Exploring the Identity Autonomy Perspective (IAP): An Integrative Theoretical Approach to Multicultural and Multiracial Identity

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ABSTRACT

Multiracial Americans, people who belong to more than one racial group in the U.S., also belong to more than one culture, yet multiracial and multicultural research and theory has not been adequately integrated. The present chapter will provide an overview of the multiracial and multicultural research on self and identity that addresses the points of overlap, distinction, and places for synthesis and integration that could advance both areas of research. For example, this chapter will examine the relationship among different strategies that utilize multiple identities and health outcomes (e.g., identity integration, identity adaptiveness, identity shifting, dialecticalism). In addition, this chapter will explore the common questions of authenticity and forced choice encounters that those from multiple races and cultures face (e.g., "Are you American or Asian?"). Integrating multicultural and multiracial research, the authors propose the Identity Autonomy Perspective (IAP) wherein the antecedents and outcomes of identity denial are discussed for both multicultural and multiracial populations. Specifically, we will examine how societal essentialism and personal attributes (e.g., physical appearance, cultural practices, social status) promote identity denial experiences that thwart autonomy for both multicultural and multiracial populations.

KEYWORDS: Multiculturalism, Multiracial, Essentialism, Social Categorization, Social Identity, Multiple Identities

INTRODUCTION

Multiracial Americans, people who belong to more than one racial group in the U.S., also belong to more than one culture, yet multiracial and multicultural research and theory have not been adequately integrated. According to the most recent U.S. Census in 2010, the multiracial population has risen to over 9 million U.S. residents, a population increase of 32% in the past ten years (Humes, Jones & Ramirez, 2011). This dramatic population growth confirms that multiracial populations are one of the fastest growing minority populations in the U.S. Moreover, estimates project that by the year 2050, 1 in 5 people will identify as multiracial suggesting that the racial landscape of the U.S is undergoing a transition (Farley, 2001). Likewise, Census data (2002) suggests that 1 of 4 people living in the U.S. has lived in another country, revealing that a large proportion of the population has been exposed to multiple cultures. Furthermore, the number of first-generation immigrants has risen to over 38 million Americans, representing over 12% of the U. S. population (Segal, Elliot, & Mayadas, 2010). Thus, many Americans living in the U.S. have multicultural backgrounds.

While these population estimates likely underestimate the true multiracial and multicultural make-up of the U.S., these numbers highlight the timeliness of multiracial and multicultural research and theory. The increasingly multicultural and multiracial landscape of the United States portends shifts in the meaning of race and culture that will influence the psychology of self and intergroup relations. The current chapter will review and integrate multiracial and multicultural research to propose a model that will help illuminate the unique experiences of populations who have multiple identities in a singular social category (race or culture).

Multiracial theory has largely built its foundation in multicultural theory because multiculturalism theorists were among the first to provide well-developed theories for how individuals navigate multiple identities, as well as the constituent practices and behaviors (e.g., language, cognition, and customs) that influence such identities. For example, multiculturalism researchers were some of the first to demonstrate that the social context could influence the accessibility of cultural knowledge networks for those with multiple cultural identities and thus, shape cognition, affect, and behavior to be consistent with the accessed cultural orientation (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000; LaFromboise, Coleman, &Gerton, 1993). This social psychological approach to managing multiple cultural identities has been a very influential guide to much of the work that followed on multiple identities (e.g., Amiot, de la Sablonnière, Terry, & Smith, 2007). As a result, researchers addressing multiracial theory borrow from and extend multicultural theory to grapple with how individuals manage multiple races (e.g., Sanchez, Shih, & Garcia, 2009).

Not surprisingly, multiracial and multicultural populations experience similar issues with regard to identity development, integration, and malleability. Moreover, they experience similar difficulties with how they are perceived by others, including the struggles of having a hybrid identity in an essentialist societal belief system (i.e., belief system that views social categories as distinct and unchangeable). At the same time, both multiracial and multicultural populations represent the changing demography of American society and therefore, may serve as catalysts for changing essentialist, singularl thinking about race, ethnicity, and culture. The present chapter will provide an overview of multiracial and multicultural research from both the target's perspective (e.g., the experience through the eyes of the multiracial and multicultural person) and the perceivers' perspective (e.g., the beliefs that others hold about multiracial and multicultural

people) that addresses the points of overlap, distinction, and places for synthesis that could advance both areas of research. This chapter will attempt to integrate multicultural and multiracial theory to better understand both perceptions and experiences of multiracial and multicultural individuals.

Key Concepts in the Discourse

To begin the chapter, it is important to define a few key concepts: race, ethnicity, and culture. Great confusion exists about the definition of race because race is socially constructed and thus, definitions of race and racial groups vary at the individual, historical, and national levels (Markus, 2008). For example, racial categories that societies use to define groups of people vary from one country to the next, from one historical time point to the next, and from one person to the next person. A very light skinned person of African descent would most likely be considered Black in the United States and White in Argentina today but it is unclear whether this will still be the case in 2050 when multiracial populations are projected to comprise 20% of the population (Farley, 2001). Moreover there is now substantial genetic evidence that there is no "race gene." In other words, the racial categories themselves have no biological or genetic basis (Goodman, 2000; Zack, 1995). In fact, there is more genetic variation within racial groups than between them (Graves, 2001; Hirschfield, 1996; Marks, 1995; Tooby & Cosmides, 1990). Because the boundaries between racial groups and categories do not rest on biological or genetic variation, race is largely understood among scholars to be a social construction that is malleable.

The social construction of race relies heavily on social structural relations that afford differential status to groups of people often connected to phenotype and ancestry. Thus, it is not surprising that psychologists, sociologists, demographers, and public policy advocates often disagree about what constitutes race. Nowhere is this debate more heated than it is around

Latino/Hispanic populations who are befuddled by current race definitions such as those represented on the Census survey. The U.S. Census currently does not treat Latino/Hispanic as a racial category causing many Latinos to be confused about which racial category to choose (e.g., Rodriguez, 2000; Scott, 2001; Swarns, 2004). This confusion has led many Latino Americans to protest by choosing “Other” when picking a racial category on the Census (Navarro, 2003).

For the purposes of this chapter, we will define race as the broader society-level definitions of race that are drawn from factors such as geographical ancestry and phenotype, which have been recognized in a given nation. Given that the focus of this chapter is on the U.S., we will use the U.S. Census racial categories in which the racial groups in the U.S. are defined as membership in one or more of the following groups: White, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Thus, people who belong to more than one of the following groups are typically considered by others to be multiracial. Using this definition, Latinos who have one parent who is White/European and one parent who is Puerto Rican (like the first and third authors of this chapter) would not be considered multiracial as they are of one race (e.g., White) and one ethnicity (e.g., Puerto Rican). We fully recognize that these categories are problematic (as is the concept of race) but we also recognize that such racial categories represent the current construction of racial categories in American society.Thus, despite our own self-definition as biracial White/Latinas, Latinos in the U.S. appear to be denied multiracial identity unless they belong to other multiple racial categories.

