Chapter 1
Minority Identity Development

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Introduction

The term minority has been defined in any number of ways. Wirth (1945, p. 347) offered one of the earliest definitions of minority:

We may define a minority as a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination. The existence of a minority in a society implies the existence of a corresponding dominant group enjoying higher social status and greater privileges.

A number of scholars have maintained that the central feature of a minority group is the power deficiency relative to that group (Blalock, 1960; Dworkin & Dworkin, 1982; Geschwender, 1978; Wilson, 1973) and the resulting oppression of one group by another. This imbalance of power may be manifested in the economic, political, and social domains of life (Ashmore, 1970; Barron, 1957; Howard, 1970; Kinloch, 1979; Ramaga, 1992; Wagley & Harris, 1958) through overt or more subtle forms of influence, exploitation, domination, oppression, and discrimination (Meyers, 1984; Ramaga, 1992). This power imbalance allows the establishment and maintenance of both control and dependency (Manderson, 1997). Within this paradigm, it is the relative power or lack of it that is determinative of minority group status rather than the numerical superiority or inferiority of a group (Meyers, 1984; Ramaga, 1992). The disempowerment and oppression of the black majority by a white minority in South Africa during the years of apartheid serves as such an example. Some writers, however, have refused to characterize a group as a minority if the group is larger in relative size within the population under discussion or if the group has no desire to preserve the characteristics that are believed to render it distinct (Anon, 2007; Schermerhorn, 1964).

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Characteristics that have been linked to minority group identity include sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, nationality, race (without debating the validity of that concept), language, culture, and religion (Baron & Byrne, 1977; Barron, 1957; Hacker, 1951; Pap, 2003; Rose, 1964; Wagley & Harris, 1958), although religion has rarely been relied upon to define a minority in the United States (Minority, 2008). One scholar explained:

Minorities are sub-groups within a culture which are distinguishable from the dominant group by reasons of differences in physiology, language, customs, or culture patterns (including any combination of these factors). Such sub-groups are regarded as inherently different and not belonging to the dominant groups; for this reason they are consciously or unconsciously excluded from full participation in the life of the culture. . . . Some minorities are physically different but culturally similar with respect to the majority. . . . others are culturally different but physically similar. . . . and still others are both culturally and physically different. . . . The cultural and/or physical differences between majority and minority actually may be so minute as to make it impossible to detect by simple observation who is a member of the minority and who is a member of the majority (Schermerhorn, 1949, p. 5).

As a result, an individual who is a member of more than one defined minority group may be multiply stigmatized (Capitanio & Herek, 1999; Herek, 1999; McBride, 1998; Reidpath & Chan, 2005). For example, a woman who is a member of an ethnic minority and is nonheterosexual may be stigmatized because of her ethnicity, sexual orientation, and biological sex (Bowleg, Huang, Brooks, Black, & Burkholder, 2003). For the past two decades, the literature on racial disparities has focused on developing “intersectional theory” to depart from both traditional conceptions of race as biology, on the one hand, and from the influence of cultural or lifestyle behaviors, on the other (Mullings, 2002). Intersectional approaches, instead, underscore the interactive interweaving effect of the hierarchies of race/ethnicity, class, and gender on the lives of impoverished women (see Mulling, 2002; Schulz & Mullings, 2006; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Rather than seen as additive, gender, race, and class are conceptualized as relational categories that have deep and enduring consequences for minority women’s health and on their ability to successfully cope with everyday stressors (King, 1988). For instance, for the Harlem Birth Right Project (1993–1997), Mullings and her team developed a conceptual framework to examine the roots of African-American babies’ low birthweight vis-à-vis the babies of white women from all socioeconomic levels. Findings showed that the intersecting effect of race, class, and gender creates unique stressors in the lives of black women which, in turn, lead them to delivering preterm low-birthweight babies. Based on research scientists’ research (Wadhwa, Culhane, Rauh, & Barve, 2001), Mulling explains that “. . . hormones released during episodes of acute stress and chronic strain may stimulate spontaneous labor and preterm delivery” (Mullings, 2002: 35). This theoretical approach is coincident with what Geronimus (1992) refers to as the “weathering” effect or the chronic and enduring burden drawn from African-American women’s continuous adaptations to structures of social inequality.
Lorde (1984, p. 120) discussed from the vantage point of an African-American lesbian the pressure on individuals having multiple stigmatized/oppressed identities of

constantly being encouraged to pluck out one aspect of [your]self and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self.

