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Black, White, Or "Other"? the Development of a Biracial Identity

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BLACK, WHITE, OR "OTHER"?

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BIRACIAL IDENTITY

by

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VITA

The author, Janet Kerf-Wellington, is the daughter of Tom and Helen Kerf, of Lake Bluff, Illinois. She was born on May 16, 1963.

She attended Northern Illinois University from 1981 to 1985. She graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Biology.

In 1986, she entered Loyola University of Chicago in the School of Counseling and Educational Psychology.

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

    "Nothing marks a man's group identity more visibly
    or more permanently than the color of his skin or
    his physical characteristics. Men have used these
    primary symbols of what they call 'race' as a basis
    for their self-esteem or lack of it."
    (Isaacs, Color and Race)
    Although these words were written over twenty years

ago, at a time when race relations in the United States

were constantly being tested both socially and politically,

there remains a sad truth in the statement. Race, skin

color, and ethnicity continue to play a major role in how

society defines individuals, and how individuals define

themselves.

    Racial identity is only one dimension of an

individual's over-all identity or self-concept. However,

it is a crucial dimension for minority individuals who must

develop a "sense of self" in the context of a majority

culture. As Eric Erikson states, "The term 'identity'

points to an individual's link with the unique history of

his people and also relates to the cornerstone of the

individual's unique development." (1969, p. 102) In

essence, one's affiliation with and attitudes toward his or

her ethnic group are key factors in the development of that

individual's identity.

Racial identity research established itself as a significant field of inquiry in the early 1970s. Its importance lies in the fact that identity development in minority individuals is influenced, to some degree or another, by the racial or cultural group in which one is a member. The field has evolved in the last twenty years from deficit model studies focusing on pathology and biased majority culture norms to a more psychosocial, less biased research perspective based on a better understanding of the complex dynamics involved in racial identity development. Racial identity development models help define the process of establishing a coherent racial identity by looking at how minority individuals shape their attitudes regarding themselves, the racial group to which they belong, other minority groups, and the majority culture.

Racial identity development is most often viewed from a stage theory perspective, in that it is constantly progressing through a number of discrete stages as one grows and matures. These transitory stages one passes through are identified by changes in attitude and are contingent upon the cognitive maturity of the individual. Racial identity development is also psychosocial, "embedded in the context of the continuing psychosocial development of the individual" (Rosenthal, 1967, p.158). Hence, it is affected by the interplay between both psychological and

sociological constructs. Developmental racial identity

models are important theoretical tools because they

highlight the differences between members of any one racial

minority group and dispel the myth that all individuals

from any one racial minority group are the same, holding

similar attitudes and beliefs (Poston, 1990). Those models

designed specifically for a particular racial or cultural

group are an important recent advance because they

recognize both within group and between group differences

within the minority population as a whole.

This review of the literature will focus specifically

on racial identity development in the biracial population,

comprised of individuals of black and white parentage. As

a group, this population has grown tremendously in the last

decade. Based upon present trends, and the increase in

social interaction between members of different races and

cultures, one can predict that the biracial population will

continue to increase.

The earlier literature on biracial issues is scant at

best. Up until the early 1970's, there was very limited

research on the topic, despite the steady increase in the

number of biracial marriages. One possible explanation for

this lack of research, beyond the illegal status of

biracial marriages prior to 1967, was society's attitude

toward individuals who married outside of their racial

group and the offspring of those marriages. The issues were often considered too controversial and/or unacceptable to attract research efforts. Hence, many of the studies focus solely on the incidence of interracial marriages in various parts of the country, and only lightly touch upon issues concerning the offspring of such marriages (Reuter, 1931), (Monahan, 1971), (Porterfield, 1978), (McDowell, 1981).

This population has also been largely ignored in the field of identity research, due in part to a lack of recognition of the group as a distinct, unique minority population. It has been customary in our society to classify biracial individuals as "black" unless their physical appearance was light enough for them to abandon their black heritage and "pass" into the majority culture. In effect, society has forced these individuals into one racial group or another. The option of identifying with both racial groups, especially two groups so disparate historically, has not been sanctioned. The result is a slowly expanding population of individuals who may find difficulty establishing a coherent racial identity that deals specifically with their attitudes, values, awareness and beliefs about being biracial.

The concept of the "marginal man", coined in 1928 by Robert Park, and elaborated upon by Everett Stonequist

(1937), is one of the earliest research attempts to understand the problems that may arise when an individual is a member of two conflictual groups. Park theorized that only those individuals able to deny membership in one of the two groups could develop a stable identity, and this was a small percentage of the population. The majority of persons lived out their lives in a constant inner battle, unable to form a stable identity and rejected by both groups. Despite its theoretical shortcomings, Stonequist's deficit model of marginality (with its bleak outlook and negativistic portrayal of these individuals) set the stage for future research on biracial individuals - the quintessential "marginal man".

A most recent deficit model based, in part, on Stonequist's theory of marginality, is the research by Jewelle Taylor Gibbs (1987). Based on observations drawn solely from biracial adolescents referred to mental health agencies, Gibbs reinforces the assumption that the mixed racial heritage of biracial persons leads to major developmental conflicts. These conflicts extend beyond the area of racial identity to include problems related to gender identification, social or reference group orientation, autonomy and achievement (Gibbs, 1987).

Since the literature on biracial identity issues is limited, the developmental process remains largely

undefined. Poston (1990) states that, with the exception
of the deficit models cited above, racial identity models
designed primarily for the African American population are
the only models that may possibly be applied to the
biracial population.

Cross' (1971) Model of Psychological Nigrescence was a
major research effort that attempted to describe the
developmental process that African Americans living in a
white majority culture may go through in resolving identity
issues. A similar process is likely experienced by
biracial individuals. Cross' "Negro to Black" conversion
experience is a self-actualization model that held great
heuristic value at its inception and presented one of the
first positive perspectives on black identity development.
Cross' stages describe a number of psychological states
(feelings, attitudes, cognitions) as well as behavioral
changes that individuals may experience as they progress
toward a resolution of who they are racially. Due to the
complexity of his model, it is difficult to
operationalize. Janet Helms' (1981) Racial Identity
Attitude Scale or RIAS is one of the instruments most
frequently used to measure racial identity in general and
Cross' model in particular. Helms' model does not measure
Cross' stages per se, but rather the attitudes shared by
individuals who are representative of each stage in his

model. Affective, cognitive, and behavioral indices are not measured by the RIAS.

Morten and Atkinson's (1983) Minority Identity Development Model was developed primarily to assist mental health professionals in multicultural counseling experiences. The model may be applied to any minority group who has experienced an oppressive relationship with the dominant culture. This model consists of stages that identify the changes in attitude and behavior of minority individuals as they establish a coherent identity.

Although all of the delineated models have made major contributions to the literature on racial identity development, they suffer shortcomings when applied specifically to the biracial population. The theory of marginality (Stonequist, 1937) is deficit based and assumes that all biracial persons inherently possess marginal identities. Cross' (1971) Psychological Nigrescence Model and Morten and Atkinson's (1983) Minority Identity Development Model do not allow for the integration of several racial or ethnic identities, but rather the integration of the minority culture and acceptance or acknowledgement of the dominant culture. In order for biracial persons to establish an indentity that embraces all aspects of their racial heritage, they must be able to integrate several racial identities. As Erikson (1969)

states, there must be "a conscious connection of self to a specific group that is unique from other groups in physical and other characteristics" (p. 102). Hence, the aforementioned models fall short when applied to the biracial population.

These models also focus solely on the affective dimension of identity (attitudes and/or behaviors). The cognitive dimension is equally important, especially when the entire life span (from childhood to adulthood) is taken into account. Historically, racial identity development research in minority children has focused on racial awareness and race preference. Studies such as the Clark and Clark Doll Preference studies (1967) often failed to account for age related cognitive limitations in the subjects, causing negative interpretations with questionable validity. Although the Cross (1971) and Morten and Atkinson (1983) studies are presumably designed for adolescent age and up, the question one must then ask is, are these models valuable as developmental theories if the cognitive role in childhood development is not considered?

W.S. Carlos Poston's (1990) Biracial Identity Development Model was the only model found in this literature review that adequately addresses the particular dynamics involved in developing a biracial identity.

poston's model is innovative in that it is the only model found in the review that allows for the integration of several racial identities into one "biracial" identity. It addresses both the affective and cognitive dimensions of racial identity so that identity development in childhood may also be considered. In addition, it is based on important research conducted by Cross (1987) and Parham and Helms (1985) that examines the link between "personal identity" psychological constructs such as self-esteem, personal competence, etc., and "reference group orientation" sociological constructs which include racial identity and racial esteem. There has been controversy over the last twenty years regarding the correlation between these two areas, much of which was laid to rest with the advent of Cross'(1987) and Parham and Helms'(1985) research.

