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Mixed Ancestry Racial/
Ethnic Identity Development
(MAREID) Model

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*A*bstract

To date no theoretical work on racial/ethnic identity development can adequately provide a framework for explaining current empirical findings (Harris, 2002; Harris & Sim, 2002) concerning racial/ethnic identification among mixed ancestry youth. In this paper, I review current research on the mixed ancestry experience and propose a mixed ancestry racial/ethnic identity development model that incorporates Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2002) work on mixed ancestry identity types, Cross and Fhagen-Smith's (1996, 2001) life span model of Black identity development, Cross' (1991) Nigrescence theory, Phinney's (1989) Ethnic Identity Development Model and Erikson (1968) and Marcia's (1980) work on ego identity development. The proposed model considers contextual influences, inconsistency in racial/ethnic identification, and developmental changes over time for four developmental age periods: preadolescence, adolescence, early adulthood, and adulthood.

While 20 years ago a person with mixed ancestry would be searching hard for some literature on their experience, it is now proliferating. Such books as *Black, White, Other: Biracial Americans Talk about Race and Identity* by Lise Funderburg (1994) and *What Are You: Voices of Mixed-Race Young People* by Pearl Fuyo Gaskins (1999) provide excellent first hand testimonials of what life is like as a mixed ancestry person in the United States. Others such as Rebecca Walker (2002), Shirlee Taylor Haizlip (1994), and Danzy Senna (1998) have incorporated their own experiences as multiracial people into award winning and best-selling novels and autobiographies. Furthermore, groundbreaking works entitled *Racially Mixed People in America* and *The Multiracial Experience* edited by Maria P. P. Root (1992, 1996) have brought multiracial issues to the forefront as important aspects of the human experience worthy of study in the social sciences. Most recently, the *Multiracial Child Resource Book: Living Complex Identities*, edited by Maria P. P. Root and Matt Kelley (2003), takes our understanding of the mixed ancestry experience even further.

What does it mean to be of mixed ancestry? Is it simply having parents from two or more different racial/ethnic backgrounds? Or does it go deeper and require personal identification as a mixed ancestry person? For example, what is the racial/ethnic identity of an adolescent who identified as a Chinese American on a school form, but yesterday confided in a mixed ancestry friend that she recently began telling people she is EurAsian? Furthermore, for the purposes of understanding the mixed ancestry experience, how should social scientists interpret mixed ancestry individuals' alternating identification. Stephan and Stephan (2000) suggest that stable definitions of racial and ethnic identity are inaccurate and the best classification system may yield the most inconsistencies over time because it allows a

person the freedom to state their identification at a given moment in a particular setting.

While literature produced during the late 1980s and 1990s can be viewed as important for bringing multiracial issues to the forefront, rigorous empirical research has lagged behind. A small number of studies using large sample sizes, recently produced by David Harris (Harris, 2002; Harris & Sim, 2002) have yielded important findings that can move our understanding of racial/ethnic self-identification among mixed ancestry people in new empirical and theoretical directions.

The goal of this paper is threefold: 1) to review current empirical and theoretical literature on racial identification and racial identity development of mixed ancestry individuals; 2) to provide new theoretical insights that can guide future research endeavors concerning the mixed ancestry experience; and 3) to propose a theoretical model that attends to the importance of development and context in racial and ethnic identity development among mixed ancestry individuals.

Before continuing, it is important to provide some definitions of terms used throughout this paper. Race is a socially constructed term that is used in the United States to describe a group of people who are perceived to be similar based on physical characteristics (e.g., skin color, facial features, hair texture; Fisher, Jackson, & Villarruel, 1998). A racial group is a social group that consists of individuals who share similar physical characteristics. An ethnic group is a social group that consists of individuals who are likely to share similar culture beliefs, values, attitudes, customs, and behaviors (McGoldrick, Giordano, & Pearce, 1996). Aspects of culture that comprise ethnicity include, among others, food, dress, celebrations, and behavior preferences.

