



“I’m Not White, I’m Just Me”: How to Understand Racial Identity and Why It Matters

Steve Brown, Psy.D.
Director, Traumatic Stress Institute

LaTasha Reece, M.S.
Research Associate, Traumatic Stress Institute



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Value of Racial Identity Models

- Provides a framework to understand:
 - Attitudes, behavior, and emotions about race and ethnicity
 - Interactions between people of different races/ethnicities
 - Our reactions to clients and their reaction us -- especially when we are of a different race and ethnicity



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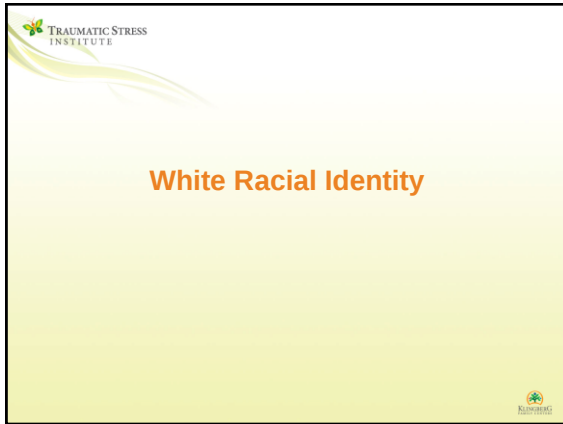


Assumptions of Models

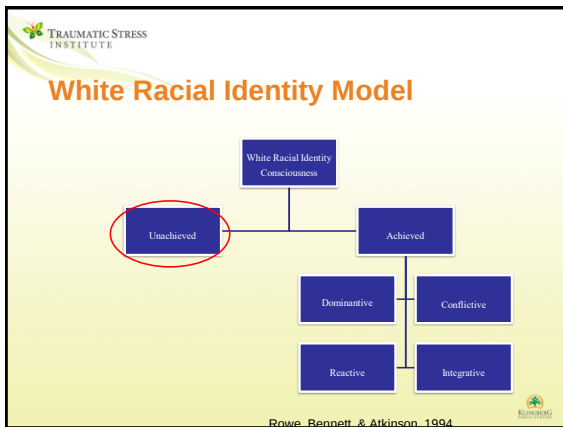
- Began as developmental models
- Now, organized into categories or types of common racial attitudes
- People can move between types – not fixed
- Movement between types often result from some internal conflict (dissonance)
- Defining different types has value -- and the lines blur



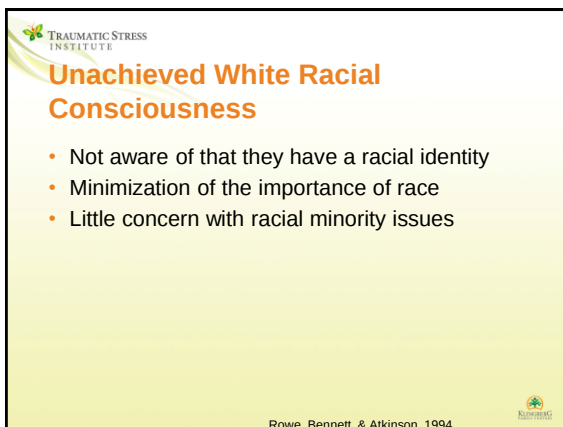
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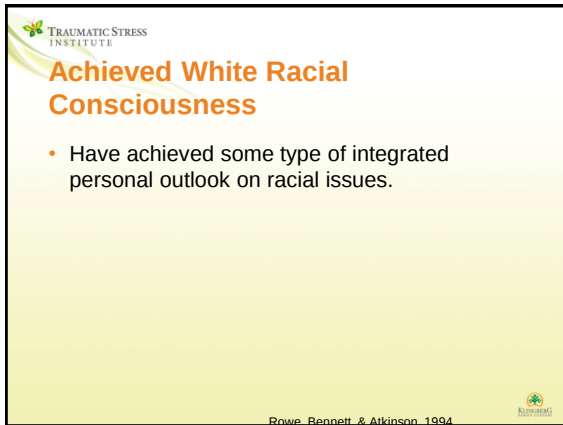
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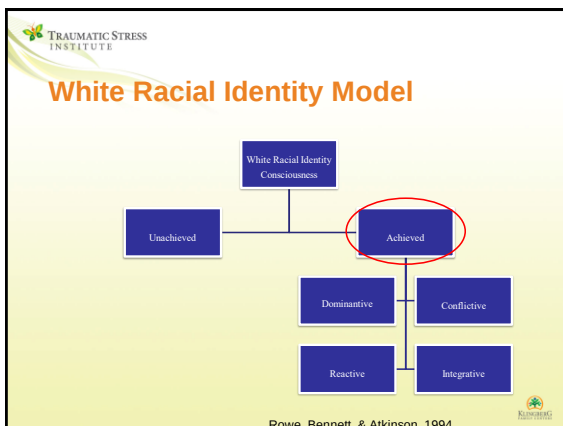
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Achieved White Racial Consciousness

Type of White Racial Consciousness	Definition
Dominative	White culture is superior. Believe racial stereotypes are true. Entitled to the advantages that White's have.
Confictive	Opposed to obvious discrimination. Also opposed to policies to reduce discrimination. Fear of losing power to the growing population of racial/ethnic minorities.
Reactive	Recognize discrimination and agree Whites benefit from, and are responsible for, discrimination. Shame and guilt about their privilege. Idealize and overidentify with minority culture
Integrative	Value culturally diversity. Involvement in actions to promote social change. Comfortable with Whiteness and interacting with people from racial/ethnic minorities. Don't respond reflexively out of anger or held hostage by guilt

