SPECIAL NEEDS OF MULTIRACIAL FAMILIES

Patricia Harrison-Monroe, Ph.D. & Fred Wiggins, Ph.D.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Increase awareness of challenges faced by multiracial families

• Describe movement to more fluid self-definition of identity

• Identify strategies to work effectively with multiracial families in therapy
CURRENT TRENDS

• 9 million people (2.9% of the population) chose more than one race on the 2010 census
  • A change of about 32% since 2000

• In the South and parts of the Midwest, the growth has been far greater than the national average.
  • In North Carolina the multiracial population grew by 99% in Iowa, Indiana, and Mississippi, the group grew by about 70%.

CURRENT TRENDS

• There are 57 racial combinations on the census

• The four most common combinations:
  • Black and white, 20.4%
  • White and “some other race”, 19.3%
  • Asian and white, 18%
  • American Indian and white, 15.9%

• These four combinations account for 75% of the total mixed race population

HOUSEHOLDS WITH PARTNERS OF A DIFFERENT RACE OR HISPANIC ORIGIN: 2010

4a. Opposite-Sex Married Couple Households

4b. Opposite-Sex Unmarried Couple Households

4c. Same-Sex Unmarried Couple Households

Percent by state

- 25.00 and over
- 20.00-24.99
- 15.00-19.99
- 10.00-14.99
- 5.00-9.99
- 0.00-4.99

U.S. percent does not include Puerto Rico.

Sources:
Figures 4a and 4b: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Summary File 1.
Figure 4c: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Summary File 1 (Preferred estimates from Table 7 of this report).
For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/doc/sf1.pdf.
The number of people of all ages who identified themselves as both white and black soared by 134% since 2000 to 1.8 million people.

Among American children, the multiracial population has increased almost 50%, to 4.2 million since 2000, making it the fastest growing youth group in the country.

INTERRACIAL COUPLES

Acceptance & Rejection
Dealing with Society
- Stares and comments
- Stereotyping
- Violence

Dealing with Family and Friends
- How could you (do this to us)?
- Why would you (do this to yourself)?
- Is this a phase?
- Nothing new!
INTERRACIAL COUPLES

- Dealing with Each Other
  - This is worth it!
  - Is this worth it?
  - No big deal!

MULTIRACIAL FAMILIES - HARRISON-MONROE & WIGGINS 2016

7/19/16
MULTIRACIAL FAMILIES

- **Understanding Race**
  - We are the world
  - Whose child is that?
  - Trans-racial adoptions
MULTIRACIAL FAMILIES

- **Parenting Issues**
  - Safe in our cocoon
  - Did we discuss this?
  - Coping alone
MULTIRACIAL FAMILIES

- Family and Community
  - Whose house for Christmas?
  - No contact, no support, now what?
  - One of many, when you’re looking
BIRACIAL CHILDREN

mommy + daddy = ME
BIRACIAL CHILDREN

- **Racial Identity Development**
  - Does anyone else look like me?
  - Affiliation and denial
  - Having options helps
BIRACIAL CHILDREN

- The Role of Family
  - One, both, other
  - Parental attitudes
  - Siblings
BIRACIAL CHILDREN

• The Role of Community
  • Friends and school
  • Dating and other adventures
  • When do the questions stop?
RACIAL MICRO-AGGRESSIONS

Racial micro-aggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.

RACIAL MICRO-AGGRESSIONS

Major categories of micro-aggression that multiracial individuals and/or families may experience:

- Exclusion or isolation
- Exoticization and objectification
- Assumption of monoracial or mistaken identity
- Denial of multicultural heritage
- Pathologizing of identity and experiences
- Favoritism in the (extended) family
- Denied opportunity to learn about family heritage or culture
2-in-10 Biracial White and Black Adults Say a Relative Has Treated Them Badly Because of Multiracial Status

% saying a relative treated them badly because of their multiracial background

All multiracial adults  

Multiracial groups

White-black

White-black-Amer. Indian

White-Asian

Black-Amer. Indian

White-Amer. Indian

Source: Pew Research Center survey, Feb. 6-April 6, 2015 (n=1,555 multiracial adults)
Biracial White and Black Adults Have Much Closer Ties to Black Relatives

% saying they have had a lot of contact with their ...

