CHAPTER 17

An Inquiry into the Measurement of Ethnic and Racial Identity

Joseph E. Trimble

For there are nearly as many ways in which such identities, fleeting or enduring, sweeping or intimate, cosmopolitan or closed-in, amiable or bloody-minded, are put together as there are materials with which to put them together and reasons for doing so... answers people sometimes give to the question, whether self-asked or asked by others, as to who (or, perhaps, more exactly, what) they are—simply do not form an orderly structure.

—Clifford Geertz (2000, p. 225)

The words of the distinguished cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz set the tone and framework for the central theme of this chapter: The assessment and measurement of racial and ethnic identity is complicated and filled with many problems, owing in part to the fact that human beings have multiple, intertwined identities that influence one another in ways that are not fully understood. Multiple identities come in many forms. No one is a member solely of a distinct racial or ethnic group, just as no one is solely a man or a woman. All persons are members of particular age groups and have particular sexual orientations. They may have disabilities. In addition, they may follow vocations that provide them with unique role identities. The enactment and nature of an individual's multiple identities can be influenced by an individual's lifeways and thoughtways, which may be at variance with conventional expectations and proscriptions. A person's multiple identities, as well as the sociocultural contexts in which these identities are enacted, must be factored into the measurement of an identity construct. However, as we will see, most of the research on the measurement of identity has been limited to the abstraction of race and ethnicity at a social and psychological level of analysis; other dimensions of identity are given less attention in the psychological literature.

In the past 20 years or so, considerable attention has been devoted to the measurement of ethnic and racial identity, although interest in the field extends back as far as the late 1930s, with the seminal work of Eugene and Ruth Horowitz (R. Horowitz, 1939; E. L. Horowitz & Horowitz, 1938). For the past hundred years or so, according to the citations found in the PsycINFO electronic database, slightly
more than 4,623 articles have been written on ethnic and racial identity and related constructs; over 80% of them have been published since 1980. During the same period, close to 237 articles have been devoted to the measurement of racial and ethnic identity; this represents about 5% of the total articles devoted to the two constructs. Most of the articles are devoted to discussions about the constructs’ meanings, uses, and implications in a variety of political, social, and psychological arenas of discourse and practice; few appear to be devoted to the actual social and psychological assessment of the constructs. Nonetheless, the accelerated interest in the field suggests that we must stop and take stock of the field’s progress and its future directions. The growth in the field and the attendant methodological and procedural problems and theoretical debates point to the need for an inquiry in the measurement of these elusive constructs. To accomplish this goal, this chapter first provides a brief overview of the two constructs, including disparate and conflicting views on their relevance. Following this, attention is given to a review and summary of selected and representative measures currently in use and the theories underlying their development; a discussion of the measures is organized according to the level of measurement sophistication and precision employed by their developers. The last section of the chapter deals with selected measurement and methodological problems and issues associated with the conduct of research with distinct ethnocultural populations that are currently being voiced by theoreticians and researchers.

THOUGHTS ON THE ORIGINS OF IDENTITY AND RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY CONSTRUCTS

The term identity has Latin origins and is derived from the word identitas; the word is formed from idem, meaning “same.” Thus, the term is used to express the notion of sameness, likeness, and oneness. More precisely, identity means “the sameness of a person or thing at all times in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else” (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 620). The psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (1968) undoubtedly has contributed to the ongoing debate in psychology and psychiatry about identity and its development and formation. According to Erikson, identity is located in the self or core of the individual and his or her communal culture; self-esteem and one’s sense of affiliation and belongingness are deeply affected by the process. Furthermore, Erikson argued that identity is inextricably linked to self-understanding and therefore can be posited “as the academic metaphor for self-in-context” (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. ix). Erikson also maintained that the transformations from childhood through adolescence presented role clarification challenges that often created identity confusion. The confusion often emerged from interactions with peers and the context and situations youth face on a daily basis. Without a context, identity formation and self-development couldn’t occur. Identity is a part of one’s sense of self, and it enables if not permits individuals to respond to “the question, whether self-asked or asked by others, as to who (or, perhaps, more exactly, what) they are” (Geertz, 2000, p. 225).

Moynihan (1993) argues that identity is “a process located in the core of the individual and yet, also, in the case of his communal culture” (p. 64). It’s a powerful
phenomenon that strongly influences personality, one's sense of belonging, one's sense of sameness, and one's quality of life. To further an understanding of identity, most social and psychological theorists must contend with the concept of self. And to approach an understanding of the self concept, one is obliged to provide plausible if not substantial explanations for the following domains: physical traits and characteristics, personal experiences and their memory, personal behaviors, "what belongs to me and what I belong to," "the person I believe myself to be," and "who and what others tell me I am" (Cirese, 1985). Explanations for these domains consume volumes.

The term ethnic has Latin and Greek origins: ethnicus and ethnikas both mean nation. It can and has been used historically to refer to people as heathens. Ethos in Greek means custom, disposition, or trait. Ethnikas and ethos taken together therefore can mean a band of people (a nation) living together who share common customs.

Although the bulk of the social and behavioral studies circumscribed to the ethnic variables concentrate on the ethnic minority element, interest in ethnic phenomena in general actually is far more inclusive. Social science interest in ethnicity, especially as a potential explanatory variable, began in the late 1940s (see Cross, 1991; Juby & Concepción, this Handbook, Volume One; Katz & Taylor, 1988). Interest was fueled by at least two fundamental concerns: the contentious notion that the United States was a melting pot of different nationalities, ethnic groups, and religious affiliations and the then escalating abiding concerns about pluralism and integration. The era "witnessed an outbreak of what might be called 'ethnic fever,'" maintains Steinberg (1981, p. 3), in which "the nation's racial and ethnic minorities sought to rediscover their waning ethnicity and to reaffirm their ties to the cultural past." Integration and the melting pot notion were challenged, if not vilified; the melting pot notion was transformed from a perceived fact to a myth, and those who resisted integration were brought to their knees by civil rights legislation.

As a widely used construct to refer to types of people, race has multiple meanings and therefore is not an easy term to define. For example, Helms (1994) maintains:

Ethnicity is often used as a euphemism for race, as well as for other sociocultural affiliations (such as religious and linguistic groups) [thus] it might better be defined as social identity based on the culture of one's ancestors' national or tribal group as modified by the demands of the CULTURE in which one's group currently resides. (p. 293)

To add to the complexity of the construct, Helms also maintains that "race has three types of definitions: (1) quasi-biological, (2) sociopolitical-historical, and (3) cultural. Each type may have relevance for how race becomes one of an individual's collective identities" (p. 297).

The race construct likely has it origins in the writings of ancient Greek historians and philosophers (see Sol thoroughly, 2002). According to the cultural anthropologist John Honigmann (1959), for example, Herodotus used the term ethnea to refer to humans who belong to different groups. Herodotus, however, did not base his classifications of humans on physical traits; thus, it's likely his term was synonymous
with the term *ethnic group*. Use of physical traits and characteristics to define humans began in the 19th century, when the term *Aryan races* was first coined by Joseph de Gobineau (Honigmann, 1959).

Young (1999) traces the origin of the construct to Carolus Linnaeus, who maintained that “human beings come from four types: *Americanus, Asiaticus, Africanus, and Europeacus*” (p. 219). Following Linnaeus, at some point physical anthropologists in the early twentieth century initiated a classification system by which humans where grouped into one of four races: *Mongoloid, Negroid, Australoid, and Caucasian*; that classification system prevailed for the majority of the century. However, in the last quarter of the twentieth century the fourfold system fell from use, owing to problems associated with blood-gene groupings, race mixtures, and the inability to group humans into four or more discrete categories (Yee, Fairchild, Weizmann, & Wyatt, 1993). Moreover, on this point, Allport (1958) emphasized:

(1) except in remote parts of the earth very few human beings belong to a pure stock; and
(2) most human characteristics ascribed to race are undoubtedly due to cultural diversity and should therefore be regarded as ethnic, not racial. (p. 111)

While there are calls from the social and behavioral science community for the elimination of the use of race as a labeling construct, there are compelling reasons for its continued use in the study of identity and identity development and formation (B. P. Allen & Adams, 1992; Yee et al., 1993). Few would seriously claim that racism and all its ugly and oppressive forms no longer exist; to eliminate the use of the race construct would obscure if not deny the racist experiences of millions of people who are subjected to it on a constant basis. To merely classify these experiences with the terms *prejudice or discrimination* takes away or obfuscates the painful sting of racism. Hence, to forcefully confront racism headlong race must be kept at the forefront of our vocabulary when discussing intergroup and interpersonal relations (Jones, 2003).

Race is a social construction, and although it has little, if any, use in classifying humans from a biological or anthropometrical perspective, it does have use as a social-political category (see Root, 1998, 2000). Helms and Cook (1999) emphasize the significance of the continued use of race because “we want to encourage consideration of the differential environmental significance of the various racial classifications as communicated through powerful societal socialization messages” (p. 30). Helms (2001) also firmly maintains that “racial identity theories do not suppose that racial groups in the United States are biologically distinct but rather suppose that they have endured different conditions of domination or oppression” (p. 181). Thus, for the eminent psychologist Janet E. Helms, racial identity:

refers to the psychological mechanisms that people develop to function effectively in a society where some people enjoy social and political advantage because of their ancestors' (presumed) physical appearances, but others suffer disadvantage and lower status for the same reasons. (Trimble, Helms, & Root, 2002, pp. 249–250; see Helms, 1996)
As an alterative to race, Helms recommends using sociorace to acknowledge "the fact that typically the only criteria used to assign people to racial groups in this country are socially defined and arbitrary" (p. 147). To emphasize her point, she contends that there are least nine characteristics that differentiate sociorace from ethnicity. In devising measurement approaches to assess identity, close attention should be given to the distinction between race and ethnicity, as they are different constructs. While research on ethnicity appears to dominate the literature, we must be mindful that as long as racism exists, the term race must continue to be used, if for no other reason than because there is no other word powerful or robust enough in the English language to truly capture the demeaning and debilitating experiences of those victimized by racists.