Purpose and Significance of This Study

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the applicability of representative racial identity development models for the biracial population. The questions are: In what areas are these models helpful in understanding biracial identity and in what areas do they fall short? What are the key factors in racial identity development that influence how biracial individuals define themselves? Why is the establishment of a true biracial identity

important for this population? Poston's Biracial Identity
Development Model will be highlighted due to its
particular stance regarding racial identity development.
This review will elaborate upon issues presented by Poston
(1990) when developing his model, followed by an analysis
of the model itself. The model analysis will focus on
racial identity theory used as a basis for development,
applicability to the biracial population, and therapeutic
implications.

This research will be unique because its focus is on
reviewing racial identity literature specifically in
relation to the biracial individual. With the exception of
Poston's (1990) study, literature on biracial identity has
been limited to narrative accounts written by biracial
individuals (St. Clair Drake, 1967), (Washington, 1970),
(Brody, 1984) or, as mentioned earlier, research drawn from
a small number of research subjects that do not represent
the entire population (Brown, 1987), (Gibbs, 1987). Since
there has been little empirical research, there is a
limited amount of literature to be reviewed. Hence, by
applying related literature to the issue of biracial
identity development, it is hoped that the reader will
identify patterns leading to further research on this
topic. Conclusions and recommendations will also be made
for the purpose of assisting health care professionals who

work with the biracial population.

Methodology

The review of the literature was derived from numerous computer searches through Loyola University Library, accessing books and journal articles written on the topic in the last 40 years. Sources were also obtained through Psychological Abstracts. The Interracial Family Network of Evanston, Illinois and the Interracial Family Circle of Washington, D.C. also assisted the author in collecting materials with limited circulation.

Limitations of This Study

This study is limited by several factors. Since it a review of the literature, it is limited to research made accessible to the author. It is also focused specifically on individuals of black and white parentage residing in the United States. Consequently, the applicability of Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model is viewed specifically in relation to this group alone. Although some findings may apply to other multiracial individuals, and areas outside of the United States, racial classification systems and societal attitudes vary considerably from group to group and in different regions. Therefore, generalizations regarding the findings of this review should be made with caution.

Definition of Terms

Biracial - First generation individuals of black and white parentage. Also used to describe marriages between one black and one white individual.

Racial Identity - One component of a person's self-concept. The degree to which members of a racial group identify with other members of same racial group and express their ethnicity through their attitudes or evaluations of that group.

Biracial Identification - The acceptance of and connection to both racial groups.

Procedure of Thesis

Chapter 2 will examine racial identity theory and the application of major racial identity development models to the biracial population. Chapter 3 will focus specifically on W.S. Carlos Poston's (1990) Biracial Identity Development Model and the work by Cross (1987) and Parham and Helms (1985) that contributed to its development. Chapter 4 will provide a discussion and summary on the literature review. Recommendations will be made for future research endeavors and suggestions will be given for health care professionals who work with the biracial population.

CHAPTER II

THE APPLICATION OF RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODELS TO THE BIRACIAL POPULATION

Chapter I presented the historical background, purpose and procedure for this review. This chapter will look at the process of racial identity development and examine several major racial identity development models to assess their applicability to the biracial population. The first section of this chapter will focus on identity or the ego and its importance as a psychological construct. The second section will look specifically at the construct of racial identity: various theoretical perspectives regarding its origin, subcomponents and developmental nature. The third section will examine three racial identity development models that have been applied to the biracial population: one was developed during the inception of racial identity research (Stonequist, 1937) which later influenced the major work contributed by Gibbs (1987) on biracial adolescents. The other two were developed after the civil rights movement of the late 1960s (Cross, 1971; Morten and Atkinson, 1983). The final section of this chapter will address the shortcomings of these models when applied to the biracial population, based

on the particular dynamics of a minority group with a dual
heritage. This chapter should give the reader a clearer
understanding of the dynamics involved in racial identity
development, and a historical context for research
perspectives used in creating these models. Chapter II
will also give the reader appropriate background knowledge
before the discussion in Chapter III that specifically
addresses Poston's (1990) Biracial Identity Development
Model and the theoretical basis for its development.

<div align="center">Identity</div>

Establishing a coherent identity is a psychological
task of the utmost importance. Identity development
measures one's capacity to know and understand oneself,
both as an individual and in the context of a social
environment (Looney, 1988). A number of social forces play
a role in identity development; race, ethnicity, gender,
social class, and educational level, to name a few. Each
of these social identities plays a different role and each
holds a different degree of importance from person to
person.

As with many psychological constructs, there is no
single definition of "identity"; in general terms, it is
comprised of all aspects that make up the "self". Eric
Erikson (1968) states that the term "identity" denotes "a
conscious sense of individual uniqueness...[and] an

unconscious striving for continuity" (p. 203). It defines

who we are, what makes us different, and where we fit in.

Identity Development

An emphasis on the psychosocial nature of identity and

its development is crucial because it underscores the

constant interplay between how one perceives oneself versus

how one believes others perceive him or her. As Rosenthal

(1987) states, "We are provided with external definitions

of the self in terms of our relationship to and membership

in certain groups in society" (p. 158). Consequently, each

individual has some internal definition of self that is

constantly integrating and accommodating to any number of

external or social influences. The development of a

stable, coherent identity, simply stated, means that

external and internal definitions of the self are somewhat

congruent, with the internal self being the primary guiding

force.

Although identity development is an on-going process,

Eric Erikson (1969) considered adolescence to be the stage

at which most individuals experience identity confusion and

crisis. It is a time when one experiments with a number of

different social roles, failing at some and integrating

others. For many, problems with defining the self continue

well beyond adolescence. Regardless, the process of

self-definition "is not construed as one in which there

should be a static end-point but rather as an ongoing process reflecting change as needed throughout the life span" (Archer, 1983, pp 345, 346).

Racial Identity

As mentioned previously, racial identity is one of a number of components that comprise one's overall identity. Racial identity relates specifically to an individual's cognitions, beliefs, and attitudes regarding his/her own and others' race or ethnicity (Looney, 1988). Racial identification refers to the active, conscious role one takes in identifying with a specific racial group.

Understanding the significance of racial identification for minority populations is important because, although a person's identity is composed of many psychological constructs, the key ingredient of personality development for minorities is their sense of, and commitment to, their racial heritage (Ponterotto, 1989). According to Janet Helms (1989), "Virtually missing from consideration in traditional developmental psychology, however, is the question of how commitment to the racial aspect of a person's identity develops" (p. 249).

Racial Identity and Group Dynamics

Ethnicity is a crucial factor in the development of a sense of self because it ties an individual to a particular group that serves as a source of support. According to

Rotheram and Phinney (1987), ethnicity "refers to one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership" (p. 13). Although the term "ethnicity" is generally attributed to minority groups within a dominant culture, it can be argued that dominant groups are also ethnic groups. For the purposes of this paper, racial identity will be viewed as the aspect of the self that is connected to a racial/ethnic group when ethnicity and minority status cooccur. It is in these cases that predictable psychosocial processes occur within groups, between groups, and with the dominant culture (Rotheram and Phinney, 1987).

Membership in a racial or ethnic group is often ascribed by society onto an individual, and may or may not be consistent with that individual's subjective affiliation to a specific group. This is often the case with biracial individuals who may be ascribed by society as being members of the "black" community rather than members of the "biracial" community. Despite powerful societal forces, it is the personal, subjective affiliation with a particular racial or ethnic group that plays the greatest role in establishing a racial identity (Rosenthal, 1987). The conscious connection to an ethnic group establishes clear boundaries and gives the members a sense of cohesion that

may serve as a buffer against the outside world (i.e.,
other minority groups and the majority culture). According
to Isajiw (1974), there are "boundaries from within" that
reflect one's interactions with one's own ethnic group and
"boundaries from without" that reflect interactions with
any other ethnic group. The strength of these boundaries
is determined by both the individual and society. For
individuals of black and white parentage, "boundaries from
without" are ill-defined because they have no formally
recognized "boundary" within which to identify themselves.

Components of Racial Identity

Racial identity is a broad concept that primarily
consists of two components: (1) the cognitive component,
which measures one's racial awareness and one's ability to
process racial cues, and (2) the affective component, which
measures one's attitudes and expressed behaviors regarding
racial cues. The cognitive component accounts for a
child's ability to organize information about ethnic cues.
However, the child is also attempting evaluations of ethnic
groups. The cognitive and affective components overlap,
requiring research analysis of both thoughts (cognitions)
and social experience or interaction (attitudes and
behaviors) to fully understand the dynamics of racial
identity development.

