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White Racial Identity Models:
A Critique and Alternative Proposal

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Existing models of White racial identity development (WRID) are challenged as being deficient in terms of: (a) being based on the oppression-adaptive models of minority identity development, (b) focusing primarily on attitudes toward racial/ethnic outgroups, not on White identity attitudes; and (c) depicting the process as developmental in nature. An alternative conceptualization, based on the construct of White racial consciousness, is presented as a more parsimonious explanation for the role of racially oriented attitudes. Three types of unachieved White racial consciousness (avoidant, dependent, and dissonant) are proposed along with four types of achieved White racial consciousness (dominative, conflictive, reactive, and integrative). Changes in attitudes characteristic of one type to those more representative of another are explained in terms of dissonance reduction. Information is provided regarding the availability of an assessment device designed to identify the types of White racial consciousness.

In 1971, Cross published a seminal article in which he described a model for the process of psychological Nigrescence, or Black racial identity development. A number of other similar models have evolved since that time; in her recent book on Black and White racial identity, Helms (1990a) lists 11 various identity development models for African Americans alone. In the past two decades, Cross's model has been refined (Cross, 1978), researched (Parham & Helms, 1981, 1985), and elaborated on (Parham, 1989). Subsequent models of identity development have appeared describing a similar process for Latinos (Ruiz, 1990), females (Downing & Roush, 1985), homosexuals (Troiden, 1989), biracial persons (Poston, 1990), racial/ethnic groups in general (Ford, 1987; Sue & Sue, 1990), minority (oppressed) groups in general (Highlen et al., 1988; Myers et al., 1991), and individuals who are members of multiple minority groups (Reynolds & Pope, 1991).

Racial/ethnic identity development is conceptualized as a series of stages through which individuals pass as their attitudes toward their own racial/

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ethnic group and the White population develop, ultimately achieving a "healthy" identity. Although the number of stages and specifics of each stage can vary across models, the first stage typically involves acceptance of the stereotypes the dominant society has attributed to the group. It is invariably suggested that attitudes toward self, one's racial/ethnic group, and representatives of the dominant society are those imposed by the dominant society. A second stage is typically one of conflict or dissonance, in which the individual begins to question the previously held stereotypes. The third stage involves an immersion in the culture of the racial/ethnic group and a militant rejection of individuals and values outside the group. In the final stage, individuals retain a positive racial/ethnic identity while coming to accept the positive attributes of individuals and cultures outside their reference group.

Recently, a number of White Racial Identity Development models (WRID) have been proposed or discussed by counseling psychologists. Those that have received the most attention include: (a) the models of Hardiman (1982) and Helms (1984, 1990b); (b) the Carney and Kahn (1984) model; (c) the model proposed for White development by Sue and Sue (1990), based on the general minority model of Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1989); and (d) the model presented by Sabnani, Ponterotto, and Borodovsky (1991) as a synthesis of models offered by Hardiman (1982), Helms (1984), and Ponterotto (1988).

The advent of models of racial identity development has been viewed very positively by the counseling field (Ponterotto & Casas, 1991; Sue & Sue, 1990) for a number of reasons. Racial identity conceptualization provides a dimension of within-group variability that potentially increases the precision of findings for researchers (Atkinson, 1983). It also provides a framework with which to better understand cross-cultural dyadic interactions (Helms, 1990a). And a verified model of White racial identity attitudes would allow the personalizing of cross-cultural learning experiences for White counselor trainees (Sabnani et al., 1991). Yet little attention has been given to the critical evaluation of WRID models.

CONCERNS WITH WHITE RACIAL IDENTITY MODELS

Of the WRID models noted above, only the work of Helms (1984, 1990b) has attracted empirical investigation and, therefore, is likely to be the most influential in the near future. For this reason, we often refer to the Helms model in the discussion that follows, although most of our comments could be applied equally to any of the models of White racial identity development.

