Summary of Stages of Racial Identity Development

The attached charts summarize several frameworks that have been developed to describe stages of racial and ethnic identity development. We found them mostly in the psychology and therapy literature. Some were developed as a way to expand on Erik Erickson’s model of human development (which goes from infancy to old age), taking into account factors such as race, gender and sexuality. Some of the frameworks are used to help therapists understand their patients more fully. The models also have broader applications for understanding how individuals function in community, family and organizational settings.

Most of the framework carry the same few cautions. Not every person will necessarily go through every stage in a framework. Many of the authors specifically acknowledge that the stages might also be cyclical, that people might revisit different stages at different points in their lives.

The frameworks summarized here describe people who are situated in many different ways, but they do not describe all of the possibilities. We have listed a few different frameworks that focus on the experiences of people of color, biracial people and white people in the U.S. We think they can be useful tools for self reflection and for building empathy and understanding of people who are situated differently from ourselves.

People of Color

- People of Color Racial Identity Model (William Cross, originally developed as the Nigrescense Model of African American Identity). This framework (referenced by Barbara Burke Tatum in the companion reading) focuses on the process by which African Americans come to understand their identity.
- Filipino American Identity Development, (Kevin Nadal). This framework focuses on Filipino Americans, highlighting the experience of cultural assimilation/acculturation of a distinct ethnic group.
- Ethnic Minority Identity Development (John W. Berry). This framework focuses on the experiences of ethnic minorities, particularly immigrants to the U.S.

Bi-racial People

- Continuum of Biracial Identity Model (Kerry Ann Rockquemore and Tracey Laszlof). Continuum rather than staged model.
- Resolutions of Biracial Identity Tensions (Maria P. P. Root). Description of possible positive resolutions of biracial identity tensions.

White People

- White Racial Identity Model (Janet E. Helms, reference in Tatum article). This framework identifies a continuum that leads to developing an anti-racist identity.

Integrated Model (John and Joy Hoffman)

- This framework begins and ends with stages that are thought to be the same for all people. In between, different stages are articulated for People of Color and White People.