Ethnicity refers to people who share the same race but also share a set of traditions and customs that distinguish their ethnic group from others in their racial group (Benet-Martínez & Oishi, 2008; Markus, 2008; Senior & Bhopal, 1994). Ethnicity is often determined by sharing a

specific geographic location, religious identity, language, style of speech and/or style of dress. For an illustrative example, South Koreans and Taiwanese are both considered part of the Asian racial category, but they practice different languages and customs as well as have distinct geographic origins that distinguish them from each other to form separate ethnic groups.

In general, the constructs of racial and ethnic identities are largely overlapping (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Many have argued that race and ethnicity terms should be merged into a race-ethnicity construct (e.g., Cross & Cross, 2007) because most research on race and ethnic identity finds similar psychological effects for well-being, belonging, behavior and identity exploration. For example, both racial identity and ethnic identities vary depending on the context and can serve as sources of belonging with other ingroup members, and rejection in the face of discrimination; however, the literatures on race and ethnicity have been distinct and not yet integrated (see Phinney & Ong, 2007). For the purposes of this paper, we use the term *multiracial identities* (e.g., Asian/White biracial populations) and examine people who belong to more than one racial group instead of multiethnic identities (those who belong to more than one ethnic group) because there is insufficient existing research on multiethnic identities that are not also multiracial. In other words, very little research has been done on people who have one race and multiple ethnicities (e.g., Chinese/Thai) whereas there is a growing literature on Asian/White populations. The recent upswing of multiracial research (and multicultural work) allows us to have a stronger foundation of empirical research to draw from. By focusing on multiracial populations, they are all multiethnic by definition because they cross both racial and ethnic definitions. However, we cannot identify those processes that may be unique to crossing ethnicity boundaries versus racial boundaries without a larger literature on multiethnic populations who share the same race.

Racial identities and ethnic identities are also connected to a unique set of customs, beliefs, practices, traditions, historical narratives, and cognitive styles that create the culture surrounding race/ethnic identities. These collections of traditions represent the “network of knowledge” that is shared and disseminated by generations of people that come to represent the meanings of ethnic, racial, and national identities (Benet-Martínez & Oishi, 2008; Chui & Hong, 2007). Given the broad definition of culture, it is very difficult to imagine a person who is of one cultural mind because every individual is nested within both a national, racial and ethnic context. Instead, cultural minds vary in salience and the extent to which they are overlapping with each other.

For example, an Irish American navigates an American cultural identity, a White racial identity and an Irish ethnic identity. In the case of an Irish American person, they are likely to experience a great deal of overlap among these identities as Irish is currently considered White in the U.S. (see Ignatiev, 1995) unless they are a first generation immigrant who does not believe that Ireland and American cultures overlap. Most latter generation Americans hold an implicit belief that American and White are cognitively overlapping categories (e.g., Devos & Banaji, 2005). On the contrary, multiracial and multicultural Americans with minority ancestry (e.g., Asian/White Biracial Americans, Asian/Black Biracial Americans, Asian Americans, Black Caribbean Americans) may experience less overlap between their identities because of the perceived boundaries between their racial and cultural identities.

The present paper takes an integrated approach to understanding multicultural and multiracial identities. We contend that similar processes govern multicultural and multiracial identities because both groups of individuals uniquely contend with *identity denial*, being denied an important aspect of their identity by others. Because of the divide between racial and cultural

categories, society does not typical view members of two racial categories or two cultural identities as members of two racial categories or two cultural identities. Multiracial and multicultural people of minority descent often experience situations wherein they are asked to define themselves in singular terms. This likely occurs because their multiple identities are not perceived as overlapping and as a culture, we believe that racial and cultural categories are exclusive (i.e., you cannot be Black and White, Asian and American). Therefore, the path of identity development for multicultural and multiracial populations is more complicated than it is for those who have singular cultural or singular racial identities. Thus, this chapter focuses on the predictors and outcomes of identity denial by proposing an identity autonomy perspective (IAP), which emphasizes the need for freedom of expression with regard to identity for both multicultural and multiracial populations.We begin with a review of theories describing multiracial and multicultural identity development because developmental models shed light on the psychological processes (e.g., social and developmental) that inform racial self-identification. We then propose the IAP as an extension of prior identity models that incorporates both perceiver (e.g., essentialist beliefs) and target (e.g., distance from category prototypes) characteristics that combine to influence identity autonomy. In this chapter, we describe possible antecedents, moderators and outcomes of identity autonomy and explore methods of coping with identity denial.

With Multiple Identities Comes Multiple Identity Choices: A Review of Identity Development Models

Researchers have tried to model multiracial and cultural identity development in several different ways. The first multiple identity development models suggested that people who have multiple cultural or racial identities are inevitably caught between them, which causes a

fragmented and marginalized sense of self. These early theories suggested that marginalized people such as those of multicultural or multiracial backgrounds suffered from fragmented self-concepts (Gordon, 1964; Hauser, 1972; McRoy & Freeman, 1986; Park, 1928; 1931; Piskacek & Golub, 1973; Stonequist, 1937; Tizard & Phoenix, 2002). Park (1928) defined this marginal man as,

> "a cultural hybrid, a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples; never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted because of racial prejudice, in the new society in which he now sought to find a place. He was a man on the margin of two societies which never completely interpenetrated or fused" (pg., 892).

In other words, Park's marginal man hypothesis suggested that people who straddle multiple racial or cultural identities struggle with identity confusion and acceptance from others. This model proposes that biracial individuals were trapped between social worlds and not a full member of either (Stonequist, 1937).

Although the marginal man perspective has long been refuted and replaced with theories that do not take the problem approach to multiracial and multicultural identities (e.g. Bagley & Young, 1979; Goldberg, 1941; Green, 1947; Tizard & Phoenix, 2002; for review see Shih & Sanchez, 2005), the problem approach perspective to multicultural and racial identity development were the first to speculate about the developmental struggles of dual identities and cultures. The main criticism of these early models of identity development was that theyproposed a singular gloomy fate for multicultural and multiracial people (e.g., severe psychological problems, social isolation, etc.) without, for example, taking into account the extent to which

bicultural and biracial individuals themselves view their identities as conflicting or perceive themselves as accepted by others (LaFromboise, et al., 1993). As we will review later, acceptance from other ingroup members (i.e., intragroup acceptance) and identity conflict are salient issues for those with dual group membership but certainly not inevitable, unsurpassable, or universal issues among multicultural and multiracial individuals.