The cognitive component. Racial awareness relates to

the level of understanding a child has regarding the
differences and similarities between racial groups. Racial
awareness measures should theoretically measure purely
cognitive functions, namely, the child's ability to
organize information. Hence, racial awareness measures may
examine a child's ability to accurately classify dolls or
pictures representing individuals from different racial
groups (Vaughan, 1964), (Aboud, 1980), (Jacobs, 1977).
They may also examine more advanced cognitive functions
such as racial conservation, or a child's understanding
that one's race or ethnic group does not change with the
passage of time or a change in dress. This concept
originated out of Piaget's cognitive development theory
(1951), concerning physical phenomena, which Patricia
Ramsey (1987) then applied to children's beliefs regarding
racial characteristics. There have been numerous "ethnic
awareness" studies, originating primarily from the Clark
and Clark studies beginning in 1939.

   The affective component. The problem with many of the
studies, including Clark and Clark (1939, 1947, 1950), is
that they lacked construct validity; the studies were not
measuring racial awareness, but rather, racial preference
or a mixture of the two constructs (Goodman, 1952)
(Stevenson and Stewart, 1958). This theoretical flaw
accounted for numerous misinterpretations of the studies,

which showed significant differences in the response patterns of minority children (primarily black) and white children. The "misidentification" responses of the minority children were interpreted as representing lags in cognitive development rather than representing racial preferences that conflicted with objective racial cues. For example, in the Clark and Clark (1947) study, when children were asked, "Which doll looks most like you?", the black children "misidentified" by choosing lighter-skinned or white dolls with significantly greater frequency than the white children. A more valid question would have been, "Which doll do you _want_ to look like most?" The first question is not purely cognitive because it relates to preferences, which are affective in nature (Vaughan, 1987).

An important point should be noted regarding doll-preference studies in which the affective component _is_ acknowledged. Misidentification for black children should not automatically be interpreted as representing a preference for being white. James Jacobs (1978), who designed a doll-preference study for use with biracial children, states that these interpretations may relate to the ethnocentric biases of some researchers [i.e., Goodman (1964) and Porter (1971)]. Misidentification may represent a healthy willingness, on behalf of the child, to experiment with different identities.

In summary, the relationship between cognitive and evaluative factors (i.e., attitudes) is dynamic, with shifting primary roles throughout one's development. As Aboud (1987) states, "It would seem...that desire determines identification until cognitions about the permanence of ethnicity develop" (p. 40). Once cognitions are fully developed, they then become the primary determinants of identification until an individual understands that there is a conscious choice involved in racial/ethnic group membership. It is then that the shift is back to the affective construct of preference.

Racial Identity Development

Racial identity development is most often viewed from a stage-theory perspective. Helms (1989) states that it is not apparent from racial identity theories whether the stages are additive (building successively upon each other) or disjunctive (each stage separate and unique), although there is a tendency for researchers to view its development as a continuous "building" process. The racial identity construct grows in a parallel fashion with other identity constructs, all of which are interconnected to various degrees.

Algea O. Harrison states (1968) that there is empirical support for viewing the process of racial identity development as the interaction between the developing

cognitive and perceptual abilities of the child and the
environment. This notion is supported by Clark et al
(1980), Katz (1973), and Spencer (1982). Development
begins at 3 to 4 years of age with racial awareness. Logan
(1981) states that at this stage, the child has already
acquired language and the core personality structure has
been formed. Since this is also the pre-school stage, the
child often enters an environment where children from other
racial backgrounds are present and self-other comparisons
are continually being made. The next stage is racial
attitude formation, which begins around 6 to 7 years of
age. Cognitive, affective, and behavioral components
become more differentiated and racial differences take on
added significance. At this stage, the family and school
environments are the primary influences upon the child's
attitudes regarding race. It is not until adolescence,
when children are attempting to define themselves from this
social context, that messages from the environment
regarding race are questioned. Beyond adolescence, and
throughout adulthood, the self becomes increasingly stable
and better defined as racial identity development
progresses through a series of stages. This trend
represents a "self-social-individual" focus in development,
which is found in most racial identity theories.

Racial Identity Development Models

The racial identity development models to be reviewed
in this paper are models that have been proposed for use
with both the biracial and black populations. These models
have a primary focus on the affective component and its
development from early adulthood on. Although each of
these models has made a significant contribution to the
field of racial identity development in minorities, they
suffer from numerous shortcomings when applied to the
biracial population (Poston, 1990). This is due, in large
part, to the particular dynamics involved in biracial
identification. This section will consist of a general
review of each model, followed by the last section of this
cahpter, which will discuss the shortcomings of these
models when applied to the biracial population.

Stonequist's (1937) Marginal Persons Model

Everett Stonequist's Marginal Person Model is the first
model to address biracial identity development. In
Stonequist's model, individuals of black and white
parentage share similar adjustment problems and undergo
similar developmental stages as other individuals initiated
into two or more cultures, races or religions. It is a
culture-conflict model, based on the hypothesis that an
individual who either belongs to two conflictual cultures
from birth or is later moved from one culture to another

(through migration, marriage, education, etc.) often finds himself or herself caught somewhere outside of either culture. Stonequist labels this individual a "marginal man" who is "... poised in psychological uncertainty between two (or more) social worlds; reflecting in his soul the discords and harmonies, repulsions and attractions of these worlds, one of which is often dominant over the other" (1937, p. 8).

Stonequist's model delineates the "typical life cycle" of the marginal man. The Stonequist model is outlined in Table 1. This table summarizes the basic characteristics of each stage of identity development, in addition to the typical personality traits associated with each stage. Stonequist has suggested that biracial individuals (classified by Stonequist as "marginal") do not enter the marginal stage until they have attempted to assimilate into the dominant culture and subsequently experience non-acceptance. Once group conflict is experienced, characteristic personality traits emerge and the individual finds him or herself "... torn between two courses of action... unable calmly to take the one and leave the other" (Stonequist, 1937, p. 146).

In the final stage of development, Stonequist states that a certain degree of maladjustment is inherent in the individual. The appearance of social adjustment may be

TABLE 1

THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE MARGINAL MAN

Stonequist Model

Stage	Characteristics	Psychological Traits
1. Pre-Conflict Phase	Pre-Crisis: As yet, individual lacks race consciousness and, therefore, is unaware of marginal status.	No characteristic "marginal" personality traits.
2. Conflict Phase	Onset of marginality, marked by a change in self-conception in response to lack of acceptance from dominant culture.	Confusion, extreme self-consciousness, ambivalence, inferiority complex, distorted worldview.
3. Adjustment/Lack of Adjustment Phase	On-going attempts to adjust to marginal position and/or to assimilate into one of two conflicting cultures.	At a minimum, feelings of isolation or malaise. At its most severe, mental disorganization and suicidal tendencies.

Source: Everett Stonequist. (1937). The Marginal Man: A study in personality and culture conflict. New York: Russell & Russell, 37-38.

only a guise to inner problems. Often the "mental
disorganization" is easily detected. According to
Stonequist, there is no single measure of appropriate
adjustment for the significant number of marginal
populations. Stonequist generally labels adjustment as
either complete assimilation into one of the two cultures
(virtually impossible for biracial individuals with
physical features that are distinct from either racial
group) or a half-hearted acceptance of one's marginal
status.

Summary of Stonequist's Model. Since its inception,
the theory of marginality (coined in 1928 by Robert Park
and elaborated upon with Stonequist's model) has been
adapted, in a variety of different forms, by numerous
researchers (Goldberg, 1941), (Turner, 1964), (Broom and
Ellen, 1965). However, there are numerous flaws in the
theory and model that render it invalid. As mentioned
previously, it is a deficit model, based on the reactive
responses of individuals who are unable to gain acceptance
into a dominant culture. According to Mann (1973), the
theory also has a descriptive flaw in that the term
"marginal" is vague and too all-encompassing; almost anyone
can be considered "marginal" in one capacity or another.
It is also simplistic, in that marginality is viewed as a
single position between two conflictual cultures, one above

the other. In addition, Stonequist states that the
personality traits associated with stages 2 and 3 of the
model "[perhaps reflect] certain inherited or previously
acquired personality traits" (1937, p. 139). The
implication is that individuals in a marginal position
suffer from enduring psychological flaws. In response to
this, Mann (1973) states, "... instead of reshaping the
whole personality, the marginal situation may merely bring
about some fleeting changes in it"
(p. 220).

