

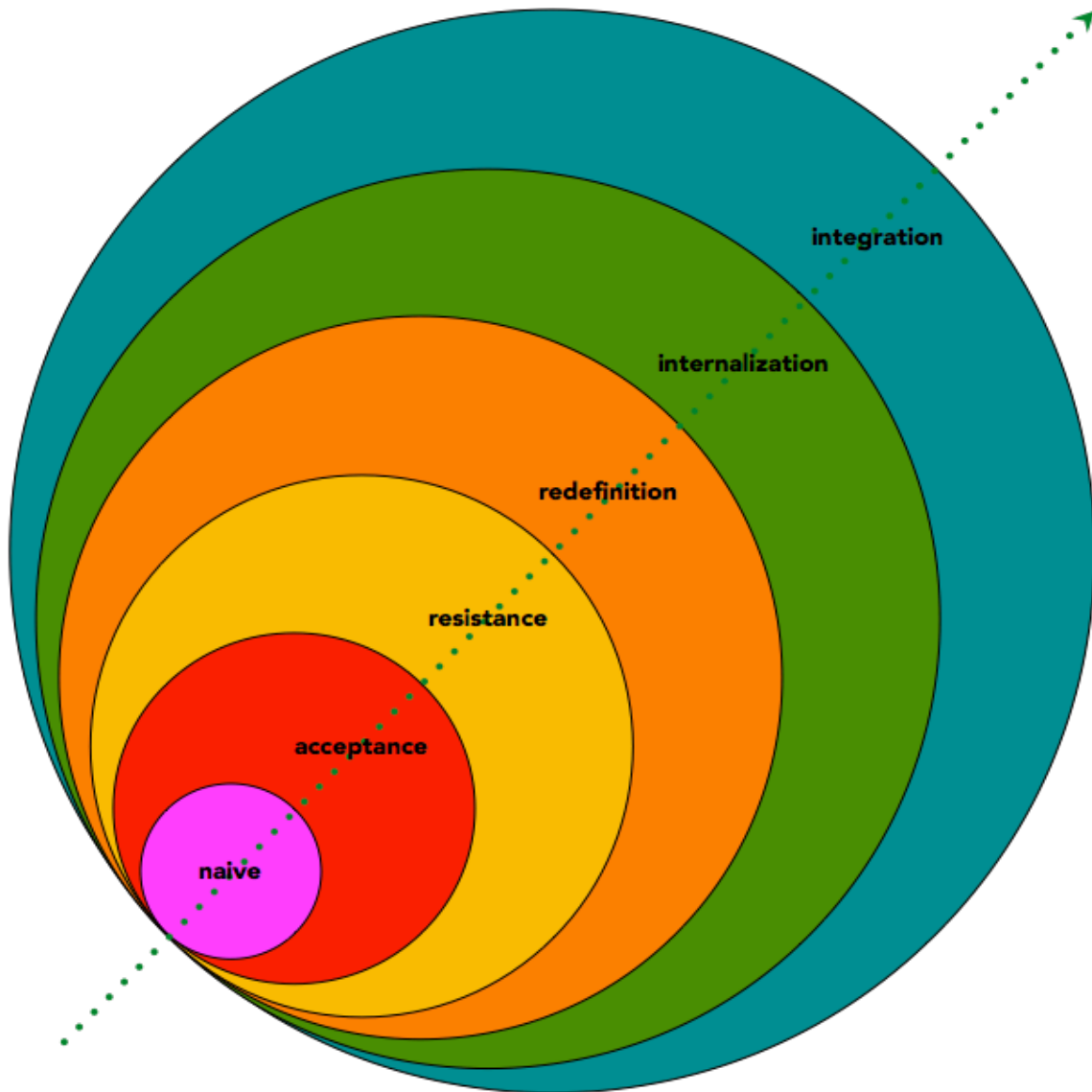
Stages of Racial Identity Development

Racial narratives and social behaviors, in the context of white supremacist culture, shapes our racial identity, our sense of “I-am-ness” as a member of a racial collective. Yet racial identity is not static or fixed throughout our life; it emerges in a dynamic psycho-social-political process and may continue to evolve through developmental stages across the lifespan. Therefore, it is possible —for us and those we seek to influence— to grow and develop beyond the ideas, beliefs, attitudes, feelings and behaviors installed in us during our early socialization and cultural conditioning.

