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## **Chicana/o Ethnic Identity Research: Lessons for Researchers and Counselors**

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*Although Chicana/o ethnic identity has been studied extensively, the process of ethnic identity development and the relationship between ethnic identity and other aspects of social identity (such as racial identity) are still not well understood. This article presents a review of the research on Chicana/o ethnic identity, focusing on the early work on the National Chicano Survey, as well as more recent research with Chicana/o children, adolescents, and young adults. Important advances and shortcomings of this work are identified. The findings are discussed in the context of implications for researchers and counselors.*

The counseling psychology literature has historically emphasized the importance of identity development in understanding the worldview of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998; Sue & Sue, 1997). For Chicanas/os, investigations of identity development have been primarily limited to considerations of the ethnic identity development process. However, ethnic identity is part of a more complex construct referred to as social identity; Tajfel (1974) has defined social identity as an understanding of the self that is based on the social realms in which one interacts. Social realms that shape the formation of social identity include cultural, familial, occupational, peer, and community contexts. Understanding the social identity and worldview of our clients is critical to the counseling process. Thus, working effectively with Chicana/o clients requires a grounding in the literature that has explored these issues.

Consistent with the unifying theme of this Major Contribution, this article focuses on current understandings of Chicana/o social identity in an effort to aid counselors who work with these populations. Given the difficulty of understanding Chicana/o social identity (Arce, 1981), the article considers both how much has been learned about identity-development processes and

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what still needs to be studied to address the urgent concerns facing the Chicana/o community today. In particular, the article addresses ethnic identity, the most well-researched aspect of Chicana/o social identity, and racial identity because of its close connection to ethnic identity. To achieve this goal, the article begins with an explanation of the central constructs that must be understood in analyzing Chicana/o social identity development and ethnic identity development in particular. This explanation of constructs is followed by a review of the research, which is divided into the following sections: early research based on the National Chicano Survey, research with young children, research with adolescents, research with young adults, and analyses of racial identity. Next, a critique and discussion of the research integrates counseling research and contributions from related fields (e.g., ethnic studies). Finally, the article ends with two sections that address the implications of this work for researchers and counselors, respectively.

### **CRITICAL CONSTRUCTS IN CHICANA/O IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH**

No aspect of Chicana/o identity has been explored in as much depth as ethnic identity. Ethnic identity development can be understood as a process of ascribing meaning to one's membership in an ethnic group. Ethnic identity can also be broken down into at least several components. These components include ethnic categorization, ethnic identification, and understanding of ethnic constancy, all of which are influenced by enculturation, acculturation, and assimilation. Ethnic categorization occurs in childhood, as individuals learn that they share certain cultural attributes with others and, simultaneously, that other groups share distinct cultural attributes. Ethnic identification is a process whereby children learn to correctly group themselves and others based on common cultural attributes. Ethnic constancy refers to an understanding that one's ethnic categorization is unchangeable (Knight, Bernal, Cota, Garza, & Ocampo, 1993).

These three components of ethnic identity development are commonly understood as necessary cognitive abilities that, once achieved, allow for more complex identity-development processes to occur (e.g., ethnic pride). However, these components of ethnic identity are influenced by enculturation, which is a process through which individuals learn that they have specific ethnic role behaviors (e.g., rituals, celebrations of holidays) that are based on unique ethnic knowledge and lead to ethnic preferences (e.g., for music, food, friends) and feelings (Knight, Bernal, Cota, et al., 1993).

At the same time, acculturation plays an important role in ethnic identity development. Acculturation is the process by which Chicanas/os adopt cul-

tural characteristics and practices from the dominant culture (Knight, Bernal, Cota, et al., 1993). Examples of acculturation can be seen when individuals become English dominant (and even monolingual English speakers) and in other instances when Mexican and Chicana/o cultural practices are exchanged for those of Anglos (e.g., having a "Sweet Sixteen" party instead of the more traditional *quinceañera*). Acculturation and enculturation do not necessarily negatively affect each other. Individuals can adopt mainstream characteristics while maintaining characteristics of Chicana/o culture, resulting in biculturalism. Of course, alternatively, individuals may substitute mainstream characteristics for their own cultural characteristics.

A third process that influences ethnic identity development is assimilation. Assimilation is understood as the end result of complete acculturation, whereby individuals lose all traces of their ethnic heritage and become indistinguishable from the dominant group. Assimilation, however, does not imply that the outside world or society sees the individual as indistinguishable from the majority. Social assimilation, which can be defined as social, political, and economic equality or integration, has not occurred for most Chicanas/os and other racial and ethnic minorities, regardless of how much assimilation may have occurred at a personal or cultural level (see Keefe & Padilla, 1987, for a discussion of assimilation issues).

Whereas ethnic identity development is influenced by these aforementioned processes (i.e., enculturation, acculturation, and assimilation), children and adolescents' acquisition of ethnic information, attitudes, and behaviors is largely influenced by family factors, such as parental level of acculturation and parental ethnic socialization efforts (Quintana & Vera, 1999b). Parental level of acculturation, for example, is related to children's acquisition of ethnic behavior. Thus, social and familial contexts, which determine the level of enculturation and acculturation to which an individual is exposed, heavily influence aspects of ethnic identity development, especially for children and adolescents (see Quintana & Vera, 1999b).

The complexity of ethnic identity development is seen in introducing these constructs. It has been difficult to reach consensus on the nature of the relationships between acculturation, enculturation, assimilation processes, and ethnic identity development in Chicanas/os. Whereas some evidence suggests that greater enculturation leads to higher ethnic knowledge (e.g., knowledge of Mexican culture or history) or practice of ethnic behaviors (Quintana & Vera, 1999b), other research has shown that strong, positive ethnic identities are achieved in individuals who are highly acculturated (Cuéllar, Nyberg, Maldonado, & Roberts, 1997; Félix-Ortiz, Newcomb, & Myers, 1994; Keefe & Padilla, 1987). Thus, the relationships between acculturation, enculturation, and ethnic identity markers do not seem to be linear and are in need of further empirical attention.