Combining the definitions and interpretations of identity, ethnicity, and race, it can be concluded that they mean or at minimum imply the sameness of a band or nation of people who share common customs and traditions; certain bands or nations may share common experiences born from oppression, domination, and colonialism. At one level of interpretation, the combined definition is sufficient to capture the manner in which identity is generally conceptualized and used to measure ethnocultural influences on its formation and development (see Trimble & Dickson, in press b). The psychologist Jean Phinney (1990) notes that there are "widely discrepant definitions and measures of ethnic identity, which makes generalizations and comparisons across studies difficult and ambiguous" (p. 500). Currently, the most widely used definition of the construct in psychology is the one developed by Phinney (1990, 2000, 2003): "Ethnic identity is a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one's identity, or sense of self as a member of an ethnic group" (2003, p. 63). From her perspective, one claims an identity in the context of a subgroup that claims a common ancestry and shares at least a similar culture, race, religion, language, kinship, or place of origin. She adds:

Ethnic identity is not a fixed categorization, but rather is a fluid and dynamic understanding of self and ethnic background. Ethnic identity is constructed and modified as individuals become aware of their ethnicity, within the large (sociocultural) setting. (2003, p. 63)

At another level, the term identity is almost synonymous with the term ethnicity, prompting some sociologists, such as Herbert Gans (2003), to suggest that identity is no longer a useful term.

**BACKGROUND THOUGHTS ON ETHNICITY, ETHNIC IDENTITY, AND ETHNIC SELF-IDENTIFICATION**

Ethnicity and race, or racial, are the principal cultural constructs used to measure identification, identity development, and identity formation, the three areas that subsume most of the literature in the field. The ethnic construct dominates literature themes; race or racial is limited to a few measures of the overarching identity construct. A few researchers argue for replacing the term race with ethnicity, and
still others prefer to use the term *culture* to refer to the identity process ostensibly lodged in one's ethnocultural orientation and ancestral history. As psychosocial constructs, ethnic identity and ethnic self-identification are not without controversy, as there are varied views on their salience, relevance, stability, characteristics, and influences. Add to the discussion and debate that identity, whatever form it takes, is rarely static and immutable. To emphasize this point, Fitzgerald (1993) maintains that it is a mistake to think of identity as an unchanging entity, as "it is the illusion of unity that is still quite real with most people" (p. 32). Social categories and people are protean; they do not present an orderly structure that lends itself to measurement and comprehension.

In this section, selected social and psychological theories and perspectives are presented in summary form and reflected against the ethnic and racial identification events that occur in one's life. Two points must be made clear: (1) Provincial and theoretical attempts to explain and predict ethnic and racial identity are inconclusive and speculative, and (2) people do construct life stories for themselves that often are mutable, and the uncertainty of the story can be sufficient motivation for one to seek and find a portion of one's ancestral history to lend structure, meaning, and stability to one's life.

Ethnic identification and ethnic transformations are not solely private acts "but are usually if not predominantly public concerns, problematic situations, and issues of public contention as well as private debate" (Strauss, 1959, p. 26). Often, ethnic and racial identity declarations, especially those of mixed ethnic background, require external validation; thus, the judgments of others play a key role in the transaction (Root, 2000). People typically construct their identity in the context of their biological background and the sociopolitical context in which they are socialized. Moreover, people often construct autobiographies to place themselves in the social order and seek out settings and situations for confirmation (Harré, 1989). Hence, we find people constructing their identity and self-image to fit preferred sociocultural contexts and constructing the situations and contexts to fit the preferred image (Fitzgerald, 1993). Identity and all its derivatives are not static: People change, and their identity and sense of self change accordingly.

Social and psychological interest in ethnicity and identity has generated a prolific increase in journal articles and books on the subject. Few claim that ethnicity is a benign topic; some refer to it as the "new ethnicity" because it is viewed as divisive, inequitable, and racist (Morgan, 1981). On occasion, the mention of ethnicity and identity, especially in academic circles, sparks discussion about segregation and that without it, ethnicity would not survive. Sometimes the discussion turns to the possibility that Americans overemphasize and exaggerate the existence and beneficence of ethnicity (Yinger, 1986); such phrases as "imagined ethnicity" and "pseudo-ethnicity" are used interchangeably to refer to those who foist some ethnic factor to justify an action. In a related vein, when it comes to conducting research on ethnic factors, Gordon (1978) asserts, "Students of ethnicity run the risk of finding ethnic practices where they are not, of ascribing an ethnic social and cultural order where they do not in fact influence the person" (p. 151). Consequently,
critics argue about some fanciful line that somehow separates ethnic influences from nonethnic ones. The argument begs the questions When can behavior, personality, values, attitudes, and so on be attributed to ethnic and racial factors? and If an ethnic or racial attribution is not possible or discernible, then what sociocultural and psychological influence can account for the phenomenon?

Greeley (1974) asks an important and related question: "Why... is ethnic identity important and useful for some Americans?" (p. 298). One relatively benign answer is that ethnicity serves as a convenient form of differentiation: Ethnic minorities can be differentiated from the dominant society and from one another (American Indians from African Americans, Puerto Ricans from Cuban Americans, Japanese Americans from Chinese Americans, etc.), neighborhoods and communities can be differentiated from one another (Navajo Nation reservation, Chinatown, Japantown, Little Italy, etc.), and it can serve to differentiate among and between individuals who do not appear to subscribe to a generalized normative behavioral diet that often occurs in stereotypic imagery, ethnic labeling, and the pejorative nomenclature of intergroup relations.

Ethnicity and ethnic identity are not likely to vanish. All countries differentiate their residents on some ethnic factor, and North America may well be an area where it is most prevalent. Barth (1969) argues that ethnic boundaries, especially for European immigrants, are more permeable in the United States than in less industrialized societies, but that the "ethnic distinctions are quite... often the very foundation on which embracing social systems are built" (p. 10). For many Americans, most notably the major ethnic minority groups, identity is the central core of their interpersonal system, and for a social support system to remain reasonably stable identity must be available, stable, and acceptable.

Several anthropologists, historians, psychologists, and sociologists have written extensively on ethnicity and ethnic and racial identity (for reviews, see Bernal & Knight, 1993; Carter, 1996; Cross, 1991; Harris, Blue, & Griffith, 1995; Helms, 1990, 1996; Steinberg, 1981; Thompson, 1989; Trimble, Helms, & Root, 2003; van den Berghe, 1981). The many theoretical positions embraced and advocated range from those that are lodged in individuals' experiences and worldview to those formed from a sociobiological perspective. Barth's (1969) perspective represents the former, where it is the native's worldview that defines relationships, boundaries, lifestyles, and thoughtways. The sociobiological perspective is most fervently represented by Pierre van den Berghe, who maintains that "ethnic and racial sentiments are extensions of kinship sentiments" (p. 18); thus, "decent... is the central feature of ethnicity" (p. 27). To support his argument, he asserts that "there exists a general predisposition, in our species as in many others, to react favorably toward other organisms to the extent that those organisms are biologically related to the actor" (p. 19).

A review of the various treatises written about ethnicity leads one to the inevitable conclusion that it is a complex subject. In its broadest form, it refers to "any differentiation based on nationality, race, religion, or language" (Greeley, 1974, p. 89). At a slightly more precise level, some theorists prefer the definition of
ethnicity as "a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood" (Schermmerhorn, 1969, p. 123). Using this definition, Greeley maintains that individuals can be classified "into groups on the basis of shared, observable traits to include shared physical characteristics, shared historical experiences, and shared religious identities" (p. 188). Note that the sociologist Andrew Greeley places an emphasis on using traits to classify individuals; presumably, individuals also use the traits to classify and identify themselves with a distinct ethnic group.

Another sociologist, Milton Yinger (1986), points out:

Ethnicity has come to refer to anything from a sub-societal group that clearly shows a common descent and cultural background . . . to persons who share a former citizenship although diverse culturally . . . to pan-cultural groups of persons of widely different cultural and societal backgrounds who . . . can be identified as "similar" on the basis of language, race or religion mixed with broadly similar statuses. (p. 23)

Although the many components of Yinger's conceptualization are inclusive and indeed comprehensive as a starting point, he prefers to distinguish between groups by appealing to their unique social and biological characteristics. To form a more concise understanding of the influences of the two characteristics we must find a shared generic cohort of descendants who share recognizable and acknowledged geopolitical boundaries.

Geopolitical boundaries change as a result of political turmoil, colonialism, and globalization; consequently, individuals change their ethnic allegiance and identification as they move from one environment to another or their boundaries are rearranged (Arnett, 2002). Also, changes in affiliation and corresponding changes in the ethnic core can produce "pseudo-ethnicity" (or fictional ethnicity). An ethnic core may be exaggerated and contrived to form "imagined ethnicity," where the relationship between the primordial ethnic core and the emergent form is blended. Some understanding of the complexity can be found in defining "ethnic group," yet another elusive concept.

Definitions of ethnic identity vary according to the underlying theory embraced by researchers and scholars intent on tinkering with conceptual meanings. Social and behavioral science interest in identity focuses on discovering causal or correlational factors with other variables. To advance the discovery process, measurement scales are developed, tested, refined, and applied to scores of conditions, circumstances, and individuals. Even though ethnic identity is a process, many researchers approach the concept as though it were a static phenomenon. Moreover, without giving much serious thought to the topic, many researchers actually use ethnicity instead of ethnic identity, assuming that they are one and the same. They are not.

Often, ethnic identity is associated with one's presumed ethnic personality (see Devereux, 1975). In this context, one's personality is inferred from one's identity with an ethnic group. But, here again, identifiable cultural factors can influence
personality development; however, inferring a similarity between identity and personality corrupts both constructs.

