ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: USING GROUNDED THEORY TO EXPLAIN
                            THE IMPACT OF APPEARANCE ON
                            MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

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Although current multiracial identity development models take into consideration the impact of appearance in identity development, minimal research exists explaining the depth of this impact or fully examines the potential impact when self-identification does not match perceived social identification of multiracial individuals. The purpose of this study was to use constructivist grounded theory to investigate how physical appearance influenced the ways in which multiracial college students defined their racial identity, how they perceived society to define their racial identity, and how this intersection impacted their multiracial identity development. By expanding multiracial research to specifically examine the intersection between internal and external perceptions of multiracial identity among students within a higher educational setting, this study fills a significant gap in current literature.

The following research questions guided the study including: (1) How does appearance play a role in the self-identification of multiracial individuals? (2) How does appearance influence societal perceptions of multiracial individuals? (3) How does self and societal racial identification impact multiracial identity development? (4) What are the differences and similarities in how multiracial individuals define their identity and how they perceive society to define their racial identity? (5) If societal perceptions differ from self-identification, how does this impact multiracial identity development?

Ten college students participated in this study along with 26 photo reviewers. The ten participants' first round of interviews focused on their multiracial experiences including their racial appearance and its impact on their internal identity, their perceived societal identity, family and peer dynamics, and student involvement and interests. Participants also provided a headshot, which was viewed by 26 photo reviewers. Reviewers responded to interviewer questions pertaining to the perceived racial appearance of each participant. The interviewer discussed the results of the photo review sessions during a second round of interviews with the ten participants, and a theory emerged to explain the impact of racial appearance on multiracial identity development.

USING GROUNDED THEORY TO EXPLAIN THE IMPACT OF APPEARANCE ON
MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

By

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DEDICATION

To my sisters, Emily and Paula, for being my partners in crime and helping to inspire this study. To my parents, Ronald and Naoko, for their strength and for loving each other because of their differences rather than in spite of them. To my daughter, Rae Naoko, for making me a better person and giving me hope for our future. To my partner, husband, and best friend, Brian, for loving me and supporting me even when I made it extremely challenging. I love you all and thank you all.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Prior to 1967, laws existed within the United States, which prevented individuals to marry outside of their race. These miscegenation laws historically stemmed from the concept of hypodescent, which is the historical practice of forcing individuals of multiple races to identify with the parent whose racial status is the lowest within society perceptions (Spencer, 2009). Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) explained the historical significance of this cultural norm and linked it with the inopportunity for multiracial individuals to claim more than one race. It took the United States government until the 2000 Census before individuals had the option of selecting more than one race to self-identify (Jaschik, 2006, Jones & Smith, 2001; "*Students Bring,*" 2006; Riley, 2006); and it is taking higher education even longer to determine how to collect, report, and analyze student data on individuals claiming more than one race (Kellogg & Niskode, 2008; Padilla & Kelley, 2005). The effects of these historical cultural norms are still evident in how multiracial individuals racially identify today (Brunsma, 2005).

Situating multiracial identity development within a historical context helps one better understand the growing trends in multiracial research today. As times shift, the assumption that groups or individuals identify with only one racial or ethnic identity is now an idea of the past. Spickard and Fong (1994) indicated this shift in thinking stems from two changes. The first change is the increase in marriages across racial, religious, and national lines. The second change is the increase in individuals of mixed ancestry claiming all parts of their ancestry instead of aligning with only one. Formally identifying as multiracial is a relatively recent occurrence and warrants additional

research, particularly in how this trend affects multiracial identity development within higher education (Nishimura, 1998; Renn, 2008).

The identification of multiracial identities has only recently become more recognized, and while the research about multiracial identity development within the realm of higher education is growing in prominence, it still remains relatively limited in scope and detail (Renn, 2008; Root, 1992, 1996). Nevertheless, the multiracial population is growing at a faster rate than the single race population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In the 2000 Census, 41% of the population identifying as multiracial were younger than the age of 18, which means that higher education can expect an influx of these students arriving on college campuses with many multiracial students already making their presence known (Jaschik, 2006; "*Students Bring,*" 2006).

Some researchers feel confident that the number of interracial relationships will continue to rise due to increased acceptance in our society and a push toward globalization (Riley, 2006), and that the college population will increasingly consist of more individuals who are multiracial. However, the experiences of these individuals are not yet adequately reflected in student development or identity development literature (Edwards & Pedrotti, 2008; Renn, 2002, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Minimal research exists linking how multiracial individuals self-identify within identity development models, and even less prevalent is the amount of research dedicated to exploring the process of how multiracial individuals come to have and self-define their identities (Renn, 2008). When examining the construction of multiracial identity through an ecological lens, one recognizes a consistent theme of physical appearance as playing a

significant role in influencing identity (Renn, 2008; Wijeyesinghe, 2001). Although current multiracial identity development models take into consideration the impact of appearance in identity development, minimal research exists explaining the depth of this impact or fully examines the potential impact when self-identification does not match perceived social identification of multiracial individuals.

As the demographic trends within the United States reflect a continuing increase in individuals identifying as multiracial, one may expect an increasing disconnect between self and societal perceptions of appearance (Campbell & Troyer, 2007). Social classification plays a significant role in the construction of racial identity; therefore, social misclassification heightens stress levels and feelings of invalidation and identity confusion (Campbell & Troyer, 2007).

Researchers who focus on the topic of race overwhelmingly base their research on a participant's racial self-identification classification, and multiracial research is overwhelmingly focused on the internal struggles of choosing between multiple races as opposed to understanding this struggle through both a self and societal perspective (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Poston, 1990). In addition, researchers focusing on racial identity in college students often based their studies on the fundamental assumption that the identity development process for individuals identifying with more than one race is the same as for monoracial students (Kellogg & Liddell, 2012). Although there are some similarities between the experiences of multiracial and monoracial people of color, more recent studies determined that important differences also exist; however, the unique developmental processes of multiracial individuals as well as their perspective in regard

to discussions on race and racism are rarely addressed (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Kellogg & Liddel, 2012; Museus, Sarinana, & Ryan, 2015, Nadal et al., 2011).

Higher education researchers and educators need to recognize the unique issues associated with identifying as multiracial and how these issues either bridge or divide the legitimacy of considering multiracial as a distinct ethnic identity (Renn, 2003; Root, 1992). Previous research indicated a strong link between societal perceptions of racial identity as well as self-identification influencing racial identity development (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Hill, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Troyer & Younts, 1997). However, this research does not specifically address environmental factors such as higher education and therefore fails to provide transferable reasons for administrators and educators within higher education to better understand and accommodate the growing population of multiracial students.

Purpose of the Study and Guiding Research Questions

The increasing demographics of individuals claiming more than one race means educators and administrators within higher education need to gain an awareness of the experiences and issues surrounding the topic of multiracial students. The purpose of this study was to use constructivist grounded theory to investigate how physical appearance influenced the ways in which multiracial college students defined their racial identity, how they perceived society to define their racial identity, and how this intersection impacted their multiracial identity development.

By expanding multiracial research to examine specifically the intersection between internal and external perceptions of multiracial identity among students within a higher educational setting, this study fills a significant gap in current literature. The

results of this research inform administrators and educators within higher education of the potential benefits and disadvantages of recognizing and accommodating their multiracial student population.

This research study used constructivist grounded theory research methods to examine further the influence of physical appearance on multiracial identity development by specifically focusing on the implications of perceived societal misclassification. Since racial classification influences the ways in which individuals react with their social world (Campbell & Troyer, 2007), this research study developed a theory to supplement current models of multiracial identity development (Poston, 1990; Root, 1996; Renn, 1999, 2003, 2008; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002) by examining the impact of differences and similarities of self-identification when compared to perceived societal identification. Through a better understanding of the impact of perceived misclassification of racial identity, faculty and administrators within higher education may better understand how multiracial students' self-identity is potentially limited, influenced, and inhibited by how society interprets and labels their appearance (Renn, 2008).

Keeping in mind the purpose and intent, this research study focused on the following questions:

1.) How does appearance play a role in the self-identification of multiracial individuals?

2.) How does appearance influence societal perceptions of multiracial individuals?

3.) How does self and societal racial identification impact multiracial identity development?

4.) What are the differences and similarities in how multiracial individuals define their identity and how they perceive society to define their racial identity?

5.) If societal perceptions differ from self-identification, how does this impact multiracial identity development?

Significance of Study

A theory specifically focused on better explaining the impact of physical appearance on multiracial identity development in college students helps students and college administrators better understand the ways in which multiracial individuals are influenced by their social world (Campbell & Troyer, 2007). This is particularly significant as higher education has a commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment for students and a mission to develop students into productive and socially aware citizens (AAC&U, 2002; Middle States, 2006).

Institutions of higher education function as communities of individuals committed to advancing knowledge, discovering and illuminating values, and advancing the communities they serve (AAC&U, 2002; Middle States, 2006). According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) higher education best takes into consideration the needs of a changing society by creating an inclusive community, which encompasses diverse ideas that reflect the 'social, cultural, and intellectual' world (AAC&U, 2002, p. 1).

Through affirmative action policies as well as additional societal efforts, universities today are the most racially and ethnically diverse than ever in United States history. This increase of inclusive communities improves social equality and improves the value of liberal education (AAC&U, 2002). Simply stated, higher education serves to

both advance knowledge and educate citizens to become actively engaged in their professions and an increasingly diverse society. In order to accomplish these goals, higher education must continue to include and expand how it views racial and ethnic diversity, examine the changing nature of campus diversity and take into consideration the growing number of students who identify as multiracial. In addition, higher education educators and student affairs practitioners need to create inclusive communities where multiracial students can find support (Chaudhari & Pizzolato, 2008; AAC&U, 2002; Cheng & Zhao, 2006). The theory generated by this study helps better inform individuals working on college campuses about the specific needs of multiracial students and helps them foster a more collaborative environment among various student groups particularly centered on race and culture (Wong & Buckner, 2008).

This type of theory also helps supplement current models of multiracial identity development and informs research and policy by focusing on the implications of perceived societal misclassification on students who identify as multiracial. Although literature on multiracial individuals in the United States has recently become more prevalent, researchers have not yet fully explained or addressed the potential relationship of physical appearance and societal misclassification (Renn, 2008; Root, 1992, 1996). By better understanding this potential relationship, colleges and universities can gain insight into student's needs and in turn be better equipped to provide students safe and inclusive environments (Wong & Buckner, 2008). When college administrators help create more welcoming and supporting environments, this helps increase the capacity and ability of students to develop a sense of belonging within the institution. This sense of

belonging plays a critical role in determining student retention and success (O'Keeffe, 2013).

In addition, higher education provides a unique window to study identity development in college students. Selman (1972) determined through his study in adolescent children that conceptual role taking is a social cognitive skill related to age. As children mature, they are able to consider more information and better understand that people react differently to an identical situation. Eventually, children develop the ability to not only recognize but also understand others' views and realize the influence of cultural or social values.

Social development research indicated that late adolescence and early adulthood are when students are at a critical state of personal and social identity formation (Gurin, 1999; Selman, 1972). Higher education is in an excellent position to leverage this developmental stage and provide an environment that allows students to experiment with different social roles, interact and form relationships with different social groups, establish their own perspectives, and consider the perspectives of others (Gurin, 1999).

This study examined multiracial college student experiences with the aim of better understanding how they viewed their racial identities and how they perceived and internalized how society viewed their racial identity. I chose to conduct this study because it is important for students and administrators working in higher education to understand how society views multiracial individuals and if multiracial individuals are restricted, or conversely, benefit in any way by society's views on their identity. Currently, the lack of research, particularly qualitative research, related to this topic makes it challenging to understand how multiracial students identify their experiences.

College administrators and student affairs professionals try to find ways to support students in higher education; however, in order to do so, they need to be better understand the potential needs of the multiracial student population in particular. By gaining insight on the multiracial student experience, my goal was to gather enough data in which a theory emerged which helps equip college administrators and student affairs professions with the knowledge and resources to best support this growing population of students.

Definition of Terms

In order to develop a theory related to the impact of physical appearance on the experience of multiracial students in higher education, it is important to define some key terms to provide additional context to the study. Additional details and explanations related to definitions of certain terms are further discussed in Chapter Two.

Given that this study refers to multiracial individuals, it is important to define the term multiracial as well as related terms such as monoracial and biracial. Root (1996) defined monoracial as a person who claims only one racial heritage, or a racial classification system which allows a person to claim only one race. Biracial refers to a person who is born of an interracial relationship where each parent is of a different race (Morales & Steward, 1996).

In the past, researchers defined multiracial similarly to biracial, in that it referred to an individual with only two racial heritages. Root (1996) included biracial in the definition of multiracial thereby claiming that the term multiracial is the most inclusive term referring to people across all types of racial mixes. As mentioned previously,

Chapter Two provides more depth to help the reader understand key terminology and language related to the topic of multiracial individuals.

Paradigm

I align myself with many of the fundamental beliefs of constructivist qualitative research including the concept that no single, universal reality or truth exists. As Creswell (2007) explained, individuals interpret reality and truth in multiple ways and in many instances within research, it is impossible to narrow down truth into one fact or one explanation. All individuals are responsible for determining their own reality and recognizing their own truths. By adhering to a constructivist qualitative research paradigm, through my research, I hoped to capture my participants' interpretations and definitions and allow them the freedom to share their voices through my investigations and questions. In addition to a social constructivist lens, I also adhered to key elements of critical race theory (CRT). Critical race theory stems from the belief that racism exists within the system of United States' society and institutional racism influences the normative culture. CRT examines existing power structures and recognizes the systemic inequalities provided by institutional racism (Creswell, 2007; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In my research, I hope to empower students to make positive decisions and transcend oppression and alienation unfairly placed on them through their membership within a marginalized group (Creswell, 2007; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

In order to design a strong research study, I elected to use a constructivist grounded theory approach aligned with my beliefs about the nature of reality and definition of truth. Recognizing that unconscious assumptions influenced by personal history and cultural background play a role in helping researchers recognize their own

perceptions of reality, I rejected the notion of an objective truth and understood this viewpoint ultimately shaped my view of the purpose of research (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). The decision to use a qualitative research approach stemmed primarily from my interest in exploring an explanation for the particular phenomenon of appearance as it relates to multiracial identity development. Using a qualitative approach provides me with the opportunity to conduct more holistic research using an inductive method. By starting with a general phenomenon of interest, I let the data gradually evolve into an explanation or theory that in turn provided a more focused understanding of the research topic (Krathwohl, 2009).

I elected to use a qualitative approach because I preferred to accentuate the process of discovery rather than the validation of fixed hypotheses typically found in quantitative research. In addition, qualitative methods tend to be the most useful method for an investigator exploring a particular phenomenon to understand the experiences of the participants from multiple perspectives and convert these perspectives into theory (Krathwohl, 2009). Therefore, I decided to use constructivist grounded theory methodology because it uses the data to create a theoretical explanation of significant and meaningful issues in individuals' lives (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mills et al., 2006).

