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A New Model for Marginal Multicultural Identity Development

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On the merit of a Marginal Identity Model to address Individuals who identify as "In Between" traditionally accepted binaries of identity

Background

Cultural Identity can be defined as the degree to which individuals identify themselves as belonging to various cultural groups, while **Cultural Identity Development** is the intrapersonal and interpersonal process in which individuals engage in order to build a clearer and more complex cultural identity in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

In existing models exploring the formation of cultural identity, there is emphasis on development from the perspective of race or country of origin. While these models have made significant contributions to the study of identity development in the fields of counseling and psychology, research on the identity development of people who exist **within the spectrum between traditionally acknowledged identities** is lacking.

- Dimensions of Identity**
- Deaf ↔ Hearing
 - Gay ↔ Straight
 - Male ↔ Female
 - Black ↔ White
 - Filipino ↔ American
 - First Generation ↔ Second Generation

Tenants of the "In Between" Cultural Identity Model

- **NOT** linear
- **Neither or Both:** Does the individual identify with neither or both cultures?
- **Environmental:** Is the environment inclusive or does it encourage assimilation?
- **Personal:** To what extent does the individual identify with each respective identity?
- **Transitional or Continuing:** Is the individual's identity acquired or preexisting?
- **Plastic vs. Rigid:** Is their identity fluid and or relatively constant?
- **Intersectional**

- What factors impact marginal or multicultural identity development?**
- Environmental factors
 - Physical/functional characteristics
 - Knowledge & skills needed in the culture
 - Degree of support from and/or rejection by members of each respective culture
 - Level of support & insight from others "In Between"

Methodology

- To explore the merit of establishing a distinct theory exploring development of individuals whose identities exist between the existing binaries of identity, the following steps were undertaken:
1. A systematic review and analysis of current literature was performed.
 2. A framework for marginal identity to address present gaps in literature was developed.
 3. Information from the review was integrated, and a hypothesis based on the framework was formed.
 4. Data from recent studies on multicultural/marginal development was gathered to corroborate or refute this hypothesis.

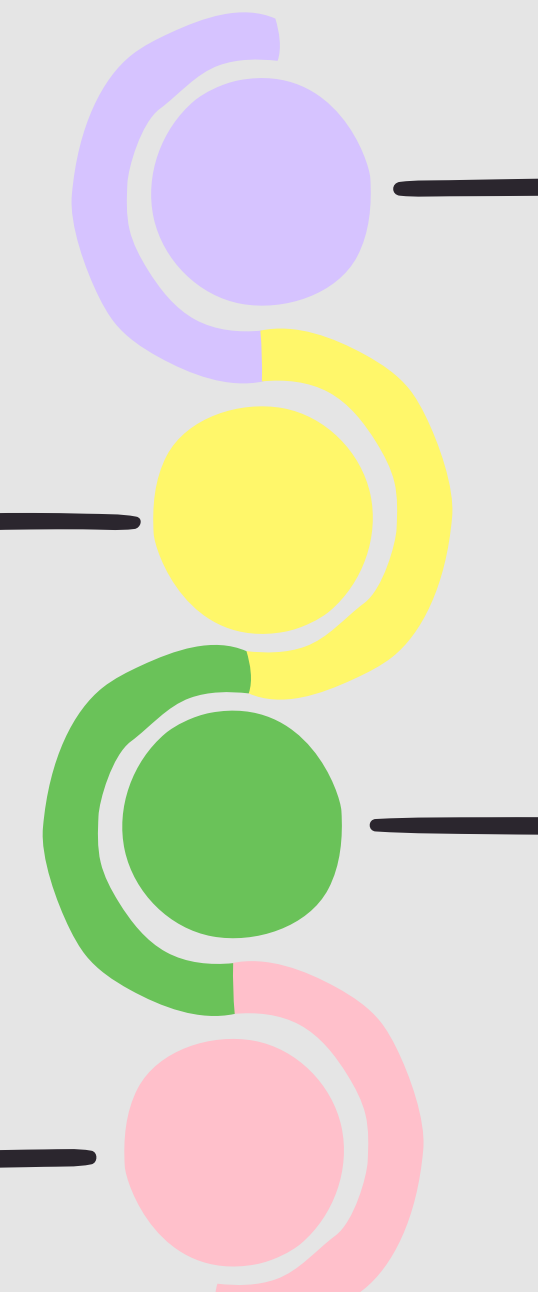
Results & Conclusions

The "In Between" Marginal/Multicultural Identity Model developed by Reid et al. (1988) addresses groups that exist in the "in between" of the continuum of identity. Building on previous models of identity development, this model addresses the fluid and nonlinear nature of identity, as well as the impact of environmental, personal, physical, and intersectional factors, while also considering the knowledge and skills required in a given culture.

