

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: EXPLORING MULTIRACIALITY, POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND OPPRESSION: A STUDY ON HOW MULTIRACIAL STUDENTS NAVIGATE THEIR RELATIONSHIP(S) TO SOCIO-POLITICAL POWER STRUCTURES WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION

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There is limited research on the experiences of Multiracial college students (Matsumura, 2017). Current Multiracial narratives within higher education focus primarily on personal identity exploration. Far fewer study how Multiracial students maneuver through socio-political power structures. The literature has also not considered how other Multiracial people might influence how Multiracial students come to understand their position(s) within these systems. This study examined Multiracial students' connection(s) to socio-political power structures within the United States by asking the following question: How do Multiracial college students, who interact with other Multiracial people, navigate their relationship(s) to power, privilege, and oppression?

The findings from this study indicated that Multiracial students are navigating their relationships to power, privilege, and oppression within an anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm by developing an understanding of the monoracially dominant

paradigm they inhabit, coming to understand the roles that are placed on them as Multiracial people within this paradigm, and rejecting notions that constrict their ability to live as a Multiracial person. The findings suggested that Multiracial students are navigating this landscape by finding and/or creating community, maintaining friendships with Multiracial peers, and developing confidence in creating a core way of being.

Keywords: Multiracial college students, socio-political power structures, Multiracial people, power, privilege, oppression, anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality, white supremacy, liberation

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ON HOW MULTIRACIAL STUDENTS NAVIGATE THEIR RELATIONSHIP(S) TO SOCIO-
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

La facultad is the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface.... The one possessing this sensitivity is excruciatingly alive to the world (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 38).

Our history, the history of Multiracial peoples, has not been written by us. Our deep and intricate understanding of who we are cannot be found in history books or the dominant media.

To do Multiracial research, as a Multiracial person, gives the opportunity to celebrate our identities, experiences, and bodies, inform others of our narrative, and acknowledge the complex history in which we are situated. The development of Multiracial identities within the United States (U.S.) is rooted in the racialization of people to justify oppressing and enslaving African and Indigenous peoples and asserting white supremacy (Mitchell, 2020). White supremacy continues as an abuse of power over marginalized racial groups, including Multiracial people. This abuse of power perpetuates the racialized history of Multiraciality through dominant society's monoracial lens.

Monoracism sets as the norm monoracial identities and allows current power structures of white supremacy to remain unscathed (Harris, 2016; Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2010, 2020). To define oneself outside of these exclusionary categories is to deviate from so-called acceptable standards (Chang, 2014; Harris, 2016; Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2010, 2020; Root, 1990). Multiracial people are a marginalized group that historically has had little to no space to explore and share their lived experiences openly in both current and historical contexts. In alignment with the opening quote, I hope to uncover the deeper processes and structures that move forth and push against the systems of power, privilege, and oppression present in U.S. contexts.

Problem Statement and Research Question

There is limited literature studying the lives of Multiracial college students (Matsumura, 2017). When looking at the research on Multiraciality in higher education the dominant focus is on identity development resulting in various Multiracial identity development models taking front seat in Multiracial discourses within higher education contexts. This emphasis, although helpful in establishing the diverse journeys Multiracial students may experience while developing their understandings of identity, skews Multiracial narratives overwhelmingly to personal identification and does not fully encapsulate the nuanced encounters Multiracial students navigate within deeply dynamic higher education institutions.

Similar to works constructed with other racialized groups, nuance is critical in studying with and for Multiracial students as there is vast diversity within this group of people (Chang, 2014; Olsen, 2012). Many Multiracial scholars have warned against developing monolithic views of Multiracial people through broad generalizations and vague understandings of the complexity of racialized identities (Hamako, 2014; Harris, 2016; Olsen, 2012; Osei-Kofi, 2012). Examples of such generalizations include the exclusion of Multiracial narratives in cultural spaces and other resources assuming that monoracial stories will fit the needs of Multiracial students. It is also assumes that Multiracial students will find community with other Multiracial students simply because they are Multiracial. To mitigate generalizations, higher education institutions must provide spaces and affinity groups for Multiracial students to explore their identities and experiences with racism and monoracism, as well as acknowledge the various ways Multiracial students move through higher education institutions based on their relationships to power, privilege, and oppression (Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020).

Refusing to acknowledge and examine the ways Multiracial students interact with their power, privilege, and oppression stifles nuance and is a disservice to the realities of many Multiracial individuals' experiences (Matsumura, 2017). Multiracial people have indicated their desire for anti-racist education that allows Multiracial students to explore “the diversity within Multiraciality and the hierarchies that stratify Multiracial people” (Hamako, 2014, p. 184). Lack of clarity is a tool of white supremacy and monoracism as it denies the intersectional lens through which people experience the world; it does not acknowledge people’s histories, identities, and lived experiences (Harris 2016; Johnston-Guerrero, 2020; Matsumura, 2017). It ignores how others perceive and treat individuals based on these histories, identities, and lived experiences and how these Multiracial individuals navigate the world and higher education institutions based on these perceptions. It continues the perpetuation of vague unexplored beliefs of Multiracial students’ abilities to grapple, define, critique, and develop understandings of their power, privilege, and oppression while in college. Leaving unexplored the theoretical functions behind how Multiracial students navigate through such contextually diverse spaces within universities prevents developing understandings of power, privilege, and oppression, higher education institutions, and Multiracial students. Scholars must consider how Multiracial students critically think about their positions in society, how they move about their world, and how they take into account their impact on the world around them in order to provide a fuller picture of Multiracial narratives.

Currently, few studies consider socio-political power structures, interpersonal relationships between Multiracial people, and how Multiracial students engage with these structures and relationships. Very little literature considers the interpersonal interactions between Multiracial people and whether these interactions influence how Multiracial students negotiate

their personal relationships to power, privilege, and oppression (Harris, 2015, 2016). As with any marginalized group Multiracial experiences are diverse (Olsen, 2012). Multiracial people have enriched stories that dive into the complexities of what it means to live as a person who is racialized outside of the dominant racial binary. To live outside of the present socialization of race is to be seen as an “other”. In following social justice ideology, giving space for narratives that are commonly silenced can shed light on norms and power structures that otherwise society is unaware or refuses to acknowledge. By specifically studying how Multiracial students develop, question, come to understand, or do nothing of the sort with their connection to power, privilege, and oppression, the stories from this community are brought into conversation with the broader contexts of power and oppression.

Offering narratives around students’ experiences that does not solely focus on ones that are oppressive or identity-based challenges provides an abundance-based perspective in how Multiracial students gain agency within socio-political structures. Potentially, from these narratives offers the allowance for the deconstruction of what is, to bring into existence a new liberatory way of being. The aim of this study was to move towards liberation by studying ways Multiracial students navigate their relationship(s) to power, privilege, and oppression within higher education institutions.

As a marking of social justice-based research, systems of power and privilege must be addressed. As one engages in critical theory it is especially imperative, as “time and time again critical theory has taught us the power of naming accurately that which we are challenging and hoping to transform” (hooks, 2013, p. 36). This study aimed to address how Multiracial students engaged in, with, and outside of the socio-political power structures in which they were surrounded. The following question guided this study.

How do Multiracial college students, who interact with other Multiracial people, navigate their relationship(s) to power, privilege, and oppression?

Approach to Inquiry

I chose to use grounded theory for this study because there is a significant gap in the literature when it comes to Multiracial students' connections to power, privilege, and oppression. My research question examined *how* Multiracial students confronted and defined their relationships with power and oppression and the potential ways other Multiracial people might have, if at all, influenced how these Multiracial students maneuvered through their journey of confronting and defining. Grounded theory is an appropriate methodology when research questions seek to generate theory where very little to none exists in the current literature (Creswell, 2018; Jones et al., 2018).

I followed a constructivist approach to grounded theory because it acknowledges the subjectivity involved in the research process (Charmaz, 2014). Constructivist grounded theory also aligns with social justice practices and helped me appropriately inquire into topics related to marginalized groups (Charmaz, 2014). The critical lens provided by the social justice perspective supported grounded theory by highlighting the subjectivity in experience as well as the social structures that influence the research. Social justice-based constructivist grounded theory can highlight current power-oppression based processes and the potential outcomes needed to deconstruct such systems.

Charmaz (2014) argued that the absence of a literature review does not mitigate a researcher's prior knowledge, beliefs, and biases related to the research topic. All researchers come to research with at least some experiences and ideas that influence their thoughts and actions. Through constructivist grounded theory, literature reviews should be used to provide a

basis on what to study without confining the research process to one central conceptual idea. As such, I offer a literature review and theorizing concepts that have guided my research; however, I did not bind the research solely to what is written in these sections. My literature review served to contextualize this study in the current literature. The theorizing concepts introduce a working understanding of the potential gap in the literature and presents the viewpoint through which I approached the research. It also provided the scholarly research subjectivities present as the research is being constructed. I viewed the theorizing concepts as indicators of my thought process as I made sense of the current literature and the gap that was clearly present between the literature and the lived experiences of Multiracial students. The literature review and the theorizing concepts do not, however, serve as the full emerging theory. Following the methods of constructivist grounded theory, the literature review and theorizing concepts clearly mark the starting place from which I, as the researcher, arrived to this study.

Overview of the Study

Following grounded theory, this study does not have a formal conceptual framework. Instead, the theorizing concepts are considered because constructivist grounded theory believes that researchers come to their study with influences from other scholarly work. For this study I was influenced in how I carry out and think about my research through the concepts of Critical Multiracial Theory (Harris, 2016) and Borderlands theory (Anzaldúa, 1987). Critical Multiracial Theory is influenced by Critical Race Theory and the lived experiences of Multiracial people. It is comprised of 8 tenets that contextualize Multiracial experiences within broader power, privilege, and oppression systems (Harris, 2016). I used this theory as it places Multiracial experiences at the center of its creation, and it provides language for the lived experiences of Multiracial people that does not exist in other theories. Anzaldúa's Borderlands theory (1987)

deconstructs binary categorically based systems and aligns well with Multiraciality. Through Borderlands theory the dominant monoracial narrative as the true or correct reality unravels. Both theories influence how I inquired and analyzed this study.

A major process that sets grounded theory apart from other qualitative methodologies is its data collection and analysis process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Both occur simultaneously. The analysis then informs how the researcher will collect more data. This process of collection and analysis continues until saturation is reached (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Saturation occurs when no known theoretical concepts emerge from the data collection process (Charmaz, 2014).

In this study, nine participants were recruited from Big 10 predominantly white public research institutions. Participants self-identified as Multiracial and had an interpersonal relationship with another Multiracial person. Each participant participated in a recorded 60-90 minute interview through Zoom, a virtual meeting platform. All recordings were password protected. There were three guided sections to the interview protocol. The first section's focus was to establish a relationship between the participant and me. The second aimed to bring to light the relationship the participant had with peers, social spaces, and their university. The third gave space for clarification and follow up. These interviews were designed to be intensive; meaning they offer space for flexibility and structure (Charmaz, 2014). For example, it could have been beneficial for one interview if we followed a narrative in the first section of the interview while another spent more time unpacking a question posed in the later half. Further intensive interviews rely on the co-construction of the interview by the interviewer and the participant which gave some agency in the data collection process to the participants (Charmaz, 2014).

The data analysis process in constructivist grounded theory can be broken into three main focuses: Initial data collection and initial coding, theoretical sampling and focus coding, and theoretical saturation and theoretical sorting (Charmaz, 2014). Initial data collection started the data and analysis process of data in which I interviewed participants based on the interview protocol. Following that was the initial coding in which comparisons were made between the data collected. Then theoretical sampling and focus coding occur in which data was collected based on what was emerging from the initial coding. Focus coding built on the initial codes through the data collected in the theoretical sampling process. This included finding commonalities and differences between the connections established in the initial codes. When saturation was hit, theoretical sorting began. This included the interlaying of the focus codes to bring about the theoretical concepts.

Significance of the Study

By inquiring into the relationships between Multiracial students as well as their relationship with power, privilege, and oppression, this study offered an understanding into a largely unexamined area within the literature. Other studies have touched on Multiracial experiences with oppression but far fewer have considered Multiracial experiences with power and privilege as explicitly as the aims of this study, nor have they considered how these relationships may be influenced by the interpersonal interactions among Multiracial people (Hamako, 2014; Harris, 2016; Johnston-Guerrero & Nadal, 2010; Johnston Guerrero et al., 2020). By exploring power, privilege, and oppression, this study offered a deeper and more nuanced contextualization into the lived experiences of Multiracial students. It also shed light on the intricate ways in which Multiracial students have been thinking about power, privilege, and oppression that were currently being left out. This study provided opportunities to address how

higher education institutions and student affairs professionals could better support this population of students.

Through a social justice-based constructivist grounded methodology I dug deep into the theoretical processes underneath participants' narratives, brought into conversation the broader social structures underpinning those experiences, and critically analyzed how these social structures function within systems. It provided another vantage point in which to consider Multiracial students' experiences that was not commonly discussed in the current literature.

From the data came the emergent theory of how Multiracial students are navigating their relationship(s) to power, privilege, and oppression. Namely the Anti-Blackness, Anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm in which both Multiracial students are navigating a higher education space in that actively perpetuates anti-Blackness and anti-Multiraciality; yet does separate and connected ways.

Glossary of Terms

The following glossary of terms includes terminology that is imperative to the topic of study. These definitions serve as defining the vantage point from which this research study is conducted.

1. *Multiracial/Multiracial people*: The term *Multiracial* has many different meanings across academia, communities, families, and individuals (Johnston-Guerrero & Wijeyesinghe, 2021; Matsumura, 2017). The term itself is open to being a fluid identity. For the sake of this thesis, I followed the definition posed in Johnston-Guerrero and Wijeyesinghe (2021) which defined Multiracial people as “anyone who claims heritage and membership in two or more (mono)racial groups and/or identifies with Multiracial terms” (p. 11). Examples of Multiracial terms include: mixed, mixed race, biracial, Hapa, mestize, Blasian, and

Mexipina (Johnston-Guerrero & Wijeyesinghe, 2021). Multiracial people may not all identify with the same labels; however, there is a unifying aspect of being racialized in a dominantly monoracial society (Hamako, 2014).

2. *Multiraciality*: Encompasses people who are of mixed heritage, the practices and processes that result from living in a monoracial dominant society, and the beliefs and ways of living as a Multiracial person (Chaudhari, 2004; Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020). This is a broader term than *Multiracial* as it does not just describe a person. Further, Multiraciality can refer to the act of being racialized onto oneself by outside forces (Hamako, 2014; Harris et al., 2021). This is reflected through societal beliefs, cultural groups, and/or institutional policies.
3. *Power*: Power is about systems of domination of one group over another (Kelly & Gayles, 2015). Within the United States these power structures maintain imperialism, capitalism, and white supremacist patriarchy. Both privilege and oppression are enacted through systems of power (Lechuga et al., 2009).
4. *Privilege*: Privileges are the rights, advantages, and opportunities given to a specific group of people and not to other groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Kelly & Gayles, 2015). Often unwritten and viewed as an innate principle for those who fall into the advantaged group (Bell, 2007; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Kelly & Gayles, 2015).
5. *Oppression*: Oppression is pervasive (Kelly & Gayles, 2015). It encapsulates marginalization and minoritization of people through “institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice” (Bell, 2007, p. 4). Oppressive practices are used to assert the dominance of one group over another and are always in relation to power (Kelly & Gayles, 2015). These practices are seen as normal through the

reinforcement of the ideas and systems that support oppression as correct and natural (Bell, 2007).

6. *Monoracial*: Term that describes a person of one race; often racialized in society as being someone of one race (Pacific University Oregon, 2021). Monoraciality is conceptualized as a fixed, rigid identity and is considered the default racialized identity (Olsen, 2012). Thus, monoracial identities are centered within the U.S., seen as the norm, and are not questioned or considered “unreal”.
7. *Monoracial BIPOC*: Monoracial BIPOC are racially minoritized Black, Indigenous, and other people of one race. It includes those who *choose* to identify as one race. People of color include all racially marginalized people.

Overview of Thesis

This thesis layout is as follows: Chapter One introduces the social and historical contexts within which this research is situated, and outlines the research problem, purpose, and significance. I offer a brief overview of the methodology and a glossary of terms. Chapter Two is a review of the literature, theorizing concepts, and justification of providing both given this study follows a constructivist grounded theory methodology. Chapter Three describes the methodological processes that I followed in this study. It touches on the foundations of grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory. It introduces my epistemological standpoint and positionality. It concludes with the data collection, analysis, trustworthiness, and limitations. Chapter Four is comprised of the description of participant interviews. This is shared to give readers a framework for contextualizing the analysis. The analysis occurs in Chapter Five. This chapter introduces the emergent theory and deconstructs and analyzes aspects of it. This thesis

concludes with Chapter Six which discusses implications and limitation for research and practice.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review discusses current narratives of Multiracial experiences indicated in higher education research. These retellings highlight the complexity of this identity as well as the many nuances that have yet to be studied within this research area. Following is a brief overview of a foundational ecological Multiracial identity development model (Renn, 2003; 2004) that has laid the groundwork for many Multiracial research studies. Then I present concepts of monoracism and Critical Multiracial Theory to explain how power, privilege, and oppression affect Multiracial people. Lastly, I discuss social systems and how these systems impact explanations of Multiracial people in the current literature.

Higher education scholars who have addressed the United States' monoracial majority social structure or power and oppression in relation to Multiracial identity holders have done so through concepts of monoracism and Critical Multiracial Theory (MultiCrit) (Hamako, 2014; Harris, 2016; Johnston-Guerrero & Nadal, 2010; Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020; Matsumura, 2017). This work is foundational; however, especially with the emergence of MultiCrit, more needs to be done to gain further clarity on these concepts. Historically, Multiraciality has been met with reservation due to how dominant narratives have painted this identity as beneficial for the perpetuation of whiteness. Through the lens of MultiCrit, Multiraciality can be examined for how it fits in, rubs up against, and/or possibly troubles the idea that Multiraciality is a flimsy concept that perpetuates white supremacy.

Multiracial Differences in Higher Education Research

When scholars study participants with similar racial backgrounds they note their findings might not be generalizable across Multiracial experiences due to the differences that have historically been noted about the complexity of the identity (Harris, 2016). Much of the current

literature notes the differences in racial demographics of participant samples but will not expand on this data point any further (Olsen, 2012; Renn 2003, 2004). Previous literature indicated that physical appearance such as skin tone, facial features, and posture affect how a Multiracial person is racialized and the forms of racial oppression they experience (Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020; Renn, 2003). These differences might indicate varying forms of privilege between Multiracial people. It is possible these differences can affect Multiracial people's understandings and views of themselves and society.

Olsen (2012) conducted 19 semi-structured interviews on Multiracial students at Colorado State University to gain insight on participants' racialized experiences. They found patterns of difference in how people racially perceived Multiracial individuals. Connected to these patterns of difference were essentialist ideas of monoracial identities that were assumed and forced onto Multiracial individuals. The general trends of difference were categorized into three groups: Non-White Mixed Race; White-Identified Mixed Race; and In-Between Mixed Race. The Non-White Mixed Race group comprised individuals who were perceived as being a monoracial person of color. The White-Identified Mixed Race group was made up of people who were perceived to be monoracially White. The In-Between Mixed Race group were those who were perceived to be racially ambiguous. The differences in perception of racial identity correlated with how they were questioned by others about their identity. Both the Non-White Mixed Race and White-Identified Mixed Race groups were socially criticized for identifying as Multiracial. When identifying as Multiracial, the In-Between Mixed Group faced more social about their real racial identity. Regardless of the category, these participants were confronted with other's questions and confusions around their racial identity. Additionally, very few participants shared stories in which their Multiracial identity was accepted, which points how

dominant monoracial identities exclude Multiraciality. This study indicated that aspects of Multiracial experiences are unique from monoracial experiences, Multiracial experiences are not monolithic, and cultural centers often do not support the needs of Multiracial students.

I am unaware of other literature that studies the patterns of difference that arise from Multiracial experiences in more depth than Olsen's (2012) work. Their work gives insight into the complexity of Multiracial experiences; however, it alone gives rise to more questions such as: what is the significance, if any, of the differences between Multiracial experiences and how to best support Multiracial students? Do Multiracial students feel a sense of community with other Multiracial students across these differences? If they do, how do Multiracial students build and define these communities? Further research should investigate Multiracial experiences by expanding on how Multiracial people make meaning of their Multiracial experiences individually *and* alongside other Multiracial people especially since historically, Multiracial literature has focused extensively on the individual development of Multiracial students' identities.

Multiracial Identity Development

A student's development as a Multiracial individual does not fit the same models designed for Monoracial individuals (Renn, 2003, 2004; Root 1990). Root's (1990) work is foundational to Multiracial research in higher education as it established the idea that Multiracial identities are fluid and should not be thought of as being fixed or having a singular ending point. Additionally, Root's (1990) research indicated that Multiracial college students are commonly racialized differently given the racial and spatial context.

Following Root's work, Renn (2003, 2004) focused on the identity development of Multiracial college students through an ecological lens. She used Bronfenbrenner's (1977)

ecological model to create the ecology of Multiracial identity. The purpose of her work was to develop an identity development model that explained how college environments impact the identities of Multiracial college students. An ecological model was used because it could account for both outcomes (how did multiracial students identify?) and process (how did they come to identify with such identity(ies)?). Very little research before Renn (2003) explored the latter aspects of identity development and her work helped provide an understanding on how college campuses impact the development of Multiracial identities. However, in following Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological model, the Multiracial identity model aligned with the belief that identity is based on the environment of an individual (Patton et al., 2016). Racialization is something that is placed onto individuals; thus, people are reactionary in their making meaning based on what is being placed onto them. Multiracial students in the ecological Multiracial identity model define their racial identity in variations that are given via their environment.

Renn's (2003) work further expanded on Root's (1990) argument that the racialization of Multiracial students' identities changes given the context. The ecological model for student identity development looks at how larger systems impact the individual but not how the individual impacts larger systems (Renn, 2003). In the center of this model is the individual and builds out from microsystems to macrosystems. Renn's (2003) model offers a way to explain how society and other contexts impact the identity development of Multiracial individuals. The model included various ways Multiracial students could identify. This variability was not present before this model. Renn uncovered five identity patterns that participants claim a) two or more monoracial categories, b) identify situationally, moving between or among the other patterns, c) a Multiracial identity, d) one monoracial category, and e) deconstructing race, opts out of categorization (Appendix A). These categories were non-exclusive in that most participants

identified with more than one of them. Renn (2003) found that the freedom in which participants felt compelled or capable of moving between two or more of these categories was influenced by the “permeability of boundaries around social and physical spaces defined in part by racial and ethnic identity and the extent to which students felt like they fit in or belonged to those spaces” (p. 392). Participants perceived spaces as flexible and fluid of identity, and welcoming, which affected whether participants border-crossed the five identity categories. Students who felt their identity fluidity was supported engaged in moving across identities more than those who felt less supported. Likewise, students who felt as if they belonged in a space moved between more categories. Additionally, peers played some role in identity development; however, the academic curriculum also played a substantial role in this process (Renn, 2003). Several participants commented that having the opportunity to explore, question, and formulate their own opinions through coursework allowed the participants to reflect and make meaning of their own personal ideas of identity and race.