Also, an individual essentially inherits his/her status as a minority group member and cannot change that status unless the status of the group itself should change (Collins, 2008) or he/she denies group membership, something that is not possible in the case of skin color or biological sex (Harris, 1959).

Defining Ethnic Identity

The concept of minority, then, encompasses both racial and ethnic minorities, among other social identities, including sexual orientation. Although the classification of individuals and groups by race has met with significant scholarly criticism, the lived experience of individuals makes it clear that the construction of race continues to constitute a major factor in individual and group interactions. Scholarly literature has instead emphasized the concepts of ethnicity and culture in lieu of race in attempting to understand the context of individual and group behavior and processes.

Ethnicity is said to derive from “language, religion, culture, appearance, ancestry, or regionality” (Nagel, 1994, p. 153). Accordingly, an ethnic group has been defined as

a reference group called upon by people who share a common history and culture, who may be identifiable because they share similar physical features and values and who, through the process of interacting with each other and establishing boundaries with others, identify themselves as being a member of that group (Smith, 1991, p. 181).

To a certain extent, ethnicity has become a malleable definition of race used to emphasize the social construction of the term, away from its biological (and inherently stable) connotations. Nevertheless, as other authors note (Phinney, 1990; Dressler, Oths, & Gravlee, 2005), explicit definitions of ethnicity and race in the literature are scarce, and quite often both terms are used interchangeably with none, or little, specifications regarding both their conceptual and methodological definitions (see Williams, 1994; Comstock, Castillo, & Lindsay, 2004). Dressler et al. (2005) define three main categories as constitutive of the term ethnicity: the cultural, the ancestral, and the referential. The first includes the shared belief systems (e.g., language, marriage rituals) and the more abstract aspect of life (the supernatural). By shared ancestry, Dressler and colleagues refer to the possession of a common history, kinship, and belonging to the same homeland. Finally, the referential category refers to the labeling of separate groups of people with regard to the ego (self-representation) and others (social recognition of difference).
In fact, individuals do not choose to be members of a specific ethnic group. Rather, membership is acquired through birth into a specific group, and the relationship with that group is forged through emotional and symbolic ties (Smith, 1991; Syed, Azmitia, & Phinney, 2007).

Ethnic identity has been variously defined as

- a complex and multidimensional construct that can encompass such factors as ethnic identity formation, ethnic identification, language, self-esteem, degree of ethnic consciousness, and the ethnic conscious, among others (Ruiz, 1990, p. 29).
- a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one’s identity. Or sense of self, in ethnic terms, that is in terms of a subgroup within a larger context that claims a common ancestry and shares one or more of the following elements: culture, race, religion, language, kinship, or place of origin (Phinney, 2000, p. 254).
- the sum total of group members’ feelings about those values, symbols, and common history that identify them as a distinct group. . . . (Smith, 1991, p. 182).
- an individual’s sense of self as a member of an ethnic group and the attitudes and behaviors associated with that sense (Phinney & Alipuria, 1987, p. 36).
- a clearly delineated self-definition, a self-definition comprised of those goals, values, and beliefs that the person finds personally expressive, and to which he or she is unequivocally committed (Waterman, 1985, p. 6).
- one’s sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one’s thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership (Rotheram & Phinney, 1987, p. 13).
- a form of self-conceptualization by a person which may be accepted or rejected by the social world around him. It may be forced on him by coercion and is of limited predictive value for his own ancestry or that of his descendants. It varies in meaning across persons and through history and is interchangeable with national identity (Bram, 1965, p. 242).
- the result of a dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, as well as the individual’s self-identification and outsiders’ ethnic designations—i.e., what you think your ethnicity is, versus what they think your ethnicity is. Since ethnicity changes situationally, the individual carries a portfolio of ethnic identities that are more or less salient in various situations and vis-à-vis various audiences (Nagel, 1994, p. 154) (emphasis in original).