Summary by Interaction Institute for Social Change
# Summary of Stages of Racial Identity Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEOPLE OF COLOR</th>
<th>BIRACIAL PEOPLE</th>
<th>WHITE PEOPLE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black American Racial Identity (William Cross)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Biracial (Poston)</strong></td>
<td><strong>White Racial Identity Model (Helms)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>PRE-ENCOUNTER</strong>: absorbed many beliefs and values of the dominant white culture, including the notion that “white is right” and “black is wrong”; de-emphasis on one’s racial group membership; largely unaware of race or racial implications</td>
<td>1. <strong>PERSONAL IDENTITY</strong>: sense of self unrelated to ethnic grouping; occurs during childhood</td>
<td>1. <strong>CONTACT</strong>: In the first stage of contact, the individual adheres to the “colorblind” motto. They see racial difference but do not find it salient and in fact may feel that racism is in fact propagated by the discussion and acknowledgement of race as an issue. In this stage, there is no conscious demonstration of racism here. This seemingly non-racist position can cover unconscious racist beliefs. If the individual is confronted with real-world experiences or knowledge that uncovers the privileges of White skin, they may move into the disintegration stage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>ENCOUNTER</strong>: forced by event or series of events to acknowledge the impact of racism in one’s life and the reality that one cannot truly be white; forced to focus on identity as a member of a group targeted by racism</td>
<td>2. <strong>CHOICE OF GROUP</strong>: as a result of multiple factors, individuals feel pressured to choose one racial or ethnic group identity over another</td>
<td>2. <strong>DISINTEGRATION</strong>: In this stage, because the person has new experiences which confront his prior conception of the world and because this conception is now challenged by this new information or experience, the person is often plagued by feelings of guilt and shame. These emotions of guilt and shame can be modified when the person decides to channel these emotions in a positive way but when those emotions continue to dominate, the person may move into the reintegration stage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <strong>IMMERSION/EMERSION</strong>: simultaneous desire to surround oneself with visible symbols of one’s racial identity and an active avoidance of symbols of whiteness; actively seek out opportunities to explore aspects of one’s own history and culture with support of peers from one’s own racial background</td>
<td>3. <strong>CATEGORIZATION</strong>: choices influenced by status of the group, parental influence, cultural knowledge, appearance</td>
<td>3. <strong>REINTEGRATION</strong>: This stage is marked by a “blame-the-victim” attitude that’s more intense than anything experienced in the contact stage. They may feel that although Whites do have privileges, it is probably</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. <strong>INTERNALIZATION</strong>: secure in one’s own sense of racial identity; pro-black attitudes become more expansive, open, and less defensive; willing to establish meaningful relationships with whites who acknowledge and are respective of one’s self-definition</td>
<td>4. <strong>ENMESHMENT/ DENIAL</strong>: guilt and confusion about choosing an identity that isn’t fully expressive of all their cultural influences; denial of differences between the racial groupings; possible exploration of the identities that were not chosen in stages 2 and 3</td>
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<td>5. <strong>INTERNALIZATION-COMMITMENT</strong>: found ways to translate one’s personal sense of blackness into a plan of action or a general sense of commitment to concerns of blacks as a group, which is sustained over time; comfort with one’s own race and those around them</td>
<td>5. <strong>APPRECIATION</strong>: of multiple identities</td>
<td>5. <strong>COMMITMENT</strong>:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. <strong>INTEGRATION</strong>: sense of wholeness, integrating multiple identities</td>
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## Summary of Stages of Racial Identity Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ETHNIC AWARENESS</td>
<td>Neutral or positive feelings toward all groups, including their own; some may identify as minority groups if they so choose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ASSIMILATION TO DOMINANT CULTURE</td>
<td>View dominant culture as equal or superior to minority groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. SEPARATION</td>
<td>Identity with the dominant group, while feeling the need to connect to other groups of color.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. ETHNOCENTRIC REALIZATION</td>
<td>Identity with one or all racial groups, usually with family support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. IMMERSION/EMERSION</td>
<td>Identity with both racial groups, but identifies more strongly with one or more racial groups. Usually moves among various settings but identifies with one or more racial groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. INTEGRATION</td>
<td>Valuing and integrating one’s culture as equal to the majority culture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Resolutions of Racial Identity Tensions

1. Accurate Reflection of the Identity Society Assumptions (Coping)
2. Little Exposure to Racism
3. Philadelphia Asian American
4. Pan-Asian American
5. Multicultural Realization: Views of Positive and Negative Discrimination
6. Incorportation: Partially Toward Asian

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### Summary of Stages of Racial Identity Development

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<tr>
<th>Integrated Model (John and Joy Hoffman)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CONFORMITY</strong> (Whites and People of Color): In the first stage of conformity, people of color and Whites feel that they are just “regular Americans.” Unconsciously, members of both groups strive to emulate Whiteness in actions, speech, dress, beliefs and attitudes because Whiteness is perceived as positive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### People of Color

**DISSONANCE**: Dissonance for people of color occurs when they want to get along and be Americans but discover that their race or gender may preclude them from the benefits that Whites or males get. They start to feel confused about the beliefs they held about America and themselves as they begin to see that racism and sexism may be impacting them.

**IMMERSION**: These question, and disillusionment can lead to the immersion stage where women and persons of color feel angry about racism and sexism. They feel that most White people and males are racists and sexists and thus part of the problem. What might people of color do with this anger?

**EMERGENCE**: The fourth stage for people of color is emersion where their anger about racism directed towards Whites leads them to feel that they can only belong with others in their own racial group which understands them. They avoid, as much as possible, contacts with Whites and seek out people of their own race or gender.

**INTERNALIZATION**: Internalization occurs when they realize that there are negative qualities among their own people and that all White people are not the enemy. They see racism and sexism as the enemy and as something that they can fight against. They also manifest the desire to have more control over who they want to be. They are more than just a person of color or a woman

#### White People

**ACCEPTANCE**: In this stage, Whites can still dismiss or diminish comments or actions that indicate that racism is alive. They express the view that that everyone has struggles and people should just accept the way things are and try to be American. They expect of color to “get over it” and go forward as Americans which really means be more like White people.