Typically, ethnic identity is an affiliative construct whereby individuals are viewed by themselves and by others as belonging to a particular group. An individual can choose to associate with a group, especially if other choices are available (i.e., the person is of mixed ethnic or racial heritage). Affiliation can be influenced by racial, natal, symbolic, and cultural factors (Cheung, 1993). Racial factors involve the use of physiognomic and physical characteristics; natal factors refer to “homeland” (or ancestral home) origins of individuals, their parents, and kin; and symbolic factors include those factors that typify or exemplify an ethnic group (e.g., holidays, foods, clothing, artifacts). Symbolic ethnic identity usually implies that individuals choose their identity; however, to some extent the cultural elements of the ethnic or racial group have a modest influence on their behavior (Kivisto & Nezger, 1993). Cultural factors refer to the specific lifeways and thoughtways of an ethnic group and are probably the most difficult to assess and measure (see Cheung, 1993, for more details). In conceptualizing ethnic identity, racial, natal, symbolic, and cultural factors must be considered to achieve a full and complete understanding of the construct.

Cheung (1993) defines ethnic identification as “the psychological attachment to an ethnic group or heritage” (p. 1216) and thus centers the construct in the domain of self-perception. Saharso (1989) extends the definition to include social processes that involve one’s choice of friends, selection of a future partner, perception of one’s life chances, and the reactions of others in one’s social environment. Both definitions involve boundaries by which one makes distinction about “self” and “other”; Saharso’s definition extends the other’s boundary to include an attribution component. An individual may strongly identify psychologically with an ethnic group; however, the strength and authenticity of the identity is contingent on the acceptance and acknowledgment of ingroup and outgroup members.

In 1990, Phinney summarized the ethnic identity literature that existed for adolescents and adults with an emphasis primarily on measurement and conceptualization. In prefacing her section on ethnic identity definitions, she states, “There is no widely agreed on definition of ethnic identity,” and “the definitions that were given reflected quite different understandings or emphasis regarding what is meant by ethnic identity” (p. 500). Undoubtedly, social and behavioral scientists believe they have a general sense for the ethnic construct; some indeed are rather firm about their position (van den Bergh, 1981; Weinreich, 1986; Weinreich & Sauderson, 2003). Identity as a psychological construct, too, is the subject of considerable debate; however, the addition of ethnic to identity cast the debate and subsequent hodgepodge of opinion into another domain. In fact, about a quarter of the studies reviewed by Phinney were not built on a theoretical framework.

Several conceptual approaches to ethnic identity emphasize an individual level of analysis in which notions of identity formation and development are linked to one’s self-concept. Much of the work in this area relies on Tajfel’s (1982) theory of social identity. Tajfel basically maintains that one’s social identity strongly influences self-perception and consequently should be the central locus of evaluation.
An Inquiry into the Measurement of Ethnic and Racial Identity 329

The strength and weakness of the self are largely determined from our status in our reference groups and how we assess outgroup members. When ethnicity and race form the nexus of an ingroup, then self-identity will be correspondingly influenced. Individuals’ distinctive ethnic characteristics, however, can be restrictive, as they may reject “externally based evaluations of the ingroup” and therefore “may establish their own standards and repudiate those of the dominant outgroup” (Bernal, Saenz, & Knight, 1991, p. 135). Other responses are possible: Individuals might withdraw or choose to dissociate from the referent, thereby creating added psychological complications for themselves. Tajfel’s social identity theory has generated considerable influence on ethnic identity research; some prefer to carry out the work under the ethnic self-identification rubric (see Helms, 1996; Phinney, 1990, 1992).

Ethnic self-identification and ethnic self-labeling typically are used interchangeably. Labeling involves the use of tags or markers to refer to and categorize groups and their members. Foote (1951) believes that labeling is proceeded by naming because in order for one to commit to an identity, one must accept the name ascribed to the group by others or one’s own group’s members. Both ingroup and outgroup members can use the same or variations of labels or names to refer to a specific ethnic group. For example, Buriel (1987) points out that numerous labels exist to refer to the Mexican-descent population in the United States; Mexican, Mexicano, Mexican American, Mestizo, and Chicano constitute most of the labels. Indeed, over the years, outgroup members coined a few pejorative and offensive labels to refer to those of Mexican descent, most of which are lodged in stereotypical, prejudicial, and racist thoughts. In fact, such belittling and deprecatory labels exist for all ethnic groups and all must be unequivocally rejected.

Ethnic labeling has a sociopolitical value and function, especially for census and demographic studies. At a superficial level, where generalizations about distinct cultural orientations are not used, ethnic labels serve a useful function. Typically, when labels are used, reference is not drawn to the deep culture of each group to explain similarities and differences. Data patterns are presented at a gross level to portray findings in the broadest manner possible. However, more often than not, researchers use ethnic labels to wittingly or unwittingly convey a deeper cultural meaning than the labels permit.

Ethnic self-identification is a distinct psychological variable and “refers to the description of oneself in terms of a critical ethnic attribute; that is, an attribute that defines more than merely describes the ethnic group” (Aboud, 1987, p. 33). In most social settings, use of one attribute may be sufficient; however, other settings may require the use of several related attributes for one to indicate the strength of one’s identity. Vaughn (1987) views self-identification as a form of personal identity and differentiates the two from social identity. Personal identity “derives from a sense of self based on interpersonal comparisons” and social identity derives “from group membership” (p. 74). Rosenthal (1987) and Phinney (1990) view subjective identity as a starting point that eventually leads to the development of a social identity based on ethnic group membership. But Rosenthal adds that “ethnic identity arises in interaction and is a function not only of the individual and his or
her relation to the ethnic group but of the group's place in the wider social setting" (p. 160).

Weinreich (1986) and Weinreich and Saunderson (2003) not only view self-identity as a starting point, they believe that identity formation and development refer to different identity states where different social contexts will influence the identity state and one's actions. Weinreich (1989) asserts:

One's identity as situated in a specific social context is defined as that part of the totality of one's self-construal in which how one construes oneself in the situated present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future. (p. 164)

Moreover, Weinreich maintains that ethnic self-identity is not a static process but one that changes and varies according to particular social contexts. Individuals may, for example, avoid situations where their identity is challenged, threatened, humiliated, and castigated; settings that favor the identity state are sought out and sustained whenever possible. Self-expression, maintenance of ethnic identity, and situated identities offer promise for understanding the complexities and dynamics of ethnic orientations through Weinreich's theory of identity structure analysis.

ETHNIC AND RACIAL IDENTITY MEASURES

With all of the theorizing and scholarly ramblings about the usefulness and appropriateness of the ethnic and racial constructs, one would think that considerable attention would have been devoted to their measurement and assessment. Such is not the case, as pointed out earlier. In fact, some theoreticians and writers on the subject believe that the measurement of ethnicity and race should be abandoned because the constructs' meanings are elusive and have pejorative, racist origins and implications (McKenney & Cresce, 1993; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Moreover, universalistic-oriented scholars such as Werner Sollors (1989) maintain that ethnicity is an invention and that its continued use and measurement are divisive because most Americans have more in common with one another than differences (p. xx). Gans (1979) adds that in measuring ethnicity attitude, studies tend to overemphasize the importance ascribed to the construct; ethnic groups may have more in common with one another than distinct differences, but that small difference may be exaggerated because of the emotional importance placed on it by researchers and their participants.

Furthermore, adding to the problems associated with the constructs' measurement, Phinney (1990) notes that there are "widely discrepant definitions and measures of ethnic identity, which makes generalizations and comparisons across studies difficult and ambiguous" (p. 500). Additionally, Helms (1996) notes that there is a tendency for "researchers to collude with society in using concepts such as race, ethnicity or ethnic group, and culture as though they have a clear common meaning and are interchangeable" (p. 146). While criticisms about measurement vary from one theoretical camp to another, nonetheless numerous approaches and
strategies have been devised and developed to measure the constructs, many of which mirror a variety of theories and social psychological perspectives. In this section, selected measures are summarized according to their theoretical emphasis, measurement approach, and themes. Critiques of the measures are not provided; however, comprehensive summaries and evaluations of numerous ethnic and racial measures can be found in the reviews by Helms (1996), Carter (1996), Burlew, Bellows, and Lovett (2000), Fischer and Moradi (2001), Kohatsu and Richardson (1996), and Cross (1991). These citations also contain extensive descriptions of numerous measures and scales not included in this section.

Social and behavioral science researchers rely on a variety of techniques and procedures that pose as measurement approaches. To answer the query posed by Geertz in the opening quotation—"who or, perhaps, more exactly, what they are"—some researchers will ask their respondents to specify their ethnic background, and on the basis of that one item, conclusions will be drawn about ethnic differences (or similarities) that are totally unjustified; still others will select subjects on the basis of surnames or physiognomic appearance and then proceed to generalize results to the total ethnic or racial population. Use of the latter procedures suggests that researchers are guilty of using an "ethnic gloss," that is, "an overgeneralization or simplistic categorical label of ethnic groups... that neglect[s] the unique differences found among individuals in various cultures or groups" (Trimble & Dickson, in press a). Indeed, measuring ethnic identity "is not a simple all or nothing proposition. Researchers have long recognized that a person's level or intensity of identification with a particular ethnicity can vary from a weak-nominal association to a strong-committed association" (Smith, 1980, p. 79).