Although Strange and King (1990) stated that theory cannot accurately describe the whole of a specific reality (it can only provide an approximate representation of the majority), it is still helpful to use theoretical concepts to better understand the developmental challenges facing college students (Evans et al., 1998). Though it is important to recognize that students are unique individuals, through my data I hoped to

develop and present a theory inclusive of the multiracial experience of making sense of their self and perceived social identities. While recognizing the limitations and potential harm in generalizing this theory to the entire multiracial student population, I intended to present this theory as one way of helping educators within higher education better understand how students develop in an attempt to improve conditions within institutions to promote positive change.

My underlying philosophical assumptions played an important role in how I interpreted and analyzed my data. By acknowledging my paradigm within the context of this research, it provided an awareness of how I influenced the conduct of my inquiry (Creswell, 2007).

Summary

Current literature regarding multiracial individuals does not provide a thorough explanation of the impact of the intersection between their self and societal definitions of their racial identity. To better inform this study, I reviewed current literature regarding racial and multiracial identity development as well as the socio-historical significance surrounding the development of multiracial identity. The purpose of this study was to use constructivist grounded theory to examine how physical appearance influenced the ways in which multiracial college students defined their racial identity, how they perceived society to define their racial identity, and how this intersection impacted their overall multiracial identity development. The theory that emerged from the data fills a significant gap in current literature and provides a more comprehensive view of the experiences of multiracial students in higher education.

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CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The identification of multiple racial identities has only recently become more recognized within the United States, therefore the research regarding multiracial identity development particularly within the realm of higher education remains relatively limited in scope and detail (Renn, 2008; Root, 1992, 1996). However, within the last 25 years, scholars have begun to recognize the gap in literature related to this population and started to publish more research on multiracial identity development and the impact of multiracial students on higher education. These scholars recognized the need to better understand and differentiate the experiences and needs of multiracial individuals in the United States. Although researchers are beginning to explore topics related to multiracial individuals, this research is still limited in scope and detail. In a review of articles over the past decade of the most widely read, peer-reviewed journals in the fields of higher education and student affairs, Museus, Sarinana, and Ryan (2015) found that less than 1% included a focus on multiracial individuals. Without the inclusion of the multiracial perspective in literature and research, college educators and administrators may struggle to understand and support this growing population of students (Museus et al., 2015).

This chapter begins by exploring the historical context of multiracial identity development within the United States. This information informs the reader as to why the concept of being able to identify legally with more than one race is a recent phenomenon. Recognizing the historical significance of the development of multiracial identity development helps inform the next section of this literature review which examines language and defines key terminology. Understanding the key terminology is necessary

for the reader to understand the progression of racial identity development models. Specific literature included in this review informs the reader of several gaps in current racial and multiracial identity development models which do not adequately account for the influence of physical appearance on the construction of multiracial identity. The next section of the literature review analyzes specific research on the influence of physical appearance on self-defined identity as well as perceptions of socially defined multiracial identity. The final segment of this chapter links the significance of better understanding the intersection of self-defined and societal definitions of multiracial identity with the implications of adapting a more inclusive racial classification system within higher education.

A Historical Perspective Linking the Current Demographic Trends

Maria Root was one of the first researchers to provide in-depth analysis regarding multiracial identity in the United States. In her book, *Racially Mixed People in America* (1992), she explained the growing trend of Americans within the United States identifying as multiracial and linked this increase with the repeal of the laws against miscegenation. Prior to 1967, the existence of laws influenced by the United States' racist history prevented individuals to marry outside of their race. These miscegenation laws historically stemmed from the cultural standard known as the "one-drop rule," which assumed that if individuals had any ancestral ties to Black or African blood, the law automatically classified them as a member of the Black race (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). The one-drop rule stems from the concept of "hypodescent," which is the historical practice of forcing individuals of multiple races to identify with the parent whose racial status is considered the lowest within society (Spencer, 2009).

The term hypodescent as well as the one-drop rule developed because of European colonization and slavery (Spencer, 2009). Stemming from the notion of hypodescent, the one drop rule has heavily influenced research on the multiracial population, particularly regarding individuals who identify as being of both Black and White racial descent. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) explained the historical significance of this cultural norm and linked it with the inopportunity for multiracial individuals to claim more than one race. Brunsma (2005) found in his recent study, that the effects of these historical cultural norms are still evident in how multiracial individuals racially identify today. He found that White participants from the dominant, societal culture were much more likely to identify the children in his study of White and non-White racial combinations with the non-White portion of their racial heritage.

To explain best the concept of hypodescent and the one-drop rule within the larger context of United States racial history, one should try to understand the concept of Whiteness as a form of property (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The disparity of lived experiences between the White population and all other races suggests inequalities are a result of a society in which issues related to race and racism continue to be subdued and ignored. According to Critical Race Theory (Bondi, 2012; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), race continues to be a strong factor in determining power and privilege as well as inequalities and marginalization. Viewing Whiteness in terms of legal or cultural property helps explain the consistent material and symbolic privileges to White individuals such as access to excellent education and neighborhoods. These material discrepancies and the intersection of race and property provides individuals with a tool to better understand and analyze social and

racial inequalities, which continue to exist today (Bondi, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Prior to 1967, the law made it illegal for individuals living in parts of the United States to claim more than one race. However, the court case, Loving v. Virginia, challenged the last of the existing laws preventing interracial marriage ("LOVING v. VIRGINIA," 1967). Mildred Jeter, an African American woman and Richard Loving, a White man, challenged the state of Virginia's law preventing marriage between people based on racial classifications. Jeter and Loving left the state of Virginia to be married in the District of Columbia, and they returned to Virginia to live as husband and wife. Shortly after their return, state officials indicted them for violating Virginia's ban on interracial marriage. The trial judge stated in his opinion that:

> Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangement there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix" ("LOVING v. VIRGINIA," 1967).

The Lovings pleaded guilty to their charge and the judge sentenced them to one year in jail. However, the trial judge agreed to suspend their sentence for 25 years if they agreed to leave the state of Virginia and not return together during that time. The Lovings moved to the District of Columbia and instituted a class action case in the United States District Court. The case went to the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia and the court upheld the constitutionality of the anti-miscegenation statutes. The jury convicted the Lovings of violating section 20-58 of the Virginia state code. It was not until the case

went to the Supreme Court in 1967 that the court finally ruled that Virginia's laws preventing marriage based on race violated the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment ("LOVING v. VIRGINIA," 1967).

Root (1992) indicated that with the repeal of miscegenation laws came a "biracial baby boom," since the repeal of the law finally allowed individuals the opportunity to legally identify as more than one race (p. 3). She explained that with the increase in racially mixed people, many individuals living in the United States would re-examine how they viewed themselves and how they viewed themselves in relation to one another. In order to adequately adjust to this revolution, she believed this transformation would force U.S. Americans to examine the social construction of race in terms of the history of the United States and its attempts to preserve racial lines and the White, Euro-American, male-dominated normative culture. Root (2000) also stated that both the oppressed as well as the oppressors play a role in embedding the racial system within the political system. She stated that many citizens still have limited knowledge and awareness of the multiracial individual's place in society and the existing racial hierarchy.

Regardless of the provocative challenges to the current definition of race instituted by the concept of being multiracial, the fact remains that individuals born of interracial relationships continue to claim all of their racial heritages more so than ever before, and higher education will experience a similar increase in individuals who identify as multiracial (Nishimura, 1998; Spickard & Fong, 1994). The 2000 United States Census marked the first time the United States government allowed individuals the option of selecting more than one race. Of the reported 281.4 million people in the United States, a total of 6.8 million (2.4%) self-identified with more than one race

(Jaschik, 2006; Jones & Smith, 2001; "*Students Bring,"* 2006; Riley, 2006). In the 2010 Census, the trend continued with a 32% growth in individuals claiming more than one race from 2000 to 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Of this population, 41% who identified as multiracial were younger than the age of 18, which means that higher education can expect an influx of these students arriving on college campuses with many multiracial students already making their presence known (Jaschik, 2006; "*Students Bring,"* 2006). Educators must prepare for this influx as they have a responsibility to foster an inclusive environment, which incorporates and acknowledges the role of race in higher education and beyond (Museus, Yee, & Lamb, 2011).

Spickard and Fong (1994) in their research explained that throughout United States history, the government and by extension society, presumed that individuals identified with one predominant race and ethnicity. As times shift, the assumption that all groups or individuals only identify with one ethnic identity is now nearly obsolete. Spickard and Fong (1994) indicated this shift in thinking stems from two changes. The first change is the increase in marriages across racial, religious, and national lines. The second change is the increase in individuals of mixed ancestry claiming all parts of their ancestry instead of aligning with only one. Formally identifying as multiracial is a recent occurrence and warrants additional research, particularly in how this trend affects higher education (Nishimura, 1998).

Although some researchers feel confident that interracial relationships will continue to increase due to an increased tolerance in our society and a push toward globalization (Riley, 2006), and that the college population will increasingly consist of more individuals who are multiracial, the experiences of these individuals are not yet

adequately reflected in student development or identity development literature (Renn, 2002). Below are some of the key terms used to define and explain multiracial identity development in college students.

Understanding the Terminology

In order to make sense of the literature specific to multiracial identity, one must understand the oftentimes complex and confusing language surrounding this population. While the younger generation contributing to trends in popular culture makes use of terms such as "Generation Mix," "Generation EA (Ethnically Ambiguous)," and "Generation M (Multiracial)" to define or describe the multiracial population (Spencer, 2009), most published and informed literature regarding the identity development of individuals from more than one racial background uses more specific, yet oftentimes varied language.

This proposal encompasses information from research on racial, monoracial, biracial, multiracial, ethnic, and multiethnic identity development. While some authors used the terms interchangeably and did not make any sort of distinctions, other authors were clear in their reasons for using certain terms and language to explain their investigations. The wide range of terminology and language surrounding the topic of multiracial individuals is oftentimes credited to the idea that there is no general agreement in society or within multiracial literature about terminology or categorizing racial identity (Renn, 2002). Root (2000) justified the importance of recognizing terminology in her Bill of Rights for racially mixed people. She claimed that new terms associated with being multiracial indicate a movement toward empowerment and a "proclamation of existence" (p. 125).

Monoracial

Helms (1990, 1995) explained that race is socially constructed, and individuals are placed in racial groups based on criteria defined by societal perceptions of race such as the color of a person's skin as opposed to biological definitions of race. Root (1996) defined monoracial as a person who claims roots in only one racial heritage. It can also mean racial classification that allows an individual to identify with only one race (Root, 1996). The term monoracial is used as a "modifier for nouns referencing, pertaining to, or ascribing to only one racial group" (Wann & Johnston, 2012, p. 9).

Biracial

Biracial refers to a person who is born of an interracial relationship (Morales & Steward, 1996). Root (1996) further defined biracial to mean an individual with parents from "two different socially designated racial groups" (p. ix). She also explained that biracial could refer to people with biracial parents or individuals with racial mixing in their ancestry that they feel is important.

Multiracial

In the past, society defined multiracial similarly to biracial, in that the term referred to an individual with only two racial heritages. The definition introduced by Nishimura (1998) defined multiracial as someone with two or more distinct racial heritages—at least one from each parent. This definition moves beyond biracial and the notion of "halves" (p. 45). Root (1996) included biracial in the definition of multiracial and stated that the term multiracial is the most inclusive term referring to people across all types of racial mixes. Individuals who claim more than one race oftentimes are denied the ability to choose their racial identity. As Root (2000) stated, the existence of

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multiracial people delineates the need to re-examine and revise the definition of ethnicity and ensure that race not be synonymous with it.

Ethnicity

Phinney and Alipuria (1996) defined ethnicity as a multidimensional construct that is based on an individual's feelings of "ethnic belonging and pride, a secure sense of group membership, and positive attitudes toward one's ethnic group" (p. 142). Phinney (1996) explained that ethnicity is oftentimes thought of as a culture and assumes that ethnicity encompasses cultural characteristics such as values, attitudes, and behaviors associated with a particular group. Although cultural values are important in constructing ethnicity, they do not completely explain the role of ethnicity in psychological outcomes. Phinney (1996) used the term ethnicity to encompass both racial groupings as well as culture of origin.

Multiethnic

Multiethnic individuals typically have ancestral ties to multiple ethnicities and may be a product of intermarriage between individuals of different races and cultural backgrounds (Spickard, 1997). Phinney and Alipuria (1996) explained that individuals who identify with multiple ethnicities may find difficulty in securing their sense of ethnic identification because of potential conflict between their multiple cultures. Because of this possible pull in different directions, the authors discovered that unlike monoethnic adolescents, multiethnic adolescents might not identify with either of their parent's ethnic groups.

Phinney and Alipuria (1996) emphasized the need for society to allow individuals from multiple races to identify with their races from both their mother as well as their

father, indicating a mixed background. However, they also indicated that there are many constraints, which prevent this from happening. For example, people who have a Black mother and a White father do not always have the choice of self-identifying their ethnicity. Society is oftentimes too quick to label them people of color, which may make them feel like they are denying their White identity. Furthermore, "as long as it remains impossible for a black woman to be seen as giving birth to a white child…nothing has changed" in regard to the deconstruction of the racial hierarchy which currently exists in the United States (Spencer, 2009, p. B 5).

Race and Ethnicity

Phinney and Ong (2007) explained that ethnicity and racial identities differ widely in their definitions, research, and models of development. Helms (2007) clarified that racial identity is mainly dependent on an individual's responses to racism and measures of racial identity typically assess experiences related to racism. The psychological importance of race stems from the way society responds to an individual based on primarily visible racial characteristics such as skin color and the implications these responses have on one's sense of identity and place within society (Phinney, 1996). While society views racial identity on the idea that race is socially constructed and externally defined, Helms recognized that in contrast, ethnic identity is much more individualistic. Society tends to define ethnicity by an individual's sense of belonging to a specific ethnic group defined by their cultural heritage, values, tradition, and language (Helms, 2007; Phinney & Alipuria, 1996).

Identity

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Snow and Anderson (1987) used the term social identities to refer to labels used by others to assign a place or situate individuals within society. These labels are not typically self-designated, and people tended to base them on information gathered through appearance and behavior. Snow and Anderson (1987) defined personal identity as the "meanings attributed to the self by the actor" (p. 1,347). Personal identities may not be consistent with social identities; therefore, it is important to recognize the distinction. Snow and Anderson (1987) defined self-concept as a "working compromise between idealized images and imputed social identities" (p. 1,348). People define their personal identity by the consistency or inconsistency between their self-concept and their social identities. Snow and Anderson (1987) defined identity work as a variety of activities and reflection in which one engages in to "create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept" (p. 1,348).

Racial and Multiracial Identity Development Models

In the original research on racial identity development, psychological theories focused on individuals within the normative, White, male-dominated culture. However, identity development needed to also apply to people of color as well as people of multiple races (Poston, 1990). Eventually, researchers such as Cross (1971) and Helms (1990, 1995) developed models of racial identity development for people of color.

