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Ethnic identify development in biethnic college students

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ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN BIETHNIC COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Child Development

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Susan Suekawa

December 2000

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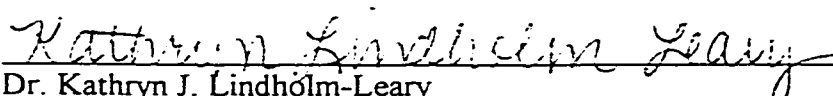
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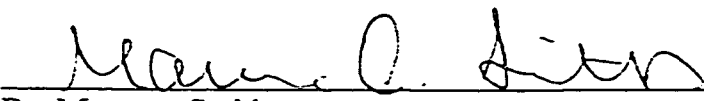
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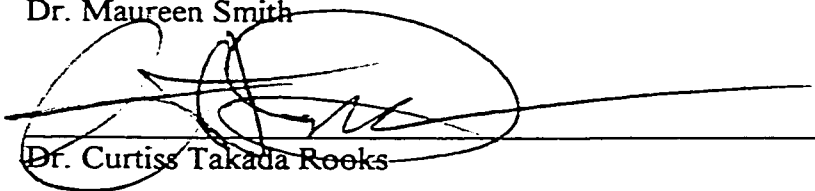
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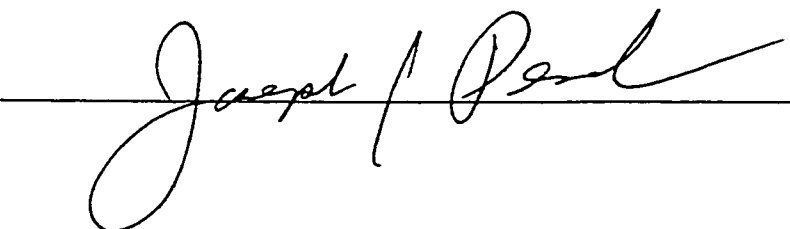
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ABSTRACT

ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN BIETHNIC COLLEGE STUDENTS

By Susan Suekawa

This study examined ethnic identity of biethnic college students. Previous literature has characterized biethnic individuals as suffering from identity confusion and low levels of self-esteem. Biethnic individuals were defined in this study as having biological parents from two distinguishable racial/ethnic groups. A sample of 60 biethnic students were surveyed regarding their ethnic self-identification and levels of self-esteem. Forty-three respondents could be classified into one of three ethnic combinations: Asian/Euro American, Hispanic/Euro American, and Asian/Hispanic. The most common reason respondents identified more strongly with one ethnicity was because their parents raised them more in that group. Students scored high in ethnic identity achievement, affirmation/belonging, physical appearance, and self-esteem. Results demonstrated biethnic students have a positive identity and self-esteem and findings are not consistent with clinical literature that characterizes biethnic individuals as marginalized and maladjusted.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Problem

Since the 1960's, the United States has undergone tremendous social, cultural, and demographic transformations (Gibbs, 1990). Today's society is becoming more ethnically diverse. Within the next 50 years, one in three Americans will be a person of color (Thornton, 1992). With the increase in people of color, there will also be a rise in interracial marriages and interracial children (Hall, 1992). The number of interracial marriages has been increasing since the late 1960's (Nishimura, 1995). Today, almost five percent of all marriages are interracial (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996) and these unions are creating growing numbers of biethnic children (Stephan, 1992). In fact, the number of mixed-race births is estimated to have grown 26 times faster than all United States births (Korgen, 1998).

There is no accurate number of biethnic individuals in society (Wardle, 1987), though it is estimated to be between one to ten million (Gibbs, 1987). Even though the races have mixed as far back as the Colonial days (Normant, 1995), there are a few reasons why the exact number of this increasing population is unknown. Since census and federal forms and school records do not categorize biethnic individuals as a separate category, the number of biethnic individuals is unclear (Wardle, 1991). Such forms and records list only one ethnic group for the individual to identify with. Another reason why the number for this population is unknown is due to underreporting (Winn & Priest, 1993). A possible reason behind underreporting may be due to the exclusion of unwed

biethnic couples who have children and parents who choose to identify their child with one ethnic group (Winn & Priest, 1993). Regardless of the reason for undercounting, biethnic individuals are clearly a neglected population, with scant research available on this growing number of children (Cauce et al., 1992; Wardle, 1987).

Definition of Biethnic Individuals

Definition on the basis of race and ethnicity has become increasingly complicated. Monoethnic minority individuals can be considered bicultural because they encounter both the minority and majority groups. According to Sroufe (1996), monoethnic individuals are confronted by two often conflicting sets of cultural values; those of their ethnic background and those of the larger society. However, biethnic individuals can also be considered bicultural if their dual backgrounds consist of both minority and majority groups. The terminology can get even more complicated for biethnic individuals who are from two minority groups. These individuals can be viewed as tricultural because they encounter not only their two minority groups but the majority group as well. Therefore, depending on the biracial individuals' racial backgrounds, they have been labeled as half-breed, half caste, metis, mulatto, mixed, Amerasian, Eurasian, and mestizo (Root, 1990).

The terms race and ethnicity are often used interchangeably, even though they do not have the same meaning because physical features are not sufficient for determining ethnic identity (Root, 1990). According to Xie and Goyette (1997), the term "race" refers to distinctions inferred from physical features, while "ethnicity" is used to include distinctions based on national origin, language, religion, food, and other cultural indexes.

Hirschfeld (1995) stated that historically race originated from a concern with not biological but with social differences. These definition complexities become even more complicated when there are children from parents of two different races or ethnicities. As Jacobs (1992) has pointed out:

a child is not interracial because his or her father is Black in color and his or her mother is White in color, but because the child's father belongs to the social class of Black people and his or her mother belongs to the social class of White people.
(p. 203)

In this thesis, Nishimura's (1995) definition will be used for a biethnic or biracial person: "one whose biological parents are of dissimilar racial groups, for example, African American and Asian, Cuban and European American" (p. 52). Biethnic and biracial will be used synonymously because ethnicity is the more concrete term for defining individuals and biethnic will be largely used here.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of this Study

Biethnic individuals have traditionally been viewed in a negative context (Korgen 1998). It is commonly thought that all biethnic individuals will have identity conflicts due to their dual backgrounds. Since society in general has not accepted interracial relationships, it was believed that the children would not be accepted by either parents' racial groups and, as a consequence, they would be psychological victims of these unions (Mass, 1992). Biethnic individuals are assumed to be at-risk for developing a variety of problems, stemming from cultural and racial identification confusion, including low levels

of self-esteem, feeling marginal or in-between two cultures (Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, & Harris, 1993), being socially rejected, and possessing unstable personalities (Mass, 1992).

Results from studies on ethnic identity development in biethnic individuals have ranged from positive to negative outcomes. These inconsistencies reflect the different methodologies and samples used to gather information. Most information on biethnic individuals has been based on case studies conducted in therapeutic settings (Wardle, 1991). Researchers who have reported that biethnic individuals are maladjusted have relied on case histories or anecdotal information (Johnson, 1992). Biethnic individuals in case studies represent a clinical population which sought help for a problem which might or might not result from their biethnicity. Drawing conclusions from case studies of subjects undergoing psychological treatment is not a reliable source of data because it is difficult to generalize the results to a nonclinical sample (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The high proportion of articles reporting negative outcomes, though relying on clinical samples, requires investigative attention.

Biethnic individuals have been characterized as pathological simply because they hold membership in two ethnic groups (Poussiant, 1984). Biethnic individuals have been viewed as a psychologically disadvantaged group due to the popular belief that they experience feelings of being marginal between two cultures. Wilson (1987) stated that this belief may stem from the perception that "remaining in between the two groups

condemned the individual to a precarious psychological fate through not being fully integrated into the racial structure” (p. 46).

In contrast, more recent research has demonstrated that psychological disadvantages are no more prevalent among biethnic individuals compared to monoethnic individuals. More specifically, biethnic individuals do not differ from monoethnic individuals in terms of psychological well-being and levels of self-esteem (Gibbs, 1990; Herring, 1992; Phinney & Alipuria, 1996; Wardle, 1991; Wilson, 1987). Further, research with biethnic children, adolescents, and college students have shown that these individuals did not report feelings of marginality (Kerwin et al., 1993; Phinney & Alipuria, 1996). These results have been interpreted to suggest that biethnic individuals feel a sense of belonging to, rather than feelings of exclusion from, both cultures (deAnda & Riddel, 1991).

Therefore, ethnic identity development is a critical issue because many biethnic individuals do not experience identity problems, and not all biethnics who have psychological problems experience difficulties based on their dual backgrounds (Wardle, 1991). In fact, many individuals adapt well to their dual ethnic identity but experience problems separate from ethnic issues (Herring, 1992). Many of these individuals face normal developmental challenges, and identity conflicts do not dominate their problems (Wardle, 1991).

This current study will examine the ethnic identity of biethnic individuals. This descriptive study will explore how a nonclinical sample of biethnic individuals ethnically

identify and why they identify the way they do. This study will also examine the factors that may be associated with their ethnic identity choices. The research questions guiding this study include: What ethnic label do biethnic individuals select? Do biethnic individuals identify more strongly with one group than another? If so, what reasons do they give for their stronger identity with that group? What influence does the family have on a biethnic individual's identity? What is the level of self-esteem for biethnic individuals? How do the ethnic attitudes compare to those of monoethnic minority students in a previous study?

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Definition and Significance of Identity

What is Identity Development?

The process of identity development is dynamic, complex, and individual (Williams, 1992). It is a process of integrating and expanding one's sense of self (Myers et al., 1991), of coming to understand who they are, and how they are unique and separate from others (Lucas, 1997). Identity development requires individuals to integrate their past experiences, their ongoing personal changes, and society's demands and expectations for their future (Sprinthall & Collins, 1995, cited in Sroufe, 1996).

Erikson (1968) defined identity as "the creation of a sense of sameness, a unity of personality now felt by the individual and recognized by others as having consistency in time-of being as it were, an irreversible historical fact" (p. 11). Achieving a sense of identity is one of the most important psychological tasks for individuals (Erikson, 1968; Phinney & Rotheram, 1987), whether they are monoethnic and belong to the dominant culture, are monoethnic and belong to a minority culture, or are biethnic and belong to two ethnic groups.

According to Erikson (1968), the process of identity development occurs through personal experience in philosophical, religious, political, occupational, and interpersonal arenas. Erikson's (1963) theory of psychosocial development stated that individuals progress through eight stages of human development. He believed that individuals must

successfully resolve a conflict or crisis at each of the stages in order to develop a healthy sense of self (Shaffer, 1994). Erikson's (1963) fifth stage of development, known as Identity versus Role Confusion, is one in which adolescents explore their own perceptions, and the perceptions and judgments of how others see them. The four essential tasks when developing an identity during this stage are: to establish a personal identity, to establish autonomy and independence, to relate to members of the same and opposite sex, and to commit to a career choice. During this fifth developmental stage, adolescents must establish social and occupational identities or they will remain confused about the role they will have as adults (Shaffer, 1994).