Renn (2003, 2004) situated Multiracial identity development within a larger context and allowed for the fluidity of experiences that individuals face. However, participants were still not seen as having true agency in identity construction. Through an ecological lens the participants’ identities were still only seen as being created based within the systems that the participants were situated. Thus, Multiracial participants’ identity development processes were only considered through the social lens of anti-Blackness and white supremacy. Renn (2003, 2004) also noted the ways that Multiracial identities were erased from political and historical recognition due to the inaccurate collection of demographic information on Multiracial students. However, the study focused on individual student development and since then, most research on Multiraciality in higher education is situated in individual identity. This model has been widely received in

higher education research, has been cited widely throughout the literature, and is considered foundational material (Harris, 2016). It is commonly taught in higher education graduate programs when looking at Multiracial students' identity development. However, by drawing heavily on the ecological model, liberatory practices are not fully addressed; as more critical approaches are necessary in examining how racism, prejudice, discrimination, and other forms of oppression are connected to Multiracial experiences (Harris, 2016). Through the ecological lens, anti-Blackness within the conceptualization of Multiraciality and how Multiracial students may experience their Multiracial identity is not addressed.

Since the creation of her model, Renn (2003), and others, have used this research to advocate for the expansion of student identity development teaching and practices to include Multiracial identity development as well as emphasize how college environments, from the policies enacted to peers they are surrounded by, impact identity development (Renn, 2003).

With the information that peer interaction influences identity development, Kellogg and Liddell (2012) studied how Multiracial students come to understand race and identity when confronted with critical incidents at two Predominantly White Institutions. The four critical incidents and subcategories of each are: confronting race and racism, responding to external definitions, defending legitimacy, and affirming racial identity (Kellogg & Liddell, 2012). Confronting race and racism includes racist encounters that have led to the saliency of Multiracial participants racial identities. Responding to external definitions encompasses experiences in which Multiracial students are questioned by others due to having phenotypically racially ambiguous features or are forced to choose a monoracial category in which to identify such as on government or university documents. Defending legitimacy are occurrences in which Multiracial students feel as if they must defend their right to belong in an institution or racial

group. Affirming racial identity consists of the incidents in which Multiracial students felt accepted within social groups, did not need to prove their right to belong in the particular group, and were given the space to explore their racial identities without judgment.

Similar to Renn (2004), Kellogg and Liddell (2012) found the environment and peer interaction affected how Multiracial students navigated higher education spaces. For example, some participants noted that they left organizations if they experienced racism from others. Participants also left Multicultural-affiliated organizations if their identity was challenged and they were perceived as not being a “minority enough” for the space (Kellogg & Liddell, 2012, p. 537). Like Renn (2004), Kellogg and Liddell (2012) emphasized the importance for higher education institutions to support the unique aspects of Multiracial students as they navigate college. However, they frame critical incidents through a deficit lens, critical incidents involving encountering racism, having their identities challenged, and having to possess or gain cultural knowledge to feel acceptance, which gives an incomplete understanding of the experiences Multiracial students have while in college and among peers.

There is one example given by a participant about meeting and befriending another Multiracial student. This participant then added that when she meets another Multiracial person she gets “really excited about it. [She feels] some sort of connection, and... wants to talk to them about it” (Kellogg & Liddell, 2012, p. 536). Kellogg and Liddell (2012) did not expand much further on the importance of Multiracial identity development in connection to other Multiracial students. The focus of this subcategory was on identity similarities across many forms which included connecting based on Multiracial identity as well as sexual or religious identities. They did mention that several participants discussed meeting other Multiracial students as being very important to their experience while in college and finding them through Multiracial student

organizations. Although participants were seeking community with other Multiracial students, Kellogg and Liddell (2012) did not look at how this shaped their understanding of participants' identities and how they helped them make meaning of their Multiracial experiences. Critical incidents were the major topic of this study; however, the emphasis on negative experiences and the individual processes of the participants prevented a fuller picture of Multiracial experiences. The focus on racialized experiences also is evident in the current research on Monoracism in higher education.

Monoracism

Johnston-Guerrero and Nadal (2010) studied microaggressions that Multiracial people experienced due to their Multiracial identity and attributed those experiences to monoracism. Pulling from previous literature, they proposed five categories of Multiracial microaggressions: a) exclusion or isolation, b) exoticization and objectification, c) assumption of monoracial or mistaken identity, d) denial of multiracial reality, and e) pathologizing of identity and experiences. Examples of Multiracial microaggressions included when a grandparent of a Multiracial child intentionally avoids interacting with their Multiracial grandchild because they are Multiracial; when Multiracial people are told their experiences as Multiracial people are not as important or difficult as monoracial people of color, or when institutions do not allow Multiracial people to select more than one racial category on demographic forms (Johnston-Guerrero & Nadal, 2010). These experiences are labeled as Multiracial microaggressions as they “deny the reality of [M]ultiracial person, [and] cause psychological distress for the recipients,” and can also be difficult for those targeted by the microaggressions to label them as microaggressions as it is happening (p. 138). These aggressions are not directly physically or visibly harmful in the aftermath of the occurrence. However, multiracial microaggressions are

considered one form of monoracism as it brings to light the unfair treatment that Multiracial people experience on systemic and interpersonal levels.

Monoracism is the systemic and interpersonal oppression experienced by Multiracial individuals due to their Multiracial status within a society that places power within a monoracial context (Johnston-Guerrero & Nadal, 2010). Monoracism perpetuates an essentialist ideology in which there are clear and fixed racial categories (Johnston-Guerrero & Nadal, 2010). Through this viewpoint, those who fall neatly within these categories (monoracial individuals) are considered racially pure while those who do not (Multiracial individuals) are perceived as impure, tainted, and worthy of othering (Harris, 2016).

Building off of the work of Johnston-Guerrero and Nadal (2010), Harris (2015) intentionally used understandings of racism and monoracism as opposed to just racism to describe the experiences of 10 Multiracial women at a predominantly white institution (PWI) as both are needed to understand the racially oppressive systems that impact Multiracial experiences.¹ The participants in Harris's (2015) research named incidences of monoracism when describing their experiences as college students. Participants articulated how they were perceived and treated due to their Multiracial identity; clearly stating how they were "tokenized, objectified, exoticized, assumed to be monoracial, perceived that they were 'not enough' for their monoracial peers, and forced to choose one monoracial identity over others in hopes of fitting in on campus" (Harris, 2016, p. 806).

Additionally, Harris (2016) noted that in her study, nine of the ten participants were unable to pass as white, which is not an experience largely discussed in the findings. Passing

¹Harris (2015, 2016) references the data collected from her dissertation, in which she studied the experiences of Multiracial women of color at PWIs (2015) in order to create the foundational tenets of Critical Multiracial Theory. I reference both works in this section.

privilege is dependent on multiple factors including access to the dominant culture and physical perceptions from individuals. Harris did not describe in further detail what forms of passing privilege the participants had access to in her study. However, she described physical appearance as playing a role in how her participants are believed to be perceived.

It is also possible that appearance affects how Multiracial participants describe the presence of Monoracism in oppressive experiences connected to their Multiracial identity (Harris, 2015; Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020; Olsen, 2012). The literature noted that monoracism is a form of racism that has become subtler in present times (Harris, 2015). This increase in subtlety has made “it more difficult for Multiracial individuals to recognize and address” experiences of monoracism, indicating that describing the nuances of racialized experiences is very challenging to articulate if not given the space, knowledge, or voice to do so properly (Harris, 2015, p. 14).

This difficulty could have been a factor in the hesitancy for participants in Johnston-Guerrero et al.’s (2020) study to accept monoracism as a legitimate explanation for participants’ experiences being negatively Multiracialized by other people. Participants often could name times when they experienced Multiracial microaggressions as “annoying” but did not consider these a consequence of being oppressed (Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020, p. 27). Some participants questioned the existence of Multiracial oppression as a key function within monoracism. From the responses in this study, it is possible that the term *monoracism* should be reconceptualized as most participants did not believe the term fully encapsulated their lived experiences. No alternative terminology was suggested.

Johnston-Guerrero et al. (2020) collected data through demographic questionnaires, responses from the Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale, and exploratory qualitative

interviews. The Multiracial Challenge and Resilience Scale was created by Salahuddin and O'Brien (2011) to measure Multiracial experiences based upon how participants answered each question. The term *oppression* was analyzed in the responses from all forms of data collection and three patterns emerged (Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020). First, the socialization of participants in their childhood impacted their understandings of racial oppression within monoracial groups. Participants explained their understandings of oppression by referencing a concept or message they had learned from a parent or another family member. The second was that participants labeled racial oppression through their or other's experiences within monoracial groups. For example, participants mentioned being a monoracial minoritized identity in connection to oppression. The third, and final form, was that participants were doubtful about the validity of Multiracial oppression. In fact, Johnston-Guerrero et al. (2020) found that Multiracial participants were unable to locate personal accounts of monoracism. One participant noted that physical appearance played a role in whether they experienced oppression based upon their Multiracial identity.

This last form aligns with past literature that also described a hesitancy to accept monoracism as a distinct concept within the literature (Hamako, 2014). Scholars argued that this response is due to the lack of education about monoracism in the general population (Hamako, 2014; Harris 2016; Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020). Johnston-Guerrero et al. (2020) postulated that because monoracism is an experience excluded from monoracial paradigms it is possible that the Multiracial participants were not receiving adequate explanations about the oppressive experiences they might face due to their Multiracial status. Johnston-Guerrero et al. (2020) suggested it was possible participants were hesitant as a result of living within a system that constantly perpetuates the idea that monoraciality is normal and correct. They concluded that

participants' hesitations were an example of the exclusion of Multiraciality, the ongoing practice of monoracism, and a form of internalized monoracism.

Although this argument is in alignment with the literature it is important to mention that thirteen of the sixteen participants had white racial heritage. However, this does not mean that all participants had the same or equal privileges due to their proximity to whiteness or could use the mechanisms that could afford them passing privilege. This hesitancy could stem from having a specific intersection of racial heritage identities (Johnston-Guerrero et al. 2020). Currently, there is not a significant discussion in the research about Multiracial individuals' perceptions on monoracism and the roles that their proximity to whiteness plays in their perceptions.

Even as the literature expands on monoracism, there is plenty of room for scholars to analyze monoracism's connection to racism, oppression, and white supremacy (Hamako, 2014; Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020). Hamako (2014) conducted five focus groups to gain insight on improving anti-racist reform in education in connection with Multiraciality. Participants were all connected to Multiracial education; some were students, educators, researchers, and/or community leaders. Hamako (2014) did not select exclusively Multiracial participants for his study, rather participant criteria included "people involved in activism that focused on Multiraciality" (p. 136). However, the majority of participants did identify as having two or more races. Hamako (2014) intentionally left specific racial identities of participants ambiguous to protect the participants' identities. Yet, he noted that 90% identified as Multiracial with over half being Asian and white. No participant in his study identified as monoracially white. Hamako found that participants wanted students to be taught about "racism and monoracism in historical and contemporary political contexts" (p.172). This indicates that there has been a drive for further support for Multiracial histories that has not been covered in current educational spaces.

Hamako (2014) asserted that monoracism is a separate but connected experience from racism and believed that monoracism qualified “as a form of oppression based on Multiracial people’s systemic experiences of marginalization, cultural imperialism, and violence” (p. 95). Historically and presently, Multiracial people in the United States live in a society that sets as its norm monoracial identities and monoracially white identities continue to be prioritized. Even as studies on monoracism enter the literature, Hamako (2014) stated that monoracism as a term is still in need of being fleshed out. Drawing back to Harris (2015, 2016) she did not mention if she directly asked the participants whether they believed in monoracism as a concept as Johnston and Nadal (2010) had done in their study. Therefore, the participants' perceptions of monoracism as an explicit term was not documented. If Harris (2015) had asked participants, it could have led to further insight on the functionality of the term even if the functionality of the term was not the aim of her study. Within the current literature there is varying data on whether Multiracial college students consider monoracism as impactful on their experiences in higher education. Future work would benefit from looking at monoracism from more critical perspectives as it can offer more clarity on the conceptualization of the term.

Critical Multiracial Theory

Critical Race theory was first created to address the U.S. legal system’s perpetuation of white supremacy (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; Harris, 2016). Critical Race Theory challenged fundamental aspects of the legal system’s approach to power and oppression. At the core of this theory is the understanding that racism is endemic, set as the norm within the U.S., and used to uphold white supremacy (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). Since then other critical theories have evolved to account for the separate experiences of Indigenous, Asian, and Latinx people outside of the strict black-white binary (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; Harris, 2016). These critical theories

include Tribal Critical Race Theory, Asian Critical Theory, and Latina/o Critical Theory (Harris, 2016). Many scholars in fields of study outside of law have taken up CRT to address systemic anti-Blackness and the upholding of white supremacy. This includes the discipline of higher education (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017).

In Harris's (2015) dissertation she initially followed CRT as it was capable of dissecting "oppressive structures that uphold racism and racial inequality in higher education" (p. 798). However, she quickly found that CRT was insufficient in explaining the lived experiences of the Multiracial participants. In response, she created Critical Multiracial Theory (MultiCrit), which was a modification of CRT. In some aspects CRT was able to address Multiraciality, including ideas of challenging ahistoricism, interest convergence, experiential knowledge, and challenging the dominant ideology (Harris, 2016). However, CRT fell short of fully addressing Multiracial experiences with race, racism, power, privilege, and oppression. From CRT, Harris (2016) offered a form of critical theory that was conceptualized to more adequately address Multiraciality. CRT is, thus, fundamental to the understanding of MultiCrit.

In conjunction with the four tenets of CRT Harris included four more. All of which are specific Multiracial experiences. The eight tenets of MultiCrit are listed below.

1. **Challenge to ahistoricism:** This tenet situates Multiracial experiences within historical and present U.S. higher education contexts. It centralizes how Multiracial experiences today are directly influenced from socio-political systems enacted in the past and present.
2. **Interest convergence:** Multiracial students are only seen as Multiracial when it benefits the higher education institution. This often occurs when institutions are looking to market themselves as diverse.

3. **Experiential Knowledge:** The voices, narratives, and lived experiences of Multiracial students are centered in literature on Multiraciality. It also challenges monoracially dominant ideology on race and Multiraciality.
4. **Challenge to dominant ideology:** By centralizing Multiracial student experiences through narrative (re)telling in research, dominant ideologies of race and Multiraciality are critiqued, questioned, and further challenged.
5. **Racism, monoracism, and colorism:** This tenet acknowledges Multiracial students' experiences with racism, monoracism, and colorism.
6. **A monoracial paradigm of race:** The United States has constructed race in exclusive categorizations that does not acknowledge Multiraciality.
7. **Differential micro-racialization:** The racialization of Multiracial students is not stagnant. Institutions will manipulate and (re)construct understandings and conceptions of Multiracial students from moment to moment. Regardless of how drastically different the differences in racialization might seem; they are all done in ways that continue to serve the needs of the institution. Multiracial identities are, therefore, constrained and positioned only through the institution's perspective.
8. **Intersections of multiple racial identities:** This tenet allows for the exploration of the racial heritages of Multiracial students at their intersections.

It is worth noting, the participants of Harris's (2015) study were intentionally Multiracial and women of color. Harris (2016) noted that all but one was physically perceived as women of color; noting that "only one woman in the study... could pass [as white]" (p. 810). It is possible that with a more diverse selection of Multiracial participants, the tenets might change as more experiences across different Multiracial experiences could lead to more patterns realized.

Matsumura (2017) used MultiCrit as well as a personal qualitative narrative to expand the literature on exo- and meso-systemic levels. Matsumura (2017) laid out potential ways Multiracial college students are consistently erased from higher education narratives. For example, Multiracial students often face pressures to pick a monoracial cultural center in which to identify (Matsumura, 2017). Matsumura's work was pivotal in naming the ways that cultural centers within higher educational spaces were largely positive in supporting Multiracial students' development; however, these spaces also potentially harmed their identity development by ignoring their realities as Multiracial people. Thus, students felt forced to pick one racial identity and conform to monoracial ideals.

I have been unable to find research that discusses the application of the MultiCrit tenets in higher education spaces aside from what I have presented. There is current literature that does demonstrate the need for it. For instance, higher education institution policies impact the development of Multiracial students (Matsumura, 2017; Renn, 2003). Many campus policies do not take into consideration Multiracial students' needs (i.e., Multiraciality competency training or the ability to select multiple races on demographic data) (Matsumura, 2017). There are indications made around addressing the continued erasure of Multiracial experiences by building stronger educational trainings about social and political history of Multiraciality. However, Matsumura (2017) did not offer in-depth explanations for applications of this solution in higher education settings. Future work should deepen this understanding, especially through the tenets of racism, monoracism, and colorism and a monoracial paradigm of race, to provide ways that professionals and policies can better support Multiracial students. Despite the use of MultiCrit as a framework in Multiracial research, current work by scholars does not use this model to address

the political ideologies that consider Multiraciality a suspect identity (Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020; Matsumura, 2017).

Research on Cultural Experiences of Multiracial Students

In this section I highlight the cultural experiences of Multiracial students in current studies. From the literature it is known that a Multiracial person's racial heritages influence the ways they experience the world and are perceived by others (Harris, 2016; Renn, 2004). Physical features and other forms of appearance impact racialization of individuals (Harris, 2016). Social, historical, political, and cultural aspects of various racial heritages differ dramatically within U.S. social systems (Charmaraman et al., 2014; Harris, 2016; Olsen, 2012). Scholars have considered how Multiracial individuals connect to cultures associated with their monoracial heritages, including the effects of peer culture on feelings of belonging on college campuses (Olsen, 2012; Renn, 2004). Olsen (2012) noted that some Multiracial people connected within their monoracial groups by practicing and understanding their heritage's culture. However, social exclusion from one or more monoracial heritage groups or being forced to select one cultural group to affiliate with over another has resulted in distress and self-doubt in Multiracial college students (Chaudhari, 2004; Olsen, 2012; Renn, 2003, 2004).

When studying Multiracial students' connections to their monoracial culture(s), Olsen (2012) found general differences in how they created cultural connections to their monoracial cultural heritages depending on if the person fell into the Non-White Mixed Race, In-Between Mixed Race, or White Mixed Race group. The Non-White Mixed Race group most often felt a cultural connection to one of their monoracial cultural heritages. Many times, they felt less compelled to seek cultural connections outside the culture they most strongly connected to because they felt a level of comfortability and stability identifying with that one culture. Often

the In-Between Mixed Race group experienced feelings of partial cultural immersion with a monoracial cultural heritage. Due to this partial immersion, participants from this group had a stronger desire to "fulfill a cultural void" than those in the Non-White Mixed Race group (Olsen, 2012, p. 43). The In-Between Mixed Race individuals with two parents from communities of color mentioned that their monoracial communities of color were competing in claiming the Multiracial individual as an exclusive monoracial individual in their specific community. The Multiracial individual felt pressured to have to choose one culture. Lastly, the White Mixed Race group experienced exclusion or hesitancy from their cultural heritages from communities of color due to the community's perceptions of the individual.

Although these findings have been helpful in highlighting Multiracial experiences in monoracial majority spaces, there is significantly less literature looking at how Multiracial students who develop spaces specifically for Multiracial people build and define Multiracial cultures and communities. In addition, little was found related to how Multiracial students come to understand and define Multiracial spaces within dominantly monoracial spaces. Higher education research currently does not have an in-depth understanding of cultures, communities, and ideologies that reside in complex spaces. Future research should expand on these areas especially as "[n]ew ideologies about race and culture may continue to grow" and Multiracial populations continue to increase and organize (Ozaki & Johnston, 2008, p. 60).

Influences of Socio-Political Power Structures on the Perception of Multiraciality in Higher Education Research

As noted earlier, the current body of research on Multiraciality in higher education is largely focused on individual identity development and internal challenges that arise when Multiracial individuals try to fit within monoracial categories (Johnston-Guerrero & Nadal,

2010; Osei-Kofi, 2012). Many also noted that Multiracial individuals exhibit varying patterns of behavior and understandings of Multiraciality given their racial heritages (Olsen, 2012; Johnston-Guerrero & Nadal, 2010; Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020; Renn, 2003, 2004). Contextualizing this through a more critical lens, the racialization of people in order to perpetuate hegemonic structures impacts the research being created.

Historically, arguments against Multiraciality stated that it was difficult to claim that this specific population had a purpose, especially as it consisted of “a wide range of histories, backgrounds, and lived experiences [which made it hard to classify it as] a distinct racial identity group” (Osei-Kofi, 2012, p. 251). Young Kim (2013) pulled on the same thread when discussing arguments that have pushed against the recognition of Multiracial identities:

[M]ultiracials comprised a group of individuals with varied cultural backgrounds and experiences and no shared history of oppression and resistance. This has rendered the Multiracial identity movement suspect; it is often viewed as an attempt to opt out of a less desirable identification per hypodescent. (p. 1104)

Those in opposition of Multiraciality argued that Multiracial identities were not legitimate identities because they do not comprise one centralized cultural background or a shared experience of violence or trauma due to their Multiracial status (Young Kim, 2013). Arguments along this nature arose following the heavy United States’ push for Multiculturalism and a post-racial U.S. society in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Osei-Kofi, 2012; Young Kim, 2013). It is then no surprise that wanting to showcase the United States as a multicultural society coincided with the ability to mark multiple racial categories on the U.S. Census at the turn of the 21st century. Although this was often seen as a step forward in the Multiracial advocacy community by allowing Multiracial people to have their identities be acknowledged by

formal bureaucratic measure, it also seemed to be highlighted by dominant narratives as proof of the United States' racial harmonious success (Harris, 2016; Young Kim, 2013). As these ideologies led to increased rhetoric of a colorblind society, they were largely harmful to racially marginalized populations. Negative views of Multiraciality were one response to the dominant narrative (Young Kim, 2013).

The arguments against Multiraciality and the focus on individual identity development of Multiracial students run parallel. Although not necessarily a cause-and-effect relationship, the rise in distaste for a congruent Multiracial racial group seemed connected to the increased focus by scholars to study individual Multiracial experiences instead of how Multiracial experiences connected with one another.

Future research must be in further conversation with how external perception, and the fluidity of perception, impact Multiracial people's lived experiences and extend privileges to some, but not all Multiracial people. One strand of this work could focus on how Multiracial spaces on campuses are formed and how community and culture is built, if it is at all, among Multiracial students. The arguments raised in the field of law on the credibility and effects of Multiracializing people have impacted policies and societal beliefs that have clear ties to Multiracial research in higher education. Currently, the greatest interaction between this argument and research in higher education takes place within research done by critical scholars including monoracism and Critical Multiracial Theory. Even as the literature works to contextualize Multiraciality within higher education there is limited research on the formation of Multiracial cultures by students in these spaces. This literature review highlighted the need for this research to study the ways that students within these Multiracial spaces cultivate, define, and build culture on their own terms. Thus, I seek to push back against the erasure of their identities

and the notion that acknowledging the existence of Multiraciality will only further perpetuate the current structures of power and oppression. My goal is to offer dialogue on how to reconceptualize culture and community in connection to race.

Anti-Blackness and The Racialization of Multiracial Identities

Historically, conversations of Multiraciality within society and in Multiracial research have centered whiteness. Multiracial people have been considered buffers within the United States's racial caste system between Blackness and whiteness (Blay, 2021). Multiracial research has centered whiteness as well, such as, Olsen's (2012) categorization of Multiracial people in terms of "White Mixed-Race", "In-Between Mixed-Race", and "Non-White Mixed Race". In developing categories based on Multiracial participants, perceived proximity to whiteness, Multiracial people are stratified against whiteness as the defining measure. This centers whiteness as the norm and perpetuates both anti-Blackness and monoracial practices. By measuring Multiracial people in closeness to whiteness the narrative that Multiracial people should, and want to be measured based upon their closeness to whiteness and their distance from Blackness is maintained (Mitchell, 2020).

Historically, the narrative of Multiraciality has functioned as a tool to maintain white supremacy through the continual use of anti-Blackness ideology. Across all disciplines, most Multiracial research focuses on participants of Black and white descent (Charmaraman et al., 2014). This could partly be because Multiracial people of Black and white descent make up the second largest population of Multiracial people within the U.S. (US Census Bureau, 2022).²

² The largest combination of racial heritages of Multiracial people is American Indian /Alaska Native and white (US Census Bureau, 2022). Unlike research on Multiracial people of Black and white heritage, Multiracial research that focuses on the lived experiences of Multiracial people of American Indian/Alaskan Native mixed descent is close to non-existent. This is another way that white supremacy shows up in Multiracial research. White supremacy gains and maintains power in the erasure of Indigeneity as well as the continual racialization of Blackness (Villanueva, 2018).

