The Context of Mixed Race Students in American Higher Education

It's kind of an odd thing, really, because it's not like I'm one or the other, or like I fit here or there, but I kind of also fit everywhere. And nowhere. All at once. You know?

—Florence

IN OCTOBER 1997, the United States Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued revisions to its Directive 15, changing the federal racial identification process to expand the number of racial categories and to include the option for respondents to indicate more than one category (OMB, 1997). The 2000 census marked the first time in U.S. history that individuals had the option to self-identify in more than one of five designated racial categories (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White) in addition to indicating Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (see appendix A for more detailed information on OMB categories). Of all census 2000 respondents, 2.7 percent indicated more than one racial category; while these respondents represent a small minority of the total population, it is important for higher education that *4.0 percent of those under age eighteen and 7.7 percent of those under age eighteen reporting Hispanic or Latino ethnicity* indicated more than one category (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

In the next two decades, the population eligible to enter postsecondary education will shift noticeably away from a monoracial norm to a more racially mixed cultural context. Mixed race students, who in 2000 represented a very small fraction of the student body, will be about as common in 2020 as asian undergraduates were in 2000 (National Center for Education

Statistics, 2001). To be sure, the distribution of mixed students will not be even across geography and regional cultures, but they will be a significantly stronger presence on campus than they have ever been.

Do these students bring experiences, interests, and needs different from those of monoracial white students or students of color? Will curricula, policies, programs, and services designed under the assumption of racially distinct student identities satisfy the learning and personal development objectives of mixed race students? And how will campus peer cultures, known to be critical factors in student learning and development change and be changed by these students?

The answers to these questions would be important even if mixed race students remained a small fraction of the student body; better understanding the experiences and needs of students from diverse backgrounds is an important prerequisite for planning and creating campus environments that maximize student learning and development. But the outcome of the 2000 census lends urgency to the task of learning about the experiences and identities of mixed race students, who will comprise an increasing percentage of the undergraduate population. Little is known about how they negotiate the racialized landscape of higher education and how that landscape will be altered by the imminent influx of students who do not identify in only one racial category. If indeed a growing portion of the student population in the next two decades will have more than one racial heritage, then postsecondary educators, administrators, and policy makers must begin now to learn about mixed race students' experiences in order to plan effectively for this demographic—and cultural—shift.

Concerned about preparing for this shift, I conducted a study of mixed race college students with the goal of learning more about how they identified, what those identities meant to them, and what they might mean for higher education policy and practice. In this book I describe the findings of a study of fifty-six mixed race students at six colleges and universities, positing five identity patterns exhibited by the participants. I utilize a developmental ecology framework to understand students' experiences in the context of campus peer culture, as well as in the context of individual background, experiences, and personal traits. I suggest that the findings could have bearing on policy, practice, theory, and research.

To set the stage for interpreting study findings, in this chapter I situate the study in the literature on race, mixed race, and racial identity development. In chapter 2, I provide a description of the developmental ecology model used to analyze data and a description of the research design. Readers who are most interested in the identity patterns and student experiences are encouraged to go directly to chapter 3 and proceed from there through the five identity patterns. Those readers interested in a deeper understanding of the scholarly context, the analytic framework, and the research design will find chapters 1 and 2 useful in contextualizing the presentation of identity patterns and student voices.

RACE AND MIXED RACE IN THE UNITED STATES

It is necessary to know something about the theory and history of race, racial categorization, and multiracial people in the United States to understand the complicated landscape in which multiracial college students live and learn. The fields of psychology, sociology, philosophy, and history have made significant recent contributions to understanding the reality of multiraciality in the United States. Postmodern approaches to racial theory show that race is socially constructed and is not the biological concept it was generally assumed to be until quite recently. The history of mixed race people has been brought to light, refreshed with a body of personal narratives and biographies of biracial individuals. Research on biracial identity development and on the lived experience of mixed race people has challenged centuries-old notions of social marginality, "hybrid degeneracy," and the "tragic mulatto."

A growing national movement of multiracial people in the 1990s made its effects felt within the research community. A theme in much of the literature from 1995 forward (see Root, 1996b; Zack, 1995) concerns whether multiracial people should seek identity as a separate racial category or not. While there may be significant personal and political gains to be made by declaring a multiracial identity, doing so reinforces the current construction of race. It can be argued that the existence of people claiming to be *mixed race* reifies the notion that there are discreet races to be mixed (see Renn, forthcoming; Zack, 1995). Yet many theorists agree that multiraciality must be fully understood before society can move to a point beyond the construction of race; in fact, some theorists (e.g., Zack, 1995) argue that an understanding of multiraciality is the key to moving beyond racial categories.

An Abbreviated Overview of Race, Racial Categorization, and Race Theory in the United States

Though commonly accepted in present-day Europe and the United States, race did not exist as a scientific notion until after the eighteenth century when Carolus Linnaeus (a botanist and taxonomist) created an artificial system to categorize all living things by genus and species (Spickard, 1992). Human beings were classified as one species, *Homo sapiens,* until the nineteenth century, when a handful of theories were developed attempting to differentiate humans by skin color (generally noted as red, yellow, black, and white). These theories generally held that the races were distinct *types,* developing utterly distinct and pure on separate continents as blood was passed from generation to generation.