Stonequist's model has never been systematically
tested. Due to the questionable validity, the model has
limited utility. However, over the last fifty years, the
Theory of Marginality has surfaced in a number of
radically transformed states.

Marginality in biracial adolescents. A most recent
deficit model based on the theory of marginality is the
work by Jewelle Taylor Gibbs (1987). Gibbs identifies the
major conflicts and coping mechanisms of biracial teens as
they face the development tasks of adolescence, as defined
by Eric Erikson (1963). Gibbs bases her model on clinical
information drawn from the case studies of twelve biracial
teens who had been referred to mental health agencies.
Gibbs states that biracial teens are in conflict about not
only their biracial heritage, but their sexual preference,

their independence, their career and education, as well as their social role. Gibbs then cites their coping strategies as primarily defense mechanisms such as denial, over-identification with the idealized racial group, regression, repression and projection, depending on the particular conflict one is facing. Although Gibbs' research has been widely utilized, and does offer clinical insight for mental health professionals who work with severely troubled biracial adolescents, it presents a biased, negative approach to biracial issues. Adolescence is a developmental phase marked by identity confusion for both minority and non-minority individuals. In addition, all aspects of one's identity are naturally questioned, resulting in some level of personal transitional conflict. Gibbs' research implies that these crises in a number of identity areas stem primarily from one's biracial heritage. She also fails to account for the transitory nature of racial identity development.

Cross' (1971) Negro-to-Black Conversion Model

In response to the black power movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, William E. Cross, Jr., developed a racial identity model based on a "psychology of black liberation...under conditions of oppression" (Cross, 1971, p. 13). In Cross' model, he describes how a person evolves from a negro oriented worldview to a black oriented

worldview through changes in their self-image and cultural frames of reference. Cross theorized that this self-actualization process is characterized by a change in attitudes and values over five additive, discrete stages of development. An outline of Cross' model is in Table 2.

According to Cross, an individual in the Pre-Encounter Stage possesses a pre-liberation, "negro" frame of reference. This individual degrades all things related to the "black experience" and makes all attempts to fully assimilate into the "white experience". Cross lists a number of ways in which this stage manifests itself: through a person's dress and mannerisms, distorted perspectives on black history, extreme dependency on white leadership, and lack of commitment to and participation in the black community.

It is only after some form of verbal or visual encounter that touches the person in a way that forces them to look deeper into the black experience that an individual is able to enter the second stage. The Encounter Stage is a testing phase for the individual, since he or she must validate and confirm a new perspective. One tests out new ideas, becomes interested in black history and culture, and internally develops a sense of growing anger at the dominant culture to which there was previous identification.

TABLE 2

THE NEGRO-TO-BLACK CONVERSION EXPERIENCE

Cross Model

Stage	Characteristics
1. Pre-encounter	Worldview dominated by Euro-American influences. Tendency to think and behave in a manner that degrades blackness. Attempt to assimilate completely into dominant culture.
2. Encounter	Experiences encounter and reinterprets worldview. Search for deeper understanding of black experience. Makes decision to become "black."
3. Immersion-Emersion	Initial total immersion into blackness. Reactionary period. All things of value must be black or relevant to blackness. Later emergence of stable black identity. Critical analysis of the black condition.
4. Internalization	Internalizes and incorporates aspects of the previous stage experience into one's identity. Achieves sense of security with one's black identity.
5. Internalization-Commitment	New identity is well-established. Confident and secure in new identity. Committed to actively work within and help the black community.

Source: William E. Cross (1971), The negro-to-black conversion experience: Toward a psychology of black liberation. Black World, 20, 13-27.

The Immersion-Emersion Stage marks the reactionary phase when the individual immerses oneself into a black worldview and externally reacts against all things perceived as representing the dominant culture. Cross states, "The immersion is a strong, powerful, dominating sensation... energized by black rage, guilt, [and a] developing sense of pride" (1971, p. 18). This defensive, extreme stance later subsides and one emerges into a more controlled, higher, aware stage which marks the beginning of internalization.

Internalization and Commitment mark the last two stages of racial identity development. Cross states that many individuals do not progress to these stages and either regress to previous stages or remain fixated in the Immersion Stage due to extreme feelings of hopelessness, frustration, or anger toward the dominant culture. For those able to internalize feelings of pride regarding their race and culture, there is a receptivity to the black experience, but no commitment to live fully in the black experience. The development of a stable black oriented worldview and a commitment to actively work within the black community marks the final phase of the conversion experience.

Summary of Cross' Model. The existence of Cross' stages in black identity transformation have been validated

by a number of empirical studies: Hall, Cross and Freedle (1972) tested the consensual validity of the Cross Model and the results support Cross' hypothesis regarding sequential stages in identity development. Williams (1975) created an interview schedule of Cross' model in order to identify characteristic beliefs, attitudes and values associated with each stage. In this study, a positive relationship between black consciousness development and educational level was found. Milliones (1974) created the Developmental Inventory of Black Consciousness out of Cross' model, which has also been empirically substantiated (Oler, 1989).

The most significant advancement of Cross' model to date is Janet Helms' (1981) Racial Identity Attitude Scale or RIAS. This scale was developed as a means of operationalizing Cross' model. The RIAS "measures attitudes consistent with [Cross'] stages of racial identity rather than the stages themselves" (Helms, 1986, p. 62). The scale was adapted from Hall et al. (1972) Q-sort items, which were developed to assess behaviors and attitudes characteristic of Cross' stages (Parham and Helms, 1981). Subjects use a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) to indicate the extent to which each item applies to them. The main criticism against use of the RIAS is that it is

limited in terms of empirically validating Cross' (1971)
stages of nigrescence. It relies on one, single component
(attitude) which, in and of itself, is difficult to
objectively measure since it is highly influenced by social
desirability factors (Ponterotto, 1989).

According to Cross (1978), it is also important to
remember that many racial identity development models
address the dynamics of identity change in the context of a
social movement, not identity change from childhood to
adulthood. It is possible that the "negro-to-black"
conversion experience of the early 1970s was influenced by
a different set of social, personal and economic factors
than a black-to-African American conversion experience of
today (Looney, 1988).

The Morten and Atkinson Minority Identity Development Model
(1983)

The Minority Identity Development Model, or MID, was
developed as a practical assessment tool to guide
counselors in identifying the level of racial identity of
minority clients and to increase their understanding of
minority clients' attitudes and behaviors as drawn from
existing theories. The model is based on the premise that
the basic tenets of racial identity development models
designed for the black population could be applied to other
minority groups under oppression (Morten & Atkinson, 1983).

The model reflects a continuous process in identity development, despite the five stages identified as "markers." Individuals may or may not experience each stage in their lifespan, and regression to an earlier stage is possible. A summary of the Morten and Atkinson Model is outlined in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, each stage may be identified by the four corresponding attitudes an individual may express regarding their views on: 1) themselves, 2) others of the same minority group, 3) others of different minority groups, 4) others in the dominant culture. Counseling implications are also given for clients at each stage of development.

The lowest level of identity development is the Conformity stage. At this level, individuals have a total preference for dominant cultural values over their own group's cultural values without question. They either consciously or subconsciously view their physical and/or cultural characteristics with shame. Their views of themselves, their minority group, and other racial groups are clouded by their identification with the dominant culture. In counseling, clients at this stage tend to view acute cultural identity problems as chronic personal identity problems. At the second stage of development, there is confusion and conflict triggered by an encounter that forces the individual to question his or her

TABLE 3

MINORITY IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Morten and Atkinson

Stages of Minority Development Model	Attitude toward self	Attitude toward others of the same minority	Attitude toward others of different minority	Attitude toward dominant group
1. Conformity	self-depreciating	group-depreciating	discriminatory	group-appreciating
2. Dissonance	conflict between self-depreciating and self-appreciating	conflict between group-depreciating and group-appreciating	conflict between dominant held views and feelings of shared experience	conflict between group-appreciating and group-depreciating
3. Resistance and Immersion	self-appreciating	group-appreciating	conflict between feelings of empathy for other minorities and feelings of culturocentrism	group-depreciating
4. Introspection	concern with basis of self-appreciation	concern with nature of unequivocal appreciation	concern with ethnocentric basis for judging others	concern with the basis of group-depreciation
5. Synergetic Articulation and Awareness	self-appreciating	group-appreciating	group-appreciating	selective appreciation

Source: G. Morten & D.R. Atkinson. (1983). Minority identity development and preference for counselor race. Journal of Negro Education, 52, 156-161.

affiliation with the dominant culture. The individual alternates between feelings of self-shame and self-pride regarding one's race and culture. In counseling, clients at the Dissonance stage are preoccupied with questions regarding self-esteem and self-conception. All problems are likely viewed as cultural identity problems.