However, it is more likely due to the deep dependency white supremacy has in the maintenance of the Black-white binary for white supremacy to maintain power within socio-political systems in the U.S. (Charmaraman et al., 2014). Studying this specific population then becomes less about the lived experiences and realities of the participants and more so a tool used to understand how two identities that are racialized as existing in two exclusive positions in the power-oppression binary can co-habit in one person.

The Black-white binary perpetuates and constrains all forms of racialization. This constriction of race erases the ability for a Multiracial existence as, in the Black-white binary essentialist beliefs of racialization are upheld. Thus, binarism and anti-Blackness are key functions of monoracism. The oppression of Multiraciality occurs because of Multiraciality ideology's ability to deconstruct the Black-white binary, a necessary tool in maintaining white supremacy. However, to engage in the necessary liberatory practices to deconstruct such a binary, Multiraciality must be able to exist, unabashedly. Current functions of anti-Blackness must be acknowledged and broken down. Multiracial research must engage in the centering of Blackness. Critical scholarship must recognize historical, social, and political systems that exist within society, are perpetuated within the literature, and enacted in the practices that result.

Theorizing Concepts

In chapter three I discuss my way of knowing in my epistemology and personal experiences that bring me to this research. In this section I introduce my academic positioning as I engage with this research. Critical Multiracial Theory (Harris, 2016) and Anzaldúa's (1989) Borderlands theory are largely influential in my rhetoric, tools for conceptualization, and general ways I engage with this research. It would be inappropriate of me to not introduce these as theorizing concepts and discuss how they impact how I do research. Critical Multiracial Theory

articulates the systems of power, privilege, and oppression that surrounds and potentially interacts within Borderlands spaces that occur within higher education. MultiCrit offers nuanced understandings through its 8 tenets to the complexity of power and privilege. The intersections of multiple racial identities allow for the exploration of the experiences and understandings of identities at the juncture in which all racial identities are alive and present. Anzaldúa's (1989) *Borderlands* interrogates the erasure of Multiracial experiences, how Multiracial bodies have been used as tools in dominant society, and how Multiracial spaces are spaces in transition. Through Anzaldúa's interpretation, these spaces are emancipatory, celebrate fluidity, and honor those who exist within spaces that dominant ideologies purposefully ignore. MultiCrit and *Borderlands* offer space to the identity holders and allow for the narrative to be written by those who live it.

Critical Multiracial Theory

Historical contexts of Multiraciality have largely been ignored or erased throughout U.S. history (Harris, 2015). A substantial portion of Multiracial research within higher education explores how students come to understand their own personal Multiracial identities rather than studying how Multiracial people conceptualize and enact Multiraciality through engagement with other Multiracial people and separate from dominant monoracial spaces. By focusing on within-group experiences, scholars can learn more about how Multiracial people navigate the complexity of identities that hold forms of power, privilege, and oppression often not discussed in the current literature. Moving forward, critical frameworks should connect the individual development of students with the larger societal structure of power and oppression to give a more expansive understanding of Multiraciality as it exists within a society that privileges whiteness and monoracial identities.

Harris (2015) sought literature that used Critical Race Theory to discuss Multiracial experiences that were grounded in current and historical contexts. She was unable to find higher education research that studied Multiracial history through the lens of CRT. So, she created the eight tenets of MultiCrit: challenge to ahistoricism; interest convergence; experiential knowledge; challenge to dominant ideology; racism, monoracism, and colorism; a monoracial paradigm of race, differential micro-racialization, and intersections of multiple racial identities (Harris, 2016).

To use MultiCrit as a theorizing concept in this research means to intentionally engage with the participants' stories. This means giving participants space to share their narratives, use transcriptions, and to record the researchers' own thoughts to not overshadow what the participants are saying. For grounded theory methodology, it also means drawing the connections between narratives to bring out the emerging theory that contextualizes the narratives within socio-political systemic power structures.

Harris's establishment of MultiCrit created a centralized understanding and language in which to position Multiraciality within a dominantly monoracial higher education system. By situating the experiences of Multiracial students through lenses of power and oppression, MultiCrit further opened the current literature's focus from individual Multiracial experiences to broader socially constructed systems. For example, MultiCrit provides a basis to refute arguments that oppose the formal recognition of Multiraciality due to it being ahistorical and lacking a clear purpose (Young Kim, 2013; Osei-Kofi, 2012). Through the ahistorical tenet, Harris (2016) argued against the idea that Multiraciality lacks a shared history as within higher education itself there exists "the creation and abolition of anti-miscegenation laws, slavery, immigration, affirmative action, the rule of hypodescent, and the addition of the 'check all 800

that apply' option on the US Census and college admission applications" (pp. 799-800).

Unfortunately, historical policies and practices around Multiraciality and their impacts on the community-building aspects of Multiracial students is marginally mentioned in current research.

Harris (2016) directly centered Multiracial experiences and related them to systemic practices of racialization and binarism brought on by oppressive systems in society. MultiCrit provides a language for Multiracial experiences that has not been available prior to its conceptualization. It contextualizes the experiences of Multiracial people within the social power structures that have gone unexamined in Multiracial literature. This aligns with my critical constructivist epistemology by highlighting such socio-political systems that have been used to marginalize Multiracial people. Other critical theories do not directly address power, privilege, and oppression through a Multiracial lens. Applying this theory to my research is helpful as it gives language and context through a specifically Multiracial lens.

MultiCrit offers the ability to more critically consider the shifting identities that Multiracial people are often subjected to in society and how this interacts with Multiracial peoples' relationships to power, privilege, and oppression. Two tenets offer this ability. The tenet of the differential micro-racialization recognizes the continued and daily experiences of Multiracial people's identity. Further expansion of this tenet should analyze ways Multiracial people are navigating such identity shifts. Another tenet that offers the expansion of understanding is the monoracial paradigm of race tenet. Built from CRT's understanding of structural determinism, this tenet broadens concepts of structural determinism. Structural determinism as defined by CRT is the idea that the dominant ideology in a society dictates the social construction of what is (and who is) right and wrong. CRT founded this on along the Black-white binary which proposes race as being either black or white. Harris (2016) re-

theorized this concept to be “A monoracial paradigm of race” to highlight how dominant ideology perpetuates the fixed, set categorization of race and refuses the acknowledgement of Multiraciality. The expansion upon this tenet is necessary to develop the foundation of MultiCrit.

It is necessary to consider other limitations to the MultiCrit framework. It has been built from a narrow sample of Multiracial individuals. All 10 participants were Multiracial women of color who were almost all perceived as such. Multiracial experiences are diverse and minimal research has expanded on the theories of MultiCrit since its inception. This leaves open the question of whether MultiCrit can be applied across Multiraciality. Harris (2016) noted that there is potential for additional tenets when more Multiracial experiences are brought into conversation with MultiCrit.

Additionally, MultiCrit is founded on Critical Race Theory and focuses on the systemic structures of power, privilege, and oppression (Harris, 2016). CRT was built off of critical legal studies and radical feminism; thus, it has a legal-based framework (Delgado & Stefaniec, 2017). This is helpful in defining the structural racism within U.S. society and it also can be stunted around the raw emotional realities of marginalized people within these power systems. This is present in MultiCrit which restricts this theory as it focuses more on systems than a fundamental aspect of a person’s lived realities. This is why I also included Anzaldúa’s (1987) Borderlands Theory.

Anzaldúa’s Borderlands Theory

Anzaldúa (1987) defined a border as “a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition” (p. 3).

Anzaldúa’s Borderlands theory proposes that Borderlands are spaces capable of holding within

themselves concepts, ideas, and beliefs that are often considered mutually exclusive.³ Further, it holds that those who reside in a Borderlands space face internal and external conflicts of living in multiple worlds at once. They are “[c]radled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems [undergoing] a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 78). This quote touches on the tensions that arise due to living in a space that cannot be understood through the binary exclusive lens that western ideology uses to define identity and culture.

The Borderlands theory troubles the notion that this tension needs to be resolved by choosing to live on one side of the border or the other. Further, it pushes that a Borderland space is not a direct summation of its opposing sides, rather; it creates a space outside of dominant society’s binary concepts and can disrupt internal conceptions of societal structures of power and oppression. Anzaldúa created the Borderlands out of the result of being of many cultures within a space that only recognizes the ability for people to hold one (Anzaldúa, 2012). This space is one that is in constant transition. Tension can arise from trying to decide to belong to one culture over another. As ways to address these tensions, people in the Borderlands develop an ability to tolerate ambiguity, contradiction, and living in two or more cultures that are said to be mutually exclusive.

Current use of Borderlands in Multiracial Research

The concept of border crossing from Anzaldúa’s (1987) Borderlands theory impacted Multiracial research. Root (1990) created a biracial identity development model that opposed the ongoing narrative that Multiracial people were destined to experience unhealthy identity development. She used the idea of border crossing, or being able to move fluidly through, across,

³ Borderlands is capitalized here to represent that the space being discussed is ideological and not, necessarily, physical.

between identity statuses on one's own terms to create an identity development model that did not rely on linear stages (Root, 1996, as cited in Renn, 2008). Although useful in stepping away from the notion of Multiracial development as a linear and one-size-fits-all process, this work focused on the concepts of border crossing in categorizing development for Multiracial people and less on how it can be used to understand the ways that individuals define, grapple, and create meaning from their experiences within a Borderlands space. Thus, Root's (1990) utilization of border crossing was useful in looking at identity development but did not touch on processes of meaning making.

Alternatively, Chang (2014) used Critical Race Theory methodology and ethnographic interviewing to recount how 25 college students who had at the time or had previously identified as Multiracial created Multiracial identities for themselves. Chang's study found that students were able to use Anzaldúa's concepts from *la facultad*, such as gaining agency by racially identifying through means of self-identification, to navigate their Multiracial identities within monoracial spaces and often felt both tension and satisfaction in their Multiraciality. This mirrors Anzaldúa's conception of Borderlands which intentionally states that the experience of Borderlands is one that can be felt whenever two juxtaposing lands (physical or abstract) meet. The participants in Chang's (2014) study directly felt these tensions when engaging in dominantly monoracial spaces. This study presented a narrative for how Multiracial students individually live within and navigate Borderlands in dominantly monoracial contexts. Further it shares ways in which Multiracial people view their Multiraciality in diverse (yet still monoracial) spaces.

Mohan and Chamber (2010) touched on an aspect of Borderlands when they noted that Multiracial communities are not monolithic. Their study found that Multiracial communities

form outside of how monoracial communities form. Monoracial communities, being the dominant and centered understandings for racialized communities within society, may completely exclude, discredit, and prevent support for the unique needs of Multiracial people and communities. Mohan and Chambers (2010) noted the bonds created between Multiracial participants and researchers were not from having the same racial identity but rather from the shared experience of having to “engage in micro negotiations” due to having a multiracial identity (Mohan & Chambers, 2010, p. 275). This finding suggests that the marginalization of Multiracial identities within a structure that sets as its norm monoracial identities forms the othering that connects Multiracial people. Monoracism racializes Multiracial people, yet society refuses to acknowledge how community and bonding between Multiracial people occurs and as a result, Multiracial people continue to be ostracized within dominant systems. The research indicates that Multiracial people still search and feel connections with one another despite the ongoing delegitimization. Although the markers of connection and bonding lie outside the dominant monoracial understandings of what constitutes an insider’s status, Mohan and Chambers (2010) noticed a shared understanding and safety between the participants and the researchers due to their Multiracial identities. Similar to Anzaldúa’s depiction of *Borderlands*, what is commonly understood from an outside perspective is deconstructed within these spaces.

Additionally, Anzaldúa (1987) highlighted the dominant binary ideology that culture, like race, is an exclusive practice. Thus, *Borderlands* theory in relation to Multiracial people contends that living as their Multiracial selves involves grappling with the pain and tension that arises in constantly having their bodies erased, manipulated, and forcibly molded by external forces. This depiction of the challenges of Multiraciality as it rests within a dominant culture of monoraciality is in line with the historical depictions of Multiracial people as being deprived of happiness, joy,

and a full identity (Renn, 2008). However, unlike the literature, pain is just one aspect of Anzaldúa's Borderlands. The lived experiences of people within the Borderlands are multi-dimensional, fluid, and dynamic.

Anzaldúa (1987) acknowledged that the current structure of society is based on exclusionary binary ideologies of culture and race. Multiracial cultures are perceived as deviant, wrong, and nonexistent. Borderlands in Multiracial contexts, thus, pushes back on this by saying that Multiracial people live in their Multiraciality, create a space for themselves, and define Multiraciality through their own understandings and lived experiences. Chang (2014) noted “[the] claiming of a Multiracial identity is not solely a Borderland of racial deviance per se, but also a space of agency” (p. 26).⁴ Borderlands within Multiracial contexts are spaces created simultaneously separate from and in response to, monoracial spaces. It is also written by Multiracial people and the definitions of these spaces are contextual. Living in these spaces is not intended to be by one singular design, rather; it is an alive space, dynamic and changing. This includes across individuals as well as within; one person can live in Borderlands and experience multiple realities.

Summary

Critical Multiracial Theory and Anzaldúa's Borderlands touch on different aspects of the socio-political structures that are present in higher education spaces. MultiCrit provides understanding for the systems of power and oppression through its critical understanding of

⁴Chang (2014) uses the term “deviance” purposefully in her study. Historically, being considered racially deviant had a negative connotation. Those who are deviant are impure, deformed, and abnormal. However, Chang (2014) intentionally uses this term in an act of reclaiming Multiracial identities. Symbolizing the ways in which the participants in the study, despite experiencing “ostracization at times, they also, at some points in their identity development, embraced the uniqueness of their racial/cultural fusion and gained a certain competency” (p. 28). As Multiracial people, others might call us racially deviant, but *we* get to show and tell others what that means. By acknowledging and celebrating what society fears we reclaim the power that society is trying to hold over us.

societal dynamics and institutional and political practices. Its foundational connection to Critical Race Theory is helpful in naming these dynamics and practices; however, it does not provide all contextual information that occurs within these socio-political spaces. Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* emphasizes fluidity, deconstruction of binaries, narratives via holder of identities in question, and the emotional details present in any spaces in which humanity is present offers another strand in which to examine these spaces. Together they acknowledge how the monoracial dominant society erases, ignores, and denies the full complexity of Multiracial experiences while also recognizing that mixed race bodies have been used to further hegemonic power structures. It postulates that Multiracial people push back against this through the multiple forms in which Multiracial people can identify their Multiraciality. Lastly, it postulates that, as a culture, this space is in transition and must rely on other forms of bonding than the ways western societies construct monoracially formed communities. This combined lens of Critical Multiracial Theory and Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* takes into consideration how Multiracial people define Multiracial spaces, navigate the broader social spaces in which they experience varying forms of power, privilege, and oppression, while contending with monoracism practices that have historically and currently denied these spaces as legitimate.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The limited research about Multiracial college students' navigation of their relationship(s) to power, privilege, and oppression led to this research study. The open inquiry into how these students come to understand their personal positions within and outside of society's power structures as well as how community plays a part in their experiences was the central focus of this study. The question below served as the guide for this study:

How do Multiracial college students, who interact with other Multiracial people, navigate their relationship(s) to power, privilege, and oppression?

My interest in how Multiracial students navigated their relationships to power, privilege, and oppression and the influence of community with other multiracial students along with the scarce research in this topic made grounded theory the best methodological approach to employ. The emphasis on the inductive emergence of theory from the data gives space for participants' stories to take a forefront in the creation of new knowledge. Of course, my influence is threaded throughout the research process. I engage in Charmaz's (2014) constructivist and socially just practices of grounded theory. This chapter includes my epistemological perspective, positionality, the characteristics of grounded theory including the foundations of grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory, as well as why it aligned with my research interests. This chapter also outlines my research design and the methods I used for sampling, data collection, analysis, and trustworthiness.

Grounded Theory Introduction

Grounded theory is a methodology in which data collected in the research process is used to inform the creation of a theory to inform action-based decisions or better understand or enhance a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 2005). Grounded theory was formally created in the late 1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss to tighten the

relationship between the creation of theories and the data collected through interactions that occur in the research process (Creswell, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Scholars can study the influences that human agency and social structures have on one another (Charmaz, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This is done through the constant comparative method, an interactive and iterative process of data inquiry, analysis, and conceptualization (Charmaz, 2005; Creswell, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The proximal relationship between the data collection and overall research process is what distinguishes this qualitative methodology from other methodologies.

Grounded theory was built on positivist ideas of systematic and objective processes (Creswell, 2013). Since then, researchers have challenged this perspective such as Charmaz (2005), who reconceptualized this methodology into a constructivist grounded theory. Drawing from Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory approach, I also practiced reflexivity throughout my research practice as my epistemology is more aligned with constructivism. Through reflexivity I considered the contexts that have influence in the creation of this research. I also engaged in memoing and theoretical sampling as these are both characteristics of this methodology. Grounded theory aligns well with the aims of my study since my study investigates how Multiracial students interact and navigate their relationships to power, privilege, and oppression, that could lead to an emerging theory.

Grounded Theory Foundations

In the 1960s, qualitative practices within the field of sociology were declining as social science fields did not consider it as rigorous or standardized as quantitative research (Charmaz, 2014). The unclear practices made it difficult for researchers, both new and seasoned, to learn qualitative approaches. In response, Glaser and Strauss (1967) brought quantitative practices to

qualitative research. This “bringing together” led to the emergence of grounded theory; a qualitative research methodology that employs systematic guidelines for inductive data analysis (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory offers flexible strategies for carrying out research that requires the researcher(s) to continually interact with the data in an iterative fashion using constant comparative methods to inductively allow a theory to emerge via the data (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory emphasizes the close relationship between theory and data as this methodology does not start with a theory but rather one emerges as data are collected and analyzed (Charmaz, 2014; Jones et al., 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

What sets this methodology apart from other qualitative methods, which also encourage researchers to adapt research to what the data deems as an interest point, is that grounded theory explicitly lays out a scaffolding for how researchers can follow the needs that emerge during the research process (Charmaz, 2014). The flexible structure of grounded theory gives researchers potential paths to consider when doing research while also allowing space for choice. It requires the researcher to play an active role in the data collection and analysis throughout the study.

Shortcomings and Criticisms to Positivist Grounded Theory

Because researcher(s) must maintain an active engagement when doing grounded theory, the coding process is vital. Glaser and Strauss (1967) had disagreements around coding processes which was evident in the largely ambiguous ways in which such processes were discussed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This posed a large challenge especially as Glaser and Strauss (1967) followed positivist ideas. Positivism views knowledge as objective realities in which a universal truth exists (Jones et al., 2013). At the time of its creation, Glaser and Strauss (1967) bent the prevailing notion that there was one correct way of doing research. However, this concern was a large criticism by researchers interested in conducting grounded theory, who noted that it was

impossible to be unbiased blank slates when conducting research. In response, researchers began to turn to constructivist grounded theory.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

Constructivist grounded theory maintains many of the guidelines of foundational grounded theory: flexible, iterative, constant comparative methods that lead to inductive theories (Charmaz, 2014). However, unlike the view that theories from positivist grounded theory practices give rise to purely objective inductive analyses, constructivist grounded theory acknowledges the researchers role in the shaping of the research process, thus, highlighting the inherent subjectivity present in research. Through this viewpoint the theories derived from the data are seen as interpretations instead of universal truths (Jones et al., 2013). Subjectivity, as highlighted by Charmaz (2014), provides an alternative understanding from Glaser and Strauss (1967) in that researchers are designated as interpreters instead of neutral observers. The practice of reflexivity is vital for constructivist grounded theory as it clarifies how the researcher(s) beliefs, actions, and interpretations impact their approach to the research process. Reflexive research highlights the importance of “how the researcher conducts [their] research, relates to the research participants, and represents them in written reports” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 344).

Grounded Theory and My Research Study

Through a constructivist lens the technique behind data analysis is less emphasized, which allows for more flexibility in the analysis process (Charmaz, 2005; Creswell, 2013). Context such as the “diverse local worlds, multiple realities, and the complexities of particular worlds, views, and actions” is heavily considered in the collection of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 137). As a critical form of inquiry, constructivist grounded theory intentionally prioritizes the continual practice of research reflexivity. Thus, the researcher is situated within

the context of the research and addresses potential biases, frameworks, and epistemological perspectives (Charmaz, 2005). Because of the impact the researcher has on the research, the researcher is viewed as a critical part of the research process (Jones et al., 2014). Through this perspective, the analysis of data is considered an emerging interpretation to highlight the underlying subjectivity that researchers bring to the research process (Charmaz, 2015).

Researchers emphasize the emergence process through the interplay between data and theory. It is not *the* theory but rather a theory that emerges due to all of the different circumstances at play; the positionality of the researcher, the participants selected, and the way the data are analyzed. Data influence the creation of an emerging theory, and the emerging theory then leads to the further collection of data.

My research was well suited for constructivist grounded theory because I was interested in how multiracial students navigate their relationship(s) to power, privilege, and oppression and how being in community with other Multiracial students influences their understanding of these relationships. As explored in chapter two, this is a question not deeply explored in the current research. “Grounded theory is a good design to use when a theory is not available to explain or understand a process” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.137).

Constructivist grounded theory also fits because of its emphasis on the researcher-participant relationship in the construction and sharing of knowledge. Participants have an active role in this research process. Researchers follow practices that lessen the unacknowledged biases that exist in the creation and sharing of research (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is important because it provides a clearer depiction for the way the research was conducted. It calls into question researcher assumptions and allows for the opportunity for participants’ stories to be accurately portrayed in the research narrative (Charmaz, 2014).

Lastly, constructivist grounded theory aligns with social justice practices. It is paramount that ethical and socially just practices occur when research studies focus on underrepresented populations such as Multiracial college students within higher education. Constructivist ideology leads to more descriptive narrative writing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Plus, the constant comparative methods and emphasis on reflexivity lends constructivist grounded theory to rich thick data and the space for participants' stories in dialogue. The focus on development of theory allows for critical analysis of current social structures of power, privilege, and oppression from a lens of openness that may not be available if engaging in deductive-centered research.

Epistemology

From a critical theory epistemology reality is understood through socially constructed systems of “freedom and oppression, power, and control” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 76). Critical theorists pay special interest to relationships, histories, and cultural ways of knowing when studying processes that exist in a society (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Jones et al., 2014). Scholars who draw from critical theories seek to define and challenge social systemic processes of power, privilege, and oppression. The explicitness in which Critical Race Theory (CRT), a type of critical theory, studies power and oppression is in direct alignment with its desire to redefine and transform societies' constructions of power, race, and racism (Creswell & Poth 2018; Delgado & Stefanie, 2017). CRT takes a constructivist approach. Foundationally, the scholars who created CRT believed that neutrality and pure objectivity were not possible. The creation of law by people made the laws inherently biased; in the case of the societal laws, they were created to oppress marginalized populations. In this case it specifically interacts with social constructivism as it adds a contextual layer of the explicit study of power, race, and oppression that is missing in a purely social constructivist perspective.

Social constructivists highly prioritize context, believe that multiple realities exist, and that these realities are “co-constructed between the researcher and the researched and [are] shaped by individual experiences” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). Because realities are co-created, research studies of this nature generally do not start with a defined theory, rather, a theory emerges through the research process. Alone this paradigm does not directly study how power and oppression affect the creation of these realities which is why it is necessary to look at this paradigm in conjunction with critical race theory as a critical constructivist perspective.