Twentieth-century scientists have discredited this typological view. Spickard (1992) noted that biologists and physical anthropologists generally saw races as *subspecies,* which implied the essential commonality of all humans, while allowing for geographically and biologically divergent populations. They

saw all human populations—everywhere and throughout history—as mixed populations but generally maintained that the idea of race was founded in biology, as demonstrated by the frequency of various inherited physical traits. Genes, Spickard said, had replaced blood as the method of transferring race to one's offspring.

Zack (1995) noted that most Americans assume that the biological explanation of race has value-neutral scientific support. She and Spickard (1992) pointed out, though, that this assumption is untrue; there is no evidence that human racial traits can be identified genetically (unlike sex, which is differentiated by XX and XY chromosomes). Zack argued that racial traits are "simply physical traits that have historically been picked out as racial traits in biologically arbitrary ways. They have been selected to rationalize the oppression of groups of people who happened to have those traits in the past" (p. xvi). Zack pointed out that the modern concept of race evolved during the time of most intense colonialism and slave taking, noting that pseudoscientific theory was used to justify economic policies and social attitudes.

The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century notion of race has been reinforced since then through legal definitions of who is white and who is not. In the United States, in order to be classified as white, one needs to have white ancestors only. One or more black ancestors classifies an individual as black. Called the "one-drop rule" or "hypodescent" (inheritance of only the lowest racial status of one's ancestors), this definition originated to maintain the perception of white racial purity and to deny mixed race people access to privilege, including freedom from slavery (see for example Spickard, 1989; Williamson, 1995). The one-drop rule has survived in part because it was taken up by black Americans during the Harlem Renaissance and again during the Civil Rights Movement (Davis, 1991; Zack, 1995). Ironically, this rule has been reversed to work against mixed race native americans who would like to claim membership in their tribe but who do not satisfy government regulations as having enough native american "blood" (Spickard, 1992; Zack, 1995).

Unquestioned acceptance of biological explanations and legal definitions of race are the social underpinnings of the construction of race in the United States. Social distinctions such as race are the result of economic or status competition between two or more groups of people and the consequent stratification of those groups (Root, 1992b; Spickard, 1992). For the dominant group, racial categories are necessary for the maintenance of the power relationship. For a nondominant group, racial categories create a way of building community through shared culture.

In the system of racial hierarchy, boundaries between groups are the critical places of inclusion/exclusion; all racial groups have some interest in maintaining these borders clearly drawn. The one-drop rule, for example,

was used to strengthen the boundary between black and white, ensuring that no one who might be called black could also be called white, even though 70 percent of the black population is estimated to have one or more white ancestors (Spickard, 1992). Racial group membership has significant economic, social, and political consequences in the United States, and it is for this reason that definitions of who belongs to which group take enormous importance.

A system dependent on racial "purity" is destabilized by the existence of people who do not fit neatly into one racial category (Nakashima, 1992; Zack, 1993). In addition to the systemwide challenges posed by multiraciality, individuals in a highly racialized society who do not claim membership in one of the five constructed races (see Office of Management and Budget guidelines in appendix A) become "culturally unintelligible humans" (Ferber, 1995, p. 164). Historically, mixed race people have been constructed as deviant. This construction serves the dual purpose of discouraging interracial unions and categorizing a group that creates "chaos" in a racially ordered society (Nakashima, 1992). Nakashima outlined the historical theory of "hybrid degeneracy," which proposed that mixed race people were genetically inferior to their parent races; had no physical, mental, moral, or emotional strength; died early; and were unable to reproduce. According to hybrid degeneracy theory, their existence will lead to group extinction or race suicide. Root (1992b) demonstrated how this assumption of degeneracy placed multiracial people at the lowest point in the overall racial hierarchy. Alcoff (1995) showed how both progressive and conservative political movements reject mixed race people as being not fully part of either a racial minority or the white majority.

While some theories posit multiraciality as proof of the inadequacy of existing racial theory, another group proposes that defining multiraciality reinforces the construction of "pure" races. Philosopher Naomi Zack is a leader of the latter movement and wrote, "If one speaks of race in the terms of mixed race . . . then one needs to hold some false idea of race constant to construct mixed-race identity or reconstruct the concept of race" (Zack, 1995, p. xviii). She proposed a theory of "microdiversity," which referred to "the reality and scholarship of racial difference within single individuals" (Zack, p. ix). Ferber (1995) and Goldberg (1995) maintained that social scientists reinscribe racial categories through work on multiraciality, and they evoke the intellectual, political, and social consequences of doing so. Elsewhere (Renn, forthcoming) I propose strategies for conducting this important work while minimizing the reifying effects of doing any kind of work on the categories known as "race" and "mixed race."