Approaches to the measurement of ethnic and racial identity range from use of a single item (Richman, Gavena, Flaherty, Birz, & Wintrob, 1987) to scales containing several dimensions (Carter, 1996; Helms, 1990, 1996; Phinney, 1992; Weinreich, 1986; Weinreich & Sauderson, 2003). Whatever measurement approach or technique one chooses to develop or use, one must factor in the following four domains of inquiry: (1) natality, where an emphasis is placed on ancestral genealogy, including parents, siblings, and grandparents; (2) subjective identification, where the respondent provides a declaration of his or her own ethnic or racial identity; this domain could be the most important of the four; Stephan and Stephan (2000, p. 549) argue that "the goal of assessment of race/ethnicity is accuracy from the perspective of the respondent, and that the accuracy of such a social construct can only be obtained by individual self-designation"; (3) behavioral expressions of identity, where respondents indicate their preferences for activities germane to their ethnic affiliation, such as foods, music, magazines, and books; and (4) situational or contextual influences, where the respondent indicates the situations that call for a deliberate expression of the ethnic affiliation, such as traditional ceremonies, interaction with family and peers, and neighborhood gatherings: the identity process. Figure 17.1 shows the four domains and the linkages between that enable individuals to fully express their ethnic self-identification (Trimble, 2000; Trimble et al., 2002). At minimum, scales and measures should attempt to capture the essence of each domain to provide a full and complete profile or silhouette of one's
identity. Helms (1996) adds to this suggestion by pointing out that measures at minimum should be tridimensional and include items to tap individual characteristics, own group affiliation, and outgroup relations.

In the next section, several assessment and measurement approaches are presented and summarized to illustrate the procedures social and behavioral scientists prefer to empirically examine ethnic and racial constructs. The section begins with the use of nominal procedures and progresses through to the use of complex and engaging measurement techniques and procedures.

ASSESSMENT AND MEASUREMENT APPROACHES AND TECHNIQUES

Before we turn to the summary, it is important to acknowledge the fact that there are numerous scales and measures in the literature designed for use with a diverse array of ethnic and racial populations. For example, a search of the electronic
database PsycINFO yields articles describing scales to measure identity among Japanese, Chinese, American Indians, Native Americans, Blacks, African Americans, Hispanics, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, Asians, Native Hawaiians, and Whites. Cross (1991) nicely summarizes a number of measures to assess Negro, Black, or African American identity. Additionally, several measures tap into multiracial, cross-racial, multicultural, multidimensional, and bicultural identity in the search results. On further inspection of the scales, one will note that virtually all of them are of the paper-and-pencil type, where respondents are asked to respond to forced-choice Likert-type scale alternatives (Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Trimble, 1991). A few of the scales do not represent a particular theoretical orientation; those that do follow a line of theoretical inquiry are derived from social and personal identity theory (Tajfel, 1982).

**Nominal Measurement Approaches**

Self-identification is a nominal procedure that, at best, provides an enumeration. The procedure also involves the fact that an individual is given a choice that is highly subjective. Some form of subjective criteria are used to decide which racial or ancestral category to choose; for those of mixed racial ancestry the choice may be more delicate than for those with an exclusive ancestry. With this procedure, typically, respondents are asked to place a check mark after an ethnic or racial category with which they most identify; in essence, they name or identify the ethnic or racial group provided them, and if it’s not there they fill in a blank space, usually labeled “other.” The results of the procedure permit the researcher to tabulate or cross-tabulate results; thus, numeration has its value, especially in census tallies and in political and social surveys, where one is not interested in attributing ethnicity to the outcome of a measured dependent variable.

Use of a nominal procedure for assessing race and ancestral heritage is no more evident than in the long-time efforts of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The census bureau has been assessing racial backgrounds in some form or another since as far back as 1790. To capture the racial information, for example, from 1850 to 1970 the census asked for one’s birthplace, the birthplace of parents, and language preferences (one’s “native tongue”). In 1890, the U.S. Congress added racial items like “quadroon” and “octoroon” to tap mixed African American ancestry (to assess the “one drop” of black blood rule). The term “mulatto” was used in the mid-nineteenth century; it is still used in Puerto Rico to refer to people of mixed African and Euro-American ancestry. Eventually, after much protest, these offensive terms were eliminated from the forms. Beginning in 1900 the census forms used White, Chinese, and Japanese as the primary racial categories; in 1970 a Hispanic-origin question was added, and in 1980 there were four racial designations: Black, Asian American and Pacific Islander, American Indian, White, and an “other” category. To gather more in-depth racial information, an ancestral heritage question was added, asking the respondent to report beyond two generations.

If nothing else, use of different racial terms and questions has always been a problem for the census bureau. In an effort to settle the matter of what terms to use to refer to ethnic and racial groups at a federal level, the U.S. Office of Management
and Budget (OMB) in 1976 imposed a standard of racial and ethnic categories to include White, African American, American Indian, Asian, and Hispanic; the imposition set a new item standard for the census bureau along with influencing how federal agencies and their representatives, researchers, educators, the media, and policy analysts referred to the country’s racial and ethnic minority populations. Use of the categories contributed to virulent debates from all corners of the country; use of the terms is filled with controversy in part because of their instability, inaccuracy, and mutability.

During the 1990s, the census bureau debated use of a multiethnic question as there was growing pressure from researchers, scholars, and citizens about the lack of a category to designate mixed racial heritage. Several studies on multiracial identity fueled the debate. For example, Johnson et al. (1997) found that the addition of a multiracial category to a standard list of racial and ethnic groups produced significantly different response patterns when compared to a list that omitted the multiracial category. The researchers learned that respondents actually preferred the addition of a multiracial category. Johnson et al. amplify their findings by suggesting that “researchers make the minor modifications that would be necessary to enable the increasing numbers of multiracial persons in this country to identify themselves in social surveys and other data collection systems” (p. 683). Against the better judgment and recommendations of scores of activists and lobbyist groups and researchers, in 2000 the census bureau asked individuals to indicate all of the “races” of which they considered themselves a part. An individual could choose to indicate one race alone or could mark other races along with the single race category. Results from the survey showed that 2.4% of the U.S. population identified with two or more racial groups; the finding led the OMB to recommend that “responses that combine one minority race and white are allocated to the minority race” (OMB, 2000, Section II). The recommendation has caused quite a stir among many members of the prominent ethnic minority groups in the country.

Use of the multiracial item has created an array of contentious problems for all who rely on use of census outcomes (see Perlmann & Waters, 2002). The addition of the multiracial category presents complex tabulation and reporting problems for health care professionals, economists, demographers, social and behavioral scientists, and others who use racial categories for their work. In the research domain, if an investigator is interested in attributing an outcome to something about the deep culture of a racial or ethnic group, the multiracial or multietnic category presents formidable attribution problems. For example, if a respondent claims that he or she is of White, American Indian, and African American background, what culture or ethnic group is most influential in forming and shaping that person’s affective styles, behavior, and cognition? In the words of the demographer and former director of the census bureau Kenneth Prewitt (2002), the addition of the multiracial category represents a

turning point in the measurement of race . . . the arrival of a multiple-race option in the census classification will so blur racial distinctions in the political and legal spheres and perhaps also in the public consciousness that race classification will gradually disappear. (p. 360)
Then again, he maintains, the new category may lead to further refinements of the construct. To the contrary, the sociologist Nathan Glazer (2002) believes the new census racial questions exaggerate the importance of the construct and asks, “But is . . . race so important a part of America that it deserves such prominence and detail?” (p. 22). As an alternative, Glazer recommends that the census form should seek race information only on African Americans, as

they are less integrated in American society than any other large group . . . [and] they have a clear sense of their identity. When they answer the race question, one can depend on a high degree of reliability in the answer, as census research has shown. (p. 24)

No doubt the debate on the census bureau’s use of the “check all that apply” question will continue well into the 21st century.

Variations on the Nominal Measurement Approach

Simple nominal ethnic and racial procedures for declaring affiliation and membership have limited use. Waters (1990) points out that the technique indeed affirms one’s ethnic identity,

but one cannot tell what this identity means to be an individual, how and why people choose a particular ethnic identity from a range of possible choices; how often and in what ways that ethnic identity is used in everyday life; and how ethnic identity is intergenerationally transferred within families. (p. 11)

To assess the deep meaning of ethnic identity the sociologist Mary Waters (1990) developed an engaging and well thought out interview schedule containing more than 100 pointed questions designed to explore the nature and meaning of ethnicity. Waters maintains that “one constructs an ethnic identification using knowledge about ancestries in one’s background” and that “this information is selectively used in the social construction of ethnic identification within the prevailing historical, structural, and personal constraints” (p. 19). Although not a scale in the strict sense of the term, Waters’s lengthy and orderly array of items allows an investigator to probe deeply into the meaning of a person’s initial designation of his or her ancestry; she follows this question with one that explores the reason behind the reply. Waters’s interview schedule moves through a carefully developed set of domains that assists the respondent in constructing an identity. The schedule begins with respondents making a nominal declaration of their identity and proceeds accordingly through the ordered sequence of questions and items. The interview protocol produces a script that requires considerable time and energy to analyze. The results undoubtedly generate a rich individual-centered profile, but Waters’s schedule and research approach has its limitations, although she has used it successfully in her seminal research on identity.

Another approach to the study and assessment of identity relying on where one’s initial nominal declaration is factored into the analysis is the research conducted by Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, and Cotting (1999). Building their assessment strategy on a variant of Tajfel’s social identity theory, the social psychologist Kay Deaux and her
associates extend their work to include procedures and items that consider motivations for an identity claim, the functions that identity serves, the relationship between identity and subsequent behavior, and the links between a categorical definition and group motivation to explore the functions of social identification.

To initiate the inquiry, Deaux and her associates (1999) first asked respondents to sort through and rate a list of 64 identities. Results generated five properties, suggesting that individuals have interrelated multiple social identities; ethnicity is one of them. In a related procedure, the researchers asked respondents to select an identity from the list of 64 that was important to them and then respond to a series of questionnaire items that tapped the identity’s importance for them; the items generated seven factors, including self-insight and understanding, intergroup comparison and competition, collective self-esteem, downward social comparison, and social interaction. The results demonstrate that identity is multifaceted and that different motives are salient for different forms of identity; ethnic identification may serve a different function from an identity with another facet of one’s life and thus serve different needs. Most important, their work shows that the sole use of a nominal ethnic declaration is hardly sufficient to understand the functions of the label for the individual and group.