Marcia (1966, cited in Meeus & Dekovic, 1995) stated that crisis and commitment are the main factors in identity development and that individuals will experience four identity statuses. The first status is called identity diffusion where the individual has not made any commitments regarding a specific developmental task and may experience a crisis (Meeus & Dekovic, 1995). Individuals have not yet engaged in exploration of ideas and interpersonal issues and have not committed to personal values, beliefs, and goals (Lucas, 1997). Identity diffusion has been found to be associated with academic underachievement, drug abuse, and a failure to establish intimacy at a later time (Meeus & Dekovic, 1995). However, success in this status has been related to academic achievement, nonauthoritarian commitments, and a successful resolution of the intimacy crisis (Marcia, 1966, cited in Wires, Barocas, & Hollenbeck, 1994). Foreclosure is the second status where the adolescent has made a commitment without experiencing a crisis

(Meeus & Dekovic, 1995). This status is where the individual has attained a firm level of commitment by adopting their parents' attitudes without exploration (Lucas, 1997). The third status is called moratorium where the individual is experiencing an identity crisis and has not made a commitment or has made an unclear one (Meeus & Dekovic, 1995). In this moratorium status, the individual is experiencing an identity conflict while exploring his or her values, interests, and occupations in search of a consistent identity (Shaffer, 1994). The last identity status, identity achievement, signifies that the individual has overcome the crisis and has made a commitment (Meeus & Dekovic, 1995). This status is where the individual has successfully resolved identity conflicts by making personal commitments to an occupation (Shaffer, 1994), and has a clear, secure understanding and acceptance of their ethnicity (Phinney, 1989).

Developmental changes influence the process of identity development (Bernal et al., 1990), especially during adolescence, where cognitive and physical transformations lead to exploration and decision making in many areas including ethnicity (Phinney & Rotheram, 1987). According to Gibbs and Hines (1992), individuals must resolve five major identity forming stages. The first stage is an internal conflict about ethnic identity, and the question is "Who am I?" This stage involves the individual accepting and rejecting both parents' ethnic characteristics. The second stage is a social conflict about marginality, and the basic question in this area is "Where do I fit in?" It involves the individual either being accepted or rejected by his or her peers. The third stage is a conflict about sexuality, and the question involves "What is my sexual role?" Issues of

sexual orientation and gender identity are prevalent during this stage. Conflicts over autonomy and independence are involved in the fourth stage and the basic question is “Who is in charge of my life?” This stage involves the individual separating from his or her family and becoming involved with peer groups. The last stage deals with conflicts over educational and career aspirations. The basic question is “Where am I going?” This is where the individual seeks achievement and success in life. Overall, adolescents need to deal with establishing peer relationships, separating from their parents, defining their sexual orientation, and making a career choice (Herring, 1992).

The Importance of Identity Development

Individuals are required to have an identity in society (Korgen, 1998). Identity development is an essential task of childhood, adolescence (Lyles, Yancey, Grace, & Carter, 1985), and overall development (Wardle, 1987). Identity is crucial to understanding an individual’s sense of self (Stephan, 1992), one’s relationships with others, and one’s values and roles in society (Sroufe, 1996). According to Shaffer (1994), an identity implies a sense of consistency; a stable and future-oriented impression of the self that serves as the psychological foundation for occupational commitments, intimate relationships, and the establishment of world. Overall, identity development leads to the attainment of a stable sense of self meaning and stability (Marcia, 1966, cited in Lucas, 1997).

Identity development involves other components of psychological development beyond one’s self meaning and concept (Sroufe, 1996). Identity development, which is

highly related to one's mental health status, is essential and correlated with both positive and negative indicators (Poston, 1990). Erikson's (1968) conceptualization of identity formation states that identity is central to personality functioning, regardless of societal factors that may assist or infringe upon identity development (Myers et al., 1991). Identity development not only affects personality functioning but also levels of self-esteem. Research found individuals who successfully achieved a positive sense of self had high levels of self-esteem and low levels of anxiety (Waterman, 1992, cited in Sroufe, 1996). Similarly, Marcia (1966, cited in Meeus & Dekovic, 1995) reported that identity achievement and moratorium were associated with high levels of self-esteem, autonomy, and moral reasoning whereas foreclosure and identity diffusion were associated with low levels of self-esteem, autonomy, and moral reasoning. Therefore, problems related to identity can constitute serious psychological disorders (Sommers, 1964).

What is Ethnic Identity Development?

Ethnicity is a powerful influence in formulating identity (Gibbs, 1990) because ethnic identity is a component of the more general identity structure described by Erikson (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996). Ethnic identity development includes pride in one's ethnic and cultural identity (Poston, 1990).

Bernal, Knight, Ocampo, Garza, and Cota (1993) state that:

Ethnic identity is a construct or set of self-ideas about one's own ethnic group membership. The emphasis in defining ethnic identity is on knowledge about one's own ethnic group and on the sense of self as a member. This definition includes

the personal ownership of ethnic group membership and its correlated knowledge, understanding, values, behaviors, and feelings that are direct implications of that ownership. Ethnic identity is an important domain of the self-concept. It is influenced in its formation by the normative socialization processes that influence everyone, as well as by intergroup phenomena resulting from minority status of the ethnic individual (p. 33).

Stephan (1992) stated:

ethnic identity, the identification of an individual or group of individuals with a particular ethnic group or groups, is particularly important to the self since it is a master status, an identity that overrides all others in others' judgments of the self (p. 51).

Why is Ethnic Identity Important?

Ethnic identity is fundamental to the establishment of self-meaning and is a critical component of the self and of the way in which the individual is perceived and prejudged by others (Stephan, 1992). Poston (1990) stated that ethnic identity development is important for several reasons. For one, ethnic identity helps individuals shape their attitudes about themselves, their attitudes about others in their racial and ethnic group, attitudes about individuals from other racial and ethnic groups, and attitudes about those from the majority. Secondly, ethnic identity is important because it dispels the myth about cultural conformity, meaning that all individuals from a particular racial group are the same and hold similar attitudes and behaviors. Ethnic identity is also important because it

includes feelings of ethnic pride and belonging, a secure sense of group membership, and a positive attitude toward one's ethnic group (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996).

Ethnic identity development influences an individual's racial attitudes and knowledge, but also one's psychological development. Since ethnicity is a critical factor in the formation of a sense of identity (Sebring, 1985), ethnic identity is a fundamental part of the psychological profile of any individual (Miller, 1992). Ethnic identity is crucial to the formation of a normal personality (Wardle, 1989) and is intricately tied to ethnic group formation, maintenance, and social bonds (Stephan, 1992). Psychologists believe there is a correlation between a positive ethnic identity and a healthy self-concept (Boushel, 1996). Kerwin et al. (1993) stated "researchers have uncovered significant relationships between various stages of racial identity, and a host of mental indexes, such as self-esteem and feelings of anxiety and inferiority" (p. 221).

Identity development not only affects one's mental health, but also one's academic achievement. Since identity development is influential to overall development, unresolved identity issues have the potential to create difficulties that can negatively affect one's educational experience (Nishimura, 1995). For example, fearing rejection by peers if they are perceived as 'bookworms,' some biethnic adolescents lose interest in academic achievement, develop negative attitudes towards school, and have unclear and unattainable occupational goals (Gibbs, 1987; 1990). However, some individuals may overcompensate academically in order to prove their worth (Root, 1990). Gibbs (1987) stated that biethnic

individuals are aware of the racial prejudice and barriers to mobility, and shape their academic behaviors accordingly.

Since ethnic identity development is crucial to one's psychological development and adjustment, mental health, personality formation, and academic achievement, understanding the identity development of biethnic and monoethnic individuals is essential (Wardle, 1989). Therefore, understanding the process of ethnic identity development is an important part of understanding the entire individual (Miller, 1992).

Stages of Ethnic Identity Development

Ethnic Identity Development of Minority Individuals

Theories of ethnic identity development have relied on developmental models that suggest individuals experience a sequence of conflicts which must be resolved in order to progress to the next stage (Yeh & Huang, 1996). Stage theories suggest that ethnic identity is a fixed and final outcome resulting from progression through various stages.

Ethnic identity development involves underlying cognitive components where one grasps the concepts of one level in order to advance to the next (Bernal et al., 1993). Bernal et al. (1993) proposed five developmental stages of ethnic identity which occur during the preschool to early school-age years. Ethnic Self-Identification is the first stage where children see themselves as members of their ethnic group, "with an appropriate label and distinguishing cues" (p. 33). Ethnic Constancy is the second stage where children's knowledge about their ethnic group membership is unchangeable and permanent across time and settings. The third stage in ethnic identity is Ethnic Role Behaviors where

children take part in activities that reflect values, styles, customs, traditions, and language. During the fourth stage, Ethnic Knowledge, children obtain the knowledge that specific role behaviors and traits, values, styles, customs, traditions, and language are reflective of their ethnic group. The last stage of ethnic identity is Ethnic Feelings and Preferences. Children develop feelings about being members of their ethnic group. During this time, children prefer their own ethnic group members, behaviors, values, traditions, and language.

Wardle (1991) stated that ethnic identity development undergoes a critical period during three to seven years of age, with ethnic awareness emerging around four years of age (Wilson, 1987). Ages three to seven is believed to be a crucial period of ethnic identity development because children both acquire the ability to differentiate skin color and to understand that skin color that does not change over time (Wardle, 1991). During this early stage of development, children learn about the emotional responses associated with racial labels (Root, 1992; Saenz, Hwang, Aguirre, & Anderson, 1995; Wardle, 1991) and racial awareness of ethnic groups (Bowles, 1993; Winn & Priest, 1993).

Katz (1987) identified self-recognition as the first phase of ethnic identity, which generally occurs at three or four years of age. Over time, children demonstrate increasing competency in: (a) perceiving similarities between one's self and one's own ethnic group, (b) categorizing various ethnic groups based on perceptual cues, (c) labeling racial/ethnic groups accurately and appropriately, and (d) recognizing that ethnicity is unchangeable.

All of these progressive stages take about four years to develop, with a consistent sense of ethnicity emerging around seven or eight years of age.

Phinney (1993) proposed three stages of ethnic identity development comparable to Marcia (1966, cited in Meeus & Dekovic, 1995). The first stage is called Unexamined Ethnic Identity. The individual has made little or no exploration of his or her ethnic identity and does not have a clear understanding of the issues involved. During this stage, individuals have adapted the values and attitudes they have mostly been exposed to (Phinney, 1989). Ethnic Identity Search is the second stage involved in ethnic identity. The individual explores and tries to comprehend the meaning of his or her ethnic identity membership. Phinney (1989) believed this stage is accompanied by some confusion, which is a similar ideology to Erikson's (1963) fifth stage of identity development known as Identity versus Role Confusion. The last stage of ethnic identity is known as Achieved Ethnic Identity where individuals have a clear understanding and acceptance of their ethnic identity. The establishment of one's self-confidence of ethnic identity is prevalent during this stage.