As noted by the sample of definitions above and as pointed out by Phinney (1990, p. 500), the array of definitions used to label ethnicity and ethnic identity is somehow indicative of disagreements about the topic. To a certain extent, part of this multiplicity of definitions is due to the diversity of the research questions scholars seek to answer. In any case, the socially constructed and changing nature of ethnic identity calls attention to the relational linkages between the ego and others that evolve through time and space. Historically, the United States has witnessed structural changes in the social representation of ethnic groups, as was the case with Italians, Polish, and Irish populations in the United States, who moved from being considered as “ethnic others” to becoming paradigmatic cases of the assimilation process known as “the melting pot.” Indeed, much of the nativist attempts to marginalize and discriminate against newcomers in the nineteenth and early
twentieth centuries rested on the social construction of those immigrant groups as different from the white majority (Kraut, 1995).

Accordingly, ethnic identity can be seen both as a process and as an outcome (Brookins, 1996; Erikson, 1968; cf. Syed, 2007), a private and a social construction (Jenkins, 2003; Trimble, Helms, & Root, 2003), playing a critical role in the enactment of relationships, in conversation, and in the outcome of communication (Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts, 1989; Larkey & Hecht, 1995). Ethnic identity is believed to be critical to self-concept and psychological functioning (Gurin & Epps, 1975; Maldonando, 1975).

Evidence suggests that the process and outcome of ethnic identity development may vary across ethnic groups (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001), as well as gender (cf. Leaper & Friedman, 2006), socioeconomic status (Phinney 2001), and immigrant generational status (Phinney, 2003). For example, research findings indicate that the strength of ethnic identity decreases between first- and second-generation immigrants (Phinney, 2003). New sorts of ethnic identity are present among second- and third-generation immigrants. For example, among some inter-racial groups, a sense of ethnic belonging to the white majority may be prevalent. The joining of “broader” ethnic aggregates may also be the case, as in the case of descendants from immigrants from different Latin-American countries (whose primary allegiance is to the country of origin) who, once in the United States, may consider themselves as “Latinos,” a category that may be absent from the ethnic imaginary back in their countries of origin. An examination of all such variations and factors is beyond the scope of this chapter. We provide here an overview of various theories of racial/ethnic minority identity development, which are potentially relevant to the identity development of nonheterosexual-identified minority women.

The Development of Ethnic/Racial Identity

Race and ethnicity can serve as the basis for the development of group identity. In general, however, they have been approached from different methodological and theoretical perspectives (Phinney, 1996). This discussion encompasses both to the extent that similarities exist.

Various theories have been advanced in an attempt to understand and explain the development of ethnic identity at both individual and group levels. These include social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986); social construction theory (Nagel, 1994); and a number of stage theories, akin to ego development theory (Yeh & Huang, 1996).

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory views group identity as a critical component of self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and, accordingly, views ethnic identity as a form of group identity that is key to the self-concept of minority group members. The theory
further posits that individuals attribute value to the group in which they are members and derive their self-esteem from their feelings of membership within that group.

In some cases, however, a particular group may be subject to discrimination or negative stereotyping, resulting in low self-esteem (Hogg, Abrams, & Patel, 1987; Ullah, 1985). In such instances, it is asserted, ethnic group members will engage in reaffirmation and revitalization efforts in an attempt to assert a more positive image of their group (Tajfel, 1978), reinterpret those characteristics perceived as inferior so as to transform the associated negative perception into one that is more positive (Bourhis, Giles, & Tajfel, 1973), and/or emphasize the group’s distinct features (Hutnik, 1985). Individuals may also attempt to pass as members of the dominant ethnic group (Tajfel, 1978).