**RESISTANCE**: Whites move from their acceptance stage to the resistance stage where they profess that racism is a thing of the past. Whites often express their belief that there is a new racism and that is the racism that they perceive is against Whites. This is popularly referred to as “reverse racism.”

**RETREAT**: If their assumptions are proven false, they may enter the retreat stage. They may feel guilty and ashamed by how hard life has been and still is for people of color. They are also frustrated by, annoyed, and impatient with other Whites who don’t get it.

**EMERGENCE**: After feeling guilty and ashamed, Whites may move into the emergence stage where they start to understand their privilege and how it has and continue to benefit them. They also now begin to take control over the type of White person they want to be like.

**INTEGRATIVE AWARENESS** (both): In the last stage of integrative awareness, Hoffman asserts that Whites and people of color both come to the conclusion that there is much more to them than their race or gender. Both groups are able to positively identify with their own racial group while also acknowledging that other aspects of their identity (their gender, their talents and abilities, their unique experiences) contribute to their personhood.
Sources for the descriptions in the grids below:
http://www.thecolorsoftherainbow.com/Cultural%20Identity%20Phinney.ppt
accessed 7-15-11

Additional readings:
John W. Berry
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

William E. Cross, Jr.


Kevin Nadal

W.S. Carlos Poston
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICEExtSearch_S earchValue_0=EJ424084&ERICEExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ424084


Working Definitions

**Acculturation:** A change in the cultural behavior and thinking of a person or group of people through contact with another culture.

**Ally:** Someone from a dominant group (someone who experiences unearned privilege and/or power) who works with and/or acts in support of non-dominant group members, or someone who is united with another for a common cause. Allies take action, reflect on their own thinking and beliefs, seek out learning opportunities, and take initiative in interpersonal relations. (IISC)

Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways.

Allies commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in oppression of those groups and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.

**Assimilation:** “The process in which one group takes on the cultural and other traits of a larger group.” In the United States, the “melting pot” was a popular metaphor used to describe the expectation that 18th and 19th century European immigrant groups would assimilate into “American” culture rather than maintain an ethnic distinct identity.

**Bigotry:** Intolerant prejudice that glorifies one’s own group and denigrates members of other groups.

**Class:** Relative social status based on income, wealth, race, power, position, occupation, and education.

**Collusion:** When people act to perpetuate oppression or prevent others from working to eliminate oppression. *Example: Able-bodied people who object to strategies for making buildings accessible because of the expense.*
Colonialism: Colonization can be defined as some form of invasion, dispossession, and subjugation of a people. The invasion need not be military; it can begin—or continue—as geographical intrusion in the form of agricultural, urban, or industrial encroachments. The result of such incursion is the dispossession of vast amounts of lands from the original inhabitants. This is often legalized after the fact. The long-term result of such massive dispossession is institutionalized inequality. The colonizer/colonized relationship is by nature an unequal one that benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized.

Critical Race Theory: The Critical Race Theory...movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies take up, but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, and even feelings and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step by step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism and principles of constitutional law.

Cultural Appropriation: Theft of cultural elements for one’s own use, commodification, or profit — including symbols, art, language, customs, etc. — often without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture. Results from the assumption of a dominant (i.e. white) culture’s right to take other cultural elements.

Cultural Competence: a set of congruent behaviors, knowledge, will, and skills that enable just and effective work in multicultural settings. Cultural competency is never fully achieved but is an ongoing process. Cultural competency can be developed by individuals, organizations, communities and beyond.

Individuals develop their cultural competency by building knowledge, values, skills, and will that help them to:

- develop self-awareness and an understanding of one’s own culture(s);
- understand and appreciate other cultures;
- facilitate understanding among people of different cultures;
- confront inconsistencies, biases and unconscious assumptions of cultures; and,
- take action to ensure fairness and access and correct for the results of historic inequities.
Organizations develop their cultural competency by building the knowledge, values, skills, and will of individuals; and, by building equitable, accessible and inclusive organizational culture, expectations, policies, structures, systems and processes.
(adapted from Garth Ham, Alliance for Nonprofit Management)

**Cultural Racism:** Cultural racism refers to representations, messages, and stories conveying the idea that behaviors and values associated with white people or “whiteness” are automatically “better” or more “normal” than those associated with other racially defined groups. Cultural racism shows up in advertising, movies, history books, definitions of patriotism, and in policies and laws. Cultural racism is also a powerful force in maintaining systems of internalized supremacy and internalized racism. It does that by influencing collective beliefs about what constitutes appropriate behavior, what is seen as beautiful, and the value placed on various forms of expression. All of these cultural norms and values in the U.S. have explicitly or implicitly racialized ideals and assumptions (for example, what “nude” means as a color, which facial features and body types are considered beautiful, which child-rearing practices are considered appropriate.)