Rowe, Bennett & Atkinson 1994

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Confictive



<https://whitenessproject.org/checkbox/ronald>

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Rowe, Bennett & Atkinson 1994

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Reactive



<https://whitenessproject.org/millennials/carson-18>

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Rowe, Bennett, & Atkinson 1994

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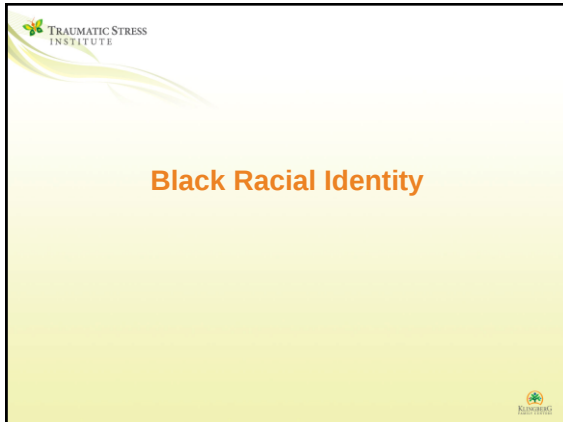
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Integrative



<https://whitenessproject.org/millennials/hadley-15>

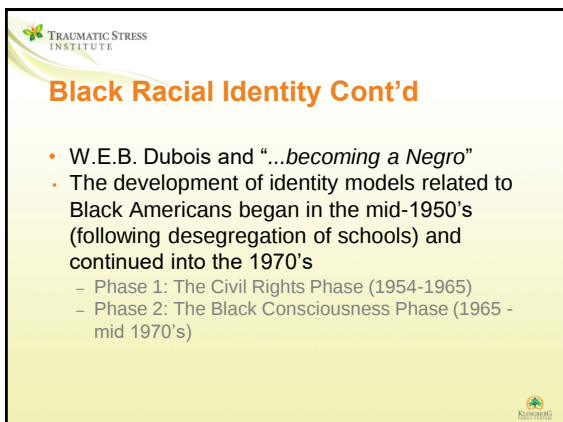
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Nigrescence Theory

- The foundation of many Black racial identity models
 - Cross' Black Racial Identity Development Model
 - Helms' White Racial Identity Model
 - French term meaning "*the process of becoming Black*"
- Suggested that Black identity went through stages, starting with salience towards race until a "challenging" racial experience occurs

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Cross' Black Racial Identity Development

Cross's Black Racial Identity Development Model "Nigrescence" (Cross, 1971, 1978, 1991)	
Stage 1 Pre-Encounter	Desire to separate themselves from their racial group and assimilate and acculturate in the dominate society
Stage 2 Encounter	An awakening to racial consciousness due to experiences that calls race into perspective
Stage 3 Immersion/Emersion	Withdrawal from White culture and become immersed into Black culture
Stage 4 Internalization	A stable Black identity without having an anti-White perspective, being tolerant, more flexible, and rejecting racism and similar forms of oppression
Stage 5 Internalization-Commitment	Marked by social activism, social justice, and civil rights and a personal commitment to effecting change

*Adapted from Cross(1971, 1978, 1991) "Talking about Race, Learning about Racism: The Application of Racial Identity Development Theory"

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The Encounter



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Modern Black Racial Identity Models

- Understanding of Black Identity as attitudes rather than stages
 - Allows for fluidity as people change due to experiences, perspectives and emotions
- Dr. Kourtney Floyd and Racial Identity Clusters
 - Used Cross' Racial Identity Scale and statistical analysis to identify six racial clusters
 - Associated some of these clusters with more favorable mental health status than others in postpartum Black women



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Racial Identity Clusters

Cluster Name	Definition
Assimilation	Consider themselves to be American and place little importance on being Black
Miseducation	Believe negative stereotypes associated with being a Black person
Self-hating	Unhappy about being Black in America (despise their physical features)
Anti-white	Black people with a strong dislike for White people
Multiculturalist	Deep respect for the cultures of others
Afrocentric	High regard for being Black
Conflicted	Embody several racial identities (i.e. disliking White people but feeling the need to assimilate into White culture)

Adapted from (Floyd James et al., 2021)



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Racial Identity Clusters

Pre-Immersion **Immersion-Emergence** **Internalization**

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Black Racial Identity: Conflict in Real Life



you don't fit in here

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Importance of Dissonance in Racial Identity Development

- Often result from big or small events in one's life or the world
- Leads to conflict and challenging of your attitude or way of thinking
- Experience highlights importance of race in America
- Evokes strong emotions – guilt, shame, anger, defensiveness, pride

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Exercise

Reflect on a time you felt conflict, dissonance, personally challenged, strong emotions around your racial identity. If you have never felt that conflict, think about why that might be.

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Role Play – White Client and Black Treater

Backstory

In the last session, the client told the treater that he was excited and nervous because he was being considered for a promotion. The treater wants to check in about what happened.



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Therapeutic Implications

- Sensitizes treaters to the role oppression plays in minority development
- Helps treaters recognize how their attitudes can be blind spots
- Treaters can use as a diagnostic tool to anticipate feelings and behaviors of clients



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