When scholars refuted the marginal man theory, they then turned to general racial identity development models for monoracial individuals to describe the multiracial experience of identity development (e.g. Cross, 1987; Morten & Atkinson, 1983). For example, these approaches would describe identity development processes for multiracial individuals as similar to those of singular identities (Thorton &Wason, 1995). This approach was described as the equivalence approach (see Shih & Sanchez, 2005) and drew its inspiration from Erikson's (1968) emphasis on achieving stability in adolescence. However, it was soon apparent that these theories were inadequate for describing ethnic identity development in individuals with mixed backgrounds (Herring, 1995; Poston, 1990). The main criticisms of these models were that they did not allow individuals to identify with multiple groups (Poston, 1990) and that even for biracial individuals who may self-identify with only one of their component races, these models did not address the unique experiences of individuals with dual membership (Gillem, Kohn & Throne, 2001).

In response to the critiques of the equivalence approach, researchers proposed racial identity development models specific to individuals with multiracial background (e.g. Collins, 2000; Gordon, 1964; Jacobs, 1992; Johnston, 1976; Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995; Kich, 1992; Poston, 1990; Sung, 1985). While these models differ in terms of their descriptions of the identity development process, there are a number of common elements among the models.

Common to all of the theories of multiracial identity development is a stage through which multiracial individuals feel great tension and conflict about their racial identity. At this stage, multiracial individuals were described as feeling forced to choose among their different component identities. Ultimately, in all these models, the multiracial individual reaches a stage in which they are able to accept, appreciate, integrate their multiracial identity and value all parts of their identity.

Many of the early multicultural identity models emphasized the processes of assimilation into the dominant culture. Much like the early multiracial identity models taking the equivalence approach, multicultural people were expected to evolve towards a singular cultural identification with the dominant host culture. Specifically, these models suggested that the multicultural person adopts a new, dominant cultural identity and losing their original cultural identity through complete immersion (Johnston, 1976; Sung, 1985). The assimilation models were discarded because complete loss of one's original cultural identity was often plagued with psychological problems. Moreover, full immersion into the dominant culture was often impossible for immigrants who were never given full membership in the dominant culture due to prejudices and social structural barriers (see LaFromboise et al., 1992). The acculturation models that followed also suggested that the multicultural person emphasized competence in the dominant culture but they also emphasized that the multicultural person would preserve and identify with their original cultural identity (see LaFromboise et al., 1992). Notably, neither of the aforementioned approaches fully recognized the possibility of dual identification nor did the models that followed (e.g., alternation approach, multiculturalism approach, see LaFromboise et. al., 1992). Instead, the alternation and multiculturalism approaches suggested that multicultural populations experience both identities as distinct yet important (e.g., Berry, 1986; Cross, Smith, & Payne,

2002; Cross & Strauss, 1998; Gumperz, 1982; Ogbu, &Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Rashid, 1984; Strauss & Cross, 2005). Thus, they recognized identification with both groups, but identities were not fully integrated.

The model of multicultural identity development that took the most integrated view of multicultural identity development was the fusion approach. The fusion approach proposed by LaFromboise and her colleagues emphasized amalgamation whereby both cultures combine to create a new cultural identity that contained aspects of both cultural identities. Exemplifying the fusion approach, these models suggested a period of a lack of awareness about culture or race followed by a stage of self-examination and a final stage of acceptance and integration (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989; Lee, Blando, Mizelle, & Orozco, 2007).

One of the difficulties in applying a single model to describe identity development for all multiracial or multicultural individuals is the great variance among multiracial and multicultural individuals themselves in how they define their own identities (Gillem, Kohn & Throne, 2001; LaFromboise et al., 1992; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Because multiracial people belong to multiple racial groups and multicultural people have multiple cultural identities, they can identify in a multitude of different ways. This makes the process of self-identification complicated and thus, there seems to be no single outcome that could be applied to everyone. For example, some multiracial Asian/White descent choose to identify as “Asian”, “White”, or some combination of their multiracial heritages (e.g. “Multiracial”, “Asian/White”, “Hapa”). Some multiracial populations choose to identify with no race at all because they are hyperaware of the social construction of race and racial categories (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007). The racial identification process for multiracial people may be a dynamic process including fluctuations and fluidity among racial identity choices over time

(Hitlin, Brown, & Elders, 2006). Similarly, multicultural identities vary; namely, multicultural people could identify with one culture, both cultures (in an integrated or non-integrated fashion), or neither cultures. Again, the process of cultural identification may be fluid and context-bound.

The most recent approaches involve the ecological approach to identity development. The ecological approach takes into account the myriad of identification options that multicultural and multiracial populations face. The ecological approach suggests that the process of identity development is not predictable, linear, or aimed at one specific end goal. Instead, the ecological approach suggests that identities are socially constructed and contextually dependent (Rockquemore, 1999; Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009; Rockquemore & Lazloffy, 2003). Focusing on multiracial populations, Rockquemore, and colleagues (2009) propose that four patterns empirically based assumptions of the ecological approach: 1) racial identification varies from person to person, 2) racial identity changes over the life course, 3) racial identification is not amenable to a specific predictable stage model, and 4) the social and cultural context is crucial. Moreover, they suggested that identity development models should critically examine race by deconstructing its components. Rockquemore and her colleagues proposed that race has at least three components such as 1) self-definition (i.e., how an individual sees him or herself racially), 2) other definition (i.e., how others view an individual racially), and 3) contextual identification (i.e., how the context shapes identification). This tri-level approach to understanding the construction of race and its relation to identity development may also be useful in understanding multicultural identities as it recognizes that cultural identities are embedded in a social context and influenced by both self-views and other-views. The ecological approach appears to have garnered the least criticism and the most support in the last decade. However, none of these prior development models consider the problem that occurs when, for example,

self-definition and other definition fail to overlap, namely, the issue of autonomy that arises when self-identification becomes constrained by others and social situations. Thus, prior identity models are insufficient to understanding the psychological well-being of multiracial and multicultural populations.

An Autonomy Perspective on Identity Development

While no singular identity development model or outcome applies to all multiracial and multicultural populations nor does one model consistently lead to better psychological outcomes compared to another (Rockquemore et al., 2009), we propose that an identity autonomy perspective (IAP) may offer universal applicability and uniquely address the issue of identity denial and inconsistency that often occurs when multiracial and multicultural populations self-identify in ways that are inconsistent with others' views. We propose that autonomy serves as a key piece in understanding the consequences of multiple identities and their development on psychological well-being. Autonomy refers to the feeling that one's actions, behaviors, and thoughts are freely chosen, authentic expressions of the self (Deci & Ryan, 1995). We contend like scholars before us that autonomy is paramount to healthy identity development (e.g., Frank, Pirsch, & Wright, 1990; Root, 1996). Empirical evidence confirms that perceiving autonomy with one's racial self-definition predicts lower depressive symptoms among multiracial populations (Sanchez, 2010).

Self-determination theorists have long extolled the virtues of autonomy in many valuable domains of life such as intellectual performance and creativity, physical health, psychological well-being, and quality of relationships (see Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000 for reviews). Moreover, autonomy has been proven beneficial cross-culturally in, for example, both the U.S. and China (e.g., Chirkov, Ryan, Kim & Kaplan, 2003; Lynch, LaGuardia, & Ryan,

2009) despite early claims to the contrary (see Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). It is important to qualify here that the IAP refers to the psychological feeling of autonomy and choice and not, for example, simply having many or few options (e.g., Iyengar & Lepper, 2000). The prior conflation of these two concepts has led to some conflicting interpretations. For example, an individual may feel that they have a great deal of autonomy in what they eat for dinner even if they only have two meal options.

