MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE IMPACT OF RACE-ORIENTED STUDENT SERVICES

by

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Abstract

Multiracial identity development has been a topic of study that has slowly begun to grow interest in academia. While it is important to acknowledge the process of multiracial identity development in and of itself, it is also essential to understand how this development is influenced by different ecological factors in higher education, such as when and where a multiracial student may encounter instances of marginalization, as well as instances of mattering. One of the more prominent facets of this ecology is race-oriented student services, which can provide either a space in which multiracial students feel marginalized, or one in which they feel that they matter. This report will examine multiracial identity development and why it is needed in order to better understand multiracial students' needs, as well as how race-oriented student services affect development and expression of their identity.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Multiracial identity development is a topic receiving increasing interest in higher education, both to academia (in regards to student development theory) and to student services (Jones, 2011; Poston, 1990; Renn, 2003; Shih, Sanchez, Bonam, & Peck 2007). This somewhat delayed interest in the topic is, in the author's opinion, indicative of our society's interest in these individuals, as well as the slow-moving process of recognition and change that this topic faces. For example, although interracial unions and multiracial individuals are not a new occurrence in the United States (or the world, for that matter), the recognition of multiracial individuals as a racial group unto itself in society, media, and politics is only now beginning to develop on a larger scale. These changes can be seen in events such as the 1967 *Loving vs. Virginia* ruling that outlawed anti-miscegenation laws (Moore, 1988) and the inclusion of multiracial as a demographic category on the 2000 Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). While these are important and needed steps in recognizing and validating multiracial individuals, the decades it took to achieve them are reflective of the struggle that these individuals face in forming an identity and feeling that their needs are met.

The struggles that multiracial individuals currently face in society are also reflected in higher education. Historically built on the assumption of the monoraciality of its students, multiracial students are left to navigate how they fit in to a system that is still learning to acknowledge them. An example of this assumption of monoraciality in higher education is with race-oriented student services, including specific race or ethnic student organizations, and the overall lack of knowledge about multiracial individuals. The purpose of this report is two-fold: first, to provide a review of the current literature on multiracial identity development and how it

relates to college students and second, to discuss the effects of race-oriented student services in regards to marginalization—a key phase of multiracial identity development.

Concepts and Key Terms

Before delving further into this topic, it is important to introduce several key terms that are used in this report. They are adapted from Minisa Chapman-Huls' (2009) categories and are outlined as follows:

Monoracial: refers to a person whose biological parents are of the same race or ethnicity (Chapman-Huls, 2009).

Biracial: refers to a person whose biological parents are of two distinct races or ethnicities (of the federally recognized categories) (Chapman-Huls, 2009).

Multiracial: often used interchangeably with the term biracial, refers to a person whose biological parents are of two or more distinct races or ethnicities (of the federally recognized categories) (Chapman-Huls, 2009).

Additionally, the author will be adopting Kristen A. Renn's (2003) exercise, "In an effort to create parity between mono- and multiracial descriptors, I do not capitalize the names of racial categories (e.g., black, white, asian) except when a word relates specifically to a nation of origin (e.g., Samoan, Chinese)" (p.1). It should also be noted that the terms multiracial, biracial, mixed-race, and mixed-heritage are used interchangeably in this report.

Race as a Social Construct

In order to understand multiracial identity development, it is essential to understand how multiracial individuals view race, as well as the role that race plays in terms of marginalization. One of the themes from research on multiracial identity development is that many mixed-race individuals view race as a social construct—meaning that the categorization of races in general is

one created by society, rather than an actual biological difference—rather than as a biological construct (Literte, 2010; Nuttgens, 2010; Renn, 2000; Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, and Peck, 2007). Forming the belief that race is a social construct is often a process that is influenced by environment (such as if they were brought up in an interracial family environment), as well as challenges and experiences the individual faces that pushes them toward this conclusion (Nuttgens, 2010; Poston, 1990; Renn, 2000). These challenges and experiences, to be more specific, tend to be ones of marginalization. Specific instances of this can be seen in the assumption of monoraciality—in social settings, in identity formation, and in categorizing the individual. The effects of this marginalization will be discussed more thoroughly later in this report in the review of the literature.

Mattering and Marginalization

This report references heavily the work of Nancy K. Schlossberg, specifically her Theory of Marginality and Mattering (1989). While its relation to multiracial identity development and race-oriented student services will be explored in the review of the literature, an overview of the theory and its definitions of mattering and marginalization are provided herein.

Schlossberg's Theory of Marginality and Mattering outlines how an individual feels in transition and the importance of feeling that one has meaning has for an individual (Schlossberg, 1989). The basic assumption of the theory is that when a person is in a state of transition, such as entering college, he or she feels marginalized and that the person must begin to feel a sense of mattering in order to combat these negative emotions (Schlossberg, 1989). In *Marginality and Mattering: Key Issues in Building Community*, Schlossberg even asserted that "For many bicultural individuals, marginality is a way of life. In contrast with the person who moves to a new city or new job, a bicultural person feels permanently locked between two worlds"

(Schlossberg, 1989, p.7). This statement provides a foundation for this report's argument on the necessity to provide multiracial individuals with a space to find relief from this marginalization.

As this report refers to this theory and the terms mattering and marginality often, in order to remain clear and consistent in use, the following definitions are provided:

Marginality: As defined by Park, "The marginal person is one who is living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples, never quite willing to break, even if permitted to do so, with past and traditions, and not quite accepted, because of prejudice, in the new society in which the individual seeks to find a place" (Park, 1928, p.892). Marginality, in essence, is the feeling of not fitting in, or of feeling in transition, and can be a temporary or permanent condition (Schlossberg, 1989).

Mattering: As defined by Nancy K. Schlossberg, "Mattering refers to our belief, whether right or wrong, that we matter to someone else" (Schlossberg, 1989, p.9). Mattering is seen as a motivator that influences how students act and is often felt and identified by an individual after or in comparison to experiences of marginality (Schlossberg, 1989).

Summary

Multiracial individuals are a fast-growing population, and student affairs practitioners are currently unequipped to adequately meet the needs of these students. As more and more of these students enter higher education, it is not only important, but also necessary for faculty and staff to be able to identify and meet their needs. The current theories and models on multiracial identity development suggest that one of the greatest needs these students face is being able to make meaning of experiences with marginalization (Poston, 1990; Jones, 2011). The importance of meeting this need, as well as a review of the current literature on multiracial identity development, is provided in the following section.

