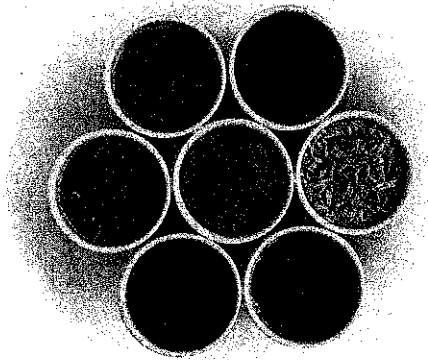


SEVENTH EDITION

Counseling the Culturally Diverse

Theory and Practice



Derald Wing Sue | David Sue

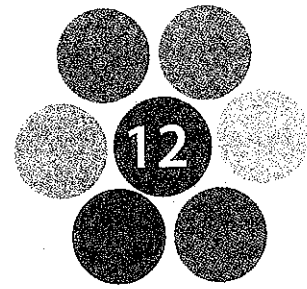
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White Racial Identity Development

Counseling Implications

Chapter Objectives

1. Acquire understanding of what it means to be White. Be able to discern differences between how Whites and people of color see the meaning of "Whiteness."
2. Analyze resistance by White Americans to identifying themselves as "White."
3. Learn the meaning of nested or embedded emotions experienced by Whites as they come to accept their *Whiteness*.
4. Define *White privilege*.
5. Understand how *Whiteness* advantages Whites and disadvantages people of color.
6. Describe and discuss the various developmental levels of *White racial identity development*.
7. Learn how the level of White racial consciousness may affect the counseling process.
8. Understand how *White racial identity development* may influence the definition of normality-abnormality, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of culturally diverse clients.

9. Learn what a White person needs to do in order to develop a *nonracist and antiracist White identity*.
10. Learn what White helping professionals need to do in order to prevent their *Whiteness* from negatively impacting clients of color.

As a person of color, I have often wondered how White people identify themselves as racial/cultural beings. At times, I noted that White trainees often seemed to believe race was confined to persons of color and did not apply to them. To explore this phenomenon more deeply, I asked people in downtown San Francisco "What does it mean to be White?" These were some of the responses I received (Sue, 2003, pp. 115–117).

42-Year-Old White Male Businessperson

Q: *What does it mean to be White?*

A: *Frankly, I don't know what you're talking about!*

Q: *Aren't you White?*

A: *Yes, but I come from Italian heritage. I'm Italian, not White.*

Q: *Well then, what does it mean to be Italian?*

A: *Pasta, good food, love of wine (obviously agitated). This is getting ridiculous!*

26-Year-Old White Female College Student

Q: *What does it mean to be White?*

A: *Is this a trick question? . . . I've never thought about it. . . Well, I know that lots of Black people see us as being prejudiced and all that stuff. I wish people would just forget about race differences and see one another as human beings. People are people and we should all be proud to be Americans.*

34-Year-Old White Female Stockbroker

Q: *What does it mean to be White?*

A: *I don't know (laughing), I've never thought about it.*

Q: *Are you White?*

A: *Yes, I suppose so (seems very amused).*

Q: *Why haven't you thought about it?*

A: *Because it's not important to me.*

Q: *Why not?*

A: *It doesn't enter into my mind because it doesn't affect my life. Besides, we are all individuals. Color isn't important.*

39-Year-Old Black Male Salesperson

Q: *What does it mean to be White?*

A: *Is this a school exercise or something? Never expected someone to ask me that question in the middle of the city. Do you want the politically correct answer or what I really think?*

Q: *Can you tell me what you really think?*

A: *You won't quit, will you (laughing)? If you're White, you're right. If you're Black, step back.*

Q: *What does that mean?*

A: *White folks are always thinking they know all the answers. A Black man's word is worth less than a White man's. When White customers come into our dealership and see me standing next to the cars, I become invisible to them. Actually, they may see me as a well-dressed janitor (laughs), or actively avoid me. They will search out a White salesman. Or, when I explain something to a customer, they always check out the information with my White colleagues. They don't trust me. When I mention this to our manager, who is White, he tells me I'm oversensitive and being paranoid. That's what being White means. It means having the authority or power to tell me what's really happening even though I know it's not. Being White means you can fool yourself into thinking that you're not prejudiced, when you are. That's what it means to be White. (Sue, 2003, pp. 118-119).*

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is this a fair or unfair question?
2. Can you discern any common responses among the three given by White pedestrians? In what ways do they differ?
3. How do Whites view themselves as racial/cultural beings?
4. What seems to prevent these three individuals from viewing themselves as White?
5. If asked what it means to be White, would people of color also find difficulty answering the question? Why or why not?
6. How does the Black salesman's response differ from his White counterparts?
7. Which perception is the most accurate? Why?

Research on *Whiteness*, *White privilege*, and *White racial identity development* point to one of the greatest barriers to racial understanding for White Americans: *the invisibility of their Whiteness* (Bell, 2003; Helms, 1990; Spanierman, Poteat, Beer, & Armstrong, 2006; Tatum, 1992; Todd & Abrams, 2011). Just as ethnocentric monoculturalism and implicit bias achieve their oppressive powers through invisibility, so too does *Whiteness* (Boysen, 2010; Sue, 2004). During racial interactions or conversations, many Whites appear oblivious to the meaning of their *Whiteness*, how it intrudes and disadvantages people of color, and how it affects the way they perceive the world (Bell, 2002; Sue, 2013).

It appears that the denial and mystification of *Whiteness* for White EuroAmericans are related to two underlying factors. First, most people seldom think about the air that surrounds them and about how it provides an essential life-giving ingredient, oxygen. We take it for granted because it appears plentiful; only when we are deprived of it does it suddenly become frighteningly apparent. *Whiteness* is transparent precisely because of its everyday occurrence—its institutionalized normative features in our culture—and because Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, average, and ideal (Sue, 2004). To people of color, however, *Whiteness* is not invisible because it may not fit their normative qualities

(e.g., values, lifestyles, experiential reality). Persons of color find White culture quite visible because even though it is nurturing to White EuroAmericans, it may invalidate the lifestyles of multicultural populations.

Second, EuroAmericans often deny that they are White, seem angered by being labeled as such, and often become very defensive (e.g., saying, "I'm not White; I'm Irish," "You're stereotyping, because we're all different," or "There isn't anything like a White race"). In many respects, these statements have validity. Nonetheless, many White Americans would be hard pressed to describe their Irish, Italian, German, or Norwegian heritage in any but the most superficial manner. One of the reasons is related to the processes of assimilation and acculturation. Although there are many ethnic groups, being White allows for assimilation. While persons of color are told to assimilate and acculturate, the assumption is that there exists a receptive society. People of color are told in no uncertain terms that they are allowed only limited access to the fruits of our society.

Third, the accuracy of whether *Whiteness* defines a race is largely irrelevant. What is more relevant is that *Whiteness* is associated with unearned privilege—advantages conferred on White Americans but not on persons of color. It is our contention that much of the denial associated with being White is related to the denial of *White privilege*, which is unmasked by this Black salesman when asked "What does it mean to be White?"