Within the United States, most majority and minority groups have been identified as single races. While the terms race and ethnicity are often interchanged and the variety of ethnicities within a single race are not recognized, several social scientists (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; McGoldrick et al., 1996) have recognized this distinction. Various groups of people of African origin have been identified as a single race (i.e., Black), but are identifiable by several ethnicities (e.g., African Americans, Haitian, Jamaican). Individuals of European origin have been identified as a single race (i.e., White), but are identifiable by several ethnicities (e.g., Italian-American, Irish-American).

Various Asian American groups have been identified as a single race (i.e., Asian or Oriental), but are identifiable by several ethnicities (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Filipino). Finally, Native Americans have been identified as a single race (i.e., American Indian), but are identifiable by several ethnicities or tribes (e.g., Hopi, Apache, Navajo) (McGoldrick et al., 1996). Alternatively, Latinos are identifiable by several ethnicities (e.g., Puerto Ricans, Cuban, Central American), but not as a single race because a broad range of physical features are represented among this group (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; McGoldrick et al., 1996).

Individuals of minority groups have experienced racism and prejudice by others based primarily on perceived racial markers (e.g., skin color, eye shape, hair texture), but also based on ethnic beliefs and practices. The commonality of experiencing racism and prejudice based on physical appearance is the bind that ties racial/ethnic groups together to create racial solidarity in the United States. This view is particularly evident in civil rights advocacy groups such the

National Urban League, which is concerned primarily with civil rights advocacy for Blacks (a racial category that includes among others African, Jamaican, and Haitian-Americans) or the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium that is primarily concerned with the civil rights advocacy for Asians (a racial category that includes among others Japanese, Chinese, Korean Americans). These examples denote the inextricable link between the two separate constructs, race and ethnicity in the United States. Therefore, throughout this paper race and ethnicity are consistently coupled together (i.e., race/ethnicity) and used interchangeably with ancestry.

A person with mixed ancestry in the United States is an individual whose parents' heritages differ in a variety of ways including: 1) parents who are from a minority racial/ethnic group and a majority racial/ethnic group (e.g., African American mother and Irish American father); 2) parents who are from a minority racial/ethnic group and more than one majority racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Puerto Rican mother and Irish and Italian American father); 3) parents who are from two different minority racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Japanese American mother and Jamaican American father); 4) parents who are from mixed ancestry backgrounds constituting mostly minority racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Japanese American/Mexican American mother and Mexican American father); 5) parents who are from mixed ancestry backgrounds constituting mostly majority racial/ethnic groups (e.g., African American/Irish American mother and Dutch and German American father); and 6) parents who are from majority racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Italian American mother and German American father). In this paper, when I refer to the mixed ancestry experience I am referring to descriptions 1 thru 4.

Recent Empirical Work

David Harris and his colleague Jeremiah Sim (2002) examined racial/ethnic identification in a variety of contexts (i.e., obtained from adolescents in school and at home, and from their parents) in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). They found that significantly different estimates of the size of the mixed ancestry population can be calculated, depending on where the racial identification question was asked. For example, based on school interviews (n = 83,135), home interviews (n = 18,924), and parents' race and ethnicity (n ~ 18,924), estimates were calculated for the entire mixed ancestry adolescent population to be 6.8%, 3.6%, and 4.8%, respectively.

Harris and Sim also demonstrated that having parents who report having roots in two different racial /ethnic groups does not automatically lead to an adolescent child identifying as having mixed ancestry. In fact, only 66% of the youth with known mixed ancestry (177 out of 269), based on parent report, actually expressed a mixed ancestry identity across school and home interviews. The remaining 34% of the sample self-identified as mixed ancestry in some situations and in others self-identified as having only one race/ethnic heritage. This finding supports earlier work by Jean S. Phinney and Linda L. Alipuria (1996) who found that 34% of their sample of 47 multiracial university students labeled themselves as mixed ancestry, while the remaining 66% of the sample used a single racial/ethnic label to identify themselves (i.e., African-American, Asian-American, European-American, Native-American, Hispanic).

