

Ecology of Belongingness for Multiracial Students

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About Me



- Multiracial College Graduate
- Ph.D. in College Student Personnel from the University of Louisville (PWI)
- Challenges Were Heightened at PWI

Let's Discuss

- What does it mean to be multiracial?
- What resources on a college campus specifically support multiracial students?
- Do you believe multiracial students feel comfortable or uncomfortable on a college campus? Why?
 - Infamous Questions/Statements
 - “What are you?”
 - “You don’t act Black/White”
 - “O, you’re mixed?”

History of Racism & Anti-Blackness

- **Oxford English Dictionary Definition of Black (1974):**
 - “Indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment, etc.” (Jordan, 1974, p.6)
- **Slavery from 1619-1865**
- **Miscegenation Statues**
 - Marriage between Black and White individuals was unlawful and prohibited.
- **Hypodescent**
 - One drop of Blood that is Black categorized individuals as being Black and would be treated as such.
- **Racial Hierarchy**
- **Racial Injustice**

History of Multiraciality

- **1967 Loving vs. Virginia**
- **2000 United States Census**
 - Respondents were able to mark more than one single-race category
- **2010 United States Census**
 - Projected that 20% of the United States population would be in the multiracial category by the year 2050.
- **2020 United States Census**
 - Multiracial category increased 276%
- **Trainings in Student Affairs Preparation Programs**
 - Focus on monoracial students
 - Need education on diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice.

Authenticity

Involves being genuine, self-aware, and defined by one's self, rather than the expectations others have of one (Abes et al., 2019).

Sense of Belonging

“Refers to students’ perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, and the experience of mattering...” (Stayhorn, 2012, p. 4).

Sense of Belonging is the Important Factor

- Overlooked in marginalized students (Hausmann et al., 2007).
- Sense of belonging is a sense of mattering and is related to academic achievement (Strayhorn, 2012).
- Sense of belonging leads to higher graduation rates in college.
 - Sense of belonging relates to the intention to persist in college.
 - Student persistence relates to graduation rates.

Sense of Belonging in Higher Education

- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954)
- Astin's Student Involvement Theory (1984)
- Tinto's Model of Student Departure (1993)
- Magolda's Theory of Self Authorship (2001)
- Strayhorn's Model of College Students' Sense of Belonging (2019)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954)



Strayhorn's Model of College Students' Sense of Belonging (2019)

- Seven Core Elements:
 1. Sense of Belonging is a Basic Human Need
 2. Fundamental Motive to Drive Behavior
 3. Context & Time Determine Importance
 4. Is the Feeling that One Matters
 5. Influenced by Identities
 6. Leads to Positive Outcomes
 7. Must be Satisfied Continuously

Renn's Ecological Theory of Mixed-Race Identity Development

- Patterns for multiracial students
- Identity is context based
- Peer culture has a strong influence
- Monoracial Identity
- Multiple Monoracial Identities
- Multiracial Identity
- Extraracial Identity
- Situational Identity

Ecological Systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1993)

- **Person**

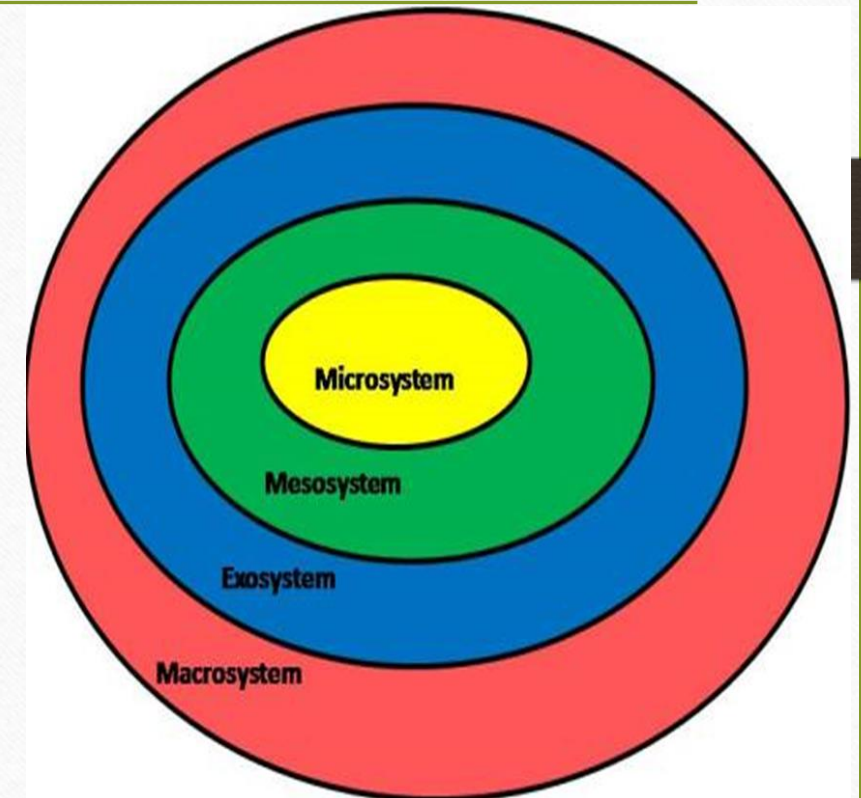
- Physical features
- Cultural background