At the Resistance and Immersion stage, the dissonance experienced at the previous stage is lifted as the individual makes a choice to fully accept his or her minority status. The individual experiences a total reversal of the views held at the Conformity stage. The values of their own minority culture are now completely accepted, and those of the dominant culture are rejected. The intense desire to eliminate oppression is a primary motivator for the individual. Consequently, the dominant culture (the source of the oppression) is viewed as the enemy. In counseling, clients at this stage relate all their psychological problems to their oppressed status. They do not seek counseling for cultural identity issues.

The final two stages of identity development mark the disintegration of ethnocentric values as the individual experiences a need for personal autonomy, separate from the rigidly controlled views of the group. At the Introspection stage, this self-assessment enables the individual to view other minority groups with an increased

understanding and selective trust is felt toward the
dominant culture. Clients at the Introspection stage focus
on their need for more individual freedom and
self-exploration. At the final stage, the individual
achieves self-fulfillment in regard to their racial
identity. One experiences strong self-worth, pride in
one's minority culture, a greater understanding of the role
of oppression in other minority groups, and selective trust
toward the dominant culture. There is "...autonomy as the
result of having established his/her identity as an
individual, a member of a minority group and/or a member of
the dominant culture" (Morten & Atkinson, 1983). Clients
at this last stage of identity development possess the
internal ability to exercise individuality and are more
able to actively engage in problem-solving.

Summary of the Morten and Atkinson (1983) Model.
Although the MID model is very similar to Cross' (1971)
Negro-to-Black conversion model, it offers added insight by
relating racial identity levels to the counseling
experience. A counselor's ability to recognize and
understand not only the various stages of minority identity
development but its transitory nature and the potential for
change in one's minority clients is an extremely valuable
therapeutic tool. In addition, studies concerning the
relationship between racial identity development and a

minority client's preference for counselor race have utilized the MID model (Morten and Atkinson, 1983; Atkinson, Furlong and Poston, 1986). Despite its heuristic value, this author could find no empirical studies conducted on the MID model.

<u>Shortcomings of Related Models</u>

Although the models reviewed may potentially be applied to the biracial minority population, each application has significant limitations. Although Stonequist's (1937) Theory of Marginality specifically cites the biracial individual as a primary example of a marginal person, the numerous theoretical flaws (discussed in the previous section) discount its viability as a useful model.

Cross' (1971) Negro-To-Black Conversion Model represents a more positive approach to racial identity development for black individuals, and could theoretically apply to other minority populations, but it is not tailored for the dynamics of biracial identity development. According to Poston (1990), the model is based on the implication that individuals choose one culture over the other at different stages of development. Since biracial individuals come from both black and white heritages, a model that allows for the integration of several group identities would best serve the population. For biracial individuals, identifying with one aspect of their heritage

and mere acceptance or acknowledgement of the other aspect does not allow them to develop an identity that embraces all facets of their race and ethnicity. In addition, Poston (1990) notes that many biracial individuals do not experience acceptance from or toward either parent culture. Hence, a model that requires some degree of acceptance into the black culture may not be appropriate for the biracial population.

The MID is the most general identity development model reviewed; however, research has shown little support for its application to all minority populations (Morten and Atkinson, 1983). Although it supports the notion that there are intragroup differences within a particular minority population, it does not take into account intergroup differences between minority populations. Racial identity development in the African-American population is influenced by different social, economic, and historical environments that in the Latino or Asian-American population, where language barriers may play a greater role than skin color or other factors. In the biracial population, familial factors, level of integration, and socioeconomic status may play the greatest role. According to Poston (1990), the unique dynamics of the biracial population are not adequately addressed with the MID. As with Cross' (1971) model, the model implies

that one group's culture and values must be chosen over those of another. There is no allowance for integrating several group identities.

Poston's (1990) Biracial Identity Development Model was the only model found in this literature review that allows the biracial individual to identify with both racial heritages simultaneously. Poston's model also takes into account the cognitive component, thereby covering the entire lifespan of the individual. Chapter three will outline the theories used in the development of Poston's model, followed by a review of the model as it applies to biracial identity issues.

CHAPTER THREE

POSTON'S BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Chapter II reviewed the process of racial identity
development, and examined several racial identity
development models. The shortcomings inherent in each of
these models when applied to the biracial population
reinforces the notion that psychological differences exist
not only between minority individuals in general, but also
between minority populations. Poston's Biracial Identity
Development Model (1990) highlights the particular aspects
of biracial identity development; the theory behind its
development will be the focus of this chapter. The first
section of this chapter will look at the constructs of
personal identity (PI) and reference group orientation
(RGO) via research conducted by Cross in 1987.   The second
section of this chapter will focus on research conducted on
the relationship of these two constructs. For example,
Parham and Helms (1985) conducted a study that confirmed a
connection between certain racial identity attitudes and
general mental health indicators, which is a theory that
had been previously discounted (Kourakis, 1983). Poston's
model is based primarily on the theoretical perspectives of
Cross (1987) and Parham and Helms (1985). The third

section of this chapter will outline Poston's (1990)
Biracial Identity Development Model, and address its
applicability to the biracial population.

Personal Identity and Reference Group Orientation

Most racial identity development models are process
models, meaning that developmental stages are isolated to
explain an individual's movement from an "old identity" to
a "new identity" (Cross, 1987). As evidenced in this
review, the process models frequently focus on racial
attitudes associated with each stage as primary indicators
of identity change (Cross, 1971; Thomas, 1971; Morten and
Atkinson, 1983). These models also focus on identity
development within the context of the immediate social
environment (i.e., externally influenced) rather than
personal identity development, which shows stable, internal
changes to an individual's personality or ego (Cross,
1978). This distinction is important to researchers who
ask the question, "How do an individual's attitudes
regarding his or her racial status influence that
individual's self-concept?"

As Barnes (1980) notes, leading researchers (Mead,
1934; Cooley, 1956; Erikson, 1968) agree that one's
self-concept develops primarily through one's interaction
with others. Erikson (1968) was one of the first to
analyze this concept by defining three different identities

within which one operates: ego, personal, and group identity. The ego identity concerns one's awareness of his or her unique individuality. The personal identity relates to one's perception concerning the continuity and sameness of one's personality, and the recognition that others also perceive this sameness. The group identity connects one's personality to the broader context of the primary group or groups in which one interacts. Erikson felt that these three identities were interrelated.

Erikson's conceptualization of identity has been challenged for its ethnocentric bias and limited applicability to minority populations; however, the notion that influences from within and from the social environment shape the self-concept is found in most black identity literature (McAdoo, 1977; Porter, 1971; Thomas and Thomas, 1971). Although there is a degree of consistency between these studies conceptually, there is limited agreement over the actual dynamics of black identity development, which has led to considerable debate (Phinney and Rotheram, 1987).

Cross' (1980, 1981) comprehensive literature review on black identity resulted in identification of a unifying theme between studies. Cross (1987) states that "... in most instances researchers have operated from the perspective that the 'self-concept' has two superordinate

domains: the personal identity sector (PI) and the group identity, or reference group orientation (RGO) sector..." (p. 121). Each of these superordinate domains consists of a number of subordinate constructs: the personal identity domain may include such factors as self-esteem, self-worth, adjustment, and general personality traits. The reference group orientation domain includes racial awareness, racial attitudes, group identification, and other constructs directly related to social interaction.

Vaughan (1987) reinforces this concept with his Social Psychological Model. In this model, an individual makes both interpersonal and intergroup comparisons that give rise to both a personal and a social identity. The personal identity originates out of concrete perceptual acts that form both affective and cognitive responses that an individual ultimately integrates into his or her self-concept. In this case, "... the individual 'uses' others not only to provide a context for thoughts, feelings, and actions, but also to provide a locus for self" (Vaughan, 1987, p. 82). The social identity originates out of the existing social structure, in which individuals are categorized into groups, and responded to in relation to group membership rather that as unique individuals.

PI and RGO Studies

Personal identity or "PI" studies highlight constructs, traits, or processes that are found in all individuals regardless of race, social class, gender or ethnicity. Cross (1987) states that these PI constructs "are the building blocks for all personalities, with culture, class, race, ethnicity, and gender mediating, in many instances, how much of the variable is present across cultures or different groups of people" (p. 121). Research that measures solely PI constructs should not require specially designed tests for different populations. For example, measures of adjustment, self-esteem, and cognitive development are theoretically and methodologically applicable to both minority and non-minority populations, males and females, and people from all socioeconomic and educational levels.