The IAP proposes that the important mechanism that underlies links between identity with indicators of well-being such as felt belonging and psychological health (e.g., depressive symptoms, self-esteem, etc.) for multicultural and multiracial populations may be the extent to which one's self identification is perceived as a choice. Having identity choices (within a single social category domain) is unique to multicultural and multiracial individuals. Thus, identity autonomy may be uniquely important to those who have multiple identities in the domain of race and culture. For example, a monoracial Asian person does not choose whether or not they self-define as Asian though they differ in terms of the extent to which they value this identity. Moreover, while a multiracial person has many identity options, not all multiracial people perceive choice in those options. Specifically, when multicultural and multiracial populations experience forced-choice situations or other encounters wherein they are denied important parts of their racial and cultural identities, these experiences thwart their identity autonomy (Sanchez, 2010). This is the central proposal of Figure 1, which displays the IAP model.

IDENTITY DENIALS AND THWARTED AUTONOMY

Multiracial and multicultural populations of minority descent are often asked to choose one race or one culture. "Are you American or Asian?" "Are you Black or White?" Identity denial can be experienced in either more blatant or subtle ways. Identity denial can occur when

others ask or otherwise pressure multiracial people to choose between their multiple racial identities, often termed, *forced choice dilemmas* (Standen, 1996). In these cases, others deny them an important identity by telling them that they cannot belong to two groups. The question, "What are you?" implicitly sends the message to multiracial individuals that they must define themselves when some multiracial people choose not to define themselves with any race at all (Williams, 1996). Whether the identity denial is blatant or subtle, multiracial and multicultural individuals in identity denial situations feel compelled to identify in ways that are socially desirable and therefore, reflect singular racial definitions rather than multiracial identities (Hall, 1992; Nakashima, 1992; Standen, 1996). These experiences can thwart identity autonomy because multicultural and multiracial people feel pressure to conform to the pressures of the social context, which may not mirror self-definitions.

On Census forms prior to 2000, individuals were asked to choose only one racial identity. This is an example of identity denial at the institutional level. One young woman of European/Asian descent writes, "I have trouble deciding whether to check the "White" or the "Asian" box, because I don't want to deny either side of my heritage. But I have even more of a conflict when I check the box marked "Other." I am not an Other and have never been an Other" (Gaskins, 1999, pg. 52). As this quote confirms, identity denial is a salient issue in both multiracial and multicultural populations with important consequences for belonging and self-esteem (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Sanchez, 2010; Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009; see also Shih & Sanchez, 2005). For multiracial individuals, identity denial is often in the form of forced choice scenarios wherein they are asked to choose between their racial identities or otherwise categorized in a way that is inconsistent with their own self-definition (Sanchez, 2010; Townsend et al., 2009). Multiracial individuals perceive forced choice situations as denying

them access or claim of an important part of their racial identity (Townsend et al., 2009). Multicultural minorities experience identity denial when they are not perceived as part of one of their cultural identities (Cheryan & Monin, 2005).

Identity denial can cause problems for the self-concept and relatedness to others. Generally, people want others to perceive them as they perceive themselves, especially when perceptions are relevant to important social identities (Barreto & Ellemers, 2002; Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Lemay & Ashmore, 2004). People strive to maintain congruence between how they see themselves and how others perceive them as a way of fostering interpersonal relationships (Swann, Rentfrow, & Guinn, 2002).When people are misclassified into social groups that they do not belong, they experience great psychological discomfort and anxiety (Bosson, Prewitt-Freilino, & Taylor, 2006; Bosson, Taylor, & Prewitt-Freilino, 2006).Thus, identity denial can have negative effects on multiracial and multicultural populations. A young woman of mixed race ancestry writes, “Being biracial isn’t hard because we’re confused about our racial identity. It’s hard because everyone else is confused. The problem isn’t us – it’s everyone else.” (Gaskins, 1999, pg. 15)

In a series of studies on multicultural populations, Cheryan and Monin (2005) found that Asian Americans who were presumed to be non-U.S. citizens by a White American experimenter reported greater negative affect, decreased liking of the experimenter and when given the opportunity, displayed greater commitment to their American identity than those Asian Americans whose American identity was not denied. Similarly, multiracial individuals who were denied their identities via forced choice scenarios tended to report greater negative mood, guilt, lower self-esteem, lower identity autonomy, lower motivation and lower public regard for their identity (Sanchez, 2010; Sebring, 1985; Townsend et al., 2009). When denied important

identities or aspects of the self, people feel less authentic in their interactions with close others (Swann, De La Rone, & Hixon, 1994; Swann & Pelham, 2002) and thus, identity denial may undermine belonging and autonomy. Therefore, it is not surprising that multicultural and multiracial people alike experience identity denial as aversive. This is not to say that all people who experience identity denial or thwarted autonomy equally experience negative psychological outcomes. For example, importance of race, the source of identity denial (e.g., family member or stranger), or the importance of autonomy may play a moderating role in determining the psychological impact of identity denial. The IAP model examines the generalized outcomes of identity denial and thwarted autonomy but future extensions are likely to include these important moderators.

PREDICTORS OF IDENTITY DENIAL

Though there may be many factors that increase the likelihood that multicultural and multiracial people will experience identity denial, the IAP highlights two prominent factors that address aspects of the target and perceiver. The first focuses on prototype consistency (whether targets have prototypical characteristics) that match their self-definition and two, whether perceivers hold essentialist ideologies (belief systems that view social categories as distinct and impermeable).

Prototype Inconsistency as Cause of Identity Denial

Categorization plays an important role in how people respond to others (Fiske & Neuberg, 1987; Hugenberg & Saaco, 2008). Many argue that people make relative quick and automatic categorizations of targets (e.g., Black or Not, American or Not). Subsequently, people attend to other attributes to assess category fit with the prototypes to consider whether their initial judgments are correct (Brewer, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Higgins, 1996; Neuberg &

Fiske, 1987; Oakes, 1987). Perceivers who ask the question the, "What are you?" and "Where are you from questions" of multiracial and multicultural people are likely in the process of calculating assessments of category fit. When a person self-identifies with a social category that contradicts their category fit (i.e., prototype inconsistency), perceivers experience difficulty reconciling targets' self-identification with their own category fit judgments.