The response given by the Black salesman is markedly different from those of the other three responders by its specificity, clarity, and perspective. In essence, he believes being White means (a) having the power to define reality, (b) possessing unconscious stereotypes that people of color are less competent and capable, (c) deceiving the self that one is not prejudiced, and (d) being oblivious to how *Whiteness* disadvantages people of color and advantages White people. This worldview is in marked contrast to the White respondents who would rather not think about their *Whiteness*, are uncomfortable or react negatively to being labeled "White," deny its importance in affecting their lives, and seem to believe that they are unjustifiably accused of being bigoted by virtue of being White. Strangely enough, "*whiteness*" is most visible when it is denied, evokes puzzlement or negative reactions, and equated with normalcy. Few people of color react negatively when asked what it means to be Black, Asian American, Latino or a member of their race. Most could readily inform the questioner about what it means to be a person of color.

UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF WHITENESS

Our analysis of the responses from both Whites and the person of color leads us to the inevitable conclusion that part of the problem of race relations (and by inference multicultural counseling and therapy) lies in the different worldviews of both groups. It goes without saying that the racial reality of Whites is radically different from that of people of color (Sue, 2010). Which group, however, has the more accurate assessment related to this topic? The answer seems to be contained in the following series of questions: If you want to understand oppression, should you ask the oppressor or the oppressed? If you want to learn about sexism, do you ask men or women? If you want to understand homophobia, do you ask straights or gays? If you want to learn about racism, do you ask Whites or persons of color? It appears that the most accurate assessment of bias comes not from those who enjoy the privilege of power, but from those who are most disempowered (Hanna, Talley, & Guindon, 2000; Sue, 2015). Taking this position, the following conclusions are made about the dynamics of *Whiteness*.

First, it is clear that most Whites perceive themselves as unbiased individuals who do not harbor racist thoughts and feelings; they see themselves as working toward social justice and possessing a conscious desire to better the life circumstances of those less fortunate than they. Although these are admirable qualities, this self-image serves as a major barrier to recognizing and taking responsibility for admitting and dealing with one's own prejudices and biases. To admit to being racist, sexist, or homophobic requires people to recognize that the self-images they hold so dear are based on false notions of the self.

Second, being a White person in this society means chronic exposure to ethnocentric monoculturalism as manifested in *White supremacy* (Hays, 2014). It is difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to avoid inheriting the racial biases, prejudices, misinformation, deficit portrayals, and stereotypes of their forebears (Cokley, 2006). To believe that one is somehow immune from inheriting such aspects of *White supremacy* is to be naive or to engage in self-deception. Such a statement is not intended to assail the integrity of Whites but to suggest that they also have been victimized. It is clear to us that no one was born wanting to be racist, sexist, or homophobic. Misinformation is not acquired by free choice but is imposed upon White people through a painful process of cultural conditioning (Gallardo & Ivey, 2014). In general, lacking awareness of their biases and preconceived notions, counselors may function in a therapeutically ineffective manner.

Third, if White helping professionals are ever able to become effective multicultural counselors or therapists, they must free themselves from the cultural conditioning of their past and move toward the development of a *nonracist White identity*. Unfortunately, many White EuroAmericans seldom consider what it means to be White in our society. Such a question is vexing to them because they seldom think of race as belonging to them—nor of the privileges that come their way by virtue of their white skin (Toporek & Worthington, 2014). Katz (1985) points out a major barrier blocking the process of White EuroAmericans investigating their own cultural identity and worldview:

Because White culture is the dominant cultural norm in the United States, it acts as an invisible veil that limits many people from seeing it as a cultural system. . . . Often, it is easier for many Whites to identify and acknowledge the different cultures of minorities than accept their own racial identity. . . . The difficulty of accepting such a view is that White culture is omnipresent. It is so interwoven in the fabric of everyday living that Whites cannot step outside and see their beliefs, values, and behaviors as creating a distinct cultural group. (pp. 616–617)

As we witnessed in Chapter 6, the invisible veil allows for racial, gender, and sexual orientation microaggressions to be delivered outside the level of awareness of perpetrators. Ridley (1995) asserts that this invisible veil can be unintentionally manifested in therapy with harmful consequences to clients of color:

Unintentional behavior is perhaps the most insidious form of racism. Unintentional racists are unaware of the harmful consequences of their behavior. They may be well-intentioned, and on the surface, their behavior may appear to be responsible. Because individuals, groups, or institutions that engage in unintentional racism do not wish to do harm, it is difficult to get them to see themselves as racists. They are more likely to deny their racism. (p. 38)

The conclusion drawn from this understanding is that White counselors and therapists may be unintentional racists: (a) They are unaware of their biases, prejudices, and discriminatory behaviors; (b) they often perceive themselves as moral, good, and decent human beings and find it difficult to see themselves as racist; (c) they do not have a sense of what their *Whiteness* means to them; and (d) their

therapeutic approaches to multicultural populations are likely to be more harmful (unintentionally) than helpful. These conclusions are often difficult for White helping professionals to accept because of the defensiveness and feelings of blame they are likely to engender. Nonetheless, we ask White therapists and students not be turned off by the message and lessons of this chapter. We ask you to reread Chapter 1 where we discussed the emotive reactions likely to impede learning. And, we ask you to continue your multicultural journey in this chapter as we explore the question, "What does it mean to be White?"

MODELS OF WHITE RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

A number of multicultural experts in the field have begun to emphasize the need for White therapists to deal with their concepts of *Whiteness* and to examine their own racism (Gallardo & Ivey, 2014; Ponterotto, Utsey, & Pedersen, 2006; Todd & Abrams, 2011). These specialists point out that while racial/cultural identity development for minority groups proves beneficial in our work as therapists, more attention should be devoted toward the White therapist's racial identity. Since the majority of therapists and trainees are White middle-class individuals, it would appear that White identity development and its implication for multicultural counseling/therapy would be important aspects to consider, both in the actual practice of clinical work and in professional training.

For example, research has found that the level of White racial identity awareness is predictive of racism and internal interpersonal characteristics (Miville, Darlington, Whitlock, & Mulligan, 2005; Perry, Dovidio, Murphy, & van Ryn, 2015; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994; Spanierman, Todd, & Anderson, 2009; Vinson & Neimeyer, 2000, 2003; Wang et al., 2003): (a) the less aware subjects were of their White identity, the more likely they were to exhibit increased levels of racism; (b) the higher the level of White identity development, the greater the reported multicultural counseling competence, more positive opinions toward minority groups, and better therapeutic alliances; (c) higher levels of mature interpersonal relationships and a better sense of personal well-being were associated with higher levels of White identity consciousness; and (d) as a group, women were more likely than men to exhibit higher levels of White consciousness and were less likely to be racially biased.

It was suggested that this last finding was correlated with women's greater experiences with discrimination and prejudice. Evidence also exists that multicultural counseling/therapy competence is correlated with White racial identity attitudes

(Neville, Awad, Brooks, Flores, & Bluemel, 2013). Other research suggests that a relationship exists between a White EuroAmerican therapist's racial identity and his or her readiness for training in multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (Falender, Shafranske, & Falicov, 2014; Utsey, Gernat, & Hammar, 2005). Since developing multicultural sensitivity is a long-term developmental task, the work of many researchers has gradually converged toward a conceptualization of the stages/levels/statuses of consciousness of racial/ethnic identity development for White EuroAmericans. A number of these models describe the salience of identity for establishing relationships between the White therapist and the culturally different client, and some have now linked stages of identity with stages for appropriate training.