Multiple-Item Ethnic Identity Measures

Ethnic identity scales assume that people can readily identify with a group or even prefer to do so. In this instance, use of an item that asks people to check, list, or write in the name of the group with which they identify is a good starting point. In fact, many multiple-item identity scales start off with this question. Building her scale on Tajfel’s social identity theory and the developmental stages advanced by Erikson, Jean Phinney’s (1992) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) actually asks respondents to indicate their ethnic affiliation twice in her 15-item scale, once at the beginning and again in item 13, where respondents answer “My ethnicity is” by checking off one of seven ethnic categories, one of which is “other.” Her widely used and well-known scale assesses self-identification through two dimensions derived from principal components, rotated factor analyses, ethnic identity, and other group orientation. Five items measure Affirmation/Belonging, seven items measure Ethnic Identity Achievement, and two measure Ethnic Behaviors. Item consistency measures obtained from a number of samples range from coefficient alphas of .77 to .92; construct validity measures are reasonably strong and are consistent with the item reliability outcomes (see Fischer & Moradi, 2001). The scale can be used to obtain a global overview measure of ethnic identity; additionally, one can obtain separate scores from the subscales.

Multigroup identity scales similar to the MEIM have been developed by Dunbar (1997) and Sevig, Highlen, and Adams (2000). The 21-item Personal Dimensions of Difference Scale (PDDS) developed by the psychologist Edward Dunbar examines seven categories of social group membership along three dimensions: ascribed group identity, personal empowerment via group membership, and perceived social support for group membership. Todd Sevig and his associates developed the Self-Identity Inventory based on optimal theory applied to identity development. The
A 71-item scale uses items from the California Psychological Inventory, the Belief Systems Analysis Scale, and the Social Desirability and Infrequency Scales to form six dimensions. Construct validity and item reliability measures fall within acceptable coefficient ranges. Both scales are useful variations of the MEIM; however, they probe different social and self-identity dimensions.

Multiple-Item Racial Identity Measures

Early in the 1990s, Burlew and Smith (1991) identified four ways that measures of racial identity could be classified to include (1) developmental, (2) Africentric, (3) group-based, and (4) racial stereotypes. Based on the development of several scales since that time, the psychologist A. Kathleen Burlew revised the categories to include (1) identity formation, (2) cultural connectedness, and (3) multicultural experiences that permit a more accurate grouping of a majority of the measures intended to tap racial identity (Burlew et al., 2000). The scales and theoretical perspectives presented in this section reflect the themes of these classifications.

In 1991, the psychologist William Cross published a landmark book on African American identity, where he laid out his theory of nigrulence. Along with a wonderful review of the research and commentary on African American identity, Cross provided data on three stages of a multistage nigrulence model: (1) Pre-encounter, (2) Immersion-Emersion, and (3) Internalization (see Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991). In 1979, Cross developed a 54-item scale that captured the essence of the three stages that permitted him to empirically demonstrate that African American identity progresses through stages and that identity can be tracked accurately. His scale and multistage approach to assessing African American identity influenced the subsequent development of important and thought-provoking racial identity measures (see Burlew et al., 2000).

Cross revised his theory in 1995 to include expanded and more clearly defined nigrulence stages. To complement the refinement of his theory and provide an empirical tool to measure the stages, Cross and his associates developed the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS; Cross & Vandiver, 2001). The development of the scale occurred over a five-year period and involved the assistance of multicultural experts and samples of African American college students. The full scale consists of 40 items, 30 of them targeted to assess six subscales that compose the main features of Cross’s revised nigrulence theory; each of the subscales contains five items, accompanied by a seven-choice alternative rating scale. The six subscales are fairly independent of one another; thus, one is encouraged to aggregate scores for each subscale but interpret outcomes in the context of the full set of subscales. Reliability coefficients or alphas for the subscales are strong and on average range from .75 to .89. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses have been used to evaluate the factor structure of the subscales; results confirm the fit of the subscales to the six-factor model (see Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Also, Cokeley (2002) provided empirical evidence in a study of racial identity attitudes and internalized racism to support Cross’s revision of his nigrulence model.

Along with his seminal scholarly work on nigrulence theory and use of developmental stages in assessing identity progression, Cross and his associates recently
offered an identity assessment approach that emphasizes "identity as operations, functions, negotiations, enactments or activities" (Cross, Smith, & Payne, 2002, p. 93). Developing a variant of Vygotsky's activity theory, Cross and his associates constructed situation-based case studies from narratives grounded in everyday transactions. Analyses of the narrative protocols from a sample of African Americans reveal that certain distinct "situation identity" patterns emerge:

(a) identity protection transactions, or buffering; (b) an identity "on/off" switch, called code switching, that allows movement in and out of Black and non-Black cultural settings; (c) identity connectivity enactments that make transracial friendship possible; (d) identity belonging activities that promote a sense of bonding and attachment to the Black experience; and (e) identity individuation activities that sustain the boundaries of a person's individuality. (p. 105)

Cross is one of a few identity researchers to factor in situational influences in the measurement of ethnic and racial identification (see Figure 17.1).

The foremost and most cited racial identity scales center on the seminal and thought-provoking research of the psychologist Janet E. Helms. Helms and her associates developed their scales according to the five developmental stages model proposed by Cross and his associates; later, Helms (2001) modified her model to focus on statuses in lieu of stages because "statuses give rise to schemata, which are behavioral manifestations of the underlying statuses. It is schemata rather than the statuses per se that paper-and-pencil racial identity attitude inventories presumably assess" (p. 184; see Carter, 1996; Helms, 1996). Currently, the Helms racial identity measures tap 11 statuses in one form or another. The scales are grounded in the following themes:

(a) one's racial identity develops in comparison to one's "contrast" racial group; (b) healthy identity development involves the abandonment of societal impositions of racial-self in favor of one's own personality relevant self-definition; (c) members of all the socio-racial groups develop racial identity by means of a sequential process in which increasingly more sophisticated differentiations of the ego evolve from earlier less mature statuses; and (d) qualitative differences in expression of racial identity statuses can be measured, but development must be inferred from responses to measures. (Helms, 1996, p. 155)

Two of Helms's widely used racial identity measures are summarized briefly; one should be mindful that her measures are undergoing constant revision owing to the prolific amount of research they have generated in the study of racial identity. The more prominent of her scales is the Form B revised version of the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (Helms, 1990). The 30-item scale uses 5-point Likert-type choice alternatives to assess the Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization stages (now statuses). Reported reliability coefficients for the four stages statuses range from alphas of .49 to .79 (Fischer & Moradi, 2001). Ponterotto and Wise (1987) found a three-factor solution using exploratory factor analysis with principal axis factoring and an oblique rotation solution that supported
three dimensions of the subscales: Pre-encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internnalization. Other factor analytic solutions performed on the scales support a four-factor solution. There are two other versions of her scale, the long form that contains 50 items and another version of the 30-item short form.

The 50-item White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) extends Helms's theoretical perspectives to White racial identity (Carter, 1996; Helms, 1996; Helms & Carter, 1990). She contends that as Whites become more racially conscious, they will progress through two phases, Abandonment of Racism and Defining a Nonracist White Identity; each of these phases contains stages/statuses that include Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-independence, Immersion-Emersion, and Autonomy. Swanson, Tokar, and Davis (1994) treated the scale with factor analysis item reliability techniques and found a wide range of alpha coefficients; items from their subscale analysis generated coefficients from -.63 to .68. Other researchers report different reliability coefficients (see Helms, 1996). The factor analysis solutions provided by Swanson, Tokar, and Davis show little support for Helms's White racial identity model. Consequently, some researchers urge that users of the WRIAS proceed with caution (Fischer & Moradi, 2001). To the contrary, Helms (1996) argues that a scale can generate variable reliability coefficients (often called alphas) because (1) researchers may not have sampled adequately, (2) alpha coefficients are estimates of the interrelationship between items and factor dimensions and not a measure of homogeneity, and (3) reliability coefficients may underestimate the relationships in part because of the influence of situational variables. She contends that we must be careful in using reliability coefficients to make judgments about scale properties. "Reliance on coefficient alpha as the sole indicator of the interrelatedness of items," she maintains, "is probably premature when the possible limitations of this approach for evaluating the reliability of racial identity measures is considered" (p. 172).

Using variants of factor analysis, several researchers generated factor dimensions that challenged the various theoretical dimensions of Helms's racial identity scales (see Carter, 1996; Helms, 1996). Carter and Helms contest the use of factor analysis with the scales because the measures and their subscales are not intended to be unidimensional or homogeneous, the statistic cannot reveal the increasing complexity of subscales and their items, and the technique often assigns a single variable to many factors (called split loadings) and thus creates problems for interpreting the dimensional meaning of the item. Helms and Carter recommend use of cluster analysis because the statistic uses one source for partitioning the variance; the source then can be used to create groups. Carter treated the Black and White racial identity scales with cluster analysis and found support for the theoretical dimensions for the White scale; support for the Black version was found after the raw scores were transformed to percentile scores. His results suggest that cluster analysis may be a more appropriate statistic for use in identifying common item dimensions in racial and ethnic identity because "if distinct dimensions were to exist in the instruments, they should be discernible from scale configurations rather than item configurations" (Carter, 1996, p. 218).
Multiple Ethnic Identity Measures

Until recently, most of the published ethnic and racial identity measures tapped the major ethnic group self-identity of the respondent; that is, the respondent typically is asked to state or list one ethnic affiliation. However, as emphasized earlier, many respondents have more than one ethnic identity and some actually prefer to state their declarations with ethnic groups that are most salient for them. Indeed, results from the 2000 census, where people were given the option to “check all that apply” to the race question, support this preference. Some researchers were acutely aware of this preference and consequently developed measures on which respondents could declare their multiple ethnic or racial group preferences. Two of these measurement approaches are summarized in this section.

