



Contents lists available at SciVerse ScienceDirect

Advances in Life Course Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/alcr



Review

Racial identification and developmental outcomes among Black–White multiracial youth: A review from a life course perspective

Annamaria Csizmadia ^{a,*}, David L. Brunσμα ^b, Teresa M. Cooney ^c

^a Department of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Connecticut, United States

^b Department of Sociology, Virginia Tech, United States

^c Department of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Missouri, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 14 March 2011

Received in revised form 26 September 2011

Accepted 27 October 2011

Keywords:

Multiracial
Racial identity
Racial socialization
Adolescence
Life course
Development

ABSTRACT

This selective review of the literature utilizes core life course principles to enhance current understanding of the complex relations between structural constraints, social contextual influences, and racial identification, and their implications for Black–White multiracial youth's developmental pathways. We assert that weakening structural constraints permit overall higher levels of human agency in contemporary multiracial youth's racial identification. We also argue that the social context within which these youth are embedded affords varying levels of human agency. Multiracial youth negotiate their racial identity in response to these micro-level social constraints. Finally, to understand the diversity of developmental pathways among contemporary multiracial youth, scholars must consider the dynamic interplay between macro- and micro-level constraints and racial identification. Research on multiracial youth's racial identity formation and psychosocial adjustment has the potential to inform efforts to promote resilience in this growing population. Mixed-method and longitudinal studies should examine multiple levels of developmental contexts, racial identification, and their joint effects on Black–White multiracial youth's psychosocial development over the life course. Scholars must also carefully attend to race measurement as it relates to sampling bias in studies of youth of color.

© 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Contents

1. The life course perspective	35
2. Relations between structural constraints and human agency in multiracial youth's racial identification.	35
3. Relations between social context and multiracial youth's human agency in racial identification.	37
3.1. Geographic region	37
3.2. Neighborhood	37
3.3. Family	38
3.4. Phenotype in social context	39
4. Understanding multiracial youth's heterogeneous development: The dynamic interplay of macro-and micro-level constraints and racial identification	40
5. Conclusions	41
Acknowledgements	43
References	43

* Corresponding author at: Department of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Connecticut, One University Place, Stamford, CT 06901, United States. Tel.: +1 203 251 9586; fax: +1 203 251 9534.

E-mail address: annamaria.csizmadia@uconn.edu (A. Csizmadia).

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, multiracial people represented one of the fastest growing racial groups of the last decade. About 92% of this group identified with exactly two races. The largest multiple-race combination was Black and White (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). These statistics underscore the importance of enhancing current understanding of Black–White multiracial youth's development. Although research on multiracial youth has increased in the last decade, it has mostly focused on personal and contextual predictors of racial identification, and to a lesser extent, on the psychosocial implications of racial identification. Multiracial youth's development must be examined within the context of the racialized history and shifting racial stratification system of the U.S. (Bonilla-Silva, 1996, 2004; Rockquemore, Brunson, & Delgado, 2009). We aim to highlight the utility of the life course perspective (LCP) for deepening our understanding of how racial identification affects multiracial youth's psychosocial adjustment. The LCP emphasizes the reciprocal influences between socio-cultural and structural forces and agency in human lives (Elder, 1994).

Informed by the LCP, we make the following assertions about contemporary Black–White multiracial youth's development. First, weakening structural constraints on multiracial identification enable youth to exercise greater human agency in their racial identification. Second, situational variation in their racial identification suggests that the social context within which youth are embedded affords them differing levels of human agency and that youth negotiate their racial identity in response to these shifting micro-level contextual constraints. Finally, to understand contemporary multiracial youth's heterogeneous developmental pathways, research must investigate their adjustment in consideration of the dynamic relationship between macro-level structural constraints, micro-level social contextual constraints, and resultant racial identities.

First, we discuss how weakening structural constraints contribute to heightened human agency in contemporary multiracial youth's racial identification. Next, we examine geographic region, neighborhood, and family contexts in which multiracial youth are embedded. We then explore how multiracial youth negotiate their racial identification in response to the varying levels of constraints that these micro-level social environments present. Subsequently, we expound on multiracial youth's diverse developmental pathways by relating them to youths' racial identification in the context of structural and social influences. We conclude the paper by summarizing limitations of the literature and recommending directions for future research.

In this review, we focus on first-generation Black–White multiracial youth (i.e., youth who have one Black-identifying and one White-identifying biological parent; Daniel, 2002). We recognize that some question the idea of a first-generation Black–White multiracial for we are all multiracial (e.g., Spencer, 2005). Despite this, we consider the offspring of those individuals who hold self-understandings as “Black” and “White” to be multiracial. Unless otherwise noted, we use “multiracial” to refer to Black–White multiracial youth.

1. The life course perspective

Scholars have drawn attention to the developmental implications of context for adolescents (e.g., Brown, 2005) and particularly racial/ethnic minority (García Coll & Pachter, 2002) and multiracial youth (Rockquemore et al., 2009). Most life course researchers focus on the patterning of lives as individuals move through age-graded social roles (e.g., student to worker) and statuses across life domains, and on the developmental implications of these transitions. Other researchers focus on the socially constructed nature of the life course itself—interested in the subjective meanings of life changes and, how people interpret a notion like “life course” and use such interpretive frameworks to make sense of their experiences (Holstein & Gubrium, 2007). In this review, we link the study of racial identification and psychosocial adjustment of multiracial youth to the life course principles of historical time, human agency, and linked lives (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003). It is critical to examine the psychosocial implications of multiracial youth's racial identification because the consequences and meaning of their selected racial identity may differ across contexts.

2. Relations between structural constraints and human agency in multiracial youth's racial identification

Historical forces and social conditions (e.g., institutional structures, economic conditions, and race relations) have a major impact on how one's life course takes shape, and subsequently affect individual behavior and development (Elder, 1998b). Members of distinct cohorts are born into and live out their lives under varying socio-historical conditions. Historical time also impacts how age-graded life events are actualized, in part through the level of human agency it allows. Although development is influenced by existing social structures and conditions, individuals may still exercise some human agency, making choices and taking action regardless of their circumstances. There is an inverse association between contextual constraints and individual agency (Elder, 1998a).

Period changes in legal and social restrictions on racial identification influence racial identity formation for multiracial youth. Historically, policies circumscribed multiracial individuals' identity within a monoracially fixated racial classification system. Specifically, any child born to an interracial couple was considered to be part of the minority parent's racial group, a practice known as the rule of hypodescent (literally, descending to the lower status) and alternatively referred to as the one-drop rule (Davis, 1991). Under this rule, children of Black and White parents were automatically classified as Black. Removal of such structural barriers affords increased human agency for contemporary multiracial youth. For instance, in the 2000 U.S. Census, respondents were allowed for the first time to mark multiple racial categories. In that year, of the 12 recognized multiracial subgroups, Black–White individuals were the fourth largest (Jones, 2005). To examine period and cohort effects on multiracial youth's racial identification, researchers should employ longitudinal research designs. We recognize the challenge inherent in

Forbidden

You don't have permission to access this resource.

Apache/2.4.25 (Debian) Server at daneshyari.com Port 443