The complexity of Chicana/o ethnic identity is increased when racial identity issues are considered. Racial identity is the process by which individuals define themselves with regard to racial classification in their social contexts (Helms, 1990). Although very little research has been done on the influence of race on Chicana/o social identity development, racial issues would seem to be inextricably related to ethnic identity, as is the case for other visibly distinct ethnic groups. Chicanas/os are mixed-race individuals because of the history of Mexico, but they are classified as White within the legal system of the United States. At the same time, because Chicanas/os as a group are more indigenous than they are Spanish, they do not look White and have been segregated as a racial category since their earliest social interactions with Anglos in the Southwest (De Leon, 1983). This confusion regarding the racial status of Chicanas/os and the tendency for race and ethnicity to be confounded in psychological literature have intimately connected concepts of race and ethnicity for Chicanas/os.

This brief discussion begins to reveal how important it is for counselors and others who work closely with Chicanos/as to understand the development of ethnic identity and racial identity (i.e., components of social identity). The analysis begins to suggest not only that worldview and self-concept are influenced by ethnic and racial identity development, but also that quality of life issues and mental health may be influenced by identity. The sections that follow will explore these issues in greater depth.

### A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON CHICANA/O ETHNIC IDENTITY

Before reviewing the larger literature, a few key issues must be addressed about research into Chicana/o ethnic identity. First, a number of different labels are used in the research, including *Hispanic* and *Latino* (often used interchangeably; see McNeill et al., 2001 [this issue]). Most of the studies reviewed here actually included only individuals of Mexican descent, and a few included samples that were primarily composed of Mexican descent individuals. Studies were not included when they focused on non-Mexican, Latina/o populations. Consistent with the other articles that make up this issue of *TCP*, and to avoid confusion, this article typically uses the Chicana/o label in discussing the samples used in these studies. In addition, because of the broad range of research being considered in this article, the works selected tend to be those that either typify the literature or expose new findings. Rather than provide an exhaustive review, the objective is to explore the nuances of Chicana/o ethnic identity that are important to counselors.

Chicana/o ethnic identity refers to the individual and group meanings attached to membership in an ethnic group, but researchers have conceptualized ethnic identity in a number of different ways. Some have looked at ethnic labels (i.e., ethnic self-referents) or ethnic practices (e.g., celebrations), whereas others have considered ethnic beliefs (e.g., fatalism), all as indicators of ethnic identity. A significant body of work has considered the variable of acculturation, which has often been mistakenly categorized as identity research. These issues will become central components of the discussion of this literature.

### **Early Research on Chicana/o Ethnic Identity**

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Chicana/o community, like many other communities of color in the United States during that time, went through a significant transformation with regard to ethnic identity. Abandoning the assimilationist goals of earlier generations, Chicana/o communities (led by students) began a process of redefinition. They developed a new, revolutionary ethnic identity that stood for community empowerment through affirmation rather than through the adoption of majority traits (García, 1997).

By the late 1970s, the significance of ethnic identity to the Chicana/o community and the Chicana/o experience became a focal point of study for Chicana/o researchers. The National Chicano Survey was the first major study that specifically addressed the issue of Chicana/o ethnic identity, although earlier research had considered issues of assimilation and acculturation as they related to Mexican-descent individuals in the United States (see Lai & Sodowsky, 1996a, for several examples). Abandoning past approaches that emphasized the difficulties Mexican Americans had in adopting U.S. social and cultural practices, the National Chicano Survey attempted to understand how Chicanas/os defined their own identities. The data gathered from the survey were obtained from interviews with a probability sample of Mexican ancestry households that included 991 families across the Southwest United States and metropolitan Chicago. The questions related to identity asked individuals to select or reject labels as self-descriptive. These labels related to ethnicity, gender, family roles, and class/work (i.e., aspects of social identity).

In this early research, most of the analyses of these data compared responses to identity-label questions with respondents' backgrounds (e.g., nativity) and with feelings about other issues (such as language use). García (1981, 1982) was among the first to publish work related to these data. His work is important, as it began the process of deconstructing Chicana/o ethnic

identity, and it is discussed in depth for this reason. García (1981) operationalized Chicana/o ethnic identity in terms of the ethnic labels respondents chose and then attempted to link background variables to these choices. He found that just over half of the respondents chose *Mexican American* to describe themselves, whereas just over one fifth chose *other Spanish* and another fifth chose *Mexican*. Connections between preferred identity labels and factors such as age, state of residence, country of origin, language use, and education were found. More important, García concluded that the nuances of the identity process extended beyond the data, as the current methodology had been insufficient to address such complexities.

In his follow-up work, García (1982) attempted to address these nuances as he looked at the relationships between ethnic identity, ethnic identification, and ethnic consciousness. For García, ethnic identity was the cognitive product of identification, which will be defined as labeling oneself in ethnic terms. Ethnic identification was measured by asking individuals to positively or negatively rate a number of different ethnic labels. Ethnic consciousness was identified as a broader concept linked to cultural consciousness (i.e., cultural preferences and attitudes) and associational preferences (for interaction with Mexican descent individuals and others). García also considered political consciousness and participation (through responses to questions about opportunity and ethnicity/race, as well as respondents' involvement in different forms of political participation). García identified several significant relationships, such as the connection between greater association with Chicanas/os and heightened political consciousness and a link between higher levels of negative ethnic identification and decreased interaction with other Mexicans, as well as decreased involvement in cultural holidays. García explained that a number of contextual issues (including concentrations of Mexicans in the community and proximity to the border) seemed to be affecting these relationships. Ultimately, he called for a more multidimensional analysis of Chicana/o ethnic identity.

This initial work by García is crucial because it defined the difficulties involved in understanding Chicana/o ethnic identity, as he considered a number of different ways of thinking about identity. At the same time, he suggested the limits of the survey data on which his analyses were based and identified the need for careful efforts to operationalize identity, which would, in essence, uncover the forces involved in the process of identity development. These conclusions were far more important than the research findings per se, which were significantly constrained by the limits he described. García, therefore, laid the foundation for other researchers to consider how to explore the nature and meaning of Chicana/o ethnic identity and its link to behaviors and the larger experiences of Chicanas/os.