**Cultural White Privilege:** A set of dominant cultural assumptions about what is good, normal, or appropriate that reflects Western European white world views and dismisses or demonizes other world views.

**Culture:** The values, beliefs, arts, customs, and languages that a group of people have discovered, invented, developed or inherited to address internal and external needs, and that comprise a way of life that can be taught, learned, reproduced, transformed, and passed on.

A social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors, and styles of communication.

**Diaspora:** “the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions...a common element in all forms of diaspora; these are people who live outside their natal (or imagined natal) territories and recognize that their traditional homelands are reflected deeply in the languages they speak, religions they adopt, and the cultures they produce.
**Discrimination:** The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories. *(Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder’s Tool Kit.)*

In the United States, the law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The law also requires that employers reasonably accommodate applicants’ and employees’ sincerely held religious practices, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer’s business.

**Diversity:** Each individual is unique, and groups of individuals reflect multiple dimensions of difference including: race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, cognitive styles, and much more. Valuing diversity means embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of difference that exist in groups. *(Adapted from Diversity Initiatives Campaign, The Diversity Project)*

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender—the groups that most often come to mind when the term “diversity” is used—but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.

**Equity:** All groups have access to the resources and opportunities necessary to eliminate opportunity and resource gaps, and thereby, improve the quality of their lives. *(Adapted from Equity and Inclusion Campaign)*
**Ethnicity:** A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base. *Examples of different ethnic groups are: Cape Verdean, Haitian, African American (Black); Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian); Cherokee, Mohawk, Navaho (Native American); Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican (Latino); Polish, Irish, and Swedish (White).*

**Implicit Bias:** Also known as unconscious or hidden bias, implicit biases are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness. Many studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals’ attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to trump individuals’ stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that many people profess. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is often used to measure implicit biases with regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and other topics.

**Inclusion:** a value and practice of ensuring that people feel they belong and that their input is valued by the whole (group, organization, society, system, etc.), particularly regarding decisions that affect their lives. (Adapted from Equity and Inclusion Campaign)

Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

**Indigeneity:** Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them, by conquest, settlement or other means, and reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form part, under a state structure which incorporates mainly national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant. *Example: Maori in territory now defined as New Zealand; Mexicans in territory now defined as Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, and Oklahoma; Native American tribes in territory now defined as the United States.*
**Individual Racism:** Individual racism refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can be deliberate, or the individual may act to perpetuate or support racism without knowing that is what he or she is doing.

**Examples:**

- Telling a racist joke, using a racial epithet, or believing in the inherent superiority of whites over other groups;
- Avoiding people of color whom you do not know personally, but not whites whom you do not know personally (e.g., white people crossing the street to avoid a group of Latino/a young people; locking their doors when they see African American families sitting on their doorsteps in a city neighborhood; or not hiring a person of color because “something doesn’t feel right”);
- Accepting things as they are (a form of collusion).

**Institutional Racism:** Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

**Examples:**

- Government policies that explicitly restricted the ability of people to get loans to buy or improve their homes in neighborhoods with high concentrations of African Americans (also known as “red-lining”).
- City sanitation department policies that concentrate trash transfer stations and other environmental hazards disproportionately in communities of color.