Cross (1971) and Helms (1990; 1995) racial identity models. Helms (1990; 1995) explained that people come to understand race, in the context of racial identity theory, from the belief that race is a 'sociopolictical' and 'cultural construction' and individuals are grouped into racial categories based on "socially defined inclusion criteria" such as the color of their skin. Helms focused her model of Black racial identity

development based on the work of Cross (1971). Parham and Helms (1985) examined

racial identity attitudes derived from Cross' (1971) model of psychological nigrescence

and determined through their study that the process of racial identity is more complex

than previous authors such as Cross suggested, and more difficult to apply toward

diagnostic purposes than previously anticipated.

Helms (1990, 1995) introduced the concept of statuses in which an African

American moves from the least developmentally mature status associated with denial and

conformity to a healthier racial sense of being which reflects integrative awareness.

Helms (1995) indicated that based on attitudes, behaviors, and emotions, individuals

might fall into more than one status of racial identity development.

Understanding race and racial identity development helps researchers set a

foundation for investigating the effects of different environments such as higher

education on students from various racial backgrounds. Although Cross (1971) and

Helms (1990, 1995) helped expand the research on identity development to acknowledge

the differences in development of people of color through their models, new research on

the development of people of multiple races indicated that previous models structured for

individuals identifying within the normative, majority culture or models specific to

people of color did not always apply (Poston, 1990; Spickard & Fong, 1994).

Poston's (1990) biracial identity development model. Poston (1990) in his

research examined previous models of racial identity development including Cross

(1971), Morten and Atkinson's (1983) Minority Identity Development Model, and

Stonequist's (1937) Model of Marginality, and discussed their lack of application for

biracial individuals. He also found that the models implied people first reject their

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minority identity and culture and then they reject the dominant culture; however, biracial individuals may come from both groups. Many people who are biracial do not experience acceptance by the minority or dominant cultures and fall into a grey area within these models.

Recognizing the need to develop a more inclusive model, Poston (1990) drew on the minimal amount of research available at the time, which focused on biracial individuals as well as information gathered from support groups serving this population. Poston then presented a new model of identity development applicable for people who identify as biracial. This new model included stages such as personal identity, choice of group categorization, enmeshment/denial, appreciation, and integration. Poston (1990) identified several challenges for multiracial individuals including the idea that biracial people may have identity problems when they internalize prejudice. He also found numerous factors influencing an individual's identity choice such as feelings of alienation, guilt, and disloyalty. He saw integration as being associated with positive mental health and a stage that biracial individuals should strive to achieve.

Root's (1996) Nonlinear Biracial Identity Development. Root (1996) introduced a nonlinear model for biracial identity development by introducing a theory that relied on people's ability to self-define their race in, across, and in-between categories. Root drew from border studies theory which referred to the movement of individuals across borders such as race or gender (Anzaldua, 1987; Michaelson & Johnson, 1997), and drew from a "wide range of anthropological, sociological, feminist, Marxist, European postmodernist and poststructuralist, postcolonial, ethnohistorical, and race/ethnicity theory" (Michaelson & Johnson, 1997, p. 2).

Root described the increase in multiracial families as having implications for previously constructed notions of race. She explained that multiracial individuals make sense of their racial identity through four types of "border crossings" of race going back and forth from their foreground to their background: 1) She indicated that to bridge the border, a person should not straddle both sides with one foot in each border, but must have both feet in both or all groups; 2) Another way to bridge the border is when a person knows how to shift between an individual's racial foreground and background based on different settings; 3) Root described a third interpretation of border crossings as sitting on the border and identifying it as a central point of reference; and 4) The last border crossing is when someone creates a home camp, a place where an individual feels supported, and will sometimes venture out of their camp to visit others (Root, 1996).

Both Poston and Root were among the first researchers to publish models of healthy development for biracial identity and both based their models on earlier models of racial identity development that they did not believe accommodated the needs of multiracial individuals (Renn, 2008). The current literature base of multiracial identity development is missing more thorough models of development for individuals of mixed heritage due to potential problems of cultural and racial identification and feelings of marginalization within two cultures (Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, & Harris, 1993; Poston, 1990). Poston's and Root's models provided alternatives to previous models and theories on racial identity development based on monoracial individuals.

Renn (2003, 2008) Multiracial Identity Development. Research today encompasses the multiracial experience of students and includes psychological, sociological, and ecological models for understanding how these students self-identify

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with their mixed race backgrounds (Renn, 2008). In her research, Renn encouraged the move away from linear, racial identity models such as Poston's and instead pushed for an ecological model to better explain the identity development of multiracial individuals (Poston, 1990; Renn, 2003, 2008).

Renn (2003) used an ecology model of human development to explore racial identities of mixed-race college students. Based on the work of ecological theorist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), she examined the influence of racial development within different environments of mixed race students. More specifically, she studied the impact of individual identity characteristics such as race, gender, and sexual identity as well as family, peer culture, and social movements on individual multiracial identity development. She found that peer cultures supported the greatest diversity of multiracial student identities.

Drawing from Bronfenbrenner's model, she considered the influences of individuals (person), their interactions with and responses from their environment (process), their connection to their immediate surroundings (context), and the changing sociocultural effects on their overall development (time). By including the elements of person, process, context, and time (PPCT), she was able to create an environment specific to an individual as well as consider shared settings such as higher education where students' individual environments overlap and may be influenced by the structure of the institution and its policies and programs.

While racial identity models focus on the outcomes of racial identity development, Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective allowed the researcher to focus on the processes that lead to the outcomes of racial identity development by incorporating

both processes and outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Renn, 2003). As Renn stated, using Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory as a framework for studying racial identity development challenges the researcher to examine students' environments and look beyond their immediate surroundings to take a more holistic approach when examining racial identity.

Impact of Racial Appearance in Multiracial Identity Development

Bronfenbrenner's model promotes the need to meet individuals where they are and recognize how they understand themselves. In addition, the expectations individuals hold for themselves, and their perceived social standing as defined by external expectations from others play a key role in social interaction (Troyer & Younts, 1997). The theory of reflected appraisals plays an influential role in explaining the impact of appearance on multiracial identity development (Sims, 2016). This theory stems from Cooley's (1902) looking-glass self which states that humans develop a sense of self through the perception of others. Similarly, the theory of reflected appraisals states that people's identity is formed based on how they internalize the perceptions of others (Noels, Leavitt, & Clement, 2010; Sims, 2016). When applied to multiracial identity development, this theory suggests there may be a significant impact when societal perceptions differ from self-identification (Noels et al., 2010; Sims, 2016).

Noels et al. (2010) helped link the theory of reflected appraisals to racial identity development. Their study examined Chinese Canadian immigrants' connection to their ethnic identity based on their perceptions of how others saw them, and how this may have attributed to any feelings of discrimination. Their results supported the theory that reflected appraisals play an important role in the ways in which individuals construct

their racial and ethnic identity. Sims (2016) further expanded the link of reflected

appraisals on racial identity development by linking it more directly with the multiracial

experience. She specifically looked at ambiguous appearance in multiracial individuals

who then received varying perceptions of their racial identity. This caused multiracial

individuals to question their own understanding of their identities. Sims (2016) argued

that in certain situations, "identity can form from experiences being consistently

inconsistently perceived when that consistent inconsistency itself functions as a reflected

appraisal of a particular identity" (p. 569).

Similarly, Troyer and Younts (1997) discovered through their research that

second-order expectations, or perceived external or societal expectations, are the key

determinants of social action. The theory they developed through their quantitative

research helps frame the concept of first order (self-expectations to guide social

interaction) and second order expectations (perceptions of others' expectations which

guide social interaction) and solidifies the importance of second order expectations'

influence over the ways in which individuals relate to themselves and others (Troyer &

Younts, 1997). Although their research provides a framework to discuss differences

between self and perceptions of societal expectations, their research is not specifically

inclusive of race or multiracial populations. They also did not discuss the environmental

impact of settings such as higher education on an individual's decision to adjust

behaviors to correspond to external expectations.

Although Troyer and Younts (1997) supported the theory that external factors

play a pivotal role in social interactions, they failed to include the effects of this external

influence, particularly regarding race or skin tone. Hill (2002) conducted a more focused

bivariate and multivariate analysis of both Black and White respondents suggesting that regardless of race, interviewers demonstrated a limited ability to distinguish physical characteristics particularly among participants of a different race. Hill stated that individuals and organizations award opportunities to people of color based on the proximity of skin color to the dominant White population, so he specifically wanted to investigate further the issue of cross-racial and cross-cultural social awareness. Through his research, he discovered the common tendency for interviewers to identify incorrectly participants when comparing participants' self-defined skin tone and racial identification with interviewer's perceptions of participants' skin tone and racial classification. Hill found that within one's own self-defined racial group, they are likely to encompass more comprehensive knowledge than other social groups, but inner-group differences are not as easily distinguishable for individuals in other racial groups.

Hill's study provided strong support that biased observations of physical characteristics such as skin tone reflect the inability for individual objectivity especially when interacting with people outside of one's own race. Based on these results, Hill concluded that individuals display limited abilities to observe physical characteristics of others because they filter social perceptions through an inherently biased lens ultimately contributing to the perpetuation of racial conflict and stereotypes. Although Hill's research expands Troyer and Younts' (1997) concept of the influence of second-order expectations by relating this more specifically to the appearance of race based on skin tone, he did not provide a strong connection to the effects of racial misclassification. In addition, his research is limited to only Black and White participants, and he did not include environmental influences or relate his findings to identity development.

Recognizing the gap in previous studies, Campbell and Troyer (2007) investigated the implications of external or social misclassification of race based on social and psychological factors such as mental health, depression, and suicide specifically in relation to American Indian adults. Pulling from Tatum's (1997) research suggesting internal conflict of individuals with racially ambiguous appearances, Campbell and Troyer (2007) decided to focus their research on the American Indian population because of the high rates of societal misclassification of this population. They then linked their findings with a cross comparison of American Indians correctly racially classified by observers with misclassified American Indians and through quantitative regression methods discovered an increased likelihood for misclassified American Indians to report psychological and social distress.

Campbell and Troyer (2007) further distinguished the erroneous belief that racial self-identification aligns with societal identification. Individuals misclassified by observers in their research study did not have the same experiences as other members of their self-identified racial group. Their results indicated a need for additional research on the impacts of the intersection between self and societal perceptions of identity particularly among an increasingly diverse and multiracial United States (Campbell & Troyer, 2007).

Although Campbell and Troyer's research found significant negative psychological and social effects of racial misclassification, they did not include participants of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds. In addition, their research was not specific to a higher educational environment nor did they link their findings to the construction of racial identity. Cheng and Powell (2011) further critiqued Campbell and

Troyer's (2007) study and explained that although Campbell and Troyer provided a strong explanation that misclassification rates are high and result in psychological and emotional distress, Cheng and Powell questioned the empirical basis upon which Campbell and Troyer built their argument. Cheng and Powell specifically pointed out the limitations of the data set used by Campbell and Troyer, questioned the reliability of self-reports and constraints of the questionnaire, and called into question inconsistencies in the racial self-identification of participants.

In response, Campbell and Troyer (2011) acknowledged the critique by Cheng and Powell (2011) and quickly offered additional analysis further supporting their initial proposition that when society misclassified an individual's self-identity, then this conflict generated psychological and emotional distress. They also pointed out an important issue facing the majority of quantitative researchers who use racial and ethnic survey data: "because racial identification is a reflection of a socially constructed and ongoing life course process, any survey measure is necessarily an imperfect snapshot rather than a flawless measure of a stable individual trait" (p. 356). The back and forth between researchers further highlighted the possible limitations of using solely quantitative data to examine complex issues such as race, ethnicity, and multiracial identity. Qualitative research may help further explain the multiracial experience especially when it comes to issues surrounding racial appearance and misclassification.

Song and Aspinall (2012) designed a qualitative study focused on better understanding the self-identity of multiracial individuals, whether they believed others validated their identity, and how they chose to respond to societal racial perceptions. The researchers specifically looked at the experience of multiracial individuals in Britain, and

their results showed many of their participants experienced racial mismatch between their self-identify versus societal identity; however, the way their participants reacted varied significantly. Although previous studies, such as Campbell and Troyer (2011) discovered racial mismatch was problematic for their participants, Song and Aspinall's research found more diversity in their participants' reactions. They provided an important qualitative perspective and helped extend studies done within the United States; however, their study was limited to individuals living in Britain. Although they made several points comparing and relating the two countries, ultimately, a study completed in Britain provides a different historical context, particularly when relating to the ways in which society understands and perceives race. Although Campbell and Troyer's (2011) research focused on the harmful effects of external misclassification among American Indians, and Song and Aspinall (2012) found a more diverse range of responses, additional research more specific to a multiracial population further examined this possible connection between misclassification and racial identity development. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) linked physical appearance with racial identity development stating that one's external phenotype influences societal interpretations of race. Individuals perceive their own skin color and racial identity, but they also interpret their racial appearance through the perspectives of others. The authors conducted a quantitative research study using participants from both a private liberal arts college and a large community college. They limited their participants to individuals self-identifying as having one Black and one White biological parent. Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2002) findings indicated the need to understand better biracial identity by researching individuals who believed societal perceptions matched their self-perceptions as well as

the intersection of individuals who believed societal perceptions did not match their self-identity as evidenced through the misclassification of their race.

Their research supports Troyer and Younts' (1997) findings of the influence of second-order expectations; however, Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2002) research links this concept specifically to biracial identity development. Their findings suggest that social structures influence self-defined racial identity. An individual's social networks may include an array of individuals such as relatives, classmates, and peers as well as an array of environments such as higher education all of which may influence the way biracial people may shape their identity. The inherent problem with societal influences occurs when there is a mismatch between racial appearance and identity (Herman, 2010; Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Rockquemore, 1999; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Root, 1990).

Social interactions are based on and influenced by perceptions making it important for researchers to further explore and understand perceptions particularly surrounding race. Although the multiracial population continues to grow, only a limited amount of research has examined how society perceives and categorizes multiracial individuals (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Chen & Hamilton, 2012; Herman, 2010). In her study, Herman (2010) examined how society perceived multiracial individuals by having observers examine photos and identify the races of the individuals in the photos. Given the challenge multiracial individuals face when identifying their racial background, Herman chose to focus on congruence as opposed to accuracy when reviewing observer responses. She explained congruence to mean agreement between the observer and the self-defined race of the individual depicted in the photograph. She found that the

observers identified almost half of the multiracial individuals as monoracial. She also

found that regardless of observers' personal demographics and exposure to people of

other races, they were more congruent when identifying people represented in the photos

who self-identified as Black or White and less congruent when identifying individuals

who self-identified with other races and ethnicities. She then determined that the

observers' perceptions of race and multiracial identity in her study further supported the

concept that society still viewed race in monoracial, primarily Black and White terms.