Identity denial, therefore, is most likely to occur for individuals whose self-identification is inconsistent with their stereotype relevant characteristics (e.g., skin color, accent, socioeconomic class, their social networks, their cultural behaviors). For example, identity denial is likely pronounced for multiracial individuals with racially ambiguous physical appearances because physical appearance is a prominent indicator of racial categorization and thus, those who are racially ambiguous challenge racial prototypes (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; McArthur & Baron, 1983; Trope, 1986). Racial ambiguity increases the likelihood that one's race is called into question by others. Evidence suggests that perceivers take more time categorizing racially ambiguous faces (slowed reaction times) compared to categorization of prototypical monoracial faces (Chen & Hamilton, 2012). Because perceivers are unable to quickly categorize racial ambiguous people using visual cues, multiracial people with ambiguous appearances may cause confusion in others due to unclear category fit. Similar issues beset multicultural minority group members who challenge the ease with which others can identify them as Americans. They may often experience the questions, "Where are you from?" especially if they are aprototypical to the American prototype. For example, if their appearance, religion, or accent makes it difficult for others to easily categorize them as Americans, they will likely encounter the same curiosity from others (Schildkraut, 2001; 2007; Takaki, 1999). Some research, which we will discuss in greater

detail later, has now demonstrated that cultural practices serve as markers of category fit for ethnic minorities (Sanchez & Chavez, 2010).

Essentialist Ideologies as Sources of Dual Identity Denial

Multiracial and multicultural minority individuals straddle multiple identities nested in different social categories. In one case, multiracial individuals straddle different racial group memberships. In the other, multicultural individuals straddle multiple cultural group memberships. In both cases, the straddling of multiple social worlds is difficult because of the discomfort others have regarding the growth in racial and ethnic diversity and thus, the threat of blurring racial categories and cultural divides. As one blatant example, there is obvious growing resistance and discomfort with immigration in the U.S., as can be gleaned by the Arizona laws forcing all individuals in the state to carry proof of citizenship and immigration documents or else be detained (Archibold, 2010). Gallup Polls indicated that more Americans favored than opposed Arizona's unconstitutional immigration law (Jones, 2010), suggesting that resistance to immigration is not limited to Arizona but is instead a widespread bias among Americans. Multicultural minorities represent the consequences of immigration and the American melting pot ideology that some Americans (perhaps the majority of Americans) resist. In fact, White is considered American (Devos & Banaji, 2005) and thus, many perceive minorities as less loyal to the nation and ultimately "less American" even if they have lived in the U.S. their entire lives (Yogeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010). This suggests that non-White bicultural individuals may experience greater resistance than other White bicultural individuals who migrate to the U.S.

In addition to immigration opposition and resistance to multiculturalism, racial tension still persist in the U.S., as evidenced by the continued racial segregation that maintains racial and class divides between Whites and other racial minorities such as African Americans and Latino

Americans (Massey & Denton, 1993; Massey & Fischer, 2000). Moreover, the geography of race mirrors people's social networks. That is, an individual's friends and romantic partners are largely comprised of those of the same race (see Fisman, Iyengar, Kamenica, & Simonson, 2008; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001; Simmons & O'Connell, 2003). The geographical and social segregation of racial groups maintains the perception that people who belong to different racial categories are different, which then makes crossing racial boundaries both psychological difficult and practically, unlikely.

Multicultural minorities and multiracial populations blend cultures and races and thus, are living challenges to essentialist ideologies that categories are easily distinctive, an ideology that may serve self-enhancement motives. A long history of research in psychology suggests that people strive to maintain distinctiveness between groups as a basic tenet of having a positive and strong personal identity (Brewer, 1991; 1999). In general, people tend to believe that ethnic and racial groups are distinct from each other as a means of achieving a group identity (Brewer, 2003; Grieve & Hogg, 1999; Reid & Hogg, 2005). In other words, Asian culture, identity, and racial groups are perceived as distinct from Black culture, identity, and racial groups, and the members within each racial group are viewed as more similar to one another than to others outside the group. In other words, people tend to essentialize categories such as race, nationality, and ethnicity, viewing them as stable, discrete, and distinct categories (Haslam & Whelan, 2008; Whelan, 2008) as part of an overall process of holding a strong, positive group identity.

As a result of essentialist beliefs, perceivers take longer periods of time during racial categorization tasks that involve racially ambiguous or multiracial faces, especially if they are highly racially identified or have greater essentialist beliefs (Chen & Hamilton, 2012; Knowles & Peng, 2005). Because highly identified perceivers derive comfort from clear outgroup/ingroup

distinctions to determine who is friend or foe (Brewer, 2003; Grieve & Hogg, 1999; Reid & Hogg, 2005), disruptions may cause perceivers to refuse categorizing multiracial and multicultural people into their ingroup. Thus, multiracial people and multicultural minorities may often be denied identities due to others' discomfort with categorization ambiguity and self-enhancement motives.

People with essentialist beliefs have the greatest difficulty with people who are multiracial and multicultural, especially if those individuals choose to claim multiple identities, therefore, the IAP proposes that essentialist ideologies among perceivers is likely to increase experiences of identity denial for multicultural and multiracial populations. Because of the essentialist beliefs that many perceivers hold about social categories, it is effortful for people to imagine the experience of those who bridge perceptually distinct categories such as Black/White biracial people or American and Asian. Because perceivers are generally cognitive misers (Fiske & Taylor, 1984), essentialists may use the most salient component identity in impression formation often connected to visual appearance (i.e., skin color, style of dress). However, those individuals who hold less concrete and narrow views of race and culture may be less likely to categorize a biracial Black/White person as Black or to view a Mexican American as less American than Mexican. People who hold less essentialist views about race may find it easier to think of a person as having multiple identities across social categories because they perceive less distance between the social categories(No et al., 2008). In general, lower levels of essentialist beliefs and higher levels of social constructivist attitudes foster an interest in crossing racial boundaries (Williams & Eberhardt, 2008). Moreover, people who hold less essentialist views about social categories are less likely to use social categories (e.g., race and gender) to make judgments about others because the categories themselves are less meaningful (Bastian &

Haslam, 2006; Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000; Levy, Stroessner, & Dweck, 1998; Prentice & Miller, 2007). As a result, less essentialist and more social constructionist perceivers are more likely to categorize ambiguous faces as multiracial (Chen & Hamilton, 2012). Similarly, those with less essentialist views about culture may be more inclusive in their definitions of American and therefore, have more multicultural ideologies of American society that promote diversity as opposed to assimilation. In other words, people who are more likely to assume that social categories (such as culture and race) are distinct, stable, unchangeable will be more resistant to multiculturalism and more likely to endorse beliefs that immigrants must assimilate into the American culture (e.g., learn English, stop speaking Spanish, become Christian). Indeed, some evidence suggests that majority group members who endorse essentialist views of race are less likely to endorse multiculturalism values (Verkuyten & Brug, 2004).