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Central to the racial/ethnic minority identity development models that were the precursors of the WRID models is the assumption that an individual's racial/ethnic identity evolves in response to an oppressive dominant society. Thus Helms (1989) describes psychological Nigrescence as consisting of "stages of racial identity that may evolve in response to the common experience of resisting racial discrimination" (p. 229). Helms's (1984) model of White racial identity development also resembles the oppression-adaptive models explaining ethnic minority identity development. Persons in the first stage (contact) accept the status quo and lack awareness of their selves as racial beings, and in the second stage (disintegration) experience conflict. Stage 3 (reintegration) is marked by anti-Black, pro-White attitudes, whereas Stage 4 (pseudoindependence) brings an intellectual acceptance of Blacks. The fifth stage (autonomy) is characterized by the achievement of a positive White racial identity similar to that described in the final stage of the minority identity development models.

We believe that the conceptualization of White racial identity development as a process parallel to minority identity development is not merited. In fact, there is some evidence that the process might be quite different for racial/ethnic minorities and Whites as a function of differences in minority and dominant positions in society (White & Burke, 1987). Phinney (1990) points out that "if the dominant group in a society holds the traits or characteristics of an ethnic group in low esteem, then ethnic group members are potentially faced with a negative social identity" (p. 501). Positive attitudes held by racial/ethnic minority persons about their own group are developed in spite of the stereotypes propagated by the dominant society. Furthermore, the attitudes that racial/ethnic minorities develop about Whites are forged from a recognition that Whites represent the society oppressing them. White attitudes about themselves and other racial/ethnic groups are not forged under such conditions. Attitudes that most Whites develop about their own group and other racial/ethnic groups are reinforced by the stereotypes of the dominant society. Thus the system of oppression impacts the racial attitudes of both Whites and racial/ethnic minority persons, but is experienced differently.

Our second problem with the WRID models is that the title itself is a misnomer. Ostensibly, a purpose of WRID models is "to explain how Whites develop[ed] attitudes toward their racial-group membership" (Carter & Helms, 1990, p. 105). Instead of doing so, however, they mainly describe how Whites develop different levels of sensitivity to and appreciation of other racial/ethnic groups (i.e., racial attitudes), but little about a White identity. Beyond suggesting that Whites initially are unaware of their own racial (as opposed to ethnic) identity before finally developing a positive view of being

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White, for all practical purposes these WRID models describe purported stages that Whites go through in developing attitudes toward other racial/ethnic groups.

Another major problem has to do with the conceptualization of WRID models as developmental stage models. Helms (1990b) proposes a model that hypothesizes "a linear process of attitudinal development in which the White person potentially progresses through a series of stages" (p. 53). It is important to recognize that the directionality (culminating in a nonracist sense of White identity) is imposed. That is to say, there is nothing in nature, similar to the Piagetian stages of mental operations, that orders the stages of White identity development and nothing other than our imposed ethics that imbues the stages with ordered levels of desirability. To speak of a progression "from a least [mentally] healthy stage . . . to a most healthy stage of racial identity" (Helms, 1989, p. 240), is to speak metaphorically. This recognition of arbitrary directionality, then, places the burden for showing that the potential progression indeed takes place on the supporters of the model, and no evidence for this is available (Phinney, 1989).

The Helms (1989) model states that many people fixate at some stage prior to the attainment of autonomy. It also seems to be at least implied that some persons might skip a stage or stages because of particular environmental circumstances. Furthermore, it seems apparent that Helms endorses the notion of periodic regression to earlier stages with subsequent development at various times during one's life cycle, as suggested by Parham (1989). However, if so many exceptions are explainable, covering forward, backward, or no progression across stages, the utility of conceptualizing the process as a developmental stagewise progression must be questioned.

Finally, we think that it is unduly limiting and therefore a weakness that Helms's model is cast exclusively in White-Black terms. It is claimed (Helms, 1990b) that White racial identity issues focus on Blacks as the primary out-group "(b)ecause White racism in the United States seems to have developed as a means of justifying the enslavement of Black Americans" (p. 49-50). Regardless of the response of American Indians to this assertion, to consider White racial identity as reflecting only attitudes toward Blacks and not other non-White peoples is to seriously limit the generalizability of the model. Granted that African Americans are the most numerous racial/ethnic minority group and have been the most prominent in promoting civil rights. However, African Americans are not the predominant racial/ethnic minority group in southern Texas, the rural areas of South Dakota, or urban southern California. For a clear majority of White Americans, Blacks represent the appropriate racial/ethnic minority reference group, but for many Whites, other racial/ethnic minority groups serve the same function.