In 1991, psychologists Eugene Oetting and Fred Beauvais proposed the orthogonal cultural identification theory and a correspondent scale to assess cultural identity. Their approach is built on the belief that cultural identity or ethnic identity is not a linear phenomenon. Furthermore, they contend that cultural identity dimensions are independent of one another and that an increasing identification with one culture does not produce a decreasing identification with another culture. One could, for example, highly identify with two cultural or ethnic groups and, conversely, not identify with any group. Hence, the two researchers would argue that an individual could conceivably identify with two, three, and even four cultural or ethnic groups and not in the least be disoriented or confused about his or her cultural identification.

Oetting and Beauvais (1991) developed a full scale consisting of over 50 items that allows an individual to “independently express identification or lack of identification” with several cultural groups (p. 663). They claim that “in large-scale surveys of adults, only two basic items may be needed to assess identification with any one culture reasonably well: (1) Do you live in the . . . way of life? and (2) Are you a success in the . . . way of life?” (p. 664). Other items can be added to assess such factors as family identification and tradition, participation in cultural events, language preferences, and parental identification to expand the scale’s measurement domains and its presumed effectiveness. In using the scale one does not have to rely on all of the full scale items; as few as 14 of the items have been proven to generate reliable outcomes.

Trimble (2000), using confirmatory factor analysis, tested a model of the American Indian version of the Oetting and Beauvais scale and generated seven factor dimensions derived from a 14-point Likert-type format. The confirmatory factor model was constructed from items to conform to three domains of a four-part ethnic measurement model, specifically natality, behavioral orientations, and subjective perceptions advocated by Trimble (1991, 1995; see Figure 17.1). The average item reliability or alpha coefficients for the items was .89; initially, the items formed three exploratory factor dimensions through use of a principal components analysis. The 14-item scale was administered to 846 self-identified American Indian youth in eight communities located in both reservation and nonreservation settings in the central southwestern region of the United States. Results reveal that 71% “all” or “nearly all” identified with the American Indian group. The results also indicate
that some of the Indian self-identified youth identified to some degree with other groups (e.g., about 9% indicated that they “mostly” or “nearly all” identified as Anglo-White and 7% did so for the Spanish/Mexican American group). However, 11% indicated that they identified “little” or “not at all” as American Indian, yet these respondents self-identified nominally as American Indian.

Perceived ethnic self-identification of one’s parents influences levels and degrees of identification among offspring. Results from Trimble’s (2000) analysis revealed that the ethnic background of one or both parents varied but had an influence on the identity declarations of the respondents. Sixty-nine percent of the youths’ mothers were seen as “all or nearly all” Indian as were 58% of their fathers. At the other extreme, the identity of some 9% of the mothers and 13% of the fathers was perceived as “not at all” Indian. Finally, the results reveal that 43% (360) of the youth who “all” or “nearly all” identified as American Indian indicated that their parents were also seen as identifying at the same level of intensity. Overall, an analysis of responses reveals that the youths’ degree of identity varied considerably for close to 80% (846) of the respondents. Thus, one’s parental ethnic background along with one’s self-claimed affiliation with and attachment to an ethnic group can influence the degree to which one affiliates with an ethnic declaration to the extent that one may declare an affiliation with other ethnic groups, as Oetting and Beauvais’s (1991) model and theory predict.

In the 1980s, the cross-cultural psychologist Peter Weinreich put forth his theory and measurement technique explication identity structure analysis (ISA), a complex, highly sophisticated approach to assessing ethnic identity as well as identities with other facets of one’s life; in effect, if one identifies with more than one ethnic or racial group to some degree, then that can be captured with the approach (Weinreich, 1986; Weinreich & Saunderson, 2003). ISA is grounded in psychodynamic developmental theory, personal construct psychology, appraisal theory, social constructionism, cognitive-affective consistency theories, and symbolic interactionist theoretical perspectives. According to Weinreich and Saunderson:

ISA conceptualizes one’s appraisal of social situations as involving one’s interpretation of their significance to self’s identity from moment to moment. Appraisal provides and records experiences of situations and events. (p. 20)

ISA can be custom-designed to measure identity in an idiographic or nomothetic framework through use of bipolar constructs; thus, the approach be can tailored for an individual as well as for groups. Indices can be constructed to measure such constructs as self-image (past, current, and ideal), values, role models, reference groups, empathetic identification, identification conflicts, evaluation of others, and a few other related identity domains.

The assessment of ethnic and cultural identity is an important feature of ISA. According to Weinreich:

One’s ethnic identity is defined as that part of the totality of one’s self-construal system made up of those dimensions that express the continuity between one’s construal of past
ancestry and one's future aspirations in relation to ethnicity. (Weinreich & Sauderson, 2003, p. 28)

One's construal of one's ethnic identity, too, is largely influenced by one's ancestral heritage and the history of the groups with which one identifies. Moreover, in the context of ISA, ethnic self-identity is not viewed as a static process but one that changes and varies according to particular social contexts. Individuals, for example, may avoid situations where their identity is challenged, threatened, humiliated, and castigated; settings that favor the identity state are sought out and sustained whenever possible.

ISA is an approach to the assessment and measurement of identity; hence one will not find a single multi-item scale available to study ethnicity. ISA uses a structured measurement procedure. To analyze the results produced by the theoretically based technique one must have access to a specialized computer program and the lengthy accompanying manual. For numerous reasons, the Identity Exploration software (IDEX) is a requirement to analyze Weinreich's approach to identity because it is based in ISA concepts and constructs (see Weinreich & Sauderson, 2003). Indeed, as a multi-item approach for the measurement of ethnic identity and identity in general, Weinreich's ISA sets the standard for comprehensiveness and inclusiveness. If a researcher is interested in exploring ethnic identities and affiliated identities in great detail, ISA offers wonderful opportunities; however, if one is interested in assessing identity in a survey questionnaire format, use of ISA is not recommended.

The scales summarized in this section and those described in the literature are not without criticism. Indeed, several researchers and scholars have subjected many of the measures and their corresponding theories to extensive scrutiny through use of cross-validation procedures, empirical testing, and theoretical speculation. For example, Root (2000) maintains that "the current models do not account for a range of ways in which people construct their core identities and determine the importance of race in them" (p. 214). Moreover, Root notes that "researchers have found no reliable method of extrapolating the core or breadth of one's identity from one context of identity or from a response to one question" (p. 212). She provides some thoughtful suggestions to accommodate several criticisms by focusing on the ecological influences on racial development that deal with inherited influences, traits, and social interactions with communities. Thus, it must be stated that before any of the ethnic and racial identity scales and theories are considered for use, one should carefully review the literature and factor in the observations and criticisms.

In the main, the fashionable mode of ethnic and racial identity scale and measurement development relies on use of self-report procedures and with variants of a forced-choice response alternative following Likert-type formats. A few assessment and measurement approaches use interview schedules and protocols such as those developed by Waters (1990) and Root (2000). Reliance on these formats can create measurement equivalence and item bias problems; these topics are discussed in the next section.
Because the measurement of ethnic and racial identity involves people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, they may not be all that familiar and cognitively resonant with self-report procedures and conventional approaches to scale development. Given this possibility, perhaps alternative approaches to assessing identity should be developed and considered. For example, to assess identity and cultural orientations Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, and Wong (2002) recommend use of Q-sort techniques, sociometric tasks, and behavioral and emotional assessment techniques such as reactions to facial expressions. Tsai and her associates describe use of a 360-degree pie to evaluate the significance of roles of culturally different respondents; roles are viewed as components of identity and thus may be more appropriate for use with culturally different groups, such as Asian Americans. Additionally, use of unobtrusive measurement techniques, such as drawings, doll selection and play, role-play, psychodrama, and games and simulations, is worthy of exploration.

CULTURAL EQUIVALENCE, ITEM BIAS, AND MEASUREMENT CONSIDERATIONS

In this section, summary information is provided about the issues associated with the development and use of psychosocial scales for cultural-specific and cultural-comparative research. Debates abound on the influence of one’s worldview in understanding and interpreting standardized tests and psychosocial scales (see Dana, 2000; Irvine & Carroll, 1980; Malpass & Poortinga, 1986; Trimble, Lonner, & Boucher, 1983; van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Moreover, many cross-cultural psychologists contend that “comparing elements from differing societies leads to inadmissible distortions of reality” (Kobben, 1970, p. 584). Ethnic and racial comparative research using identity measures may be fraught with problems of “incomparability” and thus may lead researchers to draw conclusions about a finding that may not be valid or justified. Indeed, with some exceptions, most ethnic and racial identity measures cited in the literature have not factored in cultural equivalence and item bias possibilities.

Cultural Equivalence and Item Bias

In constructing and using measurement instruments in cultural-comparative or cultural-sensitive research, the investigator must give serious attention to issues of equivalence. The instrument’s content, format, and metric style must be congruent with and comparable across the cultural groups selected for study. Researchers must provide hard evidence that the components of the measurement process meet the standards of functional, conceptual, metric, linguistic, and stimulus equivalence.

Cultural equivalence refers “to the problem of whether, on the basis of measurements and observations, inferences in terms of some common psychological dimension can be made in different groups of subjects” (Poortinga, 1983, p. 238). Most cross-cultural researchers agree that cultural equivalence can be examined by giving attention to the following concepts: functional equivalence, conceptual equivalence, stimulus equivalence, linguistic equivalence, and metric equivalence.
Although five types of cultural equivalence are used to discuss the concept, in an exhausted review of the literature on equivalence, Johnson (1998) identified 52 types; subsequently, he classified the types into interpretive and procedural summary categories. In his findings, Johnson pointed out that “in no other field of inquiry . . . has this seemingly elementary concept [equivalence] been assigned as many alternative meanings and disaggregated into as many components as in the field of cross-cultural research” (p. 2).

