WHAT ARE YOU? COUNSELING BIRACIAL/MULTIRACIAL CHILDREN

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Explore bias and awareness of interracial marriage and biracial/multiracial children.
Knowledge of historical implications and racial identity development of biracial/multiracial children.
Provide skills & activities that can be broadly used in counseling to address racial and ethnic identity.
Ethnicity – belonging to a group that shares characteristics such as language, religion, culture, country of origin

Culture – language, customs, traditions, rituals and beliefs, dress, art, music

Race – social construct that categorizes humans by heritable characteristics, refers to physical characteristics such as skin color, hair, facial features.

Multiracial – biological parents are from different racial groups.
Census (2000) - Almost 7 million Americans identified with more than one race
1 in 19 children born today are of mixed race. CA & WA are close to 1 in 10. (Newsweek, May 8, 2000).
Interracial marriages 1 in 12 according to Pew Research Center
Biracial/multiracial children are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the U.S.

Pew Research Center
1. Biracial/multiracial children are ____________.
2. Interracial marriages are ____________________.
3. A problem biracial children have is ________.
4. People who marry someone of a different race _________________.
5. People who agree with interracial marriage are _________________.
6. People who disagree with interracial marriage are _______________.

(Do this on your own, you do not have to share your answers, this is a self-reflective exercise)
**MY BOX** ACTIVITY - PICK ONE

Adapted from My People Are...Youth Pride in Mixed Heritage Film and Action Booklet. [WWW.MULTIETHNICEDUCATION.ORG](http://WWW.MULTIETHNICEDUCATION.ORG)

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<td>College Student</td>
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WHICH CHILD IS BIRACIAL?
CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE BIRACIAL/MULTIRACIAL PEOPLE IN THIS PICTURE?
AWARENESS GAME: WHAT ARE YOU?

#1

#2
WHAT ARE YOU?

#3

#4
WHAT ARE YOU?

#5

#6
School Counselors must do the following (Wehrly, 1999):

- Know the groups that make up the biracial student’s heritage
- Have an awareness of the sociopolitical history between the ethnic groups
- Understand how history plays a role in current interactions between both groups
- Aware of strengths, issues, and challenges of biracial students (Kenney, 2002)
KNOWLEDGE QUIZ: DO YOU KNOW?

- What is Loving v Virginia?
- What is the “one drop rule”?
- What are the stages of biracial identity development?
- What are the racial group categories on the U.S. Census?
Loving v Virginia (1967) - legalized interracial marriage (Last state - South Carolina in 1998)

“one drop rule”

US Census (2000) - allowed to choose more than one racial category - 5 categories (American Indian or Alaska Native, Black, White, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander)
Race Is Defined by Society

We all tend to place people into groups...

If race is not about biology, then where does racial identity come from? It starts with our natural tendency to classify things—including people—into easily understood groups. But in the case of race, these groups are social, not genetic. They have meaning because society gives them meaning.

... But these groups can change over time

As society has changed, so have our racial categories. Look at the races listed on the 1890 census form. How do these categories compare to the races we identify today?
"Tragic mulatto" myth which suggests that biracial children are misfits in society because they are denied privileges reserved for Whites because of their Black ancestry (Kareem, 2009).

According to MSNBC.com, Bardwell said, "I don't do interracial marriages because I don't want to put children in a situation they didn't bring on themselves. In my heart, I feel the children will later suffer."

Bardwell also commented that he feels neither Blacks nor Whites accept the children produced by interracial unions.
1994 high school prom in Alabama

Principal at Randolph County High School called an assembly of seniors and juniors. Racial makeup of school: 62% White and 38% Black.

Asked if anyone was planning to attend the prom “with someone who was not of the same race.”

He threatened to cancel the event when several students responded yes to his question.

The junior class president, ReVonda Bowen, whose father is White and mother is Black, asked the principal what his order meant for her. The principal allegedly told her that her parents had made a “mistake” and that he wanted to prevent others from making the same mistake.