This does not mean that membership in these various populations is fully discounted in PI research. Subjects in PI studies are usually classified in terms of race, gender, SES, etc.; however, they are considered independent variables. PI research attempts to control these independent variables. In fact, if a PI test consistently shows statistically significant differences based on an independent variable, there may be a flaw in the test construction. For example, a self-esteem measure that

shows consistently low scores in the black subject
population and consistently high scores in the white
subject population is very likely measuring constructs
other than PI constructs that have not been isolated out of
the test. It may also be a standardization flaw, in which
"normative samples" used during construction of the test
were drawn only from the white population which may hold
different cultural values from those of other racial
groups. Differences in cultural values, daily living
experiences, and language patterns may decrease both the
validity and reliability of any test that purports to
measure "universal elements" across different racial
groups.

Unlike personal identity studies, reference group
orientation studies examine constructs that are directly
related to one's membership in a specific group. Race,
gender, ethnicity, and SES are now dependent variables, and
the researcher seeks to discover differences between groups
rather than universalities. Cross (1987) states that "...
RGO represents the ethnographic dimension of the
self-concept." Cross goes further on, stating "... every
human being tends to rely on groups as a point of
reference, but the specific groups one relies on reveal the
nature of one's group identity or reference group
orientation" (p. 123). Cross supports the term "reference

group orientation" to define the domain because studies of racial identity, racial attitudes, group identity, etc. (RGO subcategories) all measure how individuals orient themselves to their socially ascribed group(s).

RGO studies focus on the process of social categorization. Allport's (1954) studies of prejudice and stereotyping fall under this domain. Tajfel's (1970, 1981) gender-specific studies also stress the power of social categorization. Tajfel found that group members will often amplify perceived out-group differences in order to focus on the unique characteristics of their own group, which helps them to define their social identity or RGO. In regard to racial RGO, society ascribes racial group membership onto individuals, and relations between these ascribed groups are already defined. As Vaughan (1987) states, "... the hint of a label, such as blue or red group, and of one's membership, ... triggers an inevitable social categorical sequence" (p.85). It is extremely difficult for an individual to develop social categories outside of the categories and intergroup relations already recognized by society. This point reinforces the importance of social recognition of the biracial label for individuals of black and white parentage so that orientation to a biracial reference group is supported by society (this will be further discussed in Chapter Four).

For minority individuals, their socially ascribed membership in a specific racial group may be in conflict with their personal orientation, which may cause difficulties when establishing a racial identity. RGO research examines these dynamics, leading to a greater understanding of the power of social categorization versus individual orientation. Cross (1987) stresses that racial identity studies in children do not attempt to determine the child's personally defined RGO; rather, these studies assess how children orient to their ascribed racial characteristics.

Relationship Between PI and RGO

A clearer understanding of the distinction between PI and RGO constructs should give the reader sufficient knowledge to address the relationship between a positive or negative self-concept and racial identity attitudes. Historically, an assumed relationship between racial identity and personal identity constructs went unchallenged. As with Stonequist's (1937) theory of marginality, negative personality traits and other problems with personal identity are linked directly to stages of racial identity transformation despite the lack of any supporting research showing a connection. The Cross (1971) and Morten and Atkinson (1983) models also imply a connection between the two constructs. As Cross (1987)

states, "Initially, the observers of Black identity change assumed that nigrescence involved comprehensive personality and identity change " (p. 119). Even so, later studies (McAdoo, 1977; Porter, 1971) led to the belief that lower levels of racial identity development did not necessarily predict negative psychological traits, nor did more advanced developmental levels necessarily predict positive, mentally healthy psychological traits.

The problem concerns continuity and change (Cross, 1987): What aspects of the personality remain constant as one's identity is transformed, and what aspects of the personality change in response to the identity transformation? This issue is especially relevant in the field of counseling psychology, where a link between racial identity development and mental health indicators would support the use of racial identity development models in the clinical setting.

Studies on PI/RGO Relationship

Up until the last ten to fifteen years, a majority of the black identity studies were univariate in design in which data had been collected on only one domain (either PI or RGO), yet interpreted as though data had been collected on both domains. The self-hatred hypothesis originates out of this methodological flaw, whereby minority subjects who oriented toward the dominant culture in any number of ways

were viewed as rejecting their own minority group and possessing low levels of self-esteem and high levels of self-hatred (Cross, 1987). More recent studies have separated out PI and RGO constructs, resulting in methodologically sound interpretations of the relationship between the two domains.

Williams (1975) developed an interview schedule for Cross' (1971) Model to determine whether specific values, beliefs and attitudes were distinctive of each stage in the model. Williams interviewed 57 black college students in an open-ended format, and then administered several racial preference scales, several self-esteem scales, and an internal-external locus of control scale. The findings indicated a tendency toward higher self-esteem levels with advanced racial identity development; however, statistical significance was low.

Similar trends have been found in studies with black children (Hraba and Grant, 1970; Ward and Braun, 1972), whereby higher self-esteem levels were found in the children who held more positive feelings about their own ethnic group. In a study with Asian-American, black, and Latino high school students, subjects who had not engaged in ethnic identity search scored lowest on self-esteem levels, and subjects with an integrated ethnic identity scored highest (Phinney, 1989). Phinney and Alipuria

confirmed these findings in a later study conducted in 1990.

Parham and Helms' (1985) Study

The theory that knowledge about a client's racial identity level and corresponding affective states would facilitate appropriate counseling intervention is supported by various authors (Butler, 1975; Jackson, 1977; Parham and Helms, 1981). However, until the research conducted by Parham and Helms (1985), no studies had demonstrated an empirical relationship between racial identity levels and various affective states. Butler (1975) had earlier adapted Cross' (1971) Nigrescence Model for the client/counselor relationship and concluded that specific counseling variables may be associated with clients representing the various stages in Cross' model. Parham and Helms' (1985) study investigated Burnett's (1975) hypothesis to empirically assess the relationship between racial identity attitudes, self-actualizing tendencies, and various affective states.

Rather than viewing Cross' model as a series of discrete stages with corresponding attitudes representing each stage, Parham and Helms (1985) considered the racial identity attitudes as "attitude types" that one may or may not possess during development. They also took into account that the relative strength of various attitudes

could indicate a different developmental stage, and may vary from person to person. Hence, they conducted multiple regression analyses on the data for a more accurate assessment. They hypothesized that: 1) Pre-encounter attitudes would be negatively associated with self-actualizing tendencies, and Encounter, Immersion, and Internalization attitudes would be positively associated with self- actualizing tendencies; 2) in regard to affective states, Pre-encounter attitudes would be positively associated with feelings of inferiority, Encounter attitudes would be positively associated with feelings of anxiety or obsessiveness, Immersion attitudes would be positively associated with anger, and Internalization attitudes would be positively associated with self-acceptance.

The subjects were 166 black college students who were given Helms' (1981) Racial Identity Attitude Scale, the Symptom-90 Checklist (measuring various affective states), and the Personal Orientation Inventory (measuring self-actualization and positive mental health levels). A personal data sheet was also completed by each subject to obtain demographic data.

In regard to self-actualization tendencies, the results indicated that Pre-encounter attitudes were, in fact, negatively associated with self-actualization, and

Encounter attitudes were positively associated. However, strong Immersion attitudes were associated with <u>lower</u> self-actualization. In regard to affective states, Pre-encounter and Immersion attitudes were positively associated with feelings of inferiority, inadequacy and hyper-sensitivity (there was no relationship between Immersion attitudes and anger). Encounter attitudes were positively related to self-acceptance as well as anxiety (no relationship between Encounter attitudes and obsessiveness). Internalization attitudes were not significantly related to any of the measures.

Parham and Helms concluded that earlier speculation suggesting a predictable progression from feelings of inferiority and low self-actualizing tendencies in lower racial identity development levels to self-acceptance and high self-actualization in later identity development is too simplified an explanation; the relation appears to be more complex or perhaps too difficult to operationalize. Parham and Helms note that, although all of their hypotheses were not confirmed, there are dominant affective states asociated with certain racial identity attitudes. These findings were supported in a later study by Parham and Helms (1985) that, in addition, showed a positive association between Encounter and Internalization attitudes and high self-esteem.

Poston's (1990) Biracial Identity Development Model

In response to the need for a racial identity development model tailored to the particular dynamics of a specific minority population, Poston (1990) created the Biracial Identity Development Model. This model was developed by Poston after a review of previous racial identity models uncovered a number of limitations when specifically applied to biracial individuals. The model is based on PI/RGO theory and the notion that racial identity attitudes expressed during identity development correspond to various affective states.