Social Identity Development theory (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997), an adaptation of Black identity development and White identity development theories applied to other racial and social group identities, serves as a functional model as it describes patterns and characteristics generally shared across all social group identities. According to this developmental model, racial identity, like other social group identities, emerges progressively from one stage to the next, with each stage including and transcending the developmental lessons and perspectives of all previous stages. Patterns of thought and behavior (perspectives, narratives, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, etc.) of preceding stages are incorporated into subsequent ones, and even while these patterns may have been outgrown and, thus, no longer necessary to the current stage, they may still be consciously accessed or unconsciously triggered.

In this model, racial identity develops in stages along a continuum: **from naïve to acceptance to resistance to redefinition to internalization**. At the *naïve* stage, a child has no social consciousness, is unaware of racial narratives and, therefore, has not yet developed a sense of self as a racial being. As they are exposed to social interactions and cultural narratives across racial difference and dynamics of power, the child enters the stage of *acceptance*. Still years away from developing any capacity for critical analysis, the child begins to accept dominant narratives of racial superiority and inferiority as a given. Whether in adolescence or much later, the person enters the stage of *resistance* as they begin to experience cognitive dissonance and emotional distress within the social environment; they begin to question, challenge or confront narratives, people and relationships that conform to or comply with White supremacist culture. Once their passive observing or active questioning and challenging begins to produce answers that are more congruent with their experience and critical analysis, resistance expands into *redefinition*. At this stage new and positive narratives reframe the narratives of White supremacy, which in turn give rise to a new appreciation of one’s own racial group and a more self-affirming racial identity. Eventually, as nurtured by a supportive social environment, the redefined racial identity becomes firmly rooted and largely unconsciously integrated into the sense of self-in-society, indicative of the stage of *internalization*.

As a person’s racial identity is firmly internalized, stage development along other social identities (class, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, etc.) may be accelerated, as new cognitive-emotional-behavioral patterns and insights may be generalized across other/all dynamics of power — a synthesis of social identities into a stage of integration of Self, liberated, transformed, and decolonized. Yet, it would appear that this developmental process beyond the stage of resistance rarely, if ever, occurs spontaneously. A primary task of decolonial antiracist liberation psychology, then, is to actively foster and support racial identity development across all stages.



Stages of Racial Identity Development

Social Identity Development Model (Hardiman & Jackson)

Stage	Agents (Dominant)	Targets (Subordinated)
<p>I: Naïve Between birth and ages three to four, agents and targets alike...</p> <p>As children exit the naïve stage, they...</p>	<p>Have no social consciousness; are unaware of differences between social identity groups, and of the complex social codes and dynamics of these groups. Learn about their social identities as they violate boundaries of their social group(s).</p> <p>Begin to internalize belief systems about their own and other's social group identities. Also socialized regarding <i>power</i>, they learn about rules, laws, institutions, authority figures that allow (and reward) certain behaviors and prohibit (and punish) others, and how these apply differentially to different people depending on their social identity group.</p>	

II: Acceptance	Passive	Active	Passive	Active
<p>Generally from childhood through adulthood.</p> <p>Entry into this stage represents some degree of...</p> <p>Life experiences that challenge this worldview lead them to exit this phase, as they begin to...</p>	<p>1) Unconscious internalization of and identification with dominant culture's logic, values, feelings and beliefs systems and codes of appropriate behavior. Covertly taught about the alleged inferiority of targeted people.</p> <p>2) Unaware of their status as dominant group members; privileges perceived as normative. Deny the existence of oppression. Blame the oppressed for their condition; paternalistically agree to help them overcome their self-made condition so that they will fit into the dominant group's system.</p> <p>3) Acknowledge existence of some injustices in society; that the oppressed group's condition may not be all their doing.</p>	<p>1) Conscious internalization of and identification with the dominant culture which give them privilege as a members of an agent group. Overtly taught about the alleged inferiority of targeted people.</p> <p>2) Believe in the superiority of their group, and tend to promote these beliefs more directly. Blame oppressed people for their condition, and actively disseminate negative stereotypes. Reward those who support the oppressive system, and punish those who question or challenge the system.</p> <p>3) Acknowledge existence of some injustices in the society; that the oppresses group's condition may not be all their own doing.</p>	<p>1) Unconscious internalization and acceptance of dominant culture's logic, values, feelings and beliefs systems and codes of appropriate behavior: inferiority of their group; superiority of dominant group.</p> <p>2) Deny the existence of oppression, and unwittingly collude with the oppressive system.</p> <p>3) Acknowledge existence of some overt forms of oppression; begin to see these as more than just occasional exceptions.</p>	<p>1) Conscious identification and acceptance of dominant culture's logic, values, feelings and beliefs systems and codes of appropriate behavior: inferiority of their group; superiority of dominant group.</p> <p>2) Rationalize their acquiescence to and/or active support of the oppressive culture and system. Ignore contradictions inherent in the rationalization of their active participation in their own oppression.</p> <p>3) Acknowledge contradictions, and the cognitive dissonance between dominant ideology and the positive attributes of their own group.</p>