Atkinson et al. (1983, cited in Yeh & Huang, 1996) proposed five distinct stages in minority identity development. The first stage, conformity, is the preference for values of the dominant culture instead of one's own culture. Dissonance is the second stage where there is confusion and conflict in regard to the dominant culture's system and one's own cultural system. Resistance and immersion comprise the third stage where there is a rejection of the dominant culture, and acceptance of one's own cultural traditions and

customs. The fourth stage is introspection where one questions the values of the majority and minority culture. The last stage is synergistic articulation and awareness where one develops an ethnic identity and selects elements from the values of both the majority and minority groups.

By adolescence, children have learned the racial label and attributes of their ethnic group (Bernal et al., 1993). These individuals have obtained a cultural knowledge about their ethnic group regarding values, customs, traditions, and language (Bernal et al., 1993). They have also consolidated attitudes toward their own ethnic group and other ethnic groups as well (Phinney, 1993). Overall, these individuals have learned the attributes of their ethnic identity and how it is permanent (Katz, 1987).

Differences Between Monoethnic and Biethnic Individuals

Identity development of biethnic individuals may be different from monoethnic minority individuals because they have the developmental task of integrating two ethnic identities and cultural heritages (Gibbs, 1990). It is believed that being from dual ethnic backgrounds impacts the normal ethnic socialization for biethnic children. Herring (1992) stated that the socialization process of biethnic children is more complicated than monoethnic children as they must negotiate between two sets of cultural values and beliefs (Herring, 1992).

Empirical evidence shows that biethnic individuals' self-concepts develop differently from monoethnic individuals (Gunthrope, 1978, cited in Herring, 1992). Chang (1976) found that biethnic children had higher mean scores on the self-concept scale and

higher reading and math scores than monoethnic children. In contrast, Cauce et al. (1992) and Phinney and Alipuria (1996) found no differences between biethnic and monoethnic individuals in terms of psychological well-being on a self-esteem measure. These two groups of individuals reported similar levels of psychological distress, competence, and self-worth.

Ethnic Identity Development of Biethnic Individuals

For biethnic individuals who are from two minority backgrounds, it is not clear how to apply models of ethnic identity development based on monocultural individuals (Root, 1990). Since current monoethnic models are not as applicable, several theorists have suggested models for biethnic identity development.

McRoy and Freeman (1986) stated that biethnic individuals experience two processes. In the first process of racial conception, which involves when and how the individual learns to make racial distinctions, the individual assesses feelings about oneself and about others who are different racially. The individual becomes aware of racial differences and learns about the emotional responses associated with various racial groups, including his or her own. Therefore, the development of ethnic identity involves an understanding of racial categorization and the value society attaches to different racial and ethnic groups (Wilson, 1987). The second process is racial evaluation, which deals with when and how the individual evaluates his or her affiliation in a racial group. This process involves the individual's membership within a given group and the cultural traditions and values of that group.

Jacobs (1992) suggested preadolescent biethnic children go through three different stages of identity development. According to Jacobs (1992), "Increasing cognitive maturity leads to a biracial self-concept" (p. 190). Stage I, Pre-Color Constancy: Play and Experimentation with Color, is where children experiment freely with color pigmentation. The child has not attained color constancy yet, which is the ability to classify individuals into racial categories or understand that skin color is invariant. The typical child is able to identify his or her own color and experiment with it in the context of family identification and doll preferences. However, some children do not exhibit this playful experimentation with color, which is characteristic of the freedom from conceptual boundaries. The child's liberal engagement with color is demonstrated in his or her flexibility in the choices of dolls for family members. According to Jacobs (1992), these children's inhibitions may be due to low levels of self-esteem or traumatic experiences of racial prejudice, which in turn, may cause them to exhibit signs of psychopathology.

In Stage II, Post-Color Constancy: Biracial Label and Racial Ambivalence, the child understands that his or her color will not change and internalizes a biracial label. However, the child is ambivalent about their racial status since research found ambivalence demonstrated for White dolls over Black ones and spontaneous racial comments. This stage of ambivalence is necessary for development and significant of free play with color during Stage 1. However, it is not sure if all biethnic children exhibit ambivalence, especially if they belong to a middle socioeconomic status rather than a low social status. Some biracial African American/White children prefer everything associated with White

and reject everything that is associated with African American. This stage of uncertainty is essential because the child is learning to classify his or herself and one's family into racial categories.

In Stage III, Biracial Identity, the child is not confused about racial status because he or she understands that group membership is not determined by skin color, but rather by the parents. The child discovers that he or she is biethnic because the mother belongs to one racial group and the father to another. During this stage, the child comprehends that his or her parents' racial groups, and not their skin color, is the meaning of being biracial. This knowledge enables the child to accurately differentiate skin color and racial group membership and evaluate one's self and family's skin color.

Kich (1992) believes that biethnic individuals progress through three stages of identity development from childhood through adolescence and adulthood. The first stage, which occurs between three and ten years, is the awareness of differences between self-perceptions and others' perceptions of them. Feeling different and dissimilar is a painful aspect of this stage. Appearance, name, birthplace, and parents' races become factors for comparison, as biethnic children are constantly asked "What are you?," emphasizing the feeling of being different. The second stage, which occurs between late adolescence and early adulthood in school or community settings, is the struggle for acceptance from others as a way of understanding themselves. They do not find an easy recognition, acceptance, and membership with others who are not like themselves. The last stage, which occurs between late adolescence through adulthood, is the acceptance and assertion

of themselves as people with a biethnic identity. During this stage, biethnic children begin to understand that not all people asking questions about their race are racist or have intentions of defining them negatively. This is a stage of self-acceptance, where biethnic individuals value their identity as something constructed from personal experiences and social meanings of race, ethnicity, and group membership.

The process of ethnic labels begins with one's family, culture, and geography (Root, 1992). Typically a biethnic child is labeled in response to a question about his or her ethnicity (Jacobs, 1992). Biethnic identity development is assisted by the use of a label and parents are usually the ones to provide such labels (Jacobs, 1992). Wilson (1987) stated that ethnic labeling should be guided by the child, with an adult asking questions in order to discover the child's knowledge of culture. An ethnic label can provide a foundation for biethnic individuals because they are different from either parent and have to integrate a more complex and less available label than African American, Asian, Hispanic, or White (Jacobs, 1992). Biethnic individuals learn the ethnic label of their cultural groups and the attributes of that label (Phinney, 1989). Wardle (1992) stated biethnic individuals need a label in order to develop a positive ethnic identity. A single reference of labeling is usually sufficient for the child to internalize and cognitively explore the meaning of his or her biethnic identity (Jacobs, 1992). Research found ethnic labels to influence identity in biracial African American/White children and adolescents (Kerwin et al., 1993). Ethnic labels may also influence the ease with which individuals can identify

themselves as being biethnic (Stephan, 1992). Kerwin et al. (1993) found that not having an ethnic label is the main problem in identity development for biethnic individuals.

Other issues regarding the use of ethnic labels have been discussed. Gibbs and Hines (1992) study of biracial African American/White adolescents found problems of labeling themselves with a racial identity. Biethnic individuals also have to deal effectively with the labels that others use to describe them (Nishimura, 1995). Although the use of ethnic labels have been found to influence identity development, it refers only to the individual's chosen ethnic identity (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996).

An identity develops when the biethnic individual explores and experiments with both sides (Kich, 1992). The individual needs to constantly negotiate between two diverse cultures and handle hostility from the social environment (Gibbs, 1990) in order to achieve an ethnic identity. Once the individual has progressed through the stages of identity development, he or she will make a choice of how to ethnically identify his/herself (Logan, Freeman, & McRoy, 1987). Erikson (1968) believed that all individuals must experience a decision process for adequate adjustment. Biethnic individuals may experience alienation when making decisions about their ethnic identity, even if they are not comfortable with it (Poston, 1990). There is more than one possible outcome of ethnic identity and it can change during a lifetime (Root, 1990). Individuals' ethnic behaviors and the way they identify may change over time (Mass, 1992). Even within the same period of time, individuals may change their identity depending on which ethnic group they are with (Mass, 1992), their immediate surroundings (Miller, 1992), or their situation (Stephan &

Stephan, 1989; Xie & Goyette, 1997). Research found biethnic Japanese/White and Hispanic/White individuals to have identities sensitive to situational variation (Stephan & Stephan, 1989). Mass (1992) found a similar result that biethnic college students' sense of ethnic identity were variable. Therefore, some biethnic individuals' identities are situational. These individuals feel a sense of belonging to one ethnic group in one situation and a sense of belonging to their other ethnic group in a different situation (Stephan, 1992). Wilson (1987) stated that biethnic individuals' identity vary since "in any given social situation, the nature and scope of ethnicity will be defined by the participant actors within boundaries delineated by the social setting" (p. 50). Individuals may also change from one single ethnic identity to another as a response to life changes (Stephan, 1992). However, research also found biethnic adolescents expressed a consistency of identifying with both groups which remains stable in a variety of situations (deAnda & Riddel, 1991).

Research found biethnic individuals to strongly identify with one race, feel torn between the two, and others to strongly identify with both backgrounds (Mass, 1992). Throughout one's ethnic identity development, an individual can experience any or all of these feelings (Mass, 1992). Logan et al. (1987) stated the four possible outcomes are: "denial of the importance of race and culture (color-blind perception); complete assimilation within the dominant culture; complete assimilation within the relevant minority culture; and bicultural or multicultural" (p. 17). Each of these identity choices

will have an effect on the individual. The four ethnic identity outcomes have their advantages as well as disadvantages.

The color-blind perception approach involves denial or dismissing the significance of ethnic identity and culture to one's self conception. It entails the denial of the importance of race and culture. This approach may be due to biethnic individuals' desire to not racially categorize themselves. Hall's (1992) study found that some biethnic Japanese/African American individuals did not believe in racial categorization. The advantage of this approach is that one can escape the potential pain of working through ethnic identity issues. The disadvantages are the lack of association with and support from both cultures, self-denial, and the inadequacy to cope with a society's conflictual views about ethnic identity.

Assimilationists and pluralists believe biethnic individuals are more likely to identify with a single ethnic identity (Stephan & Stephan, 1989). Theorists suggest that individuals identify with a single identity because of the consciousness associated with commonalities of culture, such as language, religion, and lifestyle (Hall, 1992). According to Root (1990), identifying with the majority or the minority can be a positive strategy if the individual does not feel marginal between cultures and does not deny any part of their backgrounds.

Logan et al. (1987) stated the advantage of identifying with the dominant group is the greater acceptance and fitting in when successfully assimilated. The disadvantages are the loss of culture, traditions, and support from the rejected group. The advantages of

identifying with the minority group is group support, preservation of the group's culture, and the chance of a positive ethnic identity. The disadvantages are the limitations to the dominant group's resources and the loss of chance to learn about positive outcomes of cultural diversity.

Biethnic individuals may also identify with both of their ethnic backgrounds.