In addition to self-enhancement motives, essentialist ideologies held by perceivers may partly be a product of the socio-political history of society and treatment of racial minorities with mixed ancestry. For example, multiracial Black populations historically have been viewed as Black no matter how much they physically resemble members of the White/European group nor how many White ancestors they have in their familial line (i.e., the rule of hypodescent). The rule of hypodescent has been shown to influence categorization of multiracial African Americans in the U. S. today (Ho, Sidanius, Levin & Banaji, 2011). Historically, many racial groups have been divided along blood lines. In American Indian cultures, people are recognized as American Indian based on *blood quantum*, attempts to demonstrate through racial ancestry the extent to which an individual's racial heritage is American Indian (Wilson, 1992). Moreover, the U.S. has several rules in place about how to earn citizenship and thus, be considered American (e.g., years living in the U.S., passing citizenship tests). These rules serve to maintain distinctiveness

between groups. Moreover, these rules represent an essentialist ideological understanding of group members that establishes biological rules of category membership.

Perceivers and cultures that uphold essentialist beliefs thwart identity autonomy of people who hold hybrid identities. Moreover, such essentialist ideology typically results in multiracial and multicultural people most often being denied access to valued identities that confer resources. Multiracial and multicultural minority populations are most often denied access to the dominant, higher status identity. For example, multiracial populations of White and Minority descent are often denied their White ancestry (Ho et al., 2011, Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008) while Asian Americans are most often denied their American identity (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Wu, 2002). This may be particularly true for multiracial people of Black descent because of the long history of enforcing rules of hypodescent (Harris, 1964; Omi & Winant, 1986). Perceivers and institutions which hold essentialist ideologies often stand in stark contrast to the targets' themselves who hold less essentialist ideologies.

ESSENTIALISM AMONG TARGETS

The confusion surrounding racial identity and frequent experience of racial discrimination force multiracial individuals to grapple with issues surrounding race. During this process, many multiracial individuals come to realize that racial categories are arbitrary, subjective and ultimately meaningless. In other words, multiracial individuals come to the realization that race is a social construction (Nakashima, 1996; Spickard, 1992; Weisman, 1996). While race has a great impact on the social world, it has no impact on biological world. In other words, racial categories have no biological basis (Zack, 1995). Many multiracial individuals are very aware that of the meaningless foundation upon which our social order rests.

Growing empirical evidence suggests that people who are themselves a product of the crossing of cultural and racial boundaries may be less likely to believe in rigid categories and more likely to believe in the mutability of human traits in general (Bonam & Shih, 2009; Pauker & Ambady, 2009; Shih et al., 2007). For example, multiracial people tend to believe in fluid racial categories and self-categorization, which makes them less susceptible to stereotypes, more willing than monoracial people to cross other racial boundaries such as dating people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Bonam & Shih, 2009; Shih et al., 2007). In order for multiracial and multicultural people to have identity autonomy (i.e., the freedom to choose their self-identification) how and when they want to requires adopting a less essentialist view of race and culture. Generally, holding less essentialist views is associated with greater psychological well-being for multiracial people as it helps race become less of a barrier to belonging in interracial contexts (Sanchez & Garcia, 2009). Multicultural minorities may also have less essentialist views about culture, which allow them to move between different cultural systems and define themselves and their self-concept in dynamic, contextualized ways (Chao, Chen, Roisman, & Hong, 2007). Essentialist ideologies that promote identity denial, serve to undermine belonging and psychological health for multicultural and multiracial populations.

IDENTITY DENIAL AS INTRAGROUP REJECTION

Identity denial can be understood as a form of intragroup rejection that may uniquely occur for those who hold hybrid identities. In general, intragroup rejection (e.g., perceived rejection from ingroup members) and double discrimination (i.e., being discriminated against or rejected by multiple ingroups) may be salient issues for multiracial and multicultural populations. Multiracial individuals struggle for inclusion in monoracial ethnic communities that is thwarted in situations of identity denial (Nakashima, 1992). Membership in ethnic

communities has rarely been questioned for monoracial individuals. For example, monoracial Asians are rarely questioned about whether they are "really" Asian. However, multiracial individuals are often confronted with this question. One young woman of Black/Asian/White descent writes,

> "when I'm in a room full of white people and I think, 'Gosh, I'm the only black person in here.' Or when I'm in a room full of black people and I think, 'Gosh, I'm the only white person in here,'"(Gaskins, 1999, pg. 15).

Similarly, another woman of Black/White descent writes,

> "There are negative experiences for all people. As a biracial person, it's struggling to make people believe that I fit in, or even knowing where I fit in…Black people don't completely accept me because I'm light, or because my mom is white. And white people don't accept me because I'm not white. So where do I fit in?" (Gaskins, 1999, pg. 187).

Past research suggests that feelings of intragroup rejection have negative consequences for the self and promote group disidentification, though most of this work has been conducted with populations who are members of a singular group from which they perceive rejection. Research suggests that rejection from ingroup members promotes less loyalty and identification with the group (e.g., Branscombe, Spears, Ellemers, & Doosje, 2002) whereas feeling respected and valued by other group members strengthens group identification and promotes positive self-esteem (e.g., Smith & Tyler, 1997; Smith, Tyler, Huo, Ortiz, & Lind, 1998; Tyler & Blader, 2000; 2001; 2002). Perceived intragroup rejection among Black Americans, for example, predicts less Black self-categorization and identification, which in turn, has negative downstream consequences for both personal and race-based collective self-esteem (Postmes & Branscombe, 2002).

Similar effects have been found in the handful of studies that examine perceived intragroup rejection among bicultural populations. This research outlines how bicultural individuals are likely to encounter pressure from both the dominant culture to assimilate and pressure to resist assimilation from other ingroup members often of earlier generations (Castillo, Conoley, Brossart, & Quiros, 2007). Some bicultural Latinos may fear being too “White” or “American” by doing well in academics, not speaking Spanish, or not having enough Latino friends (Castillo, 2009; Castillo et al., 2007). Perceived intragroup rejection from peers and family members has been linked to low social support and greater conflicts from family as well as greater acculturative stress, and less identification and categorization with the rejected group (Castillo, Cano, Chen, Blucker, & Olds, 2008; Castillo, et al., 2007; Castillo, 2009; Sanchez, Chavez, Good, & Wilton, in press). For example, Latinos who do not speak Spanish proficiently experience their lack of cultural knowledge as an intragroup acceptance threat, and become less likely to categorize themselves as Latino when their lack of Spanish proficiency is made salient (Sanchez et al., in press).

Very little empirical research has specifically addressed the issue of intragroup rejection and its implication for the self and identification among multiracial populations though prior work suggests that peripheral, atypical group members such as those individuals with biracial ancestry may be vulnerable to disapproval and rejection from others (Eidelman & Biernat, 2003; Marques, 1990; Marques & Paez, 1994; Marques, Robalo, & Rocha, 1992; Marques &Yzerbyt, 1988). Yet, many have proposed that perceived intragroup rejection may be responsible for multiracial adolescents’ higher patterns of substance use and depression (e.g., Chavez & Sanchez, 2010; Choi, Harachi, Gillmore, & Catalano, 2005).