Chapter 2 - Review of the Literature

Introduction

Multiracial identity development research is an ongoing process. As there are many aspects and many different variations of the multiracial individual (e.g., asian-white, black-white, asian-black, etc.), there is not just one commonly accepted model or theory. In fact, the acknowledgment of the need for a theory specifically for multiracial individuals is relatively new to academe. Before the 1990s, multiracial individuals were categorized monoracially, and were assumed to identify in that way as well. While monoracial identity models and theories may have some applicability to multiracial individuals, they do not fully acknowledge the experiences of these individuals, specifically the role that marginality plays in their identity development (Poston, 1990).

The following literature review will examine this conflict by critically examining Cross & Fhagen-Smith's Life Span Model of Black Identity Development (2001), as well as by explaining current theories on multiracial identity development, including W. S. Carlos Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model (1990) and Kristen A. Renn's (2000) multiracial identity patterns. Poston's Model was the first model to truly focus on multiracial identity development and discusses both the need for a theory and model separate from the existing monoracial theories and models, as well as the actual stages. Renn's identity patterns discuss the fluidity of multiracial identity, specifically looking at how college students identify themselves. Renn's patterns further the point that multiracial individuals view race as a social construct, as well as explain different identities within the multiracial identity.

The effects of marginality are also heavily discussed within this literature review, particularly in relation to experiences of multiracial identity denial. Instances of multiracial

identity denial are no more evident than in the interactions that multiracial college students have

within the context of race-oriented student services. While these organizations and services can,

and are intended to, provide a place in which a student feels a sense of mattering, for multiracial

individuals, this can often result in instances of marginality. In order to understand these

experiences, however, one must first understand why assumptions of monoraciality can elicit

feelings of marginalization for a multiracial individual.

Monoracial Identity Development

While monoracial identity development theories have been extremely influential to

multiracial identity development, these theories and models do not fully encompass multiracial

identity development. In order to understand this point, however, it is important to understand

monoracial identity development. The following section provides a summary of Cross and

Fhagen-Smith's Life Span Model of Black Identity Development (2001), which will serve as

both a tool to facilitate an understanding of monoracial identity development, as well as an

example for why these models do not work for multiracial individuals.

Cross & Fhagen-Smith's Life Span Model of Black Identity Development

In their Life Span Model of Black Identity Development, Cross and Fhagen-Smith

provide a model that explains different paths or patterns in black identity development. This

model is adapted from the Cross Nigrescence Model of Adult Identity Conversion (Cross, 1991).

As defined by Cross & Fhagen-Smith, "Nigrescence is a French term that means 'to become

black,' and originally Nigrescence Theory defined the study of adult identity *conversions* in

Black Americans" (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, p. 243, 2001). Cross and Fhagen-Smiths' Life Span

Model of Black Identity Development differs from Cross's original Nigrescence Theory because

it shifts the focus from adult identity conversions in black Americans to black identity development over the life span.

In their model, Cross and Fhagen-Smith based their sectors on the five stages asserted in the Cross Nigrescence Model of Adult Identity Conversion. While the original five stages are similar to Cross's sectors, Cross & Fhagen-Smith's sectors encompass black identity development over a person's lifespan. They also included a new sector, Nigrescence Recycling. The sectors are, in order, Infancy and Childhood in Early Black Identity Development, Preadolescence, Adolescence, Early Adulthood, Adult Nigrescence, and Nigrescence Recycling (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001).

In Sector One: Infancy and Childhood in Early Black Identity Development, Cross & Fhagen-Smith assert that although the child is not yet aware of racism or their racial identity, there are many factors that create an influential ecology, including family composition, socioeconomic status, and neighborhood (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). The importance of family becomes even more predominant in Preadolescence, in which the parents' emphasis or focus on race in the family dynamic strongly influences a child's perception of race. In this sector, black children will either be high-race-salience, in which the importance of race is instilled, low-race-salience, which plays down the role of race, or will experience internalized racism, in which the child often experiences inherited feelings of racism toward his or her race, and can often include self-hatred (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001).

In the following three sectors (Adolescence, Early Adulthood, Adult Nigrescence), black individuals often are challenged with their original identity that was formed in preadolescence. This state of challenge is important, as Cross & Fhagen-Smith note, because "This tumultuous testing and sorting period allows a young person to hold up for examination the ideas about race

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and Black culture which she or he wants to accept or reject" (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, p. 254, 2001). As an individual moves through moratorium and finds a new, tested, and solidified sense of racial identity, he or she moves through Early Adulthood and into Adult Nigrescence. These transitions are often accompanied by a sense of belonging and meaning in the black community and black culture (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). The final stage, Nigrescence Recycling, asserts that this challenging and changing of racial identity is an ongoing process, and that an individual may move through this model several times within his or her lifespan (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001).

Cross & Fhagen-Smith's Model serves as an example for monoracial models and theories, because although the sectors and specific patterns are not applicable to all monoracial models, certain themes can be drawn from it, which can be generalized. These themes are the following: that an individual first starts out unaware of race, but whose racial identity is influenced by his or her ecology; that an individual experiences a sense of moratorium or discord with his or her initially established identity; and finally, that the individual feels a sense of meaning or mattering in his or her racial community or culture after moving through moratorium and reestablishing his or her racial identity.

These themes, although somewhat similar to multiracial identity development, do not completely encompass what a multiracial individual faces. For example, a multiracial individual may experience moratorium or a sense of displacement and challenge in his or her racial identity much earlier in his or her life, such as within their own family dynamic (Nuttgens, 2010) or in trying to navigate their racial identity in elementary school or high school (Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009). Additionally, while a multiracial individual may begin to redefine and solidify his or her multiracial identity, this is not always met by approval or acceptance from

either or both of his or her racial communities. To discuss these differences more in depth, we turn to Poston's assertions in his Biracial Identity Development Model (Poston, 1990).

Multiracial Identity Development

Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model

In his Biracial Identity Development Model, Poston makes several key points as to why multiracial individuals need a separate identity model. First, the monoracial identity models assume that a multiracial individual will choose one racial culture over another (Poston, 1990). This assertion is an important acknowledgement of multiracial identity and the oppression and marginality these individuals experience. As was reflected in the use of monoracial identity models for multiracial individuals previous to this model, in society the assumption was that multiracial individuals will fit into a monoracial category also existed. While not all multiracial individuals identify in the same way (Renn, 2003), it is important to acknowledge that the development of multiracial identity is not as simple as choosing one culture over another.