Although subsequent analyses of the National Chicano Survey data became increasingly complex, the most critical contributions of these studies were their efforts to link identity to multiple facets of Chicana/o social life. For example, Hurtado and Arce (1986) analyzed the link between language use and socioeconomic status and the role of context in shaping ethnic label choice, finding that English speakers tended to be better educated and better off financially, whereas U.S. nativity led to more diverse use of labels. Hurtado and Gurin (1987) considered the relationships among bilingualism attitudes, ethnic label choice, structural integration, childhood linguistic socialization, and political consciousness. They found that positive views of bilingualism were associated with stronger culturally based and politically based ethnic identities, whereas significant structural integration in terms of education and wealth was linked to a lack of interest in maintaining Spanish-speaking skills.

Rodriguez and Gurin (1990) researched the linkages between group contact, political consciousness, and ethnic label choice, finding that increased contact with Chicanas/os was associated with a political ethnic identity but not with a culturally based ethnic identity. Gurin, Hurtado, and Peng (1994) focused on how the macrosocial environment is associated with microsocial conditions, which are then related to ethnic label choice. Their findings suggested that unique social contexts in Mexico and the United States lead Mexicanas/os to have more class-oriented identities and Chicanas/os to have more political-oriented identities. Gurin et al. also suggested that these different macrosocial contexts lead to different group contacts (i.e., more intergroup interaction for Chicanas/os), which play a role in these different identities.

Finally, Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng (1994) and Hurtado, Rodríguez, Gurin, and Beals (1993) analyzed the role of structural and historical conditions in shaping ethnic label choice. Both studies found that Chicanas/os have more complex identities as a function of more complex experiences and interactions in the United States. Among the most interesting implications in all this work is the conclusion made by Hurtado et al. (1994) that the most important identities to individuals (i.e., ethnic identities) are those that are most devalued by society.

The aforementioned findings demonstrate the difficulty of interpreting both the selection and meaning of ethnic labels used by Chicanas/os because they tend to vary depending on the context. Gurin et al. (1994) and Saenz and Aguirre (1991) suggested that ethnic identity is not simply ascribed or objective but that it has subjective influences that lie in the contexts in which it is invoked. Subsequent research on ethnic identity development in Chicanas/os expanded the focus from understanding the nature and meaning of ethnic



identification and labeling to elucidating the process by which ethnic identity processes occur from youth to adulthood.

### **Ethnic Identity Development in Chicana/o Youth**

During the 1990s, Martha Bernal, George Knight, and their colleagues built on the work of the National Chicano Survey and made dramatic advances in the conceptualization and analysis of Chicana/o ethnic identity. For the first time, they attempted to explain the process of ethnic identity development in Chicana/o youth (Bernal, Knight, Garza, Ocampo, & Cota, 1990), beginning with important critiques of the early literature in the field, where race and ethnicity were often used interchangeably. As the authors differentiated these constructs, their research revealed that ethnic awareness develops later than racial awareness in children, as it requires greater cognitive ability in terms of identifying complex cues such as behaviors, customs, beliefs, and values rather than simplistic perceptions of obvious physical characteristics. The work of Quintana and Vera (1999a) also demonstrated that greater cognitive development is necessary for children to recognize such complex cues.

Building on earlier work, Bernal et al. (1990) provided a model for operationalizing Chicana/o ethnic identity development that included the following dimensions: ethnic self-identification, ethnic constancy, use of ethnic role behaviors, ethnic knowledge, and ethnic preferences and feelings. Through interviews with young children that assessed each of these dimensions, Bernal et al. were able to uncover the earliest indications of Chicana/o ethnic identity development. They found that preschoolers have little understanding of their ethnic identity, whereas older children begin to develop this understanding. Specifically, ethnic awareness and identification occur for children between the ages of 7 and 10, whereas ethnic constancy occurs between 8 and 10. This research is significant as it provides a model for understanding and measuring early identity development, while also showing the emerging significance of ethnic identity in Chicana/o children's self-perceptions.

Knight, Cota, and Bernal (1993), in an attempt to validate the Bernal et al. (1990) model, investigated the relationship between Chicana/o children's ethnic socialization and their social orientations in the school. Results indicated that higher levels of ethnic knowledge and ethnic preferences among parents led to teaching children more about Mexican culture, which led to higher levels of ethnic knowledge, preferences, and identity in the children. In turn, these higher levels of ethnic identity were associated with more cooperative tendencies among the children in their learning environments: The

participants were more committed to group advancement than they were to individual advancement.

Bernal and her colleagues continued their work by focusing on the influences of gender, geography, family, and community variables on the process of Chicana/o identity formation (Bernal & Martinelli, 1993). Based on this research, Knight, Bernal, Cota, et al. (1993) provided perhaps the most complex model (to date) of the process of Chicana/o ethnic identity development. Their socialization model of ethnic identity (built on ideas from social learning theory, Bandura, 1986; cognitive developmental theory, Flavell, 1985; and self-system theory, Harter, 1983) proposed that both enculturation and acculturation work together to shape the ethnic identity and ethnic behaviors of children. In this model, the social ecology of the family (e.g., generation of migration, acculturation, ethnic identity of parent, language, cultural knowledge, family structure) interacts with the ecology of the community in which they live, and these both work together to influence children's socialization. Familial agents, therefore, teach ethnic content, for example, whereas non-familial agents also communicate views about ethnicity and ethnic group membership. These factors, the authors suggested, shape the child's ethnic identity, which in turn shapes ethnic behaviors. In addition, the authors explained that cognitive development is an overarching process that moderates the influence of various socialization agents and the extent to which such influences shape ethnic behaviors.

Knight, Bernal, Garza, and Cota (1993) contended that the Knight, Bernal, Cota, et al. (1993) model could be applicable to other aspects of social identity development in children (e.g., gender identity, familial identity, and school identity). By providing this complex model, Knight, Bernal, Cota, et al. significantly advanced the complexity with which Chicana/o ethnic identity was understood and laid the groundwork for investigations of ethnic identity development that expanded into adolescence.

### **Ethnic Identity Development in Chicana/o Adolescents**

Phinney has done a significant amount of work in the field of adolescent ethnic identity development, and her three-stage model of ethnic identity development is of particular importance. Phinney (1990, 1991, 1993) grounded most of her work in Erikson's writings on ego identity formation. Erikson (1964, 1968) focused on adolescence as the crucial time in life when youth typically experience some form of crisis and go through a process of self-exploration that leads to commitment to a personal identity, which, in turn, serves as a guide in their lives. A critical aspect of this process, according to Erikson, is the development of a sense of continuity between the way

others see the individual and the way the individual sees her- or himself. The result of this process yields an identity status. These statuses were described by Marcia (1980) as identity diffusion (individuals who have neither made a commitment to a particular identity nor experienced an identity conflict), identity foreclosure (those who have not explored identity and have made what he categorizes as a premature commitment), moratorium (those who are exploring identity options but have yet to make a commitment), and achieved identity (those who have explored identity in depth and have arrived at a well-grounded sense of self). Adolescents may move in and out of these statuses in a linear way (i.e., from diffusion to achievement). Phinney was the first researcher to apply Erikson's and Marcia's ideas to ethnic identity development.