This model has potential to address a missing element in counseling practice: addressing the needs of people who find themselves "between" different cultures. Further research is needed to test the effectiveness of the model in actual clinical trials.

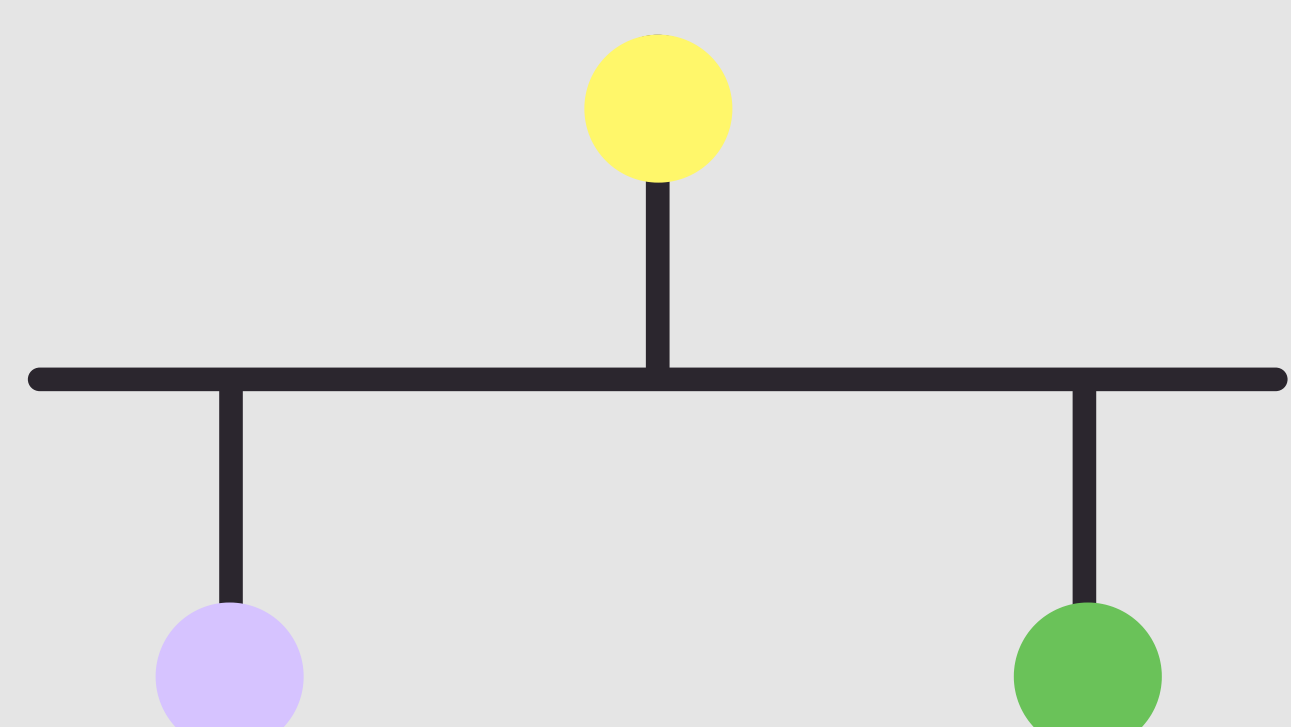


Existing Models for Singular Cultural Identity Development



- Helm's People-of-Color Identity Model (1995):** Moves from "Conformity" to "Integrative Awareness." Focuses on people of color understanding identity among white people
- Ponterotto's Model of Cultural Identity Development (1988):** Moves from "Preexposure" stage to "Integration." Focused on white counselors learning cultural awareness
- Helm's White Identity Model (1995):** Moves from "Contact Ego" to "Autonomy." Focused on white people understanding identity among other racial groups
- Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity (1996):** Moves from "Unexamined" to "Acceptance." Focuses on shaping an ethnic identity within a dominant majority culture

Existing Models for Multicultural Identity Development



- Poston Biracial Identity Model (1990):** Follows a life stages model of growth and development of identity with age
- Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems (1979):** Focuses on development through five levels of social and cultural systems
- Root (1998):** Fixed racial development focused on dual existence, tension, and the four potential resolutions for that experience

Suggestions for Further Research

- Do people who are deaf who grow up in Deaf families that use American Sign Language tend to have better mental health than people who are deaf who grow up in Hearing families that do not use sign language?
 - **Focus:** the tools needed to function in the culture & support from within the culture
- As public attitudes about homosexuality evolve over time, is there a decrease in the rate of suicidal ideation among young people who are starting to identify as LGBTQ+?
 - **Focus:** the role of support vs. barriers/stigma
- Does involvement in a support group of others who are "between" the same two cultures result in less anxiety and improved quality of life?
 - **Focus:** the effectiveness of support from and modeling by others who are "between"

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