Embedded in the notion of equivalence is the fundamental tenet that comparisons between ethnocultural groups require that a common, if not identical, measurement and assessment process exist; stretched to the extreme, the principle holds that a universal process must be developed to demonstrate and assess ethnocultural group comparability. Consequently, to achieve functionality two or more behaviors must “pre-exist as naturally occurring phenomena” that are related or identical to a similar problem or circumstance; the behaviors must serve a similar function for both groups (Berry, 1969, p. 122). Conceptual and stimulus equivalence exists when the meaning of stimuli, concepts, methods, and so on are similar or identical for the culturally different respondents. The requirement for linguistic equivalence is similar, although the emphasis is placed on the linguistic accuracy of item translations. Metric equivalence or scale equivalence (Poortinga, 1975), probably the most technical and the most difficult to evaluate, “exists when the psychometric properties of two (or more) sets of data from two (or more) cultural groups exhibit essentially the same coherence or structure” (Berry, 1980, p. 10). Of the five equivalence types, metric or scalar has received the least amount of empirical attention, perhaps because it is the most technical and/or poorly understood. Yet, for the psychometrician it may be the most important concern. Before a measure can be used in ethnic and racial specific and comparative research it must first meet standards within the ethnocultural groups; then and only then can it be used between two or more groups. For example, use of forced-choice scale alternatives laid out in a linear manner may not fit with the cognitive and evaluative preferences of certain cultural groups; a Likert-type format may work for one group but not for another. Thus, the researcher must find a common metric or scalar measure to pursue comparative measurement studies.

Cultural equivalence is similar to item bias. Item bias deals with the similarity or dissimilarity of scale outcomes across ethnic and racial populations and thus is concerned with “the presence or absence of validity-threatening factors” (van de Vijver, 2000, p. 89). In drawing a distinction between the two constructs, van de Vijver and Poortinga (1997) assert that item bias is associated with construct, instrument, and method bias; item bias differs from cultural equivalence, in part, because the latter deals more with the outcomes than the factors that influence validity (see van de Vijver & Tanzer, 1997). Put in simpler terms, according to Byrne and Watkins (2003), “Bias refers to the presence of nuisance factors [and] equivalence refers to the implication of bias on score comparability” (p. 174).

Assessing Cultural Equivalence, Item Bias, and Invariance

Use of conventional scaling procedures in cultural-comparative research has introduced a number of methodological problems, especially in the use of a structured
response format (Johnson, 1998). Mounting ethnographic evidence points to the following problems. First, researchers tacitly, and perhaps incorrectly, assume that the numeric intervals between choice alternatives on the continuum are equal and can be assigned an integer value. Second, the number of choice alternatives is presumed, perhaps also incorrectly, to represent the full range of categories that an individual would use to evaluate an item. Third, the dimensions of the scale items may not be truly comparable between cultural groups. Finally, the effects and the outcomes of the categorization process, difficult to define in any group, may be confounded by the possibility that not all cultural groups respond to stimuli in a linear manner.

Response styles of culturally different respondents create problems for scale and questionnaire construction and use. Consider the following findings I have accumulated from years of conducting field research with different ethnocultural groups. Traditional Alaska Eskimos (Inuit), certain elderly from the Iroquois Nations in northern New York, and first- and second-generation Korean Americans in southern California have difficulty responding to items that are accompanied with multiple choice alternatives set in fixed-order Likert-type formats. Samples of American Samoans in the South Pacific expressed unwillingness to complete a series of tests because they didn’t understand the procedures. Bilingual Korean Americans were able to complete the scales but not without expressing their concerns. Samples of rural Chinese Americans residing in the southeastern area of the United States preferred to use three categories to evaluate test and survey items. For the items with “yes” and “no” alternatives many of the respondents chose not to respond. According to one local informant, a “no response” to this choice format could mean “yes” but not “no.” Traditionally oriented Sioux (Lakota) American Indian children from two reservations in South Dakota were reluctant to complete certain questionnaire items because they wanted first to discuss their choices with others, especially family members. Choices required by tests and questionnaires are difficult to make in the absence of some perceived consensus; Lakota children are taught to respect the knowledge and wisdom of the community and, therefore, one should not act independently. And rural Mayan Indians in Central America have difficulty making very fine distinctions and discriminations in response to questionnaire items. Often, respondents will offer their own interpretations that don’t necessarily fit the framework provided for the task. Other illustrations and examples could be provided. On the basis of these and other observations, several points emerge: (1) Not all cultural groups judge, evaluate, and assess stimuli in a linear manner; (2) the number of salient choice options can vary from individual to individual both within and between societal groups; (3) responses are difficult for some because they don’t yet understand what the collective will accepts; (4) the conventional psychometric format common to paper-and-pencil tests and instruments may not work in all cultural and ethnic groups; and (5) the need to capture information through a paper-and-pencil approach may be inconsistent and unrelated to emic styles of information sharing (Trimble & Lonner, 1993).

In recent years, a number of cross-cultural researchers and psychometricians have put forth a variety of interesting statistical algorithms for assessing the presence of
forms of cultural equivalence and culturally bound item bias (see J. Allen & Walsh, 2000). To assess metric equivalence, for example, some researchers have analyzed the scales or instruments with principal components or factor analysis. If the structural dimensions of instruments resemble one another, then, presumably, the scales are equivalent across groups. Strength of the factor-based scales for the respective groups serves as a partial criterion. Factor solutions have been expanded to include congruence coefficients and related manipulations to isolate the nature of the equivalence. Windle, Iwawaki, and Lerner (1987) and Nishimoto (1986), for example, used factor solutions to examine the metric equivalence of personality scales administered to Asian and non-Asian populations. In both studies, the factor solutions did not differ. However, the item composition and thus the factor meanings did vary.

Use of factor analysis in psychometric research and testing equivalence is not without criticism (Carter, 1996; Helms, 1996; Kline, 1983). The full range of arguments are multifold and, in some instances, compelling, and they are not included in this chapter. Nonetheless, three critical points should be made: (1) Factor solutions rarely fit the data completely in cultural-comparative research, due, for the most part, to nonrandom measurement and translation error and unspecified conceptual contributions to the obtained weights; (2) factor solutions are suggestive; and (3) data should be, at a minimum, at the interval level. Most scales and inventories use binary or ordinal-level response categories with presumed equality of the numerical distances between the alternatives; distortions can exist, thus eroding the strength of the correlation coefficients. Kim and Mueller (1978) point out that variables with limited categories are not compatible with factor analytic models. The most forceful critic, though, is Duncan (1984), who considers factor analysis a failure in the measurement field because, among other points, “We . . . see nothing more than a ‘correlational’ science of ‘inexact constructs’” (p. 207).

A few cross-cultural researchers recommend use of covariance structural modeling (e.g., LISREL, EQS) or variants of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test for equivalence (Poortinga, 1983; van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). There are limitations associated with the use of exploratory factor models; the advances in confirmatory factor modeling, however, appear to overcome these limitations. For example, in testing for measurement equivalence, Prelow, Tein, Roosa, and Wood (2000) and Spini (2003) used CFA algorithms and found that many of their scales and corresponding items were unstable across different cultural groups.

Use of item response theory (IRT) to assess cultural equivalence and item bias has produced interesting findings. Ellis, Becker, and Kimmel (1993) and Ellis (1995) used IRT to test the equivalence of the Trier Personality Inventory, originally developed for use in (then) West Germany. The differential item functioning (DIF) index showed that subsequent retranslations of original inventory items reduced the overall content and reduced error due to translations. Bontempo (1993) also used IRT on an individualism-collectivism scale to both demonstrate the efficacy of the procedure and test for translation bias. Use of IRT and corresponding DIF analyses can generate different item consistency outcomes where item bias is detected (Budgell, Raju, & Quartetti, 1995; Marshall, 2002). The lines of research show promise for using IRT to assess equivalence of measures, scales, and tests.
Another creative statistical technique for assessing instrument equivalence has been proposed by van de Vijver and Leung (1997). The approach calls for the use of a two-way analysis of variance where each item in a scale is examined for item bias. Score groups are formed based on the aggregate item summations on the scale. These groups then are analyzed with an analysis of variance statistic. Byrne and Watkins (2003) used the procedure with two culturally different groups to assess measurement invariance among items from a self-description questionnaire; their results indicated that there was evidence of measurement and structural invariance among four subscales of the full scales. Analysis of covariance and analysis of variance techniques should be used with caution, as Byrne and Watkins emphasize: “The fact remains that neither can fully explain all incidences of non-invariance” (p. 173).

A growing number of researchers recommend a form of latent trait analysis, especially when the scale contains binary scores. The Rasch (1960) one-parameter model can be used; however, Irvine and Carroll (1980) remind us that the model should be used “alongside traditional models as part of another method of looking at the same data” (p. 210). Rasch modeling and analysis is a powerful alternative to factor analysis and analysis of variance in assessing the properties of tests and psychosocial scales. According to Schumaker and Linacre (1996), “Factor analysis is confused by ordinal variables and highly correlated factors. Rasch analysis excels at constructing linearity out of ordinality and at aiding the identification of the core construct inside a fog of collinearity” (p. 470). Moreover, factor analysis is aggregate-based; thus, misfitting individuals are a problem and cannot be identified. Rasch modeling provides a fit for each respondent to the model statistics and plots respondents and items on the same real number line (scale) so that one can visualize if the cases have higher or lower self-esteem than the items are capable of finding; Rasch measurement modeling assumes that item estimates are sample-free and case estimates are item-free.

Use of Rasch modeling to assess cultural equivalence has not been that extensive. The few studies using the approach have found that use of negatively worded items with culturally unique populations creates scale problems and item interpretation (Gerber et al., 2002); item linguistic translation can create invariance in multinational focused scales (Leplege, Ecisse, & WHOQOL Rasch Project Scientific Committee, 2000); shorter versions of a scale can be constructed for use in cultural comparative research, but the longer version can be used with one cultural group without making any item adjustments (McInerney, Yeung, & McInerney, 2001); and gender status and self-defined ethnic group respondents influence scale invariance and item nonequivalence of short scales originally believed to be reliable (Trimble & Mahoney, 2002).