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Although the initial studies regarding White identity reported by Helms (1990a) appear promising, independent empirical evaluation has not been supportive. Even though decreased self-actualization was found to be weakly associated with the appropriate stages of the Helms model (Tokar & Swanson, 1991a), Tokar and Swanson (1991b) found the factor structure of the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (Helms & Carter, 1990) to differ widely from the scales representing the stages of Helms's 1984 model. In addition, a validity study conducted by Bennett, Behrens, and Rowe (1993) was unable to confirm the expected relationships between the stages of Helms's model and various psychological attributes. Moreover, when psychology trainees, who were instructed in the Helms model, were asked to identify weaknesses, they pointed out, among other things, that the assumption of similarity in identity development for Whites and Blacks is unsubstantiated, the use of a stage theory is questionable, and the generalization of attitudes toward Blacks to attitudes toward all racial and ethnic minority groups is made without a supporting rationale (Sodowsky, Seaberry, Gorgi, Lai, & Baliga, 1991). Although some features of WRID models might be appealing, rational analysis and the available empirical evidence lead us to believe that existing models might be less than satisfactory.

We recognize the enormous contribution to the field that Helms made in 1984 by bringing attention to the variability of Whites' attitudes toward themselves and others on racial dimensions and by pointing up the significant implications for dyadic interactions. However, we believe that the WRID models proposed by Helms and others, although enjoying widespread popularity, include some features that seem to us to be inaccurate or unsubstantiated. We believe that the claims of the WRID models notwithstanding, they describe groupings of Whites who share common attitudes, not stages of identity development, that might be more descriptively labeled White racial consciousness. Therefore, we propose an alternative explanation of the role of White attitudes toward their own and other racial groups, which we believe avoids or minimizes the kinds of problems mentioned above and can consequently describe the phenomena more accurately, predict relationships better, and provide a more stable base for assessment than offered by the identity development models.

THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF WHITE RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

We define White racial consciousness as one's awareness of being White and what that implies in relation to those who do not share White group

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membership. For some people, this consciousness might be a clear and important part of their sense of identity. For others it might be vague and of little concern to how they construe their life experiences. Whatever one's position on these matters, it will be reflected to some extent in his or her attitudes, behaviors, and related affect, and it is from these observable phenomena that the person's type of racial consciousness can be inferred. Although the affect, behaviors, and attitudes associated with a person's sense of racial consciousness are correlated, obviously there is a far from perfect correspondence. We focus our attention on attitudes, however, because they might be considered relatively stable and are more readily available for assessment.

It is assumed that the attitudes that White people have with respect to racial awareness or consciousness are not unrelated. Certain attitudes are seen as complementary and consistent, whereas others are seen as antagonistic and inconsistent. These attitudes tend to cluster together in conglomerations that appear to be generally consistent and that can be described or even labeled. These groupings of attitudes might be considered indicative of categories of White racial consciousness.

Although other authors and researchers have previously chosen to describe these clusters of White racial attitudes as stages, we reject this conceptualization for the reasons expressed earlier. Of course, individuals do develop racial attitudes, and these attitudes often change over time. But we see no evidence that the process of changing attitudes is developmental. In the absence of a clearly satisfactory descriptor, we have chosen the term *types* to refer to clusters of intercorrelated racial attitudes that characterize the outlook of various individuals. Here, type refers to a describable set of attitudes subject to experiential modification, not a fixed personality attribute. The temptation to speak of a person as being a type might be regarded as a communication shorthand and not incipient reification if we recognize that the intention is to convey that a certain cluster (type) of racial attitudes best characterizes the person. In this sense, then, a type is seen as an arbitrary and simplified description of a person who is generally stable yet subject to change as a result of environmental influences, similar to Holland's (1992) typological-interactive approach. We believe that any array of racial attitudes is subject to change over time and, moreover, might vary with situational influences.