Critical constructivism is founded on the understanding that when creating realities, individuals are influenced by the society/societies, culture(s), and history/histories, and the power dynamics in which the individual is situated (Kincheloe, 2005). It is grounded in practices of justice and equity through liberatory processes. It highlights the voices of marginalized individuals and their experiences as they move through power and oppression-based systems. As my study aimed to understand how participants navigate their relationships to and with power, privilege, and oppression in an area that currently has not focused on this population, the implementation of critical constructivism was appropriate.

Positionality

An important practice in research is reflexivity by self-disclosure (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Common in qualitative research is the desire to remove omniscient voices as the dominant narrator (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Jones et al., 2013). The researcher must maintain ethical and political awareness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The relationships between the researcher and research topic as well as the relationship(s) between the researcher and participants should be explicit so the voice of the researcher is made aware to the audience. This allows for the subjectivity steeped within the narrative(s) presented in the data to be clearly understandable to

the audience (Charmaz, 2014). I was intentional in naming my positionality. I understood power, privilege, and oppression, and my relationship to them, given my social identities, greatly impacted my perception of reality. It was necessary that I engaged in reflexive practices throughout my research process as my experiences did not necessarily reflect the lived realities of the participants. Sharing the researcher's social identities, interests, and experiences that drove them to this research of study was vital for this process.

I came to this research with an intrinsically deep curiosity and personal connection to this topic. I am a Black, Chinese, and White, gender expansive person. I was born and raised in the United States in a predominantly White midwestern rural town. Both my parents were born and raised in the United States. I acknowledge the privilege I have experienced being a native born citizen with two native born citizen parents. My mother identifies as mixed and my father, Chinese American. Fluidity in terms of race has always been present in my life. I was taught that racial identities were not explicit boundaries. I was told that my racial identities were very much a “yes, and...” label. Overall, I grew up with my dominant racial identity being mixed. But I was also made very aware that this identity was one that was not always represented or recognized in public spaces. In fact, it was an identity that was at times challenged by my peers, teachers, parents and even strangers. I was told by teachers to “just pick one” (mono-)racial identity on forms. My peers would ask me to prove my identity within different monoracial groups. I was told by one peer in middle school that she could only tell I was Chinese when I wore my hair in a bun and did not wear my glasses as then she “was able to see the slant of my eyes”. I have been called racial slurs. I have been told that teachers did not need to help me in school because “all Asians are smart”. People have made jingles out of my hyphenated last name.

I grew up hearing stories of how my grandparents on my mother's side had to cross state lines to be married. They were wed while interracial marriages were still illegal in their home state. My family was, and still is, very proud of our mixed-race heritage. Beauty, inwardly and outwardly, was (and still is) an important way to exhibit pride in a racial context for my family. I view this strong pride as a response to the continual racialized othering and racism that my family experienced from other family and community members. My family pushed very strongly that no one was able to tell us who we were other than ourselves. My mother taught my siblings and I from a very young age that people would ask us or make comments about our race. This pride, at times, was overtly or covertly imbued with colorblind rhetoric. I was taught that our family was special not only for forming despite of racism but somehow overriding racism all together. I do believe it contributed to the deep shame I experienced whenever I questioned my racial identity in my childhood and teen years.

This shame followed into my time as an undergraduate student. I entered the university hopeful and with the expectation that I would easily find a sense of community because, although the university was a predominantly white institution, there were more people of color on its campus than in my hometown. However, my undergraduate institution did not have resources or other forms of support for Multiracial students. I struggled not having an intrinsic understanding of who I was and sought validation externally. I was unequipped for the challenges that came when the validation was not easily given. During my first two years of my undergraduate experience, the main ways I interacted with Multiracial communities was through academic writings and popular race and culture media. The scholarly literature often focused solely on identity development around Multiracial identities. I felt a lack of nuance and connection to the full scope of my experience as a Multiracial person.

After becoming involved in racial advocacy spaces in my undergraduate study, I grappled with my own roles and responsibilities in these spaces. Monoracial peers and advisors, although often full of academic knowledge and personal experiences around advocacy, lacked a nuanced understanding of Multiracial experiences. My role seemed complicated by the physical ambiguity my body presented towards others. The treatment I experienced in one space was starkly juxtaposed in another. I struggled immensely with my racial ambiguity. I wanted so badly for my identity to be perceived consistently rather than how different people treated me even among the same monoracial groups. Navigating advocacy-based roles left me without a guide. Advocacy and navigating power, to me, seemed to be presented and discussed in binary, rigid forms. Either you were oppressed, or you were not. Either you had power, or you did not. Questioning this idea, contemplating fluidity, did not seem welcomed. Often stories like mine were erased, simplified, and spoken about from monoracial lenses. I lacked the ability to fully articulate the frustrating and suffocating feelings of having my identity disregarded or grouped into binary roles that did not take into consideration my lived experiences. More than the frustrations, I carried a deep shame in being unable to articulate my experiences eloquently, deep shame in feeling like I was too old to still be searching for a community of people who would want me, a deep shame in seeking external validation because I did not have an intrinsic understanding of who I was.

In my third year of undergraduate I decided to actively seek out other Multiracial students who were interested in talking about being mixed and hanging out with other mixed students. It was not until I began to create community and saw the nuances in how others like me navigated the world and their understandings of themselves within, besides, and outside of it that I began to challenge, critique, and create the world and my relationship to it. My Multiracial peers' stories

may not have been exactly like mine, but I learned how to love more deeply, give more fully, and be more me from spending time with them, as they shared who they were with me. The more I came to solidify my confidence in who I was, the more flexible I became in adjusting to the environment.

It also increased my ability to engage critically around my responsibility and role in social justice oriented work. Once having an established confidence, I was able to better explore concepts of racism, monoracism, deconstruction of binaries, power, privilege, proxy privilege, and Mixed race beauty myth; while also reflecting on my own identity as a Multiracial person and the ways that my physical features, cultural knowledge, and upbringing influence my relationships to these concepts.⁵ Having the freedom and confidence to explore allowed me to develop the language to see how my socialization as a Multiracial person influenced my experiences and gave me space to deconstruct beliefs I previously left unchallenged. Through reflecting on my own life experiences, I was able to contextualize terminology. For example, proxy privilege is a form of relational power experienced by a marginalized individual (i.e. a person of color, white woman, or gender queer person) within a specific context; such as a particular place, space, and time (Liu, 2017). Proxy privilege exists through white supremacy; thus, marginalized individuals who are temporarily granted privilege experience it in unstable forms. In U.S. contexts it is dependent on the marginalized individual's (perceived) proximity to the imperialistic white supremacist cis-heteropatriarchal norm. Those who experience proxy privilege often (consciously or not) try strongly to maintain or regain this privilege. A personal

⁵ Mixed race beauty myth (also called biracial beauty myth) is the belief that Multiracial people are far too attractive in comparison to monoracial people because their mixedness gives them the chance of being made up of all of the parts of each individual race that is the most attractive (Younge, 2012). This myth is linked to the long history Multiracial people have of being subjected to being exoticized and hypersexualized. Although there is no current literature on the direct relationship between this myth and the current high rates of sexual violence Multiracial people (of all genders) experience, the possible correlation between the two is worth highlighting.

example of an experience in which I have had proxy privilege includes being told by teachers and peers in high school that I had the “right kind of tan skin that everyone was jealous of”. Instead of challenging these comments as racist I remained silent because I wanted to maintain the perceived power I had over others; that I had beautiful skin and others did not. This was the same school system in which in another setting I was called the n-word, my racially ambiguous features were criticized, and my last name was made into jingles. In different times, places, and in other social settings my perceived privilege was erased.

I found comfort through learning about MultiCrit. I could pinpoint exact experiences in which my experience as a Multiracial person fit within each tenet. In alignment with the tenet of interest convergence my identity was only recognized when the university I was attending found benefit in it. I was directly told by a professor that my contact information was given to a staff member in charge of marketing because the department wanted to highlight the diversity of its students.⁶ In this instance my identity was considered beneficial for the university to recognize, however, in other incidents my identity was largely erased. When I asked student affairs professionals for resources specifically for Multiracial students, I was directed to the same monoracially dominant diversity offices and centers. All of which had great opportunities to connect with students of color but none of which were specifically and intentionally designed to support the needs and celebrate the experiences of Multiracial students. This continually sent the message that my identity as a Multiracial student was not important, significant, or of value.

Nevertheless, I still found MultiCrit relatively new in its formation and in need of an expansion of its theorizing. I wanted to understand more about how MultiCrit considered Multiracial peoples’ relationship(s) to power and privilege. MultiCrit having stemmed from the

⁶ For more context, there were two students of color in the class the professor taught. Both of our contact information was given without our consent.

experiences of Multiracial women of color, who were consistently recognized as people of color I knew that this did not necessarily encapsulate all lived experiences within the Multiracial community. Secondly, Harris's (2016) description of the "racism, monoracism, and colorism" tenet was briefly explained but not thoroughly explored in her work. This tenet along with the tenet "a monoracial paradigm of race" were two that I saw as an opportunity for the development of MultiCrit that could enrich the literature's understanding of Multiracial experiences.

Two important aspects of my life guided me as I navigate(d) my relationship to power, privilege, and oppression: a deep determination for introspection and being in community with other Multiracial people who have been kind enough to share their stories, beliefs, and journeys with me. The more I know myself and the more I learn from and with others, the more fluid in my identity I become. As I journey through this research, I take these experiences, privileges, and ideas with me.

Methods

My positionality and critical constructivist epistemology led me to think very intentionally about the methods I enacted in my research study. The following sections describe what methods I followed in selecting the participants, collecting, and analyzing data, and developing the trustworthiness of this study.

Sample

I began the recruitment process for this thesis by using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a form of non-random sampling in which participants are selected based on their knowledge of a topic (Jones et al., 2013). Participants had to self-identify as Multiracial, have an interpersonal relationship with another Multiracial person, and attend a Big-10 predominantly white institution. I decided to focus on these three criteria because it would ensure that the

participants in the study would be able to effectively share Multiracial experiences that relate to the research question. By having participants who self-identify as Multiracial it indicated they in some ways have thought about their experiences as a racialized person. Having some relationship with another Multiracial person increased the likelihood they had been exposed to Multiraciality outside of their own identity and emphasized their experience being in connection to other Multiracial persons a component in my research question. Selecting Big 10 institutions was intentional for the purposes of recruitment.

To recruit participants for my study I reached out (Appendix B) to Multiracial-based student organizations and culturally based institutional centers at predominantly white public research institutions in the Big 10 and asked them to pass along an electronic flyer (Appendix C) about my study. The eligibility requirements included individuals who identified as Multiracial, were undergraduate students who attended a Big 10 university (Appendix D) and engaged with (an)other Multiracial person(s) in some capacity. Big 10 universities are often able to financially back student support and engagement programs and efforts that can reach Multiracial students. Drawing the sample from the Big 10 student population increases the likelihood of collecting a larger sample size than selecting from smaller conferences. Additionally, although this was not one of my sample criteria, Big 10 universities are capable of having a diverse array of students attend their institution which could help my study reach a more diverse group of Multiracial students.

To gauge whether interested individuals qualified for my research study I linked a demographic questionnaire (Appendix E) to the flyer. This questionnaire asked potential participants to indicate their race(s), ethnicities, gender, and level of engagement with other Multiracial people before and during university. Once interested individuals completed the

questionnaire, I followed up with those who met the requirements of the study with logistics for interviews and required participants to complete the informed consent (Appendix F) document in compliance with the University of Maryland (UMD) Institutional Review Board (IRB).

After the initial data collection, I engaged in theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is when participants are selected based on what the data deems necessary to reach theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Sampling is chosen to further analyze the emerging concepts or theory. This technique requires a basis for concepts to already exist (Charmaz, 2014). In grounded theory this process occurs after data collection has started and preliminary codes and categories have begun to form. Theoretical sampling is driven by the concept and not by the need to collect more participants (Jones et al., 2013). The data determines what sampling is necessary. This can mean that researchers would need to conduct more interviews with different participants, the same participants, or return to the data already collected to analyze it from another viewpoint. During the theoretical sampling and analysis phase, I interviewed different participants and returned back to the data already collected. I engaged in theoretical sampling directly after the analysis of the first participant. During that first analysis, questions were formulated around potential differences and similarities in experiences that led to more intentionally selecting Multiracial students of diverse heritages.

In total, I reached out to 12 interested individuals, 10 responded back to my inquiry and scheduled an interview time. Of those that scheduled only one had a conflict and was unable to meet for an interview. There were nine total participants who fully participated in the study. The self-reported demographic data of each participant is indicated in the following Table 1.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Name	Gender	Year in school	Race	Ethnicity
Alison	Female	4th Year	Biracial (white & Asian)	Chinese American
Alice	Woman	2nd Year	White/Asian	Japanese-American
Lynn	Female	1st Year	Mixed Race	White and Black
Sophie	Female	1st Year	Asian / White	Indian / White
Grace	Female	1st Year	White/african american	White/african american
Ava	Female	3rd Year	Asian	Puerto Rican
Reyna	Female	1st Year	Black and Asian	Filipino
Ema	Female	2nd Year	Caucasian, Latinx, Asian	Hispanic
Maya	she.her	3rd Year	Black	Chinese guyanese, black, and white

Note. Participants had the option to choose their own pseudonyms. Participants wrote in their responses for gender, year in school, race, and ethnicity in the demographic questionnaire. I clarified with all participants their year in school before organizing the years into numbers and not class standings. Participants often shared their pronouns during their interviews. I did not add them to this table as it was not something I asked in the demographic questionnaire. All other aspects are as the participants wrote in their questionnaires. Participants are listed in the order in which they were interviewed.

With grounded theory, data collection and analysis happen in tandem. I started with data collection and then cycled through a series of collection and analysis until theoretical saturation was met. For clarity, I discuss the data collection processes and then discuss data analysis processes in the sections below.

Data Collection

Data collection began when the participants filled out the demographic questionnaires. This questionnaire asked participants to self-report how much engagement they have with other Multiracial people during university as well as how much they had prior to university. Having this information provided some understanding of how much access to Multiraciality participants had both prior to and currently in their higher education experience. This provided contextualization I could use in interviews as well as for data analysis. The self-reported engagement levels are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2.
Self-Reported Multiracial Engagement

Name	Prior to University	During University
Alison	Some engagement	A lot of engagement
Alice	Some engagement	Some engagement
Lynn	Some engagement	Some engagement
Sophie	A lot of engagement	A lot of engagement
Grace	A lot of engagement	A lot of engagement
Ava	No engagement	A lot of engagement
Reyna	A lot of engagement	A lot of engagement
Ema	A lot of engagement	Some engagement
Maya	A lot of engagement	A lot of engagement

I then conducted 60-90 minute intensive interviews. An intensive interview entails a researcher giving guidance for a research participant to share their personal experiences related to the topic of study (Charmaz, 2014). I used the interview protocol (Appendix G) and also left some room for probing questions during the interview which is in alignment with a semi-structured interview process (DeCarlo, 2018). I constructed my interview protocol with three guiding sections. Section one was designed to develop the relationship between me and the

participant, section two inquiries about relationships the participant has with their institution, peers, and social communities. The third section asks for follow up and clarification. I developed a thorough interview protocol because as a new researcher having an in depth protocol can help generate more in depth sharing from the participant (Charmaz, 2014).

The intensive interview structure is both flexible and controlled, open to engagement with ideas and issues, developed through the co-construction of the interview by both researcher and participant, and gives space for immediate follow-up during the interview. Intensive interviews are well suited for grounded theory because they combine seemingly opposing techniques. In practice they are “open-ended yet directed, shaped but emergent, and paced yet unrestricted” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 85). This is very important because my approach to the interview process evolved as I engage in data collection and analysis practices.

I was very intentional in having a protocol as it developed a basis in which to guide the research. However, because of the nature of grounded methodology the initial set up for the questions and the emphasis I spent on a specific question, or another changed with the process. For example, as the data was analyzed it became increasingly clear that a pattern was arising in which the experiences of participants prior to college played a role in their views upon entering their college communities. I then made sure to follow this path as it gave access to the underlying theory that was emerging from the data. In asking more about lived experiences it also became apparent the relationships; familiar, friendships, and community all needed to be studied more. This understanding was emphasized by the procedures I followed at the end of each interview.

I wanted to allow for space for participants to engage in the research process in a way that gave them some agency in their experience. Participants at all times were allowed to skip questions, refer back to questions, and ask for clarification. Additionally, at the end of each

interview I gave time for participants to ask me any questions about the research process and to share anything they would like to add to the interview. Participants were allowed to share how they felt about the interview, why they decided to participate, any thoughts or beliefs they felt about their understanding of the behaviors they witnessed themselves or other Multiracial students exhibited, and if they had nothing to share, they did not have to share anything. These conversations and the data collected influenced the way I furthered my research analysis and data collection process. As an example, multiple participants mentioned choosing to participate in the research because they had not heard of research that was being conducted focusing on Multiracial students' experiences and they had found it challenging to find information that focused on Multiraciality. I then was more intentional in asking following participants more about what forms of Multiracial support and resources in which they had access to both prior to and while in college as well as if/how participants went looking or created support and resources for themselves. This helped create a richer understanding of how the participants were navigating and negotiating their higher education institutions.

After each interview I engaged in the analysis process and came away with aspects of the protocol that needed to be emphasized during the next interview. As an example, it became clear that I needed to ask participants about their experiences in monoracial spaces, diverse spaces, and Multiracial spaces as it was pertinent to the emerging concepts. I also was intentional in wanting to select a diverse group of Multiracial students with different racial heritages who would provide rich and potentially wide ranging insights into Multiracial experiences.

A benefit to intensive interviews as opposed to utilizing only data collected through documents or other texts is that stories are further unpacked when in an interview that is often unavailable in text. Intensive interviews follow the emergent design common in qualitative

research, which means that initial plans might change as the research process is carried out (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers attempt to tease out the information needed to study a topic or issue through the best possible practices. Intensive interviews through a constructive lens merges the interviewer's role of gently guiding participants through their narratives with an emphasis on "exploration, emergent understandings, legitimization of identity, and validation of experience" within interviews (Charmaz, 2014, p. 91). Constructivist interviews focus less on relaying the exact account of a participant's reality and instead on what is emerging from those realities. I followed the general structure of the interview protocol; however, I was not rigidly confined to it. I would often ask questions out of order from the actual list of questions to match the flow of the interview or I would ask unscripted probing questions in order to give space for the participants to develop their thoughts and collect thick rich descriptions. I took brief notes during the interviews if I felt it was pertinent. After each interview I would write out my initial thoughts and reactions to help me process the interview as well as assist with the analysis of data.

Data Analysis

Grounded theory methodology requires data analysis to occur during the data collection process. There are different analysis processes depending on the stage of research. Stated by Charmaz (2014) the collection and coding processes include:

1. Initial data collection and initial coding
2. Theoretical sampling and focus coding
3. Theoretical saturation and theoretical sorting.

The first coding process that begins during the starting phases of the analysis process and generally occurs right after the first round of data collection is called initial coding. It includes

coding via word-by-word, line-by-line, and/or incident-by-incident processes. Initial coding involves making comparisons and finding interesting similarities and differences among the data that might be of theoretical importance (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It goes beyond finding patterns in data. Grounded theory requires critically analyzing data for potential theoretical concepts behind the data and its emerging codes. Initial coding begins the process of answering the question, “what drives the data?” as it looks for the underlying motive and purpose behind the data collected. Because it begins early in the research process, concrete theoretical concepts do not generally emerge from this phase. Instead, these codes are more abstract (Charmaz, 2014). Researchers will often develop more questions as gaps in explanations or theoretical understandings within codes will become apparent in this process. It is an important stage for grounded theory as it helps provide slightly more order for analyzing the data moving forward. As these categories are created, questions will likely arise due to limited knowledge. To deepen the understanding of these categories, developing robust data are essential.

In my research study initial coding began directly after the first interview. I used the incident-by-incident approach to the coding by first, analyzing similarities and differences in the individual participant’s own story. As is expected in initial coding, I came away from this process with questions for my future data collection and analysis. I developed potential codes, but they were not fleshed out. As the data collection and analysis process continued these initial codes became steppingstones to more in-depth pathways in the research. This development required collecting data that is focused on the categories. This adaptation of sampling to discover and understand the complexities underlying the emerging categories is theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling begins the second form of data collection in the data collection and analysis process. Although what samples are determined as necessary occurs as the research process

unfolds, theoretical sampling is “strategic, specific, and systematic” because it develops categories until theoretical saturation is met (Charmaz, 2014, p.199).

Focused coding is the next data analysis step after initial coding in data analysis and goes hand in hand with the theoretical sampling process. This process took the initial codes and categorized them in an analytically meaningful manner. This meant going through the initial codes, finding connections, and coding these connections through synthesizing the initial codes. This was another step towards the theorization of the data. It was not just offering more descriptions but bringing out the emerging concepts from the initial codes. I was able to compare the codes from one participant to another. As well as go through and compare separate incidences of a participant with another incident they shared at another time in their interview. Incidents were considered separate response to questions. This phase continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Focused coding began through the second layer of incident-by-incident coding which was when participants’ experiences were compared to each other. I compared incidents in which participants indicated feeling insecure in a situation with other participants who felt similarly. I also did this with participants' experiences of security and comfortability in their identity. I then compared what was emerging from those incidents to each other for further analysis.

Theoretical saturation increased the validity of a research study. It occurred when no new concepts arise around a theory (Charmaz, 2014). Theoretical saturation was important for the establishment of a theory as it allowed the theory to be grounded in the data. This was distinct from data saturation in which sampling ended once recurring themes appear in data. The difference between saturation in *theoretical concepts* and *themes in data*. Theoretical saturation occurred once no meaningfully new information was added to the emerging theory. Because I

had a diverse array of participants with different heritages, different levels of interpersonal Multiracial engagement, and from different Big-10 institutions I was confident that I hit saturation when participants experiences added richness but did not change the overall mechanics of the emerging concepts.

Once theoretical saturation was met, I then engaged in theoretical sorting of the data. Theoretical sorting means integrating established categories in order to draw out the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2014). It helps researchers lay out and understand the theoretical underpinnings that connect the categories; thus, integrating the categories together. This process forces researchers to explicitly name relationships between categories that might have remained unknowingly unaddressed. This followed my critical constructivist lens as it brought to light implicit structures and systems, which I studied to determine the function it had to the theory that was emerging. This was when I was able to build out the emergent theory via a model.

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai, a transcription service. After each interview I listened to each recording to check for transcription errors and took any additional notes. The full interview was transcribed, as having the full transcription allowed for more in depth coding and the initial coding was not the last analysis of the data (Charmaz, 2014). I went back through each transcription more than once and I listened to each audio recording at least twice.

Trustworthiness

Often researchers will utilize triangulation and several data-gathering strategies to develop rich, thick data descriptions (Charmaz, 2014; Flick, 2019). Using more than one form of data collection also increases the trustworthiness of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Jones et al., 2013). In my study I used data from participant demographic questionnaires as well as from their

interviews to collect data. I also took notes during and after the interview, used a direct transcription, and listened to the audio of each interview. Because grounded theory focuses on the emergence of a theory over the in-depth retelling of individual narratives, the concepts that are created through the data play a vital role in the research process (Charmaz, 2014). The data was stored through UMD.box.com.

After the final interview was conducted, I held a focus group, as a form of peer debriefing, with the intention of gaining robust points of view on the conceptualizations that were emerging from the data. Peer debriefing increases trustworthiness as it provides an additional check of the data analysis and “keeps the researcher honest” by digging into the methods and way the researcher has interpreted the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 343). The focus group was approximately 60 minutes long and was held through Zoom. There were 6 participants who were selected through purposeful sampling. These participants were not from the original participant sample. All participants had experience working in higher education. The participants made a diverse group, some had experience with Multiracial student support, others identified as Multiracial or a Monoracial person of color, and others had experience researching or applying social justice concepts of power, privilege, and oppression. Focus group participants and I analyzed each of the emerging concepts to check if each concept appropriately captured the underlying theoretical ideas from the data. Potential study limitations in the research were also brought up and discussed. This focus group brought to my attention institutional agents as a subject to more heavily consider when thinking about support for Multiracial students.