Among those who are white-black

White relatives 21
Black relatives 69

Among those who are white-Asian

White relatives 61
Asian relatives 42

Among those who are white-Amer. Indian

White relatives 19
Amer. Indian relatives 81

Among those who are black-Amer. Indian

Black relatives 77
Amer. Indian relatives 7

Among those who are white-black-Amer. Indian

White relatives 31
Black relatives 78
Amer. Indian relatives 15

Source: Pew Research Center survey, Feb. 6-April 6, 2015 (n=1,555 multiracial adults)
IDENTITY ISSUES
COMPLEX IDENTITY PROCESSES

• A growing number of multiracial individuals are choosing “multiracial” as their ethnic identity

• Where the child grows up (i.e. in an integrated neighborhood and school versus in an ethnic community) can have a great impact on identity

• Physical appearance influences the sense of group belonging and racial self-identification among multiracial individuals
BIRACIAL IDENTITY MODELS

Poston’s (1990) five stages of Biracial Identity Development:

- **personal identity** stage - biracial children's sense of self is largely independent of ethnic heritage;

- **choice of group categorization** stage - the youngster feels pressures to identify with one racial orientation by either parents, peers or societal forces

- **enmeshment/denial** stage - there are likely to be considerable negative feelings, whether conscious or unconscious, regarding the denial of one of the racial heritages

- **appreciation** stage - the person begins to value the racial roots of both parents

- **integration** stage - wholeness and integration of both identities occur.
BIRACIAL IDENTITY MODELS

Root’s (2003) Ecological Identity Model:

- **Acceptance of ascribed identity** (i.e., identifying with whichever race one is assigned by others)
- **Identification with both racial groups** (e.g., “I am Hispanic and Black”)
- **Identification with a single racial group** (i.e., choosing to identify with only one of the two races)
- **Identification with a new group** (e.g., “I am biracial”)
- **Adoption of a symbolic race or ethnicity** (e.g., taking pride in one side of one’s racial makeup but not necessarily having a strong attachment to it).
Implications

• Multiracial identity development models entertain the notion that there is more than one resolution that can lead to a healthy adjustment.

• The complexity of multiple resolutions may be different depending on the type of multiracial combination, gender, and other group identity factors such as socioeconomic status, age, and sexual orientation.

• Identities may shift and are fluid depending on the situational context.

(Sue and Sue, 2008)
TREATMENT STRATEGIES
TREATMENT STRATEGIES

• Explore each family member’s perception of the effect their multiculturally/multiracial family composition has on their day to day lives

• Assess the degree to which parents promote their children’s multiracial identity development

• If feasible, promote relationships with the children’s extended family and grandparents

• Openly discuss issues and questions of race and ethnicity
TREATMENT STRATEGIES

• Address favoritism, isolation and the occurrence of micro-aggressions within the family

• Openly discuss micro-aggressions when they occur; educate family and others about micro-aggressions

• Validate the experiences of multiracial children and family members in the family and outside of the family

• For families with young children, explore potential culturally-based differences in parenting/disciplining styles
TREATMENT STRATEGIES

• Explore parents’ expectations regarding their children’s racial identity development

• Help family to view multiracial identity development as a process that is not necessarily linear

  • Biracial individuals may go through continuous cycles and changes in identity while still functioning in a healthy way

  • Integration may not be the only healthy or desired outcome
TREATMENT STRATEGIES

- Encourage family to embrace the richness of multiple heritages
- Consider that having a dual heritage can be a positive, beneficial aspect of identity the specific personal strengths that emerge from a client’s multiracial heritage:
  - Bicultural competence
  - Ability to navigate cultural contexts without relinquishing one’s sense of cultural identity
  - More positive attitudes and openness toward other groups

(Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008)
FINAL THOUGHTS

- Clinician know thyself
- Avoid stereotyping
- Use a holistic approach
- Being multiracial for some can mean coping with marginality, isolation, and loneliness; these are infused by external communities, not necessarily by internal problems
- Emphasize freedom to choose one’s identity
FINAL THOUGHTS

• Use a psychoeducational approach to address multiracial experiences

• Possess a basic historical knowledge of issues related to hypodescent (one drop rule), and ambiguity (who am I? or what are you?)

• Help clients identify social supports within their communities

Thank You!

Questions?
REFERENCES


REFERENCES & RESOURCES


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• US Census Bureau