Although our comments are intended to apply only to the racial attitudes of adolescents and adults, we recognize that young people are strongly affected by the socialization process. Therefore, we would expect that people would initially develop racial attitudes similar to those of the sources that influence them and hence would be likely to share the same type. Given

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TABLE 1: Ego Identity Statuses, Ethnic Identity Stages, and Types of White Racial Consciousness

Ego identity statuses	(Marcia, 1980; operationalized from Erikson, 1968)
Identity diffusion	Exploration absent Commitment absent
Identity foreclosure	Exploration absent Commitment present
Moratorium	Exploration present Commitment absent
Identity achievement	Exploration present Commitment present
Ethnic identity stages	(Phinney, 1989)
Unexamined ethnic identity	
Diffusion	Lack of concern with ethnicity
Foreclosure	Views based on others' opinions
Ethnic identity search	Exploration of meaning of ethnicity
White racial consciousness types	(Proposed)
Unachieved racial consciousness	
Avoidant type	Significance of racial issues ignored
Dependent type	Attitudes based on others' opinions
Dissonant type	Tentative attitudes: experiencing dissonance
Achieved racial consciousness	Dominative type Conflictive type Reactive type Integrative type

additional life experiences, a person's attitudes might change so that they become more characteristic of some other type.

We believe that racial attitudes change following, and as a result of, experiences that cause dissonance in the person's cognitive structures or schemas. The particular way that people resolve experiential dissonance is considered to be a function of their current and previous learning history. Although most people would be expected to hold some racial attitudes representative of more than one type, it would seem that patently contradictory attitudes would not coexist for long.

The categories of White racial consciousness that we are proposing are adapted from Phinney's (1989) stages of ethnic identity. Drawing from Marcia's (1980) ego identity statuses, Phinney described a process (see Table 1) in which exploration of ethnicity and commitment to one's ethnic group were the defining dimensions for four stages of ethnic identity. Even though

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Phinney's model was conceived from a developmental perspective, conceptualizing White racial consciousness in terms of exploration of racial/ethnic minority issues and commitment to some position about racial/ethnic minority matters was found to be a useful organizational device.

As shown in Table 1, the types of attitudes that constitute the present model of White racial consciousness are grouped in two statuses. Each of the four types of attitudes grouped under Achieved White Racial Consciousness requires some exploration or consideration of racial concerns and a concomitant commitment to some beliefs. Persons who hold the types of attitudes in this category have achieved some kind of integrated personal outlook on racial issues. Unachieved White racial consciousness includes those types of attitudes for which either exploration or commitment, or both, are lacking and which we have termed avoidant, dependent, and dissonant.

WHITE RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS STATUSES

Unachieved White Racial Consciousness

Avoidant type. Attitudes indicative of avoidance include a lack of consideration of one's own White identity as well as an avoidance of concern for racial/ethnic minority issues. Whereas members of visible racial/ethnic minority groups have little choice concerning their awareness of racial identity, White Americans have the option of minimizing the impact of racial awareness by dismissing the issue in various ways. For some adults, the personal and social concerns related to racial/ethnic differences are personally aversive and something to be avoided or ignored. Whether these individuals find these issues merely inconvenient or actually anxiety arousing, their preferred method of responding is to ignore, minimize, or deny the existence or importance of the problematic issue.

Life experiences that bring about dissonance, of course, will be trying to the denial system. But until the experiential factor is strong enough that avoidance is no longer a satisfactory resolution to the dissonance, the racial attitudes expressed will lack personal meaningfulness.

Dependent type. Although persons characterized by the dependent type appear to have committed to some set of attitudes regarding White racial consciousness, they have not personally considered alternative perspectives. The White racial attitudes of these individuals are held superficially and are not "owned" to the degree that these attitudes have been internalized by others.

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This situation might arise as a result of excessive dependence. For example, children and early adolescents tend to hold views that largely depend on those of the dominant family members. However, some people remain so dependent and unreflective that they may achieve adulthood still looking to significant others for what they should think about events and issues. The attitudes verbalized by these persons might be any of those described here. But, until the attitudes they espouse have a significant degree of personal meaningfulness for them—are internalized—their outlook is best characterized by the dependent type of White racial consciousness.