MEDIA’S PERSPECTIVE OF INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Movies:
- Jungle Fever
- Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner
- Save the Last Dance
- Made in America
- Carbon Copy

New Spiderman Identity: Black and Latino

New Documentary:
- The Loving Story (HBO)
Unexamined or diffused identity - lack of exploration, disinterest in ethnicity (ethnicity given little thought)

Foreclosed identity - made a commitment without exploration, take on attitude of parents (risk of accepting stereotypes)

Moratorium - exploration without a commitment (emotional experiences common as discover culture differences)

Achieved identity - exploration with commitment to ethnic identity (sense of pride, belonging, and confidence)
**BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

Poston (1990)
- Personal Identity (self-esteem focused)
- Choice of Group Categorization (pressure to select identity)
- Enmeshment/Denial (reject/deny one parent's racial identity)
- Appreciation (learn both heritages)
- Integration (integrates all parts of race/ethnicity and secure in multiracial identity)

Kerwin & Penterotto (1995)
- Preschool (recognize differences)
- Early School (questions)
- Preadolescence (sensitive to racial differences)
- Adolescence (choose group/dating dilemma)
- College/Young Adulthood (identifies with 1 group but appreciates biracial background)
- Adulthood (integrates multiple identities into self)
EXAMPLES OF VARIOUS STAGES

- “Mommy, our family is kind of different. Daddy is brown, you are orange, and I’m orange.” - What stage?
- “My Mom left when I was 5 years old and I grew up around all White people, so I see myself as White. I don’t identify at all as Asian.” - What stage?
- “I’m not Black enough. I’m not White enough. I just can’t figure out where I fit in.” - What stage?
- “I’m both and I think it is pretty cool to have family from two different racial groups. I’m proud of who I am and where both sides of my family are from.” - What stage?
Multiple Multi-Racial Identities - Which One is Best?

- Single race identity (Black, White, Asian, etc.)
- Border Identity (either validated or unvalidated) - view self as Biracial
- Protean Identity - on the fence, change between racial identity depending on situation
- Transcendent Identity - “human”, “American”

(Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002)
My People Are...Youth Pride in Mixed Heritage (video) from multiethniceducation.org
STRENGTHS

- “Chameleon effect” - adaptability, able to adapt to different cultural situations
- Acceptance of others/understanding of various cultures
- Creative, think outside the box.
- Facilitate positive identity development (including racial identity development)
- Promote positive peer relationships
- Provide a supportive and accepting environment that fosters respect for all students (including biracial students)

(Lee, 2001; Morrison & Rodgers, 1996; Schwartz, 1998; Wardle, 1992)
What are the presenting problems of biracial students in your counseling program?

Findings of presenting problems:
- Belonging/Acceptance/Uniqueness
- Color/Appearance
- Family Separation/Divorce
- Dating and Peer Relationships
Q1B BElonging/ACCEPTance/Uniqueness

“We have a student, a little girl, who the other kids in class were saying you are not Black, you are not White, well then what are you then? The Black kids were telling her she wasn’t Black, the White kids were telling her she wasn’t White. So she wasn’t sure what she was and how she fit in.”

“I grew up with one of my good friends who is biracial and the Black part of his family would tell him he is Black and the White part of his family would tell him he is White. No one would let him be biracial...So in some cases it’s their families forcing them to choose.”
“He just wanted to be like the other kids in class. He felt different. He felt unique in a negative way; he didn’t want to be that.”

“When they are little, unique is neat to be, but as they get older that probably isn’t a word they want to hear themselves described by. They want to be like everyone else.”
Being and Belonging

Through the centuries, people whose lives cross racial lines have found difficulty in gaining full acceptance from the society in which they live. This situation has often been true for African-Native American people, because their blended identities challenge the rules of race and racial categorization.
“I think a lot of times when things are new to us we don’t really see them for how big they are and how impactful they are to the student. And this student was trying to help me understand, he was very upset with a teacher who didn’t recognize the fact that he was biracial. And that was just very upsetting.”

The counselor shared that the biracial student “wanted to be White. She wanted to be like a lot of the other White girls she saw around and her parents didn’t know how to deal with that situation.”
“He didn’t like his brown skin. He wished God would change it.”

“The other day this girl said, I’m with my mom in the airport and they kept asking for my passport because she was with the parent that she looks the least alike and it was difficult for her.”
“I think you are going to find more issues with families that were biracial that have a biracial child and divorce and remarry and have children who are not biracial.”

“Divorce is particularly difficult because if they are with the parent that they least resemble in terms of color they feel they don’t have the identity to the other part of their family where I physically look the most alike.”
“I think the middle school cafeteria is the most interesting place when you look at sixth grade lunch, seventh grade, and then you look at eighth grade. And you look at who is sitting together in sixth grade, now all of a sudden it’s the summer between sixth and seventh grade, all of a sudden it’s a racial thing or color thing. They threw aside the similarities they had and what they had in common.”
One participant mentioned that the question of “Well, who do I date?” becomes an issue to resolve.