**Internalized Oppression:** “A system of disadvantage [that includes people who are the targets of oppression internalizing]...a set of develop ideas, beliefs, actions and behaviors that support or collude with [oppression and in which]...individuals, institutions and communities ... are often unconsciously and habitually rewarded for supporting ... privilege and power and punished and excluded when [they] do not.”
Internalized Racism: Internalized racism is the situation that occurs in a racist system when a racial group oppressed by racism supports the supremacy and dominance of the dominating group by maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures and ideologies that undergird the dominating group’s power. It involves four essential and interconnected elements:

**Decision-making** - Due to racism, people of color do not have the ultimate decision-making power over the decisions that control our lives and resources. As a result, on a personal level, we may think white people know more about what needs to be done for us than we do. On an interpersonal level, we may not support each other’s authority and power, especially if it is in opposition to the dominating racial group. Structurally, there is a system in place that rewards people of color who support white supremacy and power and coerces or punishes those who do not.

**Resources** - Resources, broadly defined (e.g. money, time, etc.), are unequally in the hands and under the control of white people. Internalized racism is the system in place that makes it difficult for people of color to get access to resources for our own communities and to control the resources of our community. We learn to believe that serving and using resources for ourselves and our particular community is not serving “everybody.”

**Standards** - With internalized racism, the standards for what is appropriate or “normal” that people of color accept are white people’s or Eurocentric standards. We have difficulty naming, communicating, and living up to our deepest standards and values, and holding ourselves and each other accountable to them.

**Naming the problem** - There is a system in place that misnames the problem of racism as a problem of or caused by people of color and blames the disease—emotional, economic, political, etc.—on people of color. With internalized racism, people of color might, for example, believe we are more violent than white people and not consider state-sanctioned political violence or the hidden or privatized violence of white people and the systems they put in place and support.
Interpersonal Racism: Interpersonal racism occurs between individuals. Once we bring our private beliefs into our interaction with others, racism is now in the interpersonal realm. Examples: public expressions of racial prejudice, hate, bias and bigotry between individuals.

Interpersonal White Privilege: Behavior between people that consciously or unconsciously reflects white superiority or entitlement.

Intersectionality: An approach largely advanced by women of color, arguing that classifications such as gender, race, class, and others cannot be examined in isolation from one another; they interact and intersect in individuals’ lives, in society, in social systems, and are mutually constitutive.

Exposing [one’s] multiple identities can help clarify they ways in which a person can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a white woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produce a qualitatively distinct life.

Institutional White Privilege: Policies, practices, and behaviors of institutions—such as schools, banks, non-profits or the Supreme Court—that have the effect of maintaining or increasing accumulated advantages for those groups currently defined as white, and maintaining or increasing disadvantages for those racial or ethnic groups not defined as white. The ability of institutions to survive and thrive even when their policies, practices, and behaviors maintain, expand, or fail to redress accumulated disadvantages and/or inequitable outcomes for people of color.
Movement Building: is the effort of social change agents to engage power holders and the broader society in addressing a systemic problem or injustice while promoting an alternative vision or solution. Movement building requires a range of intersecting approaches through a set of distinct stages over a long-term period of time. Through movement building, organizers can:

- Propose solutions to the root causes of social problems;
- Enable people to exercise their collective power;
- Humanize groups that have been denied basic human rights and improve conditions for the groups affected;
- Create structural change by building something larger than a particular organization or campaign; and
- Promote visions and values for society based on fairness, justice and democracy.

Multicultural Competency: A process of learning about and becoming allies with people from other cultures, thereby broadening our own understanding and ability to participate in a multicultural process. The key element to becoming more culturally competent is respect for the ways that others live in and organize the world and an openness to learn from them.

Oppression: Systemic devaluing, undermining, marginalizing, and disadvantaging of certain social identities in contrast to the privileged norm; when some people are denied something of value, while others have ready access. The act of crushing or burdening by abuse of authority or power, or of burdening spiritually or mentally.

Pluralist Model: The existence of groups with different ethnic, religious, or political backgrounds within one society. The policy or theory that minority groups within a society should maintain cultural differences but share overall political and economic power.
Power: is the capacity of individuals or groups to bring about change by:

- influencing people – “I/we can persuade others (individuals or groups) to do or refrain from doing something.”
- affecting one’s environment – “I/we can manipulate, change or control our environment.”
- addressing personal or group needs – “I/we can ensure that our needs are met.”
- pursuing desires – “I/we can take steps to get what we want.”
- protecting interests – “I/we can make sure that we and what’s important to us are protected.”
- defining issues, set agendas, and expand or limit the scope of discussion – “I/we can determine what is discussed, how issues are framed, and what is on/off the table for discussion.”
- determining who can participate in decision making and how – “I/we can decide who will make decisions and whose input will be considered.”