Phinney (1993) conducted research with groups of racial and ethnic minority adolescents that included Chicanas/os, asking them to discuss the degree to which they have addressed and resolved ethnic identity issues. Much of this research led to the development of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), in which Phinney (1992) posited three components of ethnic identity: affirmation and belonging (i.e., the sense of group membership and attitudes toward the group, including attachment and pride), ethnic identity achievement (i.e., the extent to which a person has achieved a secure and confident sense of his or her ethnicity, including knowledge and understanding of the ethnic group), and ethnic behaviors (i.e., activities associated with group membership such as customs, traditions, and social interactions). Whereas feelings of affirmation/belonging and ethnic behaviors were seen as outcomes of ethnic identity development, ethnic identity achievement was conceptualized as representing a range of identity statuses similar to those articulated by Marcia (1980).

Phinney (1993) explained that the first stage of ethnic identity development is unexamined ethnic identity, in which adolescents have given no thought to issues of ethnic identity (whether they are steeped in their own culture or trying to adopt mainstream culture). Phinney suggested that there are significant similarities between these youth and individuals that Marcia (1980) classified as having foreclosed or diffused identities. Phinney (1993) went on to explain that this unexamined stage continues until an identity crisis occurs, triggering the next stage, ethnic identity search/moratorium. No pivotal event is required to initiate this shift, but the search process is necessary to reaching an achieved identity. At the third and final stage, individuals are confident and comfortable with their ethnicity, as well as their place in the society at large. An achieved identity status is proposed to be the most adaptive identity status, and this assertion is supported by research suggesting that adolescents with achieved identities have high self-esteem, strong ego-identity, and healthy family and peer relationships (Phinney, 1989).

Phinney (1993) suggested that the process of ethnic identity formation need not evolve in a linear direction, although her research findings favor linear movement. As Phinney concluded, her model is only an initial analysis of the process of ethnic identity formation, and a great deal more research and development is needed. Nonetheless, the Phinney model is helpful, as it explains later phases of identity development not covered in the model proposed by Bernal, Knight, and their colleagues. Like earlier researchers, Phinney has added a critical piece to the puzzle of Chicana/o ethnic identity. As Phinney (1996) acknowledged in a later work, ethnic identity can best be understood in terms of dimensions along which individuals and samples vary, rather than as categories into which individuals can be classified.

Phinney and her colleagues' most recent work has focused on developing the MEIM as a research tool for measuring ethnic identity. Roberts et al. (1999) found the MEIM to be a strong tool for assessing ethnic identity among Chicanas/os and other ethnic groups. Although the MEIM allows for a seemingly valid, broader assessment of ethnic identity, it does not address some of the critical complexities of social identity among Chicanas/os and still focuses on categorization in the absence of identifying a developmental process that might go beyond adolescence and into adulthood.

### **Ethnic Identity Development in Chicana/o Young Adults**

The work of Ethier and Deaux (1990, 1994) has focused on understanding factors that influence ethnic identity development among young adult Chicanas/os. Their work investigated relevant issues for Latinas/os attending Ivy League universities (more than half the sample was of Mexican descent) using an open-ended interview to allow students to choose the identities that were significant to them. The researchers were able to examine the multiple social identities that were important to participants, although they were most interested in and focused on the ethnic identities of the students. Ethier and Deaux (1990) found that most participants emphasized ethnic identity (as reflected in their discussions of the importance of ethnicity in their lives), although to varying degrees. The authors highlighted the importance of context, such as the academic environment, as attending Ivy League colleges posed definite threats to the students' ethnic identities. Some of these threats came in the form of incidents of racial prejudice.

Later, Ethier and Deaux (1994) reported findings gathered longitudinally through discussions with students about their identities, self-esteem, cultural affiliations, and perceived threats to their identity. This study is significant because it looked at three points in time during students' first year in an Ivy League college. Among their central findings was the fact that participants went through a process of "remooing" whereby they replaced the ethnic

identity supports they had before college with new ones in the college context. They found that the degree of "Hispanic group involvement" before coming to college determined the degree of this involvement at college. Students who made efforts to be involved in their ethnic community at college showed an increase in ethnic identification, whereas those who did not showed a decrease. Ethier and Deaux also had the important insight that these differing degrees of involvement do not necessarily indicate differing degrees of ethnic salience but rather may reflect differing responses to the salience. For example, they found that students who felt threatened about their ethnic identity experienced losses in self-esteem. Ethier and Deaux also found that students who had negative feelings about their ethnic group decreased their ethnic identification, whereas those who had positive feelings about their group increased their ethnic identification. Overall, this study suggested both the importance of ethnic identity to the comfort of Chicana/o college students and the benefits of a strong ethnic identity to these students.

Most Chicanas/os do not attend Ivy League universities, and these findings may not apply to Chicanas/os in other academic contexts. However, Ethier and Deaux (1994) were successful in underscoring the importance of interethnic context and changes in this context in understanding ethnic identity issues among Chicana/o young adults. The experience of attending college is a particular event that may precipitate important changes in ethnic identity for Chicanas/os, which is particularly relevant to counseling psychologists who work in counseling centers or in student services. Furthermore, this research appears to suggest that issues of identity may be linked to attitudes toward and even performance in school. One particularly disturbing aspect of this research is the prevalence of ethnic/racial harassment experienced by students in the collegiate environment. Thus, both ethnicity and race seem to be critical issues involved in social identity development for Chicanas/os.