During my research study I practiced memo-writing. Memo-writing allowed for an interactive space for the research to question, think, and critique ideas, codes, and concepts (Charmaz, 2014). It brought to light researcher assumptions and biases. It gave space for finding

connections between data points, creates opportunities to look at codes and ideas from different vantage points, and gave direction for next steps in the research process. Memo-writing is aligned with grounded theory as grounded theory requires the analysis of data to create concepts from them. Memo-writing forces researchers to slow down, deconstruct and reconstruct codes, and puts the thought process on a physical page. Thus, reflexive memo-writing helped to bring to light preconceptions that I had while coding data. As I came to this research with my own experiences and knowledge on the subject, I wanted to make sure I did not force the data into a pre-existing theory or my own subjectivities on the data. Memo-writing made me aware of how I might have influenced and made meaning of the research. I would memo-write before and after interviews, during my data analysis process, and while writing the chapters of this thesis.

Memo-writing is not a one size fits all process (Charmaz, 2014). Memo-writing is meant to be free flowing, unstructured, adaptable, and used in a way that is productive for the researcher. I kept a centralized location for all my memo-writing, so I could return to earlier memos as I progressed through my research. Memos created early in the research process are often less conceptually complex as there is less information for the development of codes, concepts, and a theory. A lot of my early memo-writing included questions that I wanted to follow up on in later data collection and analysis. This included questions around participants experiences with diversity and having Multiracial friendships. I then started to make general working definitions and codes from the data. As the research process advances so did these definitions and codes. Further connections were then made between codes and concepts and definitions were critiqued and updated as new data provided further insight into the theory emerging.

Summary

In Chapter three I introduced a brief history of grounded theory and current constructivist grounded theory. I also explained my reasoning for using constructivist grounded theory for this study as it aligns with my social justice oriented epistemological perspective. I shared my epistemology and my positionality. The latter of which provides my experiences being a Multiracial person of color whose relationships to other Multiracial people have influenced the ways in which I understand my relationships to power, privilege, and oppression as well as how I engage with this research. Then I described the data collection and analysis process and dove into the different forms of analysis that are common to constructivist grounded theory. I also described how I increased trustworthiness of the research.

CHAPTER IV: PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS

I want to recognize the lived experiences each participant shared in the process of developing the emergent theory. Grounded theory focuses on the concepts below the surface of the data and not on thick rich descriptions of participant stories (Charmaz, 2014). However, below I share brief notes on each participant because if I shared the underworking systems in which Multiracial students navigated, I would have to first share more about the lived realities of these participants. As a critical constructivist, I would be doing a disservice by not acknowledging how important participants' stories are to this work. Each description below is taken from the interview and audio transcript as well as notes I recorded during or directly after the interview. I also recognize that in sharing descriptions of the participants, I am reconstructing their stories and so my positionality and potential biases may come into play. However, I hope that, by reading the bios, my positionality, and the findings that illustrate the emergent theory, any biases on my end may be highlighted and challenged in future research.

Participants

I interviewed nine participants from four Big-10 institutions. They ranged from first year to fourth year students who all self-identified as Multiracial and interacted at least somewhat with other Multiracial people. Participants spoke at different lengths about their relationships to power, (proxy) privilege, and oppression. At large participants spoke about their experiences both prior to and during their time in college. They also discussed trying to navigate their understanding of their identity in comparison to how others perceive(d) and treat(ed) them. Many mentioned their desire or appreciation for Multiracial spaces. I include large quotes from participants as it helps to bring through their own understandings and experiences.

Alison

Alison was fairly involved on campus and held a few leadership roles in student organizations. She grew up in a suburb which had a few Wasian children but otherwise was predominantly white. She stated:

My school was ... the whitest PWI so ... it was not good. I actually ended up making friends with ... half the ... Wasian kids in my district, just because we ... tended to cluster together.”

Alison associated not having a strong monoracial Asian community with a big reason that her and the other Wasian kids bonded. She mentioned often feeling erased. People often assumed her to be white and that she “just looked a little bit different.”

Since coming to college, Alison has experienced different forms of racialization that have led her to reflect more on her identity, her privileges, and her experiences. She mentioned more than once that she has thought a lot during her time in college about what it means for her to often be perceived as a white woman by white people and a person of color by other people of color. She spoke about thinking more critically about what her privilege looked like as someone who can look like a monoracial white person when she is among white people. She also credited having access to a more expansive United States history at her higher education institution as helping her navigate her understanding of power and oppression and her role as a Wasian American. Being able to learn more about the LA Riots and how racial tensions have formed between Black, Latinx, and Asian communities has allowed her to question her own actions. In referring to learning about the LA Riots Alison reflected, “[It] made me think... is there a subconscious reason why I don't have that many Latino or black friends?”

She also mentioned being a leader in the Multiracial student organization on campus, which focuses on the experiences of being Multiracial and is open to all students, especially Multiethnic and Multiracial students. She decided to become involved with the Multiracial student organization because, “joining ... was definitely a part of me trying to ... lock down my feelings on my own identity and ... provide me the connection to ... other peers.”

Alison’s strongest sources of support for her Multiracial identity included the Multiracial student organization, the racial and ethnic cultural centers, the women’s resource center, her monoracial Asian and Multiracial friendships, and her relationship with her roommates; one of whom is monoracial and one who is Wasian. Alison believed that her relationship with her roommates “is probably the most important thing ... to my college success, definitely my mental well-being just because I'm so close with all of them. [A]nd it helps that I can ... literally talk to them about anything.”

To Alison, having a Multiracial community meant:

[H]aving people who understand ... the way you feel and the way your brain works in a way that can't really be explained to other people...Just ... having that [Multiracial] community that ... kind of intrinsically relates to you. Not saying that all Mixed people are the same or anything, but ... the mixed experience is pretty universal in some ways. So that really helps also just knowing that they're there. Again, depending on where you grew up, or just ... knowing Mixed kids in the area, so just knowing they're there can ... feel really, really comforting, I guess, especially if you're getting ... shaded by people for ethnic identity and stuff.

For Alison, being able to connect with other Multiracial people through a community has offered comfort in ways that she has been unable to find in other forms of community. Even

when notating the vast diversity within Multiracial experiences Alison still holds on to the idea that there is something that connects her to her Multiracial peers. It was through this group that she was able to process her thoughts and feelings about her racialized experiences. Alison believed that this space provided the opportunity for her to think more critically about her racial identity. She believed it was important to be able to talk about Multiracial experiences and challenges that Multiracial people face as it helps to develop a better understanding of who you are and your ability to clearly speak about it.

if you can't articulate stuff, even to yourself, then you're gonna have a really hard time ... with any kind of personal growth in that area of your life.

Alison mentioned feeling some relief from this interview because:

[E]specially around ... racial and ethnic identity and stuff, I feel like my opinions [are] always ... changing so being able to ... nail down ... concrete ideas about myself, at least for a little bit is ... really, really helpful ..., reassuring, basically.

Alice

Alice believed she looked monoracial Asian when she was very little and was treated as such by other people. As she grew up, she began to look more white and she thought, “people could tell that I was mixed, or I would get assumed to be either Asian or white around the same rate.” Alice’s relationships with her siblings were very important. She considers them her closest friends and support system when it comes to her Multiracial identity. Growing up there were other Multiracial students in her school, but she was not friends with them. She was “pretty used to being ... the only mixed person in a room”. Her friends were mostly monoracial white or monoracial Asian and would “joke that everything that was different about [her] life was because [she] was half white.” She also noted that:

It wasn't until I got to college ... that I started to sort of realize some of those harmful things that was happening when I was younger and be able to understand my identity more. Take back ... the pride of it.

In college, Alice experienced other invalidating experiences from friends that at the time were very upsetting. Her identity as an Asian American and person of color were called into question by her BIPOC friends, or her friends would make derogatory comments about Multiracial celebrities' racial identities in front of her. Alice did not join the Multiracial student organization during her first year of college because she thought "being mixed wasn't enough to ... have a shared connection." She joined monoracial and ethnic based spaces and often felt like she struggled to fit the specific monoracial mold of the group. Until she joined her Multiracial student organization, she had stopped looking for friendships through cultural based organizations as she felt like others seemed to fit in in ways she did not. Alice noted, "Until I joined [the Multiracial student organization] I tried not to put myself into situations where I knew I would be uncomfortable."

Eventually Alice did join the organization and credited joining the Multiracial student organization in helping her develop "the right communication tools to talk to her friends," offering space to express her frustrations, and developing a "sense of belonging" that if she would have joined earlier "would have been overall good for [her] mental health." It was through this organization that she realized that it was not her Japanese heritage that she wanted to be validated but her Multiracial heritage. Alice values the Multiracial student organization's "openness to difference" and that the way the group is "accepting of the fact that we don't understand each other's backgrounds and identities as well as that person does. But we can still talk about it and be friends anyway. And learn from each other." She mentioned that the

organization is for Multiracial, transracial adoptees, and multiethnic students. A connection she did notice was that many of the students in the organization share the feeling of being left out.

I asked Alice what she thought was positive about being Multiracial. She stated, “[H]aving that mixed background definitely ... helps me be more open minded. And having different experiences increases ... the diversity of your thought”. Alice believed that having the ability to think in a more diverse way allowed her to see experiences from different points of view, find solutions to challenges that others found unsolvable, and to engage with others in a more open manner.

Lynn

Lynn grew up “surrounded by white people and that was all I was really exposed to mainly.” She mentioned her identity is “more so just the blurred line of I’m either both or identifying as Black.” She viewed her identity as a decision “because people are going to make their assumptions.” Lynn noted that others make a lot of assumptions of her racial identity and recalled a time when a teacher mis-identified her as Latinx and made comments and references she did not understand. She connected these assumptions to her “ambiguous appearance”. Later she mentioned that she understood why people are curious, but they often do not know how to ask questions in non-problematic ways: “People [ask] if I’m adopted and just [say] blunt remarks that I don’t feel like most [monoracial] people endure”.

Lynn is predominantly surrounded by white people in her academic and social circles, which becomes apparent when considering beauty standards. Her peers will make comments about brushing their hair or tanning, which does not apply to her experiences. She desires spaces in which she can be around more people of color, but her experience with social anxiety and feeling “whitewashed” has made that difficult. She described it as a trickle down effect. Her

mother was raised in a predominantly white space and grew up with little access to Black culture. Lynn then also grew up in a white space and her mother did not have the cultural knowledge to share Black culture with Lynn. When wanting to seek out Black and other POC spaces Lynn has felt her whiteness positions her as an outsider.

There currently is no active Multiracial student organization on her campus. Her strongest form of support for her Multiracial identity on campus comes from her counselor who specializes specifically on multicultural experiences. She also has Multiracial friends that she made prior to college, noting that she can relate to people who have mixed Black heritage due to “the different topics today with racism”.

Lynn mentioned that in trying to increase her exposure to people who look like her she is conscious of the spaces she occupies on social media, but she did mention that she found it challenging to do the same in real life. She felt there was a lot about her identity she needed to process and that she needed to reflect more on why she struggles to follow through on bettering her relationship to her identity.

However, she was clear that she knew there was some part of her that was resisting the process. This resistance, she believed, stemmed from the potential solidification that she might not belong. Several times she spoke about experiences in which she has been othered, experienced microaggressions due to her Blackness, her racial ambiguity, and the way she did not fit standards of beauty. Then, she thought, for her to go through the process of exploring her identity and exploring new cultural communities and spaces and not feeling like she belonged would then “reinstate... feelings of feeling other, an outsider to different spaces, and never feeling fully a part of one group.” Lynn clarified that it was not the desire to fit into *one* specific

group that she desired but actually the desire for “fluidity and feeling like [she could] go in between groups” and be comfortable doing that.

Lastly, when asked what she found as positive in being Multiracial she said having access to different cultures was a large positive. She reflected:

Definitely the duality of ... experiences I've been exposed to. [A]n issue that a lot of people don't get to see is ... having people you care about on both spectrums... [and] experiencing two different kinds of lifestyles.

Sophie

Sophie's perspective on social issues is important to her. She has a lot of pride for her hometown and has a passion for environmental justice. Although it does not normally come up naturally, she does like for people to know that she is Indian and white. Sophie mentioned growing up in a very diverse environment which was a dominantly Black and brown space where it was common to be Multiracial. She explained, “I've always felt pretty comfortable [in my community]. [B]ut I've ... definitely had, like most Multiracial people, issues belonging in either community”. Prior to college, she was part of a very large and diverse friend group; one commonality they all share is being a daughter to at least one immigrant parent. When talking about her friend group Sophie shared: “[T]he fact that none of us are really the same race ... makes it pretty easy for us to connect because we can connect on other levels”. In college, Sophie has made a lot of friends although not as large or connected to a group like her high school friends. She described herself as very outgoing and very interested in learning about other people, their values, and their beliefs.

When it comes to how she racially identifies, Sophie goes back-and-forth about whether she identifies as a person of color because she can look like a monoracial white person. She

described times in which her BIPOC friends told her that they think she's a person of color.

However:

[I]f someone were to say [to me] you're not a 'person of color' I would be open to listening to them and see what they think because it is really about how you're ... perceived by others, which dictates your experiences.

She found it hard to think about how she perceives herself because she doesn't "think it's ever defined, like it's always changing." Sophie has tried to join an Asian-based student organization, but she witnessed a prejudice-based incident that occurred from some members of the organization towards other ethnic groups that deterred her from going back. She also mentioned that she went to a few Multiracial student organization meetings and events which was "pretty cool" because she had deep conversations about being Multiracial that "is not as common to be able to talk about" because it is a smaller community. She also mentioned that she went to a party they held which was a way to hang out with other Multiracial students.

Sophie prefers being in diverse spaces because she gets to learn about how others view the world. She added, "[A]ll of us have different identities that we kind of share the fact that we *can't* [emphasis added] relate. Nobody can rely on their identity so, therefore, I don't feel like I have to relate." I asked Sophie what advice she would give to other Multiracial students who were at her school. She encouraged students to join the Multiracial student organization and to "self-reflect on how they belong in spaces and how it impacts the way you go through the world." When prompted to share more about the importance of self-reflection she said:

It can help you ... understand what your privileges are and then how you can use that to support others and to relate to others. It can help you understand ... what you're lacking in terms of your identity, you know, it's made me realize how I want to explore more

about my own culture and how that's lacking. And it can ... help you realize ... why you have the relationships that you do.... And you can understand what kind of people that you want to be with ... from there on out. If you want to value diversity, then you'll seek it out and you prioritize that.

Grace

Some of the first things Grace wants people to know about them is that they are adopted and have two white moms. Their experience as an adoptee is important to them. They were open that they “don’t want to hide it”. They are from a Predominantly Black area but attended both predominantly white and predominantly Black schools prior to college. When they attended a Predominantly white middle school, they would receive microaggressive comments based on their Blackness. In high school they were at a Predominantly Black institution where they were bullied for their Multiracial identity. These experiences have influenced their feeling of belonging in college. They said:

if I could have stopped the way that I was treated in high school, I wouldn't feel like I don't have a place in like Black spaces on campus because I know like if I walked in there, no one is gonna say anything because hopefully like we've all grown and changed as people and they're not going to be like stupid, but it's still like I still feel like “oh that's not for me.”

For them, they have been able to cope with their trauma by talking with friends who understand Multiracial experiences and one of their supportive parents, as well as self-reflection. They spoke about trying in high school to suppress their feelings towards the bullying and their feelings of not being Black enough. They said that they used to tell themselves “everybody feels left out all the time.” But letting themselves accept and process their feelings as well as take the

time to reflect on how they perceive themselves has been very helpful in their healing process. Still, they admitted that the last part is pretty challenging for themselves even now. When explaining why they talk about this process in line with their experiences with homophobia as well stating:

I like to think I'm very outspoken and I will like stand up to people when they say stuff to me, but when it comes to certain, like, things that I'm kind of, like, unsure about, like, my racial identity or my sexual identity, I'm like, damn, like this kind of... I don't want to think about that. Because like, what if they're right? Because it's like, I don't know myself so like, what's to say that this person who's saying this thing to me, what if they're right? Like what if I eventually come to that conclusion later, or something like that?

Their academic and extracurricular activities are predominantly white spaces. They mention that it has been incredibly important for them to create Black communities within these predominantly white spaces. When asked about where they'd like to see themselves as they go through their college career, they mentioned:

I would love to be in like a part of like an on campus organization or start my own... for people who like might not feel as solid in their identity, like getting to talk about that.

Grace mentioned their friendship with someone else who was also Multiracial. I asked them to talk more about it. This was their response:

Being able to talk with someone who, even though she is not like black and white, but just that she like is multiracial. And being able to be like, oh, like a "white person said this to me today. I don't feel like I belong with white people" or "a black person said this to me that I don't think I belong with black people." and her being able to be like, "Yeah, this one time someone said this to me, and I feel exactly the same." Like being able to

have those similar experiences that are very specific to someone who was multiracial and being able to talk about it and have those conversations.

Ava

Ava said she feels better when she tells people she is Multiracial before they can ask questions. This way, she has the “agency of telling somebody who [she is]” rather than them probing. Ava said she grew up in a fairly diverse place with a decent amount of Multiracial people but most of those people were mixed Black and white or Asian and white. Ava, being Asian and Puerto Rican, said that there was added nuance to her experiences as a Multiracial person. She thought that this might be why when she was growing up she did not have a lot of close Multiracial friends and her sister was her main form of support for her Multiracial identity. Her identity as a Multiracial person was not at the forefront of her mind because there really were not spaces for her to “talk about and discuss [her] experiences with both sides.” She had a lot of Asian friends but didn’t feel quite like she fit in. “I wasn’t like Asian enough to be with them. And I just always felt like an outsider.”

Ava mentioned that she is often perceived as an Asian person and others categorize her as Asian. Speaking on this experience she said:

I feel like I tried really hard in the past, to be part of like Latinx spaces and to get involved in those areas. But I always felt like because of how I looked, I didn't fit in.

Finding a Multiracial space did not happen until she was in college. “I felt like I actually found... people that validated my identity. And I could form like, well meaning, like connections with... it was such a different level of connection that I've never experienced.” When describing the Multiracial student organization Ava describes it as a space “centering the perspectives of

people that are Multiracial, multiethnic, and transracial adoptees”. They talk a lot about experiences with racial imposter syndrome.

She also mentioned that this space helped her develop a sense of agency especially when it came to navigating family dynamics. In the student organization she was able to talk about racism she has experienced by family members and the lack of support she received from her parents whenever she would bring these issues to them. She was able to connect to others who shared similar experiences and learn ways that she can try to work through those experiences, find ways to resolve conflicts, and how to call family members out if needed. She couples being able to process in the Multiracial student organization as well as taking ethnic studies classes as equipping her “with enough knowledge to finally counter people who are like, ‘Oh, you’re wrong, like you don’t have evidence about this specific issue.” She goes back and forth with her feelings about becoming more credible through getting an education. On one hand she said, “it’s a relief [because she is] finally being taken seriously” but on the other hand she said “I should still be believed, regardless.”

Ava has made some close friendships through the Multiracial student organization. She even is roommates with someone she met through the organization. She also mentioned the importance of having professors in the ethnic studies classes who are open to hearing about her experiences as a Multiracial person and supportive staff members in the culture spaces she spends time in. When talking about the support from staff members she said:

[g]etting that support from them and that validation, even though like, you know, not all the conversations I’m having are with people that are a part of this community. But just I think being able to, like, be supported, like, by adults, by people that are older than me,

because that's not something that I've had in the past. And that's like, very validating and comforting as well.

Reyna

Reyna said that since coming to college more people seem to be curious about her identity and so she has found herself sharing more about it when she introduces herself. “As compared to high school,” she said, “[her peers] just kind of assum[ed] or just not even really cared to know.” Reyna described her hometown as a pretty diverse area, she grew up mostly with people of color, and she had a few Multiracial friends. Of her experience she said:

I didn't have many white friends at all growing up mostly other people of color. So that kind of influenced me to at least be able to identify with groups better or not have faced so much racial discrimination. Because there were so many people similar to me or having similar experiences.

She did mention that prior to high school, when she said she was Black and Asian, people would assume she was either Korean, Japanese, Chinese, or Vietnamese instead of Filipino. That changed a bit in high school because more Filipino people lived in the area and “as people became more aware of other countries in Asia” they were more likely to ask if she was Filipino.

Reyna mentioned that her family has played a big role in how she identifies. Especially seeing how everyone gets treated, her father as a Black man, her mother as a Filipina woman, and her siblings. With her siblings, she said, “a lot of the time people will assume our races just based off how we look.” She mentioned that her sister is a hairstylist. Whenever she posts Black hairstyles, especially braids, to social media the comments are full of things like: “Are you Black? Maybe you shouldn't wear braids.” Sometimes as these comments are coming in Reyna

will be in the same room or even be getting her hair done by her sister. Reyna feels that her relationship with her sisters has helped her identify as Multiracial because people will tell Reyna that her older sister “acts a lot more Black than her” or that Reyna “looks more Asian”. Reyna’s response to is to shrug, “that just happens to be the roll of the dice with genetics. This is how some things are, you know?”

I asked Reyna to share her experience around how she racially identifies. She said, “It’s definitely been a journey.” In middle school, people assumed she was Blasian and she did not personally identify herself in any way. There was always a conflict around which one she identified the most with, this question came to a head in high school. The spaces that she inhabited were predominantly Black spaces and she often believed she had to act a certain way. During the interview Reyna recalled ways in which people would try to fit her into being Black or Asian. She said:

I tried to not let people who think those things or have comments like that get to me, especially because I just know that they are just kind of ignorant in that way. Like they're not really thinking about the strength and power of their words, the weight of the words they're carrying, or how that can really affect somebody and make them view themselves.

Reyna had gone to a few meetings of the Multiracial student organization at her university; however, due to schedule conflicts she “won’t get to get involved this semester” despite wanting to develop her network of like-minded people. A conversation she had with her peers in the Multiracial student organization was the importance of how people personally fit into groups.

Reyna said she liked meeting people and getting to know them as a person and not just how they are defined by their race. She said she could be with people who are completely

different races than her and still mix with them as easily as if they were from the same cultural group. She finds that she prefers diverse spaces and has a diverse group of friends. For Reyna being in Multiracial spaces and being in diverse spaces are similar experiences in terms of comfortability. In describing these spaces, she noted that there are different perspectives and different experiences. In getting to know people you learn how “people have been made through their experiences.” She said that even with everyone being different it is possible to find something in common. She prioritized getting involved with the Multiracial student organization over other organizations because she knows diversity is important to her.

Still Reyna said, she can relate to other Multiracial people, even if they are not of the same mix because of “that experience of like, any sort of discrimination for being mixed or Multiracial, or not being purely one thing or another, you know?”

I asked Reyna what she would tell her younger self about her journey.

[I] don't just have to listen to what people say when they're assuming who I am just by the view of me. I can possibly be, that I can confidently not feel like I belong to either one of those groups, that it doesn't matter that I don't feel mostly black or mostly Asian because, it's not just who I am. I mean, kind of just more assurance. I felt that like, you're gonna have to figure out who you are and how you identify yourself and just the feelings you have now are gonna... lessen. The feelings of confusion and feeling like an imposter and feeling like you aren't your actual identity, that's not going to be how it is forever.

Ema

For the first years of their life Ema lived in a predominantly white place. They did not have a lot of experiences with people of color or access to culture via community experiences.

From there they moved to one that was predominantly Black and Brown. They said that the significance of the cultural shift was not realized until they were older.