Second, the monoracial identity development models suggest that minorities at some point often reject their minority culture for the dominant culture (Poston, 1990). For multiracial individuals, this concept does not easily apply, as these individuals may be from both of these cultures, and do not choose to reject any of their cultures.

Third, as Poston writes, "All the models require some acceptance into the minority culture of origin, particularly during the immersion stage. Many biracial persons do not experience acceptance by parent cultures, minority or dominant" (Poston, 1990, p. 153). This statement is a key component of the need to articulate the marginalization that many multiracial individuals experience in their identity development. Since acceptance into the minority culture is not something that happens for many multiracial individuals, and since the lack of it often

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creates influential experiences of marginalization to multiracial identity development, monoracial identity models are not adequate for understanding multiracial identity development.

Lastly, Poston explains that these models are also flawed in explaining multiracial identity development because they "place identity problems solely within the individual… The lack of support that some biracial individuals receive from their parent cultures may be largely responsible for their difficulties and not the differences between the parent cultures" (Poston, 1990, p. 153). Although all people feel marginalized at some point in their lives (Schlossberg, 1989), it is important to note that the marginalization that multiracial individuals experience often plays a larger role in their identity development, due to its origin not being constrained to an internal conflict, but also an external one.

Because of the limitations of monoracial identity development models, Poston proposes his own model for biracial individuals. Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model is composed of five stages: Personal Identity, Choice of Group Categorization, Enmeshment/Denial, Appreciation, and Integration (Poston, 1990). While there are some important distinctions with this model, it does hold some similarities to its monoracial identity theory counterparts. For example, in the Personal Identity stage, biracial individuals hold an identity and sense of self that is not largely influenced by race, if at all (Poston, 1990). This may be attributed to age, as individuals in this stage are often younger. This similarity is echoed in Cross and Fhagen-Smith's first Sector: Infancy and Childhood in Early Black Identity Development (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001), in which black individuals (often younger in age) are not yet aware of racism or their racial identity.

From this stage, however, Poston's model begins to diverge in order to focus more clearly on multiracial identity development. The next two stages, Choice of Group

Categorization and Enmeshment/Denial, could be considered the most defining stages of multiracial identity development. Perhaps this is due to the strong feelings of marginalization that a multiracial individual very likely experiences during these stages. In Choice of Group Categorization, a multiracial individual is forced to choose a racial identity, and very often this identity is for one racial group (Poston, 1990). Poston describes this stage as "a time of crisis and alienation for the individual" (Poston, 1990, p. 153). These feelings of crisis and alienation can also be seen as moments in which the individual feels marginalized, and experiences during this stage may not be fully processed until later stages, due to a likely lack of cognitive development for most individuals at this stage (Poston, 1990). In the Enmeshment/Denial stage, the individual begins to feel guilt and crisis as they become more aware of the conflict between their racial identity and their biraciality (Poston, 1990). The individual will again feel marginal as they try to make sense of their identity and make sense of their biraciality without conflict. The marginality that an individual may experience during this point could be from internal or external factors as they try to understand who they are and where they fit in. When a multiracial individual is able to appreciate and merge their previously conflicting racial identities, they move into the Appreciation stage, followed by a sense of wholeness, stability, and a biracial identity in the Integration stage (Poston, 1990).

Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model was the first model to begin to discuss the identity process for multiracial individuals as a distinct racial group. While overall the model is an important theory to understand, it does not discuss in depth how multiracial individuals identify beyond integrating both racial identities. Poston's model assumes that the healthiest and best way for a multiracial individual to identify is the integrated, multiracial identity. However,

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Root's (2003) and Renn's (2000, 2003) research demonstrated that this is not always the case, and instead each approach multiracial identity development from an ecological perspective.

Root's Five Types of Identity

Root's research on multiracial identity development was among the first to move away from stage models and move instead to analyze it from an ecological perspective. From her research, Root developed five different ways that multiracial individuals identify (Root, 2003). The first two of these identities are both as monoracial; however they are driven by different influences. The first is driven by "hypodescent and one-drop rules" and is when a multiracial individual "takes on the racial status the community assigns, and it is always the racial identity of lower status" (Root, 2003, p. 119). The second monoracial identity, as Root explains, may be driven by much of the first identity's influences; however in the second identity, the multiracial individual has examined and reflected on "how this identity fits, works for the person, and is consistent with experience" (Root, 2003, p. 119).

The third identity that Root acknowledges is a multiracial identity in which the individual acknowledges the racial heritage of both parents, though one race may be more salient or fitting in different contexts or at different times (Root, 2003). In this identity, a multiracial individual may acknowledge their multiracial heritage, but identifies monoracially for either race depending on the situation.

Root's fourth identity was "to identify as a new racial group and refuse to do racial addition, as in black and white" (Root, 2003, p. 119). Instead, multiracial individuals in this identity chose to only identify as multiracial without any qualifiers or descriptors (Root, 2003). In her last identity of multiracial individuals, Root describes an identity called symbolic race, in which multiracial individuals identified predominately with and felt most connected to being

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white, but felt pride and affinity in a distanced way to their other races (Root, 2003). Root

described this as being "detached from this aspect of their heritage for either having been raised

away from family and community of ethnic origins or having experienced significant and

repeated rejection from communities of color such that they stopped trying to join in group

activities" (Root, 2003, p. 119).

Renn's Identity Patterns

Rather than focusing on a stage model that encompasses multiracial identity development

from a lifelong perspective, Renn (2000, 2003) instead focused on identity patterns of multiracial

college students, much like Root (2003). Renn found that while Poston's stages do shed light on

a multiracial individual's identity development, they do not completely encompass some of the

more complex ways in which an individual chooses to express their identity. While Poston

focused on how multiracial individuals feel and what they experience at different points in their

life (1990), Renn instead focuses on how these moments influence the expression of identity in

that instant. Renn categorized the identity patterns as follows:

Table 2.1 Multiracial Identity Patterns (Renn, 2000)

Two or more monoracial categories	Identifies situationally, moving between or among the other patterns	Multiracial identity	One monoracial category	Deconstructs race, opts out of categorization

Renn also notes that a multiracial individual can move between these patterns at any

point, and for any reason (Renn, 2000). Therefore to understand multiracial identity and its

development, it is also important to understand the ways in which it is expressed. The five

patterns that Renn presents are complex. An individual can identify as two or more monoracial categories, but not view the combination, or herself, as mixed-race. An individual can even view himself as only one race, completely denying the existence of other races, despite his mixed-race heritage. Others can identify as multiracial as their single race, without acknowledging the traditional monoracial categories of heritage, and still others may identify differently depending on the situation or opt out all together. What causes such different patterns in multiracial identity? Renn explains it thusly:

> The finding that psychosocial factors influence racial identity development is not new… but the attempt to explore the cumulative, interactive influences of overlapping social settings, some or all of which may be sending contradictory messages regarding racial identity and identification, calls for more theoretical flexibility than the racial identity development models, with their inherent assumptions that race is a given and that there is a unitary racial identity outcome, can provide. (Renn, 2003, p.386)

Renn's research makes it clear that following Poston's model alone is not enough. While it is important to understand how multiracial identity development is shaped and influenced, it is equally important to understand how it influences the expression of this identity. Why is it important? Because it sheds light on how, when, and why a student may experience moments of marginalization. A multiracial student who expresses his identity as one monoracial category may find an experience makes him feel marginal for which a multiracial student who identifies situationally may not. And while marginality is a key point in multiracial identity development, as it pushes a student to recognize and define where and why they feel a sense of belonging, it

can also be a difficult experience for an individual, and can have negative outcomes, which are discussed in the following section.

Multiracial Identity Denial

As previously discussed, a strong theme in multiracial identity development is the focus on experiences of marginality that denial of one or more racial identities can have for an individual. As Poston noted in his Biracial Identity Model, this denial can be from an external source, not just an internal one (Poston, 1990). While it can be argued that these instances of denial can have an overall positive effect, since they elicit feelings of marginality that motivate multiracial individuals to not only seek places in which they matter, but to form, express, and develop a healthy and balanced identity, it cannot be denied that these experiences can also elicit negative feelings and self-image. If these marginalizing experiences of denial are left without a way for an individual to find a sense of meaning and mattering, however, it becomes detrimental to an individual, rather than a natural experience. The following sections on external and internal identity denial highlight the negative outcomes and effects of denial for multiracial individuals.

External Identity Denial

External identity denial is the experience that a multiracial individual has when his or her multiracial identity is either dismissed as a racial category or in which he or she is forced to adopt or identify monoracially from external sources (Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009). External identity denial comes in many forms for multiracial individuals, however the root of it seems to stem from two points: assumption of monoraciality and denial or exclusion to a racial community from members of that community. An example of the assumption of monoraciality and why it is considered external identity denial is with demographic surveys that do not allow a

multiracial individual to identify as more than one race or as mixed-race. In a study by Townsend, Markus and Bergsieker, they found that multiracial individuals who were given the option to "check all that apply" for racial identification on an aptitude test performed better than their multiracial peers who could only choose one racial category (Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker 2009). This diminished performance was seen especially in the individual's self-efficacy, to which Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker drew the following conclusion: "Compelling a biracially or multiracially identified individual to choose a single, monoracial identity rather than allowing multiple selections leads to decreases in performance, self-esteem and motivation" (p. 199, 2009). This conclusion is a significant point in explaining the role of external identity denial, because it illustrates the impact that implicit and passive forms of monoracialism can have on a multiracial individual. Other forms of this can be seen in any demographic survey that allows only monoracial identity expression, including the U.S. Census and college applications, which only recently changed to include multiracial identity expression (Stuckey, 2008). If multiracial individuals feel such a sense of marginalization from identity denial on an aptitude test, then the experience of multiracial individuals operating in a society that is slow to move beyond assumption and acknowledgement of solely monoracial identity must also be a marginalizing one as well.

A more active form of external identity denial is illustrated through interactions with racial communities to which a multiracial individual identifies. As Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model (1990) asserts, a multiracial individual often feels moments of conflict because they do not fully feel integrated or accepted by a specific racial group. Evidence of this conflict in the college setting can be found in Literte's research on race-oriented student services (2010). Race-oriented student services are discussed more deeply further in this report, but it is

important to note the role they play in external identity denial for multiracial students. As Literte summarizes, race-oriented student services create moments of identity denial "because they legitimize particular racial identities and place students in a position where they must navigate a racial terrain that is ambivalent toward biraciality" (p. 126, 2010). By acknowledging specific racial identities as legitimate, race-oriented student services also implicitly ignore biraciality as its own racial category, creating moments of external identity denial, and sometimes causing internal identity denial for multiracial individuals who are seeking mattering.

Internal Identity Denial

Due in part to the amount of external factors that can create a negative experience for multiracial individuals as they seek to identify and express their racial identity, internal identity denial is also common in multiracial individuals. This form of denial is similar to its external counterpart, however the feelings of marginalization are born from inner conflict of the individual. Poston acknowledges this internal identity denial as a stage in his Biracial Identity Development Model (1990). In the Enmeshment/Denial stage, Poston explains that it is "characterized by confusion and guilt at having to choose one identity that is not fully expressive of one's background…individuals at this level often experience feelings of guilt, self-hatred, and lack of acceptance from one or more groups" (p. 154, 1990). Although this guilt and self-hatred can be compounded from external influences, as Poston suggests these feelings are often manifested from the internal conflict a multiracial individual experiences when choosing one racial identity over another.

Although experiences of denial are decidedly negative for a multiracial individual, it cannot be denied that they are also extremely influential in one's multiracial identity development. These experiences of not fitting in and the conflict that the individual faces can be

viewed as instances of marginalization. Operating under this assumption, it can also be

concluded that these experiences of marginalization lead way for individuals to identify what it is

that elicits feelings of mattering (Schlossberg, 1989). In the following section, the role that

marginalization plays as a key influence in multiracial identity development is discussed.

The Effects of Marginalization

As alluded to earlier in this report, marginalization is an inevitable experience for all

individuals (Schlossberg, 1989), but it plays a pivotal role in multiracial identity development

(Poston, 1990; Literte, 2009). As discussed in the previous section, the marginalization that

multiracial individuals face most often occurs in the form of multiracial identity denial—either

from an external source or an internal conflict. It is equally important to discuss the effects that

marginalization and multiracial identity denial can have on a multiracial individual.

The negative influences of marginalization are easy to identify, as they fit closely with

Schlossberg's definition of marginality—namely that they elicit the feeling of not fitting in or

lacking a sense of belonging. These experiences of marginalization and their influence on

multiracial identity development and expression were explained through the discussion of

multiracial identity denial. However, although it is easier to explain and understand the negative

role of marginalizing experiences in multiracial identity development, the positive influence they

have on how an individual expresses his or her multiracial identity must also be acknowledged.