### **Racial Identity Issues**

Recent discussions in *American Psychologist* have highlighted the necessity of considering racial identity formation and its connection to ethnic identity development and social identity in general among Chicanas/os. Specifically, Phinney (1996) sparked the controversy when, in her conceptual discussion of ethnicity, she encompassed race and racial identity within ethnic identity, arguing that race itself is a social construct, as there is wide disagreement on its meanings and usage for psychology. Although Phinney makes reference to aspects of identity that are specifically a function of race and discusses their significance in identity formation, she argues that race can and should be encompassed within the construct of ethnicity. Later, Phinney

and Kohatsu (1997) went on to conceptualize racial and ethnic identity development as one process.

In a response to Phinney (1996), Helms and Talleyrand (1997) argued that individuals can receive distinct forms of socialization in the areas of race and ethnicity. Furthermore, the authors explained that ethnicity often has little meaning for life in the United States, whereas race is constantly employed as a means of socially categorizing individuals and groups. The authors suggest that race, not ethnicity, influences the quality of life for visibly distinct ethnic groups due to experiences of racial discrimination. Although the debate did not specifically address research with Chicanas/os, it exposed the fact that, in social identity research with Chicanas/os, issues of race have been ignored or have not been addressed with the rigor they demand.

For Chicanas/os, studies of relationships between race, ethnicity, and quality of life indices have been few. However, Hall (1994) argued that skin color, which varies greatly in Chicanas/os and other Latinas/os, is related to discrimination and economic opportunities in the United States. For example, Relethford, Stern, Gaskill, and Hazuda (1983) found that skin color of research participants became progressively lighter as they moved from lower socioeconomic status to higher socioeconomic status. Arce, Murgia, and Frisbie (1987) also examined phenotype differences among Chicanas/os and found a correlation between darker skin tone, lower income level, and lower education level. Skin color is but one indicator of race and cannot be equated with race. However, the limited number of studies that have considered racial features of Chicanas/os have focused on skin color. To the extent that skin tone is a reflection of various racial mixtures in Chicanas/os, these studies support the contention that there may be important racial differences related to quality of life among Chicanas/os, although they belong to the same ethnic group.

The limited evidence that does exist suggests that Chicanas/os may indeed experience dual processes of ethnic and racial identity development. For example, Bernal et al. (1990) noted that Chicana/o children learn racial awareness before ethnic awareness (i.e., between the ages of 3 and 6). Still, models of identity development for Chicanas/os have not specifically addressed racial identity. Thus, studies that explore racial identity development among Chicanas/os are sorely needed, especially given the multiracial nature of Chicanas/os. Although Chicanas/os may be a mix of indigenous and European peoples, their physical appearances vary. Those who are darker skinned and appear more phenotypically indigenous are likely to experience a different type of discrimination than Chicanas/os who are lighter skinned and have more European features.

It stands to reason that physical appearance is a part of one's self-concept and, therefore, affects one's ethnic and racial identity. It is important to men-

tion that lighter skinned Chicanas/os are not necessarily "better off," when one considers discrimination that occurs due to language usage and accented speech. It is also possible that although features such as skin tone are associated with economic prosperity, they can become the focus of within-group conflict. For example, more European-looking Chicanas/os are sometimes accused of not "looking Mexican," whereas darker skinned Chicanas/os are sometimes pejoratively called *indios* as a sign of disrespect. At the same time, even lighter skinned Chicanas/os may be acutely affected by issues of race as they are exposed to racism in ways that other Chicanas/os are not (e.g., being seen as confidants in negative discussions of Chicanas/os, among other ethnic groups). Issues of race within the Chicana/o community are undoubtedly complex and need to be further explored by identity development research.

The issues raised by Phinney (1996), Helms and Talleyrand (1997), and others suggest that racial identity development must be included in any analysis of social identity for Chicanas/os. Casas and Pytluk (1995) are perhaps the only authors to devote significant attention to racial identity development as it relates to Chicanas/os and other Latinas/os. In their review of the literature, Casas and Pytluk discuss the Racial/Cultural Identity Development model of Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1993). It is significant that this model considers the role of racial oppression in the development of identity among people of color in the United States. The model, however, develops a continuum of racial understandings that underplays the complexity of the role of race in the lives of individuals. In the latest published version of the model (Atkinson et al., 1998), the authors explain that the stages of development are not unilinear and often overlap, and yet, the authors are still bound by their emphasis on stages. As in the model proposed by Phinney (1993), individuals are placed into one of the following stages of racial identity development: conformity (preference for dominant cultural values), dissonance (uncertainty and conflict between appreciating and depreciating attitudes toward the self, dominant group, in-group, and other minority groups), resistance and immersion (rejection of dominant culture and immersion in own culture), introspection (emphasis on individual autonomy within the group), and synergetic articulation and awareness (positive views on culture, in-group, and other minority groups and selective appreciation of the dominant group). Because this model has not been directly tested on Chicanas/os, it is difficult to speculate the extent to which it might be useful in understanding a process of racial identity development relevant in the lives of Chicanas/os. However, it may serve as a starting point as this necessary area of scholarship emerges.

Helms (1995) has also devoted significant attention to the development of a racial identity model (primarily for African Americans and White Americans). As the earlier discussion of her critique of Phinney suggested, Helms believes that racial identity is a central aspect of social identity among people

of color in the United States. Helms developed her model based on Cross's (1971) early work, which looked at the process of Nigrescence during the activist period of the late 1960s and 1970s. Helms's work is perhaps the most thoughtful and carefully developed racial identity model in the literature. She identified six racial identity statuses, which include conformity (denial, minimization, and selective perception), dissonance (anxiety, ambivalence, or disorientation), immersion (hypersensitivity and dichotomous thinking), emersion (vigilance and energized collectivism), internalization (intellectualization and abstraction), and integrative awareness (flexible analyses and responses to racial stimuli). Helms explained how racial identity comes into play in regular interactions individuals experience and showed how identity differences between people can dramatically affect these interactions. Helms also proposed that individuals can possess more than one racial identity status at any given time, and furthermore, she articulated how these statuses are linked to actions and behaviors. Unfortunately, Helms's model has not been used to assess racial identity development among Chicanas/os, but it could represent a starting point for future scholarship. In her more recent work (Helms, 1995; Helms & Cook, 1999), Chicanas/os or Latinas/os are not listed as a distinct racial group but fall into the combination of groups mentioned.