COPING WITH IDENTITY DENIAL

To cope with the aversive experience of identity denial, prior research has found that Asian Americans subsequently attempted to "prove" their American identity by displaying their American loyalty and fluency (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). As outline above, however, not all people respond to identity threatening situations by showing greater loyalty to their denied identity (e.g., Postmes & Branscombe, 2002; Sanchez et al., in press). On the contrary, some research on bicultural populations specifically shows the opposite pattern such that bicultural people show cultural reactance when denied mainstream identities and embrace their minority identity instead of their denied identity (Ogbu, 1993; O'Hearn, 1998). Some research has attempted to reconcile these conflicting findings by examining the role of *identity integration*, the extent to which people view their identities as overlapping and harmonious (e.g., Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Cheng, Lee, & Benet-Martínez, 2006; Sacharin, Lee, & Gonzalez, 2009). In sum, this research on identity integration suggests that people who have higher levels of identity integration show assimilation to positively primed cultural identities and distancing from negatively primed cultural identities whereas the opposite pattern is found for those with low levels of integration (Cheng et al.,. 2006). This suggests that identity denial (a negative social context) may cause people with low levels of integration to assimilate or prove their loyalty. This prediction is further complicated by research suggesting that negative events can shift levels of identity integration and thus, identity integration is not a stable construct but rather a socially influenced self-view of one's identities and the relationship between them (Cheng & Lee, 2009). The experience of identity denial itself may reduce the extent to which people experience their identities as integrated and therefore promote assimilation behaviors like those found by Cheryan and Monin (2005).

Until we know more about the mechanisms driving loyalty behaviors and empirically examine them in identity denials situations, it is unclear whether to expect loyalty or distancing gestures as a means of coping with denied identities. Consistent with the IAP model, we propose an alternative perspective that identity denial may cause multiracial and multicultural people to display cultural behaviors that are consistent with their own self-identifications to reassert autonomy in the social context. In other words, self-perception of identity may moderate the cultural strategies used to reassert autonomy in the face of denial. Nonetheless, cultural strategies (whether they be assimilative or contrastive) may be effective in manipulating others' perceptions of the self.

Cultural knowledge and behavioral loyalty effectively operate as tools to create a shared social reality wherein perceivers may use cultural practices to determine the identities of those they are interacting with. In other words, categorization by others is influenced by cultural practices cues (Sanchez & Chavez, 2010). For example, Latino Americans may discuss their inability to speak Spanish, or dislike for Spanish foods if trying to display loyalty to their American identity. Prior research suggests that Latinos who do not speak the language associated with their ethnicity (i.e., Spanish) were less likely to be categorized as Latino and less likely to be afforded minority resources (e.g., affirmative action) while those who spoke Spanish were readily categorized as Latino and viewed as affirmative action worthy (Sanchez & Chavez, 2010). Having more prototypical hairstyles and names influences categorization into ethnic and racial groups because they cue perceptions of similarity to ethnic group members, perhaps as markers of cultural practices (Levin & Banaji, 2006; MacLin & Malpass, 2001). People may assume that Diana Sanchez speaks Spanish and Leigh Wilton does not when in fact, both authors have equivalent levels of Spanish speaking ability. These cultural practices may serve as guides

to categorization because they imply self-identification with the category. Perceivers assume that Latinos who speak Spanish are more identified with their Latino identity (Sanchez & Chavez, 2010) much like they assume that African Americans who have darker phenotypes are more racially identified with their African American identity (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009). Thus, actions to prove ingroup loyalty (or prove loyalty to an alternative group) via cultural practices may be successful in shaping others' perceptions.

Even when intragroup group perception is achieved at the individual level, it is important to note that acceptance into mainstream groups may make bicultural and biracial people alike vulnerable to overhearing the prejudices that other mainstream group members hold. For example, many multiracial individuals look racially ambiguous and thus, easily "pass" and are accepted into White communities. As a result, others around them may feel more comfortable voicing prejudice because they forget that, for example, multiracial individuals are also members of the racial minority community. One young woman of Taiwanese/English descent describes her experiences:

> "When I was younger, I was very Caucasian-looking…they [friends] didn't acknowledge that I was part Asian. So people felt comfortable making racial jokes and offensive remarks in front of me because it was not so obvious that I was part Asian" (Gaskins, 1999, pg. 190).

Being accepted in racial minority communities increases the frequency and salience of discrimination and racism because multiracial people are privy to the blatant anti-interracial racism in racial inner circles. A young man of West Indian/European descent describes his experiences as a member in the Black Student Union (BSU) in his university. He writes "They're [BSU] very exclusive. The girls will say, "We don't like seeing our guys getting

snagged up by all of those white women." Can you image what it's like for mixed people to hear that? That's like us-our families are who they despise." (Gaskins, 1999, pg. 196).

Thus, it is important for future research to examine the effects of intragroup rejection at both the group and individual level. Biracial/White people whose social network is largely White might feel that they themselves are accepted in the community but their exposure to racist remarks makes them feel as though their minority identity and group is not accepted in the White community. Both group and individual level acceptance may play an important and independent role in feelings of belonging.

To minimize the negative psychological consequences of identity denial and the likelihood of overhearing prejudice remarks from others, those with hybrid identities may create a unique, less inclusive definition of one's ingroup. For example, multicultural and multiracial people could exclusively consider those who similarly have multiple cultural and multiple racial identities as ingroup members. This strategy may be particularly likely for those who experience double rejection, in which individuals feel rejected by more than one group (see Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Double rejection offers little opportunity for preservation of self-worth unless one seeks an alternative ingroup. Identity denial and intragroup rejection may be less aversive if people exclusively consider oneself as a multiracial person and use other multiracial people as one's ingroup. People who share their multiracial and multicultural backgrounds are unlikely to restrict identity choices because they are less likely to hold essentialist viewpoints. Thus, other multiracial people may provide a context that fosters identity autonomy. One drawback of this approach is the difficulty accessing other multicultural or multiracial people in certain geographic regions where the multicultural or multiracial populations are typically low. Many multiracial people struggle to find multiracial role models and communities during adolescence

(Shih & Sanchez, 2005). For example, their parents are often monoracial so the typical familial role model is unavailable. Similar issues may beset first generation multicultural youth whose parents cannot provide sufficient role models on how to navigate dual cultural identities. Access to similar others may improve with age when individuals have greater control over their geographical environments (Collins, 2000) suggesting that intragroup acceptance and identity autonomy may be more easily achieved in later adulthood.

CLARIFYING IDENTITY AUTONOMY

Thus far, the chapter has focused on outlining the identity autonomy perspective by outlining possible antecedents and outcomes of autonomy. Moreover, the discussion of the IAP has generated some unique perspectives on the ways in which multiracial and multicultural people may cope with identity denial to regain autonomy. In this last section, we explain how identity autonomy is separable from other known constructs (identity integration and identity switching) in the multicultural and multiracial identity literature.