As Schlossberg (1989) explained in her article, "Marginality elicits feelings of mattering"

(p. 8). Therefore a multiracial individual's experiences with marginality, although often negative

in the moment, provide a context and frame of reference in which to define what is needed in

order to feel a sense of mattering. Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model describes

marginalization as a stage that leads an individual to resolve internal and external conflict in

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order to progress to stages of Acceptance and Integration (1990). Although he acknowledges the Enmeshment/Denial stage as one of guilt, self-hatred, and shame, he notes that this is a necessary stage that allows the individual to begin to define and seek out ways in which he or she can experience mattering (Poston, 1990). Therefore, as the author suggests and as this report will investigate, experiences in marginality are necessary for a multiracial individual to define and express his or her racial identity and to experience feelings of belonging within his or her expressed identity.

Race-Oriented Student Services

One of the strongest examples of how experiences involving marginality and mattering affect multiracial students in college is presented in interactions that these students have with race-oriented student services. Race-oriented student services are almost always geared toward monoracial groups of students—especially in regards to student organizations. This assumption of monoraciality creates an environment in which multiracial students have to face instances of marginality as they navigate through these groups to find one in which they feel that they matter. The following sections of this review will discuss first how the campus ecology affects the expression of an individual's multiracial identity, followed by how race-oriented student services can directly create instances in which this identity expression is challenged.

The Influence of Campus Ecology on Multiracial Identity

As discussed previously in this review, multiracial identity development and expression are influenced by several factors, both internal and external. One way to better understand the role that these influences play is by investigating how campus ecology affects identity. In her

article, Renn used Bronfenbrenner's Process Person Context Time model (Renn, 2003) to examine these influences.

This influence is particularly highlighted in the Context part of campus ecology. In her article, Renn explains this context as the following:

> Feelings of incongruity in microsystem groups of monoracial peers led some students… to question their legitimacy to claim a particular racial identity. Students spoke frequently of feeling "singled out," often telling stories about times when they had entered a meeting of a group of monoracial students and people had looked at them questioningly… as if to say, "Are you sure you belong here?" (Renn, 2003, p. 394)

From this quote and the definitions provided in the introduction of this report, one can conclude that these "feelings of incongruity" and of "feeling 'singled out'" as moments of marginalization that occur within the campus ecology for multiracial students. Renn noted from her interviews with specific multiracial individuals, that this context often led students to feeling frustrated or feeling like they did not fit in, which led them to either develop and discover more about their race as it pertains to their identity, or ignore it altogether (Renn, 2003).

Renn also noted that this assumption of monoraciality extends beyond student organizations to the classroom and our society as well. In her interviews with students, it was noted that multiracial individuals' identity development and expression were often sparked by classroom discussions on race and the societal norms and assumptions that exist about it (Renn, 2003). While not all multiracial students identify or express their racial identity as multiracial, it cannot be denied that the campus ecology is a contributing factor to feelings of marginalization for these individuals.

Bearing in mind the large influence that campus ecology can have for a multiracial student in experiencing feelings of mattering, it is incredibly important to identify both moments and factors that create marginalization, as well as those that create mattering. One way to identify these moments is to explore race-oriented student services, particularly student organizations focused on specific races, because of the assumptions these organizations make on race, and the marginalizing moments that these assumptions create, as discussed in the following section.

Monoracial Race-Oriented Student Services

Monoracial race-oriented student services, specifically the student organizations that fall under this umbrella, are not new to higher education. These organizations were created in the 1960s and 1970s as a way to help minority students to create a unified voice and to provide support to marginalized groups of students. However, the issue remains that as race evolved over the following decades, the framework of these organizations did not, leaving students who identify as mixed-race feeling divided or marginalized as they try to find their voice and support within these services. As Literte explained, "These services exist as the universities' responses to cultural nationalists' demands for recognition and inclusion, and in turn, they represent the legitimization and institutionalization of… identities. A growing biracial student population can potentially challenge these firmly rooted identities and the student services built upon them" (2010, p. 117). While these services are not turning away multiracial students, it is evident that these students are facing a framework that not only assumes monoraciality, but in some ways, demands it in order to serve the students within existing structures.

External Denial

Perhaps the most overt way that this assumption of monoraciality and resistance to multiraciality can be seen is with the 2000 Census debate on whether to include a category for multiracial individuals. One side of the debate argued that with such a large, young population of individuals who were mixed-race, a category for multiracial individuals would be necessary. The other side of the argument feared that such a category would result in, as Literte describes, "racial flight, whereby people who previously identified with one of the minority categories would now arbitrarily mark the multiracial category without realizing the consequences" (Literte, 2010, p. 117). These consequences included a significant decrease in individuals who identified within one of the five primary racial categorizations, thereby misrepresenting the historical minority population, which would result in less funding and support for these individuals (Literte, 2010, p. 118).

Although the above example is on a national level with issues on a much larger scale than race-oriented student services, the threat that national organizations articulated is echoed in higher education (Jones, 2011; Literte, 2010). Resistance to multiraciality in race-oriented student services can be seen by the lack of multiracial support services, as well as students' resistance to fully incorporate multiracial individuals into their own organization (Jones, 2011). This resistance can be seen as created by both the organization, which feels threatened in losing its historical structure and mission, as well as the multiracial students, who may feel that the organization does not fit their needs or their identity.

Marginalization

The resistance of race-oriented student organizations to multiracial students' inclusion leads to feelings of marginalization for multiracial students. Because multiracial students have a

more fluid sense of racial identity, that results in different ways of expression and identity, it is often hard for their monoracial peers to place them in a specific monoracial category—an act which race-oriented student services promote and need in order to persist. This often results in feelings, from both sides, that multiracial students do not fully fit into an organization, which often results in feelings of marginalization for these students.

As Jones explains, "While multiracials may achieve a sense of full racial and ethnic identity individually as a result of these characteristics, the literature suggests that this distinctive ability to opt out or switch identities depending on context is problematic for collectivization" (Jones, 2011, p. 141). This ability, as described earlier with Renn's Multiracial Identity Patterns (Renn, 2000), can make it inherently difficult for a multiracial student to feel they are truly part of a group that only encompasses a part of their identity, and likewise, can create an obstacle for multiracial race-oriented student organizations to form, as well. Despite this obstacle, however, the literature shows that multiracial student organizations and race-oriented student services can be incredibly beneficial for multiracial identity development and expression, and as a way for these students to make meaning of previous marginalizing experiences.