Society's refusal to accept multiple racial identities results in further constraints to

the United States racial system. The demographics within the United States continue to

evolve and more individuals continue to claim more than one race or ethnicity, which

will ultimately challenge the current racial and ethnic classification system within the

United States (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Although Rockquemore and Brunsma's

study focused on participants within higher education, it did not include multiracial

participants other than those identifying as African American and white.

Whereas previous research (Hill, 2002; Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Rockquemore

& Brunsma, 2002; Troyer & Younts, 1997) emphasized the impact of societal

misclassification on identity, in more recent research, Bining, Unzueta, Huo, and Molina

(2009) focused on the potential positive effects of self-identification of multiracial

participants. For instance, as opposed to the idea that multiracial individuals feel trapped

within monoracial environments, the authors highlighted the potential benefit and ease

for multiracial individuals to navigate multiple monoracial and multiracial environments.

Bining et al. (2009) used ANOVA to analyze multiracial identity among high school

students related to psychological well-being and levels of social engagement. Their

research indicated positive psychological outcomes such as increased self-esteem and social engagement when multiracial individuals have the opportunity to claim more than one race.

Although Bining et al. (2009) included a more comprehensive multiracial participant sample population; their research was limited to only high school students, which meant their results were not necessarily transferable to participants in other environments such as higher education. Their research also did not focus on the impact or effects of racial appearance, did not take into consideration the potential effects of societal perceptions, and did not specifically link to the construction of multiracial identity development.

Previous research (Hill, 2007; Troyer & Younts, 1997) showed not only that societal implications played a role in the ways individuals socially interacted, but also that incorrect societal assumptions regarding race caused potentially negative social and psychological consequences (Campbell & Troyer, 2007). The increasing self-identifying multiracial population in the United States will lead to an increase in societal racial misclassification (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Tatum, 1997) warranting additional research to explain better this potential intersection on racial identity development. Ahnallen, Suyemoto, and Carter (2006) conducted a study designed to explore the impacts of appearance and other social variables (such as sense of belonging within monoracial groups) on racial identity. Through quantitative survey analysis and open-ended short-answer questions, the authors included participants who self-identified as multiracial Japanese European Americans. Their results challenged the theory that second-order expectations (Troyer & Younts, 1997), or the perception of how society

classifies or misclassifies multiracial individuals primarily influences the construction of multiracial identity. Instead, their results found that first-order expectations (Troyer & Younts, 1997) or one's self expectations of racial identification played an independent role in multiracial identity development.

Ahnallen et al. (2006) connected the impact of self-perceptions of racial identity with multiracial identity development; however, they failed to connect social meanings of belonging with out-group or observer perceptions. They did not examine the intersection between self-identification and societal misclassification with identity development. They also limited their participants to adults (aged 18-52) identifying solely as multiracial Japanese European Americans, which made it difficult to relate their research to a broader multiracial population or a more specific environment such as higher education.

Implications of Identifying as Multiracial in Higher Education and Society

Previous research indicated a strong link between societal perceptions of racial identity as well as self-identification influencing racial identity development. However, this research did not specifically address environmental factors such as higher education, and such understanding would be helpful for administrators and educators within higher education to better understand and accommodate the growing population of multiracial students. With an awareness of the historical context contributing to the current demographic trend within the United States of individuals identifying as more than one race or ethnicity, higher education researchers need to recognize the unique issues associated with identifying as multiracial and how these issues either bridge or divide the legitimacy of considering multiracial separately from monoracial research (Root, 1992; Renn, 2003). Expanding the multiracial research specifically to examine the intersection

between self and societal perceptions of multiracial identity, based on the external racial appearances of multiracial students within a higher educational setting, fills a significant gap in current literature. The potential results of this research can inform administrators and educators within higher education of the potential benefits and disadvantages of recognizing and accommodating their multiracial student population.

Researchers have discovered potentially negative psychological and social effects when multiracial individuals feel pressure to monoracially identify or when they feel society does not allow them to claim more than one race (Binning et al., 2009; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). In response to these types of findings as well as the call by multiracial individuals to be allowed to claim all of their racial backgrounds, the United States Education Department changed the way it collects and reports information about race and ethnicity by allowing students to select multiple racial categories (Jaschik, 2006; Kellogg & Niskode, 2008; U.S. Department of Education [DOE], 2007; U.S. Office of Management and Budget [OMB], 1997).

Until recently, higher education did not have an adequate system of accurately capturing the number of multiracial students and no proper system in place to handle the new option of allowing students to select more than one racial category for self as well as societal identification purposes (Renn, 2002). However, with the ongoing struggle over college access, equity, and affirmative action policy, racial statistics are important in accurately reflecting the true racial and ethnic make-up in higher education (Jaschik, 2006; Renn, 2002; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). With the potential for inherent and considerable changes affecting higher education in regard to the increasing trend of individuals identifying as multiracial in the United States (Root, 1992), educators and

administrators need to understand the importance of expanding the awareness of the unique needs associated with multiracial students. This may mean reframing the way society and higher education view race and encouraging movement away from a monoracial structure toward a more inclusive environment, which allows a better representation of the multiracial experience (Johnston & Nadal, 2010).

Previous research on racism largely operated under an assumption of a monoracial world. If included in this research, investigators typically classified multiracial individuals as only one race. Therefore, it is important to understand that this research may not be reflective of multiracial experiences. Multiracial people may experience racial microaggressions based on their appearance as people of color, and they may face microaggressions from monoracial individuals because of their multiracial identity (Johnston & Nadal, 2010, Museus, Lambe Sarinana, Kawamata Ryan, 2015; Museus, Lambe Sarinana, Lee, & Robinson, 2016). Additional research confirmed that multiracial individuals experienced microaggressions both similarly and differently from monoracial people of color (Kellogg & Liddell, 2012; Nadal et al., 2011). Given these differences and considering the growing population of multiracial individuals within the United States, it is important to expand multiracial awareness, particularly race-related and multicultural discourse, and give individuals the opportunity to correctly identify all parts of their identity (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; King, 2008; Renn, 1998; 1999; 2002; 2008; Root, 2000).

The literature that linked the impact of racial appearance on one's self-identity and perceived societal expectations also explained the disadvantages and advantages to re-framing the racial classification structure within the United States, and more

specifically higher education. Root (2000) argued that the existence of individuals of multiple races challenges the historical context surrounding the creation of racial lines. She further stated that the multiracial person challenges these "delusional biases" which are used as an excuse to endorse racism and maintain the illogical belief that race is rooted in biological and scientific fact (p. 122).

Awareness of the growing population of individuals identifying as multiracial is increasing; however, issues surrounding how they are included in research and data entry, how they are perceived by society, how they self-identify, what factors influence their identity, and how their identities evolve over time has not yet been fully examined and understood in research (Herman, 2011). Individuals who are skeptical about expanding the racial classification system in the United States to allow individuals to claim more than one race believe the opposite of Root's claim. Phenotype plays a significant role in the development of racial identity because one's racial appearance oftentimes represents a 'collection of cultural meanings' causing society to develop perceptions and make interpretations (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002, p. 340). A multiracial person's existence does not support the concept of race being socially constructed but may in fact lend support to the argument that race is biologically constructed since it is the biological union of parents from different races that produces multiracial offspring (Spencer, 2009).

In her research, Renn found that racial appearance was an important element in maintaining boundaries between multiracial students and monoracial students. Many students in her research did not physically appear like someone from a monoracial group, and many peers questioned their legitimacy to identify within that monoracial group. Oftentimes, she found that students felt rejected by monoracial student groups as well as

communities of color (Renn, 1998: 1999: 2002). Additional research from King (2008)

showed a link in how racial appearance accentuated the differences of students of mixed

race backgrounds from their monoracial peers making it more difficult for them to fit into

racial and ethnic spaces within the college environment. King (2008) described

challenges of students' experiences as feeling invisible, being constantly questioned

about their racial identity, and feeling as if they needed to justify or prove their identity.

In many instances, multiracial individuals found difficulty in internally defining

their racial identity and this oftentimes led to a sense of identity confusion. Along with

this confusion, some individuals experienced negative psychological outcomes such as

poor academic performance and lower self-esteem (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Therefore,

one possible benefit to creating a more inclusive racial classification system within higher

education is that it allows multiracial individuals the ability or right to choose for

themselves how they racially identify (Jaschik, 2006). This occurs by providing

multiracial individuals the opportunity to mark multiple boxes on reports asking about

race such as the United States Census, college admissions applications, or employer

records. In addition, since there is no uniform way in which multiracial individuals

identify, it makes it especially challenging for researchers to quantify the data. In many

instances, demographic questionnaires narrow down multiple race response categories to

a single race category to simplify the process of analyzing the data. Taking the time to

organize the data into coherent and meaningful categories requires researchers and

educators to take into consideration the "complicated personal, political, and social

components that affect the identities of multiracial people" (Herman, 2011, p. 615). By

doing so, the data can be more effectively used to understand the growing population of

multiracial individuals in the United States and specifically, higher education. This in turn may encourage more students to report their racial classification on admissions or financial aid forms thereby more accurately reflecting the reality of race and ethnicity within the institution (Jaschik, 2006). With the emphasis on societal impacts on racial identity development and classification (Binning et al., 2009; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Troyer & Younts, 1997), students may feel more pressure to identify themselves on these forms based on how they feel they are perceived by society and not necessarily how they self-identify.

Although research suggests that oftentimes multiracial individuals feel excluded from their peers, one source of support in the campus environment is when multiracial students find safe spaces as well as other individuals who identify as multiracial where they can have conversations and explore their identity as a person from multiple races and ethnic backgrounds (Ahnallen et al., 2006; King, 2008; Renn, 1998; 1999; 2002). Oftentimes, college is the first environment where students are away from the support of family and communities when they start to seek answers to personal questions regarding race and being multiracial (Shang, 2008). Some students may feel the need to renegotiate their identities in college as they encounter questions related to their race and ethnicity (Chaudhari & Pizzolato, 2008). Adopting models that reflect the development of multiracial students can have a positive impact on how students make meaning of their mixed cultures and how they find support within largely monoracial and monoethnic structures within the higher education setting (Chaudhari & Pizzolato, 2008).

By recognizing multiracial identity separately from monoracial identity, institutions may foster a more collaborative environment among various student groups,

particularly those centered on race and culture. As Root (2000) stated, "connection, wholeness, and a sense of belonging decrease the likelihood that one can commit atrocities against another human being (p. 124)." In Renn's (2002) study, many multiracial students at a particular institution felt belonging to a cultural organization specifically designed for multiracial students allowed them the opportunity to identify however they chose and assert and accept all their multiple heritages. Although many of the students in her study identified as different combinations of heritages, she found that most of them shared similar experiences of finding acceptance of their multiracial identity while navigating campus life.

Wong and Buckner (2008) also found that sponsoring and supporting specific programs and student services for the multiracial community was a means of promoting 'ethnic pluralism (p. 48).' In their research, they found that oftentimes on campuses, multiracial organizations collaborated with other programs that targeted all students of color to increase cultural awareness and foster community building. A respondent in their study asserted that at her institution, the university community valued biracialism and multi-ethnic identity as essential aspects of this cultural group's distinct diversity the same as other more common cultural classifications such as national origin, religion, gender, class, sexual identity, and so forth.

Arguments Opposed to Recognizing Multiple Racial Identities

While many researchers made strong arguments in favor of recognizing multiracial as a unique racial identity, other research and literature made significant claims opposing this proposition. Many arguments highlighted specific reasons indicating more individuals will suffer if multiracial identity is recognized separately

from monoracial categories within political, social, and educational contexts (Richardson, 2007; Riley, 2006). By better understanding not only what impacts multiracial identity development, but why multiracial individuals develop different understandings of their racial identity (Renn, 2008; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002), educators and researchers within higher education can better understand the advantages and disadvantages of moving away from a solely monoracial classification system toward one which allows individuals to claim all of their racial backgrounds. One way to investigate this further is to dig deeper into the impact of racial appearance on the construction of multiracial identity. By understanding the impact of self as well as perceived social identity, educators and administrators within higher education can better understand the overall impact of the potential harm or benefit to separating multiracial identity within political, social, and educational contexts. They can also better understand the complexity of the multiracial experience, particularly in relation to issues for or against racial progress (Johnston-Guerrero & Chaudhari, 2016).

Educators and researchers such as Spencer (2009) linked the separation of multiracial identity from monoracial identity with the reinforcement of racial hierarchies created through cultural standards such as hypodescent and the one-drop rule (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Spencer, 2009). In relation to education, critics specifically highlighted the possibility that institutions would exaggerate differences while de-emphasizing commonalities, trust, and positive human interactions (Richardson, 2007). By accentuating separation and fostering the notion of 'incompatible cultures' (p. B18), educators and administrators risked promoting stereotypes and developing exclusive environments of distrust (Richardson, 2007).

Another disadvantage of separating multiracial as a distinct identity includes not only the reinforcement of racial hierarchies, but a challenge to the current racial order (Brunsma, 2005). In an article written for *Black Issues in Higher Education,* Manning Marable, Professor of History and Director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University referred to an interview from the *New York Times* where Robert H. Hill, director of the Institute for Urban Research at Morgan State University and chairman of the Census Bureau's Advisory Committee on the African-American Population stated that individuals in support of recognizing multiracial as a separate ethnic group are de-emphasizing the racial component. Specifically, in the case of multiracial individuals of Black and White descent, people who say they are multiracial are in essence saying they are less Black (Marable, 1997). In Spencer's (2009) article, the author discussed the ramifications of this countermovement explaining that some individuals of Asian and Latino descent are taking advantage of the opportunity to identify as multiracial as a way of claiming "honorary whiteness" (p. B4). In Brunsma's (2005) study, the racial hierarchy in the United States coupled with the resulting unequal resources, access, and opportunities influenced parents of multiracial children to begin moving their children away from their minority heritage to what they considered a more impartial classification such as multiracial.

Some scholars believe that recognizing multiracial identity reinforces ingrained, institutionalized racial hierarchies claiming that people of color are separate and inferior to Whiteness (Johnston-Guerrero & Chaudhari, 2016; Spencer, 2009). Opponents also believe that accepting multiracial identity will give credence to individuals who assert that the increasing trend of claiming a multiracial identity indicates the possible

destruction of the American racial model by causing the extinction of ethnic unity (Root, 2000). Some researchers and educators use the debate surrounding multiracial identity as an argument indicating a post-racial America (Spencer, 2009). With the increasing demographic trend of individuals claiming multiple races, over time, the expectation is that society will become more accepting of interracial relationships and their multiracial offspring (Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

Some researchers and educators are concerned that inevitably in the near future, no one will bother asking individuals to racially identify because with the increasing demographic, multiracial individuals will become the norm (Riley, 2006). But Spencer (2009) and Root (2000) both agreed that those who believe "multiracial identity will destroy race are living a lie" (Spencer, 2009, p. B5). Although interracial marriage is increasing (Riley, 2006; Root, 2001), individuals born from these relationships are more focused on understanding and racially defining themselves thereby finding it difficult to bridge a variety of racial and ethnic communities (Riley, 2006). Multiracial identity cannot deconstruct race since it depends on the system of racial classification to even announce its existence (Spencer, 2009).