Poston's model covers biracial identity development from childhood on. Although it is similar to the previously reviewed models (Cross, 1971; Morten and Atkinson, 1983), its emphasis on integrating several racial identities into a new positive biracial identity makes the Biracial Identity Development Model innovative in its approach. Poston's model represents biracial identity as a series of changes in reference group orientation attitudes throughout development. Personal identity constructs that may surface as a result of the RGO changes are also cited in the model. An outline of Poston's model is in Table 4.

According to Poston, the primary phase of development is the Personal Identity Stage. Children in this stage are not yet fully developed in racial awareness, due to

TABLE 4

BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Poston

Stage	Characteristics	PI/RGO Relationship
1. Personal Identity	Sense of self independent of racial background. Racial awareness not fully developed.	RGO not yet developed. PI factors influenced primarily by family.
2. Choice of Group Categorization	Time of crisis and confusion. Individual pushed to choose a racial identity. Usually choose one racial identity over other despite discomfort. Status, social support and personal factors play a role in decision.	RGO factors strongly influence PI factors. Primary reference groups: family, peers, neighbors, extended family.
3. Enmeshment/Denial	Time of guilt, alienation, non-acceptance. Identifying with only one racial heritage not fulfilling. Feelings of disloyalty toward parent of other racial heritage.	RGO factors dominate. PI constructs primarily negative.
4. Appreciation	Appreciation of dual racial and ethnic identities. Identify with one racial heritage, but accept other.	PI constructs are strong-positive mental health indicators. Increased flexibility in RGO.
5. Integration	Integrated dual racial identity. Identifies as "biracial". Feelings of wholeness and acceptance.	PI and RGO supportive. PI constructs represent positive mental health.

Source: W.S. Carlos Poston. (1990). The biracial identity development model: A needed addition. Journal of Counseling and Development, 69, 152-155.

cognitive limitations. Since they do not yet fully understand themselves or others as racial beings, their orientation to certain reference groups is either unrelated to racial factors or inconsistent and spontaneous. As Poston (1990) states, "In essence, their RGO attitudes are not yet developed, so their identity is primarily based on PI factors such as self-esteem and feelings of self-worth that they develop and learn in the family" (p. 153). Children remain in this stage until they have fully developed a racial awareness of themselves and others. Jacobs (1978) suggests that biracial children become racially aware sooner than children from other racial groups because of the salience of racial characteristics in their own families.

The second stage is Choice of Group Categorization, in which individuals are pressured into choosing a racial identity for themselves. Since the pressure is usually over choosing one specific racial group, the individual feels alienated and may be in crisis over the issue. As Brandell (1988) states, "Ambivalence over racial identity [is] a highly significant problem for biracial children..." that can lead to "... a pervasive sense of loneliness" (p. 178). According to Hall (1980), as quoted in Poston (1990), biracial individuals have two choices at this stage. Either they can choose one parent's ethnicity as

dominant over the other, or they can choose a biracial identity in which the racial heritages of both parents are accepted. Hall (1980) cites a number of factors that may influence this choice, such as: 1) Racial characteristics and ethnicity of the parents, and racial demographics of the neighborhood, the school, and the individual's peers; 2) Social support factors, such as parent, extended family, and peer acceptance. The level of participation in cultural events or ethnic experiences may also play a role; 3) Personal factors, such as the individual's physical appearance, cultural knowledge, age, and individual differences in personality. Poston (1990) notes that it is rare for an individual to choose a biracial identity at this stage because the individual is not fully developed cognitively and lacks the level of cultural knowledge necessary to make a decision of this nature.

The third stage is Enmeshment/Denial, which is characterized by guilt, confusion, and self-hatred. These feelings stem from the belief that one must choose one racial identity over the other, and one will be unable to identify with both parental backgrounds. Typically, adolescents fall into this stage, for it represents a time of questioning, self-doubt, and confusion in any number of areas in a person's overall identity. According to McRoy (1985), if a biracial child is not accepted by peers

because of his or her racial background, or if a child
cannot openly discuss his or her racial identity with peers
or family, this transition period can be difficult to
progress through. Individuals may fixate at this level and
may require clinical intervention to deal with these
issues. However, if the individual can resolve the
feelings of guilt and anger through support from
significant others, an appreciation of both parent cultures
is likely.

The fourth and fifth stages are Appreciation and
Integration. In the Appreciation stage, the individual
learns to explore both parent cultures with increased
understanding and meaning. Although the individual still
primarily identifies with only one racial group, there is
acceptance of the other racial group. The factors cited in
the Choice of Group Categorization Stage also influence the
choices made in this stage. The final stage of development
is Integration. At this stage, the individual has
integrated both racial heritages into a distinct biracial
heritage. By recognizing and valuing all aspects of their
raical and ethnic heritage, they experience a sense of
wholeness (Poston, 1990).

Poston's model raises a number of important issues
concerning biracial identity development (Poston, 1990):
1) Identity problems primarily surface when negative

attitudes and non-acceptance are internalized from the
external environment. Hence, acceptance from those
individuals closest to the individual (peers, family,
neighbors) serves as an important buffer against other
outside prejudices or values. 2) To counter feelings of
isolation and non-acceptance, biracial individuals often
make a choice at the Choice stage that they are not
comfortable with. Attempts to deny the racial heritage <u>not</u>
chosen is a primary factor in the guilt feelings that
consequently arise. The more informed an individual is
regarding both racial heritages, and the more supportive
significant others are, the more likely the individual will
be able to choose an identity he or she is comfortable
with. 3) Integration of both racial heritages is
important, and is related to positive mental health
indicators.

Poston's (1990) Biracial Identity Development Model is
an important step in racial identity theory. Prior to
Poston's model, researchers held the notion that achieving
a dual racial identity was not possible. For individuals
of black and white parentage, the assumption was that
identity problems were inevitable. Poston reinforces that,
although racial identity problems are highly likely, they
represent only a transitory phase of identity development.
The final chapter of this review will cover the therapeutic

implications of Poston's (1990) model for biracial individuals, supported by research on biracial identity. Suggestions for future research efforts regarding biracial individuals will also be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to reach some
conclusions from the information gathered in this review
regarding racial identity development, and to discuss the
implications of these conclusions for individuals
attempting to develop a biracial identity. Recommendations
for parents of biracial children and counselors who work
with the biracial population will also be discussed. This
review will end with suggestions for future research
endeavors on biracial issues.

Conclusions.

Based on the findings of the research reviewed, a
number of conclusions can be drawn regarding racial
identity development in minority populations:

1. Racial identity is only one aspect of an
individual's self-concept; however, for minority
individuals, it is a crucial dimension. Minority
individuals must feel a sense of continuity with a
historical past. Affiliation with, and a sense of
commitment to, one's racial or cultural heritage
facilitates this process. As Sebring (1985) states, "The
doctrine of color-blindness in counseling must be replaced

by an appreciation of the dynamics of an individual's life as it relates to a cultural context" (p. 3). Establishing a racial identity enables minority individuals to connect with a specific group that can serve as a social support and a buffer against negative influences from the dominant culture.

2. <u>Individuals pass through transitory stages when establishing a racial identity and developmental differences between individuals may be identified by their expressed racial attitudes</u>. The racial identity construct is interconnected, to some degree, with other social identity constructs and develops in a parallel fashion. In general, there is a self-social-individual progression from childhood to adulthood. Racial identity development models reinforce the unique differences between minority individuals. By corresponding certain racial identity attitudes to specific stages of development, one can distinguish an individual's level of racial identity growth. The racial identity development models outlined in this review emphasize the importance of viewing problems in racial identity development as transitory. Minority individuals will likely undergo periods in their development when their racial self-conceptions are negative and conflictual; however, these conflicts will likely subside and be replaced by positive racial conceptions as

one learns to accept one's racial and cultural heritage.

   3.   <u>There are two general domains that comprise the</u>
<u>self-concept: Personal Identity and Reference Group</u>
<u>Orientation (Cross, 1987).   Although the two domains are</u>
<u>not predicitive of one another, there is a relationship</u>
<u>between various subsets of the two domains</u>.   The reference
group(s) that a minority individual chooses to orient
toward tends to change as an individual's racial identity
progresses.   For example, at the lower stages of
development, individuals may idealize the values and
beliefs of the dominant culture.   At intermediate stages,
the individual may fully reject the dominant culture and
orient solely toward one's own racial/cultural group.   In
later stages of development, reference group orientation is
more flexible and healthy since the individual's sense of
self is well-established.   Parham and Helms' (1985) study
showed that although self-esteem and a positive racial
identity are not predictive of one another, there is a
relationship between establishing a positive racial
identity and general mental health indicators.
"Connectiveness" as a condition of self-esteem is extremely
important; an individual must feel a part of something, or
feel related to a certain group.   Individuals that can
identify with a unique group that has a past or heritage
feel connected and achieve a sense of self-esteem related

to the connection (Bean & Clemes, 1978).