The Social Construction of Ethnic Identity

The constructionist perspective posits that ethnicity is socially constructed by individuals and groups through their negotiation, definition, and production of boundaries, identities, and culture (Nagel, 1994). As such, the content and boundaries of ethnicity are in continual flux in relation to context and are subject to redefinition and renegotiation by both members of the specific ethnic group and outsiders to that group.

This dynamic, fluid process occurs at both individual and group levels. Because ethnicity and ethnic identity may be determined or designated situationally, depending on the larger context or audience, individuals maintain a portfolio of ethnic identities. The individual’s choice of identity in any specific situation is dependent upon the utility of a particular identity with respect to the relevant political and social context and the audience. As an example, American Indians may choose to self-identify as members of a particular lineage, tribe, or region, or simply as Native American or American Indian (Cornell, 1988). Similarly, Latinos, Asian Pacific Islanders, and non-US-born Blacks may self-identify by national origin or may utilize the broader US census-defined designation, such as non-Hispanic Black (Gimenez, Lopez, & Munoz, 1992; Espiritu, 1992; Padilla, 1986; Waters, 1991).

As noted in ethnographic research, ethnic self-identification may change through individuals’ life spans following mobile social trajectories through new environments and geographies. For instance, in her work with Argentine immigrants in New York City, Viladrich (2005) examined the participants’ changing self-representations in terms of class, racial, and ethnic categories. Although many Argentines had considered themselves as members of the “white majority” in their country of origin, their self-perception changed in the United States, where they were more often labeled as members of the Latino minority, along with their perceived socioeconomic dislocation in mainstream America. And, just as ethnic identity changes, the content of the underlying culture to which an identity refers also changes, as it is reshaped and reinterpreted over time (Barth, 1969; Nagel, 1994).
Stage Theories

Table 1.1 provides an outline of various stage theories of ethnic/racial identity development. Each of these is discussed in greater detail below.

Atkinson et al. (1979) utilized a stage model to explain the developmental trajectory that an individual may undergo in developing an identity as a member of a minority group. Conformity, the first stage, was hypothesized as a period during which the individual is self-depreciating, minority group-depreciating, discriminatory toward members of other minority groups, and appreciative of the dominant racial/ethnic group. Dissonance, the second stage, reflects a growing internal conflict, characterized by both self- and group-depreciation and self- and minority

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<th>Source</th>
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<td>Cross (1971)</td>
<td>Pre-encounter encounter immersion-emersion internalization internalization-commitment</td>
<td>African Americans</td>
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<td>Gay (1985)</td>
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<td>Poston (1990)</td>
<td>personal identity choice of group categorization enmeshment/denial appreciation integration</td>
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group-appreciation. The individual may continue to hold the dominant views of the minority hierarchy, while also feeling that experiences are shared. During the third stage, known as resistance and immersion, the individual develops an appreciation of himself/herself and him/her minority group, as well as a feeling of empathy for other minority experiences. He/she may also develop a culturocentric perspective, while simultaneously holding a deprecatory view of the dominant group.

The fourth stage, introspection, reflects increased questioning. During this stage, the individual seeks to understand the basis of self-appreciation and becomes increasingly concerned with the unequivocal appreciation of the minority group, the ethnocentric basis from which others are judged, and the depreciation of the dominant group. The fifth stage, termed synergistic articulation and awareness, finds the individual self-appreciating, appreciative of her own minority group and other minority groups, and selectively appreciating the dominant racial/ethnic group. The individual is able to evaluate the cultural values and accept/reject them based on their merit and/or the individual’s own experiences. This model has been used as a basis for understanding Latino identity development and has been analogized to the identity development of Latino lesbians (Espín, 1987).