Critics fear the argument that multiracial identity will lead to a post-racial existence provides individuals with an excuse to uphold institutionalized racism and racial hierarchies. Others fear that allowing individuals to claim more than one race will cause a decrease in overall minority numbers which has potentially far-reaching political and institutional implications (Johnston-Guerrero & Chaudhari, 2016; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002).

In a 1996 survey of 18,000 U.S. households, the Census Bureau asked respondents to racially identify and included multiracial as a categorical option. The study found an overall significant decrease in the number of individuals who identified as Asian, African American, and Latino and attributed this decline to the option of allowing individuals to identify as multiracial (Marable, 1997). Regarding higher education, the majority of institutions currently do not accurately capture the number of students who identify as multiracial (Herman, 2011). This trend may actually add to data inaccuracies by grouping these students into incorrect or unknown categories ("Don't Assume," 2006; Herman, 2011; Renn, 2002). Inconsistencies in data collection lead to the inability to capture accurately the racial and ethnic make-up of an institution, which has larger implications about retention of underrepresented minority students ("Don't Assume," 2006). The Associate Director of National Initiatives at the American Council on Education predicted that the ability to claim multiracial on student demographic forms would cause a drop in Black, American Indian, and Asian enrollment. This data is especially important because many institutions and even some government-sponsored educational access programs are restricted to colleges based on demographic information (Jaschik, 2006). In order to preserve minority numbers and maintain political influence, some scholars and researchers argue against the consideration of a separate multiracial identity (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002).

Claiming a multiracial identity may not adequately allow for the individualization of identifying race since extreme intergroup differences exist among the multiracial population. Although Renn (2002) recognized intergroup differences in regard to the multiracial student population highlighted in her study, she made the claim that the

students still connected with each other through their shared experience of being multiracial. However, this mentality fails to recognize significant problems with grouping together people who have important differences in histories and potentially educational and social opportunities as well (Marable, 1997). For instance, it is inappropriate to classify Japanese Americans whose median familial income tends to be higher than Caucasians in the same category as native Hawaiians, Filipinos, or Cambodians whose average familial income tends to be significantly lower (Marable, 1997). However, if society starts allowing additional racial classifications such as multiracial, then some may argue for a further breakdown of more specific categories. This specificity operates under the guise of allowing more individuals the ability to racially identify according to their own standards, however, this occurrence may actually foster a less tolerant environment allowing individuals to remain surrounded by others who look and identify exactly like them (Riley, 2006). In addition, a fixation on racial and ethnic classifications leads to unhealthy discriminatory behaviors (Richardson, 2007).

The fascination with allowing individuals to check an increasing number of boxes for the purposes of racial and ethnic classification warrants the fear among researchers and critics that there could potentially be no end to the number of possible proposed racial categories. Critics further emphasize that recognizing multiracial identity may be a pointless debate due to the thought by some that this is no more than a fad (Spencer, 2009). Buying into this trend may be particularly influential in causing individuals to lose sight of the idea that even with the growing trend in individuals claiming more than

one race, there is no guarantee that this particular group will gain political influence or racial equality (Spencer, 2009).

Multiracial Experiences With Racism

Although there are those opposed to separating multiracial from monoracial, recent research proved that the multiracial experience is different from the monoracial experience (Johnston-Guerrero & Chaudhari, 2016). This research opposes post-racial perceptions and supports the concept that multiracial individuals should be more visible in research regarding the racial dynamics within higher education. Wann and Johnston (2012) created an Integrative Model of Multiraciality for campus climate to: 1) more accurately account for broader systems of oppression; 2) provide a framework to better connect monoracial and multiracial systems of oppression; and, 3) help higher education within the United States progress toward creating a more socially just society. Their model built on previous research focused on multiracial microaggressions (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Nadal et al., 2011). Racial microaggressions are subtle, often inadvertent forms of discrimination that may cause negative, harmful effects (Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, & Sriken, 2014). Although research is beginning to expand on the multiracial experience in academic environments, minimal research exists on multiracial experiences with racism and discrimination. Reasons for this may include: 1) multiracial individuals are assumed to experience racism similarly to monoracial individuals; 2) current research examines racism based on a "monoracially-designed society" (p. 124); and, 3) racism has become less blatant and more subtle making it more challenging to identify and recognize when it occurs (Johnston & Nadal, 2010).

Several recent studies looked more closely at multiracial individuals' experiences with racism and discrimination, particularly within higher education (Museus, Lambe Sarinana, Kawamata Ryan, 2015; Museus, Lambe Sarinana, Lee, & Robinson, 2016). Museus et al. (2016) discovered multiple types of prejudice and discrimination experienced by multiracial participants. Examples included racial essentialization, which refers to situations when society attempts to identify a multiracial individual with a monoracial category. They also discovered their participants experienced a sense of invalidation of their internal identity by others, challenges to their ability to claim authenticity within a particular racial group, exoticization primarily based on their appearance, as well as other forms of racism and discrimination.

To better understand how multiracial individuals manage racism and microaggressions in higher education, Museus et al. (2015) discovered their participants tried to better educate others about multicultural initiatives. They also created, expanded, and utilized on-campus support networks; worked to "embrace fluidity" (p. 338) by rejecting incorrect societal assumptions of their race and validating their right to self-identify; and physically avoided environments and people where they felt excluded. This research helped explain not only how multiracial individuals in higher education may experience racism and discrimination, but also how they respond to it. However, the study does not take into full account other aspects, such as gender, family, and other pre-college characteristics (Museus et al., 2015), which may influence multiracial individuals' experiences.

The Role of Higher Education in Supporting the Multiracial Student Experience

In earlier research, Renn (1998, 1999) identified the importance of space and the impact of peer culture on the multiracial identity development and the college environment of multiracial college students. She defined space to mean public spaces of social groups, physical space where students felt comfortable, and private space where students could reflect and discuss their identity. She defined peer culture to include external influences that shape group membership and socially desirable behaviors (Renn, 1998, 1999). Multiracial students in her research also indicated the importance of having private spaces where they could reflect on their identity through journal writing or conversations. Overall, her research suggested that multiracial students looked for a space to belong on campus that accommodated them specifically (Renn, 1998, 1999, 2002).

Informed by literature from researchers such as Renn about the importance of providing multiracial students with personal space and support, and further encouraged by current multiracial students demand for support structures, campuses will likely see an increase in programs and services designed specifically for multiracial students ("Students Bring," 2006). Across the nation, student groups are increasingly fostering safe spaces for multiracial students to connect with others of similar experiences ("Students Bring," 2006). However, Renn (2002) found in her study that many multiracial students still cannot find others with whom to affiliate and must individually negotiate their identity on oftentimes highly racialized campuses. She recommended that higher education administrators re-evaluate admissions and retention programs by providing diverse leadership and staff to help unify and connect the multiracial student population. Renn (2002) also suggested faculty offer specific courses that include topics

relevant and related to multiracialism and encourage all students to think critically about issues regarding identity.

However, before making the decision to provide additional programs and services for multiracial students, educators and administrators within higher education should recognize the current context of political and current events regarding affirmative action policies, changing student populations, and racial equity while at the same time balancing the impact these services and institutional policies have on student growth and development (Shang, 2008). Another area where higher education needs to prepare itself for the changes brought on by the increasing number of students from multiracial backgrounds includes the issue of how to include these students under current affirmative action policies (Kellogg & Niskode, 2008). According to Kellogg and Niskode (2008), the increasing trend of students "checking more than one box" to self-identify with multiple racial identities will change the collection and reporting of data related to race and ethnicity and may also affect policy enforcement as well as measures of the effectiveness of affirmative action. Higher education educators and administrators must prepare for these impending influences and changes in the context of affirmative action by reviewing procedures for different departments such as admissions, financial aid, and employment to discuss how institutional policies should consider multiracial students and still uphold the intended goals of affirmative action (Kellogg & Niskode, 2008).

Root (1996) questioned whether the experiences of multiracial individuals were similar enough to create a separate cultural group. Using Renn's (2003, 2008) theoretical framework from an ecological lens helped to develop a more flexible structure whereby researchers can incorporate the unique needs and experiences of multiracial individuals.

Additional studies by Renn (1998, 1999) linked the importance of space and peer groups to multiracial individuals in college. Future quantitative studies may help further associate commonalities of experience across multiracial lines in the attempt to answer Root's (1996) question of whether higher education policies should consider multiracial individuals as a separate cultural group. From the growing number of individuals who identify as multiracial, more research regarding the multiracial student experience can help the division of student affairs and higher education better understand how to serve this population.

Where to Go From Here

With an increasing acceptance in social attitudes toward individuals of multiple races, many individuals are making the claim that higher education should perceive multiracial identity as a legitimate ethnic and cultural identity and allow individuals the opportunity to claim all of their racial backgrounds in order to more accurately depict the overall racial and ethnic make-up of an institution (Renn, 2003). Educators need to treat each student from an individual perspective and understand that all students bring with them a personal reflection on his or her identity. The university community must recognize the growing population of students who identify as multiracial and treat each student as an individual (Shang, 2008). Additionally, higher education should provide a supportive environment in terms of diversity by remaining a place to meet people of different races, economic classes, countries, and sexual identities.

Because literature focused on higher education has only recently recognized the identification of multiple identities, the research about multiracial identity development particularly within the realm of higher education is relatively limited in scope and detail

(Renn, 2008; Root, 1992, 1996). Within higher education, educators and administrators as well as students need to recognize this growing population and understand their unique needs to best serve this group of students. However, administrators and educators must also recognize the potential negative consequences of informing and supporting the suggestion of accepting multiracial as a unique ethnic and cultural classification.

CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION OF STUDY METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to use constructivist grounded theory to further investigate the role of appearance (phenotype) in the construction of multiracial identity among college students. This study specifically examined the ways in which multiracial individuals defined their racial identity, how they perceived society to define their racial identity, and how this intersection impacted their multiracial identity development. The following research questions guided me as the investigator as I carried out this research: 1) how does appearance play a role in the self-identification of multiracial individuals; 2) how does appearance influence societal perceptions of multiracial individuals; 3) how does self and societal racial identification impact multiracial identity development; 4) what are the differences and similarities in how multiracial individuals define their identity and how they perceive society to define their racial identity; and, 5) if societal perceptions differ from self-identification, how does this impact multiracial identity development?

Design of Study

In order to conduct a strong research study, I used a research paradigm aligned with my beliefs about the nature of reality and definition of truth. Recognizing that unconscious assumptions influenced by personal history and cultural background play a role in helping researchers recognize their own perceptions of reality, I rejected the notion of an objective truth and understood this viewpoint ultimately shaped my view of the purpose of research (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). The decision to use a qualitative research approach stemmed primarily from my interest in exploring an

explanation for the particular phenomenon of appearance as it relates to multiracial identity development. Using a qualitative approach provided me with the opportunity to conduct more holistic research using an inductive method. By starting with a general phenomenon of interest, the data gradually evolved into an explanation or theory, which provided a more focused understanding of the research topic (Krathwohl, 2009).

Qualitative research approaches are beneficial when investigators prefer to let the data flow and develop throughout the entire research process. By using an inductive approach, investigators try not to hold pre-conceived expectations or hypotheses regarding their research topic, but instead prefer to let the unique qualities of the human experience emerge to create an explanation or theory regarding the particular phenomenon in which their research is based (Krathwohl, 2009).

I used a qualitative approach not only because I preferred to accentuate the process of discovery rather than validation of fixed hypotheses typically found in quantitative research, but also because qualitative methods tend to be the most useful method for an investigator exploring a particular phenomenon to understand the experiences of the participants from multiple perspectives and convert these perspectives into theory (Krathwohl, 2009). Therefore, I used constructivist grounded theory methodology because it allowed me to use the data to create a theoretical explanation of significant and meaningful issues in individuals' lives (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mills et al., 2006).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) first introduced the concept of grounded theory methodology. They explained the process of generating theory using comparative analysis, which they defined as a constant comparison of individuals, groups, or

subgroups. Additional details regarding the constant comparison method are included later in this chapter. By comparing similarities and differences among and between codes, categories, and groups, researchers collect data and analyze it throughout the research process identifying patterns and themes, which lead to general concepts ultimately informing and generating theory to explain the research phenomenon of interest. By creating a broad theoretical construct, researchers can continue to expand the data by analyzing and testing it using additional comparison groups or subgroups. The continued expansion of the data helps to support the theory or discover necessary adjustments, so it has more predictive influence meaning it is more applicable to a broader population (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Although Glaser and Strauss (1967) established grounded theory as a legitimate means of conducting qualitative research, Charmaz (2000) provided an additional perspective by asserting that their traditional grounded theory approach assumes the existence of an external reality or a universal truth. For researchers operating under a constructivist epistemology, Glaser and Strauss' original grounded theory guidelines do not take into full consideration the idea that researchers are biased, and therefore, they consciously or unconsciously integrate their assumptions and perspectives into how they interpret data and carry out research (Charmaz, 2000).

Therefore, Charmaz (2000) decided to take the original grounded theory method, and as Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommended, adapted it to suit her own definition of reality and truth (Mills et al., 2006). Charmaz (2000) offered a variation that further incorporates a constructivist approach to conducting grounded theory. In constructivist grounded theory, researchers must push beyond the initial meaning of the data and search

for deeper meanings about the values and beliefs emerging from participant responses in the data (Charmaz, 2000; Mills et al., 2006). Rather than theories emerging from merely data alone, constructivist grounded theory asserts that researchers are a part of the world they investigate thereby constructing the theories through not only the data, but the interpretation of the data as influenced by our interactions, cultural backgrounds, and perspectives (Charmaz, 2000).

Contrary to other modes of inquiry, grounded theory methodology requires that both data collection and analysis occur simultaneously (Dunne, 2011). This then leads to one of the most contentious issues related to conducting grounded theory research: how and when should researchers incorporate literature into the study. Dunne (2011) explained how researchers such as Charmaz and Glaser in particular believed conducting a literature review prior to conducting the research could potentially suppress the process of creating a theory and may detract from the overall quality of the research. While I recognized conducting an early literature review had the potential to influence me, I also believed that it is impossible for a person to conduct research without inherent biases and some basic level of prior knowledge. In addition, postponing a literature review until the data collection and analysis process was complete was impractical for doctoral students "whose research funding, ethical approval and progression through the doctoral process may all be heavily dependent upon producing a literature review prior to commencing primary data collection" (Dunne, 2011, p. 115). Therefore, I chose to complete a literature review prior to collecting and analyzing data; however, I attempted to keep an open mind and remain aware of how my prior knowledge and personal biases may affect and affect my research. I included more details regarding my possible researcher bias in

the limitations section of Chapter Five. Although I completed a literature review prior to

gathering my own data, I did not attempt to confirm or validate any pre-existing theories.

I also revisited my literature review once I completed the research in order to fill in any

gaps and help complement the emerging theory I discovered through the process of

completing the research.