More recently, research by Harris (2002), has considered demographic variables as factors that differ among adolescents who consistently identify as having mixed ancestry with those who inconsistently identify as having mixed ancestry in their reporting across measures of race/ethnicity (i.e., home versus school interviews). In general, adolescents who were consistent in their mixed ancestry self-identification were more likely than the inconsistent adolescents to be female and live apart from one biological parent in racially diverse neighborhoods in the West with higher concentrations of Hispanic and non-poor residents.

Harris (2002) also considered comparisons within certain combinations of racial/ethnic groups. Youth who reported being White-Black both at home and at school were likely to be older, have parents with middle incomes and live in predominantly White neighborhoods. While the White-Native American population is the largest mixed ancestry population among adolescents, it is also very fluid with many more reporting inconsistent racial/ethnic identities. Harris (2002) found only one significant difference between consistent and inconsistent White-Native Americans, namely consistent White-Native Americans were more likely to be urban than suburban than their inconsistent reporting peers.

For inconsistent reporting White-Asian youth, Harris (2002) found that those who identified as White-Asian at home were more likely to have moderate-income families, live in the Northeast, and have Asian or affluent neighbors than those who identify as White-Asian at school. Finally, adolescents who consistently identified as White-Asian both at home and at school were more likely to be female, less likely to be poor, and more likely to have at least one parent with a college degree, live in the West, have Asian and Hispanic neighbors, and live in an affluent neighborhood than those who identify as White-Asian at school only.

Beyond describing demographic differences between adolescents who identify consistently versus those who identify inconsistently, Harris does not provide explanations as to why these demographic differences are present in the data. Sound theoretical work is needed to interpret these data and to provide a framework to conduct research that considers such questions as 1) why do some mixed ancestry adolescents oscillate from one racial/ethnic identification to another while others do not; 2) why do some mixed ancestry adolescents consistently self-identify with only one of their racial/ethnic heritages; and 3) why do demographic variables such as neighborhood composition, family constellation, and socioeconomic status relate to racial/ethnic self-identification. In the second half of this paper, I review and critique models of mixed ancestry identity development and propose a more comprehensive theoretical model of identity development.

Existing Multiethnic Identity Development Models

W. S. Carlos Poston (1990) was one of the first researchers to suggest that existing racial/ethnic identity models were not applicable to the mixed ancestry experience and developed a racial/ethnic identity development stage model. Poston's (1990) model describes a developmental process that involves acquiring reference group orientation (RGO) attitudes. Reference group orientation refers to the group or groups an individual uses as a point of comparison to evaluate and build self-representations and an identity (see Cross, 1991 for further discussion of RGO). Poston's stage model suggests that mixed ancestry identity development progresses as follows: 1) no group identity, 2) choosing to identify with one racial/ethnic group; 3) experiencing guilt for choosing to identify with one group along with rejection from members of the group that is rejected; 4) a

broadening of one's reference group orientation to include one's multiple heritages; and 5) accepting and valuing one's multiple heritages. Poston does not associate these stages with specific ages, but rather makes reference in his description of the stages to broad developmental descriptors (i.e., young individual versus individual).

Christine Kerwin and Joseph Ponterotto (1995) devised a model of racial/ethnic identity development that integrates the work of Poston (1990) and others (e.g., Kich, 1992; Jacobs, 1992). Kerwin and Ponterotto's (1995) model consists of six stages beginning with preschool and ending with adulthood. The first three stages describe racial awareness development that is applicable to most young children of color (see Holmes, 1995; Wright, 1998). Kerwin and Ponterotto suggest that the fourth stage, during adolescence, can be the most challenging period for mixed ancestry children because mixed ancestry adolescents, like all adolescents, must negotiate both developmental issues and societal pressures. This is a developmental period when differences are not tolerated because of a great need to fit in. Peers may pressure mixed ancestry adolescents to identify with one group, particularly with the parent of color. During the young adulthood stage, the immersion in one culture and rejection of the other culture begins to dissipate for mixed ancestry individuals as they develop a more secure personal identity. Finally, Kerwin and Ponterotto suggest that during adulthood mixed ancestry individuals continue to integrate the multiple facets that make-up their racial identity.