They spoke about times in their childhood when others would ask if she was a Russian adoptee. They said their relationship with their brother was often challenged due to their difference in skin color. Other Multiracial students would not have considered them mixed because they were too light skinned and did not speak Spanish. Ema believes that being in connection with one or more of their racial identities “puts this respect to [their] family.” Trying to learn Spanish is very important for Ema as they see that as a way to give their family that respect. Additionally, learning about culture through food is another way to gain access to community. Ema sees food as “a gateway into a community”. They knew how to make food from both their Mexican and Filipino heritage but

I know a few recipes from my mom. Like enchiladas and my grandma has taught me how to make a few things and even from my Filipino community, I know how to make lumpia and pancit and adobo, but I really don't have anyone to share that with right now. And like being able to share that and learn from other people from my community, about the foods that they grew up with, and that I grew up with, I think would really help like, food is one of the greatest things to come from cultures.

At their university they are very close to their brother and they have a handful of friends. They have gone to a few meetings for students with Asian and Pacific Islander heritage. They said in comparison to the Latinx groups they have attended, which as a population is drastically smaller in size, the Asian and Pacific Islander community is very large and there are different languages being spoken. They said they get “washed out in the crowd” in those meetings and they do not feel as isolated. In the Latinx group, Ema said the community is much smaller.

Everyone generally speaks Spanish or Portuguese. People go to connect to each other and so their outsider status “feels much louder” to them.

Ema knew of a Multiracial student organization on campus. Their schedule the past few semesters has made it difficult for them to attend meetings. They felt that they would like to make the effort, nonetheless, because if they “don’t go now, [they were] not going to go ever. It is one of their goals because it would help them to “be a part of a community that understood where [they were] coming from.”

I asked Ema what advice they would give to another Multiracial student at their school. Their response is below:

I mean, if they're having the same racial identity in secureness that I'm having I would probably say that you know, the personal identity of your culture is more important than your communal identity of culture. And finding that community that's going to accept you for you, is more important than anything else.

Maya

Maya described herself as blunt. “I will admit that.” She said, “but I expect people to be 100% blunt back to me.” She does not enjoy fake people and never wants to be fake herself. “I want to be 100% true for as much as I can, as open-minded and open about myself as I can because that only gives to others. It doesn’t, I don’t think it hurts me.”

Maya also said that, besides me, she has met one other person who is of Black, Chinese, and white. She said that she met him at a conference where there was a Multiracial affinity group. When recalling she said:

There was LGBTQ, there was Black, there was white there was and then there's multiracial and I was like I get to pick?? I get to pick? So, I went to Multiracial. And it

was amazing. We did this chain where you be like “I’m Black,” on one hand. “I’m Chinese,” on the other hand, and... someone would come join you. And so, you link arms and at the end of the conference, when everyone did that in the room everyone had a hand to link to.

Maya said that this experience made her understand why she did not identify as being fully Black. “Because I’m not,” she said, “and I never will be or never would be.” It is also what made her create a Multiracial student organization at her high school. She said that at her high school not a lot of Multiracial students were as open or accepting about being Multiracial.

Maya had been to at least four different PWIs in her academic career. In comparison to the other she had attended prior to college; her current university has been very navigable. She did start to “feel” the fact that the institution was a PWi when she switched her major from Chinese to Business, but she said in comparison to the other PWIs she has attended this one is “not that bad.” On the flip side she mentioned that she is currently in a class that is mostly Black. In describing the experience, she said, “It’s amazing, bro. Like, I’ve never been in a class that’s unintentionally Black like that. I’ve been telling my friends it’s like 70 minutes of the HBCU experience.”

Maya said that in college she doesn’t “really give a shit as much” about feeling accepted. She said she has a very diverse friend group here. She has a few Black friends, and they treat her well and a lot of people she is surrounded by are Multiracial. By accident all her assigned roommates are also Multiracial. With her friends, she does not talk a lot about being Multiracial. She said in the beginning phases of their relationships they would but now there is a “casual understanding of we get each other”. There is an understanding in the group, where her and other

Multiracial friends will make jokes about being Multiracial but her monoracial friends will stay silent. She said it is because they understand.

Maya sometimes goes to the Multiracial student organization at her school. She said, in comparison to other cultural organizations, the Multiracial student organization is very friendly. She is not very close to anyone in the group, but she really enjoys getting to know other Multiracial people and their stories. It is a different experience than when she is with her friends. She noted that many of her peers in the group “don’t have those outlets or those diverse friend groups, or they’ve never gotten it until college.” The space is a grieving space. “Some people will even cry because their experiences are just so, like, vivid and it’s the first time they’ve ever been able to share it.”

When going to certain Black specific events, Maya noted that she still does get a little nervous. In thinking about this she said:

[M]aybe I don't feel 100% accepted on campus. But I definitely feel more accepted in college than I did in high school, and definitely more than I did in middle school. And like, each year is like a growing phase.

Maya spoke about how she has reflected on her own experiences being racialized and how that has played a large role in how important she believes it is to talk about race, identity and Multiraciality, starting at an early age. Maya said that her parents are very colorblind. When she would try to bring up conversations around race, they would tell her they ‘didn’t really see it as a big deal.’ Maya also said, “they don’t really, like, do that whole, like, feelings and like, long drawn out conversations about social issues.” In comparison, Maya said, “I process this a lot. I think about identity every day, I wake up, I look in the mirror. It is what it is.”

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I briefly introduced the participants in this study. The following chapter will discuss the emergent concept from the findings.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS

I intentionally pursued a grounded theory methodology because I was interested in studying the *underlying* motivations Multiracial students drew upon to navigate their relationships to power, privilege, and oppression. The goal of this research was not to find patterns in participants' identities nor was it to find patterns in what they were doing to relay their lived experiences. In this chapter I briefly share some patterns that arose in the data to provide a deeper understanding of the theory and provide references for future research. The emergent theory contains several parts that I unpack through the course of this chapter. Because there are many aspects of this theory, I explicitly state the layout of this chapter in the following section to help build a roadmap for readers. I recommend referencing this layout if readers find themselves needing to be reoriented to the overall purpose of each section.

Chapter V Layout

I first introduce the overall fundamental principles of the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm (ABAM) which comes from the data and the supporting current literature. Then I break down two main axes of this paradigm; the Racial Stratification via Racism: Anti-Blackness White Supremacy Axis (AB axis) and the Racial Stratification via Monoracism: Anti-Multiraciality White Supremacy Axis (AM axis). In following grounded theory practices, I return to current literature. I do not bring this literature in to critique it as someone would do when creating a literature review, rather it is to help build context in exploring the emergent theory. When explaining the AM axis, I provide more context around monoracial dominant spaces and anti-Multiraciality beliefs. I am intentional in expanding upon this section to add dimensions to an axis with considerably less current literature. After I offer details on the axes of this paradigm, I return to the ABAM paradigm as a whole. When

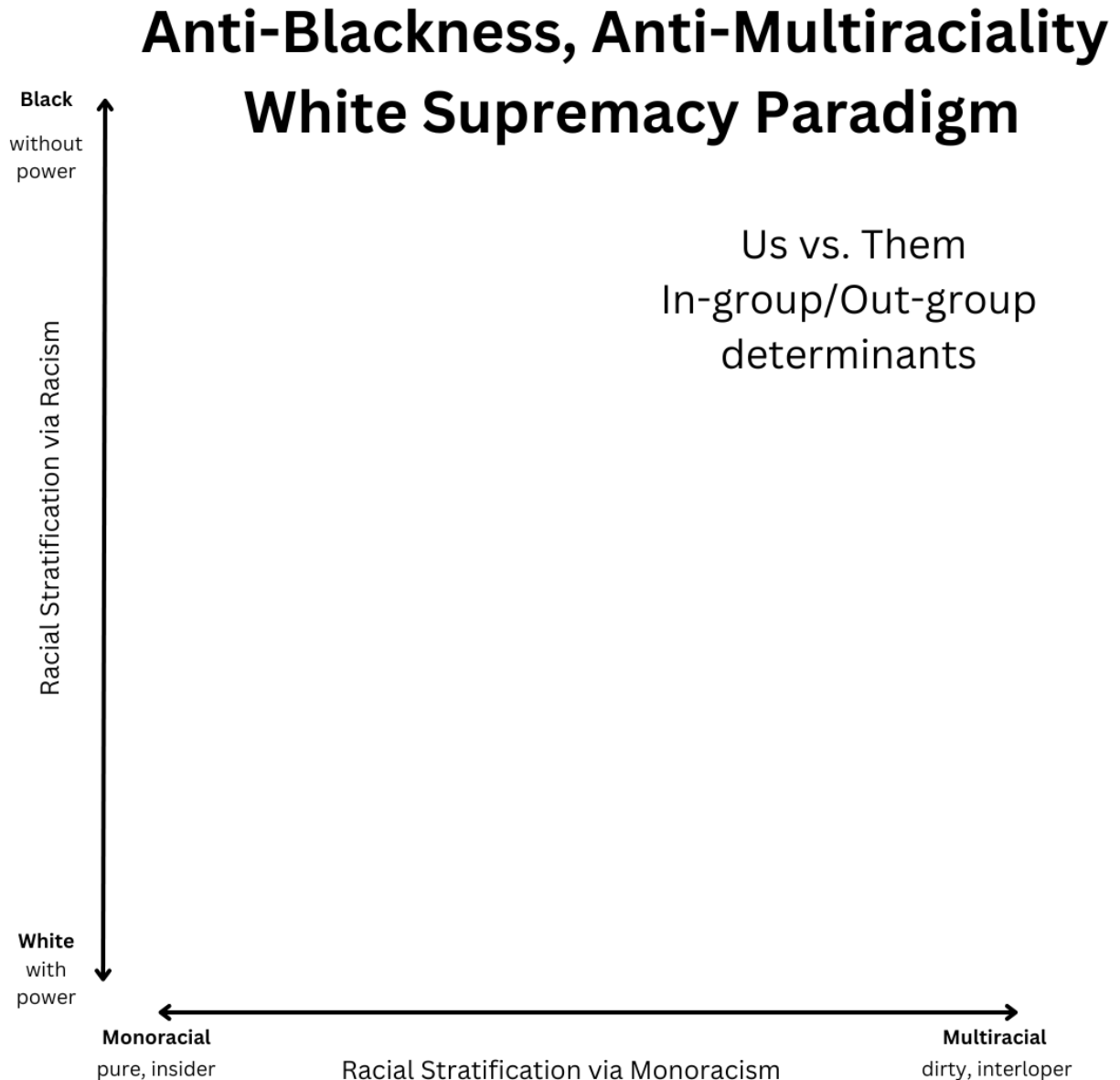
unpacking the two main axes of this paradigm and in bringing the entire model together I use direct quotes from participants to illustrate the concepts at play. These retellings from participants offer entry points as to how Multiracial students are coming to understand, live within it and move through this paradigm. Lastly, I provide suggestions as to how Multiracial students are navigating their relationships to power, privilege, and oppression within the ABAM paradigm in the section about deconstruction and rejection of the ABAM paradigm by Multiracial students.

Fundamental Principles of the Anti-Blackness, Anti-Multiraciality White Supremacy Paradigm

To understand *how* Multiracial students are navigating their relationships to power, privilege, and oppression, it must be known *what* Multiracial students are actually navigating in order to understand *why* Multiracial students are navigating their relationship(s) in the ways that they are in higher education. The emergent theory suggests that Multiracial students are navigating a dominantly monoracial paradigm of race that functions to uphold white supremacy. In general, this paradigm maintains racialization for the purpose of upholding white supremacy ideology and the white supremacy power structure. Because this paradigm exists to uphold anti-Black and anti-Multiracial systems and beliefs with the overall goal of maintaining white supremacy it has been intentionally labeled: the Anti-Blackness, Anti-Multiraciality White Supremacy Paradigm. Figure 1 below shows the ABAM paradigm.

Figure 1.

Anti-Blackness, Anti-Multiraciality White Supremacy Paradigm



Note. This paradigm has two separate but connected vectors. Both the separation and connection are important distinctions as each vector is actualized differently but they both function to maintain white supremacy-based racialization. This also helps to give emphasis to the connection of CRT and MultiCrit.

The intentional label follows the fundamental principles of ABAM which includes:

1. In a white supremacy society, socialization practices (marginalization, racialization, minoritization) function to maintain white supremacy power structures.
2. Both racism and monoracism exist and interact.
3. Racism exists to maintain anti-Blackness ideology.
4. Monoracism exists to maintain anti-Multiraciality ideology.

In thinking about United States society as existing within this paradigm then CRT is an examination of US society via the Racial Stratification via Racism: Anti-Blackness White Supremacy Axis of the ABAM. Harris (2016) in her seminal work on MultiCrit suggested an expansion of CRT to examine the socialization of Multiraciality. I add that Harris (2016) offered a critical inquisition into the socialization of Multiraciality through the Racial Stratification via Monoracism: Anti-Multiraciality White Supremacy Axis of the ABAM. This theory then provides a scaffolding for understanding the frames of reference used in creating CRT and MultiCrit. MultiCrit is directly connected to CRT, four tenets of MultiCrit are fundamentally (and intentionally) the same as CRT. To understand, study, and value the tenets of MultiCrit must not automatically lead to the erasure or rejection of CRT fundamental principles. Take for example, CRT's Black-white binary and MultiCrit's concept of a monoracial paradigm of race. In the ABAM paradigm both concepts can exist simultaneously. So, recognizing a monoracial paradigm of race does not mean that a further exploration of the black-white binary must no longer be studied or acknowledged. Rather, it states that this binary is not the only form of racialization that exists and is perpetuated within the U.S.

The emergent theory provides two axes to express, the different forms of power and oppression the data suggests participants were navigating. Both axes of this paradigm are created

to sustain white supremacy; however, the practice of maintaining white supremacy is actualized differently depending on the specific axis.

Racial Stratification Via Racism: Anti-Blackness White Supremacy Axis

The racialized stratification that supports the socio-political power structures within the United States is maintained through the perpetuation of anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, anti-Latinx, anti-Asian ideologies, and the dehumanization of all People of Color. As a pervasive system, white supremacy is present across institutions and organizations including higher education institutions. White supremacy is designed to maintain the current power structures that sets whiteness as the norm, as holders of power, and as being worthy of that power (Martinez, 2021). A white supremacy system uses racism as a tool to continue its power and oppression structure by racializing all bodies and setting BIPOC individuals as the oppressed in its binary power system (AWARE-LA, 2021). It is used to categorize and divide all racialized groups from each other (Okun, 2021).

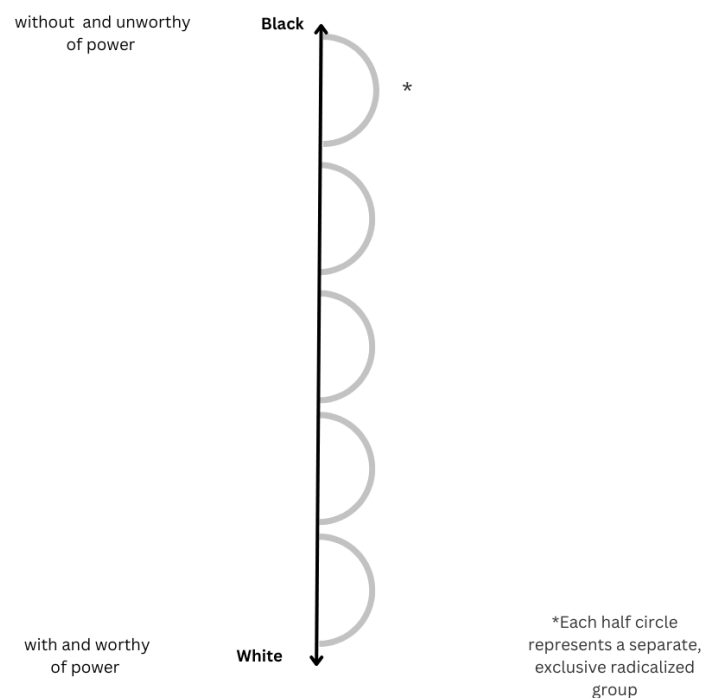
White supremacy states that each racialized group is definite, categorically exclusive, and a marker of who has ownership and power within the white supremacy system with white people purported to be worthy of power, and Black people as the least worthy and incapable of holding power. Although somewhat external to the very exclusive whiteness category, other racialized groups have a proximal privilege to power given their (arbitrary) closeness to whiteness (as determined by whiteness). White supremacy relies on the perpetuation of the racial stratification power and oppression system (Martinez, 2021). Race is a socialization and an embodied reality that it is a part of everyone's lived experiences within the US as the US is in the white supremacy system (Harris, 2015). Not everyone experiences direct oppressive experiences of racism but everyone (those who are oppressed and those who are the oppressor) experience a

lived reality in which racism is maintained. The ramifications of this system impacts everyone in it. Based on how racism is used in a white supremacy power system to racially stratify people, I offer Figure 2 below.

Figure 2.

Racial Stratification Via Racism

Racial Stratification Via Racism



Note. The gray half circles, which do not overlap, touch, or in any way connect, symbolize the essentialist ideology of the categorically exclusive nature of each racialized group within a white supremacy structure.

Contextualizing Racial Stratification Via Racism

Anti-Blackness is highlighted in the Racial Stratification Via Racism axis as it is a fundamental aspect of racialization within the United States. The model also represents the ways

that different groups, excluded from the white category, experience racism. The model intentionally fails to incorporate the different and nuanced lived realities that racialized groups experience and oversimplifies the lived experiences of marginalized people. This model does not illustrate the ways that white supremacy occurs, rather how it operates as an *ideology*. In alignment with current literature, this model is a representation of the “traditional manifestations of racism” as well as the forms of privilege (proxy privilege and white privilege) that are deeply rooted within the U.S. (Johnston et al., 2020, p. 19).

Racial Stratification Via Racism: Participant Experiences

To further expand on the process of racialization, racism, and privileges held within the anti-Blackness white supremacy model, I offer examples from my conversations with participants. For sake of time, I do not include all incidents or examples that participants shared in their interviews. A few frequently mentioned examples include being seen as intellectually inferior in classrooms due to their BIPOC identity or being considered an expert on any topic related to their BIPOC identity, experiencing microaggressions based upon appearance, and exploring their own roles within socio-political power systems due to their privilege.

Maya moved schools relatively frequently growing up. For her, she felt different forms of racialization depending on the institution. Several times during the interview, she mentioned incidents of being racialized and experiencing racism within education institutions. English teachers would tell Maya that she was “not taught properly” because she would “use too much AAVE in [her] writing” . In these predominantly white spaces, Maya’s identity was restrained to caricatures of Blackness. She said,

I felt very much other[ed] by the white girls in my school because they were all white blond hair. I was going through puberty at the time, a lot faster than the other girls

developing, I guess more like curvy, like black features that they weren't developing just yet. So there was that whole thing and that's kind of when I got into more of my blackness.

Within the AB axis Maya's is being racialized by systems that enact white supremacy to preserve white supremacy practices. However, in claiming her Blackness Maya is refusing the anti-Black beliefs and marginalization that are being perpetuated within the educational institution and creating reprieve from the white supremacy system.

Ava mentioned several experiences of microaggressions that exemplify racialization via the AB axis. Ava spoke about an older Latina family member who would associate her with "every Chinese person" the family member knows; furthering the idea that all Asians look alike. In the past when Ava would go to her parents would tell her that the relative in question did not know any better and that Ava should "not take everything so personally." Additionally, she works in a research lab and is commonly confused with her sister who also works in the same department. In both examples, Ava mentioned how she is well aware of the discrimination she has faced due to her racial minoritized identity. While reflecting on these experiences, Ava mentioned how she has been able to articulate and understand such experiences through social support and gaining more knowledge on how to navigate social issues through her academics. By engaging in such avenues of support, she can construct her own understandings of her experiences and the white supremacy systems that she is inhabiting.

Sophie has had many experiences of fitting into different racial groups. People often have thought she was Latina, white, Middle Eastern, or Jewish. "Whatever people are, they assume that I'm [also the same racial identity.] Sophie has thought about what it means when she is assumed to be white. Although she did not feel comfortable in white spaces, she considered her

own power and privilege, “if I wanted to [be perceived as white], I could because I look white, and they could just accept me as white.” In comparison to her friends of color, Sophie believed her ambiguous phenotype and proximity to whiteness allowed for power through choice, stating:

If I chose that I wanted to more assimilate into these [white] groups, I could. So, I think I hold a lot of power in that fact ... I try not to ... forget that ... it's not the same struggle that I'm going through going to a PWI, it's a more of a personal thing. It's not really a societal thing.

Sophie’s ability to be accepted into white spaces without contention affords her proxy privilege to white privilege. She considers that it is her decision to not mold to the white supremacy ideology of fitting in that stops her from inhabiting white spaces and not the system of anti-Blackness that would prevent her from doing so. It is also a large reason why she is unsure whether she should self-identify as a person of color. She is more comfortable telling people she is Indian and white but will often avoid calling herself a person of color. By working through questions like, if she does not experience the oppressive experiences that often racialize a specific group should she identify with the label and talking with her friends about their experiences Sophie is actively creating her understanding of the AB axis and making decisions about her identity based on how she understands the power-oppression structure.

For the most part Sophie stated that she tried not to take the ability to be accepted into different racial groups for granted as she has access to a lot of experiences that other people do not. But she also admitted that there was a big part of her that wished people would just see her as who she really is. She would like to not always have people guessing and assuming, to not have her body, mannerism, and cultural knowledge analyzed. “There's always a part of me that would like to be identified and grounded in who I actually am.” This desire to be seen as one

knows themselves to be, is a common theme mentioned throughout the participant interviews and is often spoken about from the lens of having a Multiracial identity within a monoracial dominant society.

Monoracial Paradigm of Race

Harris's (2016) sixth tenet of MultiCrit, *a monoracial paradigm of race*, expands upon structural determinism, a fundamental notion of CRT that is based on the belief that how a system is dominantly constructed will determine how a society is socialized. A monoracial paradigm of race adds to the Black-white binary narrative to emphasize and call attention to the categorical exclusivity inherent within racialization that leads to the rejection of Multiraciality from the dominant monoracial paradigm (Harris, 2016, 2017). Monoraciality functions on a system of in-group, out-group determinants that are used to maintain the current power and oppression structure. When looking at in-group, out-group via a dominantly monoracial paradigm the racialization of identities via separate unchanging categories excludes Multiraciality (Harris, 2016). From this perspective, monoraciality exerts power over Multiraciality and those who are Multiracial.

The preservation of the dominant monoracial paradigm functions through the continued manifestation of anti-Multiraciality. Anti-Multiraciality pushes the notion that Multiracial identities are not real identities, they are subservient to Monoraciality, and are a threat to the maintenance of the Monoracial dominant paradigm. Participants noted several anti-Multiraciality sentiments they had been subjected to as a Multiracial person. Including the following:

1. Paternalism: Multiracial people do not understand race
2. Othering: Multiraciality can only be defined by monoracial terms

3. Racial groups are natural: a "real" member of a racial/ethnic group must have specific genetic physical features, phenotype(s), and cultural knowledge
4. Maintain Monoracial dominant paradigm: Monoraciality is the norm.

Paternalism: Multiracial People Do Not Understand Race

Monoraciality as an ideology sets an in-group/out-group dichotomy. Alice spoke about how her authority on her identity was challenged by monoracial peers through the utilization of this binary. Alice's friends have conversations about race and social justice. One such conversation on whether Multiracial people could have authority to speak on conversations about race.

I think there was this idea that ... because someone's only part a person of color, full people of color might have authority on subjects about [Multiracial people's place on conversations about race] because they have authority on subjects about people of color.