When reviewing my research questions and purpose for my study, I decided to

use a constructivist grounded theory approach to inquiry because of its practical

application of using data to inform and create theory (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007;

Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mills et al., 2006). By combining this approach with a

constructivist worldview and critical race theory, I tried to include an element of

advocacy in my research by showing the potential need for college administrators and

educators to recognize the increasing demographic of this population on their campuses

and challenge their views and assumptions of multiracial students.

Participants

Although the qualitative research process typically encourages the researcher to

continue collecting information until she reaches data saturation (Creswell, 2007), it is

nearly impossible for a researcher to ascertain the number of participants necessary for

this to occur and it is a subjective process to determine saturation. However, after

reviewing research on recommended sample sizes (Creswell, 2007; Mertens, 2010),

which vary dramatically across all aspects of qualitative research, I decided to include ten

self-identified first generation, multiracial individuals from a variety of multi-ethnic and

multiracial backgrounds. I defined first generation multiracial to include only individuals

raised in environments where the parents were each from a different monoracial

background and did not identify as multiracial (example: one parent identifies as Asian and one parent identifies as African American). I wanted to limit my research to the experiences of first-generation multiracial students with the hope that their responses would be more contained to their experiences as the first in their family to navigate their identity as a multiracial person. I intentionally selected participants who expressed a willingness to share their thoughts about their appearances as well as their racial identity and how they think they fit into society. After reviewing my data, I determined the ten participants provided enough thick descriptions and rich data to the point of saturation; therefore, I was satisfied the data I collected allowed me to inform a credible, well-grounded emerging theory.

I used a purposeful sampling strategy to select my participants specifically because this method has the goal of identifying and including only the most informative and in-depth cases (Mertens, 2010). More precisely, a purposeful sampling strategy allowed me to select participants that resolutely inform the basis of my research. I was especially committed to including participants from a college campus with an inclusive environment for multiracial students as dictated by the number of student services, organizations, and staff specifically dedicated to this population. I felt this would result in better access to potential and willing participants who could provide me with rich, thick descriptions of their experiences and understanding of their identity. To ensure maximum variation of my sample, I selected participants from a variety of mixed heritages and backgrounds, included a mix of participants according to gender, and attempted to control for age by including only traditionally aged college students (ages 18-24). Including multiracial students from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds as

well as different geographic locations helped me better compare differences and similarities among and across groups, which was particularly helpful when attempting to identify an emerging theory.

In order to ensure the data and the emerging theory held strength and applicability for additional populations, once I began to identify a theory, I intentionally reviewed confirming and disconfirming cases to help test the theory. This helped bring to fruition any adjustments or changes I needed to make to help strengthen the predictability of the theory for additional populations (Mertens, 2010). For instance, I discovered that regardless of how frequently the participants believed they were misidentified by society, they all shared commonalities regarding their paranoia that misidentification may lead people to label incorrect stereotypes on them and misunderstand their culture, values, and identities as a multiracial person.

I selected ten participants via purposeful sampling methods from a large, public four-year institution in the Mid-Atlantic. In order to solicit participants, I used personal contacts to ask for referrals and used marketing strategies to advertise this research opportunity. I contacted the staff advisor for the university's multiracial student organization and requested that she spread the word to the student group. She also allowed me to speak about my research to students enrolled in her class, which focused on the multiracial experience. I also emailed colleagues and contacts I had throughout the institution and requested that they forward my email to any students they thought may be interested in participating (Appendix A). Through this process, I received responses from ten participants who self-identified as traditionally aged first-generation multiracial students and believed met my selection criteria. The students who responded and elected

to participate all expressed a strong identification with their multiracial background and were willing to share details regarding their lived experiences, which I then developed into strong themes and rich sources of information (Miville et al., 2005).

Instrumentation

In order to more accurately depict, understand, and interpret my participants' emotions, identity, and reality, I tried to immerse myself in their world and perspective. Through in-depth conversations, documentation review, and interviews, I tried to get the full picture of my participants in relation to my research and develop a strong sense of how my personal biases influenced how I analyzed and interpreted the data.

One of the primary goals of my research was to focus as much as possible on my participants' views of their racial appearance in connection to their lived experience as a multiracial person, but I recognized that my cultural, personal, and historical experiences influenced my interpretation of their realities. Self-identifying as a multiracial individual, I recognized the potential for both advantages and disadvantages when interacting with participants and interpreting the data. Having a personal connection with the research topic inferred that I also had personal awareness and knowledge regarding some of the potential themes, particularly around identity, which emerged from the data. However, another concern was the concept that my personal bias and self-identification may have negatively influenced my interpretations of the data (Miville, Constantine, Baysden, & So-Lloyd, 2005). To deal with this concern, I was strategic in my interview protocol and used open-ended questions instead of more structured questions to reduce the chances of inadvertently trying to solicit certain responses (Miville et al., 2005). Although I attempted to reduce the possibility of leading participants to respond in a certain manner,

using a constructivist grounded theory methodology meant that I fully embraced that I had an influential role in this study. I chose to be highly involved in the process, was honest about my personal connection to the research, and was interactive with the participants during the interview process. By being an active participant, I tried to establish trust and rapport with the participants in the hopes it would allow them to feel comfortable and confident in sharing their honest responses with me.

Data Collection

I gathered my data through semi-structured interviews, document review, and field notes. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with all participants (Appendix B). I audiotaped all participant interviews, and I used a transcription service to complete all transcriptions. All participants had the opportunity to review my interpretation of their interviews and provide feedback. According to Mertens (2010), interviews help the researcher more fully understand someone's lived experiences from their own perspective. Therefore, a strong advantage to conducting semi-structured interviews was the ability to obtain more depth across a full range of salient subjects and develop rapport and trust with the participants (Mertens, 2010).

Over the course of one academic year, I interviewed all participants twice with each interview averaging about 50 minutes, and I attempted to gain trust and rapport as well as a thorough understanding of their responses. I began my interviews with basic, demographic questions then moved into broad, general questions allowing participants to tell their story and share their experiences. I continued the interviews by asking open-ended questions thereby getting descriptions that are more detailed. Krathwohl (2009) suggested mastering the nondirective approach to interviewing. To do so, I was

committed to improving my listening and communication skills by validating, rephrasing, and reflecting the underlying significance of the participants' previous responses. This technique helped me prompt more thorough and data rich responses from my participants. Krathwohl (2009) also stressed the importance of establishing rapport with participants so they feel comfortable answering the interview questions thoughtfully and honestly and are more willing to partake in subsequent interviews. One way I established rapport was by being honest with participants about my own multiracial identity and my sincere personal interest in learning more about this topic. I also built rapport by giving the participants the opportunity to choose the interview location and attempted to use body language that helped send nonthreatening messages (Krathwoh, 2009).

I asked questions during the interview process related specifically to how participants made sense of their racial identity informed by their appearance. I structured the questions in a way that encouraged the participants to discuss their familial background in relation to how they made sense of their physical appearance. As part of a documentation review (Mertens, 2010), and to better help them explain their responses and better assist me in interpreting their responses, I encouraged each participant to share photographs of their family members. Viewing the photographs helped me better understand and make sense of the impact of familial appearances on their own ability to self-identify racially.

I also documented my own involvement and thoughts during the process of conducting my research by maintaining thorough field notes in my researcher journal (Krathwohl, 2009). My researcher journal helped me see the ways in which I was personally impacted by my research and how this impact potentially played a role in how

I collected and analyzed data. I also used my researcher journal as a means of keeping track of different themes, questions, and thoughts that emerged throughout my experience of conducting the study.

All my participants completed a first round of interviews that focused on questions related to their multiracial experiences including their racial appearance and its impact on their internal identity, their perceived societal identity, family and peer dynamics, and student involvement and interests. I was also interested in understanding my participants in terms of how their peer group racially identified them. To do so, I asked each participant to either provide their own photograph (headshot which included shoulders and head only) or allow me to take their photograph. I then randomly selected 26 students to review their photo and classify what race or races they believed correctly identified each participant. I then discussed the results with the participants during the second round of interviews and asked them to provide their reactions and thoughts.

I recruited the 26 photo review participants by asking colleagues and fellow staff members to forward my recruitment email to any of their student populations (Appendix C). With permission from my supervisor, I also emailed all students who I worked with and asked them to consider participating and/or spread the word to their peers who may be interested in participating. I wanted the photo reviewers to represent a snapshot of the higher education environment in which my participants lived and experienced daily; therefore, I accepted all 26 photo reviewer volunteers and met with each of them individually. I asked the 26 photo reviewers a variety of personal demographic information, and then I asked them to review the 10 study participant photographs and respond to a variety of questions regarding their racial appearance (Appendix D). I

initially showed each photo one-by-one and documented their responses. I then placed all 10 photographs on the table and allowed the reviewer to look at all the images together and make any additional comments or amendments to their initial responses. I then documented any changes based on their second review. I initially informed the 26 photo reviewers that the study focused on racial appearance. After they completed the photo review session, I informed them that the study was specifically about multiracial identity and racial appearance. I then informed them that all 10 of the people in the photographs identify as multiracial. Upon hearing this information, I then asked them to review the images once more and let me know if any specific photographs surprised them now knowing that the individual identified as multiracial.

Although I used purposeful sampling to select my study participants to ensure they would meet my selection criteria, I was open to choosing any interested photo review participant with no restrictions on selection criteria. I decided to cap the number at 26, even though I continued to receive inquiries from potential photo review participants, because I thought I had a good variety of demographic diversity in the pool including a variety of ages, hometowns, gender, race, and ethnicity. I believe it is important to note that since I used many personal contacts and colleagues within the College of Engineering to help recruit both my study participants and my photo review participants, a significant number of my participants were engineering majors (19/26 photo review participants and 6/10 study participants). One study participant wondered if academic major may play a role in a photo reviewer's ability to identify multiracial appearance; however, upon review of the data, I did not see any sort of trends related to

the responses from the photo review participants majoring in engineering versus the non-engineering participants.

Data Analysis

I used a transcription service, which helped me transcribe all interviews verbatim. I reviewed all transcripts to ensure they did not include noticeable mistakes (Creswell, 2009). I then highlighted significant statements, sentences, and quotations that provided an explanation of the participants' experiences regarding their racial appearance in relation to their multiracial identity development. I then coded the data and looked for emergent themes which assisted me in writing a description highlighting the participants' experiences (textural description) and included how their environment influenced their experiences (structural description) (Creswell, 2007). I then wrote an abstract to capture the essence of the experience of the participant and allowed them to review the abstract as well as specifically relevant sections of the study and requested suggestions or changes in case I misinterpreted the meaning of any of their comments.

In order to establish credibility in my data and emerging theoretical findings, I used triangulation—multiple methods and multiple data sources—to support my interpretations and emerging theory (Krathwohl, 2009). First, in order to help reduce the potential for my bias in the interpretation of the data, I conducted member checks at two different points of collecting and analyzing data. Soon after each interview, I emailed the transcriptions to my participants and asked them to provide any addendums or clarification points. After I finished coding themes, I submitted an abbreviated version of my findings and analyses, as well as quotations to my participants again and encouraged them to verify that I correctly interpreted their responses.

Second, I used peer debriefing to increase the trustworthiness of the data and my interpretation of it (Creswell, 2009). I discussed my coding strategy as well as the emerging theory with a peer who was unfamiliar with the results of my research. This peer provided an external group member's perspective ensuring that my codes, themes, and emergent theory was logical to someone outside my specific study. This technique also helped check the influence of biases and assumptions in my interpretation of the data. Third, once I started to see a theory develop, I deliberately cross-compared by participants' responses to see if there were any cases that directly challenged my findings (Krathwohl, 2009; Mertens, 2010).

By constantly interacting with the data, I was able to make meaning from the data by sorting and synthesizing through qualitative coding. Through this coding process, I had a better sense of how to make comparisons of different sections of data and develop tentative analytic categories, which eventually combined into more inclusive themes. These themes contributed to an emerging theory that explained how the data made sense of participants' lived experiences (Charmaz, 2006). I primarily used Excel spreadsheets to help me navigate the process of examining data and creating codes and themes.

Once I began to establish my theory, I continued to test it through the constant comparative method discovered by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a fundamental element of using grounded theory. This process required that I reduce my data through constant coding including: 1) open coding-coding major categories of information; 2) axial coding-making connections between categories; and, 3) selective coding-developing hypotheses that connect the categories and offer further enhancement and development (Creswell, 2007).

During this constant comparative analysis process, I continued to select confirming and disconfirming cases to test and compare groups and subgroups and build any differences or similarities into the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, once I determined the percentage of times the photo reviewers identified each participant as multiracial, I then cross-compared the results of the participants the reviewers more commonly misidentified with those who were less commonly misidentified to see if the emerging theory still accurately described their lived experiences. I constantly examined and analyzed my data and continued to ask questions and help fill in the gaps within my emerging theory using this constant comparative method until I was confident that my theory encompassed enough complexity and variation to include a conceptual understanding of multiple cases (Mertens, 2010). However, enveloping elements of constructivist grounded theory, I also paid special attention to the potential to develop a false sense of confidence by recognizing how my bias plays a role in the ways in which I create my research questions, codes and themes (Charmaz, 2006; Mertens, 2010).

Informed Consent and Participant Protection

Prior to recruiting and selecting participants, I received approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). All participants including the 10 study participants and the 26 photo reviewers completed informed consent waivers describing the details of the study, explaining their rights as participants, and detailing that their participation is completely optional (Appendix E).

I selected all participants from the same institution. While all the participants fell into the targeted age range for the study, two of the 10 participants were graduate students and completed their undergraduate degree at a different institution. During their

interviews, both participants referred to both undergraduate and graduate experiences. In addition, of the 10 study participants, I had prior job-related connections with two of the participants. During our prior interactions, we had minimal discussions regarding race and multiracial identity. Of the 26 photo reviewers, I had prior job-related connections with 19 of them. During our prior interactions, we never had discussions regarding race, ethnicity, and/or multiracial identity, and I was very clear that participation in my study was completely voluntary and not directly related to my work at the university.

In order to protect participants' confidentiality, I assigned the 10 study participants pseudonyms and did not collect any names from the 26 photo reviewers. I also assigned pseudonyms any time a participant referred to a specific departmental name within the institution. I stored data, including digital recordings, on a password-protected computer and I kept any hard copies of data in a locked desk drawer.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this constructivist grounded theory study was to investigate the role of racial appearance (phenotype) in the construction of multiracial identity among college students. This study specifically examined the ways in which multiracial individuals defined their racial identity, how they perceived society to define their racial identity, and how this intersection affected their multiracial identity development. The following research questions were the basis of the study:

1) How did racial appearance play a role in the self-identification of multiracial individuals?

2) How did racial appearance influence societal perceptions of multiracial individuals?

3) How did self and societal racial identification impact multiracial identity development?

4) What were the differences and similarities in how multiracial individuals defined their identity and how they perceived society to define their racial identity?

5) If societal perceptions differed from self-identification, how did this impact multiracial identity development?