The Hardiman White Racial Identity Development Model

One of the earliest integrative attempts at formulating a *White racial identity development* model is that of Rita Hardiman (1982). Intrigued with why certain White Americans exhibit a much more nonracist identity than do other White Americans, Hardiman studied the autobiographies of individuals who had attained a high level of racial consciousness. This led her to identify five White developmental stages: (a) *naiveté*—lack of social consciousness, (b) acceptance, (c) resistance, (d) redefinition, and (e) internalization.

1. The *naiveté stage* (lack of social consciousness) is characteristic of early childhood, when we are born into this world innocent, open, and unaware of racism and the importance of race. Curiosity and spontaneity in relating to race and racial differences tend to be the norm. A young White child who has almost no personal contact with African Americans, for example, may see a Black man in a supermarket and loudly comment on the darkness of his skin. In general, awareness and the meaning of race, racial differences, bias, and prejudice are either absent or minimal. The negative reactions of parents, relatives, friends, and peers toward issues of race, however, begin to convey mixed signals to the child. This is reinforced by the educational system and mass media, which instill racial biases in the child and propel him or her into the acceptance stage.
2. The *acceptance stage* is marked by a conscious belief in the democratic ideal—that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed in a free society and that those who fail must bear the responsibility for their failure. White Euro-Americans become the social reference group, and the socialization process

consistently instills messages of White superiority and minority inferiority into the child. The underemployment, unemployment, and undereducation of marginalized groups in our society are seen as support for the belief that non-White groups are lesser than Whites. Because everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed, the lack of success of minority groups is seen as evidence of some negative personal or group characteristic. Victim blaming is strong, as the existence of oppression, discrimination, and racism is denied. Hardiman believes that although the naiveté stage is brief in duration, the acceptance stage can last a lifetime.

3. In the *resistance stage*, the individual begins to challenge assumptions of White superiority and the denial of racism and discrimination. The White person's denial system begins to crumble because of a monumental event or a series of events that not only challenge but also shatter the individual's denial system. A White person may, for example, make friends with a coworker of color and discover that the images he or she has of "these people" are untrue. The person may have witnessed clear incidents of unfair discrimination toward persons of color and may now begin to question assumptions regarding racial inferiority. In any case, the racial realities of life in the United States can no longer be denied. The person becomes conscious of being White, is aware that he or she harbors racist attitudes, and begins to see the pervasiveness of oppression in our society. Feelings of anger, pain, hurt, rage, and frustration are present. In many cases, the White person may develop a negative reaction toward his or her own group or culture. Although those at this stage may romanticize people of color, they cannot interact confidently with them because they fear that they will make racist mistakes. This discomfort is best exemplified in a passage by Sara Winter (1977, p. 1):

We avoid Black people because their presence brings painful questions to mind. Is it OK to talk about watermelons or mention "black coffee"? Should we use Black slang and tell racial jokes? How about talking about our experiences in Harlem, or mentioning our Black lovers? Should we conceal the fact that our mother still employs a Black cleaning lady? . . . We're embarrassedly aware of trying to do our best but to "act natural" at the same time. No wonder we're more comfortable in all-White situations where these dilemmas don't arise.

4. In the *redefinition stage*, asking the painful question of who one is in relation to one's racial heritage, honestly confronting one's biases and prejudices, and accepting responsibility for one's *Whiteness* are the culminating characteristics. New ways of defining one's social group and one's membership in that group become important. The intense soul-searching is most evident in Winter's 1977 personal journey as she writes,

In this sense we Whites are the victims of racism. Our victimization is different from that of Blacks, but it is real. We have been programmed into the oppressor roles we play, without our informed consent in the process. Our unawareness is part of the programming: None of us could tolerate the oppressor position, if we lived with a day-to-day emotional awareness of the pain inflicted on other humans through the instrument of our behavior. . . . We Whites benefit in concrete ways, year in and year out, from the present racial arrangements. All my life in White neighborhoods, White schools, White jobs, and dealing with White police (to name only a few), I have experienced advantages that are systematically not available to Black people. It does not make sense for me to blame myself for the advantages that have come my way by virtue of my Whiteness. But absolving myself from guilt does not imply forgetting about racial injustice or taking it lightly (as my guilt pushes me to do). (p. 2)

There is realization that *Whiteness* has been defined in opposition to people of color—namely, by standards of *White supremacy*. By being able to step out of this racist paradigm and redefine what her *Whiteness* meant to her, Winter is able to add meaning to developing a nonracist identity. She no longer denies being White, honestly confronts her racism, and understands the concept of *White privilege*.

5. The *internalization stage* is the result of forming a new social and personal identity. With the greater comfort in understanding oneself and the development of a *nonracist White identity* come a commitment to social action as well. The individual accepts responsibility for effecting personal and social change without always relying on persons of color to lead the way. As Winter 1977 explains,

To end racism, Whites have to pay attention to it and continue to pay attention. Since avoidance is such a basic dynamic of racism,

paying attention will not happen naturally. We Whites must learn how to hold racism realities in our attention. We must learn to take responsibility for this process ourselves, without waiting for Blacks' actions to remind us that the problem exists, and without depending on Black people to reassure us and forgive us for our racist sins. In my experience, the process is painful but it is a relief to shed the fears, stereotypes, immobilizing guilt we didn't want in the first place. (p. 2)

The Helms White Racial Identity Development Model

Working independently of Hardiman, Janet Helms (1984, 1990, 1994, 1995) created perhaps the most elaborate and sophisticated White racial identity model in the field. Not only has her model led to the development of an assessment instrument to measure White racial identity, but it also has been scrutinized empirically (Carter, 1990; Helms & Carter, 1990) and has generated much research and debate in the psychological literature. Like Hardiman (1982), Helms assumes that racism is an intimate and central part of being a White American. To her, developing a healthy White identity requires movement through two phases: (a) abandonment of racism and (b) defining a *nonracist White identity* (Helms, 2015).

Six specific racial identity statuses are distributed equally in the two phases: contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independence, immersion/emersion, and autonomy. Originally, Helms used the term *stages* to refer to the six; but because of certain conceptual ambiguities and the controversy that ensued, she has abandoned its usage.

1. *Contact status*: People in this status are oblivious to and unaware of racism, believe that everyone has an equal chance for success, lack an understanding of prejudice and discrimination, have minimal experiences with persons of color, and may profess to be color-blind. Such statements as "People are people," "I don't notice a person's race at all," and "You don't act Black" are examples. Although there is an attempt to minimize the importance or influence of race, there is on both a conscious and an unconscious level a definite dichotomy between persons of color and Whites regarding stereotypes and the superior/inferior dimensions of the races. Because of obliviousness and compartmentalization, it is possible for two diametrically opposed belief systems to coexist: (a) Uncritical acceptance of White supremacist notions

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relegates minorities into the inferior category with all the racial stereotypes, and (b) there is a belief that racial and cultural differences are unimportant. This allows Whites to avoid perceiving themselves as dominant group members or as having biases and prejudices. Such an orientation is aptly stated by Peggy McIntosh (1989) in her own White racial awakening:

My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will. . . . Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow "them" to be more like "us." (p. 8)

2. *Disintegration status:* Although in the previous status the individual does not recognize the polarities of democratic principles of equality and the unequal treatment of minority groups, such obliviousness may eventually break down. The White person becomes conflicted over irresolvable racial moral dilemmas that are frequently perceived as polar opposites: believing one is nonracist, yet not wanting one's son or daughter to marry a minority group member; believing that all men are created equal, even though society treats people of color as second-class citizens; and not acknowledging that oppression exists and then witnessing it (e.g., the killing of Michael Brown and Eric Garner in 2014). Conflicts between loyalty to one's group and humanistic ideals may manifest themselves in various ways. The person becomes increasingly conscious of his or her *Whiteness* and may experience dissonance and conflict, resulting in feelings of guilt, depression, helplessness, or anxiety. Statements such as "My grandfather is really prejudiced, but I try not to be" and "I'm personally not against interracial marriages, but I worry about the children" are representative of personal struggles occurring in the White person.