In monoracial dominant paradigms Multiracial people are not given the ability to speak on their own experiences. Multiracial people are often subjected to societal conversations on who has the power to dictate their place within the social construction of race (Rockquemore et al., 2009). This is rooted in a long history of anti-Blackness and white supremacy ideology, from the stereotype of the tragic mulatto to research in multiracial identity development created for the express purpose of maintaining Jim Crow, Multiracial people are seen as underdeveloped and needing assistance from monoracial people (Harris, 2016, Rockquemore et al., 2009). This is a way that white supremacy is perpetuating anti-Multiraciality. White supremacy ideology asserts a paternalistic structure when leveraging who does and does not have power (Jones & Okun, 2001). A part of this ideology is the belief that people with power can and should make decisions for those without power.

In this case Alice's peers were asserting whether Multiracial people had the ability to speak on conversations of race, racism, discrimination, and social justice with disregard of actual Multiracial people's realities and experiences when it came to those topics. By using a monoracial lens to construct Multiracial identities as a tool to further intellectualize racial stratification, the idea that Multiracial people are not legitimate holders of knowledge about racialization, race, racism, monoracism, power, and oppression is sustained. In trying to vocalize her lived experiences, Alice directly challenged the monoracial norm; and thus, received backlash.

Othering: Multiraciality Can Only Be Defined by Monoracial Terms

In Monoracial dominant spaces, essentialism is maintained (Johnston-Guerrero & Nadal, 2010). Multiracial identities are a direct challenge to this notion. The response within a Monoracial dominant space is to actively mock and other Multiracial identities to assert dominance and allow Monoraciality to maintain control and power in these spaces.

For example, Alison brought up a joke about Multiracial people she remembered seeing on social media. It was formatted in a common meme format of "You know someone is ____ if they ____". In this specific case Alison said the joke went like this, "You know someone is Blasian if they... bring it up within the first three minutes of you talking to them." The joke was not being presented by Multiracial people for Multiracial people but as a way for monoracial dominant ideology to make a mockery of Multiracial identities.

[T]his stereotype that... biracial people always have to, ... disclose their identity. [T]hat's a negative stereotype... [I]t just makes it sound like all we care about is being mixed and stuff, especially since ... mixed people are sometimes ... exoticized by ... both the communities that they're from.

Alison is touching both on exoticization and multiracial microaggressions. Both of which have a long history of othering multiracial people (Mitchell, 2020). And further function to constrict Multiraciality into monoracially defined terms and understandings. In response to maneuvering through the objectification of her identity Alison continued:

“So I really, really, really don't like playing or... I really don't want to feel like I'm playing into that stereotype of ... the annoying mixed kid who brings up their identity because they can or because they want to seem more interesting.”

This idea that Multiracial people are obsessed with their identity and do so just for a “cuteness factor” reduces the complexity and richness of Multiraciality to an identity that is for the consumption of monoracial normativity (Mitchell, 2020). However, identity disclosure is often an experience that Multiracial people know well (Gaither, 2015). Multiracial people more often receive backlash from others when disclosing their identities. Identity disclosure, or lack thereof, for Multiracial individuals often leads to othering. Lynn, although most often seen as Black also, mentioned that sometimes people will miss identify her due to her ambiguous appearance and so she will have to disclose her identity in those incidents. Reyna said that many people in college are curious about her identity, and she has found herself more often sharing that aspect over herself. Sophie said she wished people could be able to tell her Multiracial heritage without guessing but that does not happen. Ava was very clear that she likes to disclose her Multiracial identity when meeting new people as it gives her a feeling of agency when she is able to share her identity before someone asks about it. Alice said that she does not know what people think about who she is unless they tell her and that she does not like to tell people her race upfront. Maya is minoring in Chinese but often will not even share that information when

meeting someone new. She said it was because she did not want her identity to be questioned and especially not by someone, she knows is Chinese. When explaining her reasoning why she said:

I don't want them to think I am one of those people obsessed with Chinese culture, nor do I sometimes feel like explaining why I'm Chinese especially when they don't look at me and see me as Chinese. It's just too much so, I guess I sometimes pretend or try to blend in and be just Black as best as I can do.

In disclosing or choosing not to disclose their identities participants were all making negotiations on how they were navigating a monoracial dominant society. Thus, the data suggests that Alison, in not disclosing her Multiracial identity in a group of monoracial white peers, chose to not do so because she did not want her Multiracial identity to be challenged.

Racial Groups Are Natural: A "Real" Member of A Racial/Ethnic Group Must Have Specific Genetic Physical Features, Phenotype(s), and Cultural Knowledge

Some participants also spoke about their own internalized anti-Multiraciality beliefs. Ema spoke about their understanding of belonging in the Latinx community as knowing Spanish and growing up in a Latinx community. Ema is currently learning Spanish at their university and added that it was not just knowing Spanish that would make them feel as if they really belonged but if they had the experience of speaking in an unstructured way like a native or heritage speaker. They stated:

I'll never know Spanish the way that fluent native speakers will know Spanish like from their household because a lot of the people that I know who are Hispanic or Latino know it by hearing it, by speaking it, but don't know how to read or write it and I'm learning it by reading and writing it. So, it's a different experience and I won't understand ... the

dramatics of how they speak in a familial way versus how I speak in like an educational way.

Ema shared several times in their life in which they have been othered (both directly and indirectly) by fellow members within the Latinx community. As Ema's Multiracial identity has been continually used by others (from members within Latinx community and others as well) to ostracize them from their cultural heritages. Often access points into the Latinx communities have been presented to Ema through language and the fact that they do not speak Spanish has been used to prove that Ema is not a real or respectable member of the community. Ema has internalized this messaging that real members are those that fit within a specific script. In this case, growing up speaking Spanish would prove membership in the Latinx communities Ema is trying to inhabit. This removes the way context plays into reality. History, colonization, immigration, physical location, social, and systemic structure are all being removed. Ema has internalized a belief that falls under the ideology that a person must naturally understand and practice all group norms and experiences to be a member of the 'in-group'. These 'natural' understandings are often used to indicate who are legitimate members within a group. Anti-Multiraciality through this idea pushes that Multiracial identities are illegitimate members of monoracial communities. There is a level of onus of belonging that is placed solely on the Multiracial person that is being othered. As is exemplified by Ema when they mentioned they felt as if they "needed to try harder to be a part of [their] culture" as it was their responsibility to do so.

As it is quite common for Multiracial people to be questioned about their identity and belonging within dominantly monoracial spaces, Ema was not the only one who felt the pressure

of not being a “real” member. Grace’s experience having two white parents and not fitting stereotypes of Blackness has often given them the status of not being a “real” Black person.

I went to ... a majority black high school [and] I would get a lot of like, ‘You can only celebrate half of Black History Month’. [T]here was a couple of girls who called me a houseslave all the time. It’s just not my favorite thing ever.

By not having the cultural access to Blackness via parental units, Grace was positioned as an outsider and this status is used against them when in monoracially dominant spaces. This experience, although not directly taking place in college, impacts the way Grace engages in spaces on their college campus. They believe that if they had not experienced challenges to their Multiracial Black identity while in high school they probably would not feel as if they were not Black enough for Black spaces on campus like the Black student center or historically Black sororities. They mentioned feeling very conscious of their identity as a Black person and not feeling Black enough. Monoracality via history and trauma are thus internalized.

Monoracality Is the Norm

As participants are navigating their experiences within dominantly monoracial spaces they receive continual reminders of their marginalization as Multiracial people. More than one participant spoke about their experiences when wearing cultural clothes and hairstyles. Often participants were challenged for presenting in such ways. If others perceived participants’ decisions to engage in their cultural heritages in ways that did not match the monoracial dominant understanding participants’, they received feedback of not being worthy of wearing the culturally significant attire. If they preconceived notions of being able to present in a culturally specific way, then they received pushback if they attempted to claim an identity outside of the monoracial specific identity.

There were incidents in which participants were challenged by members of their same racial heritages; Ema was by members in their Latinx community and Grace was by Black peers at her high school. However, many participants spoke about experiences in which the challenges to their identity and belonging came from many racial groups, not just the racial heritage groups that participants were inhabiting. Ava, spoke about her experiences trying to be involved in Latinx spaces. She noted that many times the people within those spaces were very welcoming, but others would object, telling her she did not belong or was not enough to be in Latinx spaces. Ava said that she believed that was what deterred her from being active in Latinx spaces and why she gravitated towards Asian American ones instead. In reflecting she said:

“I felt like that’s what people expected of me, that is the way people perceive me in society, and that was the best way I was gonna fit.”

When Ava, as someone who has been told that she presents more Asian, interacted in Latinx spaces she received backlash because she was challenging systemic norms. This suggests that what is being threatened by Multiraciality is not specifically cultural and racial groups on an interpersonal level but the larger concept of monoraciality and racial essentialism.

Reyna, spoke about her experience when she was younger, how she felt pressured to choose one group to identify with, and how others would try to reduce Reyna’s identity into monoracial understandings of identity. Being both Black and Filipina, Reyna has had others try to erase one or the other depending on how she is perceived by others. She remarked:

[there is] pushback from people wanting to not accept that I see myself as both... even in every form that I take”.

When Reyna would wear her hair in braids people would assert that she must only be claiming her Black identity. On the flipside when Reyna wore a cultural Filipino dress for her

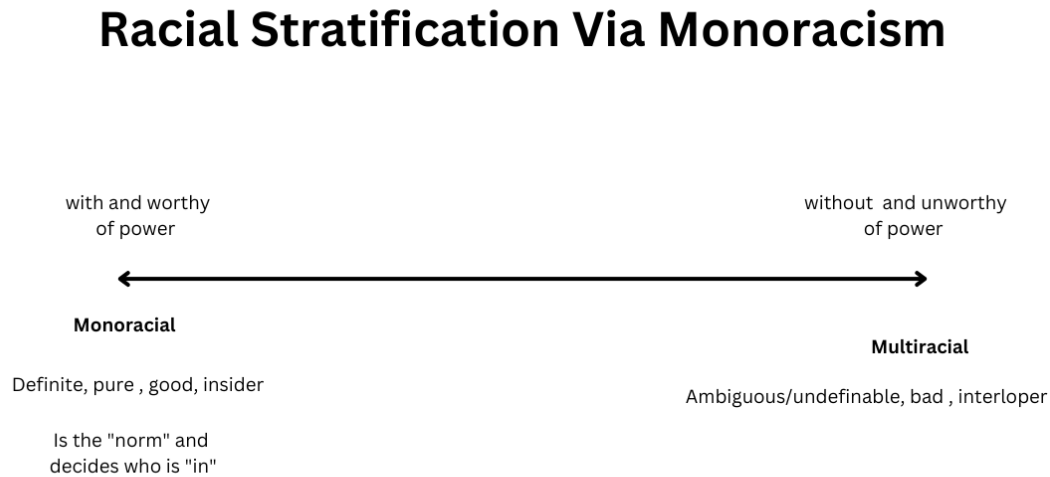
senior photos, she thought a lot about the feedback she received about her choosing to be Filipino instead of Black. In receiving this messaging Reyna is being confronted with how society is trying to maintain a monoracial norm. Because her identity is being reduced to one or the other identity depending on how she shows up it is not a steady form of monoracialization. Rather, she is being positioned into one or the other depending on how she is presenting. It is not really Reyna's identity that is trying to be understood but the monoracial notion of racial exclusivity that is trying to be preserved.

Racial Stratification Via Monoracism: Anti-Multiraciality White Supremacy Axis

All these anti-Multiraciality beliefs set Multiracial identities as subservient to Monoraciality. This process is often enacted through monoracism, which perpetuates Anti-Multiraciality ideology and a white supremacy power-oppression system. Figure 3 represents the racial stratification maintained via monoracism.

Figure 3.

Racial Stratification Via Monoracism



In this model, Monoracial identities are those who hold and wield power, while Multiracial identities are oppressed. Similar to the racial stratification via racism there is a gradient of those who lie outside the normative monoracial group; the more ambiguous the identity, the less power someone has. Ambiguity in this case includes phenotype, physical features, cultural knowledge, language and in-group terminology, religious practices, and treatment by others (Olsen, 2012).

To accept Multiraciality as a concept is to deconstruct the key component of white supremacy; the belief that distance between groups is natural, normal, and an indication of who is inferior. With Multiraciality, boundaries become blurred, bend, and are fluid (Anzaldúa, 1987). Additionally, racialization becomes very apparent. The racialization of Multiracial people in an anti-Multiraciality context is used to maintain power over this group; and to keep Multiracial people “boxed in”. Monoraciality, its process of racialization, and the power-

oppression processes it maintains are most effective when its machinations remain covert. Multiraciality brings these aspects to the forefront.

Anti-Blackness, Anti-Multiraciality White Supremacy Paradigm

The lives of participants are not segmented. Multiracial students are not solely navigating power, privilege, and oppression via an anti-Blackness paradigm nor an anti-Multiraciality paradigm but an anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality paradigm. Monoracism and racism are used to maintain power-oppression structures and in-group, out-group ideologies. They function on separate (but connected) axes both of which lend to the preservation of white supremacy. Multiracial students experience racialization via racism and/or monoracism at varying levels based upon proxy privilege to whiteness.

By recognizing the “anti-” ideologies that make up this paradigm, more nuance is given to the power, privilege, and oppression experiences of Multiracial people. A Multiracial person can face dehumanization as a Multiracial person *and* as a [perceived] monoracial person of color. A Multiracial person can face dehumanization as a Multiracial person *and* have proxy privilege due to their perceived closeness to whiteness. A Multiracial person can face dehumanization as a Multiracial person *and* as a [perceived] monoracial person of color *and* have proxy privilege due to their perceived closeness to whiteness.

By examining the nuanced differences in monoracism, monoracism via white monoraciality is asserted via vertical monoracism and monoracism via BIPOC monoraciality is asserted via horizontal monoracism (Harris 2017, Johnston- Guerrero et al., 2020). Monoracism can also be internalized (Harris, 2017). Understanding anti-Multiraciality and the racial stratification of monoracism helps to contextualize the spaces in which Multiracial students are navigating. Different dominantly monoracial spaces on college campuses present racialization

differently given the identities and perceptions of the Multiracial student yet all are being racialized via the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm.

It is through the ABAM paradigm that the Multiracial participants are living out their realities. Returning to Alice's experience in which her peers decide Multiracial people's knowledge on topics of race and to Grace's experience being denied their Black identity from their Black peers. Both experiences are occurring in minoritized BIPOC spaces. Their peers are also grappling with the white supremacy system, trying to navigate their own relationships to power, privilege, and oppression, and seeking to obtain their own sense of power while being in an anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy structure. The ABAM paradigm highlights the pervasiveness of white supremacy and how white supremacy ideology is perpetuated by racially and ethnically minoritized groups.

When returning to Alison's desire to not have her Multiracial identity be presented as performative and consider it through the intersection of Multiraciality and anti-Blackness the ABAM model adds more context. On one hand, Alison did not want her identity as a Multiracial person to be challenged. Nor did she want her identity as a Multiracial person to be dismissed as illegitimate within a monoracial paradigm that is effectively trying to strip Alison from being seen as her full self. Additionally, through the ABAM model the history of anti-Blackness and Multiraciality can be addressed. Multiracial people, due to their Multiracial identity, have a proximity to whiteness that Monoracial people of color do not have. The stereotype that Multiracial people use their identities to appeal to the white gaze stems from the long history of anti-Blackness and the assumption that all Multiracial people want to not be Black or only want to claim their monoracial BIPOC identities when it benefits them (Mitchell, 2020). Through the

ABAM paradigm the multiple angles in which white supremacy is functioning are acknowledged.

All participants mentioned having to contend with being racialized within a monoracially dominant society. They are maneuvering through power-oppression structures and navigating their own relationships to power, privilege, and oppression. Multiracial students navigate these relationships by becoming aware of, understanding more about, and/or deconstructing the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm.

Having or Developing an Understanding of The Anti-Blackness, Anti-Multiraciality White Supremacy Paradigm

Participants exhibited mindfulness when they spoke about their racialized experiences. Often when talking about experiences of racism, participants spoke about experiences from the perspective of being a person of color. When speaking about forms of discrimination and exclusion due to being a Multiracial person, they often made distinctions between racialized experiences via racism and racialized experiences via monoracism. However, they were unsure how to articulate or fully define exactly what the differences were between the two. This suggests that Multiracial students are aware of different ways racialization occurs. A potential reason that Multiracial students are often not able to articulate what the difference is may be because they do not receive resources about white supremacy power-oppression system that include their experiences as Multiracial people.

Ava mentioned really valuing her experiences in her ethnic based courses and being involved in advocacy spaces at her higher education institution. For her these resources have helped her express her lived experiences and have supported her in having conversations about race, power, and oppression with family members, friends, and others. In comparing the way that

her Asian American classes have helped her understand her experiences as an Asian American she spoke about wanting opportunities in academia to learn more intentionally about

Multiraciality. Ava stated:

One thing I would like, is ... more classes that talk about the multiracial experience, because as of now, ... they don't really have, at least for undergrads, ... classes that are specifically labeled in that way, especially with the language that's put in the ..., course title or description.

When it came to spaces in which she was most directly able to process and learn tools for communicating her experiences as a Multiracial person Ava credited being involved in the Multiracial student organization, the multicultural office at her university, and having supportive student affairs professionals within the multicultural office. Ava shared a specific time in which she was able to seek support from a student affairs professional who was also Multiracial about her experiences.

Ava was among the minority of participants who named an institutional agent as supporting her Multiracial identity. Other than her only Lynn named her Multicultural counselor as a professional in higher education that was a support system. All other participants named peers, siblings, and student run organizations as their forms of support while they attended their university. Several mentioned looking to social media and doing independent projects to try to find resources that reflect their experiences. Maya directly named the Multiracial Bills of Rights as helping her build a framework to help her understand why she has never felt like she completely belonged in Black spaces. She was able to use this resource as an anchor to help her understand why she believes it is acceptable to claim her Multiracial experience without having to conform to the Monoracial expectation of being just one racial identity.

More than one participant admitted to participating in this research study because they have not had access to academic knowledge related to Multiraciality and/or they felt very compelled to help contribute to Multiracial research to grow the literature. This indicates that Multiracial students are desiring both formal and informal spaces and materials within higher education to learn, speak, process, and share their experiences living as a Multiracial person within an anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy society. Most participants could not name direct ways they were receiving such support from institutional agents.

Understanding Through Outside Perception

Participants also shared how they have or are developing an understanding of the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm through their beliefs or experiences of racialization from others. Ava, Grace, and Lynn understood the dynamics of being more often perceived as one racial identity. Sophie, Alison, and Ema were aware of their privilege or proxy privilege due to the ways white people might assume them to be white. Alice, Maya, and Reyna recognized the different ways others perceived them based upon location and who was in the spaces they were inhabiting.

The treatment participants received changed upon location, which also played a part in how they felt about and internalized the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm. Although this paradigm treats racialization as definite and unchanging, the lived experiences of the participants were drastically different depending on physical, cultural, and/or social location. For some, the difference in others' perceptions took place because of moving in their youth, changing school districts, or entering college. Several participants spoke about the difference in others' perceptions based upon how diverse a space was and who was the dominant monoracial group in the space. Participants described very reactionary responses of

marginalization in their early experiences. Ema mentioned having feelings of frustration and even anger when reflecting on their experiences because when they were younger despite feeling upset by these experiences, they “couldn’t get angry because [they] didn’t know what it meant” but as they reflect now, they understand how their experiences of being othered by their peers and community members was not okay.

Maya spoke about her identity changing depending on which school district she attended. In her first school, colorblindness was the underlying experience. She received the “race talk” from her mother at 6 years old after being accused of stealing a bag of chips at a grocery store. In another school district she was seen as “other” by Black people. “Even though I thought I ... was also Black... I discovered that my hair wasn't like theirs, or that I was ‘a little bit different.’ As noted earlier, when Maya enrolled in a private PWI, her teachers accused her of using too much AAVE. She also felt othered by her white peers when she started puberty earlier and developed curves. These experiences spurred her to engage more with her Blackness. Midway through high school, she attended the conference where she met other Multiracial people and was introduced to another way of thinking about her identity. In college, Maya surrounded herself with a lot of diverse people and felt free. However, she felt more restricted in expressing her identity in monoracial spaces, such as a dominantly Black friend group. She shared, “[T]hat's why I used to get in trouble with ... the Black group. They liked me okay, but they didn't like that I had other friends. And I think that kind of made me more of a floater.”

Alison was not accustomed to having her identity challenged when she was in high school, but, in college, she noticed that she was often perceived as white by white people while being seen as mixed by Asian people. She explained:

I didn't really question my identity in high school, and then I come to college, and different people are telling me that I look different things to them. I always thought I looked clearly Asian.... It kind of made me like rethink like, 'Okay ... how am I privileged if White people see me as a white woman?' So that's something that I really thought about a lot.

Ava's story of how an older family member would racialize her either as "every single Chinese person" at various instances, while also not recognizing Ava as Asian in other instances demonstrates the fluidity of identity as imposed by monoracial groups. Perceptions by others offer an illustration of the world around Multiracial students. A Monoracial dominant paradigm is often not congruent with the lived realities of Multiracial students, despite their various attempts to navigate within this paradigm.

Negotiating Identity

Grace spoke about processing the trauma and bullying she faced in secondary school due to her identities as Multiracial and as a transracial adoptee. She also mentioned that she was still working on her identity: "I want to embrace the fact that I'm multiracial but also ... be aware of the fact that ... I'm multiracial and I am Black. And ... that does affect me, like, I have experienced racism and stuff".

Alison felt pressured to tone down her Multiracial identity. She mentioned that her proximity to whiteness and her proxy privilege as "white passing" played a part in her decision to tone down her Asian identity when engaging with Asian peers. Alison explained:

[S]ometimes I feel really, really bad, but I feel like people who are ... more of a minority group than me, like using heavy heavy quotations around that, ... people who are ... more Asian than me or ... who can speak their ... native language or who ... lived in

their home country for a long while, ... it doesn't matter the race or ethnicity. Sometimes I feel like I have to actually play into my whiteness a little bit more because ... if I'm the Wasian chick, that's like, "I'm Asian, I'm Asian... I'm just as Asian as the rest of you.' And I look white passing to them, that's gonna come off as super bad. So sometimes I actually toned down my Asian side if I'm around people who I feel ...have a stronger connection to like their racial identity than I do.

In other instances, participants develop understandings of their realities that resisted the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm. For example, Maya perceived the importance of having a Multiracial space or a Multiracial community:

[A]s a mixed person, you're never going to find community in monoracial society. I can't go to a Black affinity meeting and I'm not gonna feel 100% like I'm me, nor am I going to go to ... a Chinese meeting or a white meeting, which hopefully that doesn't happen, and feel like I'm 100% seen there either.

Deconstructing and Rejecting The Anti-Blackness, Anti-Multiraciality White Supremacy Paradigm

All participants touched on desiring, developing, or inhabiting spaces in which Multiraciality was not constrained by Monoracial normativity. At large the data suggests that Multiracial students are developing spaces in which they can deconstruct and reject the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm. Prominent factors that help in this deconstruction and rejection for Multiracial students include:

1. Supportive spaces to explore, challenge, find connection, and reflect upon their identities.
2. Close relationships to share and bond over every day experiences.
3. The time and trust in themselves to develop a core way of being.

Deconstruction and rejection of the paradigm occurs when participants have space for contemplation, challenge, and support. For example, Ava discussed how she is trying to reject the monoracial ideology that someone must be monoracial to completely inhabit their identity. In college, and with various support systems, Ava is considering what it means for her to inhabit the entirety of her identities, “not being like, ‘Oh, I’m half Puerto Rican, half Japanese. Like I am Japanese. I am Puerto Rican.’” In comparison Lynn mentioned not personally having spaces to navigate her lived experiences with others. She explicitly stated her desire to move from one racial group to another without feeling as if she was an outsider inhabiting these spaces. Her experiences being racially marginalized has continually reinforced ideas of her being an outsider within a monoracially dominant paradigm. Still, she sought out a counselor that specializes in culture and identity but still is surrounded by the monoracial dominant paradigm in the majority of spaces she inhabits potentially leading to her continual experiences of otherness.