Dissonant type. Persons whose attitudes resemble the dissonant type are clearly uncertain about their sense of White racial consciousness and racial/ethnic minority issues. They are open to new information because it might reduce their uncertainty, but they lack commitment to the ideas they might express. Although this situation could result from a lack of information and experience, it is commonly the result of dissonance generated by the conflict between previously held attitudes and recent experiential incidents.

In the case of experiential dissonance, persons are likely to be confused because their previous racial attitudes are in conflict with their recent experience. This causes them to be uncertain and to tentatively hold their current attitudes. The disparity between experience and racial attitudes might result in the lessening of commitment to current attitudes and an increased search for information on which to base one's future attitudes. For this reason, those who represent the dissonant type because of experiential crisis are often in transition.

Models of White racial identity development have not recognized those persons whose sense of racial identity has not been achieved. Identifying individuals who might not have internalized their racial attitudes or who are clearly tentative about them has the advantage of increasing the homogeneity of the substantive types to be described. Acknowledgement of the non-achieved status of some individuals might improve the ability of models to predict behavior and other attributes associated with these sets of attitudes.

Achieved White Racial Consciousness

Dominative type. Persons who exemplify dominative White racial attitudes are characterized by a strong ethnocentric perspective, which justifies the dominance of racial/ethnic minority peoples by the majority culture. They usually hold views based, either implicitly or explicitly, on the premise that

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White Americans and the majority culture in the United States are superior and of more value than minority people and their associated cultures. In actuality, they might have a limited knowledge of any visible racial/ethnic groups, but remain largely ignorant of this because of their almost exclusive reliance on and reference to common negative stereotypes.

Individuals who demonstrate dominative racial attitudes tend to see little in common with racial/ethnic minority persons. The lower level of economic and educational achievement and the higher levels of crime, poverty, and other indexes of social disorganization are seen not as a result of historic disadvantages, but as confirmation of the negative personal characteristics attributed to members of visible racial/ethnic groups. White culture is considered to be superior because White people have achieved more; they have achieved more because of superior intellectual and personal attributes. And given this, they feel entitled to the advantages that White people enjoy in American society. Therefore, even when confronted with the case of a racial/ethnic minority person who has achieved great wealth, prominence in academics, or who has performed courageously against great odds, individuals with dominative racial attitudes might interpret the outcome to be the result of evil cunning or blind luck. Such cases are viewed as unique and are not likely to challenge one's identification with the dominant White society.

Dominative White racial consciousness might be expressed in more or less passive or active modes. Active expression would involve negative or hostile overt behavior. This could range from indirect behavior that would result in negative consequences for minority persons (e.g., telling an agent not to rent their property to Mexicans) to direct verbal or physical behavior of a hostile nature. The passive expression of dominative racial attitudes might involve a reluctance to interact with members of visible racial/ethnic groups, except in clearly dominant/submissive roles. Persons who demonstrate the passive mode often will be unaware of the contradiction between beliefs that they espouse and commonly accepted values, and they might not identify themselves as racists. They might simply see whiteness as the norm, with racial/ethnic minorities as deviant, inferior, and less deserving. However, the passive and active response is the same when threatened by forced contact or competition with racial/ethnic minority people: anger, fear, and hostility.

Conflictive type. Persons who hold attitudes characteristic of the conflictive type of White racial consciousness are opposed to obvious, clearly discriminatory practices, yet are usually opposed to any program or procedure that has been designed to reduce or eliminate discrimination. Whether

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the remedy proposed is busing, affirmative action, or job training programs, those with predominately conflictive attitudes are likely to be offended by the idea and opposed to its implementation.

Two somewhat similar explanations have been put forth to account for this phenomenon. According to Katz and Hass (1988), ambivalent racial attitudes are the result of conflict engendered by the contradictory implications of two fundamental values embedded in American culture: egalitarianism and individualism. The former is the basis for our democratic and humanitarian ideals, and the unifying concept is justice or fairness. The latter speaks to our concern with individual freedom, self-reliance, and personal achievement, and the essence is personal responsibility for one's fate based on a just world perspective. However, McConahay and Hough (1976) have focused on the conflict between cognitions based on egalitarian values and negative affect directed toward visible racial/ethnic groups.