Ferber (1995) took a postmodern approach to the sociological study of race. She criticized the literature on race mixing for assuming the given nature of discrete races, and she criticized research methods that assume race

exists without offering some explanation of how categories were established. She held researchers accountable for these weaknesses and claimed that "when researchers fail to discuss what actually constitutes a racial group, they reproduce race as a naturally existing category" (p. 157). Ferber took sociologists to task for re-creating and reifying race as a construct, even as they attempted to detach themselves from its construction. She decried separation of "we the researchers who know that race is a social construct [who] have no choice but to use these categories" from "they, the people in society who believe in these categories" (p. 160). Recent work on biracial people (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Kilson, 2001; Root, 1996a; Wallace, 2001; Zack, 1995) addressed Ferber's concerns, but the dilemma of doing research on issues concerning race while attempting to move beyond the construct remains a challenge to researchers.

Zack (1995) approached the research issue from another angle, proposing that multiracial academics are in effect writing themselves into existence in the academy. She said that postmodernism expects intellectuals to claim membership in some vulnerable group in society but that this task is impossible for mixed race scholars because outside the academy mixed race is not considered an identity or form of culture (p. 298). Of multiracial academics, Zack (1995) wrote:

> The mixed-race self that invents itself on paper is a refugee to the life of the mind: Only on the printed page at this time can one begin to lay down the parameters of mixed-race identity. . . . Outside one's professional life, mixed-race identity flashes on and off depending on whom one is interacting with. And administratively, within one's professional life, the record-keeping apparatus of the institution in question will most like recognize one in terms of the most disadvantaged or "under-represented" group that one has checked off on the relevant demographic form. (p. 299)

Whereas Ferber (1995) was concerned about the reification of racial categories through mixed-race scholarship, Zack contended that mixed-race scholars are inventing themselves, even if only precariously so, through their intellectual work. Zack added that although she advocates for the end of race as a social construct, she believes that societal recognition of multiraciality is a crucial element toward this end and that a period of multiracial self-invention is necessary to achieve it. Alcoff (1995) stated more simply that race should be kept as a research subject because in a highly racialized society, "universalist pretensions often produce alienation in those whose identities are not dominant" (p. 271).

Postmodernists suggest that work on race theory, if it is to be done at all, could be done from the border zones between designated social categories. Some suggest that multiracial people should engage in openly transgressive ethnic and racial crossings, imitating the cross-gender strategy of lesbians and

gay men who do queer theory (Shrage, 1995). Work from women's studies and queer studies informs theories of how compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1986) constructs and reproduces racial boundaries. Cerulo (1997, pp. 387–88) summarized additional work in these areas.

Race, gender, and sexuality form an "unstable triad" in which "shifts in one create disturbances in the other two" (Allman, 1996, p. 279). According to Allman, the "cult of true womanhood" in late nineteenth-century America created an image of white female purity that needed to be defended against the ravages of black men, and thus rich, white male identity was based in part on providing that protection. Racial group membership requires women to relinquish their sexuality to the men of that group in a sort of "sexual pledge of allegiance" (Twine, 1996, p. 303). Because women's bodies are the sites of racial reproduction, Streeter (1996) considered biracial black-white women the "symbolically charged gatekeepers" of the boundary between whiteness and blackness. Root (1997) proposed, "Race and gender co-construct each other in this country" (p. 157), and Rockquemore (2002) examined the specific co-construction of race and gender identities in biracial black-white women. Race, gender, and sexuality reinforce and re-create one another, and people on the margins of each category have unique perspectives from which to observe the process.

THE STUDY OF MULTIRACIALITY

The literature on multiraciality divides roughly into four categories: the history of mixed race people in the United States, theories about biracial identity and biracial individuals, popular literature about multiracial individuals, and models of bi/multiracial identity development, which I discuss in this section. The majority of writing comes from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and anthropology and the interdisciplinary fields of education and ethnic studies. With the exception of writings about the history of mixed race people, the research is mainly empirical, with a shift from quantitative to ethnographic studies over the last ten to fifteen years. Recently, popular media has taken up the issue of multiraciality in drawing attention to the ancestry of sports and entertainment personalities such as Tiger Woods, Derek Jeter, Keanu Reeves, and Vanessa Williams. The following brief review provides a backdrop against which to examine evolving ideas about the study of race and mixed race.

Histories of Mixed Race People in the United States

There are a number of excellent histories of mixed race people in the United States. These histories are proof that the myth of racial purity is false. Briefly, blacks and whites in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries engaged in sexual unions that produced the first "mulattoes" in the British colonies

(Daniel, 1992; Williamson, 1995). Despite stern action to prohibit such behavior, a small but steady mixed race population persisted. By the 1850 census, a distinction was made between whites, blacks, and nonwhites, with clear instructions that census takers should "take special care in reporting 'Mulatto (including quadroons, octoroons, and all persons having any perceptible trace of African blood)' because *Important scientific results depend upon the correct determination of this class'"* (italics in original, Goldberg, 1995, p. 240). By 1880 a category for "Indians" was refined to account for various mixtures of white, black, and mulatto within the indigenous population.