Participants were at varying places in their journeys of understanding this paradigm and developing their own core way of being. A few patterns arose in the data. For one, those who spoke about having more security around their Multiracial identity tended to have more access to Multiraciality and diversity either growing up or deliberately finding/creating Multiracial and diverse spaces at the higher education institution. Lynn, who desired to feel more secure in her identity, spoke about wanting to see and be around more people who looked and had lived experiences like hers. Maya, in describing the Multiracial student organization she sometimes attended, described it as a place for people to share their experiences because they were not receiving affirmations of their Multiraciality in other places.

Supportive spaces generally include diverse and/or Multiracial communities in which Multiraciality is not marginalized. Participants described these spaces as being unencumbered by

expectations of who belongs. Ava spoke about the diversity within her Asian community with her university. In this specific space, Ava said:

I feel like we have such a strong ... care and passion for our community that we're able to form a connection and ... we're able to acknowledge that there's diasporic difference and not equate that to ... a lack of cultural ties.

Aspects such as history, power, and many lived realities of having an Asian identity are established in this specific community that Ava finds validating to her experiences.

Maya, Reyna, and Sophie surround themselves with very diverse people, several find comfort in Multiracial student organizations, and others desire for a space in which their Multiracial identity is not marginalized. A running theme as to why diverse and Multiracial spaces are freeing is that they provide an understanding that people do not have to relate to each other; therefore, participants are not restricted to a certain way of existing to be in the in-group. This goes against the fundamental aspect of a Monoracial dominant paradigm in which there must be an in-groups and out-group(s) based upon racial differentiation.

There were also ways that participants were developing spaces in which they could find reprieve from the marginalization of their Multiracial identities: through interpersonal relationships. This often took the form of friendships and sibling bonds. Participants often mentioned that siblings helped them understand the world around them, were their primary sources to talk about Multiracial topics, and would support them in their racial identity journeys. These relationships were often considered very important but did not remove their experiences of marginalization. As Alice said when talking about importance of relationship outside of siblinghoods, "it [is] really nice to hear from other people that my experiences were shared and concerns valid."

The development of a core way of being looked different depending on the participant but all participants mentioned developing an understanding of who they were important to their racial journey regardless of the level of security they currently felt. When asked about what needs to happen for participants to feel more secure, several participants said statements along the lines of “needing to do the work” or “I just need to get over myself.” Those who often mentioned being further along stated that they needed to embrace being uncomfortable. While those who spoke about having already developed a basis for a core way of being were more nostalgic about their experiences. Reyna said,

It's definitely been a surprising road of ... self-discovery. It's difficult and ... there's still a lot of times with ... doubt of like, ‘Do I really have it figured out?’ and a lot of reflecting on it, but I think ... it's all a process for everybody because I can guarantee there's still many people I know who aren't that comfortable in their own mixes and their own identity and I'll still be there for them to support them through that.

A common pattern of those with a core sense of being is a feeling of pride in themselves for their journey. Most participants expressed wanting to tell their younger selves that the pain and discomfort they felt would lessen with time.

Summary

In this chapter I introduced the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm that Multiracial students are developing an understanding of to navigate their own relationships to power, privilege, and oppression. I also considered how participants were navigating this paradigm. Lastly, I shared patterns that participants were using to make sense and navigate the system.

CHAPTER VI: IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

I began this research study because I wanted to know how participants were navigating their own relationships to power, privilege and oppression in higher education spaces. The angle in which I originally began my research was from the view of developing Multiracial spaces that were constructed outside of a white supremacy framework. However, because of the ways that the participants were navigating higher education institutions, spaces in which were fundamentally built on white supremacy ideology and practices, the data suggested for students to navigate their relationship to power, privilege, and oppression they had to develop an understanding of that framework as well as creating and finding spaces in which their marginalization were not highlighted. This section includes limitations of this research study, implications for future research, and implications for practice.

Implications for Future Research

Due to the richness of the data and the limited exploration of this research topic there are numerous opportunities for additional research in this area. I start with the need for future research to build up the concept of Multiraciality in relation to power and oppression. I also offer suggestions for expanding the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm model.

Further Exploring Multiraciality

Past research has considered how race and racism function in creating a Multiracial identity and how Multiracial students experience oppression (Guillermo Wann & Johnston, 2012; Harris, 2016). This research examined how Multiracial students navigated their relationships to power, privilege, and oppression and built up the emerging theory of an anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm. However, due to the scope of this thesis, Multiraciality as a concept, an ideology, and/or a paradigm was not explicitly examined.

There is potential for future research to expand on this concept and position Multiraciality as a way of being that actively exists outside of the dominant binary ideology.

An area for critical examination even within this research study is the focus on the “anti-” ideologies (anti-Blackness and anti-Multiraciality) rather than the ideologies (Blackness and Multiraciality) themselves. I made the intentional decision to focus on the “anti-” ideologies as it was the system that participants were naming when they described their experiences of being marginalized. Future research would benefit from focusing on the Multiracial experiences a step further than what is introduced in this study. Data from this research study suggests Multiracial student organizations and diverse spaces are more likely to provide such spaces for Multiracial students. Future research should expand upon Multiraciality and diverse spaces as well as Multiraciality and Multiracial student organizations.

Also, several participants described their Multiracial student organization as being a space for Multiethnic and/or transracial adoptees as well as for Multiracial students. The experiences of transracial adoptees and multiethnic individuals should be considered more intentionally when studying the roles of Multiracial student organizations and the ways that such organizations address complex lived experiences should be more researched. As there is potential for enriching the understanding of Multiraciality and the ABAM white supremacy paradigm.

Exploring the above topics also can give more insight into the factors that kept coming up in participants' deconstruction and rejection of the ABAM paradigm. The factors being: supportive spaces to explore, challenge, find connection, and reflect upon their identities; Close relationships to share and bond over every day experiences; and the time and trust in themselves to develop a core way of being. Even Sophie who did not consider Multiracial spaces necessary

to her navigation of everyday life mentioned valuing having interpersonal relationships with other Multiracial people as it allowed her to process her lived reality and talk through her thoughts with someone who shared similar experiences. More work than should explore what meaning(s) exist in interpersonal relationships between Multiracial people. This offers space to further explore Multiraciality and deconstruct monoracial dominant ways of being.

Expanding Understanding of the Anti-Blackness, Anti-Multiraciality White Supremacy Paradigm

More research should study the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm. The model presented in this study is intentionally very broad as it aims to provide a working generalized model of the power-oppression framework that Multiracial students are navigating. It is then vital to expand the knowledge on Multiraciality and power-oppression systems. Future research should delve deeper and develop the nuances of the model. It is important to look deeper into how each vector intersects and influences the other. Colorism and featurism, two topics that are prominent realities in Multiracial individuals' lived experiences yet deeply understudied in Multiracial research, should be researched more as they have the potential to add more nuance to the understanding of Multiracial students and the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy power-oppression system (Hamako, 2014; Harris, 2016.)

Additionally, when expanding on this model more research needs to be done in examining the effects of marginalization and racialization on monoracial BIPOC communities and the treatment of Multiracial people within those communities. A recurring experience of participants was that the smaller a monoracial BIPOC community the more often participants spoke about feelings of marginalization. More research should be done to further consider how

the preservation of minoritized identities within heavily marginalized spaces interact with power and anti-Multiraciality.

More research must consider the varying proximities to privilege that are present within Multiraciality. More research must consider how Multiracial people with white heritages and/or those who are perceived as monoracially white are navigating their proximity to privilege. Research needs to probe further into what this privilege looks like, how it flexes, and how can Multiracial people deconstruct their own relationships to power through navigating their privileges.

More research should further the understanding that institutional agents (offices, student affairs professionals, faculty, and academic spaces) have in supporting the well-being of Multiracial students. Very few participants spoke about the support of institutional agents in supporting their identities as Multiracial students. Although these relationships were less commonly mentioned it does not necessarily mean that these types of relationships are not important for Multiracial students. Further research needs to investigate the influence these types of relationships have on Multiracial students' abilities to navigate their relationships to power, privilege, and oppression. Some participants mentioned the ways in which their parent-child relationship was supportive in their exploration of their racial identity, others spoke about its negative influence or did not openly support their ability to explore, discuss, or question their racial identities. Many participants did not mention, know, or actively seek institutional agents as forms of support which could potentially be because participants did not see institutional agents as affirming spaces for their Multiracial identity, participants were not receiving communication from institutional agents about their support systems, and/or there are very little, if any, institutionally based support for Multiracial students. Current research indicates that advisory

roles within Multiracial student organizations can have very positive influences on individuals and groups (Ozaki & Johnston, 2008). More research should investigate the institutional structures of higher education institutions.

Lastly, Multiraciality, the ABAM paradigm, and gender should be further explored. Harris's (2015) study intentionally recruited only women of color and this group of participants was the influence behind the creation of MultiCrit. MultiCrit was foundational to the creation of the ABAM paradigm along with the data from this study. In this study, I wanted to expand the gender diversity in participants. Two participants openly noted being gender diverse while the others indicated identifying as a cis woman. This study was unsuccessful in recruiting men or trans-identifying participants. While there is new research coming out that indicates differences in experiences with masculine identifying Multiracial participants in comparison to feminine Multiracial participants, yet more is necessary to further broaden understandings of gender and Multiraciality (Waring, 2023). There is potential for a more robust and enriched understanding of the ABAM paradigm with the increase in Multiracial experiences across gender diversity.

Implications for Practice

In alignment with future research opportunities, findings from this study offer several routes for student affairs practitioners, faculty, and those who do social justice work. First, practitioners and faculty must be familiar with how dominant narratives oppress Multiracial students and understand the importance of providing support for Multiracial student organizations on college campuses (Matsumura, 2017; Ozaki & Johnston, 2008). As some Multiracial students might not have had the opportunity to process their marginalization as Multiracial people prior to college, having a space in which they can connect to others, learn language around their experiences, and form relationships with other Multiracial people can

provide vital in their development (Ozaki & Johnston, 2008). Regardless of the amount of time and space Multiracial students have had to process, reflect, and define their racial identities prior to college the findings indicate that having the opportunity to connect with a community of Multiracial students give affirmation and comfort to Multiracial students as can be seen through the shared experience of many participants in this study. Lastly, several participants spoke about the importance of having a space to hang out with other Multiracial students and do “regular college student things”. This is in alignment with prior research which indicates that socializing, discussing social issues, and the political landscape are all reasons why students seek out Multiracial student organizations (Ozaki & Johnston, 2008).

Student affairs practitioners and faculty should also consider the ways in which they might internalize and/or perpetuate anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy ideology as professionals. Being able to critically reflect on one’s own practices and beliefs can better prepare practitioners for supporting this specific demographic of students (Ozaki & Johnston, 2008). Examples of internalizing such ideology would be automatically assuming a student is mixed with white heritage, assuming that Multiracial students are unaware of their own relationships to power, privilege, and oppression, or not considering Multiracial identities as identities worthy of a cultural space on campus (Hamako, 2014; Harris, 2016; Matsumura, 2017). Professionals on college campuses need to be aware of the nuanced and dynamic ways that racialization impacts Multiracial students’ experiences on college campuses in order to properly support the development and needs of Multiracial students (Ozaki & Johnston, 2008). The findings indicate that Multiracial students are coming to college at various places in their racial identity development which needs to be acknowledged in the ways that practitioners think about Multiracial students and support. Practitioners should consider how much knowledge

they have around Multiracial experiences, how often they see these identities spoken about from Multiracial people and how that can impact their role in supporting Multiracial students.

Limitations

There were several limitations that influenced the findings in this study. A limitation of this research study was the diversity of participant gender. In alignment with prior research the majority of participants in this study were cis-women. No men identifying students or male students participated in this study. This leaves out a large portion of this community unaccounted for in this study. Future research should intentionally incorporate more men and gender queer Multiracial participants. Although there was some diversity in the Multiracial heritages of participants a multitude of heritages and mixes were not present. One identity that is not present in this research study was indigenous Multiracial identities. Only two of the participants were of Latinx heritage and only four were of Black heritage, only two were of two minoritized racial identities that did not include white identities and only two were of three racial heritages. Because of this there is so much opportunity for more research to look at the experiences of these populations of Multiracial students.

Another limitation that needs to be addressed is the emphasis this study takes on the lived experience of Multiracial students not only in the past but also the present and future. Several students mentioned not having processed some of the questions from the research interview before our time together. It is possible that Multiracial students had not fully had the time to respond to the questions in ways that are fully true to them. They might not have been able to completely share their meaning-making processes and understandings at the time of the interview. This frames the data of this research in a very specific time and place within the

participants lives that cannot necessarily be generalized across their lives or to other Multiracial students' lives.

The grounded theory base, although directly in line with the research question and full of many benefits, also presented limitations. Grounded theory, even critical constructivist grounded theory, is designed to explain the underworking processes of participants' narratives (Charmaz, 2014). There was such richness of each participant's own narrative that is not touched upon due to the goal of explaining an emerging theory. I intentionally added in the descriptions of participants as it helped to contextualize the theory, but it did not aim to fully share the lived experiences of each participant. Further research should be done from other research methodologies to add the nuance of individual experiences to the current research. Participatory action should be more greatly emphasized in the retellings as well to give more robust recounts and allow for the lived experiences of participants to be more justly portrayed in the creation of new knowledge.

Conclusion

I came to this research somewhat selfishly. I wanted to provide space for Multiracial students to share their lived experiences and give alternative narratives from the current ones that framed Multiraciality as secondary to monoraciality and as a cushion for white supremacy. I hope this research helps to give light to the way that Multiracial students are moving through their lived realities, how they are critical of the world around them, and aware of the frameworks that build the societies they inhabit.

Throughout the research process I found that my positionality as a Multiracial person was both affirmed and challenged throughout this research process. I had to confront many ways in which I had/have internalized the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy dominant

paradigm. Due to my critical constructivist epistemology, I continually reflected on my own relationship(s) to power, privilege, and oppression both as a Multiracial (graduate) student at a higher education institution and as a researcher. As a critical constructivist researcher, I am aware to an extent of the biases of myself in this research and also acknowledge that there are still subjectivities that I sow into this work that I am still unaware of at this time. I hope that future research will critique and move the research presented here forward.

Additionally, I hope this research helps to deconstruct the anti-Blackness, anti-Multiraciality white supremacy paradigm and allow others to think more critically about how power and oppression shows up with their own communities and the broader society. Lastly, I hope this research provides some reassurance to Multiracial people. Reassurance that their identities as Multiracial people are important and that there are people out there who do deeply care about their lived experiences.

Appendix A

Five Identity Patterns with Examples.

Identity Pattern	Example
Two or more monoracial categories	Identifying as both Black and Asian
Identifies situationally, moving between or among the other patterns	Sometimes identifying as Black and other times as Multiracial
Multiracial identity	Identifying as Multiracial or Mixed-race
One monoracial category	Identifying as Black only while also having Asian heritage
Deconstructing race, opts out of categorization	Not identifying with any racial categorization

Note. Above I provide examples for each of the five identity patterns created by Renn (2003).

Appendix B

Dear [NAME],

My name is Abbie Williams-Yee. I am a second-year master's student in the Student Affairs program at the University of Maryland. I am conducting a study that is seeking to better understand how Multiracial students navigate their relationships to power, privilege, and oppression on college campuses.

I am hoping you would be able to send members of your organization the attached flyer which includes a link to a demographic questionnaire. Filling out the questionnaire will determine interested individuals' eligibility for the study. The research study involves completing the demographic questionnaire (10 minutes) and 1-2 virtual interviews (60-90 minutes). Participants can receive up to \$25 in compensation for full participation. If interested individuals do not meet the requirements for this study their collected information will be destroyed.

Please reach out with any questions. My email address is: awyee@umd.edu

Best,

Abbie Williams-Yee

Appendix C

RECRUITING STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

**HOW MULTIRACIAL STUDENTS NAVIGATE
THEIR RELATIONSHIP(S) TO POWER,
PRIVILEGE, AND OPPRESSION**

Study looking for Multiracial students attending a public university in the Big 10 who engage with other Multiracial students (organizations, friendships, or classes.)

Students will be asked to complete 1 virtual interview (60-90 minutes.)

\$15 compensation for participants



Those interested in participating must complete the demographic questionnaire in order to determine eligibility.



<https://go.umd.edu/MultiracialInterestSurvey>

The following research study is being conducted by Abbie Williams-Yee for thesis completion at the University of Maryland. All questions should be sent to Abbie at: awyee@umd.edu

Appendix D

Big Ten Academic Alliance Member Universities:

- University of Illinois
- Indiana University
- University of Iowa
- University of Maryland
- University of Michigan
- Michigan State University
- University of Minnesota
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- Northwestern University
- Ohio State University
- Pennsylvania State University
- Purdue University
- Rutgers University-New Brunswick
- University of Wisconsin-Madison

Appendix E

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study on how Multiracial students navigate their relationship(s) to power, privilege, and oppression on college campuses. Participation in this research study includes attending a virtual interview (60-90 minutes). Completing this questionnaire will determine your eligibility for this study. The requirements to participate are as follows:

1. Be an undergraduate student attending a public predominantly white institution in the Big 10
2. Identify as Multiracial (includes those who identify as mixed-race, and/or of two or more differing racial heritages)
3. Engage with other Multiracial persons
 - a. Can be organizations (does not have to be affiliated with the university)
 - b. Friendships
 - c. Classes
 - d. Family

Student Demographics questions:

1. First name:
2. Last name:
3. Email address:
4. University Name:
5. Year in School:
6. Race:
7. Ethnicity:
8. Gender:
9. If I qualify for participation, I would like a pseudonym (alternative non-affiliated name to be addressed by in the study):
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure
10. How much engagement did you have with other Multiracial people before attending your university?

None at all		A lot of engagement
1	3	5
11. How much engagement have you had with other Multiracial people since attending your university?

None at all		A lot of engagement
1	3	5

Appendix F

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Project Title	<i>Multiraciality, Power, Privilege, and Oppression: A Study on How Multiracial Students Navigate Their Relationship(s) to Socio-Political Power Structures within Higher Education</i>
Purpose of the Study	<i>This research is being conducted by Abigail Williams-Yee at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you match the subject criteria. Participants must self-identify as Multiracial, have an interpersonal relationship with another Multiracial person, and attend a Big 10 predominantly white public research institution. The purpose of this research project is to broaden the understanding of Multiracial experiences with power, privilege, and oppression while being connected to other Multiracial people and attending a higher education institution.</i>
Procedures	<i>The procedures involve completing a demographic questionnaire, filling out the informed consent form, and participating in an 60-90 minute virtual interview.</i>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	<i>There are no known risks for participating in this research study.</i>
Potential Benefits	<i>There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. However, possible benefits include increased understanding of Multiracial experiences within higher education. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of Multiracial students' experience in higher education.</i>
Confidentiality	<p><i>Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing data in a secured password protected computer. Recordings will be secured in a password protected folder. Data for any participant who does not fully complete an interview will be destroyed. The researcher will be the only one with access to the complete recordings. Participants will be allowed to use pseudonyms and all specifying information will be removed from the final thesis.</i></p> <p><i>If the researcher writes a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger</i></p>

	<i>or if we are required to do so by law.</i>
Compensation	<p><i>Upon completion of the 60-90 minute interview, you will receive \$15. You will be responsible for any taxes assessed on the compensation.</i></p> <p><i>Only your name and email address will be collected to receive compensation.</i></p>
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p><i>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</i></p> <p><i>If you are an employee or student, your employment status or academic standing at UMD will not be positively or negatively affected by your participation or non-participation in this study.</i></p> <p><i>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, please contact the investigator:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <i>[Abigail Williams-Yee]</i> <i>[1570 Van Munching Hall, College Park, MD 20742]</i> <i>[awyee@umd.edu]</i> <i>[319-371-5183]</i> </p>
Participant Rights	<p><i>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"> University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 </p>

	<p>E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p><i>For more information regarding participant rights, please visit: https://research.umd.edu/research-resources/research-compliance/institutional-review-board-irb/research-participants</i></p> <p><i>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</i></p>	
Statement of Consent	<p><i>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You may print a copy of this signed consent form.</i></p> <p><i>If you agree to participate, please type your name, the date, and click "I consent" below.</i></p>	
Signature and Date	NAME OF PARTICIPANT	
Signature and Date	DATE	
	I CONSENT	

Appendix G

Guiding Research Questions:

1. How do Multiracial college students, who interact with other Multiracial people, navigate their relationship(s) to power, privilege, and oppression?

Introduction to Participants

Hello [Participant's Name],

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my study on how Multiracial students navigate their relationships to power, privilege, and oppression on college campuses. As for logistics for our time together, this interview should take around 60-90 minutes. This interview will be recorded as it will be used in the data analysis process. That being said, what you share with me will remain confidential including all names and institutional references you make during this interview. As your participation is fully voluntary you can choose to not answer any of the questions posed or withdraw from this study at any time.

Before beginning the interview, I would like to thank you again for your time and to share a little bit about myself. My name is Abbie. I am a second year master's student in the Higher Education Student Affairs program in the College of Education at the University of Maryland. I was born and raised in the state of Iowa and attended the University of Iowa for my undergraduate study. I am a Multiracial person of color; I am of Black, Chinese and White heritage.

I would like to check in and see if you have any questions before I begin the recording?

Interview Questions:

Central question: tell me about yourself

1. When meeting someone new what are some things, you find important for the other person to know about you?
2. Tell me about your experiences around being Multiracial prior to attending your current university?
 - a. What is one specific story you could share that comes to mind when you think about your experiences being Multiracial prior to your university experience?
3. What roles would you say family, friends, or community play in how you identified?
 - a. What were the majority racial identity group(s) you were surrounded by?
4. What other social identities have influenced how you racially identify, if any? (Social identities, identities that are important to them)
5. I have been aware of my Multiracial identity since childhood and really began to question and explore what that meant when I was in undergrad. What has been your journey around your racial identity?
 - a. Have you ever questioned how you racially identify?
 - b. How has your perception of your racial identity changed since being in college, if at all?

Central question: tell me about your relationships: to other Multiracial students, poc students, and the institution

6. Tell me more about your experiences in spaces in which you are one of few, or the only Multiracial person in a predominantly white space? In a space for people of color?
 - a. If possible, could you name one space for each instance?
 - b. What have been your interactions with other people in these spaces?
 - c. What feelings often arise for you when you are in these spaces?
7. Are there any spaces on campus (offices, centers, student organizations) that you go to for support as a Multiracial person?
 - a. Could you expand on why you do or do not?
 - b. Tell me about your experiences, if you have any, exploring race specific centers, spaces, and/or classes on campus?
8. Who do you generally hang out with?
 - a. If at all, how do you see your race influence the ways you interact with your peers?
 - i. How does your racial identity influence the way you behave with your peers, if at all?
 - ii. How does your racial identity influence what peers you try to interact with more, if at all?
 - iii. How does your racial identity influence who you are the most comfortable interacting with, if at all?
9. Describe the Multiracial communities you participate in or the Multiracial relationships you have?
 - a. How important are these communities to you? How connected do you feel towards others in this communities?
 - b. How would you say your racial identity has changed, if at all, since being around other Multiracial students?
 - c. Can you tell me a time in which you interacted with this community or person, and you learned something new about yourself, if at all?
10. As a Multiracial person have you ever thought about what it means to be in connection with one or more of your racial heritages, if at all?

Wrap up: Clarifications, additional contributing information

11. Is there something that you might have not thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?
12. What advice would you give a student who attends your school and identifies similarly to you?
13. In 3 words could you describe what feelings have come up for you as you have participated in this interview?
14. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

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