Regardless of the specific cause, the result is that persons whose attitudes reflect the conflictive type are likely to support ideas based on a fairness principle, while opposing any efforts to alter the status quo by remediating any currently inequitable situation resulting from earlier discrimination. Their position seems to be that all of the necessary legal and administrative steps have been taken so that discrimination no longer exists and, furthermore, to take additional action would be to provide an unfair and undeserved advantage to minorities at the expense of Whites. They apparently believe that racial/ethnic minority people experience equal opportunities and advantages and that the rates of school achievement and economic success and the various indexes of social disorganization associated with minorities are the result of factors such as deviant values and lack of motivation.

Although persons characterized by this type of White racial consciousness might be quite careful to present a rationale that avoids the appearance of latent racism (McConahay, 1986), it might be inferred that their attitudes toward visible racial/ethnic groups have a negative valence compared to their attitudes toward Whites and whiteness. According to Gaertner and Dovidio (1986), the affect associated with racial/ethnic minorities might culminate in fear, yet the more common expression is likely to be in terms of indignation or disgust.

Reactive type. Persons who embody reactive White racial attitudes are aware of racial/ethnic discrimination as a significant feature in American society and are reacting to this acknowledgement. They are likely to hold views based on the premise that White Americans benefit from and are responsible for the existence of discriminatory attitudes and practices. They

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often are very sensitive to the potential for discrimination to be a factor in situations and might be particularly vigilant in identifying inequitable acts.

Individuals who entertain attitudes characteristic of the reactive type tend to feel that they have much in common with racial/ethnic minority persons. They strongly endorse egalitarian values, and those who exhibit the extreme attitudes characteristic of reaction, in fact, might romanticize the various aspects of the culture they particularly identify with, ascribing idealized significance well beyond that recognized by members of the racial/ethnic group. Generally, those with reactive racial attitudes ignore the implications of individual responsibility and tend to overlook the roles of personal behavior and individual choice as they contribute to the levels of achievement, poverty, and social disorganization experienced by many racial/ethnic minority communities. Instead, such things are seen as the sole result of prejudice, discrimination, and racism. Socially deviant behavior of racial/ethnic group members might be seen as adaptive survival behavior and, given the contingencies of the system, as an almost noble response to oppression.

Reactive White racial attitudes might be demonstrated in a variety of ways on the passive-active continuum. The more passive expression would not include personal involvement. Instead, there would tend to be an intellectualized acceptance of racial/ethnic minorities and perhaps an interest in knowing things about them so as to justify that acceptance to other Whites and to appear knowledgeable in conversation with one's minority contacts. Active expression of reactive racial attitudes would run the risk, pointed out by many authors, of eventuating in overidentification or in behavior that is likely to be seen as paternalistic. Well-meaning Whites have often interacted with members of racial/ethnic minority groups by making statements, proposing courses of action, and generally displaying perspectives that clearly are grounded in White experience.

The dilemma that is confronted by Whites who hold reactive racial attitudes is that although they can control, to some extent, the degree of alienation that they experience from the majority society, they cannot significantly affect the extent of their acceptance by the minority society that they emulate. In terms of the bicultural competence model, they are striving to identify with the minority culture while rejecting the majority. The danger is that, should they give up the cause—burn out—they may become culturally marginal. The affect associated with the reactive type is anger, directed toward the dominant society and individuals who support the status quo, and guilt or shame, directed toward the society for perpetuating the known inequities and toward one's self for having unknowingly participated or, at least, having been deceived.

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Integrative type. Persons who maintain integrative White racial attitudes display a variety of behaviors derived from a pragmatic view of racial/ethnic minority issues. This is not to say that the view is driven by convenience. On the contrary, the view is solidly based on moral responsibility, but it is pragmatic in the sense that conduct is tempered by the reality of what will make a difference.

