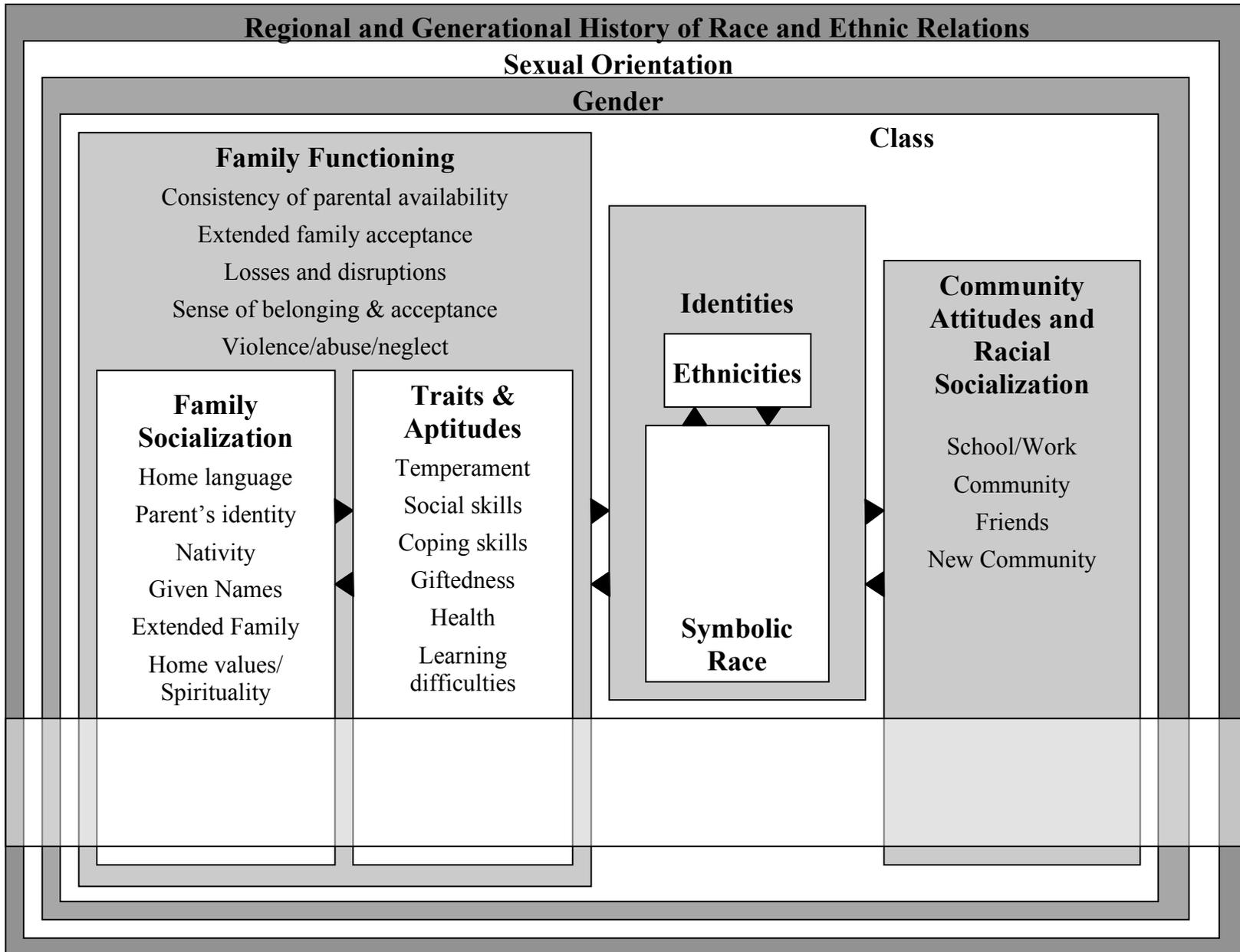


## Maria P. P. Root's Ecological Framework for Understanding Multiracial Identity Development



Adapted from: [www.drmariaroot.com/doc/EcologicalFramework.pdf](http://www.drmariaroot.com/doc/EcologicalFramework.pdf)

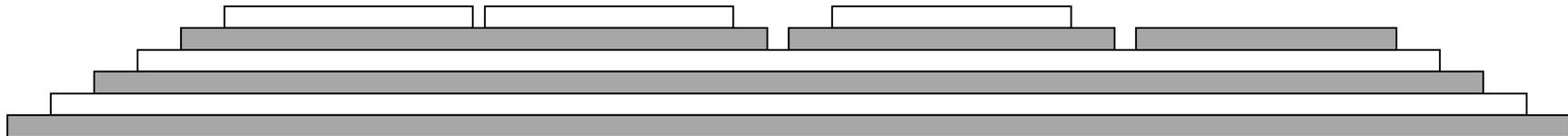
## **Maria P. P. Root's Ecological Framework for Understanding Multiracial Identity Development**

### **An Interpretation of the Framework**

Rosetta Eun Ryong Lee

When looking at the framework, it is important to note that P. P. Root's work stresses the importance of not categorizing when it comes to multiracial identity. Her works, "50 Experiences of Racially Mixed People" and "Bill of Rights for People of Mixed Heritage," were pivotal in providing greater understanding of the breadth of challenges that multiracial people face in the United States. Her ecological framework is multifaceted, as it tries to explain a very complex identity development process that is unique to each multiracial individual.

#### **Pyramid Visualization**



When looking at this model, imagine a pyramid with the central elements at the top and the surrounding elements below, getting wider and wider, lower and lower. The central/uppermost elements are the influences closest to the individual, while the outer/lowermost elements are wider social contexts that influence the person more indirectly through societal pressures and messages. The half-transparent "cover" on the bottom side of the framework shows how most of the influences on a person's identity are not visible – you cannot look at the person and guess at anything besides their symbolic race and perhaps their ethnicity.

Using this framework, it becomes easier to understand the nuances of multiracial identity. Imagine a girl whose parents are African American and White, whose symbolic race (how she "looks") is African American, whose grandparents acknowledge her and accept her fully, whose school and local communities do not, and whose home is in an area historically wrought with racial tension between African American and White communities. Imagine a gay boy whose parents are Filipino and Latino, whose symbolic race is an unidentifiable mix of the two (allowing him to "blend" into either), whose Filipino family does not acknowledge him as a family member, whose school tolerates him (as long as he's not too "out and proud" with all his identities), and whose local area has a high multiracial population. These two youth may have some similarities in experiences, but their sense of who they are as multiracial people is probably significantly different. P. P. Root's framework helps us understand why.