In this chapter, I first introduce the 10 participants in this study and provide an overview of their relevant demographics. I then give an overview of the emergent theory and the relationship between the phenomena. Next, I review the themes and findings by providing in-depth descriptions and incorporating examples directly from each participant using their own explanations and language. I concluded with a summary

further detailing the emergent theory within the context of the themes and grounded within the participants' experiences.

Participants

To set the framework of my findings, I included an overview in Table 1 of my participants according to personal descriptions provided by them. The crux of my study ultimately hinges on the participants, their experiences, and the meaning making of their experiences, so understanding each participant was crucial to understanding the overall study. The goal of the participant profiles was to better explain, through their personal descriptions, their key identities, backgrounds, and worldview and help set the stage for the theory that emerged from their lived experiences and participation in this study.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Sex	Year in School	Parent Racial ID	Self-Described Racial ID
Aimee	19	Female	Second	Mom: Caucasian; Dad: Chinese	Half Asian & Half Caucasian
Arieanna	21	Female	Fourth	Mom: Filipina; Dad: African American	Mixed, "Blasian," if only allowed to select one, will select African American
Cailyn	24	Female	Master's	Mom: White; Dad: African American	Black and White; Mixed-Race/Black; Multiracial; situationally Black
Dianna	18	Female	First	Mom: Chinese (born Hong Kong) Dad: Caucasian	Half Chinese & Half White
Gwyn	20	Female	Third	Mom: Filipina; Dad: White	Biracial Filipina and White
Joseph	23	Male	Master's	Mom: White of Irish descent; Dad: Filipino	Multiracial/Mixed race
Kodi	24	Male	Fifth	Mom: Dominican; Dad: Panamanian	Afro-Latino
Marisol	19	Female	Second	Mom: White; Dad: Hispanic from Spain	Half White & Half Spanish; partly Hispanic
Ryan	20	Male	Second	Mom: Indian (northern); Dad: Caucasian (German/Irish/Italian/Dutch/Austrian)	Half Indian & Half Caucasian; multiracial, racially ambiguous
Zerah	21	Female	Fourth	Mom: Guyanese mostly Indian; Dad: Guyanese African/Indian/Portuguese	Guyanese/Caribbean/Black/Multiracial

Table 2 provides a condensed overview of the photo reviewer responses to the racial appearance of the ten participants based on their photograph. The table shows how often the photo reviewers assessed a participant's multiracial identity as well as how frequently they incorrectly identified their identity. The counts and percentages in Table 2 exclude any instances where the photo reviewers passed because they felt they recognized the participant from the photograph. In order to summarize the vast array of results, I chose to combine matching responses into one category. I then chose to combine similar responses and group them into one category. For example, I grouped any responses of White and Caucasian into one category labeled White. I struggled to condense the data into appropriate categories as I wanted to remain as true as possible to the photo reviewers original responses; however, given the large amount of responses, I felt condensing everything into a smaller number of categories was the best way to display the results in way that was easier to read, understand, and conceptualize. More detailed information about the original responses for each participant as well as more detailed information about each of the photo reviewers is available in Appendix F.

Table 2

Summarized Photo Reviewer Responses

Race	Aimee	Arieanna	Cailyn	Dianna	Gwyn	Joseph	Kodi	Marisol	Ryan	Zerah
American Indian or Alaska Native				2 (9%)						
Asian		2 (8%)		8 (35%)	3 (12%)				4 (15%)	
Asian or Hispanic/LatinX		1 (4%)		1 (4%)	1 (4%)				2 (8%)	
Black or African American		3 (12%)	5 (19%)				23 (92%)			16 (70%)
Black or African American or Hispanic/LatinX			1 (4%)							
Hispanic/LatinX			1 (4%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	25 (100%)			6 (23%)	
Mixed	2 (8%)	4 (15%)	17 (65%)	10 (43%)	11 (42%)		2 (8%)		9 (35%)	2 (9%)
White	21 (88%)				9 (35%)			25 (100%)		
White or Asian				1 (4%)						
White or American Indian or Alaska Native					1 (4%)					
South Asian or Indian American		12 (46%)							2 (8%)	4 (17%)

	Participant									
Race	**Aimee**	**Arieanna**	**Cailyn**	**Dianna**	**Gwyn**	**Joseph**	**Kodi**	**Marisol**	**Ryan**	**Zerah**
Black or South Asian or Indian American		2 (8%)								1 (4%)
Asian or South Asian or Indian American		2 (8%)								
White or Hispanic/LatinX	1 (4%)									
South Asian or Indian American or Middle Eastern or Hispanic/LatinX									1 (4%)	
Middle Eastern			2 (8%)						2 (8%)	
* count of responses (% of responses for each participant)										

Table 2 shows how often the participants indicated the photo reviewers assessed their multiracial identity. The results were based off the photo reviewers' responses prior to learning that all participants identified as multiracial. According to the results, photo reviewers assessed a participant as multiracial no more than 65% of the time (Cailyn), and two participants were never identified as multiracial (Joseph and Marisol). Table 2 shows the most common responses for each participant, and in many instances, the most common responses were not accurate. For example, Arieanna was most commonly identified as South Asian or Indian American (45%) when she identifies as half African American and half Filipina. Aimee was most commonly identified as White (88%); however, she identified as half White and half Asian (Chinese). I created Table 2 after I reviewed all the results with each participant and asked them to help me interpret, analyze, and understand the results.

Overview of Findings

Central to this study was the overarching umbrella of multiracial identity. Although this study specifically examined racial appearance and its impact on multiracial identity, I recognized I may never fully understand the complexities of this relationship. I also understood and accepted the connection between appearance and multiracial identity may never by fully described, compartmentalized, or categorized. Bearing these limitations in mind, I was committed to listening to each participant's story and recognizing it as unique to their experiences, backgrounds, and context. Through the constant comparison method, coding, and data analysis, I recognized emerging patterns in the participants' experiences and developed a theory, grounded in the research, to address

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and explain my research questions. One quotation from Joseph helped introduce the framework for the theory developed from the data:

> I think multiracial, I think it's a specific identity group as far as, like, I think you can identify as multiracial and that can be its own separate identity, which not everyone feels that way. So, for me, if someone asks, if I tell someone that I'm multiracial and they're like, "Oh, what are you? What are the halves or the fractions or whatever?" to me, that's – I mean, I can tell them that, but it's like – I can say that I'm Filipino and White, but, to me, the coming together of multiracial is a whole separate thing in and of itself, and that's its own identity that I think is, like – that's enough of an identity, to say that I'm multiracial. And I think, too, explaining a little more, I think that multiracial can have the potential to be a community, as well. I think there's shared experiences. At least in my experience of knowing other people, there's a lot of shared experiences, and there's the potential for that community between multiracial people the way that there is with other racial identity groups.

Joseph, a master's student whose mother is White, and father is Filipino, described being multiracial as a distinct group identity separate from the monoracial experience. Through participant comments, descriptions, and explanations, many of the participants further upheld and expanded on this concept of the distinct multiracial experience, which goes beyond purely operating within their monoracial halves. Since all the participants expressed multiple examples of ways in which they were expected by their family, society, and peers to identify within their monoracial halves, regardless of whether they racially appeared as either of their monoracial halves, part of the multiracial

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experience meant participants had to learn how to navigate this expectation and flip back and forth between their two monoracial identities. However, they also described a third space which is a separate and unique experience from balancing their monoracial worlds.

Part of being multiracial meant the participants did not just navigate their monoracial halves, but they also understood and accepted the complexity of when their monoracial halves blended together. A large part of this complexity was influenced by their experience of living as a multiracial person within an interracial family and being forced to adapt to a reality where parents were not always able to fully understand the racial experiences of their children and vice versa.

Another large part of this complexity for the participants was feeling consumed by the experiences of being racially misidentified and being forced to adapt to a world that oftentimes made incorrect assumptions about their identity, culture, and upbringing. The participants learned how to handle the associated emotions they felt when racial misidentification occurred. For the participants, being multiracial meant feeling a strong sense of pride and a connection to their internal identity as a multiracial person while simultaneously feeling vulnerable in their external identity, particularly for those participants in which the photo reviewers most commonly misidentified based on appearance.

An easier way to conceptualize multiracial identity as reflected in this study was by comparing the multiracial experience to a puzzle. The puzzle represented multiracial identity in its entirety, and the primary pieces this particular study examined were the pieces that related to racial appearance. In no way did this study attempt to define or explain the full intricacies of multiracial identity, but rather it attempted to clarify,

describe, and explain one section of the overall puzzle. See Figure 1 and Figure 2 for a visual representation of the theory explaining the impact of racial appearance on multiracial identity.

Figure 1. Monoracial halves
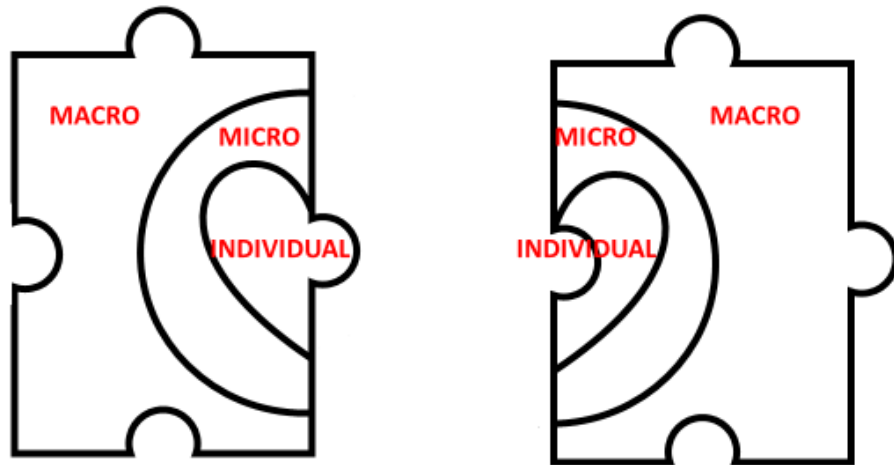
Figure 2. Multiracial Whole
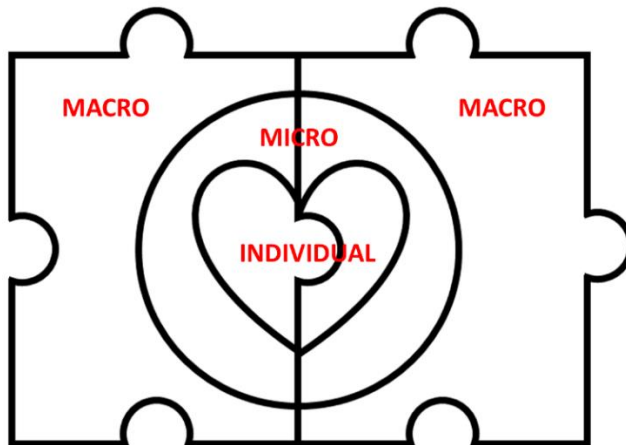
As depicted in Figures 1 and 2, participants explained how their racial appearance impacted their multiracial identity in primarily two ways. First, they described how and why they conceptualized their identity within their monoracial halves and described the resulting effects. Second, they described the need and the impact of merging their monoracial identities together to create their multiracial whole. Within the context of these two images, are the macro, micro, and individual factors influencing their ability to conceptualize and define the impact of racial appearance on their multiracial identity development.

In Figure 1, macro level factors inform the pieces representing racial appearance on multiracial identity specifically when participants identified within the context of their monoracial halves. The participants described their monoracial halves as stemming from the monoracial identities they received from their parents, such as Asian and White or Asian and African American. They explained how part of their identity is situating their multiracial identity within the context of each of their monoracial backgrounds. Figure 1 depicts monoracial halves by two, separated but matched pieces that represent participants' connection to their monoracial identities as passed along to them by their parents. One puzzle piece represents 50% of their racial identity, or one of their monoraces and the other puzzle piece represents the other 50% of their racial identity, or their other monoracial identity. The way they understood and operated within their monoracial halves depended on the macro, micro, and individual factors affecting the way in which each participant felt connected to their monoracial identities.

Drawing from macro level sociology definitions, concepts that fall into the macro level typically stem from overarching social processes and help clarify the pattern in

which society has evolved over time (Keizer, 2015). These macro level factors stem primarily from the historical and societal context affecting how people within the United States define and view race in monoracial terms (Brunsma, 2005; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Through their actions, comments, and expectations, members within society (including peers, family members, and strangers), further reflect these macro level factors, which reflect the societal context of race. The participants described how this limited definition of race led to a lack of awareness and acceptance of their multiracial identity and racial misidentification based on their appearance. The impact of racial misidentification influenced the participants' external sense of identity in multiple ways. Some participants felt pressure to adjust how they identified because of societal pressures, some described a sense of paranoia, which caused them to constantly question whether anyone could truly recognize the truth of their multiracial identity, and some participants described feelings of guilt, confusion, apathy, and empathy when they were racially misidentified based on their appearance.

Although I found a consistent pattern of the participants understanding, accepting, and appreciating their monoracial identities, I also found the participants always contextualized and grounded their monoracial experiences within the context of their multiracial identity. Therefore, Figure 2 provides the most comprehensive and accurate description of the overall impact of racial appearance on multiracial identity development. For the participants in this study, their internal sense of identity was strongly rooted in their multiracial background, and this multiracial context always influenced and informed their understanding of their monoracial identities.

In Figure 2, the two-monoracial halves pieces are connected to represent the multiracial whole. Participants provided numerous examples of when individuals expected them or forced them to identify within their two monoraces as they found society seemed to be the most interested in their monoracial backgrounds. Therefore, in the context of Figures 1 and 2 above, the participants recognized that part of being multiracial meant understanding how they fit within each of their 50/50 pieces, but they always identified as 100% multiracial. For the participants, they felt the most whole, the most complete, when they identified with all their racial backgrounds.

Figure 2 depicts the pieces representing racial appearance on multiracial identity when they forge together to create a more comprehensive image representing their multiracial whole. The section of Figure 2, which portrays a heart surrounded by a ring represents both micro level and individual factors which inform the participants' multiracial identity. The image depicts these factors in the center surrounded by the context of the macro level influences.

Drawing from micro level sociology definitions, concepts that fall into the micro level typically stem from smaller-scale interactions between individuals. These ongoing interactions help influence the formation of an individual's culture (Keizer, 2015). The micro level factors in this study stem primarily from the participants' interactions with their family, peers, and university. Participants expressed the importance of their families in building their sense of identity and how they navigated being raised by monoracial parents. They also expressed their frustrations in trying to connect to their monoracial peers, their ability to adapt to their monoracial surroundings, and their urge to find multiracial communities and spaces. They also described multiple instances where

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the college environment had a direct impact on their current understanding, mindfulness, and connection to their multiracial identity.