Those who hold attitudes characteristic of the integrative type of White racial consciousness are not compelled to respond to reductionistic worldview in predictable, predetermined ways. They do not need to oppress or idealize; they are not likely to respond reflexively out of anger or to be held hostage by guilt. People with these attitudes appear to have integrated their sense of whiteness with a regard for racial/ethnic minorities. They value a culturally pluralistic society and often have a more complex or sophisticated understanding of the sociopolitical factors affecting racial/ethnic minority issues.

The degree to which persons with integrative racial attitudes are committed to social change might vary from passive to active. Although all individuals would be expected to act in ways that do not promote racism and to disapprove of social and institutional policies and practices that have racist aspects, their active involvement in activities to effect social change might range from contributing to organizations to organizing demonstrations. For some, the major personal contact with members of racial ethnic minority groups might be social, whereas others might be actively involved in movements dedicated to eliminating social inequities.

Persons with integrative racial attitudes are comfortable with their whiteness and comfortable interacting with visible racial/ethnic minority people. This type of racial awareness should not be construed as a state of racial self-actualization or transcendence, but more as a process. As Helms (1990b) has pointed out, personality attributes are quite independent of racial attitudes. Moreover, the ability to integrate rational analysis, on one hand, and moral principles, on the other, as they relate to a variety of racial/ethnic issues is subject to human frailty and error. People with predominantly integrative attitudes are engaged in the process.

MOVING BETWEEN STATUSES AND TYPES

The types of White racial consciousness that we have described are quite similar to some of the stages of the WRID models. This is not a coincidence. Both explanations of White racial attitudes describe groups of people who share similar attitudes. However, as we have indicated, we do not see any

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evidence to support the contention that the process by which these attitudes are acquired follows a developmental sequence. Rather, we see movement between the statuses and types of White racial consciousness as not necessarily sequential or predictable, but a variable consequence of life experiences.

Social conditions at any given point in time might create what appears to be a developmental process, where large numbers of people move from one type to another, but different social conditions can create a reverse movement. The cyclical rise and fall of membership in the Ku Klux Klan over the years since the Civil War is a case in point. The buildup of anti-Jewish sentiment in Germany prior to World War II is another. White involvement in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s is a third, more positive, example. The point is, given the appropriate social and political climate, racial attitudes can develop negative trends, just opposite to that proposed by the WRID models.

The key element in the process we have described is the role of dissonance. At certain times, there might be dissonance between previously held attitudes and new attitudes and feelings resulting from some recent, intense, and/or significant life event. In the unachieved White racial consciousness status, attitudes can change between those representing the avoidant and dependent types without dissonance occurring because the attitudes of these two types are not considered to be internalized. To move between the unachieved status and any of the achieved status types, however, the individual should experience conflict and would therefore be likely to develop attitudes consistent with the dissonant type. Figure 1 depicts the various statuses and types. Graphically represented, an individual can move directly between any two types separated by a single line, but must develop dissonant type attitudes to move between any two phases separated by a double line.

Thus, once attitudes are clearly reflective of one of the four types of achieved White racial consciousness, the individual is not likely to develop attitudes characteristic of another type unless he or she experiences the uncertainty associated with dissonance. For example, a White person representing the dominative type might experience dissonance if he or she desperately needed help of some kind and received it from a minority person after several Whites had refused to provide assistance. If questioning of previously held attitudes about White and ethnic minorities resulted in tentatively held attitudes, the individual might then be best described by the dissonant type. Movement to one of the other types of the unachieved or achieved statuses would be dependent on the impact of subsequent experiences. Similarly, a White person characterized by the integrative type might experience dissonance with previously held attitudes as the result of harm he or she perceives