“All students deal with name calling but sometimes race is the thing that stands out for biracial students.”
What issues are challenging for you when working with biracial students?

Findings of challenges:
- Difficulty Identifying Biracial Students
- Biases/Values/Ethics
- Parents/Family
- Society Acceptance and Media
“I don’t even know concretely who is biracial and who is not. So when kids are coming to me, until I see both parents I have no clue that this student is one or the other unless there is a stereotypical obvious thing there.”

“What I think makes it so difficult is it just doesn’t stand out to you anymore. I think the real challenge is really knowing who they are and how the families themselves are embracing it. I usually say ‘Do you recognize anybody in this office that you are supposed to be going with?’ because I don’t know anymore.”
“Three years ago I had a student that came in. She came in with another child and she said she felt the teacher was prejudiced. I said, ‘Tell me about that, in what way, what do you mean?’ She was a Black kid and I said to the other girl, ‘Oh you are here for support? And she goes, ‘No, I’m Black.’ I’m sure my face dropped. I had no idea that she was biracial. I never would have picked that up, so realize too how it is not always apparent.”
In groups,
List as many terms you can that refer to people with biracial/multiracial backgrounds

Using acceptable labels = child has greater sense of self and personal identity (Morrison, 2001).
PART TWO

- Categorize the terms as acceptable or not acceptable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptable Terms:</th>
<th>Not Acceptable Terms:</th>
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TERMS OF ENDEARMENT OR ENDANGERMENT?

OREO

Mixed

Quadroon

Heinz 57

MULATTO

Mutt

Bumble Bee

Rice Cracker

Blackanese

ZEBRA

TWINKIE

Chexmex

BANANA

HALF-BREED
Students typically identified themselves as “mixed” and could identify both ethnic background as well as racial categories within family.

Students and adults make assumptions based on skin color.

Students mentioned the variety of color based on the season (light in winter, darker in summer)

People challenge them when they identify as a race that others do not “see”.
One identifies as Black or White depending on the situation and who they are talking to.

One experienced teacher’s reaction at an awards assembly when Dad was there. She noticed the reaction of teachers as if they were shocked that he was her Dad. Dad is African-American and Mom is White, her skin is pale.

Children interviewed with lighter skin said a lot of people assume they are Hispanic or Spanish.
Some viewed racial teasing as playful. 
Family culture is different - foods they prepare - all agreed to this
Aware of both racial and ethnic background -
13-year-old girl: Black, White, French, German, Welch
13-year-old girl: German, Irish, Native American, African American
13-year-old girl: Black and White
13 year old boy, Irish and Korean...calls himself “Coffee Cream” or “Half and Half”

People have told him he is a “weird mix” and joked with him about being Jackie Chan but it didn’t seem to bother him.

Misidentified as “Native American” and doesn’t understand why people view him that way.

Dealt with some teasing about his mom being a prostitute because of movies that stereotype Asian women - this does bother him a lot.
13-year-old boy with German, Irish, Cherokee, and Blackfoot Indian background
Identifies as “mixed” but others see him as only White which is upsetting to him.
Doesn’t like racial categories, feels it perpetuates racism - likes us to be seen as a whole group
Wants to learn more about his Native American heritage and plans to research it.
Dad has been instrumental in supporting his exploration of his identity.
What techniques and strategies have you found to be helpful when counseling biracial students?

Findings of Techniques/Strategies:

- Bibliotherapy
- Use of Art
- Student as Expert (solution focused)
- Family Involvement
- Self-awareness Activities
- Accepting Environment
- Empathy/Validating Feelings (person centered)
- Strengths-based approach (solution focused)
Small group counseling

Mentoring programs that include biracial role-models

Communicate acceptance through curriculum, school environments, use of multi-skin color art materials, “mix-up” people figurines, and posters that include biracial children and interracial families.
Counseling Techniques

- Bibliotherapy, use theme of commonalities rather than focus only on differences in classroom guidance and school-wide activities
- Self-awareness activities (Identity collages, autobiography, self-portrait, interest inventories, narrative therapy)
- Family involvement through school activities (family tree project, family collage, multicultural nights, book club for parents, family homework assignments when counseling biracial students)
PUTTING THEORY AND RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