There has been little effort to distinguish between racial and ethnic identity in Chicanas/os and to understand their relationship. There has been no attempt to consider the significance of the forces shaping racial identity and their role in determining ethnic identity. Because many of the psychological issues facing contemporary Chicanas/os may be connected to racial oppression in the United States, understanding ethnic identity necessarily involves clarification of what role race plays in the daily lives of Chicanas/os.

### **Chicana/o Ethnic Identity Research and Counseling**

To this point, our review has highlighted some of the most significant work addressing Chicana/o ethnic identity development. Early work on the National Chicano Survey provided an initial understanding of the importance of ethnic categorization. Bernal and Knight (1993) and their colleagues helped provide a further understanding of the earliest processes of identity development and created a model that identified some of the relevant social-cognitive forces involved in this process. Phinney (1993) provided a three-stage model for identity development among adolescents. Ethier and Deaux (1990, 1994) considered some of the contextual factors involved in the continual evolution of this identity in young adulthood. Together, this body of research creates a piecemeal model for understanding the process of Chicana/o ethnic identity development. Consequently, although this research allows for the consideration of some important issues confronting



Chicanas/os, there is still not a comprehensive understanding of the process of Chicana/o ethnic identity development. As a result, the research covered in previous sections does not provide much direction in terms of comprehensive guidelines by which counselors can work with Chicanas/os.

A limited amount of work, however, has specifically considered counseling issues related to Chicana/o identity. De Domanico, Crawford, and De Wolfe (1994) discussed the role that counselors can play in helping Chicana/o youth develop a bicultural identification (defined as comfort in home and dominant cultures). They suggested that counselors should work with Chicana/o adolescents to develop high self-esteem and maintain their Mexican values and networks, while acquiring U.S. values and networks that will help them achieve success. The academic setting has been the focus of much of the applied work in this area, which has attempted to understand how various aspects of ethnic identity are related to coping with stress and successful adaptation in academic environments.

Quintana, Vogel, and Ybarra (1991) conducted a meta-analysis of the literature examining the role of ethnic identity in psychological adjustment of Latinos (including Chicanas/os) in postsecondary education. In many of these studies, ethnic identity variables were considered as important predictors of academic success. One of the main findings was that cultural affiliation (e.g., participation in ethnic practices and behaviors) was related to stress level in college students. Lower involvement in mainstream culture was related to higher levels of stress. Thus, this finding would suggest that greater ease of functioning in the dominant culture may make it easier for Chicana/o students to "fit in" and experience less stress. However, these studies often confounded the constructs of ethnic identity with indices of acculturation and acculturative stress. Both of these latter constructs are important in understanding the mental health of Chicanas/os, but they are distinct concepts, not necessarily related to ethnic identity achievement. For example, an individual who has an achieved ethnic identity may also be highly acculturated and experience little acculturative stress. Another individual may also have an achieved ethnic identity but be less acculturated and experience significant acculturative stress. In this example, the ethnic identity of the individuals might be comparable, but the acculturation level would be different, resulting in stress that might have serious mental health consequences.

As that example suggests, what is important about the literature exploring ethnic identity, acculturation, stress, and academic achievement is that it suggests that ethnic identity variables per se may have no consistent relationship to outcome variables. Rather, the stress that one experiences in one's immediate context (e.g., a college campus) seems more directly related to academic performance (Quintana et al., 1991). Although ethnic identity variables might be involved in determining the level of stress (e.g., being on a predomi-

nantly white campus, experiencing discrimination because of one's participation in Mexican rituals or Chicana/o organizations), it is not the case that having a specific ethnic identity status or specific ethnic preferences is consistently related to academic success or quality of life issues.

Based on his experience in counseling Chicanas/os and Latinas/os, Ruiz (1990) stressed the need for understanding ethnic identity and identified applications to the work of counseling psychologists. He presented a five-stage model of identity development and emphasized the strategies that counselors can use to support Chicanas/os. The stages he described are causal (ethnic identity conflict), cognitive (faulty beliefs about ethnicity), consequence (fragmentation of ethnic identity), working through (dealing with the distress of ethnic conflict), and successful resolution (greater acceptance of self, culture, and ethnicity).

Ruiz (1990) suggested counseling strategies that combine conventional therapeutic interventions with culture-specific methods depending on the stage a client is in. For example, the use of positive ethnic self-affirmations, along with participation in activities that promote ethnic appreciation and pride, may occur during the causal stage. At the working through stage, the counselor may address negative attitudes about race and ethnicity through such techniques as *ethnotherapy* (Klein, 1980) and *pluralistic counseling* (Levine & Padilla, 1980). Although Ruiz provided a much-needed conceptualization of Chicana/o ethnic identity issues based on clinical experience, his work is limited by its effort to condense the process of ethnic identity development into a simplistic model that focuses on specific ethnic conflicts; it does not consider other equally significant (e.g., racial) conflicts. Thus, this model does not address the multiple paths Chicanas/os may follow in their identity development. In addition, as Casas and Pytluk (1995) suggested, more empirically based investigations are needed to validate and expand this model.

Overall, the few studies and models that have considered the counseling implications of understanding Chicana/o ethnic identity processes have been essential. They initiated a much needed discussion of identity issues important in the lives of Chicanas/os. At the same time, these models and studies have been preliminary and limited in their scope. Casas and Pytluk (1995) conceptualized the needs in this area of research by noting that the vast majority of counseling research dealing with Chicana/o ethnic identity has focused on the level of acculturation rather than the process of its development. Lai and Sodowsky (1996a, 1996b) provided bibliographies of much of the acculturation research, which focuses on issues of language usage and ethnic preferences. Assessment devices such as the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (Cuéllar, Harris, & Jasso, 1980) have been frequently used in this body of research. Despite efforts to analyze the link

between acculturation and ethnic identity (Cuéllar et al., 1997), the constructs have not been operationalized distinctly or effectively, and the findings, therefore, cannot provide a careful analysis of the relationship between these constructs.