Although a healthy resolution might be to confront the myth of meritocracy realistically, the breakdown of the denial system is painful and anxiety provoking. Attempts at resolution, according to Helms, may involve (a) avoiding contact with persons of color, (b) not thinking about race, and (c) seeking reassurance from others that racism is not the fault of Whites.

3. *Reintegration status:* This status can best be characterized as a regression in which the pendulum swings back to the most basic beliefs of White superiority and minority inferiority. In their attempts to resolve the dissonance created from the previous process, there is a retreat to the dominant ideology associated with race and one's own socioracial group identity. This ego status results in idealizing the White EuroAmerican group and the positives of White culture and society; there is a consequent negation and intolerance of minority groups. In general, a firmer and more conscious belief in White racial superiority is present. Racial/ethnic minorities are blamed for their own problems.

I'm an Italian grandmother. No one gave us welfare or a helping hand when we came over [immigrated]. My father worked day and night to provide us with a decent living and to put all of us through school. These Negroes are always complaining about prejudice and hardships. Big deal! Why don't they stop whining and find a job? They're not the only ones who were discriminated against, you know. You don't think our family wasn't? We never let that stop us. In America everyone can make it if they are willing to work hard. I see these Black welfare mothers waiting in line for food stamps and free handouts. You can't convince me they're starving. Look at how overweight most of them are. . . . Laziness—that's what I see. (Quoted from a workshop participant)

4. *Pseudo-independence status:* This status initiates the second phase of Helms's model, which involves defining a *nonracist White identity*. As in the Hardiman model, a person is likely to be propelled into this phase because of a painful or insightful encounter or event that jars the person from the reintegration status. The awareness of visible racial/ethnic minorities, the unfairness of their treatment, and a discomfort with their racist White identity may lead individuals to identify with the plight of persons of color. However, the well-intentioned White person at this status may suffer from several problematic dynamics: (a) Although intending to be socially conscious and helpful to minority groups, the White individual may unknowingly perpetuate racism by helping minorities adjust to the prevailing White standards; and (b) identifying with minority individuals is based on how similar they are to him or her, and the primary mechanism used to understand racial issues is intellectual and conceptual.

5. *Immersion/emersion status*: If the person is reinforced to continue a personal exploration of him- or herself as a racial being, questions become focused on what it means to be White. Helms states that the person searches for an understanding of the personal meaning of racism and the ways in which one benefits from *White privilege*. There is an increasing willingness to confront one's own biases, to redefine *Whiteness*, and to become more active in directly combating racism and oppression. This status is different from the previous one in two major ways: It is marked by (a) a shift in focus from trying to change people of color to changing the self and other Whites and (b) an increasing experiential and affective understanding that was lacking in the previous status. The ability to achieve this affective/experiential upheaval leads to a euphoria, or even a feeling of rebirth, and is a necessary condition to developing a new, *nonracist White identity*. Winter (1977) states,

Let me explain this healing process in more detail. We must unearth all the words and memories we generally try not to think about, but which are inside us all the time: "nigger," "Uncle Tom," "jungle bunny," "Oreo," lynching, cattle prods, castrations, rapists, "black pussy," and black men with their huge penises, and hundreds more. (I shudder as I write.) We need to review three different kinds of material: (1) All our personal memories connected with blackness and black people, including everything we can recall hearing or reading; (2) all the racist images and stereotypes we've ever heard, particularly the grossest and most hurtful ones; (3) any race-related things we ourselves said, did, or omitted doing which we feel bad about today.

. . . Most whites begin with a good deal of amnesia. Eventually the memories crowd in, especially when several people pool recollections. Emotional release is a vital part of the process. Experiencing feelings seems to allow further recollections to come. I need persistent encouragement from my companions to continue. (p. 3)

6. *Autonomy status*: Increasing awareness of one's own *Whiteness*, reduced feelings of guilt, acceptance of one's role in perpetuating racism, and renewed determination to abandon White entitlement lead to an autonomy status. The person is knowledgeable about racial, ethnic, and cultural differences; values the diversity; and is no longer fearful, intimidated, or uncomfortable with the experiential reality of race. Development of a *nonracist White identity*

becomes increasingly strong. Indeed, the person feels comfortable with his or her *nonracist White identity*, does not personalize attacks on *White supremacy*, and can explore the issues of racism and personal responsibility without defensiveness. A person in this status “walks the talk” and actively values and seeks out interracial experiences.

Helms’s model is by far the most widely cited, researched, and applied of all the White racial identity formulations. Part of its attractiveness and value is the derivation of “defenses,” “protective strategies,” or what Helms (1995) formally labels *information-processing strategies* (IPSs), which White people use to avoid or assuage anxiety and discomfort around the issue of race. Table 12.1 lists examples of IPS statements likely to be made by White people in each of the six *ego statuses*. Understanding these strategic reactions is important for White American identity development, for understanding the barriers that must be overcome in order to move to another status, and for potentially developing effective training or clinical strategies.

TABLE 12.1 White Racial Identity Ego Statuses and Information-Processing Strategies

1. *Contact status*: Satisfaction with racial status quo, obliviousness to racism and one’s participation in it. If racial factors influence life decisions, they do so in a simplistic fashion. Information-processing strategy. IPS: Obliviousness.
 Example: “I’m a White woman. When my grandfather came to this country, he was discriminated against, too. But he didn’t blame Black people for his misfortunes. He educated himself and got a job. That’s what Blacks ought to do. If White callers [to a radio station] spent as much time complaining about racial discrimination as your Black callers do, we’d never have accomplished what we have. You all should just ignore it” (quoted from a workshop participant).
2. *Disintegration status*: Disorientation and anxiety provoked by irresolvable racial moral dilemmas that force one to choose between own-group loyalty and humanism. May be stymied by life situations that arouse racial dilemmas. IPS: Suppression and ambivalence.
 Example: “I myself tried to set a nonracist example [for other Whites] by speaking up when someone said something blatantly prejudiced—how to do this without alienating people so that they would no longer take me seriously was always tricky—and by my friendships with Mexicans and Blacks who were actually the people with whom I felt most comfortable” (Blauner, 1993, p. 8).
3. *Reintegration status*: Idealization of one’s socioracial group, denigration and intolerance of other groups. Racial factors may strongly influence life decisions. IPS: Selective perception and negative out-group distortion.
 Example: “So what if my great-grandfather owned slaves. He didn’t mistreat them; and besides, I wasn’t even here then. I never owned slaves. So I don’t know why Blacks expect me to feel guilty for something that happened before I was born. Nowadays, reverse racism hurts Whites more than slavery hurts Blacks. At least they got three square [meals] a day. But my brother can’t even get a job with the police department because they have to hire less-qualified Blacks. That [expletive] happens to Whites all the time” (quoted from a workshop participant).

