

Jean Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development

Erica Garnett

What is ethnic identity?

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**“There is no universal definition of
the concept of ethnic identity in
literature”**

(Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 272).

How do we define ethnic identity?

Ethnic identity is the culture, religion, geography, language, and practices shared by individuals connected by loyalty and kinship. (Evans et al., 2010)



2 Ways of Understanding



External Ethnic Identity:

Recognizable social and cultural behaviors

- Language
- Traditions
- Friendship with other members
- Involvement in group activities

Internal Ethnic Identity:

- *Cognitive*: view of self, the group, and traditions.
- *Moral*: obligation to heritage and values
- *Affective dimensions*: attachment feelings and an affinity to seek out similar members and cultural patterns.



Factors Affecting Ethnic Identity Participation

- ❖ Ethnic language proficiency
- ❖ Parental cultural influence
- ❖ Peer interactions
- ❖ Socioeconomic Status
- ❖ Ethnic Identity = Racial Identity
- ❖ “Code Switching”



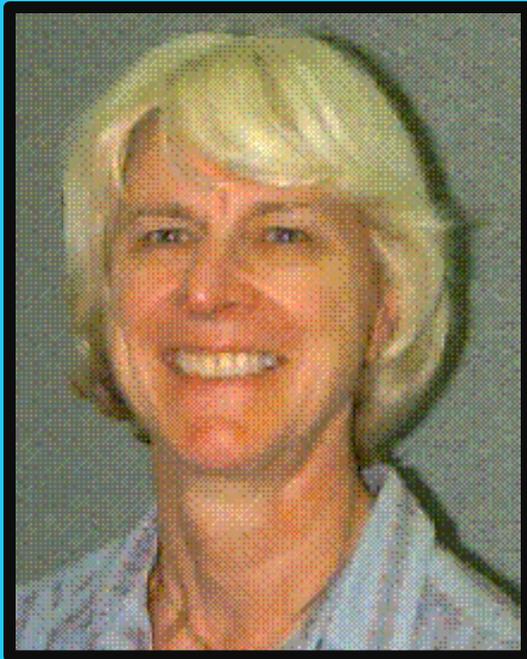
Acculturation

The extent to which an individual absorbs the dominant culture.

John Berry's Model of Acculturation:

- Assimilate: Individuals solely identify with the dominant culture and sever ties with their own culture.
- Marginalize: Individuals reject their own group and the host culture
- Separate: Individuals identify solely with their culture and reject host culture.
- Integrate: Individuals become bicultural by maintaining aspects their own group and selectively acquire some of the host culture.

Jean S. Phinney



Professor of Psychology
California State University,
Los Angeles (CUSLA) – 1977

Received B.A. in Foreign Language
Wellsey College – Wellsey,
Massachusetts

Received PhD in Psychology
UCLA in Los Angeles – 1973

Research

Influences

- William E. Cross (study of black identification)
- Jean Kim (study of Asian American women identity development)
- Erik Erikson (theory of development)
- James Marcia (identity development)

Study

- Survey of 196 Asian American, Black, Hispanic, and White, college students
- Phinney studied the importance of ethnicity to minority group members' identity development .
- A similar survey was also done with junior high and high school students.



Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development

Stage 1: Unexamined Ethnic Identity

- ❖ Individuals have not explored their own ethnicity and may be disinterested in doing so.
- ❖ Some minority students may initially accept attitudes of the dominant culture.
- ❖ Attitudes toward exploring an ethnic identity are influenced by several factors.
- ❖ For several individuals in this stage, ethnicity is a nonissue which can lead to diffusion or foreclosure.
- ❖ Some individuals may relay strong views of ethnic identity and appear to be in stage 3.

**NOT
INTERESTED**



Stage 2: Ethnic Identity Search/Moratorium



- Individuals may remain in Stage 1 until they encounter a situation that causes them to explore.
- The situation may be harsh (overt racism) or gradual (less traumatic).
- This is a time of experimentation where individuals talk with friends and family, read literature, take courses, learn cultural customs, and attend cultural events.
- May be an emotionally intense stage (anger, guilt, or embarrassment).
- Individuals can remain in this stage for a very long period of time.

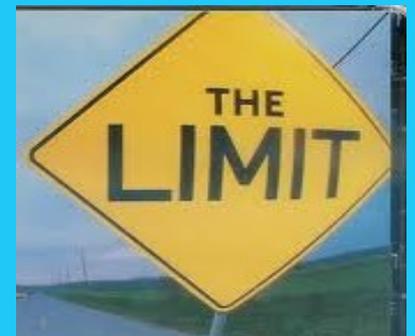
Stage 3: Ethnic Identity Achievement

- ❑ Individuals resolve their ethnic identity conflicts, accept membership in minority culture, and are open to other cultures.
- ❑ The best outcome would be for an individual to have a secure ethnic identity and a positive orientation toward the mainstream culture.
- ❑ Individuals are confident and calm



Limitations

- Little research has been done to explore how ethnic identity changes during adolescence and early adulthood.
- More studies are needed that include longitudinal data.
- Larger samples are needed to account for variables (family, gender, etc.)
- Need for research across wider range of ages and groups.
- Investigate relationship of ethnic identity and self-esteem.





How can we apply Phinney's model
to our work in student affairs?

GROUP ACTIVITY!



Group Activity

- ❑ Each group will take on the role of a different university office/department
- ❑ Act as an advisor to a student who has experienced an event that is causing him to explore his ethnic identity.
- ❑ Designate 1 spokesperson to present your solutions, on behalf of your group.

TASK:

Create 2 ways your office can promote/support ethnic identity development, specifically for minority students.

Keep in mind what ethnic identity achievement looks like.

References

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