### **ADVANCING CHICANA/O ETHNIC IDENTITY RESEARCH**

Over the course of the last two decades, the research on Chicana/o ethnic identity has evolved tremendously. Perhaps the most important findings in this body of work have been the new directions the research has suggested we pursue. First of all, there is a need for a more uniform and conceptually complex definition/understanding of Chicana/o ethnic identity, grounded in efforts to understand the process of Chicana/o identity development across the lifespan. The wide range of conceptualizations of Chicana/o ethnic identity make it difficult to fully understand how different analyses contribute to our knowledge of ethnic identity as it is experienced by Chicanas/os in the real world. Similarly, the complex nature of ethnic identity makes it difficult to understand how specific analyses of individual relationships (such as those between acculturation and ethnic consciousness) relate to the daily processes of ethnic identity development. For example, the identity struggles that Chicana/o youth face are often related to their experiences, not only as members of an ethnic minority group but as members of a racialized group. Furthermore, a number of other arenas of Chicana/o existence overlap into their ethnic and racial identities, including issues of gender, class, sexuality, family, and, of course, education. Chicana/o ethnic identity research has yet to address these concerns, and a most important need exists for greater emphasis on the ongoing developmental process of Chicana/o ethnic identity formation.

In addition, there have been no analyses of Chicana/o ethnic identity development in adulthood. Although the work with the National Chicano Survey is based on research with adults, it is not process oriented. Research with Chicana/o adults would provide a much more thorough and complex understanding of the forces involved in Chicana/o ethnic identity development and its changes over time. In particular, it would be interesting and important to conduct both longitudinal studies and research with Chicana/o elders, as such research would allow for the crucial formation of a more comprehensive model of Chicana/o ethnic identity development across the lifespan. Consequently, to better understand Chicana/o ethnic identity and its development, conceptual and empirical research needs to be conducted that

looks at identity development across early childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and adulthood.

Also, there is a need for researchers to articulate clearly the ways in which they both conceptualize and operationalize various aspects of ethnic identity. In this review, multiple dimensions of ethnic identity have been presented, from early aspects of ethnic identity development (e.g., ethnic categorization, ethnic constancy) to more advanced dimensions (e.g., ethnic identity achievement and ethnic consciousness). Ethnic identity is also reflected in preferences, behaviors, attitudes, and feelings, and measures exist that allow researchers to tap into any or all of these dimensions in their investigations. Thus, good scholarship must be based on precise conceptualizations of constructs and reliable operationalization.

Finally, there is a need to use qualitative research methods to capture the complexity of the aforementioned types of information. Conducting research that can describe the experiences and complexity of Chicana/o ethnic identity formation is extremely difficult. At a conceptual and practical level, it is an enormous task to design research projects that can deconstruct multiple aspects of Chicana/o ethnic identity and the identity formation process in general. However, some qualitative investigations have begun to address these complexities.

Olsen (1997), for example, investigated identity issues in students from one California school district, revealing a racial hierarchy with regard to who can and cannot be successful and who can have access to the school capital that will lead to later life successes. Her analysis included observations; interviews with students, teachers, and administrators; and participation in classes. Through this in-depth analysis, she uncovered illuminating aspects of the complex reality of students. Olsen explained that the racial hierarchy was subtly maintained in the school, where teachers and administrators alike were among the first to espouse ideals of diversity and equality. The dominant belief among these school staff members was that the school operated as a meritocracy, and few saw the subtle ways that staff constricted the opportunity of Latina/o students to access resources necessary for demonstration of merit (through tracking and discipline, for example). Olsen's research suggests the need for qualitative studies that work with Chicanas/os to critically evaluate the complex forces that shape their experiences and identities. Pizarro (1997, 2000) has initiated this type of research through a qualitative methodology that analyzes social identity formation among Chicana/o high school and college students. This work is taking identity research in new directions by examining the forces and contexts that shape the evolution of Chicana/o social identity across axes of race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, education, and other arenas of their social lives. Pizarro's work suggests the importance of more complex analyses as individuals' lack of power in

specific social arenas of their lives influences identity formation and the link these individuals make between racial and ethnic identity, all of which is connected to school performance.

In addition, contributions from areas outside of counseling psychology such as ethnic studies have made important advances that help us consider how to move beyond the shortcomings of previous research on Chicana/o ethnic identity. For example, a myriad of Chicana feminist writers (most notably Anzaldúa, 1987; Castillo, 1994; Moraga, 1983) have constructed complicated frameworks that explain the need to understand the interaction of gender and ethnicity in shaping the identities of Chicanas. These writers have pushed the discourse on identity forward by suggesting that ethnic/racial, gender, sexual, and class identities are neither static nor firm; rather, they are continuously intersecting and evolving as a function of various social forces. Thus, qualitative research needs to strive to investigate and develop an understanding of identity as Chicanas/os themselves experience it. Rather than forcing individuals' lives into specific categories, researchers need to engage in the development of grounded theory through extended interviews and oral histories with Chicanas/os in different contexts, of varying age groups, and across diverse life experiences.

At a more basic level, researchers also need to reexamine the epistemological foundations of our approaches. For the most part, identity research is grounded in a shared academic epistemology or worldview, despite the fact that there are multiple epistemologies in the different communities in which this work is conducted. Chicanas/os do not produce and pass on knowledge in the ways that other communities do (see Pizarro, 1998, for a more in-depth description of Chicana/o epistemology). When a mainstream epistemological framework or system of knowledge is applied to the study of a group that operates under a different way of thinking, researchers force themselves to employ tools that cannot begin to comprehend the issues and processes involved in what is being studied. By acknowledging the validity and uniqueness of Chicana/o epistemology, as well as the worldviews that shape a distinct knowledge system among Chicanas/os, researchers can begin the process of constructing frameworks for understanding and intervening in the social identity formation of Chicanas/os, frameworks that are grounded in the complex realities of Chicanas/os.

As a result, future areas of research might examine the link between social identity and the dramatic school failure of Chicanas/os (Pizarro, 2000), the role of Chicana/o epistemology in the use of informal counseling strategies versus conventional counseling services, and the influence of power and inequality in Chicanas/os' use of and response to mental health providers. Without methodological innovation, research will remain bound by the constraining methods of academic traditions, and these issues may go unex-

plored. Simultaneously, traditional research may continue to produce categorizations and correlations that gloss over the complexity of social identity and ignore the insights of Chicana/o epistemology. In short, there is a great need for researchers to acknowledge that effective scholarship will require a complex and carefully conceptualized, qualitative accounting of the unique forces, knowledge systems, and worldviews that shape the identities of Chicanas/os over the course of their lives.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELORS

Counseling psychology literature has demonstrated the significance of ethnic identity in the worldviews of people of color in the United States. Although research on Chicana/o populations has not been as abundant as research on other racial and ethnic minority groups, it is probable that understanding aspects of Chicana/o ethnic identity, racial identity, and other components of social identity is critical to effective counseling efforts.