4. *Pseudo-independence status*: Intellectualized commitment to one's own socioracial group and deceptive tolerance of other groups. May make life decisions to "help other racial groups." IPS: Reshaping reality and selective perception.
 Example: "Was I the only person left in America who believed that the sexual mingling of the races was a good thing, that it would erase cultural barriers and leave us all a lovely shade of tan? . . . Racial blending is inevitable. At the very least, it may be the only solution to our dilemmas of race" (Allen, 1994, p. C4).
5. *Immersion/emersion status*: Search for an understanding of the personal meaning of racism and the ways by which one benefits and a redefinition of Whiteness. Life choices may incorporate racial activism. IPS: Hypervigilance and reshaping.
 Example: "It's true that I personally did not participate in the horror of slavery, and I don't even know whether my ancestors owned slaves. But I know that because I am White, I continue to benefit from a racist system that stems from the slavery era. I believe that if White people are ever going to understand our role in perpetuating racism, then we must begin to ask ourselves some hard questions and be willing to consider our role in maintaining a hurtful system. Then we must try to do something to change it" (quoted from a workshop participant).
6. *Autonomy status*: Informed positive socioracial group commitment, use of internal standards for self-definition, capacity to relinquish the privileges of racism. May avoid life options that require participation in racial oppression. IPS: Flexibility and complexity.
 Example: "I live in an integrated [Black-White] neighborhood, and I read Black literature and popular magazines. So I understand that the media presents a very stereotypic view of Black culture. I believe that if more of us White people made more than a superficial effort to obtain accurate information about racial groups other than our own, then we could help make this country a better place for all peoples" (quoted from a workshop participant).

Source: Helms, 1995, p. 185.

The Helms model, however, is not without its detractors. In an article critical of the Helms model and of most "stage" models of *White racial identity development*, Rowe, Bennett, and Atkinson (1994) raised some serious objections.

First, they claim that Helms's model is erroneously based on racial/ethnic minority identity development models (discussed in the previous chapter). Because minority identity development occurs in the face of stereotyping and oppression, it may not apply to White identity, which does not occur under the same conditions.

Second, they believe that too much emphasis is placed on the development of White attitudes toward minorities and that not enough is placed on the development of White attitudes toward themselves and their own identity.

Third, they claim that there is a conceptual inaccuracy in putting forth the model as developmental via stages (linear) and that the progression from less to more healthy seems to be based on the author's ethics.

Last, Rowe (2006) attacks the Helms model of *White racial identity development* because it is based upon the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (Helms & Carter, 1990), which he labels as "pseudoscience" because he asserts that the psychometric properties are not supported by the empirical literature. It is important

to note that the critique of the Helms (1984) model has not been left unanswered. In subsequent writings, Helms (1994) has disclaimed the Rowe et al. (1994, 1995) characterization of her model and has attempted to clarify her position. The continuing debate has proven beneficial in adding greater clarity to the issues of *White racial identity development* and has resulted in increased research.

THE PROCESS OF WHITE RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT: A DESCRIPTIVE MODEL

Although there are differences in the models, it appears important for Whites to view their developmental history in order to gain a sense of their past, present, and future as they struggle with racial identity development. In our work with White trainees and clinicians, we have observed some very important changes through which they seem to move as they work toward multicultural competence (Sue, 2011). We have been impressed with how Whites seem to go through parallel racial/cultural identity transformations. This is especially true if we accept the fact that Whites are as much victims of societal forces (i.e., they are socialized into racist attitudes and beliefs) as are their counterparts (Sue, 2003). No child is born wanting to be a racist! Yet White people do benefit from the dominant-subordinate relationship in our society. It is this factor that Whites need to confront in an open and honest manner.

Using the formulation of our past work (Sue & Sue, 1990), we propose a seven-step process that integrates many characteristics from the other formulations. Furthermore, we make some basic assumptions with respect to those models:

1. Racism is an integral part of U.S. life, and it permeates all aspects of our culture and institutions (ethnocentric monoculturalism).
2. Whites are socialized into the society and therefore inherit all the biases; stereotypes; and racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the larger society.
3. How Whites perceive themselves as racial beings follows an identifiable sequence that can occur in a linear or nonlinear fashion.
4. The status of *White racial identity development* in any multicultural encounter affects the process and outcome of interracial relationships.
5. The most desirable outcome is one in which the White person not only accepts his or her *Whiteness* but also defines it in a nonracist and antiracist manner.

Seven-Step Process

The seven phases of *white racial identity development* and their implications for White Americans are described in the following. We encourage Whites to use this information to explore themselves as racial/cultural beings and to think about their implications for work with culturally diverse clients.

1. *Naiveté phase*: This phase is relatively neutral with respect to racial/cultural differences. Its length is brief and is marked by a naive curiosity about race. As mentioned previously, racial awareness and burgeoning social meanings are absent or minimal, and the young child is generally innocent, open, and spontaneous regarding racial differences. Between the ages of three and five, however, the young White child begins to associate positive ethnocentric meanings to his or her own group and negative ones to others. The child is bombarded by misinformation through the educational channels, mass media, and significant others in his or her life, and a sense of the superiority of *Whiteness* and the inferiority of all other groups and their heritage is instilled. The following passage describes one of the insidious processes of socialization that leads to propelling the child into the conformity stage.

It was a late summer afternoon. A group of White neighborhood mothers, obviously friends, had brought their four- and five-year-olds to the local McDonald's for a snack and to play on the swings and slides provided by the restaurant. They were all seated at a table watching their sons and daughters run about the play area. In one corner of the yard sat a small Black child pushing a red truck along the grass. One of the White girls from the group approached the Black boy and they started a conversation. During that instant, the mother of the girl exchanged quick glances with the other mothers, who nodded knowingly. She quickly rose from the table, walked over to the two, spoke to her daughter, and gently pulled her away to join her previous playmates. Within minutes, however, the girl again approached the Black boy and both began to play with the truck. At that point, all the mothers rose from the table and loudly exclaimed to their children, "It's time to go now!" (Taken from Sue, 2003, pp. 89-90)

2. *Conformity phase*: The White person's attitudes and beliefs in this phase are very ethnocentric. There is minimal awareness of the self as a racial being and a strong belief in the universality of values and norms governing behavior. The

White person possesses limited accurate knowledge of other ethnic groups, but he or she is likely to rely on social stereotypes as the main source of information. Consciously or unconsciously, the White person believes that White culture is the most highly developed and that all others are primitive or inferior. The *conformity phase* is marked by contradictory and often compartmentalized attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. A person may believe simultaneously that he or she is not racist but that minority inferiority justifies discriminatory and inferior treatment, and that minority persons are different and deviant but that "people are people" and differences are unimportant. As with their marginalized counterparts at this phase, the primary mechanism operating here is one of denial and compartmentalization. For example, many Whites deny that they belong to a race that allows them to avoid personal responsibility for perpetuating a racist system. Like a fish in water, Whites either have difficulty seeing or are unable to see the invisible veil of cultural assumptions, biases, and prejudices that guide their perceptions and actions. They tend to believe that White EuroAmerican culture is superior and that other cultures are primitive, inferior, less developed, or lower on the scale of evolution.