Multiracial Race-Oriented Student Services

Very little research has been done on multiracial student services, especially in regards to multiracial student organizations. Two of the most prominent studies of these organizations were performed by Patricia Literte (2010) and Jessica Jones (2011), both of whom studied both how these organizations formed, as well as the experience they provided multiracial students, specifically in regards to mattering and identity. In their findings, both Jones and Literte reported that multiracial student organizations and services provided these students with feelings of mattering, namely from the connections and relationships built with other students (Literte,

2010; Jones, 2011). Jones also found that a sense of collectivism and bonding was found through a discussion of similar experiences of marginalization, which eventually created the foundation on which students were able to form a cohesive group identity. The following sections provide these findings in more detail.

Providing a Sense of Mattering

In order to feel like they matter in a specific race-oriented student organization, a multiracial student may feel pressure to "choose a single, monoracial identity" that Townsend, Markus, and Bergsieker (2009) warn against creating (p.199). Their study showed that when a student is forced to do so, it often results in diminished self-efficacy and performance (Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009). Unlike monoracial race-oriented student services, multiracial race-oriented student services do not create this pressure to choose. Instead, they discourage these feelings of duality, by accepting and acknowledging any and all of a student's expressed or perceived racial identities (Literte, 2010).

Additionally, it is clear that although there is much diversity among multiracial individuals, the multiracial characteristic in itself becomes a bonding point for students. As Literte explains, "Biracial students also frequently voiced the belief that they share a common identity, experience, and kinship with one another" (Literte, 2010, p. 129). This belief, especially when supported by a university or college through race-oriented student services, can provide the foundation for a sense of belonging and mattering for these students that could not be found in traditional monoracial services.

Making Meaning of Marginalizing Experiences

As discussed previously, marginalization is a key experience in multiracial identity development and expression. While many student affairs professionals may feel that instances of marginalization should be minimized or eradicated, it can be argued that for multiracial individuals, marginalization is both inevitable and necessary for identity development and group formation. Perhaps one of the most prevalent examples of how marginalization can be helpful can be seen with the question "What are you?"

As Jones explains, this question, which attempts to demystify a multiracial individual's phenotypic ambiguous appearance into one of the five primary monoracial categories, is one that creates a feeling of marginalization for the individual. Additionally, this question pushes many multiracial students to begin to think about their racial identity and how they choose to express it. But perhaps the most interesting point of the "What are you?" question is that "Mixed-race scholars argue elsewhere that this particular form of questioning is ubiquitous to multiracials and may be the singular experience that multiracials have in common" (Jones, 2011, p. 148). Jones goes on to explain that in her observations of a specific multiracial student group, conversations surrounding this question came up again and again, resulting in what would become the foundation of the group's identity. While this identity was not explicitly about feelings of not fitting in, multiracial individuals found a sense of meaning in shared experiences of marginality, which allowed them to better articulate how they aimed to provide a sense of mattering to the members of the group. Making meaning of these instances, then, allowed multiracial students to gain a better understanding of their own identity development and expression, as well as define what they needed in order to feel that they mattered.

Summary

It is clear that multiracial individuals do not have the easiest of paths in identity development. As discussed in this review, moments of marginalization are inevitable for these individuals, and for many marginalization may feel like a way of life. While Poston's (1990) and Renn's (2000) models show that these moments of marginality are often integral to an individual's multiracial identity development, the reality remains that higher education and campus ecology often create new instances of marginalization, rather than creating space for multiracial students to feel like they matter. The following chapter provides an analysis of the literature review through personal reflection as a multiracial individual as a way to better understand multiracial identity development, and the influence that moments of marginalization and mattering can have.

Chapter 3 - Analysis through Personal Reflection

As discussed in the previous chapter, marginalization plays a key and inevitable role in multiracial identity development. While these moments of marginalization are oftentimes instances that student affairs practitioners attempt to eradicate, one can argue that marginalization is necessary in order for a multiracial individual to develop his or her identity. The following personal narrative is provided to clarify multiracial identity development as well as the importance that making meaning of marginalization has for multiracial individuals.

Personal Narrative

As a multiracial individual, race has always been a prominent and integral part of my identity. This was due, in part, to the fact that at first glance I look nothing like my mother, who is white. I am mixed-race: asian and white and am visibly a person of color. As a child growing up, this created a lot of confusion and speculation from others. Strangers and friends alike would ask me if I was adopted, which was the first instance in which I became truly cognizant of my race. Much like in Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model (1990) this awareness of race came to me at an early age. By the time that I was in third grade I was extremely aware of several things. First, I was aware that my mother did not look like me and that my dad did. Second, I was aware that not looking like both of my parents confused people—I had already encountered questions of adoption as well as the "What are you?" question referenced within the literature review. Lastly, I was aware that in certain areas, my mother did not feel that I was safe unless she was with me, and that this largely had to do with race. Perhaps the best example of this was when my family would take road trips to visit relatives in the South. My mother would get very concerned about letting me go to the restroom by myself at gas stations and restaurants,

and when I asked her about these concerns, she explained that it largely had to do with how people might react to me because of my race. Her explanation sparked in me the initial comprehension of race, as well as what would become an internal and external conflict about with whom I belonged.

At the end of high school, I began to deal with a lot of internal conflict and denial regarding my racial identity—specifically in submitting demographic information for standardized tests and college applications. Many of the forms required me to select one race, rather than to express my multiraciality, which in turn left me conflicted on how to identify. I had already encountered moments of marginalization from external denial with my peers— having been told that I was neither asian nor white without acknowledgment of multiracial being a legitimate racial identity. Expressing my identity through demographic forms, however, created a new sense of internal conflict and struggle, because it forced me to choose and identify my race within a monoracial scale. In doing so, I felt forced to choose one race over another. Due to physical appearance, perceived possible advantages with college admissions, and societal influence that treated me like a minority, I chose to identify as asian rather than as white.

This period of time became a catalyst for what would become an exploration and a hyperawareness of instances of marginalization that I experienced in regards to my race. Early on in my undergraduate career, I explored several different ways to get involved with organizations and offices that focused on racial or ethnic identity. What I found in this search for mattering, however, was an echo of my high school experience. I was not "asian enough" to feel like I truly belonged in the asian student organization on my campus. When attending the first meeting, I felt like I had to defend my racial background and ethnicities in order to feel valid. My multiraciality was not necessarily denied, but it also held me back from being a "true asian."