Identity construction and development for Chicanas/os is a complicated process that is influenced by cultural variables of the client (e.g., age, gender, race), family variables (e.g., parental ethnic socialization), contextual variables (e.g., academic environment, community factors), and the dynamics of enculturation and acculturation. For this reason, placing individuals into categories of ethnic identity and treating them based on the generic needs that have been established for the category may be ineffective and even harmful. For example, two individuals might have strong, positive ethnic identities that were constructed by different experiences. One might have an ethnic identity grounded primarily in early and comprehensive enculturation into Mexican traditions. The other individual might have an ethnic identity grounded in several recent experiences with racism that have led the individual to become immersed in Mexican culture as a means of coping with the messages conveyed by racist encounters. Although the two individuals may be placed into one category of ethnic identity, in many ways, their identities are different. To conceptualize the psychological strengths and needs of these individuals accurately and to develop more appropriate counseling strategies, one must account for those differences.

One of the most important issues involved in working with Chicana/o youth might be helping them to integrate aspects of their ethnic/racial identity into their evolving self-concept. The influence of parents and families is likely to be powerful at this point in time. About the same time that awareness of ethnic identity issues is emerging in children, awareness of prejudices is appearing among children (Quintana & Vera, 1999b). Thus, it is possible that children begin to see that ethnicity and race are bases on which children ridi-

cule one another, just as they are beginning to grapple with the meaning of their ethnicity in their young lives. Thus, counselors can provide opportunities for children to process these issues in individual, group, or family modalities.

Adolescents are more cognitively developed than young children and begin to understand ethnic identity and other aspects of social identity development in more complex ways. Furthermore, research suggests that adolescents may be engaged in search processes that eventually help them commit to a sense of identity that will be important to how they view their world. While adolescents struggle with a host of identity issues that include emerging sexuality, developing vocational interests, and changing roles within their families, they are also likely to be more influenced by social conflicts than they were as children. Thus, counselors can assist in the struggles that Chicana/o adolescents experience around identity as it is influenced by family, authority figures, peers, and community.

Research suggests that, for young adults, new contexts such as college or the workforce may represent challenges that affect ethnic identity development. For college students in general, adjusting to the challenges of school and/or living away from home for the first time can be traumatic. For Chicanas/os, who also may be living away from ethnic communities that served as important sources of support, this adjustment can be even more challenging. The paucity of Chicana/o college graduates is one indication that counselors could play a more instrumental role in increasing retention. However, counselors who work with Chicanas/os in college settings must also understand that the conflicts Chicanas/os experience in their daily lives will often make them distrustful of people associated with "the system." For example, as Olsen (1997) pointed out, Chicana/o youth typically see counselors and other school staff as obstacles because these individuals often do not consider their own unconscious complicity in maintaining school inequality. Thus, outreach and nontraditional efforts to reach Chicana/o students may be needed (e.g., continual counselor involvement with Chicana/o student organizations and participation in community activities) to create a climate in which students are more comfortable connecting with psychologists. Counselors also may be required to help Chicana/o clients deal with the dissonance between the Chicana/o world and that of the institution. With regard to helping Chicana/o students struggling with racism, counselors may have to acknowledge not only the existence of racism but also the manner in which the university itself promotes the institutional racism that underlies the experiences individuals have faced. In fact, recent research suggests that individuals might be more successful if helped to develop a critical understanding of racism as a strategy that can be used as a motivation to pursue self-empowerment (Pizarro, 1997).

Finally, counselors can be of assistance to Chicana/o clients by developing programs in college settings, schools, or the workplace that provide social support and ethnic group affiliation and encourage community empowerment. This means that we have to be willing to push the boundaries of our work settings to include contexts in which Chicanas/os feel welcome and safe. This recommendation may mean that we sponsor student organizations that meet in the Chicana/o community, if one exists, or in sanctioned settings such as community centers, churches, restaurants, or even private homes. As counselors, we must support Chicanas/os' efforts to use natural systems of support (e.g., extended family, friends) and indigenous mechanisms of help (e.g., priests, curanderos), which may be instrumental in affirming their sense of ethnic identity.

Counselors also must work to make support networks inclusive of all Chicanas/os, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or other demographic variables that sometimes serve as barriers within the community. As the research on the mental health needs of Chicanas/os increases, we will be able to more clearly articulate specific ways in which counselors can foster and support the development of healthy ethnic identities in Chicana/o communities. The key to developing successful interventions for Chicanas/os, in the meantime, is dedication to the people and their needs, which demands the willingness to invest in and become a part of these communities. Without this investment, even the most successful and well-tested interventions will be limited in impact. With such an investment, counselors and Chicanas/os can work collaboratively to address individual and community struggles with identity that consider the complex issues discussed in this article. Some of these issues might include feelings of not belonging in the Chicana/o culture and/or the mainstream culture; dealing with racial conflict from either or both groups; struggling with issues of class, gender, or sexuality in either or both groups; and dealing with the discontinuity between individual values and those honored by either or both groups. Helping Chicanas/os manage these issues may lead to the development of a stronger sense of social identity, which includes an orientation toward success and psychological well-being.

## CONCLUSION

The research reviewed in this article poses significant challenges to the field. It has laid an important foundation by allowing us to generally understand the importance of Chicana/o ethnic identity within the larger Chicana/o experience. We also have emphasized the difficulties in taking this work to the next level in the pursuit of knowledge that will help our efforts to assist



Chicanas/os. The implications for researchers are tremendously challenging, as they require increasing the complexity of our methods and models, looking at how different realms of social identity interact, and analyzing social identity development as a lifelong process. The implications for counselors are equally demanding due to the lack of consistent relationships between ethnic identity variables and mental health issues. To understand Chicana/o social identity development, counselors will need to put time and effort into investigating the multiple social arenas of Chicana/o clients' lives (e.g., ethnicity, race, gender, families, and communities). The growing presence of Chicanas/os in every area in which counseling psychologists work requires that we take the initiative to develop a research agenda that carefully explores these complicated issues. As we learn more about ethnic, racial, and other social identity issues, we will be in a better position to help Chicana/o communities meet their psychosocial needs.

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