This hypothesized developmental trajectory is reflected in the musings of a lesbian woman who immigrated to the United States from Cuba. She reflected:

As a child my self-definition was not conscious, since there was no need for awareness of ethnic identity while I lived in Cuba. Coming to the United States instantly brought to my awareness at the age of 10 what being Latina meant in this country. I would say that the need to assert that identity was strengthened by the racism in the U.S. In my teens I passed through a period of acculturation in which to some extent I internalized society’s views of ethnic groups in a very subtle way. During college, I became active in political and community activities and went through a “militant” phase in which I came to understand the nature of racism and oppression more deeply. Presently, I consider myself to have a more universal or humanistic perspective and I am able to appreciate as well as critically analyze my cultural heritage (Quoted in Espín, 1987, p. 45).

Cross’ (1971) model similarly views identity development from the perspective of minority oppression by and resistance to a dominant culture, but has been applied specifically to Black racial identity development. Cross postulated that individuals progress through five distinct phases: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. The pre-encounter stage is marked by the dominance of Euro-American values, a denigration of Blackness and of self, and the assessment of success and achievement against what are seen as White values. During the encounter stage, the individual is confronted by an incident or event that causes him/her to think about his/her ethnicity and to rethink previously held beliefs and values. In essence, the encounter serves to dislodge “individuals from their pre-liberation, pre-encounter, pre-conceptual ‘ethnic innocence’”... (Gay, 1985, p. 40).

The events of the encounter stage propel the individual toward the third stage of immersion-emersion, during which he/she experiences the feelings of ambivalence,
anger, and depression, while alternating between the rejection and embracing of other Blacks. It has been proposed that the adoption during the 1960s and 1970s of Afro-American cultural symbols, such as African-inspired clothing and names, constituted an immersion at the group and individual levels (Gay, 1985). Emersion occurs as a transitional link to internalization as the individual seeks a more balanced perspective. The final stages of internalization and internalization-commitment are characterized by a transformation of identity, as inner conflicts are resolved and more generalized anger against non-Black groups is directed toward fighting oppression. These stages have been variously referred to by scholars as transcendence (Thomas, 1971) and ethnic clarification (Banks, 1981).

Gay (1985) has re-tooled the Cross model (1971), compressing it into three phases: pre-encounter, analogous to Cross’ pre-encounter stage; encounter, mirroring Cross’ second stage; and postencounter, encompassing Cross’ final three phases. Gay distinguished these developmental phases as follows:

Whereas the overriding human behaviors of the pre-encounter stage are characterized by non-questioning conformity to externally determined roles and identities, those of the encounter stage are characterized by feelings of emotional turmoil and psychological traumas, and the predominant behavioral motivations of the post-encounter stage are self-determined ethnic identities, ethnic objectivity and rationality, and a genuine acceptance of the right to be ethnically different (Gay, 1982, p. 74).

Ruiz (1990), like Cross, focused on the development of ethnic identity, as it relates to a specific minority group. Ruiz’ model of Latino ethnic identity development posits that individuals progress through five stages: causal, cognitive, consequence, working through, and successful resolution.

The first stage, causation, is characterized by messages that denigrate Latino culture and/or exalt the majority culture. Racism, ethnocentrism, and classism are implicit in these messages. During the subsequent cognitive stage, the individual is able to identify the erroneous beliefs that may have prevailed during the causation stage. As an example, this may include an erroneous belief that Latino ethnicity is inextricably linked to poverty and that total assimilation into the dominant culture represents the sole pathway to success. The third stage, consequence, reflects the individual’s increasing fragmentation, as he/she perceives various ethnic traits or traditions as inferior or embarrassing. During this stage, individuals may isolate from their own ethnic group and even assume an alternate ethnic identity.

Ruiz suggests that as the individual enters the fourth stage of identity development, that of “working through,” he/she experiences psychological distress. Through the exploration of relevant issues and reliance on a support system, the individual gradually de-assimilates, reconnects with his/her ethnic identity, and reintegrates those parts of himself/herself, which were discovered during earlier phases. The final stage of resolution finds the individual accepting of himself/herself and his/her ethnicity and culture (Ruiz, 1990).

