counselors; higher general levels of identity achievement	Burkard et al. (1999); Goodstein & Ponterotto (1997); Helms & Carter (1991); Ladany et al. (1997); Miville, Darlington, et al. (2005); Neville et al. (1996); Pope-Davis & Ottavi (1994); Taub & McEwen (1992); Vinson & Neimeyer (2000, 2003)
Autonomy	Higher inner directedness and autonomy, positive opinions of other racial and ethnic groups, higher self-reported multicultural counseling competence among counselors and stronger perceived therapeutic alliance with racially diverse clients among counselors, higher general levels of identity achievement	Burkard et al. (1999, 2003); Goodstein & Ponterotto (1997); Miville, Darlington, et al. (2005); Neville et al. (1996); Ottavi et al. (1994); Taub & McEwen (1992); Tokar & Swanson (1991); Vinson & Neimeyer (2000, 2003)