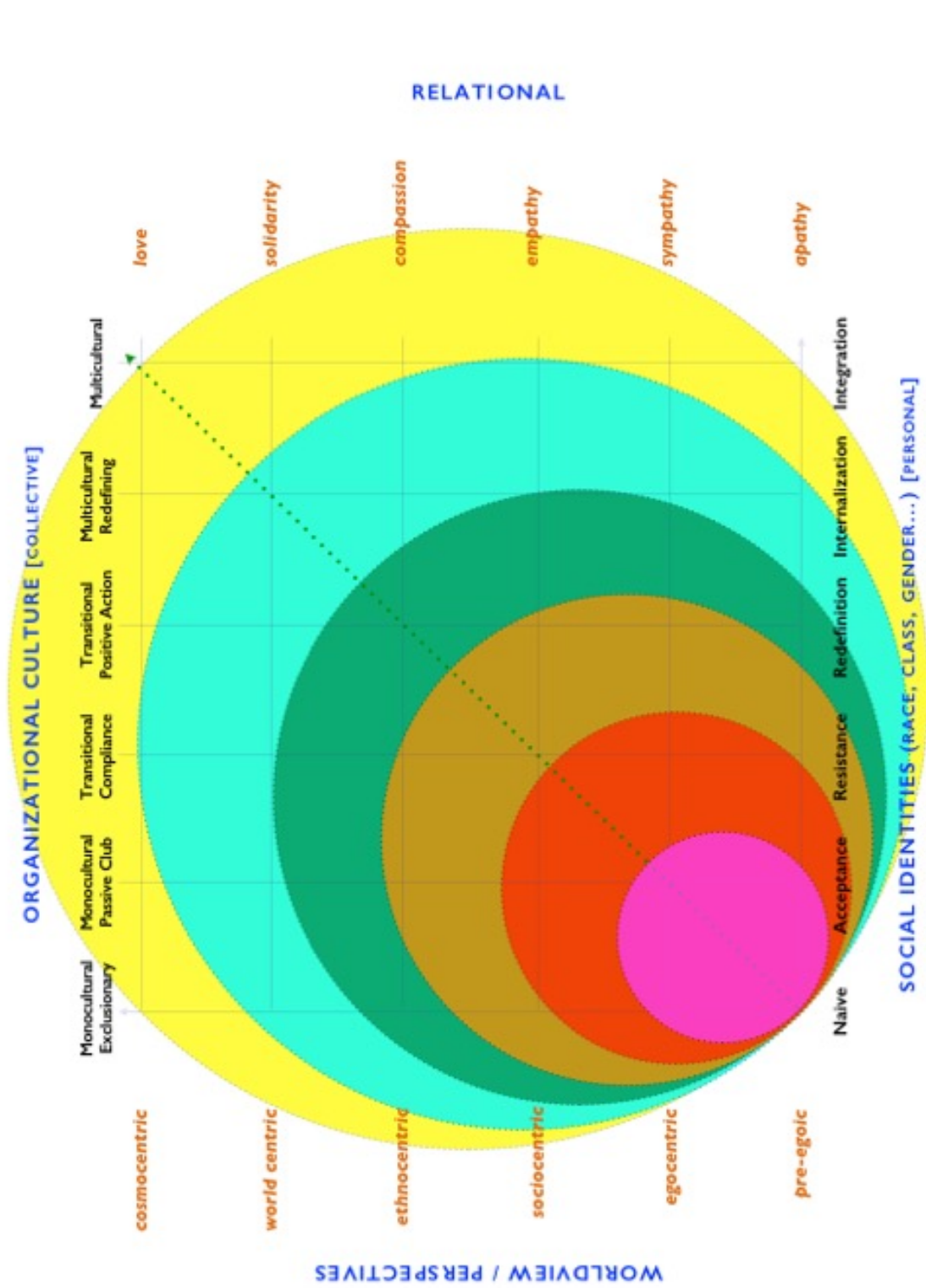
<p>III: Resistance Entry into this stage comes with increased awareness of oppression and its impacts, as they...</p> <p>Exit from this stage involves intense feelings and the urge to address questions about their identity, as they...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Passive</p> <p>1) Search for examples of oppression in the behavior of individuals and institutions. Question and challenge oppression in safe situations where there is little or no risk to social and professional position.</p> <p>2) Recognize the existence of oppression and its pervasiveness throughout society. This often results in their attempt to distance themselves from members of their own dominant group.</p> <p>3) Feel alienation and frustration, often leading them to more actively engage the problem. Begin to own their own participation in the oppressive system, and reject the tenets of that system.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Active</p> <p>1) Question and examine the social dynamics and structures that support oppression. Challenge oppression whenever it is identified in people and institutions.</p> <p>2) Feel shame and guilt at the existence of oppression, and anger at other of their own social group. Take ownership of own oppressive behavior and their implicit support of oppressive institutions.</p> <p>3) Actively reject own oppressive behavior and attitudes, and the social system that teach and support oppression. Actively reject the privilege they gained from an oppressive system.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Passive</p> <p>1) Question and challenge oppression in safe situations where there is little or no risk to social and professional position.</p> <p>2) Experience feelings of frustration, pain and anger. Continue to take greater risks through more open challenges of oppression.</p> <p>3) Feel an increasing sense of power with each direct challenge of oppression.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Active</p> <p>1) Openly question individual and institutional support for oppressive practices and policies. Seek to gain increased understanding of the nature of oppression; become more skilled at identifying the many ways that it manifests.</p> <p>2) Increased anger, pain, hurt and rage regarding their oppression. Become more hostile toward agents, and target that collude with, oppression. Identity is defined in opposition to the oppressor; attempt to cleanse themselves of those beliefs, attitudes and behaviors learned at the Acceptance stage.</p> <p>3) Realize a sense of power related to an ability to influence the immediate environment. Develop a clearer sense of “who I am <u>not</u>”.</p>

