

A Three-Stage Model of Ethnic Identity Formation

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Several Models of Ethnic Development have been proposed. Many researchers agree that an achieved identity is the result of a crisis or awakening, which leads to a period of exploration or experimentation and finally to a commitment or incorporation of one's ethnicity.

Phinney focused on the process of ethnic identity formation - the way in which individuals come to understand the implications of their ethnicity and make decisions about its role in their lives, regardless of the extent of their ethnic involvement.

Stage 1: Unexamined Ethnic Identity

- Characterized by the lack of exploration of ethnicity.
- Existing models suggest that minority subjects initially accept the values and attitudes of the majority culture, including internalized negative views of their own group held by the majority.

Stage 2: Ethnic Identity Search/Moratorium

- The initial stage of ethnic identity is conceptualized as continuing until adolescents encounter a situation that initiates an ethnic identity search.

Stage 3: Ethnic Identity Achievement

- The ideal outcome of the identity process, characterized by a clear, confident sense of one's own ethnicity.
- Identity achievement corresponds to acceptance and internalization of one's ethnicity.

Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development What You Might Say or What You May Feel

Stage 1: Diffusion-Foreclosure

Overall: "I haven't really thought about my feelings around my ethnicity. I'm not sure I even have feelings about my ethnicity. Should I have feelings about my ethnicity? Why would anyone even ask the question?"

D: "My past is back there; I have no reason to worry about it. I'm American now."

D: "Why do I need to learn about who was the first of my people to do this or that? I'm just not too interested."

D: "My parents tell me... about where they lived, but what do I care? I've never lived there."

F: "I don't go looking for my culture. I just go by what my parents say and do, and what they tell me to do, the way they are."

F: "If I could have chosen, I would have chosen to be American White, because it's America, and I would be in my country."

F: "I would choose to be White. They have more job opportunities and are more accepted."

Feelings: ambivalence, detachment, mild curiosity

Stage 2: Moratorium

Overall: "Oh my goodness! I do have some feelings and attitudes about my ethnicity. That incident on my floor/What he said to me/What I experienced in class has influenced my realization of this. Who am I? When did this happen? Why is this happening to me? What did I do to deserve this?"

M: "I want to know what we do and how our culture is different from others. Going to festivals and cultural events helps me to learn more about my culture and myself."

M: "I think people should know what my people had to go through to get to where we are now."

M: "There are a lot of people around me who aren't in my group, and it gets pretty confusing to try and decide who I am."

Feelings: hostility, shame, confusion

Stage 3: Identity Achievement

Overall: "I know who I am and I embrace my ethnicity. I feel pretty good about myself and proud of my ethnicity."

A: "People put me down because of my ethnicity, but I don't care anymore. I can accept myself more."

A: "I have been born [ethnicity], and am born to be [ethnicity]... I'm here in America, and people of many different cultures are here, too. So I don't just consider myself [ethnicity], but also American."

A: "I used want to be White, cause I wanted long flowing hair, and I wanted to be real light. I used to think being light was prettier, but now I think there are pretty dark-skinned girls and pretty light-skinned girls. I don't want to be White now. I'm happy being me."

Feelings: pride and acceptance