To close out this section attention must be give to the achievement of cultural equivalence through use of item linguistic translation procedures, as it is central to understanding the cultural equivalences of measures. Typically, researchers interested in using a measure with more than one ethnic or cultural group will use a translation–back translation (TBT) technique. The TBT technique is straightforward: A researcher first asks a bilingual person to translate the items into the
language of the intended research population, then asks another linguist to translate the items back into the original language of the measure; items from the translated versions are compared and adjustments are made accordingly. The procedure is repeated until the versions match one another conceptually and functionally (Marin & Marin, 1991). Use of the conventional TBT technique is flawed and unreliable; thus, it is not recommended (Brislin, 1976; McGorry, 2000; van de Vijver, 2000).

Several interesting and plausible alternatives for assuring item and scale equivalence using translations have been proposed and empirically tested. Erkut, Alarcon, Coll, Tropp, and Garcia (1999) developed a dual-focus method that relies more on concept translations than straightforward word-for-word translations. Indigenous researchers are invited to join the full research team and together they work through the meanings of concepts intended for use in the measures. Similarly, Geisinger (1994) recommends use of an editorial board consisting of bilingual translators who have credentials similar to those of the researcher; both collaborate on the translation of items. Finally, Johnson (1998) identified some other interesting approaches to item and scale translations, including decentered translation, use of independent bilingual translators who develop alternative versions of the target measure, rank ordering of alternative versions of the measure in the source language, use of cognitive "thinkaloud" protocols, and facet analysis.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We come to the end of our inquiry into the measurement of ethnic and racial identity. The inquiry began with Clifford Geertz's observation that identities "simply do not form an orderly structure." Although his keen observation is not the central theme of this chapter, it sets a tone that the assessment and measurement of racial and ethnic identity is complicated and filled with many problems owing in part to the fact that human beings have multiple, intertwined identities that influence one another in ways that are not fully understood. The problems are compounded by the growing popularity of identity and the effect this has on its meaning. "As identity became more and more a cliché," maintains Philip Gleason (1983), "its meaning grew progressively more diffuse, thereby encouraging increasingly loose and irresponsible usage" (p. 931). The tone is consistent with Weinreich's contention that "a person's appraisal of the social world and its significance is an expression of his or her identity"; consequently, one can have multiple intertwined identities that shift according to a number of circumstances and situations (Weinreich & Saunderson, 2003, p. xix).

To approach the inquiry, the origins of the meanings of identity, ethnicity, and race were provided. When the derivations and meanings of the three constructs are combined, a loose definition emerges to indicate the sameness of a band or nation of people who share common customs and traditions; certain bands or nations may share common experiences born from oppression, domination, and colonialism. The chapter's inquiry focused primarily on how social and behavioral scientists attempt to measure sameness.
To extend the inquiry, a section was devoted to a summary of the thoughts and theoretical perspectives on ethnicity. Although there are several compelling definitions of the construct, ethnicity is not without controversy. Most scholars agree that ethnicity is a social construction. Some view it as an invention, a synonym for identity, symbolic, political, fictional, imagined, and pseudo or contrived. Ethnicity and race are linked to identity; however, the linkage is not straightforward as there are varying opinions on what is more salient and in need of emphasis to understand identity formation and development—ethnic identity or racial identity. Several scholars insist that the concept of the self must be factored into the discussions and theory building. Many have been influenced by the seminal work on social identity initiated by the social psychologist Henri Tajfel, who viewed the self as the core of the identity process.

With the summary background in hand, the inquiry turned to a review of several approaches and techniques to the measurement of ethnic and racial identity. The inquiry started off with a review of nominal approaches to self-identification such as those used recently by the U.S. Bureau of the Census; here again, use of nominal approaches to capturing race and ethnicity is not without controversy. Flowing from that section several measures were summarized illustrating multiple-item measures and those that attempt to capture multiple ethnic and racial identities.

Several important conclusions emerged from the section. First, valid and reliable measures of ethnic and racial identity must be grounded in theory or, at a minimum, on several fundamental propositions. Cheung (1991) reminds us that typically, ethnicity has been treated as no more than a self-evident, ascriptive quality, as have been sex and age. Operationally, ethnicity was always measured by one or a combination of a few objective indicators such as color, place of birth, and language, neglecting the subjective aspect of ethnicity. (p. 575)

Relying on a deconstructive perspective, the cultural anthropologist Dwight Heath (1991) argues that many of the assumptions and uses of ethnicity are garbled “and confused in a markedly inconsistent manner [and are] unlikely to yield further insights that are theoretically or conceptually helpful in terms of understanding how alcohol interacts with the human animal” (p. 610). Although both Cheung and Heath are highly critical of the measurement tendencies, they are quick to point out that some positive contributions have been made to the field of ethnicity, especially in the way the ethnic variable has been viewed in some studies.

Second, we must acknowledge the conclusion that the measurement of ethnicity is no small task, especially given the debate surrounding its theoretical foundations and its usefulness. Researchers must consider the “various cultural and structural dimensions of ethnicity” (Cheung, 1989, p. 72) and “distinguish between general aspects of ethnic identity that apply across groups and specific aspects that distinguish groups” (Phinney, 1990, p. 508). To accomplish this we must move away from viewing ethnic groups as homogeneous entities—in fact, there may be more heterogeneity within certain ethnic and racial groups than among the dominant groups in North American society (Cheung, 1993; Trimble, 1991).
The inquiry closed with a summary of the methodological and measurement problems inherent in the development and use of measures for ethnic and racial populations. Aspects of cultural equivalence and item bias were presented along with an assortment of statistical techniques that can be used to assess invariance and nonequivalence. Studies suggest that sole reliance on conventional and traditional psychometric approaches for establishing a measure's reliability and validity is insufficient and incomplete given advances in the use of latent structure analyses. Helms (1996) reminds us that “this closed-minded perspective frequently has led them [those who use alpha coefficients, interitem correlations, and factor analysis] to discount their own findings in support of racial identity theory” (p. 186). Translation of measures for use with linguistically different ethnic and racial populations is an area in need of serious review and exploration, too. Consequently, a short section was provided calling attention to potential sources of measurement error, item bias, and nonequivalence owing to the inability of researchers to reliably and accurately translate measures for use in cross-cultural settings. Use of the conventional translation-back translation technique is no longer recommended as it has been proven to create multiple sources of measurement error and cultural nonequivalence.

What emerges from the inquiry is uncertainty and ambiguity—uncertainty about the meanings of identity, ethnicity, and race; uncertainty about their usefulness in describing the U.S. population; uncertainty about a person's appraisal of the social world and its significance as an expression of self-identity; uncertainty about what theory best explains psychosocial dynamics, components, and processes; uncertainty about the cultural equivalence of measures and how best to control for cultural bias; uncertainty as to why ethnicity and race are given so much prominence in North America and in other parts of the world; and uncertainty about the applicability of the findings generated by the incongruent and inconsistent measures. Apart from accounting for demographic distributions, there are uncertainties about the causal relationship between ethnic and racial identity outcomes: Most empirical studies using ethnic and racial identity as a moderating or independent variable fail to predict anything of psychosocial importance such as drug and alcohol use, depression, adolescent delinquency, grieving, eating disorders, and suicide, among many other variables.

The inconsistencies and incongruities suggest that the field of ethnic and racial identity is in a condition of disorder and confusion. Weinreich and Saunderson (2003) summarized the confusion best when they asserted that it is “a kaleidoscope set of conceptualizations [where] methods of assessment of parameters of identity, deriving from disparate conceptualizations of self and identity, are often unrelated” (p. 361).

The inconsistencies, incongruities, and confusion in the field should not deter or dissuade the scholar and scientist from conducting further inquiry into the daunting topic. Quite the contrary. The field is not whimsical, patchy, or unsteady—it is in desperate need of structure and order. To accomplish orderliness and structure scholars are challenged and encouraged to engage further and deeper into the topic to sort out and smooth over the discrepancies and incongruities. A good starting
point for a probing inquiry is the emergence of a multiracial or multiethnic classification category. In the cultural and ethnic comparative research realm, researchers typically rely on monoethnic or monoracial categories to test hypotheses about the contribution of one's cultural lifeways and thoughtways to some outcome variable or variable domain. What deep or surface cultural attributes will a multiethnic category permit? If a researcher is interested in discovering deep cultural or ethnic contributions to a cognitive learning style, for example, how will the contributions be disentangled from one's multiethnic worldview or orientation?

There is yet another challenge that most assuredly will press the wit, vigor, and intellect of those bent on advancing an inquiry into ethnic and racial identity. The number of ethnic and racial groups in North America is increasing, not declining—the pot is not melting and the populace does not appear to be assimilating at the rate many demographers and sociologists predicted. All over the world geopolitical boundaries are changing as a result of political turmoil, colonialism, and globalization; consequently, individuals are changing their ethnic allegiances and identities as they move from one environment to another or their boundaries are rearranged (Arnett, 2002). Indigenous groups are asserting sovereign rights and demanding recognition and access to their ancestral lands. Once suppressed voices are demanding their right to recognition. Consequently, the number of ethnic groups worldwide is increasing prominently and becoming more independent and visible; this presents new challenges for the field of ethnic and racial identity.

At the start of this chapter, our inquiry began with an observation by Clifford Geertz (2000), and so it is fitting that the inquiry close with another of his astute and speculative observations:

As the world becomes more thoroughly interconnected, economically and politically, as people move about in unforeseen, only partially controllable, and increasingly massive, ways, and new lines are drawn and old ones erased, the catalogue of available identifications expands, contracts, changes shape, ramifies, involutes, and develops. (p. 225)

Accordingly, the only principled way we can meet the challenge posed by the enlarging catalogue is to engage in a thorough inquiry, all the while realizing that the world is constantly changing.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I want to take this occasion to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my graduate research assistant at Western Washington University, Ryan Dickson, who provided wonderful assistance in the identification and compilation of the chapter's references and thoughtful and helpful comments on various draft sections.

REFERENCES

Critical Issues in Racial-Cultural Research, Measurement, and Ethics


Critical Issues in Racial-Cultural Research, Measurement, and Ethics