Practical Ideas to implement into your comprehensive school counseling program
Standard A: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

**PS:A1 Acquire Self-knowledge**
- PS:A1.1 Develop positive attitudes toward self as a unique and worthy person
- PS:A1.2 Identify values, attitudes, and beliefs
- PS:A1.10 Identify personal strengths and assets

**PS:A2 Acquire Interpersonal Skills**
- PS:A2.3 Recognize, accept, respect and appreciate individual differences
- PS:A2.4 Recognize, accept and appreciate ethnic and cultural diversity
- PS:B1.7 Demonstrate a respect and appreciation for individual and cultural differences
External Support: Caring school climate
- School provides a caring, encouraging environment

Internal Positive Identity
- Self-esteem - Young person reports having a high self-esteem
- Positive view of personal future - Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.
Racial/Ethnic Exploration Groups

- **Session 1: Introductions/Expectations**
- **Session 2 & 3: Exploring race and ethnicity: What does that mean to you?**
- **Session 4: Stereotypes/Perceptions**
- **Session 5: Bill of Rights for People of Mixed Race Heritage (Reactions/Experiences)**
- **Session 6: Coping with the questions: What are you? Is that your Dad? Etc.**
- **Session 7: Belonging & Relationships**
- **Session 8: Group Wrap-up**
SESSION 1:
INTRODUCTIONS/EXPECTATIONS
Multi-color tumbling tower game needed for this activity.

Identify question categories based on color: red, blue, yellow

Red: Share something you are good at (strength)

Blue: Share something about your family

Yellow: Share a goal/dream
Provide template for each child and provide directions on creating the mini-me.

Provide multi-shades of colors of felt, yarn, etc. for them to create their mini-me.

After they have created their mini-me, have them discuss the following:
- Describe the outward appearance
- Describe likes, dislikes, similarities and differences from others.

* Adapted from lesson created by Mrs. Kris Helverson.
Directions: In each point of the star, list a word or phrase that answers the question, “Who Are You?”

This can also be used as a classroom guidance activity and possibly used for a bulletin board

“ We Are Superstars”
IDENTITY & STRENGTHS WORDLE (WORDLE.NET)
SESSION 2 & 3: EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

diversity
Amy Hodgepodge All Mixed Up! By Kim Wayans and Kevin Knotts
Trevor’s Story By Bethany Kandel
Black, White, Just Right! By Marguerite W. Davol
The Skin You Live In by Michael Tyler
Barack by Jonah Winter
Blended Nation: Portraits and Interviews of Mixed Race America
Listen to Christina Aguilera’s song “My Reflection”

Look at me
You may think you see
Who I really am
But you'll never know me
Every day, is as if I play a part
Now I see
If I wear a mask
I can fool the world
But I can not fool
My heart

Who is that girl I see
Staring straight back at me?
When will my reflection show
Who I am inside?

I am now
In a world where I have to
Hide my heart
And what I believe in

But somehow
I will show the world
What's inside my heart
And be loved for who I am

Who is that girl I see
Staring straight back at me?

Why is my reflection
Someone I don't know?

Must I pretend that I am
Someone else for all time?
FAMILY TREE OR GENOGRAM

Mom
- sensitive
- runner

Dad
- energetic
- Likes to play video games

Jayden
- Likes to laugh
- Likes to play
Looking at your family portrait collage, answer the following questions.

- How would you describe your family?
- How would you describe the race and ethnicity of members within your family?
- What are some characteristics/qualities of your family?
Directions: This is a family homework assignment that should be completed and returned for the next counseling session. Students/clients will race to see how much they can learn about each others families.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mom’s heritage</th>
<th>Holidays we celebrate</th>
<th>Dad’s heritage</th>
<th>A family value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Foods my family enjoys</td>
<td>Books/stories we have read</td>
<td>Activities my family enjoys</td>
<td>Music we listen to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicknames my family has given me</td>
<td>How my family communicates</td>
<td>A tradition we have</td>
<td>A personal value</td>
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Students/clients create a journal or autobiography, or use creative writing where students/clients create a character to represent themselves and write about a true event they have experienced.

Clients could also create a video to capture their “real world” as well.

This activity could be used as a follow-up to reading of Trevor’s Story.
What is your story?

Externalize the problem from the child

How does the story impact them?