4. <u>There are differences in racial identity development between minority populations as well as minority individuals</u>. Individuals from any one racial/ethnic group share a common worldview that is unique from the worldviews held by other racial/ethnic groups. These differing worldviews are a result of the particular socioeconomic, political, sociocultural, and physical backgrounds that define each group. Despite individual differences within a minority group, certain commonalities can be found that distinguish that group from all others. Ethnic socialization has different implications, depending on the particular group to which one belongs (Phinney and Rotheram, 1987). This notion leads to the assumption that general racial identity development models lose a certain degree of validity when applied across minority populations. Poston's (1990) Biracial Identity Development Model is an example of a model specifically designed for a specific minority group.

5. <u>Individuals of black and white parentage represent a minority population that is unique from any other minority population</u>. Historically, individuals of black and white parentage were viewed as either members of the black population or individuals "somewhere outside of" any one minority population. However, the lack of social

recognition does not negate the fact that promotion of the "biracial" ethnic group is warranted. Biracial individuals are in a unique position racially because they cannot fully identify with both parents. The understanding is that individuals who have achieved a truly biracial identity are those individuals who accept both racial heritages, yet acknowledge that their own racial status is qualitatively different from either parent's heritage. Socially and personally recognizing the biracial population as unique further defines the boundaries of this group and promotes group cohesiveness.

6. <u>Poston's (1990) Biracial Identity Development Model is the only model found in the literature review that allows for the integration of a dual identity</u>. Based on the assumption that differences in identity development exist between different minority populations, Poston created a model showing the shifting changes in reference group orientation and personal identity constructs during biracial identity development. The model shows that orienting toward both racial groups and accepting one's dual heritage is related to positive mental health indicators. Reaching this level of development is facilitated by factors in the individual's environment (listed in the next subsection).

7. <u>There are key factors that influence racial</u>

identity development in individuals of black and white
parentage. The level of support from the individual's
parents, extended family, neighborhood, school, and peers
play a major role in how that individual chooses to
racially identify. The physical characteristics of the
individual influence his or her racial status in a broader
social context. In addition to social support factors,
increased cultural and ethnic awareness and experiences may
also play a role. Researchers have also confirmed that
socioeconomic status is an important determiner of racial
identity. Higher socioeconomic status brings increased
resources, and greater flexibility in controlling one's
immediate environment. In the case of biracial
individuals, it is possible that interracial families from
moderate to above moderate socioeconomic levels would be
better able to foster a biracial label onto their offspring
than an interracial family from a low socioeconomic level.
In the former case, these families will likely have
increased opportunities for choosing their child's school,
neighborhood, and peer interactions. The educational level
of a biracial child's parents, or the biracial adult, may
also play a role. The positive relationship between
educational level and higher racial identity development
was supported by a study conducted by Williams in 1975.
Williams theorized that those individuals who are

a part of a higher educational process are more likely to
explore the emotional, personal, and intellectual issues
related to racial identity, thereby facilitating its
development.

Implications for Counselors and Parents of Biracial
Children.

There are certain implications and recommendations
which can be made for counselors or parents who are
interested in facilitating biracial identity development in
children of black and white parentage. These implications
are based on the conclusions drawn from the previous
section. According to Poston (1990) and others (Jacobs,
1978; McRoy, 1985; Phillips and Wardle, 1984; Wardle,
1987), the following issues should be identified and
assessed by parents or counselors due to their influence on
a biracial child's identity formation (recommendations that
support a biracial identity will also be given for each
issue):

1. The racial label chosen by the family unit.
Families with biracial children who identify the children
as "black" or "white" are abandoning the child's other
heritage and may not be allowing the child to fully express
him or herself racially. It is important for families to
teach their children to accept both cultural backgrounds
and to define a truly bicultural and biracial identity

(Jacobs, 1978; Wardle, 1987). Parents in biracial families need support from both the extended family (grandparents, cousins, etc.) and society at large. Since there is no legal or institutional distinction between biracial individuals and other minority groups, it is difficult for society to recognize and support biracial individuals. The establishment of local interracial family network groups throughout the country has assisted these families in establishing themselves as a "different minority." The networks also provide families with an established reference group to orient themselves toward.

2. <u>Parental attitudes regarding child's racial and cultural status</u>. It is important for the parents of a biracial child to acknowledge the child's racial status and to accept it as being distinct from their own racial heritage. Being "biracial" does not mean that one is "half-black and half-white;" it is a combination of two racial and cultural heritages that results in the individual having a qualitatively different worldview from either parent. Conveying the message that biracial children share racial and cultural aspects from both parents and form them into a different complementary heritage is important. The parents should be secure about their own racial heritage and their biracial family unit to convey this message. According to Jacobs (1978), "... the

personal individuation of the spouses and their commitment to interracial life appears to facilitate the growth toward differentiation of the self that is implicit in the interracial family situation" (p. 198). This is especially significant for a child at the first two stages of Poston's (1990) model, when the primary reference group is the parents. In addition, since the child is not fully developed cognitively, the notion that one can choose to be "biracial" needs to be explained and reinforced by the parents. In this manner, feelings of guilt and disloyalty at choosing one heritage over the other can be alleviated.

3. <u>Level of communication and understanding regarding child's racial status</u>. The racial status of the biracial child needs to be openly acknowledged and accepted by members of the child's primary reference groups. Open discussions between the parents and child are especially relevant when the child enters the school years. This acknowledgement and acceptance should also be reflected in the child's interactions with teachers and peers. According to Wardle (1987), teachers "... must not go along with society's attempt to classify by the parent of color, but must teach them that they are culturally members of both races" (p. 58). Open communication on the issue also gives the child the opportunity to express his or her ambivalence or feelings of non-acceptance that may hinder

progression to the next developmental stage. Multiracial books, dolls, and other materials are also helpful tools.

4. <u>Level and quality of multiracial associations</u>. Biracial children who are exposed to a variety of cultural and racial groups in day-to-day living experiences are less likely to regard themselves as "outsiders" or "different from everybody else." Cultural/racial heterogeneity should be reflected in the parents' associations, the school, the neighborhood, and the child's peers. The awareness that the world is comprised of a large number of racial and cultural groups that are all interconnected, to some degree, enables the child to accept differences and to identify similarities within oneself and in others. According to Hallinan (1982), and Longshore (1982), children from integrated environments have a much greater awareness of other-group characteristics than children from non-integrated environments. Often, the biracial child may resent his or her minority status and attempt to deny the heritage of the minority status parent. McRoy (1987) notes that, for this reason, the children should have frequent, positive contacts with role models from both racial groups, and the parent should assist the child in developing positive, non-stereotypic attitudes toward both racial groups.

In summary, parents and counselors must understand the

transitory nature of biracial identity development; a child with feelings of ambivalence and self-hatred at the Enmeshment/Denial Phase of Poston's (1990) model can develop into a young adult preparing to enter the Integration Phase. According to Jacobs (1978), "... racial ambivalence is a developmental attainment that allows for continued exploration of racial identity" (p. 224). Counselors must also explore their own biases and stereotypes and their feelings regarding biracial unions. They should also educate themselves about biracial identity development, so that proper assessment of biracial families or children in counseling can be undertaken. Counselors who are uninformed on biracial issues may misinterpret the problems of biracial clients either by assuming that all problems are related to the client's racial status, or by avoiding the racial dynamics due to personal discomfort with the topic. Despite the significance of racial status for minorities, one must be cognizant of the limits of this dimension in one's overall self-concept. As Sebring (1985) states, "Ethnic identity is but a part of the whole person, a part that is hoped may one day be absolved of its qualitative overtones" (p. 8).

Suggestions for Future Research Endeavors.

There are numerous avenues to be undertaken in investigating the issue of biracial identity formation.

Poston's (1990) Biracial Identity Development Model
emphasizes the importance of reference group orientation
for biracial individuals. Based on this model, a study
examining the process of orienting toward primary reference
groups at the various stages would further our
understanding of the "choice process." A study on the
relative impact of the various environmental factors on the
choice process may help professionals plan more effective
intervention strategies. A comparison study of biracial
individuals who identify themselves as "black" versus those
identifying as "biracial," and a third group who state no
racial affiliation, would also provide valuable insight
into the identity development process. The relationship
between mental health indicators and biracial identity
development stages must also be explored. Research on
biracial issues is so limited at present, despite the
potential to learn more about not only identity formation
across racial boundaries, but about a new population of
individuals who represent a step forward in race relations
in this country.

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