I additionally did not feel "minority enough" to feel like I belonged in our cultural diversity center. This frustration in feeling like I did not fit in pushed me to explore what my racial identity meant to me—as well as how I wanted to define my racial makeup.

The first time I began to attempt to understand my multiraciality and make meaning of the marginalizing moments I had experienced came in the form of an assignment given to me in my freshmen Rhetoric class. I was assigned the task of writing an autoethnography, and chose to analyze the moments in my life where I had been forced or pressured to select one of my races. I expressed this through an essay, as well as a map that visually illustrated where I had chosen to identify as asian and where I had chosen to identify as white. Seeing these choices represented in such a visual manner made me realize how much influence others' opinions had on my racial identity. Often times I chose to express my identity as asian not because I necessarily felt more connected to that race, but because I knew I would not face external denial for choosing it. This representation also led me to a very pivotal and important realization: I did not want to express my race as a monoracial category, and more than that, I wanted my identity as a multiracial to be seen as a legitimate and valid race.

Where before I had taken moments of marginalization as inevitable and frustrating moments, I then began to use them as ways to define what I needed in order to feel like I matter. This ties very much to how Schlossberg (1989) explains that in order to define what matters, we must know what it means to feel marginalized. During my undergraduate career, though my racial identity tended to shift depending on the situation and my emotions, much like the second of Renn's Multiracial Identity Patterns (2000), I was able to begin to define what made me feel like I mattered; I wanted to feel like my identity as a multiracial individual was legitimate and seen as valid by the university and by my peers. While in some ways I was able to find this

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sense of mattering, such as through discussions with my friends and coworkers and in my classes, I did not find feelings of fitting in with many of the organizations and offices that cater to minority students.

This was an area that I struggled with greatly, and I believe this struggle pushed me to truly reflect on how I identified. I wanted to know how I could fit into these support systems, but eventually I became frustrated that these organizations and offices did not allow for me to fit in. I also wanted to find ways to connect with my peers and discuss multiraciality, however it was difficult for me to find individuals who could empathize or share my experience. This meant that even though I did feel validated by my peers and was able to find internal harmony in my identity as a multiracial individual, I was not able to find the same sense of mattering with my institution.

In coming to graduate school, I knew that I wanted to study multiracial identity development, first and foremost because I was eager to learn more about myself and others like me. This motivation was driven by the desire to find that sense of mattering with my peers and within higher education that I had not been able to connect to in my undergraduate experience. I also wanted to study more on this topic, though, because I wanted to make sense of the feelings of marginalization that I had experienced throughout my life. As I began to research multiracial identity development for a class assignment, I had several moments of truly feeling connected to the literature. Reading through Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model (1990) for the first time gave me an overwhelming sense of finally being understood, and it allowed me to begin to articulate and comprehend defining moments in my life, such as feeling conflicted about being two races, as well as a sense of wholeness when I embraced my multiracial identity.

As my research continued, I was struck by several articles on race-oriented student services and how they affected multiracial students. It was a pivotal point in my graduate career and for my identity, because it helped me finally understand how important making meaning of marginalizing moments, not just feeling a sense of mattering, is to an individual—specifically for multiracial students. This realization also pushed me to make meaning of personal moments of marginalization, and to help me understand what it meant to my identity. I reflected on the moments of internal and external denial I had struggled with in my youth and in my undergraduate career, as well as the guilt that was closely tied in with this conflict. Rather than using these instances as a way to further my guilt, I began to try to understand the other components at play, such as society's assumption of monoraciality. What I was able to develop from these reflections was a greater understanding of myself as a multiracial individual, as well as a sense of internal wholeness and acceptance.

With my more personal issues resolved, my focus then turned to how to provide the experience of making meaning of marginalizing moments and a sense of mattering to multiracial students in higher education. My concerns with race-oriented student services remained then, and still do today. In Jones's study (2011), she highlights the importance that participating in a multiracial student organization can have for students, specifically because it provides them with a safe space in which they can bond over instances of marginalization. The "What are you?" question that she references in her study was one that resounded with me even as I read it. I had never had a discussion with anyone who was multiracial about experiencing the "What are you?" question before, and yet just reading the content made me feel understood and valid as a multiracial individual.

This feeling—of being understood, of being legitimate, of mattering—is of utmost importance to me as a multiracial individual. And unfortunately, all too often it is not one that multiracial individuals experience often enough. Many colleges and universities do not offer multiracial student organizations, and many that do offer them have ones that are currently inactive. Even fewer colleges and universities offer offices for multiracial individuals, perhaps because there is little awareness of multiracial students, because students are still treated and viewed through a monoracial lens, and because there is still much research to be done on the needs of these individuals. While research may be slow (due to the time demands of qualitative study), there is still much that student affairs practitioners can do. The following chapter outlines these actions, as well as what future research is needed.

Chapter 4 - Implications for Student Affairs Practitioners and Future Research

Implications for Student Affairs Practitioners

Simon Nuttgens wrote (2010):

> The overall profile of the biracial experience—as informed by the social scientific literature—is somber in tone. The picture one is left with is that of a troubled young person who is racially marginalized both within society and within the family. (p. 358)

While there is truth to this statement—as evidenced in the previous section's review of the literature—the duty of student affairs practitioners must be to minimize instances that create new moments of marginalization, and furthermore to create spaces in which multiracial students feel they matter and can make meaning of what marginalization means to their identity. This requires two different processes. The first is to critically examine where student affairs and higher education are wrongly assuming monoraciality and to take steps to move away from this assumption. The second process is to begin to provide resources and spaces that cater to the specific needs of multiracial students.

The first process of critically examining structural assumptions of monoraciality is incredibly important for the success of multiracial students. Townsend, et al. (2009) noted that "relative to when biracial or multiracial identities are allowed or supported, the experience of being forced to racially miscategorize oneself may lead mixed-race individuals to feel as though they have less control and power to affect their social environments" (p. 199). As discussed in the literature review, higher education in the United States was developed under the assumption of monoraciality, and its support services and structure reflect this assumption. Student affairs

practitioners must acknowledge that challenging such an assumption will require diligence and patience, as such an expansive change will be slow moving.

More support must be given, however, to multiracial students in order to provide them with a more immediate sense of control and power within social environments. This reflects the second process that must take place concurrently with examining and challenging assumptions of monoraciality. Student affairs practitioners must also begin to understand and meet the needs that multiracial students present—specifically the need to make meaning of one's identity and how marginalization affects it.