In 1930, the census had shifted to the racial categories of white, Negro, Indian, Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese. The "mulatto" category, and all of its accompanying designations of smaller and smaller proportions of black ancestry, had disappeared, and any "racially mixed person" with a white parent was designated by the race of the nonwhite parent (Goldberg, 1995, pp. 241–42). Not until the 1970s did citizens self-identify on the census, but at that time they could not refuse to identify in one of the designated racial categories; if they did so they would be automatically assigned "Other" (Farley, 2001). Following a political movement that included such unlikely participants as then House Speaker Newt Gingrich, in October 1997 the federal government changed its regulations to allow individuals to check more than one race from among the five official categories: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White (for a description of the events leading to the revisions, see Farley, 2001, or Renn & Lunceford, 2002). According to the 1997 revisions, "respondents shall be offered the option of selecting one or more racial designations. Recommended forms for the instruction accompanying the multiple response questions are 'Mark one or more' and 'Select one or more'" (OMB, 1997, p. 2).

The census has not been the only bureaucratic mechanism concerned with interracial unions and their offspring; laws proscribing miscegenation originated in the 1630s colonies and persisted in several states until struck down by a Supreme Court ruling in 1967. After *Loving v. Commonwealth of Virginia* (commonly abbreviated as *Loving*), the number of interracial marriages increased from 651,000 in 1980 to 1,464,000 in 2000 or 2.9 percent of all marriages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). People under age eighteen reporting two or more races in census 2000, the majority of whom are children resulting from these interracial marriages, numbered 2,856,886 (or 42 percent of all "two or more race" respondents) (Jones & Smith, 2001).

As multiraciality gained momentum as a legitimate social identity, a political movement made up of people who identify as multiracial evolved (see Farley, 2001). Though multiraciality is still a contested identity—both outside and inside the movement—theory has emerged to describe the growing movement. One theory proposes three major approaches within multira-

cial politics (Nakashima, 1996). The first approach is *the struggle for inclusion in traditional racial/ethnic communities.* Multiracial people can work to have all of their (mono)racial parent communities accept them in their multiraciality or can work to be accepted as full members of these communities (Nakashima, 1996). The second approach seeks to create *a new agenda for a movement of multiracial people.* This approach assumes that the experience of being of mixed heritage has enough common themes to constitute a meaningful reference group. The third approach seeks to *dismantle dominant racial ideology and group boundaries to create connections across communities into a community of humanity.* The central thinking of this approach is that binary thinking and the boundaries it facilitates must be destroyed in order to end oppression based on race, gender, class, and so on (Nakashima, 1996). Owning multiple positionalities and transgressing boundaries places multiracial people not as marginal but as liminal and advantaged, as in Anzaldùà's (1987) construction of *mestiza* identity. In her final analysis, Nakashima (1996) moved from historical and theoretical analysis to call for the construction of a multiracial identity that reflects the diversity of voices in the multiracial movement.

Theories about Mixed Race People

The second category of literature on multiracialty concerns theories about mixed race people. This area of research falls into four categories; the first three were identified by Thornton and Wason (1995) and augmented by Renn (1998) with the fourth. They are the problem approach, the equivalent approach, the variant approach, and the advantaged approach. Each approach casts mixed race people differently in relation to self, family, and society.

   The problem approach encompasses much of the pre-Poston writing on mixed race people in the United States. It assumes that monoracial identity is preferable and that multiracial people experience problems because they are "between" races. Moving back and forth across color lines is viewed as maladaptive. Stonequist's (1937) *Marginal Man* was the foundation for this mode of research, though it continued into the last decade of the twentieth century primarily through psychological studies of clinical populations (see Brown, 1990; Gibbs, 1989; Herschel, 1995).

   Proponents of the equivalent approach conclude that mixed race people and monoracial people (generally assumed in the research to be people of color) undergo similar identity development and assimilation processes with similar outcomes. This research appears to be in reaction to the problem approach and includes several studies designed to test whether biracial individuals were as well-adjusted in general as their peers (see Cauce, Hiraga, Mason, Aguilar, Ordonez, & Gonzales, 1992; Gibbs & Hines, 1992; Hall, 1992; Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, & Harris, 1993). In the area of ethnic

identity in particular, a number of studies showed that multiracial people are equally well adjusted as their monoracial peers of color (see Field, 1996; Grove, 1991; Pinderhughes, 1995; Sodowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995).

Departing from the equivalent approach, some researchers argue that taking a variant approach to mixed race identity allows for the uniqueness of the multiracial experience and the possibility of situational identity patterns. The concern of these researchers is how multiracial individuals live in a society predicated on monoracial definitions. Brown (1995) and Stephan (1992) contributed to this approach, finding that the majority of mixed race individuals do not consider themselves to be of a single heritage. Standen (1996) noted that new research on biracial identity development has led to a kind of "forced choice" dilemma. Whereas biracial people are now more free than ever to claim biracial identity rather than choose between their dual heritages, they are "put into a position where they are accused of being in denial for not accepting biracial identity" (p. 247). He advocated for the creation of models of identity development that account for various factors of development rather than prescribe a singular identity resolution. Bradshaw (1992) explored the role of physical appearance in the life of the mixed race person, arguing that a sense of "specialness," involving highlighted self-awareness or self-consciousness, is an issue for biracial people.