It is important to note that many Whites in this phase of development are unaware of these beliefs and operate as if they are universally shared by others. They believe that differences are unimportant and that "people are people," "we are all the same under the skin," "we should treat everyone the same," "problems wouldn't exist if minorities would only assimilate," and discrimination and prejudice are something that others do. The helping professional with this perspective professes color-blindness, views counseling/therapy theories as universally applicable, and does not question their relevance to other culturally different groups. The primary mechanism used in encapsulation is denial—denial that people are different, denial that discrimination exists, and denial of one's own prejudices. Instead, the locus of the problem is seen to reside in marginalized groups. Socially devalued groups would not encounter problems if they would only assimilate and acculturate (melting pot), value education, or work harder.

3. *Dissonance phase*: Movement into the *dissonance phase* occurs when the White person is forced to deal with the inconsistencies that have been compartmentalized or encounters information/experiences at odds with denial. In most cases, individuals are forced to acknowledge *Whiteness* at some level, to examine their own cultural values, and to see the conflict between upholding

humanistic nonracist values and their contradictory behavior. For example, a person who may consciously believe that all people are created equal and that he or she treats everyone the same suddenly experiences reservations about having African Americans move next door or having one's son or daughter involved in an interracial relationship. These more personal experiences bring the individual face-to-face with his or her own prejudices and biases. In this situation, thoughts that "I am not prejudiced," "I treat everyone the same regardless of race, creed, or color," and "I do not discriminate" collide with the denial system. Additionally, some major event (e.g., the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.) may force the person to realize that racism is alive and well in the United States.

The increasing realization that one is biased and that EuroAmerican society does play a part in oppressing minority groups is an unpleasant one. Dissonance may result in feelings of guilt, shame, anger, and depression. Rationalizations may be used to exonerate one's own inactivity in combating perceived injustice or personal feelings of prejudice; for example, "I'm only one person—what can I do?" or "Everyone is prejudiced, even minorities." As these conflicts ensue, the White person may retreat into the protective confines of White culture (encapsulation of the *conformity phase*) or move progressively toward insight and revelation (*resistance and immersion phase*).

Whether a person regresses is related to the strength of positive forces pushing the individual forward (support for challenging racism) and negative forces pushing the person backward (fear of some loss) (Sue, 2011; Todd & Abrams, 2011). For example, challenging the prevailing beliefs of the times may mean risking ostracism from White relatives, friends, neighbors, and colleagues. Regardless of the choice, there are many uncomfortable feelings of guilt, shame, anger, and depression related to the realization of inconsistencies in one's belief systems. Guilt and shame are most likely related to the recognition of the White person's role in perpetuating racism in the past. Guilt may also result from the person's being afraid to speak out on the issues or to take responsibility for his or her part in a current situation. For example, the person may witness an act of racism, hear a racist comment, or be given preferential treatment over a minority person but decide not to say anything for fear of violating racist White norms. Many White people rationalize their behaviors by believing that they are powerless to make changes. Additionally, there is a tendency to retreat into White culture. If, however, others (which may include some family and friends) are more accepting, forward movement is more likely.

4. *Resistance and immersion phase:* The White person who progresses to this phase will begin to question and challenge his or her own racism. For the first time, the person begins to realize what racism is all about, and his or her eyes are suddenly open. Racism is seen everywhere (e.g., advertising, television, educational materials, interpersonal interactions). This phase of development is marked by a major questioning of one's own racism and that of others in society. In addition, increasing awareness of how racism operates and its pervasiveness in U.S. culture and institutions is the major hallmark of this level. It is as if the person awakens to the realities of oppression; sees how educational materials, the mass media, advertising, and other elements portray and perpetuate stereotypes; and recognizes how being White grants certain advantages denied to various minority groups.

There is likely to be considerable anger at family and friends, institutions, and larger societal values, which are seen as having sold him or her a false bill of goods (democratic ideals) that were never practiced. Guilt is also felt for having been a part of the oppressive system. Strangely enough, the person is likely to undergo a form of racial self-hatred at this phase. Negative feelings about being White are present, and the accompanying feelings of guilt, shame, and anger toward oneself and other Whites may develop. The White liberal syndrome may develop and be manifested in two complementary styles: the paternalistic protector role or the overidentification with another minority group (Helms, 1984; Ponterotto, 1988). In the former, the White person may devote his or her energies in an almost paternalistic attempt to protect minorities from abuse. In the latter, the person may actually want to identify with a particular minority group (e.g., Asian, Black) in order to escape his or her own *Whiteness*. The White person will soon discover, however, that these roles are not appreciated by minority groups and will experience rejection. Again, the person may resolve this dilemma by moving back into the protective confines of White culture (*conformity phase*), again experience conflict (dissonance), or move directly to the *introspective phase*.

5. *Introspective phase:* This phase is most likely a compromise of having swung from an extreme of unconditional acceptance of White identity to a rejection of *Whiteness*. It is a state of relative quiescence, introspection, and reformulation of what it means to be White. The person realizes and no longer denies that he or she has participated in oppression and benefited from *White privilege* or that racism is an integral part of U.S. society. However, individuals

at this phase become less motivated by guilt and defensiveness, accept their *Whiteness*, and seek to redefine their own identity and that of their social group. This acceptance, however, does not mean a less active role in combating oppression. The process may involve addressing the questions, "What does it mean to be White?" "Who am I in relation to my *Whiteness*?" and "Who am I as a racial/cultural being?"

The feelings or affective elements may be existential in nature and involve feelings of disconnectedness, isolation, confusion, and loss. In other words, the person knows that he or she will never fully understand the minority experience but feels disconnected from the EuroAmerican group as well. In some ways, the *introspective phase* is similar in dynamics to the *dissonance phase*, in that both represent a transition from one perspective to another. The process used to answer the previous questions and to deal with the ensuing feelings may involve a searching, observing, and questioning attitude. Answers to these questions involve dialoging and observing one's own social group and actively creating and experiencing interactions with various minority group members as well.

6. *Integrative awareness phase*: Reaching this level of development is most characterized as (a) understanding the self as a racial/cultural being, (b) being aware of sociopolitical influences regarding racism, (c) appreciating racial/cultural diversity, and (d) becoming more committed toward eradicating oppression. A nonracist White EuroAmerican identity is formed, emerges, and becomes internalized. The person values multiculturalism, is comfortable around members of culturally different groups, and feels a strong connectedness with members of many groups. Most important, perhaps, is the inner sense of security and strength that needs to develop and that is needed to function in a society that is only marginally accepting of integrative, aware White persons.
7. *Commitment to antiracist action phase*: Someone once stated that the ultimate *White privilege* is the ability to acknowledge it but do nothing about it. This phase is most characterized by social action. There is likely to be a consequent change in behavior and an increased commitment toward eradicating oppression. Seeing "wrong" and actively working to "right" it requires moral fortitude and direct action. Objecting to racist jokes; trying to educate family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers about racial issues; and taking direct action

to eradicate racism in the schools and workplace and in social policy (often in direct conflict with other Whites) are examples of actions taken by individuals who achieve this status. Movement into this phase can be a lonely journey for Whites because they are oftentimes isolated by family, friends, and colleagues who do not understand their changed worldview. Strong pressures in society to not rock the boat, threats by family members that they will be disowned, avoidance by colleagues, threats of being labeled a troublemaker or not being promoted at work are all possible pressures for the White person to move back to an earlier phase of development. To maintain a nonracist identity requires Whites to become increasingly immunized to social pressures for conformance and to begin forming alliances with persons of color or other liberated Whites who become a second family to them. As can be seen, the struggle against individual, institutional, and societal racism is a monumental task in this society.