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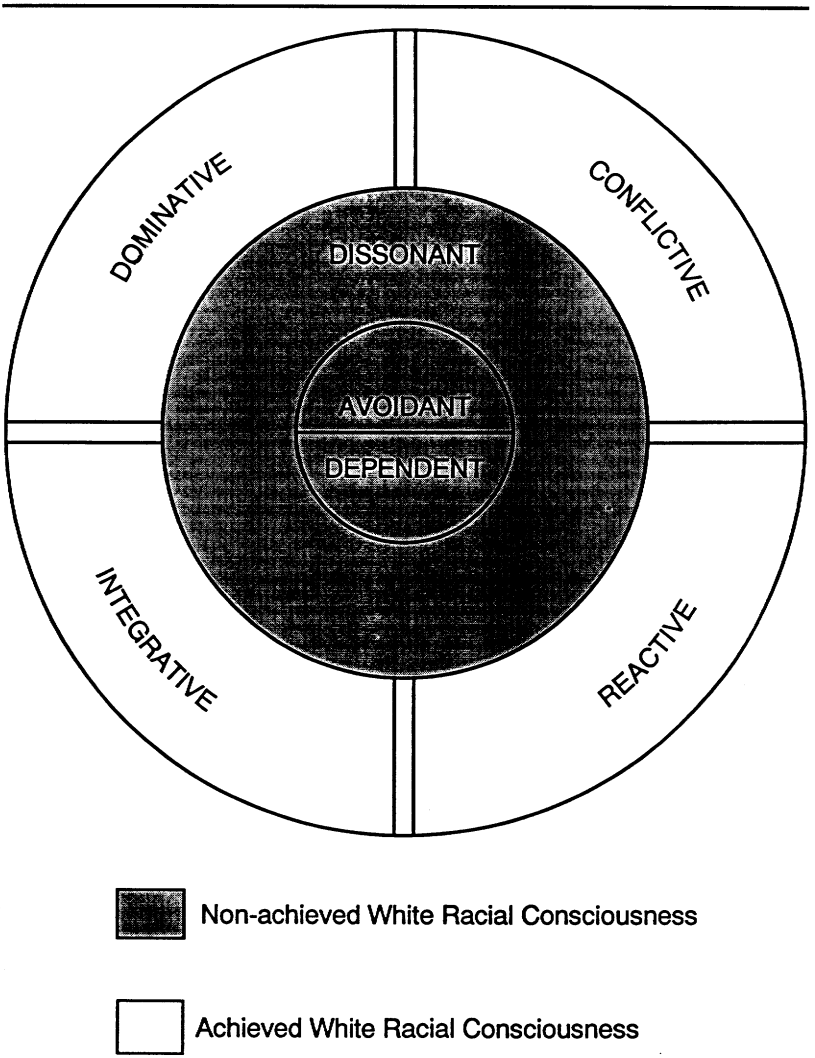


Figure 1. Statuses and types of White racial consciousness

to be due to an ethnic minority person or persons. This perceived harm might be the result of direct experience or of indirect experience, as when the media provide graphic portrayals of ethnic minority-on-White violence. The White individual's attitudes would then change to the dissonant type, with subsequent movement dependent on subsequent experience.

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CONCLUDING COMMENT

The primary purpose of this article was to raise questions about the eventual utility of WRID models that have recently gained widespread popularity in counseling psychology. In particular, we are concerned about the fact that these models (a) are based on the oppression-adaptive models of ethnic minority identity development; (b) focus primarily on racial attitudes toward ethnic minorities, not on White identity attitudes; and (c) depict the process as developmental in nature. We are also concerned that these models are being promulgated without apparent critical evaluation; they are being accepted by practitioners and researchers without serious question, despite their potential flaws.

We have proposed an alternative explanation of the role of racially oriented attitudes and have put forward the construct of White racial consciousness while pointing up the weaknesses of existing WRID models. Whether the clusters of attitudes represented in the WRID models will prove to be useful and whether these so-called stages can be demonstrated to be developmental are questions that must be decided empirically.

To assess the utility of the conceptualization of White racial consciousness presented here, the Oklahoma Racial Attitudes Scale (Bennett, Behrens & Rowe, 1992) has been in the process of development since the spring of 1991. A research form is anticipated to be available by the fall of 1993 and those interested in viewing the instrument or using it in future research are invited to contact Sandra Bennett, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 73019.

We hope that future research will investigate the validity of models of White racial identity/consciousness currently available, as well as address the developmental issue described above. Significant gains for both research and practice await the development of conceptually strong models and psychometrically strong devices for assessing the racial outlook of Whites. However, until such validation studies can be conducted, we urge counseling psychologists to use existing models with caution.

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