Phinney (1989, 1996) has conceived of ethnic identity development as a process involving four phases. During the initial stage of diffusion, the individual has
engaged in little or no exploration of his/her ethnicity and has relatively little understanding of the salient issues. The stage of foreclosure is similarly characterized by relatively little exploration of ethnicity but, in contrast to the previous stage, the individual has greater clarity with respect to his/her own ethnicity. During this process, the individual may experience positive, negative, or neutral feelings toward other groups, depending on his/her previous experiences (Phinney, 1996). The third stage of moratorium reflects greater exploration, accompanied by confusion regarding the meaning of one’s own ethnicity, increased awareness of racism, and possibly some anger toward Whites (Phinney, 1989, 1996). The final stage of achieved ethnic identity signifies the development of a sense of clarity and group membership and a more realistic assessment of one’s own ethnic group.

Relatively few scholars have addressed biracial identity development. One such model is that of the Biracial Identity Development Model (Poston, 1990), consisting of five stages. The first stage, personal identity, is marked by children’s identification difficulties resulting from the internalization of prejudices and values. Individuals are consequently pressured during the second stage, choice of group categorization, to choose an identity of one ethnic group. That choice may be premised on one or more of various factors, such as the status or degree or nature of social support. As a result of having made this choice, however, individuals may experience guilt and confusion because the choice does not reflect the sum total of their identity. Poston terms this third stage of development “enmeshment/denial.” During the fourth stage, appreciation, individuals continue to identify with only one group but begin to develop an understanding of and appreciation for their multiple identities. The final stage of integration is characterized by a sense of integration and an appreciation of multiple identities.

In contrast to the many models that focus on the development of ethnic minority identity, whether applicable generally or to one ethnic group only, the Smith Ethnic Identity Development Model (Smith, 1991) examines ethnic identity development within the context of majority/minority status (for a discussion of majority, i.e., White, identity development, see Helms, 1990 and Rowe, Bennett, & Atkinson, 1994). This model consists of four phases: (1) preoccupation with self or the preservation of ethnic self-identity; (2) preoccupation with the ethnic conflict and with the salient ethnic outer boundary group; (3) resolution of ethnic conflict; and, ultimately, (4) integration. As Smith (1991, p. 183) explained, the model proposes that ethnic identity development is a lifelong process... Ethnic identity development is a process of differentiation and integration. One moves from a state of unawareness, from non-ethnic self-identification to ethnic self-identification, and from partial ethnic identifications to identity formation. Additionally, the process of ethnic identity development is affected by both contact and boundary-line drawing situations. . . .

Ethnic identity development is a continual process of boundary-line drawing, of deciding what individuals and what groups are included in one’s inner and outer boundary groups. . . . Broadening, narrowing, or crystallizing of ethnic boundaries is the basic process that directs one’s ethnic identity development.
An examination of the foregoing theories suggests commonality with respect to various themes. The initial stage of each model consists of the acceptance of majority group values and standards and, often, the denigration of one’s own ethnic/racial group. This initial stage is followed in almost all models by a period of exploration and clarification, often prompted by an encounter or conflict, culminating in the acceptance and integrations of one’s own ethnicity. With the exception of Marcia’s model, each of the foregoing models further presupposes that identity development is a progression through hierarchical stages, with each subsequent stage suggesting the successful achievement of the tasks of the preceding stages.

Unlike scholars who have conceived of minority ethnic identity development as a progressive movement through successive stages, Marcia (1966, 1980) postulated that ethnic minority individuals reflect one of four statuses: achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. Identity achievement reflects an individual’s exploration of and commitment to an identity. In contrast, the moratorium status is characterized by the exploration of an identity, but the absence of a commitment. Individuals with a foreclosed status have ceased their exploratory process, while those with diffused status have been unable to reconsolidate the ego. Accordingly, each status is characterized by the presence or absence of a period of exploration and the presence or absence of a commitment to ego identity consolidation (St. Louis & Liem, 2005). This conceptualization of individuals as having statuses may be integrated with stage theories if one assumes that the individuals attain a particular status as they pass through successive stages. As an example, Ruiz’ final stage of resolution may reflect the individual’s attainment of Marcia’s achievement.