Finally, the advantaged approach proposes not only that mixed race people are a separate, equivalent group but also that the experience of this separateness confers advantages to them. In discussing resolution of "other" status and four types of "border crossings" mixed race people encounter, Root (1990, 1996b) alluded to the increased cognitive flexibility prompted by and required by these situations. Kich (1992) emphasized cognitive flexibility required to transcend external definition and move toward self-definition, and Weisman (1996) acknowledged the reflexivity required to achieve a sense of "positive alterity." Daniel (1996), in an apparent reference back to Stonequist (1937), used the term "positive marginality" to describe the situation of mixed race individuals.

Popular Literature about Multiracial Individuals

Popular literature—in magazines, books, and newspapers—makes up the third major area of what might be called the "multiracial literature." From the mid-1990s, a growing literature of personal narratives and other nonacademic writing has augmented the empirical and theoretical work on the lives of mixed race people (e.g., Azoulay, 1997; Baron, 1998; Barrath, 1995; Camper, 1994; Chao, 1996; Jones, 1994; Minerbrook, 1996; Moraga, 1993; Williams, 1995). Authored almost exclusively by mixed race people, these essays, autobiographies, poems, and novels help create a multiracial culture. In contrast to the "tragic mulatto" stories prevalent until around the middle of the twen-

tieth century (see Streeter, 1996, for an analysis of this literature), recent work gives voice directly to multiracial people. Together with book-length reports of journalistic and ethnographic studies of biracial people (see Funderberg, 1994; Kilson, 2001; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Tizard & Phoenix, 1993; Wallace, 2001) and growing attention in the popular media, personal narratives provide access to information on how multiracial people understand and represent their lives. The success of mixed race individuals in public arenas (sports, entertainment, news media) has spawned near-weekly articles in newspapers and magazines (from *Time* to *People* to *Glamour*) about multiraciality and mixed race identity.

Viewed against this backdrop of history, theory, and narratives about the multiracial experience, the study of mixed race college students fits in a national, transhistorical context. It is necessary also to understand something about their identity development in a specific setting—higher education institutions—to contextualize the findings of my study. I turn now to an introduction of multiracial identity formation and college student development theory.

BI- AND MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY FORMATION

Erikson (1968) believed that the development of a positive racial identity was critical to the establishment of a healthy identity. He pinpointed adolescence as the time when this work on identity occurred. Chickering and Reisser (1993) concurred, including racial identity development in the "Establishing Identity" vector of their student development schema. Stephan (1992) proposed, "Identities are meaning that the self acquires through social interaction, and as such are crucial to an understanding of an individual's sense of himself or herself" (p. 51). Further, ethnic identity is particularly important because it is a "master status, an identity that overrides all others in others' judgments of the self" (p. 51). Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1993) focused on the individual's feelings about her or his race, defining racial identity development as pride in one's racial and cultural identity. The underlying premise of these theories is that people cannot develop a healthy sense of identity if they lack a positive racial identity.

THEORIES OF RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

A number of theories attempt to describe how an individual achieves such a positive racial identity, and most of them focus on how people of color accomplish this developmental task (e.g., Cross, 1995; Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993). Exceptions include Helms (1990, 1995), who has proposed models for both blacks and whites, and Tatum (1995) whose theory of white identity development closely parallels Helms's theory. Virtually all of the

theories are based on a psychosocial or social interactionist paradigm in which an individual comes to understand him- or herself through a series of racialized encounters with family, friends, and others. These models follow a general format of increasing sophistication from a stage of no awareness of race or racial difference to a stage of integration of race as an aspect of a complete adult identity. Kich (1992), Kilson (2001) King and DaCosta (1996), Poston (1990), Renn (2000), Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002), Root (1990, 1992b), Wallace (2001), Williams (1996), and others have found that while the psychosocial assumption holds up when translating monoracial models to multiracial situations, the traditional stage models pose problems in exploring healthy biracial identity formation. In order to create models of mixed race identity, we need to reconsider existing theories about racial identity development.

There is general agreement that development of racial self-identity occurs within the context of social encounters. Helms (1995) posited that development occurs as needed by an individual to cope effectively with "personally meaningful racial material in her or his environments" (p. 186). Cross (1995) revised his 1978 theory of Nigrescence to accommodate the notion that it describes the resocializing experience in which a black person is transformed from a non-Afrocentric preexisting identity into one that is Afrocentric. Similarly, Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1993) outlined how a lifetime of social encounters propels individuals from one stage to the next, and King and DaCosta's (1996) four-fold theory of the construction of race relies on self-other interactions to stimulate identity development.

While there is agreement that race is socially constructed at both macro and micro levels, there is a diversity of opinion about the pattern of racial identity development at the individual level. Stage and typology theories predominate among the traditional models, but research with multiracial people shows that these models do not necessarily translate well from monoracial populations. According to the stage theories, an individual moves from "pre-encounter" (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1990, 1995) to "internalization-commitment" (Cross) or "integrative awareness" (Helms, 1995) through a process of rejecting majority (white) culture and embracing minority culture. There is not consensus on the immutability of the stages or the possibility of regression from a "higher" stage to a "lower" one. Helms (1995) changed her 1990 theory from "stages" to "statuses" to imply permeability in the model. In the revision, she intended to clarify that an individual may exhibit traits reflective of more than one status, that the statuses are dynamic interactions between cognitive and emotional processes, and that "neither theory nor measurement supports the notion of the various stages as mutually exclusive or 'pure' constructs" (p. 183). Phinney's (1990) model allows for an individual to return to a foreclosed state of disinterest in ethnic issues from a moratorium state of ethnic identity search. Cross's (1995) model is more rigid,

implying development from one stage to the next in irreversible order, though he accounts for individuals who may choose not to progress through to the highest stage. See table 1.1 for a summary of the minority identity development models.