- **Process**

- Ongoing reciprocal interactions
- Encountered discrimination
- Close diverse friends increased inclusion and sense of belonging

Context

- **Microsystem**
 - Multiracial Student
- **Mesosystem**
 - Best friends of color & involvement on campus
- **Exosystem**
 - Institutions' diversity focus
- **Macrosystem**
 - Predominantly White institution's beliefs and attitudes that are shared amongst employees and students



Chronosystem

- **Global Pandemic**
 - COVID-19
- **Racial Injustice**
 - Ahmaud Arbery
 - 02/23/2020
 - Breonna Taylor
 - 03/13/2020
 - George Floyd
 - 05/25/2020

How do Multiracial Students at a Predominantly White Institution Describe their Sense of Belonging?

- A majority of multiracial students did feel connected.
- Involvement in predominantly Black organizations and campus resources (e.g., Cultural Center, Student Activities Center, Writing Center).
- Some struggled to establish connectedness, especially during their incoming semester.
- **“The institution itself, I don’t think it makes a big enough effort to try to connect with me. Organizations that are predominantly African American do. Not the university as a whole, but there are people there that do” (Jamaal).**

In What Ways do Multiracial College Students feel that they can be their Completely Authentic Self at all times while at a Predominantly White Institution?

- Nearly all stated they can not be their completely authentic self at all times.
- Constantly codeswitching in search of acceptance.
- Completely authentic around intimate friends.
- **“There are times that you are told that you are too White around your Black friends and you are too Black around your White friends. That’s happened” (Tom).**

How do Multiracial Students feel Comfortable or Uncomfortable at a Predominantly White Institution?

- Comfortable
 - “They acknowledge my existence. Not like it is a problem, but we are People of Color and we are going to work with that and be successful either way” (Jamaal).
- Uncomfortable
 - “...I’m high up in my organization and in NPHC, they say a lot of racist stuff sometimes and they ask a lot of questionable questions like that make you think like they are very uneducated. That kind of makes me uncomfortable” (Leroy).

How Salient is Multiracial Students' Race while at a Predominantly White Institution?

- Participants shared race was “important”, “huge”, or “extremely important”.
- Challenge, struggle, difficult, and uneasy.
- “The Best of Both Worlds”
- **“You put on a persona and it’s not how they envision you are. You are trying to figure out where you want to go while other people are also trying to tell you where you should go too” (Paige).**

Chronic Codeswitching (Wright, 2021)

- “I have heard everything from, ‘you’re being too White’ to ‘you’re not Black enough’. It really depends on who you are presenting yourself in front of. I kind of base how I alter my perception to them” (Bay).

Monoracism (Johnston & Nadal, 2010)

- Unique system of oppression facing individuals who do not fit monoracial categorization.

Implications

- **Racial Diversity Education**
 - Employees
 - Predominantly White Greek Life
- **Multiracial Experience Courses**
 - Multiracial experience courses will allow individuals at the PWI to have an opportunity to gain knowledge surrounding multiracial experiences
- **Multiracial Organizations**
 - The main reason organizations can be obstacles is because it can be difficult for multi-racial students to find peers they can connect to and discuss their struggles with.

Thank You For Engaging In This Presentation

- Utilizing this research, we can ensure that multiracial students have a better chance at predominantly White institutions to not feel like “the minority of the minorities” (Leroy), and instead feel like “the best of both worlds” (Taty).

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Questions?

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