DEVELOPING A NONRACIST AND ANTIRACIST WHITE IDENTITY

I sometimes visualize the ongoing cycle of racism as a moving walkway at the airport. Active racist behavior is equivalent to walking fast on the conveyor belt. The person engaged in active racist behavior has identified with the ideology of White supremacy and is moving with it. Passive racist behavior is equivalent to standing still on the walkway. No overt effort is being made, but the conveyor belt moves the bystanders along to the same destination as those who are actively walking. Some of the bystanders may feel the motion of the conveyor belt, see the active racists ahead of them, and choose to turn around, unwilling to go to the same destination as the White supremacists. But unless they are walking actively in the opposite direction at a speed faster than the conveyor belt – unless they are actively antiracist – they will find themselves carried along with the others. (Tatum, 1997, pp 11–12)

What does this metaphor of racism tell about the difference between active and passive racism? What is the “destination” of the walkway? If it represents our society, can you describe what that destination looks like? What does the conveyor belt symbolize? Are you on the conveyor belt? Which direction are you traveling? Do you even feel the movement of the belt? What would it take for you to reverse

directions? More importantly, how can you stop the movement of the conveyor belt? What changes would need to occur for you at the individual level to reverse directions? What changes would need to happen at the institutional and societal levels to stop or reverse the direction of the conveyor belt?

As repeatedly emphasized in earlier chapters, *White supremacy* must be seen through a larger prism of individual, institutional, and societal racism. All these elements conspire in such a manner as to avoid making the "invisible" visible, and thus directly or indirectly discourage honest racial dialogue and self-exploration. Let us briefly return to the "walkway" metaphor provided by Tatum (1997) in her classic book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*

First, the walkway metaphor is a strong and powerful statement of the continuous and insidious nature of racism; it is ever-present, dynamic, and often-times invisible as it takes us on a journey to White supremacist notions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The visible actions of White supremacists moving quickly on the belt represent the overt racism that we're aware of; these forms we consciously condemn. The conveyor belt represents the invisible forces of society or the biased institutional policies, practices, and structures that control our everyday lives. From the moment of birth, we are placed on the conveyor belt, culturally conditioned, and socialized to believe that we are headed in "the right direction." For many White people, the movement of the belt is barely noticeable, and its movement remains hidden from conscious awareness. This allows White people to remain naïve and innocent about the harm their inaction imparts on people of color.

Second, as indicated by Tatum (1997), one need not be actively racist in order to be racist. The pace by which one walks with the flow of the conveyor belt determines the degree to which one consciously or unconsciously harbors White supremacist notions: (a) "active racists" who are aware and deliberate in beliefs and actions move quickly, (b) those slowly strolling may be unintentional racists, unaware of their biases and the direction they are taking, and (c) "passive racists" may choose not to walk at all. Despite choosing not to walk in the direction of the walkway, passive racists are, nevertheless, being moved in a direction that allows for racism to thrive. On a personal level, despite beliefs of justice, equity, and fairness, inaction on the walkway ultimately means that these individuals are also responsible for the oppression of others.

Third, most people of color are desperately trying to move or run in the opposite direction. The voices of people of color are filled with attempts to make well-intentioned Whites aware of the direction they are taking and aware of the harm

they are inflicting on people of color. But they are hindered by many obstacles; well-intentioned White Americans who tell them they are going the wrong way and don't believe them; institutional policies and practices that put obstacles in their retreating path (institutional racism); and punishment from society for "not obeying the traffic rules"—a one-way street of bias and bigotry.

Fourth, despite limited success in battling the constant forces of racism, people of color are also slowly but surely being swept in a dangerous direction that has multiple implications for their psychological health, physical well-being, and standard of living. Walking at a fast pace or running in the opposite direction are never-ending activities that are exhausting and energy depleting for people of color. Worse yet, they are being trampled by the large numbers of well-intentioned White Americans moving in the opposite direction. Giving up or ultimately being swept to the end of the walkway means a life of oppression and subordination.

Last, the questions being posed to trainees are challenging. How do we motivate White Americans to (a) notice the subtle movement of the walkway (making the invisible visible), (b) discern the ominous direction it is taking (White racial supremacy), (c) take action by moving in the opposite direction (antiracism), and (d) stop the conveyor belt and/or reverse its direction (institutional and societal change)?

As indicated in the *White racial identity development* sections, becoming *nonracist* means soul searching, individual change, and working on the self; becoming *antiracist*, however, means taking personal action to end external racism that exists systemically and in the action of others. The invisibility of *White privilege* and *Whiteness* allow for denying the pain and suffering experienced by people of color, but more importantly, it absolves White Americans of personal responsibility for perpetuating injustice, and allows them to remain passive and inactive.

Principles of Prejudice Reduction

Although *White racial identity development* models tell us much about the characteristics most likely to be exhibited by individuals as they progress through these phases, they are very weak in giving guidance about how to develop a *nonracist White identity* (Helms, 2015). Possible answers seem to lie in the social-psychological literature about the basic principles or conditions needed to reduce prejudice through intergroup contact first formulated by Gordon Allport (1954) in his classic book *The Nature of Prejudice*. His work has been refined and expanded by other researchers and scholars (Aboud, 1988; Amir, 1969; Cook, 1962; Gaertner,

Rust, Dovidio, Bachman, & Anastasio, 1994; Jones, 1997). Sue (2003) has summarized these findings into the basic principles of prejudice reduction: (1) having intimate and close contact with others, (2) cooperation rather than competition on common tasks, (3) sharing mutual goals, (4) exchanging accurate information rather than stereotypes, (5) sharing an equal status relationship, (6) support for prejudice reduction by authorities and leaders, and (7) feeling a sense of connection and belonging with one another. To this we might add the contributions of *White racial identity development* theorists, who have indicated the importance of understanding oneself as a racial/cultural being. It has been found, for example, that a person's level of White racial awareness is predictive of his or her level of racism (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994; Wang et al., 2003); the less aware that participants in research projects were of their White racial identity, the more likely they exhibited increased levels of racism.

The seven basic principles outlined above arose primarily through studies of how to reduce intergroup conflict and hostility, but several seem consistent with reducing personal prejudice through experiential learning and the acquisition of accurate information about other groups. Translating these principles into roles and activities for personal development has come from recommendations put forth by the American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Preventing Discrimination and Promoting Diversity (2012), from the President's Initiative on Race (1998, 1999), from educators and trainers (Ponterotto et al., 2006; Young & Davis-Russell, 2002), and from studies on difficult racial dialogues (Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009; Sue, Rivera, Capodilupo, Lin, & Torino, 2010).

Sue (2003) outlines five basic learning situations and activities, or principles, most likely to enhance change in developing a *nonracist White identity*.