Korgen (1998) stated that biethnic individuals born after the Civil Rights Movements are more likely to identify as bicultural. Biethnic individuals' abilities to create congruent self-definitions rather than be determined by others' definitions and stereotypes may be the major achievement of a bicultural identity (Kich, 1992). Hall (1992) found some biethnic individuals' choice to identify with both cultures was positive in that it helped them realize they did not have to fit into a single racial category. These individuals may view their bicultural identity as a unique characteristic that contributes to their sense of self and individuality (Root, 1990). A review of the research showed African American/White, Latino/White, and Asian/White adolescents and college students to identify as multiethnic (deAnda & Riddel, 1991; Kerwin et al., 1993; Phinney & Alipuria, 1996; Stephan & Stephan, 1989). A study by Wilson (1984) found biracial African American/White individuals to be most satisfied when they identified as bicultural while retaining a positive perception of themselves as African American. Fitzpatrick (1999) found biethnic college students who strongly identified with both ethnic groups had high levels of self-esteem. The disadvantages of identifying as bicultural are the chance of failing in both groups and the emotional burden of belonging to two cultures (Logan et al., 1987). Identifying as

multiethnic has often been met with hostility by both groups and society (Bowles, 1993). Hall's (1992) study of biethnic African American/Japanese adults reported that one disadvantage of identifying as bicultural was not being fully accepted by either group.

Research on the Psychological Adjustment of Biethnic Individuals

Since identity development is a complicated task, it is assumed to be even more problematic for biethnic individuals (Gibbs, 1990). Grove (1991) stated that biethnic individuals are assumed to be an at-risk group whose "identity development and psychosocial development have been thought to be necessarily fraught with conflict about racial issues because of purported dissonance associated with belonging to neither the majority nor minority racial group" (p. 617-618). Observations by clinicians described biethnic individuals who experienced identity confusion to display a range of psychological and behavioral problems, psychosomatic disorders, depression, and suicidal behaviors. According to case studies conducted by Motoyoshi (1990), respondents with identity problems reported low levels of self-esteem and were self-conscious. Gibbs (1990) stated that clinicians argue that biethnic individuals who experience identity conflicts are most likely referred for assessment and treatment which resulted in biethnic individuals being characterized as having identity conflicts. However, these severe psychological or behavioral problems should not be confused with age-appropriate developmental behaviors and concerns (Gibbs, 1990).

It is commonly thought that all biethnic individuals will endure ethnic identity conflicts. Empirical studies found biethnic individuals to experience difficulties with

gender confusion, substance abuse, academic and behavioral problems, self-hatred, alienation, delinquency, depression, and suicidal behaviors (Gibbs, 1990; Herring, 1995). While early research focused on biethnic individuals experiencing low levels of self-esteem, being confused about their ethnic identity, and having psychological and behavioral problems, more recent research has emphasized their resiliency and adaptability (Gibbs, 1990). Some biethnic individuals make a smooth transition to form an ethnic identity whereas others become confused during the process. Gibbs (1990) proposed that positive outcomes for biethnic individuals are correlated with a supportive family, a sense of competence, self-esteem, and one's involvement in supportive social networks. In turn, biethnic children brought up in nurturing environments can be expected to develop stability and cohesiveness regarding self-confidence, acceptance, and resiliency (Brandell, 1988).

A review of the research indicated few problems encountered among biethnic individuals in their ethnic identity development (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996; Tizard & Phoenix, 1995). Rather, research depicts biethnic individuals in a positive light (Gibbs, 1990). For example, research studies has shown that biethnic individuals did not display any type of adjustment problems (Johnson & Nagoshi, 1986), but are psychologically well-adjusted, highly competent, and comfortable with their biethnicity (deAnda & Riddel, 1991; Pouissant, 1984). Several studies also found them to have high levels of self-esteem (deAnda & Riddel, 1991), self-concept (Chang, 1976), and positive self-evaluations (Burkhardt, 1983). Other studies found these adolescents to experience low levels of

confusion, to not feel torn between two cultures (deAnda & Riddel, 1991), and to not display maladaptive deviant patterns of aggression or withdrawal (Burkhardt, 1983). In Tizard and Phoenix's (1995) study of biethnic adolescents, only two respondents experienced any identity confusion. Although biethnic individuals have been assumed to endure identity conflicts, this research suggests otherwise.

Positive Versus Negative Identity

During one's search for identity, he or she may become confused to some extent, which is a normal part of the identity development process (Gillespie, 1997). Erikson (1963) referred to this confusion as the fifth stage of identity development, Identity versus Role Confusion, where the crisis involves the establishment of one's sense of identity. Though identity formation is already a complicated task, Gillespie (1997) suggested that biethnic individuals experience yet an even greater challenge. Ethnic identity for biethnic individuals is intensified by the fact that they are racially mixed in a society composed largely of monoethnic individuals (Hall, 1992). Therefore, ethnic identity development may be particularly complex because these individuals belong to one group valued by society and another that is devalued (McRoy & Freeman, 1986) and may experience racism by both (Cauce et al., 1992). There are also biethnic individuals who belong to two minority backgrounds which are both devalued by society. According to Root (1990), biethnic individuals from two minority groups are likely to experience oppression from the racial group that has a higher social status. Identity conflicts may result from the individual's feelings of love and loyalty to each parent (Gibbs, 1990) and confusion and

guilt at having to choose one identity that does not fully express their dual backgrounds (Poston, 1990). According to Phinney and Alipuria (1996), one basic question is whether biethnic individuals are confused outsiders in the racial structure or individuals who possess a greater racial understanding.

Dual ethnic identities are perceived as a stigma in society (Baptiste, 1990) which may be the reason why biethnic individuals have been depicted as confused. Biethnic individuals have been characterized as troubled and anxious outsiders who lack a clear identity (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996). Major concerns exist about the emotional and psychological welfare of these individuals (Logan et al., 1987). Observations by clinicians described biethnic individuals as having psychological and behavioral problems, psychosomatic disorders, suicidal behaviors, and depression (Gibbs, 1990). Biethnic individuals were and still are characterized today as depressive, emotionally unstable, moody, irrational, and confused (Nakashima, 1992). These characteristics may result from societal belief that the biethnic individual holds membership in two groups and is torn between the two (Baptiste, 1990). Not only do biethnic individuals hold membership in two groups, but they also experience two different styles of expression, parenting styles, and values (Cauce et al., 1992).

However, it is commonly thought all biethnic children will experience identity problems in regard to their ethnic identity. Wilson's (1987) study of biracial African American/White children found that even though some were confused about their ethnic identity, they were never too confused because their identity choices were realistic.

Review of the research suggests few individuals seem to experience their situation as a painful clash of loyalties between backgrounds (Boushel, 1996; Tizard & Phoenix, 1995; Wilson, 1984).

Before the last third of the 20th century, biethnic children did not have the opportunity to choose their identities (Root, 1992). They were given little choice in how they were identified and were pushed to choose an identity, typically with the parent of color (Poston, 1990). Biethnic children were forced or pushed to make a specific racial choice in order to participate in or belong to family, peer, and social groups (Poston, 1990). These individuals often experienced pressure from society to choose the minority group even though they may prefer to identify with the majority or both (Gibbs & Hines, 1992). These individuals were defined by others and have internalized images of themselves as being confused, not fitting in, and being torn between two cultures (Nakashima, 1992). Biethnic individuals were also constantly being forced into one of the already existing monoracial categories (Nakashima, 1992). The direction to 'check one box only' on school, federal, and census forms were decided for the individual by society based on one's physical characteristics (Nakashima, 1992). Root (1990) stated that biethnic individuals struggle to exercise choices that are not congruent with how they are seen physically or emotionally even though they have the right to identify themselves ethnically.

Biethnic individuals' identity confusion may be related to feelings of marginality. Wilson (1984) defined marginality as being trapped in a painful marginal position between

one group and another. Marginal individuals are trapped between two cultures and are partly assimilated into each but fully assimilated into neither (Baptiste, 1990). Marginality was first referred as the emotional distress and social pathology among individuals (Burkhardt, 1983) and as a result, will develop marginal personalities (Chang, 1976). They may display symptoms of ambiguity, moodiness, and lack self-confidence (Stonequist, 1937, cited in Chang, 1976).

However, more recent research has found that biethnic children and adolescents do not perceive themselves as marginal in two cultures, but rather feel multicultural (deAnda & Riddel, 1991; Kerwin et al., 1993; Phinney & Alipuria, 1996; Yogev & Jamsky, 1983). Wilson (1984) stated that this marginal or in-between position can be resolved by the individual adopting full membership with one ethnic group. Biethnic individuals may identify with their White background if they could 'pass' as White or they may identify with the minority group (Stonequist, 1937, cited in Tizard & Phoenix, 1995). According to Root (1990), biethnic individuals are marginal until they achieve a unique resolution for themselves that accepts both backgrounds; they will be marginal as long as they base self-acceptance on social acceptance by any ethnic group. It is important to that note that marginality is not the fault of the individual. Marginality is not by choice, but rather a degree of oppression from the majority group directed towards minority groups (Freire, 1970, cited in Root, 1990). It is the marginal status given by society, of majority over minority, rather than being from two backgrounds (Root, 1990). The marginal status affects biethnic individuals by inducing stress to one's positive ethnic identity development

(Root, 1990). Marginality forces biethnic individuals to choose; however, many biethnics neither need nor want to choose one ethnicity over the other (Tizard & Phoenix, 1995). While there are many authors who discuss the negative features associated with identity choices and outcomes for biethnic individuals, much of this work is theory or conjective based on clinical samples or mere supposition. More recent research suggests that identity choices and outcomes are more positive. Clearly, more research is necessary to understand the positive and negative outcomes associated with biethnic individuals.

The Family as a Context for Ethnic Identity Development

Erikson (1968) believed that establishing a personal identity was the central task of adolescence. That is, ethnic identity develops in contexts and within relationships that provide personal experience and social meanings of ethnicity within various group memberships (Kich, 1992). When the individual examines and experiments with both backgrounds in these various contexts, he or she is developing an ethnic identity (Kich, 1992). As indicated previously, research shows that some biethnic individuals change their identity depending on the context in which they are interacting (Wilson, 1987).

The family environment is critical to biethnic individuals' understanding of their backgrounds and identity (Cauce et al., 1992), as the family members transmit cultural knowledge and traditions to the child (Saenz et al., 1995; Xie & Goyette, 1997). Hall's (1992) study of biethnic African American/Japanese adults found that their knowledge of culture was the main influence to their ethnic identity development, a knowledge which

was mainly transmitted by the parents. Therefore, it is essential that parents communicate the traditions and values of both cultures (Motoyoshi, 1990).