Kerwin and Ponterotto's (1995) stage model expands Poston's work by including specific developmental age guidelines and discussing contextual factors such as peers. Both models suggest that most mixed ancestry individuals ultimately develop an identity that integrates all of their heritages. Thus, only one possible linear

trajectory for mixed ancestry identity formation is represented in these models. There is no theoretical discussion, in either model, of fluidity between identifying with one heritage or another. Furthermore, both models describe the identity development process so broadly and with such generality that they are difficult to use as a scaffold for empirical research. Finally, neither theoretical model provides a framework for understanding the current empirical findings on mixed ancestry adolescents. In the second half of this paper, I will propose an alternative mixed race/ethnic identity development model and discuss the predictions, explanations, and hypotheses this model offers.

Toward A Comprehensive Theoretical Model of Mixed Ancestry Identity Development

In light of the shortcomings of the models reviewed , I propose a new model of identity formation for mixed ancestry individuals that builds on Cross' (1991) emphasis on the critical role race/ethnic salience plays in racial/ethnic identity, Marcia's (1980) elaboration of Erikson's (1968) ego identity stages, and Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2002) taxonomy of mixed ancestry identity types. I have constructed a model of mixed ancestry identity development that considers identity development during four periods of the lifespan: pre-adolescence, adolescence, early adulthood, and adulthood.

Period 1: Pre-adolescence

Socialization is a critical input to the model. Sociological and ecological factors that influence the socialization of mixed ancestry children include parental, kin and family traditions, family SES, neighborhood schools, places of worship, local culture, and macro influences such as politics, social policies, and historical trends.

Research (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Branche & Newcombe, 1986; Fhagen-Smith, 2003; Marshall, 1995; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Spencer, 1983; Stevenson, 1995) demonstrates that parents of color differ in terms of their racial and ethnic socialization attitudes and behaviors, which most likely contributes to variations in racial and ethnic identification among offspring. Recent research by Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) also demonstrates that pre-adult socialization experiences are linked to different identity types for mixed ancestry Black/White adults.

Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) suggest that during preadolescence children develop "emergent" racial/ethnic identities that reflect both parental racial and ethnic socialization and other contextual factors (e.g., peers, neighborhood composition). Preadolescent children can develop, based on socialization experiences, one of several types of emergent mixed ancestry identity types. Racial/ethnic identity types, whether emergent or fully developed, vary depending on racial/ethnic salience, that is, the degree to which race/ethnicity are defining aspects of an individual's sense of self. As depicted in Figure 1, emergent racial/ethnic identity types during the pre-adolescence period can be categorized by the degree of saliency and valence of attitudes toward race/ethnicity. For example, some mixed ancestry preadolescents are raised in homes that expose them to numerous experiences and stress something other than race and culture. These preadolescents' identities entail emergent self-concepts that accord minimal significance to their races/ethnicities (*Emergent Low Race/Ethnic Salient Pattern*). Other preadolescents develop emergent identities that reflect parental socialization that emphasizes pride in a mixed identity, the importance of cultural heritage, and racism awareness and coping (*Emergent Positive High Race/Ethnic Salient Pattern*).

Some mixed ancestry preadolescents show early signs of a damaged self-concept developed from internalized racism (i.e., not liking oneself because they are mixed or wishing they were one ancestry or the other) found among the belief systems of their parents or significant others (*Emergent Negative Race/Ethnic Salient Pattern)*. This pattern contains identities developed from inaccurate negative information about being mixed or about one or both of their heritages (e.g., miseducation), society's glamorization of European physical features and a focus on one's appearance (e.g., colorism and lookism), and personal self-loathing as a person of mixed ancestry (e.g., racial/ethnic self-hatred). To date no research has considered racial/ethnic identity patterns that reflect strong negative feelings toward the self. Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2002) theorize that African Americans can develop identity patterns that entail a negative perception of the self which they called "internalized racism patterns". I suggest that mixed ancestry individuals may also develop "internalized racism patterns" that reflect a focus on race/ethnicity, but in a highly negative and self destructive way.

Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) have identified four identity types in a sample of 177 Black/White mixed ancestry adults. The most common identity type was a *border identity*, an identity in which a person views themselves as neither Black nor White, but a unique category that includes a blending of both racial/ethnic heritages. In their data sample, Rockquemore and Brunsma identified two types of border identities, <u>validated</u> and <u>unvalidated</u> border identity. A *validated border identity* is an identity that is accepted by others in an individual's environment as a viable identity. An *unvalidated border identity*, on the other hand, is not recognized or supported by others in an individual's social network.

Rockquemore and Brunsma also identified three additional identity patterns among their sample of mixed ancestry adults. Mixed ancestry individuals who identify with only one of their racial/ethnic heritages and exclude the other have a *singular identity*. In their sample, some said they were Black, some others defined their racial identity as White. They also found that some mixed ancestry individuals possess multiple identities, or a *protean identity*, in which a mixed or singular identity is chosen depending on what the person deems appropriate for the social setting they are in. Finally, when race and ethnicity are not considered a part of one's identity, they have what Rockquemore and Brunsma call a *transcendent identity*. In my model, the border identity pattern, singular identity pattern, and protean identity patterns can be categorized as "high positive race salient patterns" and the transcendent identity pattern can be categorized as a "low race/ethnic salient pattern".

As stated previously, mixed ancestry children are socialized in environments that can vary dramatically. The result of these differences in socialization and environment contribute to the array of emergent identity patterns represented in the preadolescent mixed ancestry population. Some mixed ancestry children may be raised by a single parent and that parent's heritage is the primary or sole focus in the home (i.e., emergent singular identity). Other mixed ancestry children may be raised by two parents from dramatically different cultural backgrounds who have made a commitment to themselves and their children to socialize them to be members of both heritages equally (i.e., emergent border identity). Yet, other mixed ancestry children may be raised in a home where neither parent does any socialization concerning race and culture (e.g., emergent transcendent identity).

During preadolescence, children's construction of the self derives primarily from the socialization of significant others. Thus, most children's emergent mixed ancestry identity patterns will reflect what significant others would deem an appropriate identity. Therefore, I suggest that most preadolescent children's mixed ancestry identity patterns will be validated by their social environment. It is not until adolescence that the issue of validation becomes a critical factor in the identity development process. In the next section, I will discuss the second developmental period, adolescence, and address this issue more fully.

Period 2: Adolescence

Forming an identity is a crucial step in human development. According to Erikson's (1968) conceptualization of this construct, identity reflects an individual's synthesis of past experiences and perspectives during childhood with new ways of thinking during adolescence. It is a culmination of past experiences and perspectives, inner qualities and abilities, societal expectations, and individual expectations. All of these aspects integrate to form an identity representing not only who people think they are, but also the way in which they think. It creates a sense of sameness and continuity both within oneself and in one's representation of oneself to others (Erikson, 1968). Erikson argued that the issue of forming an identity becomes paramount during adolescence.

Erikson proposed that the two central dimensions of identity formation include 1) the presence or absence of a crisis and exploration period and 2) the presence or absence of a clearly defined commitment to values, beliefs, and standards. Marcia (1966) has utilized Erikson's dimensions to operationalize identity formation by placing the dimensions of exploration and commitment into a 2 x 2 contingency table and constructing four identity states or statuses: diffused, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved.

"Diffused" adolescents (low exploration, low commitment) are neither exploring nor feeling the compulsion to find a self-defined identity. "Foreclosed" adolescents (low exploration, high commitment) find their identity through the adoption of parental (and others') standards and values without examining the nature, quality, or personal fit of such commitments. "Moratorium" adolescents (high exploration, low commitment) are experiencing an identity crisis and are exploring alternatives. Finally, identity "Achieved" adolescents (high exploration, high commitment) have experienced a psychosocial moratorium and have made their own choices for commitment.