Since multiracial people have historically been declared people of color (and not white), theory predicts that they follow the same stages as their monoracial peers of color. In any of the models, rigid or permeable, the middle stages of questioning identity, rejecting majority culture, and immersing in minority culture could prove problematic for individuals of mixed heritage. It was this phenomenon that led numerous researchers over the years to deem biracial people poorly adjusted. Pinderhughes (1995) cited a number of such studies, and Root (1992a) described how the methodological difficulty of doing research with multiracial people yielded biased results. A number of recent studies found that mixed race people were as well adjusted as their monoracial peers (e.g., Brown, 1995; Cauce et al., 1992; Field, 1996; Gibbs & Hines, 1992; Hall, 1992, 1996), and these studies supported the creation of models of biracial identity formation that accounted for these findings (e.g., Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995; Kich, 1992; Root, 1996b).

MODELS OF BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

In attempts to describe biracial identity formation, traditional stage models of minority identity development have been criticized for being too linear (Miller, 1992; Root, 1992a, 1992b, Wallace, 2001), for paying inadequate attention to the socioecology of race (Clancy, 1995), for relying on rejection of white culture as a necessary middle stage (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995; Kich, 1992; Poston, 1990; Root, 1990), and for lacking adequate empirical support (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Multiracial identity formation is generally believed to be personal and multidimensional, though stage-based models predominate (e.g., Kich, 1992; Poston, 1990).

There is disagreement among theorists over the goal of biracial identity formation. Achievement of an integrated identity similar to that achieved at the highest levels of the traditional minority identity development models is the goal of one family of theories, while a second group of theories holds that development of a distinct biracial/bicultural, mixed race, interracial or multiracial identity is the goal. In this second group, there is a subset of theories that holds that an individual will not just achieve an identity as a multiracial person, but she will also achieve a sense of "positive alterity" (Weisman, 1996) or specialness in her "otherness" (Root, 1990). Finally, emerging theories propose that the goal of multiracial identity development is an individual's ability to engage in a variety of "border crossings" between and among social contexts defined by race and ethnicity (Root, 1996a; Wallace, 2001). In this section I discuss theories in each of these three categories.

TABLE 1.1
Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Models

Atkinson, Morten & Sue (1993)	Conformity	Dissonance	Resistance/Immersion	Introspection	Synergetic articulation and awareness
Cross (1995)	Preencounter	Encounter	Immersion/Emersion	Internalization	Internalization/Commitment
Helms (1995)	Conformity (Preencounter)	Dissonance (Encounter)	Immersion/Emersion	Internalization	Integrative Awareness
Phinney (1990) [uses Marcia's Ego Identity Statuses]	Unexamined ethnic identity, diffused: lack of interest in or concern with ethnicity	Unexamined ethnic identity, foreclosed: views of ethnicity based on opinions of others	Ethnic identity search		Achieved ethnic identity

Toward an Integrated Identity

Poston's (1990) pioneering work on biracial identity development was based on Cross's (1987) work on personal identity (PI) and reference group orientation (RGO). In Cross's model, PI included constructs independent of racial categorization such as self-esteem and interpersonal competence, whereas RGO included racial identity, racial esteem, and racial ideology. Poston designed his theory for black-white biracial people, but it may be generalized to incorporate other mixed race people as well. Poston was concerned that existing models of minority identity formation and theories about the social marginality of mixed race people implied that biracial people must choose one group's culture and values over another in order to achieve racial group pride, and that whereas monoracial people might reject first minority then majority culture, biracial people come from both cultures. Consequently, Poston believed that existing theories did not allow for the integration of several group identities. He also noted that minority identity development theories relied on some acceptance of an individual into the minority culture of origin, but that biracial people might never gain this acceptance.

Poston proposed a five-stage theory of biracial identity development. Stage one is *Personal Identity*. Children who are just becoming aware of membership in any particular ethnic group are in this stage. Their sense of self is independent of ethnic background and their RGO attitudes have not yet developed, thus their identity is primarily based on PI. Stage two is *Choice of Group Categorization*. Individuals are pushed by family, peers, or other social groups to choose a racial identity, usually of one ethnic group. This stage can be a time of crisis and isolation. While individuals might choose to identify multiracially at this point, they are more likely to choose one ethnicity over another. This decision often leads to feelings of confusion and guilt at having to choose one identity that is not fully expressive of an individual's heritage. These feelings signal entrance to the third stage, *Enmeshment/Denial*. Typically an adolescent stage, it is characterized by feelings of disloyalty at choosing one parent's background and not the other's (Sebring, 1985 in Poston, 1990). Prompted by these feelings, a biracial person might begin to learn about her various ethnic heritages, to appreciate her multiple identity, and to broaden her RGO. She has entered the fourth stage, *Appreciation*. When she is ready to recognize and value all of her ethnic identities, she moves to the final stage, *Integration*. According to Poston (1990), here she develops a secure, integrated, and multicultural identity. The majority of biracial people will achieve this stage.