According to Williams (1992), parents can provide a positive foundation of acceptance and affirmation to their children by discussing their biethnic heritage with them (Williams, 1992). Parents' ability to discuss and value their child's dual backgrounds seems to be crucial for helping the child develop a positive ethnic identity (McRoy & Freeman, 1986). Research found parents who discuss their child's biethnic heritages facilitated a positive ethnic identity (Winn & Priest, 1993). Kerwin et al. (1993) found biracial African American/White children and adolescents were more likely to identify as biracial and perceive themselves as having dual group membership when they had open discussions with their parents about their ethnicity. Providing open discussions about ethnicity confirms and fosters the child's biethnic self-concept and self-acceptance (Kich, 1992).

Children's racial attitudes about themselves are influenced by the attitudes and practices of their parents (McRoy & Freeman, 1986). Bowles (1993) found a significant relationship between biethnic adults' perceptions of their ethnic identity and their parents' attitudes. Research found parents' attitudes and behaviors regarding racial issues were an important factor in how biethnic individuals felt about their dual backgrounds (Hall, 1992). Parents are the key agents in making decisions and supplying resources which assist children's high level of self-esteem and ethnic identity (Mass, 1992). Parents who

encourage their children to embrace both ethnic backgrounds facilitate a sense of belonging (Williams, 1992).

Parents who practice empathy are also beneficial for the child. According to psychologists, the crucial determinants of psychopathology in adults can be the result of a failure of empathy from one's parents that occurred during childhood (Brandell, 1988). Children who have parents who are not empathetic or nurturing may experience problems relating to their lack of acceptance from both cultures (Winn & Priest, 1993). According to Root (1990), some parents do not understand biethnic individuals' unique situation because the parents are not capable of empathetic understanding. Since parents are unable to fully understand their child's situation, such difficulties may result in an individual who feels depressed, anxious, and suffers from low levels of self-esteem (Cauce et al., 1992). These nonempathetic behaviors usually occur repeatedly and entail a chronic pattern of interaction in order for the child to experience them as traumatic (Winn & Priest, 1993).

According to Wardle (1987), some parents of biethnic children struggle with their own understanding of their child's identity. Some parents may try to push away their child's unique situation and the struggles that come from it (Kich, 1992). However, ignoring any part of the individual's backgrounds only contributes to identity confusion. Some parents may view any problem as race-related when it may be the result of a normal developmental stage (Wardle, 1987). Parents who can not deal with their child's biethnic backgrounds may end up transferring these attitudes to their children (Cauce et al., 1992).

Since parents are the crucial facilitators of the biethnic child's self-acceptance

(Kich, 1992), the development of a positive sense of ethnic identity and self-esteem is initially dependent on parental acceptance and support (Mass, 1992). Therefore, the family's openness to cultural and interracial differences conveys a message of acceptance of value (Kich, 1992). Parents who acknowledge their child's heritages as different from their own and recognize this as positive may help lessen any identity confusion (Poston, 1990).

The sex of the parents is also influential to ethnic identity development. Empirical evidence has shown that the father is the most significant figure of influence in his children's ethnic identity (Saenz et al., 1995). The father may be more influential because the child is more likely to have his surname. Research found children typically adopt the surname of the father, signifying a verbal and visual cue which reflects one's ethnic background (Waters, 1989, 1990, cited in Saenz et al., 1995). In contrast, Wilson (1981, cited in Xie & Goyette, 1997) highlights the importance of the mother in establishing children's ethnic identities. Since the mother is typically the one to transmit cultural knowledge to the children, the children are more likely to identify with the mother's ethnic background (Xie & Goyette, 1997). Wilson's (1987) study of mother-child dyads stated high cultural awareness from the mother appears to increase biethnic children's positive view of themselves.

Biethnic individuals' extended family is also crucial to their development and understanding of their ethnic backgrounds (Cauce et al., 1992). Biethnic individuals are vulnerable to differential treatment by their relatives (Herring, 1992). The development of

a positive ethnic identity depends on early-ego enhancing treatment by one's extended family (Jacobs, 1992). However, relatives (e.g., grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) can negatively influence identity development by not accepting the child as a family member and by treating them in a rejecting or demeaning way (Gibbs, 1987). Some biethnic children are treated in a negative fashion because families have difficulty accepting an interracial union or the biethnic children (Root, 1990). Relatives may also tease the individual or make negative comments about the child's dual backgrounds (Gibbs, 1990). This treatment may contribute to biethnic individuals feeling insecure (Root, 1990). It is often the grandparents and other relatives who do not accept the child because of their own prejudices and not wanting to pass the family name on to the biethnic child (Ladner, 1984). Root (1990) stated that more traditional grandparents may refuse to accept grandchildren from another ethnic background. Even though some children are rejected by family members, they may try to obtain approval from those least likely to give it (Root, 1990).

One of the primary sources of acceptance and support for biethnic individuals is one's extended family (Motoyoshi, 1990). Hall (1992) found biethnic Japanese/White respondents to have positive ethnic identities when they received support from their grandparents and other relatives. In contrast, contact with both sides of the family tends to provide a congruent biethnic experience (Bradshaw, 1992). Research found the extent of the relationship bonds among biethnic adolescents and their extended family members can be said to be strong (deAnda & Riddel, 1991).

Influence of Physical Features on Biethnic Individuals' Ethnic Identity

Physical features determine how one is viewed by society (Logan et al., 1987). Typically, society will identify and relate to biethnic individuals as people of color based on physical features, including the prejudices directed at that ethnic group (Baptiste, 1990). One's physical characteristics may limit the extent to which individuals are accepted as a member of an ethnic group (Stephan & Stephan, 1989), because physical features underlie social hierarchies that regulate acceptance and power (Root, 1990). The way an individual physically looks will have an impact on one's ethnic identity.

Korgen (1998) stated:

Throughout all historical, cultural, and social settings, racial appearance has been of paramount importance in racial identification. Physical features play a major role in determining identity and social categories. Therefore, when examining racial identity, appearance must also be taken into account (p. 40).

Tizard and Phoenix (1995) found that biracial African American/White adolescents identified as African American due to their physical appearance. However, Hall (1980, cited in Bradshaw, 1992) found little correlation between physical appearance and self-identification although she stated that this finding may have been due to an insufficient number of respondents in the study.

The color of one's skin is one major component of physical features which influence identity. It is believed that skin color is important in the evaluation and self-esteem of the individual. Accurate ethnic identification decreased when one's skin color

was darker which suggests darker biethnic individuals may have a higher level of a negative self-concept (Gibbs & Hines, 1992). Baptiste (1990) found that darker Hispanics experienced more discrimination than lighter-skinned Hispanics, since individuals who have darker skin color are viewed as having lower status in society (Wilson, 1984). Skin color of the self and family members shapes one's sense of an ethnic identity (Root, 1990). Tizard and Phoenix (1995) found that biracial African American/White adolescents who identified as African American did so because of their appearance and skin color. However, Wilson (1987) stated that numerous studies have found no correlation between skin color and ethnic identity. Thus, not all biethnic individuals identify according to their physical features.

Conclusions

Overall, recent research suggests that being from dual ethnic backgrounds may not be negative as it was once believed. The advantage of identifying as biethnic is the ability to function in two groups, to have access to both groups, and a cultural maintenance (Logan et al., 1987). This identity choice also enables the individual to possess insight and knowledge of two or more distinct and often antagonistic worlds (Williams, 1992). Biethnic individuals encounter an authentic cultural experience (Nash, 1995) and have the best of both worlds (Mathabane & Mathabane, 1992). Hall (1992) stated the benefits of biethnicity are the ability to accept, empathize with, and understand people of other races. Since biethnic individuals are exposed to two different sets of values, traditions, and

lifestyles (Motoyoshi, 1990), they may be more objective and less stereotypical in regards to racial issues and beliefs (Tizard & Phoenix, 1995).

Past research has shown that biethnic individuals may strongly identify with one, two, or neither ethnicities. One's ethnic identity will depend on many factors, including one's family and physical characteristics. This descriptive study will examine how biethnic individuals ethnically identify, if they identify more strongly with one group than another, and if so, what reasons they give for their stronger identification. This study will also examine the levels of self-esteem of biethnic students, and how the ethnic attitudes compare to those of monoethnic minority students in a previous study.

Chapter 3

Methods

Participants

The respondents included 60 students attending San Jose State University, West Valley Community College, or De Anza Community College. Forty-two (70%) of the respondents were women and 18 (30%) were men. The 60 participants could be grouped into one of three age range categories: 1) 42 (71%) fell into the 18-29 age range, 2) 12 (20%) were in the 30-39 age range, and 3) 5 (9%) were in the 40-54 range. The majority of respondents were born in the United States ($n=52$, 87%). Most of the students' mothers ($n=35$, 58%) and fathers were also born in the United States ($n=48$, 80%). While they were growing up, most of the students lived with both parents ($n=41$, 69%), 8 (14%) lived with only their mother, 1 (2%) with their father, 1 (2%) with their parent and stepparent, 3 (5%) with grandparents, and 6 (11%) indicated other living situations. Participants' present living situations included: 28 (47%) live with their family, 9 (15%) with a roommate, 12 (20%) with their significant other, 9 (15%) by themselves, and 11 (19%) indicated other living arrangements. Respondents were also asked their overall college grade point average (GPA). Thirteen (22%) students indicated a GPA between 4.0 and 3.5, 25 (42%) between 3.4 and 3.0, 10 (17%) between 2.9 and 2.5, 4 (7%) between 2.4 and 2.0, and 1 (2%) of 2.0 and below. Seven (12%) of the students did not provide their GPA's.

Materials

Biethnic college students were asked to complete a two-page questionnaire which inquired about the student's ethnic identity and attitudes. The questionnaire consisted of 82 questions, with 15 background, 58 identity, and 9 self-esteem items. The questionnaire was adapted from two previous studies of ethnic identity (Fitzpatrick, 1999; Phinney, 1992) conducted with college students at two California State University campuses.

Various items on the questionnaire were modified from Phinney's (1992) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. Phinney's measure consisted of 37 items concerning how important their ethnic identity is to them, how they feel about their ethnic identity, and how much their behavior is affected by it. Examples of Phinney's ethnic identity questions included "I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of my ethnic group," "I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments," and "I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music or customs." For the purpose of this study, the questions were modified to inquire about the respondents' dual ethnic membership. Therefore, the ethnic group the respondent most strongly identified with was referred to as Group A. If there was a second ethnic group the respondent identified with, it was referred to as Group B. Phinney's questions were rephrased as "I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of Group A," "I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of Group B," "I am happy that I am a member of Group A," and "I am happy that I am a member of Group B."

Questions were also adapted from Fitzpatrick (1999), which inquired about which group(s) individuals identified with and how much they valued themselves. An example from Fitzpatrick (1999) was “I have a positive attitude about myself because I am biracial.” For this study, Fitzpatrick’s (1999) questions were slightly modified to “I have a positive attitude about my biethnicity.”

A third measure used for the questionnaire inquired about self-esteem, adapted from Harter’s (1982) perceived competence scale. These items asked about overall self-worth and evaluations of physical appearance. An example of a self-esteem question included “I am pretty pleased with myself.”

All attitude and self-esteem questions asked the respondents to rate the item on a Likert scale, from 1, strongly agree, to 4, strongly disagree, or 5, don’t know.