With the advent of a measure of ego identity (Bennion & Adams, 1986), researchers have focused primarily on two aspects of ego identity formation, exploration and commitment of ideological issues (i.e., occupation, politics, religion, and philosophy) and interpersonal issues (friendship, dating, sex role, and recreation). More specifically, empirical research has concentrated on examining the relationship between ego identity statuses and age (developmental trends), along with gender and ethnic group differences in ego identity statutes across a variety of age groups. While research has demonstrated that youth with diffused identities are more likely to be younger than youth who have an Achieved ego identity, the relationship between age and the Foreclosure or Moratorium identity statuses is more complicated and less predictable (see Lewis, 2003 for review).

One line of research using Erikson's model and Marcia's articulation of ego identity formation is extremely informative to the proposed model.

Jean Phinney (1989) developed the Ethnic Identity Development model, which assumes that the identity development experiences of different racial/ethnic groups parallel the ego identity process. According to Phinney, racial/ethnic minorities approach adolescence with poorly developed racial/ethnic identities (diffuse status) or with identities given to them by their caregivers (foreclosed status). Youth may enter into an identity crisis (moratorium status) during which the challenges and conflicts associated with their minority or ethnic status are scrutinized. When an adolescent achieves a reasonable degree of resolution and clarity, his or her ethnic identity matures (achieved status).

While Phinney's application of Marcia's ego identity statuses to ethnic identity development is admirable, her assumptions mirror the assumptions of racial/ethnic identity development models for mixed ancestry individuals reviewed earlier in this paper. Namely, Phinney assumes that ethnic minority children begin with a nondescriptive or negative racial/ethnic identity and then develop a positive ethnic identity. Thus, Phinney's model only explains the identity development process for a small portion of the ethnic minority population. Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) point out that most Black youth are already Black-focused or have a high positive race/ethnic salient pattern of identity and their struggle is not so much to be or not to be Black, but one of "authentication" (p. 255). That is, taking the values and beliefs given to them by their parents and significant others, and making them a permanent part of their self-concept.

Research demonstrates that preadolescents are more likely to have diffuse identity statuses compared to adolescents and young adults. I suggest that most mixed ancestry preadolescents will have a diffused emergent mixed ancestry

identity pattern. Most preadolescents are in a diffuse identity state because they do not have the cognitive nor social capacity to experience an "identity crisis". A smaller number of preadolescents will have considered issues of race/ethnicity, but not critically evaluated themselves and their upbringing. Therefore, these preadolescents are committed to a mixed ancestry identity pattern based on socialization and will have a foreclosed mixed ancestry identity pattern.

During adolescence, mixed ancestry youth experience an identity exploration process, entering with a diffuse or foreclosed emergent mixed ancestry identity pattern formed during childhood and preadolescence. Therefore, no matter which emergent mixed ancestry identity type a child enters adolescence with they are likely to experience an "identity crisis" that pushes them to reevaluate the racial/ethnic identity that was based on parental socialization. (see Figure 1)

Inconsistent racial identification may be related to the identity exploration process during adolescence. Adolescents who are in a pattern of diffusion or moratorium are probably not committed to a particular racial/ethnic identity and, when asked about their racial/ethnic identification, may fluctuate their response based on a variety of factors including where the question is asked (i.e., home or school), who is doing the asking (i.e., race of the interviewer), and how it is being asked (i.e., order of question on a questionnaire). Adolescents who are in a pattern of achieved identity or foreclosed identity have committed to a set of values, goals, aspirations, and also a racial/ethnic identity. Therefore, they are less likely to fluctuate their response on a racial/ethnic identification question. The exception would be individuals who have a protean identity because they consciously use a variety of mixed ancestry identity patterns

depending on what a situation calls for. This type of fluidity is qualitatively different from individuals who are indecisive about their identity and alter their self-identification without much thought about what they are doing.