Whereas the middle stages of the Helms (1990, 1995); Cross (1991, 1995); and Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1993) models are characterized by enthusiastic immersion in a minority culture, Poston (1990) identified stages two (choice) and three (enmeshment/denial) as the most difficult times of

adjustment for biracial people. That they fall during late childhood and adolescence when factors of personal identity might be most affected by the attitudes of members of one's reference group does little to facilitate the overall development and adjustment of mixed race youth. Poston acknowledged the additional potential burden of an individual's internalizing societal prejudice and negative reference group values. However, he believed that positive resolution of feelings of guilt and disloyalty could lead to full exploration of an individual's identity and was therefore associated with positive indicators of mental health.

The Kerwin-Ponterotto (1995) model also follows a stage pattern and leads to an integrated multiethnic identity. According to this model, identity formation depends on a number of psychosocial factors and is an individual process. The Kerwin-Ponterotto model contains six stages, beginning with *Preschool,* when racial awareness emerges. *Entry to school* is the second stage, in which "What are you?" questions and a need to categorize people and objects prompt children to reassess their self-concept. *Preadolescence* is marked by increased awareness that physical appearance represents group membership and awareness that parents are from different racial groups. Awareness of living in an interracial family may not occur until triggered by such an event or environmental circumstances.

Stage four is *Adolescence,* and like Poston (1990), Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995) marked this stage as the most challenging one for biracial youth, both because of the developmental issues characteristic of adolescents and the particular challenges society presents to biracial people. Kerwin and Ponterotto noted that dating during adolescence may bring racial issues to the surface, and Twine (1996) examined the role of heterosexual romance in transforming racial identities. Kerwin (1991) found significant peer pressure for biracial teens to identify with only one racial group but also found that these pressures could be neutralized by nonrace-related RGO factors such as sports teams, school or church groups, or other interests (pp. 212–13). Still, individuals in this stage are likely to identify with one aspect of their heritage over others.

College/young adulthood may bring continued immersion in one culture (and rejection of others), but as young people develop a more secure personal identity, they are more likely to reject others' expectations and to accept their biracial heritage. Often, they begin to see advantages as well as disadvantages of being biracial. College affords particular opportunities to explore racial identity. As they move into the sixth stage, *Adulthood,* they seek a continuing integration of the different facets of their racial identity. They may experience an enhanced sense of self as they function effectively in varying situations and understand different communities. This final stage represents an integration of racial self/selves and other aspects of identity.

Toward a Multiracial Identity

While Poston (1990) and Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995) saw integration of ethnic/racial identities as the endpoint of multiracial identity development, other theorists saw the claiming of a distinct multiracial identity as the endpoint of this process. From an ethnographic study of fifteen biracial adults of white and Japanese heritage, Kich (1992) concluded, "For a person who is biracial, a positive expression of that reality is the integration and assertion of a biracial identity" (p. 304). He proposed a three-stage model of biracial/bicultural identity development. Stage 1 generally occurs from ages three through ten and is characterized by "an *initial awareness of differentness* and dissonance between self-perceptions and others' perceptions" (p. 305). Kich found that this awareness and dissonance often occurred during the transition from home to early peer group when individuals found themselves not fitting into any reference group outside the family.

Stage two occurs through grade school and into late adolescence or young adulthood. During this stage, the biracial person engages in a *struggle for acceptance by others*. Most people in this stage will either claim one heritage or will simply list their different heritages, though some will claim an interracial identity. Kich (1992) believed that this stage enables biracial people to learn how to negotiate racial boundaries in society. Late in this stage, individuals will begin to examine their own stereotypes about multiracial people and will begin to take on an independent identity, apart from parental expectations.

When an individual accepts herself as a person with *a biracial and bicultural identity*, she has entered stage three. In this stage, identity is influenced by but different from the quest for acceptance by others. Individuals come to form congruent, positive self-definitions that reverse negative social constructions of mixed race people. They explore aspects of ethnic heritage and culture and use terms such as *interracial* to describe themselves. These individuals are less defensive toward those who are confused by multiraciality and understand identity as "something constructed out of the relationship between personal experience and social meanings of ethnicity, race, and group membership" (Kich, 1992, p. 316). People in stage three are able to educate others about multiraciality and to recognize parameters of group roles and rules and are accepted into different groups.

Kich's model relies on the agency of the individual to overcome external restrictions imposed by societal ideas about biraciality. This model requires reflexivity; in order to achieve the final stage an individual must develop the cognitive flexibility to view race as a social construction and multiraciality as one construct among many. Further, a person must learn to "take the self as an object" (Mead, in King & DaCosta, 1996) and apply that construct to it. Kegan (1982, 1994) would describe such a phenomenon as a

"subject-object shift," involving "self-authorship," and use it as evidence of cognitive growth. See table 1.2 for a summary of the lifespan models of multiracial identity development.