Procedure

Biethnic respondents were obtained from their Anthropology, Art, Child Development, Communication Studies, English, Intercultural Studies, Math, Mexican American Studies, Nutrition, or Sociology classes. The researcher gained permission beforehand from the college professor to visit the classroom. The researcher gave a short presentation to each class about this present study. Interested and qualifying students were asked to fill out the questionnaire, which takes approximately 15 minutes to complete, outside of class. Students were given a questionnaire, two consent forms, and a self-addressed stamped envelope. Students were asked to fill out the questionnaire, sign

and date both consent forms, and return the questionnaire and one consent form by mail in the self-addressed stamped envelope.

Chapter 4

Results

Biethnic individuals were defined as having biological parents from two distinguishable racial/ethnic groups. Table 1 represents the ethnic backgrounds of the respondents. Of the 60 respondents, 57 (95%) were biethnic and three (5%) were triethnic. Out of the 60 respondents, 43 could be classified into one of three biethnic combinations: 1) Asian/Euro American ($n=21$, 35%), 2) Hispanic/Euro American ($n=13$, 21.7%), and 3) Asian/Hispanic ($n=9$, 15%). Three (5%) respondents were Native American/Euro American, 2 (3.4%) were African American/Euro American, and 2 (3.4%) were African American/Asian. The following ethnic group combinations each had 1 (1.7%) participant from that background: Native American/African American, Native American/Asian, Native American/Hispanic, African American/Hispanic, Chinese/Filipino, Asian/Hispanic/White, Native American/Hispanic/White, and Native American/Hispanic/Asian.

Ethnic Identification

Table 2 shows the ethnic group the participants most strongly identified with. This ethnic group was referred to as Group A. The most common ethnic group the students identified with was the Euro American ($n=20$, 33.9%). The next most common ethnic groups were Hispanic ($n=18$, 30.5%) and Asian ($n=15$, 25.4%). Few of the respondents identified with the African American group ($n=5$, 8.5%) and 1 (1.7%) triethnic student identified most strongly with both the Euro American and Asian groups.

Table 1
Percent of Students Identifying With Various Ethnic Group Combinations

Ethnic Groups	Percents
Biethnic:	
Asian/Euro American	35.0%
Hispanic/Euro American	21.7%
Asian/Hispanic	15.0%
Native American/Euro American	5.0%
African American/Asian	3.4%
Native American/Hispanic	3.4%
Native American/African American	1.7%
Native American/Asian	1.7%
African American/Hispanic	1.7%
Chinese/Filipino	1.7%
Triethnic:	
Asian/Hispanic/White	1.7%
Native American/Hispanic/White	1.7%
Native American/Hispanic/Asian	1.7%

Table 2
Percent of Ethnic Group(s) Students Identified Most Strongly With

Ethnic Group(s)	Euro American	Hispanic	Asian	African American	Euro American and Asian
Percent	33.9%	30.5%	25.4%	8.5%	1.9%

Table 3 presents the breakdown for participants identifying with a second ethnic group. This ethnic group was referred to as Group B. Again, the most common choice was the Euro American group ($n=21$, 35.6%). The second most common ethnic group students identified with was Asian ($n=17$, 11.9%). Few of the students identified with the Hispanic group ($n=7$, 11.9%) and with the Native American group ($n=4$, 6.8%). Five (8.5%) of the respondents indicated that they do not identify with a second ethnic group. The following ethnic groups were each reported once by the participants: Hispanic and African American, African American and Euro American, Euro American and Asian, Euro American and Native American, and Hispanic, Asian and Native American ($n=1$, 1.7%).

Table 3
Percent of Ethnic Group(s) Students Identified With Second

Ethnic Group(s)	Percent
Euro American	35.6%
Asian	28.8%
Hispanic	11.9%
Native American	6.8%
Hispanic and African American	1.7%
African American and Euro American	1.7%
Euro American and Asian	1.7%
Euro American and Native American	1.7%
Hispanic, Asian and Native American	1.7%
No ethnic group	8.5%

As shown in Table 4, out of the 21 respondents who were from Asian/Euro American ethnic backgrounds, 11 (52%) identified more strongly with the Asian group while 10 (48%) more strongly identified as Euro American. A majority of respondents from Hispanic/Euro American backgrounds were more likely to identify with their Hispanic heritage ($n=8$, 62%) than with their Euro American side ($n=5$, 39%). Students from Hispanic/Asian ethnic groups identified more with the Hispanic group ($n=7$, 78%) than with the Asian group ($n=2$, 22%).

Table 4
Percent Associated with the Ethnic Group Students Most Strongly Identified With by Most Common Ethnic Mixes

Ethnic Group Most Strongly Identified with	Percent
Asian/Euro American combination:	
Asian ($n=11$)	52%
Euro American ($n=10$)	48%
Hispanic/Euro American combination:	
Hispanic ($n=8$)	62%
Euro American ($n=5$)	38%
Hispanic/Asian combination:	
Hispanic ($n=7$)	78%
Asian ($n=2$)	22%

Another way of determining strength of ethnic identity is to ask subjects how they identify most when walking through city streets on an average day. Table 5 presents percentages relating to the students' response to this item. Of the Asian/Euro American

respondents who had selected Asian as the group they more strongly identified with, one third ($n=3$, 33%) felt they belonged most with the Asian group while more than half with no particular group ($n=5$, 56%). Among the Euro American/Asian respondents who identified more strongly as Euro American, half ($n=5$, 50%) felt they belonged most with the Euro American group ($n=5$, 50%) while few Euro American/Asians said they felt they belonged to both ($n=2$, 20%). Overall, Euro American/Asian respondents felt most strongly that they belonged to the Euro American group, while Asian/Euro Americans felt they belonged to no particular group. Out of the eight Hispanic/Euro American respondents who identified more strongly as Hispanic, only 2 (25%) said they belonged most with the Hispanic group, 3 (38%) with the Euro American group, 2 (25%) with both ethnic groups, and 1 (12%) with no particular group. The majority of Euro American/Hispanic respondents felt they belonged most with the Euro American group ($n=3$, 60%) while 1 (20%) with the Hispanic group and 1 (20%) with no particular group. Regardless of which group the Hispanic/Asian mixtures strongly identified with, about half of the respondents felt they belonged to the Hispanic group more and half felt they did not belong with any particular group. Thus, if students were part Asian and identified as Asian or Hispanic, they were about equally likely to identify with no particular group or the Hispanic (for Asian/Hispanic) or Asian (for Asian/Euro American) group. In contrast, for Hispanic/Euro American and Asian/Euro American (who identified as Euro American), the students were more likely to select Euro American than any other response. Few students selected both groups.

Table 5
Percent of Ethnic Groups Students Felt They Belonged to the Most on City Streets

Ethnic Groups	Asian	Euro American	Hispanic	Both Groups	No Particular	Don't Know
Asian/Euro	33%				56%	11%
Euro/Asian	10%	50%		20%	10%	10%
Hispanic/Euro		38%	25%	25%	12%	
Euro/Hispanic		60%	20%		20%	
Hispanic/Asian			50%		50%	
Asian/Hispanic			50%		50%	

Table 6 shows the mean score and percent of agreement or disagreement with items associated with their ethnic identity. Most subjects agreed that they have a positive ethnic self-concept ($M=3.4$). Of the students who identified as Euro American/Asian, most were in strong agreement that they have a positive ethnic self-concept ($n=9$, 90%) while those who identified as Asian/Euro American only agreed ($n=9$, 90%). Therefore, those who identified stronger with their Euro American than their Asian side were more likely to strongly agree they have a positive ethnic self-concept. Overall, though, there was no statistically significant difference between the ethnic group combinations and having a positive ethnic self-concept [$X^2(6)=5.3$, NS]. The majority of all respondents ($N=60$) were in general agreement that they have a clear sense of their ethnic background for Group A ($M=3.5$, 92% agree) and Group B ($M=3.2$, 75% agree). However, the mean score was significantly lower for Group B than it was for Group A ($t(56)=4.1$, $p<.001$).

Respondents expressed a positive attitude about their ethnic background with respect to each group, and there was no difference in how positively they felt for Group A

(\underline{M} =3.6) and Group B (\underline{M} =3.4). When asked if they have a strong sense of belonging to each group, most students indicated agreement with both Group A (\underline{M} =3.1) and Group B (\underline{M} =2.7), though their sense of belonging was significantly lower for Group B than it was for Group A ($t(55)=3.6$, $p<.001$). Similarly, there was a statistically significant difference in their sense of a strong attachment to the group, which was stronger toward Group A (\underline{M} =3.4) than Group B (\underline{M} =3.1) ($t(56)=3.0$, $p<.01$). The majority of respondents strongly agreed they are content with their identity (\underline{M} =3.8). There was no statistically significant difference among ethnic groups in how content they were with their identity [$X^2(4)=1.3$, NS]. Almost all subjects were in strong agreement that they are happy with who they are (\underline{M} =3.9).

The majority of respondents also agreed strongly (72% strongly, 90% agree) that they have a positive attitude about their biethnicity, and again there was no statistically significant difference among the ethnic groups in having a positive attitude about their biethnicity [$X^2(4)=2.5$, NS]. In looking at students' responses to the items "I am happy that I am a member of Group A" and "I am happy that I am a member of Group B," the mean scores were very high (\underline{M} =3.7 and 3.6). There was no statistically significant difference between their happiness with membership in Group A versus Group B ($t(57)=1.4$, NS).

The respondents selected from a number of reasons why they identify more strongly with one ethnic group over the other, as seen in Table 7. Students were asked to choose two reasons why they identified more strongly with Group A than with Group B.

Overall, the main reasons students identified more with Group A were that their parents raised them more in that group (32%), they more physically resemble that group (15%), they never really thought about it (17%), or other reasons (23%).

Table 6
Mean Scores and Percents for Identity Items

Question	Mean	% Agree (Strongly Agree)	% Disagree (Strongly Disagree)	Don't Know
I have a positive ethnic self-concept.	3.4	77%	17%	6%
I have a clear sense of my ethnic background for:				
Group A	3.5	92%	5%	3%
Group B	3.2	75%	20%	5%
I have a positive attitude about my ethnic background for:				
Group A	3.6	92%	7%	1%
Group B	3.4	87%	10%	3%
I have a strong sense of belonging to:				
Group A	3.1	92%	5%	3%
Group B	2.7	75%	20%	5%
I feel a strong attachment towards:				
Group A	3.4	82%	15%	3%
Group B	3.1	72%	24%	4%
I am content with my identity.	3.8	98% (80%)	2%	0%
I am happy with who I am.	3.9	98% (89%)	0%	2%
I have a positive attitude about my biethnicity.	3.7	90% (72%)	17%	3%
I am happy that I am a member of:				
Group A	3.7	95%	5%	0%
Group B	3.6	90%	7%	3%

Table 7
Two Reasons Students Selected for Identifying With Group A

Item	First Reason Given	Second Reason Given
I was accepted most by that group.	6 (10%)	6 (10%)
My parents raised me more in that group.	19 (32%)	3 (5%)
Group B really never accepted me.	2 (3%)	1 (2%)
I physically resemble that group more.	9 (15%)	5 (8%)
I never really thought about it.	10 (17%)	4 (7%)
Other	14 (23%)	41 (68%)

The extent to which individuals feel accepted was a reason why some respondents identified more with Group A or with Group B. Table 8 shows that most respondents generally agreed that they feel accepted by individuals of Group A ($M=3.5$) and Group B ($M=3.2$). There was no statistically significant difference among the ethnic groups on acceptance from Group A [$X^2(4)=2.1$, NS] or Group B [$X^2(4)=7.7$, $p>.05$]. However, respondents were significantly more likely to feel accepted by Group A than Group B ($t(57)=2.5$, $p<.05$) and to feel that they fit into Group A more than Group B ($t(54)=2.8$, $p<.01$).