Period 3: Early Adulthood

Many mixed ancestry adolescents enter early adulthood having gone through the process of identity exploration and emerged with the same racial/ethnic identity with which they entered adolescence. Some mixed ancestry youth may have changed their racial/ethnic identity pattern after going through the process of identity exploration. Most mixed ancestry adolescents enter young adulthood with either a foreclosed or achieved mixed ancestry identity pattern. Young adults with negative high race salient patterns have mixed ancestry identity types that can put them at risk for psychological difficulties. It is likely that these young adults have committed to identity patterns developed during preadolescence without having experienced identity exploration. The rationale is that, had these young adults experienced identity exploration, they would not have emerged from adolescence with these self-destructive mixed ancestry identity patterns. Therefore, these identity patterns are depicted in Figure 1 as foreclosed mixed ancestry identity patterns during early adulthood.

Period 4: Adulthood

Based on the work of Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001), it is suggested that mixed ancestry adults whose racial/ethnic identities are either a low race/ethnic salience pattern (i.e., transcendent identity type) or a negative high race/ethnic salience pattern, are vulnerable to an identity conversion process. This racial/ethnic identity conversion process was theorized by Cross (1971,

1991) to occur in four phases.

Pre-encounter, or the first phase, is simply the low race salient identity or internalized racism identity that a person has before an encounter occurs. Cross (1991) suggests that the catalyst that drives someone to an identity conversion is an experience or series of experiences that involves race and ethnicity that is so profound as to make the person reconsider their previous notions about race and ethnicity and re-examine their reference group orientation. During the second phase, the encounter(s) and the proceeding thinking may make a person so cognitively and emotionally uncomfortable that they are propelled into an immersion-emersion phase. During the immersion-emersion or third phase individuals become intensely involved in learning about ethnic heritage(s), history, and people. Some may develop strong feelings of hatred for the White establishment in the United States. Finally, during the fourth phase or internalization, they emerge having made race and ethnicity a salient part of their identity.

Some mixed ancestry youth may have changed their racial/ethnic identity pattern after going through the process of identity exploration during adolescence. This process of racial/ethnic identity transformation can be similar to the adult conversion process. Mixed ancestry adults whose racial/ethnic identities are either a low race/ethnic salience pattern or a negative high race/ethnic salience pattern are vulnerable to an identity conversion process that transforms their identity to a positive high race/ethnic salience pattern.

Conclusions

The proposed identity development model for mixed ancestry individuals provides a useful framework on which to base research on the

mixed ancestry experience. First, the model considers multiple identity development trajectories by suggesting that a variety of emergent mixed ancestry identity types are present during preadolescence. Furthermore, by contending that emergent mixed ancestry identity types during preadolescence are based on socialization experiences, the model brings contextual factors into the framework. Second, the model considers the issue of fluidity and suggests that inconsistent and consistent reports of self-identification during adolescence may relate to ego identity status (i.e., Diffused, Foreclosed, Moratorium, Achieved). Third, by including both identity types and identity statuses the model not only takes into account the existence of multiple identity types, but also the process of how these identity types might be developed. Finally, the mixed racial/ethnic identity development or MAREID model presented here provides testable hypotheses that can be applied to empirical research.

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Emergent Identity Patterns
Pre-Adolescence(~ 8–12years)

Internalized Identity Patterns
Early Adulthood (~ 20+)

Normative Change Process
Adolescence (~ 13–20)

Non-normative Conversion Process
Adulthood (~ 25+)

Low Race/Ethnic Salience Pattern

Transcendent Identity

Negative High Race/Ethnic Salience Patterns

Miseducated Identity

Colorism & Lookism

Self-Hating Identity

Positive High Race/Ethnic Salience Patterns

Border Identity

Protean Identity

Singular Identity

No Exploration + No Commitment (Diffused [Fluid])

No Exploration + Commitment (Foreclosed [Static])

Exploration (Moratorium [Fluid]) + Commitment (Achieved [Static])