<p>IV: Redefinition Entry is characterized by conscious efforts to create identities independent of the oppressive system. Therefore, people...</p> <p>Exit from this stage begins as people...</p>	<p>1) Search for new ways of defining their social group and their membership in it in ways other than based on oppression and stereotyping of target groups.</p> <p>2) Critically examine their own socialization with other members of the same social group. Recognize differences between social groups, but without attributing superiority or inferiority to any.</p> <p>3) Develop positive definition of their social identity as they discover aspects of their culture they find to be affirming. Develop new sense of pride and personal esteem, and act more spontaneously on their values.</p>	<p>1) Focus attention more on their own social group; do not tend to associate much with agents, as they do not perceive these as being affirming of their new and positive identity.</p> <p>2) Search to rename [and reframe] their experience and basic referents through new and affirming paradigms; tend to interact more with others at the same developmental stage within their own group.</p> <p>3) Reclaim their group's culture; rediscover positive aspects of their heritage, and develop a renewed appreciation and sense of pride in their group identity.</p>
<p>V: Internalization Entry occurs as persons begins to associate into their redefined identity, and...</p> <p>On-going process of refining identity...</p>	<p>1) Integrate the new identity into all the various aspects of their life.</p> <p>2) New identity is internalized, and largely unconscious, as they become more comfortable with the application of their new consciousness in everyday life.</p> <p>3) New identity must be nurtured in order for it may be sustained in a hostile environment and against new and improved attempts to resocialize it in the ideology of the oppressive society.</p>	<p>1) Integrate the new identity into all the various aspects of their life. Continue to internalized new sense of group pride.</p> <p>2) Expand circle of social interaction beyond supportive reference group; expand circle of influence. Renegotiate important relationships based on new consciousness.</p> <p>3) Gain a better understanding of the different forms of oppression; appreciation of other target groups; better understanding of the inter-relatedness of oppressions. More capable of transferring growth to other identities.</p>

Sources:

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Developmental Stages in Liberating Transformation



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