Re-author the story with identified strengths that will help them deal with the problem and overcome the problem

Considers influence of society and culture - how the world sees them
SESSION 4:
STEREOTYPES/PERCEPTIONS
Goal of session: challenge stereotypes

Share various advertisements and have students/clients discuss the messages (try to find advertisements that stereotype genders, races, ethnic groups, etc.)

Discuss how people are influenced by messages from society and media.

Have the child create a new advertisement that challenges society’s message, challenges the stereotype.
Movie clips:
- Save the Last Dance
- The Loving Story
- Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner (new and original versions)

Music:
Half Breed by Cher
SESSION 5: BILL OF RIGHTS FOR PEOPLE OF MIXED HERITAGE

I HAVE THE RIGHT...
Not to justify my existence in this world.
Not to keep the races separate within me.
Not to justify my ethnic legitimacy.
Not to be responsible for people’s discomfort with my physical or ethnic ambiguity.

I HAVE THE RIGHT...
To identify myself differently than strangers expect me to identify.
To identify myself differently than how my parents identify me.
To identify myself differently than my brothers and sisters.
To identify myself differently in different situations.

I HAVE THE RIGHT...
To create a vocabulary to communicate about being multiracial or multiethnic.
To change my identity over my lifetime—and more than once.
To have loyalties and identification with more than one group of people.
To freely choose whom I befriend and love.

© Maria P. P. Root, PhD, 1993, 1994
SESSION 6: COPING WITH QUESTIONS & IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS

- What are you?
- Is that your Mom? Dad?
- Bibliotherapy
- Movie clips
- Narrative therapy
- Solution focused brief therapy
SESSION 7: BELONGING & RELATIONSHIPS
Purpose: Identify multiracial role models
Select various famous multiracial individuals and have students take turns giving clues/guessing.

Examples:
Alicia Keys
Barack Obama
Mariah Carey
Booker T. Washington
Vin Diesel
Derek Jeter
Soledad O’Brien
Frederick Douglas
Selena Gomez
Jordin Sparks
Adapting to different situations
Have you ever had to act different to fit into a certain group?
What was that experience like for you?
How do you handle those situations now?
How is the ability to adapt to different situations helpful?
- Materials: Blank puzzle pieces, Sharpie markers in different colors
- Have students identify the groups they belong to (clubs, racial groups, gender groups, sports, etc.)
- As the group shares their completed puzzles, discuss the term “fitting in” and what that means to them. How do they decide which groups to join? How does it feel to belong? Have they ever felt left out of a group?
- Validate feelings and point out common themes from their answers
--- Variation: Have group complete a puzzle with one piece from a non-matching puzzle and once they discover this piece doesn’t fit, discuss what that feels like to not fit in to the rest of the group and explore feelings related to those experiences.
How do you connect with other people?
What traits/characteristics link people together? (commonalities)
Have you ever tried to connect with a person or a group and it didn’t work out? How did you handle that?
What strengths/characteristics do you have that help you connect with others...write each word on a link to a paper chain and then connect all of the students words together to form a group chain.
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

http://www.wwnorton.com/college/psych/psychci/media/rosenberg.htm

Qualitative Data:
What did you learn/discover about yourself during this group?
What did you learn about your race/ethnicity?
What personal strengths did you discover?
How do you feel about racial and ethnic diversity?
CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

Immediate Family

Extended Family

Peers

Role Models

School Staff
Create displays of projects/discoveries during their time in group.

Create a museum and invite parents to view the displays.

Alternative: For older students, have them create a documentary or presentation and have “screening”.
School climate communicate acceptance - include multiracial history in curriculum, celebrate Loving Day with activities on accepting/appreciating racial/ethnic diversity, display posters and provide reading materials that illustrate multiracial families.

Schools have followed the direction of U.S. Census (2000) in allowing students to identify as more than one race - success!

Still battling injustice in society - recent comments by Montana judge regarding President Obama, not everyone agrees with interracial marriage and this can impact children from these marriages.
It is important to note that although certain unique concerns related to biracial students have been found, school counselors stated that not all biracial students have these problems or are any less well-adjusted than their monoracial peers.
“We’re not all cut from the same mold. We may all be kahnawa’kehronon, but we’re all individuals. We all have our own approaches, attitudes, and characters.”

~JOSEPH TOKWIRO NORTON, 2003
REFERENCES

REFERENCES

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