Negative High Race/Ethnic Salience Patterns

Miseducated Identity

Colorism & Lookism

Self-Hatred Identity

Low Race/Ethnic Salience Pattern

Transcendent Identity

Positive High Race/Ethnic Salience Patterns

Border Identity

Protean Identity
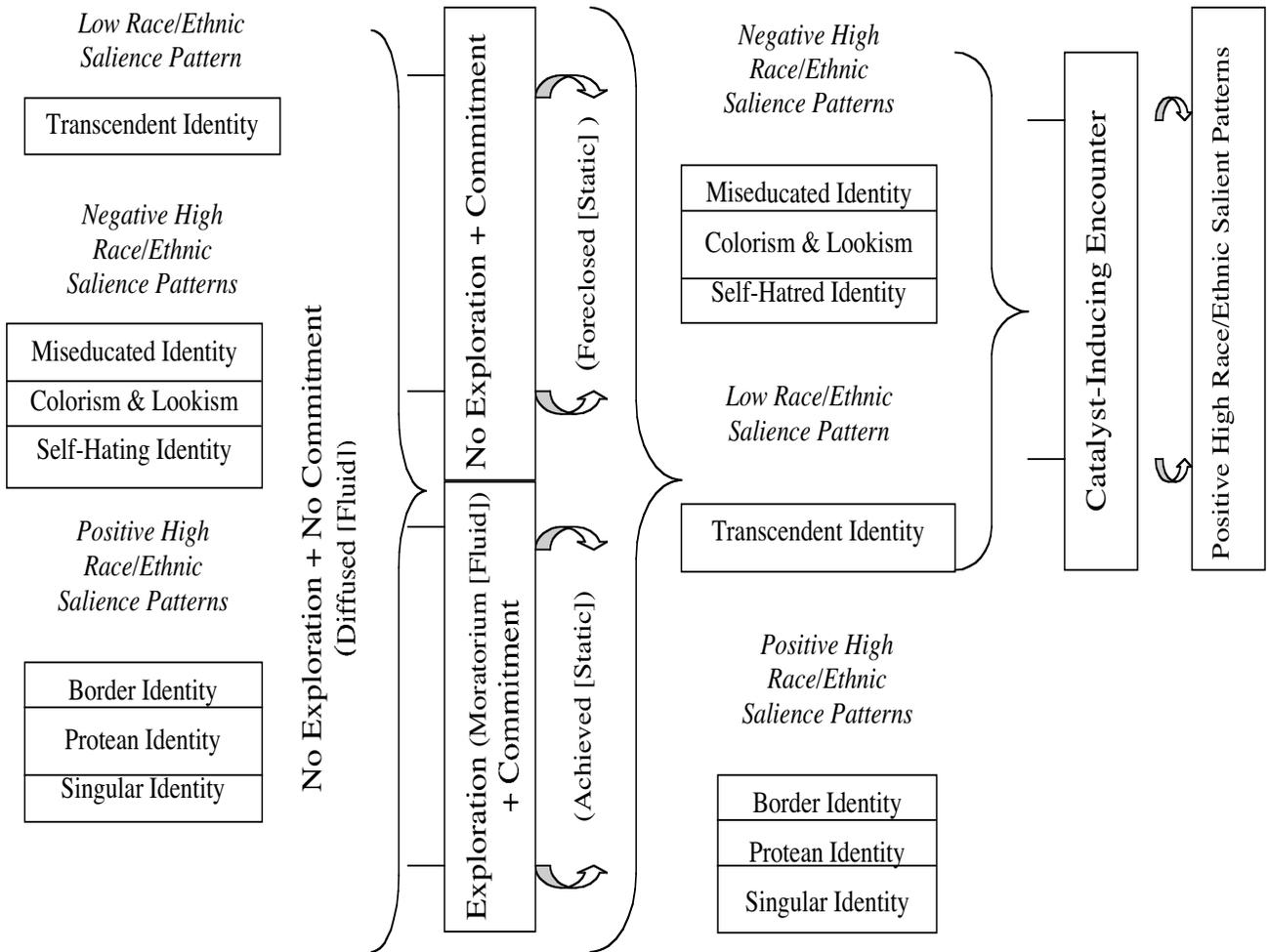
Singular Identity

Catalyst-Inducing Encounter

Positive High Race/Ethnic Salient Patterns

Figure 1: The MAREID Model.