Power is multi-dimensional and can be exercised by individuals, groups, organizations and systems. Power is not a fixed asset that people possess. Rather, it is socially constructed, understood, and legitimized through social relationships among individuals and groups of people.

Neither inherently negative nor positive power can be developed and exercised either as “power over” or as “power with” others. It can be generated, redistributed, or shared. Power can be exercised in ways that affirm human dignity, protect individuals, and groups from oppression, and support a just and sustainable distribution of resources. Alternatively, power can be exercised in ways that undermine human dignity, oppress or disenfranchise individuals and groups, and maintain unfair, unsustainable distributions of resources.
People and groups gain power through many sources, including:

- being in a legally or institutionally protected group or having legally defined rights;
- having a position or role that gives one authority or responsibility to do certain things;
- having expertise or technical knowledge;
- being able to influence people by having gained their respect or admiration;
- having the capacity (real or perceived) to coerce, punish or employ physical force or to decide who will be punished or hurt;
- having the capacity (real or perceived) to decide who is rewarded and how;
- having control over resources needed to meet one’s own/one’s communities’ needs or satisfy desires;
- have “moral authority” (need to describe this) or,
- having the ability to decide how and for whose benefit public resources are used.

Power is unequally distributed globally and in U.S. society; some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access and control over resources. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates. Although power is often conceptualized as power over other individuals or groups, other variations are power with (used in the context of building collective strength) and power within (which references an individual’s internal strength). Learning to “see” and understand relations of power is vital to organizing for progressive social change.

**Prejudice:** A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics.
Privilege: Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we’re taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.

Race: A socially constructed way of grouping people, based on skin color and other apparent physical differences, which has no genetic or scientific basis. The concept of race was created and used to justify social and economic oppression of blacks and other people of color by whites.

A political construction created to concentrate power with white people and legitimize dominance over non-white people.

Racial and Ethnic Identity: An individual’s awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and ethnic categories that an individual chooses to describe him or herself based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience.

Racial Equity: Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one’s racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

Racial Justice [is defined] as the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all.

Racial Identity Development Theory: Racial Identity Development Theory discusses how people in various racial groups and with multiracial identities form their particular self-concept. It also describes some typical phases in remaking that identity based on learning and awareness of systems of privilege and structural racism, cultural and historical meanings attached to racial categories, and factors operating in the larger socio-historical level (e.g. globalization, technology, immigration, and increasing multiracial population).
**Racial Healing:** To restore to health or soundness; to repair or set right; to restore to spiritual wholeness.

**Racial Reconciliation:** Reconciliation involves three ideas. First, it recognizes that racism in America is both systemic and institutionalized, with far-reaching effects on both political engagement and economic opportunities for minorities. Second, reconciliation is engendered by empowering local communities through relationship-building and truth-telling. Lastly, justice is the essential component of the conciliatory process—justice that is best termed as restorative rather than retributive, while still maintaining its vital punitive character.

**Racism:** For purposes of this site, we want users to know we are using the term “racism” specifically to refer to individual, cultural, institutional, and systemic ways by which differential consequences are created for groups historically or currently defined as white being advantaged, and groups historically or currently defined as non-white (African, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, etc.) as disadvantaged. That idea aligns with those who define racism as prejudice plus power—a common phrase in the field. Combining the concepts of prejudice and power points out the mechanisms by which racism leads to different consequences for different groups. The relationship and behavior of these interdependent elements has allowed racism to recreate itself generation after generation, such that systems that perpetuate racial inequity no longer need racist actors or to explicitly promote racial differences in opportunities, outcomes and consequences to maintain those differences. A form of oppression based on the socially constructed concept of race* exercised by the dominant racial group (whites) over non-dominant racial groups.
Racism operates on four levels: (Source: Applied Research Center)

1. Internalized Racism is the set of private beliefs, prejudices, and ideas that individuals have about the superiority of whites and the inferiority of people of color. Among people of color, it manifests as internalized oppression. Among whites, it manifests as internalized racial superiority.
2. Interpersonal Racism is the expression of racism between individuals.
3. Institutional Racism is discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and practices, inequitable opportunities and impacts within organizations and institutions, based on race.
4. Structural Racism is a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequality.