Principle 1: Learn about People of Color from Sources within the Group

- You must experience and learn from as many sources as possible (not just the media or what your neighbor may say) in order to check out the validity of your assumptions and understanding.
- If you want to understand racism, White people may not be the most insightful or accurate sources. Acquiring information from persons of color allows you to understand the thoughts, hopes, fears, and aspirations from the perspective of people of color. It also acts as a counterbalance to the worldview expressed by White society about minority groups.

Principle 2: Learn from Healthy and Strong People of the Culture

- A balanced picture of racial/ethnic groups requires that you spend time with healthy and strong people of that culture. The mass media and our educational texts (written from the perspectives of EuroAmericans) frequently portray minority groups as uncivilized or pathological, or as criminals or delinquents.
- You must make an effort to fight such negative conditioning and ask yourself what are the desirable aspects of the culture, the history, and the people. This can come about only if you have contact with healthy representatives of that group.
- Since you seldom spend much intimate time with persons of color, you are likely to believe the societal projection of minorities as being law breakers and unintelligent, prone to violence, unmotivated, and uninterested in relating to the larger society.
- Frequent minority-owned businesses, and get to know the proprietors.
- Attend services at a variety of churches, synagogues, temples, and other places of worship to learn about different faiths and to meet religious leaders.
- Invite colleagues, coworkers, neighbors, or students of color to your home for dinner or a holiday.
- Live in an integrated or culturally diverse neighborhood, and attend neighborhood organizational meetings and attend/throw block parties.
- Form a community organization on valuing diversity, and invite local artists, authors, entertainers, politicians, and leaders of color to address your group.
- Attend street fairs, educational forums, and events put on by the community.

Principle 3: Learn from Experiential Reality

- Although listening to readings, attending theater, and going to museums are helpful to increase understanding, you must supplement your factual understanding with the experiential reality of the groups you hope to understand. These experiences, however, must be something carefully planned to be successful.
- It may be helpful to identify a cultural guide: someone from the culture who is willing to help you understand his or her group; someone willing to

introduce you to new experiences; someone willing to help you process your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This allows you to more easily obtain valid information on issues of race and racism.

Principle 4: Learn from Constant Vigilance of Your Biases and Fears

- Your life must become a “have to” in being constantly vigilant to manifestations of bias in both yourself and the people around you.
- Learn how to ask sensitive racial questions of your minority friends, associates, and acquaintances. Persons subjected to racism seldom get a chance to talk about it with a nondefensive and nonguilty person from the majority group.
- Most minority individuals are more than willing to respond, to enlighten, and to share *if they sense that your questions and concerns are sincere and motivated by a desire to learn and serve the group.*

Principle 5: Learn from Being Committed to Personal Action against Racism

- Dealing with racism means a personal commitment to action. It means interrupting other White Americans when they make racist remarks, tell racist jokes, or engage in racist actions, even if this is embarrassing or frightening.
- It means noticing the possibility for direct action against bias and discrimination in your everyday life: in the family, at work, and in the community.
- It means taking initiative to make sure that minority candidates are fairly considered in your place of employment, advocating to your children’s teachers to include multicultural material in the curriculum, volunteering in community organizations to have them consider multicultural issues, and contributing to and working for campaigns of political candidates who will advocate for social justice.
- The journey to developing a White nonracist identity is not an easy path to travel. Remember, racial identity and cultural competence are intimately linked to one another. Becoming a culturally competent helping professional involves more than “book learning”; it requires both experiential learning and taking personal action. Are you ready for the challenge?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do these suggestions and strategies make sense to you? Are there others that come to mind?
2. What would make it difficult for you to personally implement these suggestions? What barriers stand in the way? For example, what would make it difficult for you to interrupt a stranger or even a family member when a racist or sexist joke is made?
3. Have you ever been in a situation where you were the only White person in an activity or event full of Black, Asian, or Latino/a people? What feelings did you have? How did you think? Were you uncomfortable or fearful?
4. What would you need in the way of support or personal moral courage to move toward developing a White nonracist identity?



IMPLICATIONS FOR CLINICAL PRACTICE

1. Ultimately, the effectiveness of White therapists is related to their ability to overcome sociocultural conditioning and to make their *Whiteness* visible.
2. Accept the fact that racism is a basic and integral part of U.S. life and permeates all aspects of our culture and institutions. Know that as a White person you are not immune.
3. Understand that the level of *White racial identity development* in a cross-cultural encounter (e.g., working with minorities, responding to multicultural training) affects the process and outcome of an interracial relationship (including counseling/therapy).
4. Work on accepting your own *Whiteness*, but define it in a nondefensive, nonracist, and antiracist manner.
5. Spend time with healthy and strong people from another culture or racial group.
6. Know that becoming culturally aware and competent comes through lived experience and reality.

7. Attend cultural events, meetings, and activities led by minority communities. This allows you to hear from church leaders, to attend community celebrations, and to participate in open forums so that you may sense the strengths of the community, observe leadership in action, personalize your understanding, and develop new social relationships.
8. When around persons of color, pay attention to feelings, thoughts, and assumptions that you have when race-related situations present themselves.
9. Dealing with racism means a personal commitment to action.

SUMMARY

"What does it mean to be White?" is often an uncomfortable and perplexing question for White Americans. Exploring the basis of this discomfort and its meaning is important for cultural competence in mental health practice. Being a White person in this society means chronic exposure to ethnocentric monoculturalism as manifested in *White supremacy*. Research suggests that it is nearly impossible for anyone to avoid inheriting the racial biases, prejudices, misinformation, deficit portrayals, and stereotypes of their forebears. If White helping professionals are ever able to become effective multicultural counselors or therapists, they must free themselves from the cultural conditioning of their past and move toward the development of a nonracist and *antiracist White identity*.

White racial identity development models have been found to be helpful in describing how majority group members go through a process of racial awakening that has direct meaning to multicultural counseling. Two of the influential models are those presented by Rita Hardiman and Janet Helms. It has been found that the level of White racial identity awareness is predictive of racism and internal and interpersonal characteristics. The less aware subjects studied were of their White identity, the more likely they were to exhibit higher levels of racism, while the greater their White identity development, the greater their levels of multicultural counseling competence, the higher their positive opinions toward diverse groups, and the better their ability to form therapeutic alliances with clients of color.

A descriptive model of *White racial identity development* identifies a seven-phase process by which Whites become increasingly aware of themselves as racial/cultural beings: (1) naiveté, (2) conformity, (3) dissonance, (4) resistance

and immersion, (5) introspective, (6) integrative awareness, and (7) commitment to antiracist action. Becoming *nonracist* means soul searching, individual change, and working on the self; becoming *antiracist*, however, means taking personal action to end external racism that exists systemically and in the actions of others. Five basic principles are provided to facilitate racial/cultural awareness. Learn (1) from the groups you hope to understand, (2) from healthy and strong people of the culture, (3) from experiential reality, (4) from constant vigilance of fears and biases, and (5) from being committed to anti-bias action.

GLOSSARY TERMS

Antiracist white identity	Naiveté phase
Commitment to antiracist action phase	Nonracist white identity
Conformity phase	Resistance and immersion phase
Dissonance phase	Unintentional racism
Ego statuses	White privilege
Hardiman White racial identity development	White racial identity development
Helms White racial identity development	White racial identity development descriptive model
Information processing strategies	White supremacy
Integrative awareness phase	Whiteness
Introspective phase	

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