The model of bicultural competence developed by LaFramboise, Coleman, & Gerton (1993) suggests the skills that comprise an integrated or achieved identity and that may be critical to one’s effective functioning within two cultures without a loss of competence in or denigration of either. The acquisition of these six competencies occurs in a hierarchical manner: views of both groups’ knowledge of the cultural beliefs and values of both groups; development of a belief in one’s own efficacy; ability to communicate within both groups, a role repertoire appropriate for and within each group; and establishment of a social support system within each group.

**Barriers to Successful Identity Integration**

Significant potential barriers exist to the successful integration of ethnic minority identity. These occur at the individual, familial, and systemic levels. The inability and/or unwillingness of parents to address racial/ethnic issues with their children may present a barrier to successful ethnic identity integration (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). As a result, the individuals may have no or limited access to role models who have been able to integrate ethnic identity successfully (Semaj, 1985; Spencer, 1983; cf. Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990).
The “melting pot” perspective of assimilation has been identified as a major barrier to successful social integration (Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974). It has been suggested that this approach views the amalgamation of ethnic identities and the obliteration of individually identifiable groups as the ideal. The enactment of this perspective within the larger society may create conflict between the values presented at home and in the family, and those confronted in external spheres of daily living, such as the educational system and the workplace. Indeed, this perspective belies the reality of minority group members who may confront reminders of different-ness on a daily basis.

The imposition of societally stereotyped identities may also present a barrier. As an example, American Indian children raised in non-Indian environments may initially identify with European-American White culture (Westermeyer, 1979). As they become increasingly aware of discrimination, they may reject the dominant culture, but are unable to replace it with an American Indian identity, other than the external signs of Indian-ness, resulting in significant identity confusion. Similar difficulties have been noted among Latinos, Asians, and African Americans (Means, 1980). Nonheterosexually identified members of minority groups may face heightened difficulties as a result of their nonconformity with role expectations within their ethnic communities (Loiacano, 1989). Indeed, ethnic minority communities may even deny the existence of its nonheterosexual members, believing that same-sex orientation is a White phenomenon (Chan, 1989). Chapter 2, which follows, addresses models of sexual identity development and sexual identity in the context of intersecting identities.

Notes

1. The concept of ethnic identity has been used synonymously with that of acculturation, but the constructs are distinguishable. It is beyond the scope of this text to address the vast literature relating to this concept. It may be helpful to the reader, nevertheless, to have an initial understanding of the difference between the concepts of ethnic identity and acculturation. Acculturation has been defined as

   cultural change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems . . . Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, the process of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences and the operation of role determinants and personality factors (Social Science Research Council, 1954, p. 974).

   As such, ethnic identity represents one component part of acculturation.

   The process of acculturation has been described as a linear progression beginning with strong affinity to one’s ethnic group culture, with relatively weak ties to the dominant culture, and culminating in weak ties to one’s ethnic group culture and relatively stronger ties to the dominant culture (Andujo, 1988; Ullah, 1985). More recently, scholars have conceived of acculturation as a two-dimensional process, through which members of minority groups may maintain stronger or weaker ties either with their ethnic group culture and/or with their dominant culture, resulting in four possible outcomes: (1) assimilation: strong ties to the dominant culture and weak ties to one’s own ethnic group culture; (2) separation/dissociation: weak ties to the dominant culture and
strong ties to one’s ethnic group culture; (3) integration/biculturalism: strong ties to both dominant culture and one’s ethnic group culture; and (4) marginalization: weak ties to both dominant culture and one’s ethnic group culture (Berry, Trimble, & Olmedo, 1986).

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