The next three items in Table 8 assessed other influences on students' ethnic identity. Half of the respondents (53%) did not agree that their surname influenced their ethnic identity ($M=2.2$). There was no statistically significant difference among the biethnic group combinations in this item [$X^2(6)=3.5$, NS]. Most of the respondents also disagreed that their physical characteristics eliminated the possibility of a choice for their

ethnic identity ($M=2.2$), and there was no statistically significant difference among the groups for this item [$X^2(6)=6.6$, $p>.05$]. Finally, the majority of students were in agreement that they have not felt pressured to identify with one ethnicity over the other ($M=3.1$). Again, there was no difference among the ethnic groups in having felt pressure to identify with one group over the other [$X^2(6)=5.4$, NS].

Table 8
Mean Scores and Percents for Ethnic Identity Items

Question	Mean*	% Agree	% Disagree	Don't Know
I feel accepted by individuals of:				
Group A	3.5	85%	15%	0%
Group B	3.2	73%	23%	4%
I don't feel like I fit in with: (recoded)				
Group A	3.4	14%	80%	6%
Group B	3.0	34%	64%	2%
My surname influenced my ethnic identity.	2.2	38%	53%	8%
My physical characteristics eliminated the possibility of a choice for my ethnic identity.	2.2	32%	60%	8%
I have not felt pressured to identify with one ethnicity over the other.	3.1	73%	27%	0%

*Mean for item was recoded so that disagree was given a higher score than agree.

Family Influences on Ethnic Identity

Students were asked how their mothers and fathers ethnically identify them. Table 9 shows percentages relating to subjects' responses to these items. The majority of students felt their mothers were more likely to ethnically identify them with either both groups ($n=20$, 33%) or no particular group ($n=22$, 37%). Most subjects also felt their fathers ethnically identified them with both groups ($n=24$, 41%) while some said with

either Group A ($n=15$, 26%) or with no particular group ($n=13$, 22%). Overall, at least one third of students felt that both their mothers and fathers identified them with both ethnicities.

Table 9
Percent of Ethnic Group(s) Students Felt Their Parents Identified Them With

	Group A	Group B	Both Groups	No Particular Group	Don't Know
My mother	22%	2%	33%	37%	6%
father	26%	7%	41%	22%	4%
ethnically identifies me as:					

When asked if their parents helped them understand their biethnic background, most students indicated agreement that both their mothers ($M=3.0$) and fathers ($M=2.6$) did help, as seen in Table 10. However, there was a statistically significant difference in that they perceived their mothers helped them more than their fathers ($t(55)=2.8$, $p<.01$). Almost all the subjects strongly agreed that parents should talk to their child about his or her biethnic background ($M=3.7$, 75%). The majority of students were in agreement that parents of biethnic individuals should not make them feel a part of only one ethnic group ($M=3.3$).

Self-Esteem

Several items inquired about the self-esteem of the biethnic students. As shown in Table 11, the majority of students were in strong agreement that: they are pretty pleased with themselves ($M=3.8$); they like the way they are leading their life ($M=3.8$); and they are happy with themselves most of the time ($M=3.7$). When they were asked if they wish

they were someone else or wish they were different, most students disagreed ($M=3.5-3.6$, 82-83%). There was no significant difference among the ethnic groups for total self-esteem (self-esteem items summed) [$F(2,35)=6.09$, $p<.05$].

Table 10
Mean Scores and Percents for Influence of Family on Ethnic Identity

Question	Mean	% Agree (Strongly Agree)	% Disagree	Don't Know
My mother father helped me understand my ethnic background.	3.0 2.6	65% 52%	28% 45%	7% 3%
Parents should talk to their child about his or her biethnic background.	3.7	92% (75%)	7%	1%
Parents of biethnic individuals should not make them feel a part of one ethnic group.	3.3	77%	20%	3%

Physical Characteristics

Finally, four items assessed how students felt about their physical characteristics. As shown in Table 11, the highest rated item was whether or not respondents are happy with the way they look. The majority of students said they: are happy with the way they look ($M=3.5$); like their body the way it is ($M=3.0$); and like their physical appearance the way it is ($M=3.3$). When asked if they wish something about their face or hair looked different, most respondents disagreed ($M=3.3$). The total mean score for physical appearance did not differ significantly across ethnic groups [$F(2,36)=9.04$, $p<.05$].

Table 11
Mean Scores and Percents of Self-Esteem Among Biethnic Students

Question	Mean*	% Agree (Strongly Agree)	% Disagree (Strongly Disagree)	Don't Know
I am pretty pleased with myself.	3.8	18% (78%)	3%	0%
I like the way I am leading my life.	3.8	97% (82%)	3%	0%
I am happy with myself most of the time.	3.7	96% (72%)	2%	2%
I often wish I were someone else. (recoded)	3.5	15%	82%	3%
I wish I were different. (recoded)	3.6	10%	83%	7%
I am not happy with the way I look. (recoded)	3.5	15%	78%	7%
I like my body the way it is.	3.0	68%	32%	0%
I like my physical appearance the way it is.	3.3	83%	17%	0%
I wish something about my face or hair looked different.	3.3	20%	75%	5%

*Means for items were recoded so that disagree was given a higher score than agree.

Comparison of Ethnic Attitudes

Ethnic attitudes were compared to those of monoethnic minority students from Phinney's (1992) study, as there were many items in common across the two studies. Table 12 shows the two groups scores' on two scales: Ethnic Identity Achievement and Affirmation/Belonging. Students' scores for these two scales were summed (and divided by the number of items) for an average score for each scale, according to Phinney's (1992) instructions. However, students in the present study were rating two groups as opposed to a rating of only the ethnic minority group in Phinney's study. Overall, students'

average scores from this study were comparable to the average scores from Phinney's study ($M=2.9$) on Ethnic Identity Achievement for Group A ($M=3.1$) and Group B ($M=2.8$).

When asked about their Affirmation/Belonging, students from this study had high mean scores for Group A ($M=3.5$) and Group B ($M=3.2$), though it was slightly stronger for Group A. Mean scores for students from this study were also comparable to the average scores from Phinney's study ($M=3.4$).

Table 12
Mean Scores for Ethnic Identity by Two Groups of Students

Ethnic Identity	Group A	Group B	Phinney
Ethnic Identity Achievement	3.1	2.8	2.9
Affirmation/Belonging	3.5	3.2	3.4

Comparisons to Phinney's study were also examined by looking at students who were a combination of Euro American and one ethnic group, so that their choices were one ethnic/minority group and the dominant/majority group. Thus, these students were selecting between the majority and minority cultures as were the students in Phinney's study. Table 13 presents the results from this analysis. Students who identified more strongly with the Euro American (majority) group ($M=3.0$) had similar mean scores on Ethnic Identity Achievement as those students who identified more with the minority culture ($M=3.1$). When asked about their Ethnic Identity Achievement for Group B, students who identified strongly with the Euro American group had a mean score of 2.9

while students who identified strongly with the minority culture had the same mean score of 2.9. Students who identified more strongly as Euro American had as positive an identity with the minority part of their self ($\underline{M}=2.9$). For those students who identified more with the minority side, their score was 3.1 for that minority group, compared to Phinney's score of 2.9. Similar results were obtained with the scale of Affirmation/Belonging ($\underline{M}=3.5, 3.4$). For students who identified more strongly as Euro American, their score for belonging was higher for the majority group ($\underline{M}=3.5$) than the minority group ($\underline{M}=3.2$). However, for subjects who identified more strongly with the minority group, their score for belonging with the minority group was 3.4, which was the same score ($\underline{M}=3.4$) reported by Phinney's ethnic minority students rating their belonging with the ethnic group. These biethnic students, though, also had a high sense of belonging to the Euro American group ($\underline{M}=3.3$). Overall, regardless of whether they identified more with the majority or minority group, students had similar mean scores on Ethnic Identity Achievement and Affirmation/Belonging.

Table 13

Mean Scores for Identifying More Strongly With Majority and Minority

	Majority	Minority
Ethnic Identity Achievement for:		
Group A	3.0	3.1 (2.9)*
Group B	2.9	2.9
Affirmation/Belonging for:		
Group A	3.5	3.4 (3.4)*
Group B	3.2	3.3

* = Phinney's scores for similar items.

Chapter 5

Discussions and Conclusions

The purpose of this descriptive study was to examine the ethnic identity of biethnic college students. The study also examined the family and physical characteristics associated with their ethnic identity choices and their levels of self-esteem. From this sample, there is no evidence that biethnic individuals are maladjusted, suffer from identity confusion, or low levels of self-esteem. Overall, the majority of students more strongly identified with the Euro American group than with their other ethnic group. About one third of students identified as Hispanic and a quarter of the respondents with the Asian group. Few students said they identify strongly with the African American group. Out of the 60 students, 43 could be classified into three ethnic combinations: Asian/Euro American, Hispanic/Euro American, and Asian/Hispanic. Hispanic/Euro American and Asian/Hispanic combinations identified more strongly as Hispanic, whereas half of the Asian/Euro American students identified as Asian and the other half as Euro American.

Although the students more strongly identified with one ethnic group, they felt a sense of belonging when walking through city streets with either the same, different, or no particular ethnic group. Euro American/Asian, Euro American/Hispanic, and Hispanic/Euro American respondents felt they belonged most with the Euro American group, while the Asian/Euro American felt no particular group. Therefore, those students who identified more strongly with the Euro Americans also felt a sense of belonging with that group. As for the Hispanic/Asian students, results were split between belonging to

the Hispanic group or with no particular group. These results suggest that ethnic identity may be situational for biethnic individuals. Mass (1992) and Stephan (1992) also reported that the ethnic identity of college students varied, where students felt a sense of belonging to one ethnic group in one situation and a sense of belonging to their other ethnic group in a different situation.