Toward a Positive Alterity

A subset of the group of theories that holds formation of a multiracial identity as the desired goal is the set that features a theme of "positive marginality" (Daniel, 1996) as the endpoint of healthy development. In these theories, an individual comes not only to see himself as biracial, but also to understand biraciality as a privileged position from which to experience social interactions. Daniel's contribution was not a stage model but rather a theory that healthy biracial identity lends itself to a sense of "positive marginality" characterized by "a style of self-consciousness that involves a continuous process of 'incorporating here, discarding there, responding situationally'" (Adler in Daniel, 1996, p. 134). People living in this state experience an increased tolerance for difference and appreciation of commonalities, as well as multiple points of reference.

Daniel (1996) outlined four ways of being in positive marginality that correspond roughly to Root's (1996a) types of border crossings. Daniel described *integrative identity* as a simultaneous referencing in black and white communities. *Synthesized integrative identity* occurs when individuals identify equally and comfortably in the two communities and shuttle between both (like Root's "both feet in both camps" border crossing). *Functional integrative identity* occurs when an individual identifies with and functions within both communities but feels a greater acceptance from and comfort in one or the other community. A functional integrative/black individual, for example, would feel more accepted in the black community and would have a strong commitment to issues within that community. Functional integrative identity corresponds to Root's idea of shifting foreground and background according to context.

Pluralistic identity, on the other hand, blends aspects of both parent groups, but these individuals consider themselves part of neither (Daniel, 1996). They create instead a new primary reference group of mixed heritage individuals. *Synthesized pluralistic identity* occurs when people reference themselves equally in black, white, and multiracial communities (again, like Root's feet in both groups border crossing, but with feet in an additional, mixed race group). The *functional pluralistic identity* group identifies variously with black, white, and racially mixed people, but feels more comfortable in and accepted by one reference group or another. These people might be seen as shifting foreground and background or as setting up a home base in one group and venturing periodically into others (see Root, 1996a). Daniel's description of life on the racial boundary accounted for a variety of outcomes

TABLE 1.2
Lifespan Models of Biracial Identity Development

Kich (1992)	Initial awareness of difference		Struggle for acceptance by others			Biracial/bicultural identity
Poston (1990)	Personal identity, no racial RGO	Choice of group categorization, forced to choose one category		Enmeshment/denial, choice of one category leads to confusion and guilt	Appreciation, learn more about various ethnic heritages and consider broadening RGO	Integration, recognize and value all ethnic identities
Kerwin–Ponterotto (1995)	Preschool, racial awareness emerges	Entry to school, reassess racial self-concept	Preadolescence, awareness that phenotype represents group membership and that parents are not from same group	Adolescence, pressure to identify with one racial group	College/young adulthood, immersion in one culture with beginning to reject others' expectations	Adulthood, continuing integration of different facets of racial identity

and relied on the development of the cognitive and emotional flexibility Kich (1996) said accompanies a marginal existence.

Weisman (1996) employed a similar theory that incorporated the development of a "positive alterity" or positive reference group. Since identity maintenance is not posited as possible without a reference group (Stuart & Abt, 1973), and society does not provide a multiracial reference group, a self-proclaimed alterity provides mixed race people such a group. Weisman argued that societal recognition of a reference group is not as important as recognition of that group by those who define it and seek to belong (p. 157). She also pointed out that although development of a positive alterity is important, insistence on a separate multiracial reference group reifies the existing structure of race in the United States. Nevertheless, incorporation of positive marginality or positive alterity into the final stage of racial identity development requires the kind of cognitive ability necessary for Kich's (1992) final stage, and moving beyond the concept of race altogether requires a level of cognitive ability along the lines of Kegan's (1994) subject-object shift.

Root (1990) presented a model for how individuals might develop and manage positive marginality or alterity. In remarking on studies that attest to the adjustment difficulties of biracial people, she claimed that *"it is the marginal status imposed by society rather than the objective mixed race of biracial individuals which poses a severe stress to positive identity development"* (p. 188, italics in original). Like Kich (1992), Root emphasized the importance of shifting from seeking approval from others to defining oneself. She proposed that healthy development for biracial children must include learning strategies for coping with the "otherness" forced on them by a dichotomous, black-white society but noted that these children have few models available in this attempt to resolve "other" status.

Root (1990) proposed four strategies for this resolution. These strategies are not mutually exclusive or progressive, and they may exist simultaneously. They share a number of themes. In each, the biracial person accepts both sides of her heritage, she has the right to declare how she chooses to self-identify, she develops personal strategies for coping with social resistance, and she no longer internalizes questions about her identity as inferences that there is something wrong with her (pp. 201–02). The strategies echo Nakashima's (1996) "voices" from the multiracial movement.

In the first strategy biracial people can *accept the identity society assigns*. Root (1990) called this strategy the most tenuous, as it depends on external forces, which may change depending on time and place. The second strategy involves *identification with both racial groups*. This solution can be a positive one if an individual's personality remains stable across groups and if she is accepted in both groups. Root notes that this strategy does not change other people's behavior and that the biracial person may need to develop strategies