IDENTITY SHIFTING AND IDENTITY AUTONOMY

Both multiracial and multicultural populations demonstrate the ability to shift between identities and cultural systems. That is, social situations and cues (e.g., symbols that represent the culture, the presence of others that share one's ethnic identity) activate one or more racial identities, which in turn, activate a set of cultural meanings that shape cognition, affect, and behavior (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Geertz, 1973; Hong, Chiu, & Kung, 1997; Kashima, 2000; Mendoza-Denton, Shoda, Ayduk, & Mischel, 1999). Research on multicultural populations finds that cultural priming can elicit changes in the self-concept, behavior, memory, and attributional processes that reflect the primed culture (Chiu & Hong, 2007; Fu, Chiu, Morris & Young, 2007; Hong et al., 2000; Hong, Ip, Chiu, Morris, & Menon, 2001; Sui, Zhu, & Chiu,

2007; Trafimov, Silverman, Fan, & Law, 1997;Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006). For example, Chinese Americans who were primed with Chinese cultural cues (e.g., Chinese dragon) made more external attributions characteristic of Eastern culture whereas Chinese Americans primed with American cultural cues (e.g., American flag) tended to make more dispositional attributions characteristic of Western culture (Hong et al., 2000). Moreover, Chinese Americans who are engaged in Chinese cultural activities (e.g., speaking Chinese, reading in Chinese, being in the presence of other Chinese people) tend to experience their ethnic identities as a prominent aspect of their self-concept in the moment, suggesting also that cultural cues make one's racial identity salient (Yip, 2005). Notably, bicultural individuals with stronger essentialist beliefs shift between cultural frames more slowly than those with lower essentialist beliefs (Chao et al, 2007). Because essentialists perceive social categories as less permeable and more distinct, more cognitive effort is needed to switch between them.

Multiracial people show patterns of fluidity among their multiple identities as well. Many qualitative studies suggest that multiracial individuals move between their racial identities in a fashion that is consistent with research on cultural framing. For example, multiracial people indicate that they change their racial identification depending on the social context (Basu, 2004; Collins, 2000; Gibbs & Hine, 1992; Newsome, 2001; Renn, 2000). Empirical data also demonstrates that the presence of others that share one of their racial identities increases identification with the shared identity (Sanchez, Garcia, & Wilton, 2011). In fact, empirical data suggests that multiracial adolescents shift their racial identities more often than they keep a constant racial self-definition (Harris & Sim, 2002; Hitlin et al., 2006). Consistent with cultural priming work, priming biracial people's racial identity can shift cognitive processes in a fashion that is congruent with the primed racial identity. For example, priming biracial Black-White

Americans with their Black identity elicits a similar pattern of race-related visual search to other Black respondents, whereas White identity priming elicits a similar pattern of response to White respondents (Chiao, Heck, Nakayama, & Ambady, 2006). Thus, priming race for biracial people can cause a pattern of behavior that is consistent with the primed racial group.

The context bound nature of social identity and cultural mindsets are now widely accepted among scholars though both scholars recognize that individuals may vary in their tendency to shift between culture frameworks or racial identities. For example, some multiracial populations have shown stability across racial categorization over time and across social contexts though the majority of multiracial people show fluidity (Harris & Sim, 2002; Hitlin et al., 2006). Bicultural people alike vary in the stability of cultural identity and thus, their tendency to shift cultural frames in different social contexts (Downie, Koestner, ElGeledi, & Cree, 2004; Downie, Mageau, Koestner, & Liodden, 2006) but the consequences of high levels of malleability among cultural identities and racial identities may be similar.

Prior work on multiple identities and contextual shifts suggests that chameleon-like cultural self-concepts among bicultural populations and shifting racial identification among multiracial populations predicts lower self-esteem and lower psychological well-being (Downie et al., 2004; 2006; Hitlin et al., 2006; Sanchez et al., 2009). Hitlin and colleagues' work (2006) shows that identity shifting across long periods of time predicts lower self-esteem among adolescents. Moreover, multiracial people who report frequently switching between identities in different social contexts also report greater symptoms of depression and more negative attitudes about being multiracial (Sanchez et al., 2009). But, the negative link between identity shifting and well-being was largely for those multiracial people who showed evidence of longstanding identity shifting and who had little tolerance for ambiguity and contradiction (low in dialectical

self-views; see Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, & Peng, 2010). In this case, their own identity shifting contradicted their beliefs about how they should be. At first, this may seem inconsistent with the IAP because showing fluidity amongst identities may be wrongfully construed as evidence of felt autonomy, when in fact autonomy and identity shifting are separable constructs. If identity shifting occurs among those with little tolerance for it, identity-shifting may reflect outside pressures and need for approval by others rather than an autonomous approach to racial self-definition. Thus, an important factor that needs to be addressed in future research is whether identity shifting is autonomous or non-autonomous.

Identity shifting can be adaptive when it is accompanied by a well-integrated identity (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Sacharin et al., 2009), and therefore likely a sign of an autonomous act of shifting in the context. Those who have highly integrated identities, for example, are likely to exhibit identity congruent behaviors in response to social contexts. Identity shifting in a congruent fashion may promote experiences of belonging by forging similarity with others with the relevant identity (Cheng, et al., 2006). On the contrary, those with low levels of integration tend to show identity incongruent behaviors, which may undermine belonging. In general, research on navigating multiple cultural or racial identities suggests that having highly integrated identities tends to be associated with more positive outcomes because people feel as though their identities are compatible and thus, do not serve as sources of psychological tension. For example, having an integrated bicultural identity is associated with less interpersonal isolation, less acculturative stress, greater well-being, and less perceived discrimination (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Chen, Benet-Martínez & Bond, 2008). Those who report less bicultural identity integration tend to have dueling dual identities. That is, they report having more difficulty achieving a cohesive and coherent self-concept and thus, feel restricted and pressured to choose a

singular cultural identity (Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997; Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Among multiracial populations, integration of multiple racial identities has been found to predict greater pride in their multiracial background (Cheng & Lee, 2009), suggesting that similar processes may be at work for the integration of multiple racial identities. However, it is unclear based on prior research whether the positive outcomes of identity integration (and the largely negative outcomes of identity switching) are largely driven by felt autonomy. Testing the IAP may reconcile these seemingly contradictory results. Thus, there is a pressing need for future research that more explicitly examine the role of autonomy in identity integration and identity fluidity.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this chapter, we have outlined the overlap between multiracial and multicultural research from theories of identity development to double discrimination. In doing so, we have proposed the IAP, which outlines the antecedents and consequences of identity denial and thwarted autonomy for multicultural and multiracial populations. The IAP elaborates on the societal, perceiver, and target characteristics that promote identity denial experiences. Specifically, the IAP outlines the impact of essentialist ideologies and prototype consistency on the autonomy of multiracial and multicultural individuals. Lastly, this chapter has outlined theories in the multicultural and multiracial literature that would benefit from greater empirical integration in future research (i.e., identity integration, fluidity, and autonomy). In sum, the IAP provides an integrative, theoretically driven model regarding how the common experiences of identity hybridity may similarly affect multicultural and multiracial populations.

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Figure 1.

Identity Autonomy Perspective (IAP) Model.