The students were asked what ethnic label, if any, do they use to identify themselves. The most common labels the students use are Hispanic, Mexican American, or White. The terms Asian American, Black, Eurasian, Filipino, Mexican, and Pacific Islander were each reported twice. The following labels or terms were each reported once by the students: Afro American, Amer Asian, Asian, Asian/Hapa, Asian/Pacific Islander, Caucasian, Filipino/Swiss, Filipino/White, half Japanese, half Black/half Japanese, half Japanese/half White, Hapa, Hapa-Hauli, Hawaiian, Hispanic/Filipino, Hispanic/Mexican American, Japanese, Korean/Greek, Mexican Filipina, mixed/multiracial, Oreo, Spanish, White non Hispanic, White non Hispanic/Asian American, Xicana, and other. Six of the respondents did not indicate an ethnic label or term to describe themselves. This result shows the many ethnic labels or terms biethnic respondents use. However, these individuals must typically select only one existing racial category on forms requesting ethnicity; clearly this one category does not represent the complexity or fullness of their identification.

The most common reason students identified more strongly with Group A than with Group B was because their parents raised them more in that group. A quarter of the

respondents said they never really thought about it. These results are compatible with Fitzpatrick (1999) who found that most students identified more with one ethnic group because either their parents brought them up in it or they did not give it much thought.

Another reason why students identified stronger with Group A was due to their acceptance by that group. Overall, students felt more acceptance by Group A than Group B, though few students felt that Group B did not accept them. This finding coincides with Stephan's (1992) familiar conclusion that acceptance by the ethnic group one identifies with plays a role in shaping ethnic identity.

Most students said that both their mothers and fathers helped them understand their biethnicity, though more students rated their mothers higher than their fathers. This finding was compatible with Gibbs and Hines (1992) who found biethnic individuals' exposure to and understanding of both ethnic groups to be mainly initiated by their mothers. Overall, students strongly felt that parents should talk to their children about their ethnic background and how parents should not make them feel a part of only one group.

The students had high mean scores on the self-esteem items. This finding supports studies by both Chang (1976) and Fitzpatrick (1999) that biethnic individuals have high levels of self-esteem and self-concept. This result contradicts past literature that biethnic individuals suffer from low levels of self-esteem (Gibbs, 1987; Motoyoshi, 1990).

A quarter of the students identified more with Group A because they physically resemble that group more. This finding was consistent with Tizard and Phoenix (1995)

who found ethnic identity to be related to one's physical appearance. Almost all subjects agreed that they are happy with the way they look and like their physical appearance the way it is.

The ethnic attitudes of biethnic students were compared to those of monoethnic minority students from Phinney's (1992) study. Students' scores from this study were comparable to the scores from Phinney's study on two scales of: Ethnic Identity Achievement and Affirmation/Belonging. Whether students strongly identified with the majority (Euro American) or minority group, mean scores were similar for Group A and B on the two scales. This result was consistent with studies by Cauce et al. (1992), Johnson and Nagoshi (1986), and Phinney and Alipuria (1996) that biethnic individuals are not much different from monoethnic minority individuals in terms of ethnic identity.

Clinical reports of biethnic individuals suggest that these people experience identity confusion, psychological problems, depression, and low levels of self-esteem. However, results from this study found biethnic college students to be psychologically well-adjusted, comfortable with their biethnic identity, and to have high levels of self-esteem. Students had a positive attitude towards their ethnic background and felt a sense of belonging, acceptance, and attachment to both Group A and Group B. Students also liked their physical features and overall, are happy with who they are. These results demonstrate positive identity outcomes for biethnic students which are not consistent with previous reports using clinical samples.

Further research needs to be conducted in order to understand the components involved in ethnic identity of biethnic individuals. Limitations of this study include the small number of subjects surveyed and various subject characteristics with respect to the age of the respondents. Most students fell into the 18-29 age range, but there were some older students in the 30-39 and 40-54 range. Ethnic identity may vary with age and the age of the respondents may affect the results. Also, the respondents surveyed were college students, a group which may not be representative of, or generalizable to, a non-college sample. Another limitation of this study was that the subjects were self-selected. It is possible that many potential biethnic individuals did not participate because they do not consider themselves biethnic although their parents are from two different racial/ethnic groups. Perhaps these individuals fit the definition of biethnic but identify solely with one ethnic group and therefore, did not fill out the questionnaire.

More research is needed on biethnicity, especially for biethnic individuals from two minority backgrounds. Other variables should be investigated, such as one's socioeconomic status, gender, age, and generation in family structure. Studies should also be conducted in other demographic communities because this study took place in a culturally diverse area. Since racial demographics can have an effect on one's ethnic identity development (Baptiste, 1990; Motoyoshi, 1990), research needs to be conducted in areas that are not as racially diverse.

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Appendix

Biethnic Identity Questionnaire

1. What is the ethnic background of your mother? ____ a) Hispanic b) African-American c) White non-Hispanic
2. What is the ethnic background of your father? ____ d) Asian American e) Native American
3. Who did you live with *when you were growing up*? ____ both parents ____ mother ____ father ____ parent and stepparent
 ____ grandparents ____ relatives ____ foster parents ____ other (please specify): _____
4. Who do you live with *presently*? ____ family ____ roommate ____ significant other ____ myself
5. Gender: ____ female ____ male
6. Age: _____
7. Overall, what is your GPA? ____ 4.0-3.5 ____ 3.4-3.0 ____ 2.9-2.5 ____ 2.4-2.0 ____ 2.0 and below
8. What ethnic label or term do you use to identify yourself? _____
9. Where were you born? ____ U.S. ____ other (please specify): _____
 Where was your *mother* born? ____ U.S. ____ other _____
 Where was your *father* born? ____ U.S. ____ other _____
 Where was your *mother's mother* born? ____ U.S. ____ other _____
 Where was your *mother's father* born? ____ U.S. ____ other _____
 Where was your *father's mother* born? ____ U.S. ____ other _____
 Where was your *father's father* born? ____ U.S. ____ other _____
10. Which ethnic group do you most strongly identify with? This group will be called **Group A**.
 ____ Latino/Hispanic/Mexican American/Other Latino heritage
 ____ African-American/Black
 ____ Anglo/White/European/White non-Hispanic
 ____ Asian/Filipino/Chinese/Japanese/Korean/Vietnamese
 ____ Native American/Alaskan Native/American Indian
11. Is there a second ethnic group you identify with? This group will be called **Group B**.
 ____ Latino/Hispanic/Mexican American/Other Latino Heritage
 ____ African American/Black
 ____ Anglo/White/European/White non-Hispanic
 ____ Asian/Filipino/Chinese/Japanese/Korean/Vietnamese
 ____ Native American/Alaskan Native/American Indian
 ____ None
12. I identify more with Group A because (please number your two choices):
 ____ I was accepted most by that group
 ____ My parents raised me more in that group
 ____ Group B never really accepted me
 ____ I physically resemble that group more
 ____ I never really thought about it
 ____ other (please specify): _____

	Group A	Group B	Group A&B	No particular group	Don't know
13. Your mother ethnically identifies you as:	1	2	3	4	5
14. Your father ethnically identifies you as:	1	2	3	4	5
15. Growing up, your peers ethnically identified you as:	1	2	3	4	5
16. When you are walking through your city streets on an average day, which ethnic group(s) do you feel you belong to the most?	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
17. I have spent time trying to find out more about Group A, such as its history, traditions and customs.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I have spent time trying to find out more about Group B, such as its history, traditions and customs.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of Group B.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of Group B.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background for Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background for Group B.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I have a clear sense of what my ethnic background means for me for Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I have a clear sense of what my ethnic background means for me for Group B.	1	2	3	4	5

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27. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership for Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership for Group B.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I am happy that I am a member of Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I am happy that I am a member of Group B.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I am not very clear about the role of my ethnicity in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I have a strong sense of belonging to Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I have a strong sense of belonging to Group B.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I understand pretty well what my ethnic membership to Group A means to me, in terms of how to relate to my own group and other groups.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I understand pretty well what my ethnic membership to Group B means to me, in terms of how to relate to my own group and other groups.	1	2	3	4	5
36. In order to learn about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other individuals about Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
37. In order to learn about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other individuals about Group B.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I have a lot of pride in Group A and its accomplishments.	1	2	3	4	5
39. I have a lot of pride in Group B and its accomplishments.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I participate in cultural practices of Group A, such as special food, music or customs.	1	2	3	4	5
41. I participate in cultural practices of Group B, such as special food, music or customs.	1	2	3	4	5
42. I feel a strong attachment towards Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
43. I feel a strong attachment towards Group B.	1	2	3	4	5
44. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background for Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
45. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background for Group B.	1	2	3	4	5
46. My mother helped me understand my ethnic background.	1	2	3	4	5
47. My father helped me understand my ethnic background.	1	2	3	4	5
48. Parents should talk to their child about his or her biethnic background.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Parents of biethnic individuals should not make them feel a part of one ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5
50. I am happy with who I am.	1	2	3	4	5
51. I feel accepted by individuals of Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
52. I feel accepted by individuals of Group B.	1	2	3	4	5
53. I wish I belonged to only one ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5
54. I have a positive attitude about my ethnic background for Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
55. I have a positive attitude about my ethnic background for Group B.	1	2	3	4	5
56. I have not felt pressured to identify with one ethnicity over the other.	1	2	3	4	5
57. It was not difficult for me to combine two ethnic backgrounds into one identity.	1	2	3	4	5
58. I have a positive ethnic self-concept.	1	2	3	4	5
59. My friends had an important role in my ethnic identity.	1	2	3	4	5
60. The use of an ethnic label assisted me in understanding my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4	5
61. Society's perceptions on race and ethnicity blocked a positive ethnic identity in myself.	1	2	3	4	5
62. Growing up, the racial composition of my neighborhood had nothing to do with my ethnic identity.	1	2	3	4	5
63. In school, teachers' perceptions of race and ethnicity influenced my ethnic identity.	1	2	3	4	5
64. I ethnically identify myself with the parent who is perceived as the most similar in terms of physical features.	1	2	3	4	5
65. My surname influenced my ethnic identity.	1	2	3	4	5
66. Society prefers biethnic individuals to identify with one ethnic group over the other.	1	2	3	4	5
67. My physical characteristics eliminated the possibility of a choice for my ethnic identity.	1	2	3	4	5
68. I don't feel like I fit in with Group A.	1	2	3	4	5
69. I don't feel like I fit in with Group B.	1	2	3	4	5
70. I have a positive attitude about my biethnicity.	1	2	3	4	5
71. I am content with my identity.	1	2	3	4	5
72. I enjoy participating in Group A's activities.	1	2	3	4	5
73. I enjoy participating in Group B's activities.	1	2	3	4	5
74. I am pretty pleased with myself.	1	2	3	4	5
75. I like the way I am leading my life.	1	2	3	4	5
76. I am happy with myself most of the time.	1	2	3	4	5
77. I often wish I were someone else.	1	2	3	4	5
78. I wish I were different.	1	2	3	4	5
79. I am not happy with the way I look.	1	2	3	4	5
80. I like my body the way it is.	1	2	3	4	5
81. I like my physical appearance the way it is.	1	2	3	4	5
82. I wish something about my face or hair looked different.	1	2	3	4	5