The onus of multiracial identity development and making meaning of multiracial identity is not completely on student affairs practitioners, however. It is just as important that multiracial students seek out these opportunities to develop their racial identity. Students can do so by taking advantage of the resources that are available to them and to take steps to learn more about their identity through research or critical discussion. Student affairs practitioners can assist multiracial students in the exploration of their racial identity by empowering the student through accepting their multiraciality as a legitimate identity and by guiding them to institutional, local, and national resources.

As discussed previously, multiracial student organizations and support services can be incredibly transformative for multiracial students. As discussed in Jones's study (2011), multiracial students were able to use their participation in a multiracial student organization as a platform to articulate and find empowerment from marginalizing instances, such as the ubiquitous question of "What are you?" Renn's study on multiracial identity development through a developmental ecology framework also notes that being a member of a multiracial

student group gave multiracial individuals an outlet and safe space that they could not find in other monoracially-oriented groups (2003).

Clearly, there is a need for student organizations and support services specifically for multiracial students. Student affairs practitioners, then, must begin to assess the specific needs of multiracial students on their campuses, and work to create these services and organizations for multiracial students. In order to do this, practitioners can challenge themselves on assuming monoraciality and begin to provide safe spaces for multiracial students to make meaning of their identity in small ways, such as intentional conversations in their immediate work environment. Student affairs practitioners must also begin to educate themselves on multiracial identity development and multiracial needs, an area that needs significantly more exploration and research. One way to do this might be to ask small groups of multiracial students to visit with a few staff members in Student Affairs to provide personal insights about the experiences and needs of these students. The information learned from these conversations can be used to begin to make administrative changes to the department, enhance staff training to meet multiracial needs, and most importantly to create race-oriented student services specifically for multiracial students.

Currently, few if any offices for multiracial students exist. While it may not seem that such an office is necessary since offices for diversity already exist, as discussed in the literature review, multiracial students' identity development and experience is significantly different from their monoracial peers'. While their needs are still being studied, it is already clear that multiracial students' needs are also significantly different and do not fit into the existing monoracial structure. Because of this, the need for an office that supports multiracial students specifically is needed.

Recognition of the need for such support can be seen from a national level with organizations such as MAVIN, which is described as a "national non-profit organization that builds healthier communities by providing educational resources about Mixed Heritage experiences" (undefined, 2011). As part of this support, MAVIN sponsors and provides the Mixed Heritage Center, which is an online learning center that aims to be a resource for multiracial individuals as well as a place to learn more about multiracial identity. While the center is not a physical space for individuals to visit, it provides several key resources to help multiracial individuals make meaning of marginalization and of their identity, including a library of literature, mixed-race role models, and organizations that support multiracial individuals.

In higher education, an office for multiracial students could very easily have the same resources. In fact, having an office in and of itself displays an institution's validation of multiracial individuals as a legitimate racial group with unique needs. An ideal multiracial office would have physical space for a multiracial student organization to meet, as well as literature and information on other organizations that cater to multiracial students, much like the Mixed Heritage Center. An ideal office would also take efforts to help others engage in multiracial awareness and curriculum. This could be achieved through assisting in faculty and staff training, outreaching to other student organizations and offices, and through researching specific areas of multiracial identity development or expression on campus.

In discussing implications for student affairs practitioners, it becomes apparent that multiracial identity development and the needs of multiracial students require significant study. The following section will provide an overview of gaps in current research, as well as what future research is needed for multiracial identity development, expression, and the role that marginalization plays within it.

Need for Future Research

In researching multiracial identity—specifically in regards to how students make meaning of their multiracial identity and the effects that participating in a multiracial student organization can have—there is little, if any, research. In fact, in writing this report, the author encountered significant difficulties in identifying and engaging in communication with active multiracial student organizations across the nation. This difficulty is indicative of the lack of support for multiracial individuals in regards to student organizations and race-oriented student services, as well as the lack of multiracial student engagement in this area. Research that specifically focuses on multiracial student organizations—especially in regards to the role that they play in multiracial identity expression and a student's sense of mattering—is lacking and very much needed.

More research is also needed in regards to multiracial identity development and expression. Very little research has resulted in a model or theory that approaches multiracial identity development from a continual and on-going perspective, like Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model (1990). The majority of the research results in concepts, like Renn's Identity Patterns (2000), that investigate and analyze a specific moment in a multiracial individual's identity development. While it is beneficial to understand these glimpses of identity expression, it does not provide a holistic understanding of multiracial identity development.

In order to gain a more holistic picture on multiracial identity development in college students, research of multiracial identity development in an individual's lifetime is also needed. Longitudinal studies that follow an individual from childhood to adulthood must be implemented in order to achieve a better understanding of what multiracial identity development looks like

over a lifetime. The knowledge of lifestyle trends, then, allows others to focus on specific points that begin to occur while students are in college.

Finally, research is needed for multiracial subgroups. Although there may be general trends that multiracial individuals show during development, the multiracial identity development of an individual who is of two minority races may look different from an individual who is of one minority race and white. Cultural trends may also influence how an individual identifies in regards to his or her multiracial identity, an assertion reinforced by Brunsma's findings from his study on racial identification of mixed-race children (Brunsma, 2005).

Conclusion

As noted earlier in this report, multiracial individuals are the fastest growing racial population in the country (Shih & Sanchez, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). While most college campuses currently have a low number of multiracial individuals, in coming years enrollment of multiracial individuals is likely to greatly increase. Due to this anticipated increase, it is incredibly important that higher education and student affairs practitioners are prepared to both understand the needs of multiracial individuals as well as have the resources and knowledge to support them.

While marginalization may be an inevitable and necessary experience for multiracial identity development, it does not mean that student affairs practitioners need to continue to work within the monoracial parameters that continually exist. In fact, many multiracial individuals will have encountered instances of marginalization long before they enter college. The role of student affairs practitioners needs to not only be challenging marginalization within their institutions, but also to find ways to give multiracial students a space (tangible and intangible) in which they feel like they matter.

One of the most prominent examples of marginalization and mattering for students centers around race-oriented student services. While currently the support services and organizations that exist operate almost exclusively under the assumption of monoraciality, Student Affairs practitioners can challenge this by learning more about multiracial students' needs and work to meet them. As the findings in this report suggest, one of the strongest ways to meet the needs of these students is to provide them with a sense of mattering, which can be achieved by finding spaces and organizations that they can engage in and make meaning of their identity.

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