*Race:* A socially constructed way of grouping people, based on skin color and other apparent physical differences, which has no genetic or scientific basis. The concept of race was created and used to justify social and economic oppression of blacks and other people of color by whites. (Adapted from “Race: The Power of an Illusion”)

**Racial Justice:** the creation and proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, and outcomes for all people, regardless of race. (Applied Research Center)

**Racial Equity:** a situation where one cannot predict an individual or group’s access to resources or likelihood of well-being and social status based on their race.
**Structural White Privilege:** A system of white domination that creates and maintains belief systems that make current racial advantages and disadvantages seem normal. The system includes powerful incentives for maintaining white privilege and its consequences, and powerful negative consequences for trying to interrupt white privilege or reduce its consequences in meaningful ways. The system includes internal and external manifestations at the individual, interpersonal, cultural and institutional levels.

The accumulated and interrelated advantages and disadvantages of white privilege that are reflected in racial/ethnic inequities in life-expectancy and other health outcomes, income and wealth and other outcomes, in part through different access to opportunities and resources. These differences are maintained in part by denying that these advantages and disadvantages exist at the structural, institutional, cultural, interpersonal and individual levels and by refusing to redress them or eliminate the systems, policies, practices, cultural norms and other behaviors and assumptions that maintain them.

**Unearned Privilege:** Systematic advantage that is granted based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or other dimensions of diversity, regardless of individuals’ personal characteristics or efforts. This creates dominant/“up” and non-dominant/“down” groups in a society. These advantages are real and exist whether or not a person from a privileged group makes a conscious, deliberate choice to seek or act on the privileges or whether the person is even aware that s/he benefits from such systematic, structural advantages.

**White Privilege:** Refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. Generally, white people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.

**White Supremacy:** White supremacy is a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.
Levels of Racism

**Interpersonal Racism** - Occurs between individuals. Once we bring our private beliefs into our interaction with others, racism is now in the interpersonal realm. (Example: Public expressions of racial prejudice, hate, bias and bigotry between individuals.)

**Internalized Racism** - Lies within people. These are private manifestations of racism that reside inside our minds (Examples include prejudice, internalized oppression and privilege, and beliefs about race influenced by the dominant culture. The acceptance and incorporation of the negative images of one’s own race.)

**Institutional Racism** - Occurs within institutions. Institutional racism is discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and practices, and inequitable opportunities and impacts, based on race. (Example: Discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and practices, and inequitable opportunities and impacts, based on race.)

**Structural Racism** - Occurs underneath, all around and across institutions and society. It’s the cumulative and compounded effects of an array of factors that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color. (Example: racist history, dominant cultural representations, practices across institutions, popular myths, and compounded and chronic inequities.)
From Perception to Oppression – A Progression

1. **Perception**: Impressions of an object, person, or situation that are taken in by people through their five senses or from beyond the five senses.

2. **Assumption**: The supposition that something is true without adequate facts to back it up. For diversity work, it’s important to recognize when we are making assumptions and to make our assumptions visible and testable.

3. **Stereotype**: A standardized mental picture that is held in common about members of a group that represents an oversimplified opinion, attitude, or unexamined judgment, without regard to individual difference.

4. **Prejudice**: A negative or limiting opinion or leaning, based on stereotypes and formed without a basis in fact or experience, or before sufficient knowledge of the particular person or situation.

5. **Bigotry**: The state of mind of a person who is obstinately or intolerantly devoted to his or her own negative opinions or prejudices, and is unwilling to be influenced by information, interpretations, or analysis of others.

6. **Discrimination**: The act, practice, or instance of making a limiting difference in treatment or favor based on a person’s actual or perceived membership in a particular group. Denial of justice prompted by prejudice, typically involves preserving the power, access or special status of some groups over others.
Equality vs Equity
Inclusion vs Exclusion

INCLUSION

INTEGRATION  SEGREGATION  EXCLUSION
Structural Racism