Drawing from organizational behavior theory, the individual level involved learning and adapting based on one's personality, ethics, and cognitive awareness (Blakeney, 1983). As it pertained to this study, the individual level referred to the participants' self-understanding and ability to conceptualize the impact of their racial appearance on their experiences and identity as a multiracial person. The participants described ways in which they shaped their own reactions to the macro and micro level factors. They also explained how they chose to navigate and regulate how the macro and micro level factors affected and influenced their sense of self. The participants articulated ways in which they defended their multiracial identity; how they internalized and strongly connected to their multiracial identity even when racially misidentified by others; how they believed they benefited from the challenges of being multiracial; and how these benefits and challenges inspired them to engage in multiracial advocacy.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I explain and discuss in more depth each of the components included in Figures 1 and 2 above and demonstrate how they all played an important role in understanding how racial appearance affected multiracial identity for the ten participants in this study. Insights from the participant interviews as well as the photo review sessions are integrated throughout the chapter where relevant. I also include an overview of the strengths and limitations of the study, and I conclude with a discussion about the implications of the findings and recommendations for future research.

Macro Level Factors

In this section, I explain the ways in which the participants made meaning of the macro level factors, which impacted their understanding of their racial appearance in relation to their multiracial identity. Multiple participants explained how they thought the historical and societal context influenced societal views on their multiracial identity. By recognizing, accepting, and excusing how society still sees race in limited terms, they also described ways they unconsciously enabled the status quo. With their awareness of how the historical context of the United States limits individuals' definitions of race, combined with their personal experiences with racism and microaggressions, the participants described how this contributed to their feelings of multiracial paranoia. They expressed that when people regularly misidentified them, it made them question if anyone could see the truth of their multiracial identity. They also described how these feelings of paranoia often led to negative feelings and emotions.

Historical Context: "[I]t's just the racial construct of society, you know."

When viewing the framework of this study from a large, macro level scale, I found the historical context informed the foundation of the participants' experiences. Several participants recognized the historical influence on how society constructs race within the United States and how it is specifically limiting to multiracial individuals. Aimee, a second-year student who identified as half Asian and half Caucasian, explained that ingrained within society is the concept of the "purity of race," and it still hinders people's ability to conceptualize the mixed-race population:

> …Purity of race. So, if that's something that's kind of ingrained in people. And also, this idea of purity of race comes from interracial marriage only even being allowed recently. And so, I feel like that idea still hasn't quite worked its way out

of the system, in that a lot of Black and White people still can't marry, and Black

and Asian. So, for people, they don't commonly think mixed-race, because they

don't commonly think interracial marriage.

Kodi, a fifth-year student who identified as Afro-Latino, also stated that being

misidentified as a monoracial African American was inauthentic to his identity; however,

being misidentified as such occurred frequently due to his racial appearance and

historical norms.

> …because, yeah, that's the thing. It's 100 percent not authentic to my identity, but
>
> it's just the racial construct of society, you know. It kind of goes back to – I had a
>
> friend who was, like, talking about this earlier the other day. Like, if you have any
>
> Black blood in you, you are Black in this country.

Zerah, a fourth-year student who identified as multiracial Guyanese, further described

how she felt historical context influenced the limited view society has on race and how

this may influence the results of the study, particularly if the photo reviewers struggled to

identify and accept people who identify as multiracial:

> I feel like this country has been working for hundreds of years trying to get skin
>
> color out of the categories and trying not to section off based on that, but it's still a
>
> work in progress, and I think that's why it played a role in these [photo reviewer]
>
> results.

> As explained in Chapter Two, the historical context of multiracial identity

development is rooted in the United States' racist history. It is influenced by

miscegenation laws stemming from the concept of the "one drop rule" and hypodescent

(Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). The government created these miscegenation laws,

which prevented people of different races from marrying, because of the deep-seated belief by those in power that anyone outside of the Caucasian race were inferior. Given that it was illegal to claim a multiracial identity, the law automatically forced children born from interracial relationships to identify with their monoracial category of lowest status (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Spencer, 2009). This historical context helps inform why and how society defines race in monoracial terms.

Over time, states repealed miscegenation laws and while many challenges still exist for people in interracial relationships, the numbers of multiracial people continue to rise within society (Riley, 2006). Although multiracial individuals have existed for hundreds of years in the United States, since they were unable to claim their multiraciality until recently, several participants felt that many people were not yet ready to accept the idea of interracial relationships and multiracial children. Arieanna, a fourth-year student who identified as half Filipina and half African American, believed this reluctance caused individuals to continue to uphold a definition of race that did not include multiracial, and could have potentially influenced the photo review results:

But I feel like it's becoming – people are becoming more aware of mixed-race families, but I know that still a lot of people are rejecting it, and that could be a reason for people just initially wanting to reject the idea of interracial relationships. So, I feel like, for some people, depending, I don't know how these participants [photo reviewers] grew up or what their views are, but I know that, because they don't like the idea, they won't think of it as a possibility of mixed-race, so they just default to one race.

Kodi felt similarly that although society is making progress, there is a stigma toward multiracial relationships, "We're making good progress, and it doesn't take away from that there is still a stigma toward multiracial relationships, which creates a stigma towards multiracial children and creates that whole issue of cultural identity."

Cailyn, a master's student whose mother is White, and father is African American, stated, "...And it appears that – this is very preliminary – that there's still perceiving of mixed folks through a monoracial lens, because there's no incentive to do so otherwise." Both Kodi and Cailyn described a "cultural identity" which emphasized race in monoracial terms. Although there may be a deep-rooted history explaining how race has been socially constructed through a monoracial lens, by accepting this and using it to excuse society's impressions of the multiracial population, multiracial individuals may be unconsciously enabling the status quo and prohibiting progress.

Unconsciously Enabling a Limited Definition of Race: "I, as a person, am misleading."

As a result of the historical context and its influence on the ways in which individuals within the United States view race in monoracial terms, the participants in this study identified many ways in which they have unconsciously internalized the existing, limited definition of race. By doing so, this caused them to feel guilty that due to their multiracial background, they did not fit into the majority of society's limited definition of race. In my review of the data, I noticed multiple instances where the participants expressed ways in which they were unconsciously enabling a socially and historically constructed definition of race, which did not include them. Aimee provided one example:

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In my head, multiracial children still aren't a huge percentage of the population.

People aren't used to seeing them. So, I feel like people – I would never expect

people to be experts at figuring out what kind of races or ethnicities people

identify as. But I think that, also, they're not used to seeing mixed people, so they

just wouldn't know.

As Aimee implied, she had no expectation that people would be able to accurately

identify the multiracial population. She also excused society for their ignorance because

multiracial individuals "aren't a huge percentage of the population."

In cases when the participants were misidentified by people who assumed they

were part of their same cultural and racial background, the participants were quick to

empathize, provide excuses for the behavior, and even take some of the blame. When

Cailyn described how frequently she was misidentified, she responded:

Very often. I'm so used to it, that I don't notice it sometimes. When it comes from

people of color, it doesn't make me feel bad. I think it's just out of an attempt to

build community. So, if people speak Spanish to me, I don't have a problem with

it. If anything, it makes me feel guilty for not being able to speak Spanish.

Gwyn, a third-year student whose mother is Filipina and father is White, also explained

her conflicted feelings when people in the Latinx community incorrectly assumed she

identified as Latina:

…but a part of me wishes they would just, like, hit the nail on the head

sometimes. But I know that's a one-in-a-million chance. It doesn't make me feel

bad, people thinking I'm Latino. I just feel bad sometimes when I can't reply to

them in Spanish or something.

The feelings of guilt both Cailyn and Gwyn expressed left the impression they felt partly

to blame for their appearance misleading others. They recognized their appearance may

be misleading, and they expressed understanding when someone from a particular racial

or ethnic group mistakenly identified them as part of that group. Additionally, they

described negative feelings of guilt that they were unable to better adapt to the language

and culture of the people misidentifying them because they did not want to disappoint or

make them feel badly for their incorrect assumptions.

Given their background, experiences, and identities as women of color, they

understood the importance of building community and wished they could better connect

with others who misidentified them as part of their community. However, in the process,

they took on feelings of guilt and responsibility for others' incorrect assumptions rather

than hold the others accountable.

It was particularly evident that Joseph thought deeply about the implications of

being consistently misidentified as Latino.

> Because literally I've been mistaken by people on all levels as a Latino
>
> person…How do I respond when folks are, you know – when parents come up to
>
> me at events and start talking to me in Spanish, which has happened to me before,
>
> it's a strange feeling, because it's like, I want to support you as an ally, but I'm not
>
> a member of your community. And then, I don't want you to be let down, and I
>
> also still feel like I could support you as a fellow person of color and as a fellow
>
> person who just cares about equity and diversity in general.

Joseph further expanded on his feelings of guilt:

I think there's a feeling of kind of like guilt, feeling bad that, you know – I

understand where they're coming from. There is a level of empathy. It's probably

taken a long time to develop that…But I think it is – it's [being misidentified]

definitely disheartening. It's definitely – I think it's hard. Yeah. It never feels

good, really…That's an important – that's an emotion that I actually feel a lot, that

I should have included. I often feel very guilty. And I think, for me, too, it's even

– there's that added layer of, like, Filipinos. Like, my middle name is Carlos.

Reyes [last name pseudonym] is of Spanish origin. I'm pretty Catholic. Like,

there's a lot of clues that I don't blame folks for assuming that, because there's a

lot of indications that would point you in that direction. So, then I feel kind of

bad. I almost feel like, you know, like I, as a person, am misleading, you know

what I mean?...I know it's not my fault, but I think, like, in the moment, it's a

sense of guilt where, "Oh, I feel bad," because, you know, they're not trying to –

they're just following the context clues right now. And then I step back later and

I'm like, "No, that's fine." But in the moment, I definitely feel bad.

Joseph explained his ability to empathize and provided excuses for others when they

misidentified him, but also admitted to feeling badly that he may be disappointing them

when they discovered he was not actually part of their community. He experienced

tension in that he understood it was not his fault that others misidentified him; however, it

did not stop him from feeling guilty, making excuses for others, and shouldering part of

the blame.

Although it was clear many of the participants recognized the impact of the

historical context in how society frames and understands the definition of race, many

seemed reluctant to place any blame on others when they misidentified them as part of their marginalized group. By not holding others responsible for continuing to uphold this limited definition of race, they were, in essence, unconsciously enabling this limited definition to continue. The participants understood the importance of connecting to others within the same cultural community, so when they were misidentified, particularly by people of color, they expressed a sense of confusion in how they could help extend their support as an ally while simultaneously be misidentified as an authentic member of the minority group. They recognized that in most cases when people misidentified them primarily due to their appearance, it occurred because people were using the socially accepted, narrow definition of race, which encouraged them to see everyone in monoracial terms. When this occurred, the participants experienced feelings of guilt and responsibility since they recognized their appearance as multiracial beings sent out indicators, which went against the current social norm and definition of race.

Multiracial Paranoia Caused by Racism and Microaggressions: "I don't want to say being paranoid—but, I could be over-thinking it too."

The implications of being misidentified were further emphasized by the ways in which the participants experienced racism that is influenced and derived from the historical context surrounding race in the United States. In some instances, the participants described experiences with overt racism; however, in the majority of other instances the participants described experiencing microaggressions. Racial microaggressions are subtle, often inadvertent forms of discrimination that may cause negative, harmful effects (Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, & Sriken, 2014). These

microaggressions and experiences with racism contributed to the participants' feelings of

multiracial paranoia. Gwyn described experiences with her family:

> …And also, it's funny, because if me and my mom go to lunch with my
>
> [Caucasian] grandpa, they get, like, dirty stares, because I'm pretty sure they think
>
> she's, like, a mail order bride or something. Yeah, it's weird. The dynamic is
>
> weird. When people see my mom with my grandpa, even alone, or even with us
>
> four kids, they're always like, "What is going on there?" Yeah. But sometimes I
>
> think that's funny, and I – I don't encourage it, but it's like, "Ugh, we're getting all
>
> the attention today."

In addition, several participants described childhood experiences when others presumed

their parent adopted them because they did not racially appear to be the same race or

ethnicity. Gwyn stated, "But I think, like, people, when all my siblings, or if I'm with my

[Caucasian] dad, people assume he adopted us…" Ryan a second-year student who

identifies as half Caucasian and half Indian, described a similar experience, "But I will

say, when I'm with my mom and dad, sometimes people assume my [Caucasian] dad's

not with us." And Joseph explained,

> And so, I think, just being really aware early on, I had racialized experiences from
>
> the time that I was, like, in kindergarten, when I was at school and kids asked me
>
> if my mom – like, if I was adopted, because my mom is a White woman and does
>
> not phenotypically look like me.

Joseph, Ryan, and Gwyn explained how their racial appearance affected the societal

perception of their connection to their less dominant race. Other participants further

alluded to this in some of the above sections when people presumed they felt

disconnected with part of their culture due to their racial appearance. For example, if a

participant did not phenotypically resemble her Hispanic half, then people assumed she

did not speak Spanish. If participants did not phenotypically look like one of their

parents, society presumed their parent adopted them.

Kodi ascribed many of the microaggressions he experienced to society's reluctance to

talk about race and instead make assumptions that were oftentimes incorrect and

potentially harmful.

> It really comes down to, though, what people see you as, because, like I said,
> they're not going to ask. There's kind of this open-closed discussion about race
> in this country, where a lot of people are fighting to talk about it, and a lot of
> people are refusing to talk about it, yet talking about it, like side-handedly, kind
> of, like, not addressing the issue, but—. Basically, it goes back to, like, the
> microaggressions and White privilege situation. And this definition is not limited
> to White people. This is all people in this country. People refuse to have this
> conversation about racial politics, yet they say things and do things every day that
> really, if you listen to the way that they talk, to the way that they speak, and if you
> pay attention to the way that they act around certain situations and certain people,
> they speak for themselves. They're engaging passively and, a lot of the times, un-
> mindedly, like, not aware, unaware of their engagement in the conversation. And
> their refusal to openly acknowledge it—and it's not always refusal, but it's an
> issue that makes people uncomfortable. It makes people very uncomfortable.

Arieanna described a particular situation where she could tell some of her White colleagues were curious but reluctant to ask about her racial background, and they approached her in a passive aggressive manner.

> Actually, a really funny time is when I interned for the Department of the Navy. There was only a few Black women on our floor, and they were all traditionally just 100% Black. And then, when I came and interned, everybody else were just White. And so, they were all trying to inch towards that question of, "Where are you from?" And I purposely just kept saying, "Severn, Maryland," just my hometown. I didn't – I just didn't feel like giving it in that easy. And so, I think that they spent the whole year trying to figure out what my race was. So, they kept trying to call out, "So, do you like Indian food?" or, "Where have your parents traveled to?"

Many of the participants, such as Kodi and Arieanna, expressed the reluctance of many people to ask about their racial background; however, they preferred people ask them as opposed to harboring inaccurate assumptions. Gwyn stated, "…and when they ask me, I'm actually very like, 'Thanks for asking me,' because I never want to come out and be like, 'I'm actually biracial.'" Similarly, Dianna, a first-year student who identified as half Chinese and half White, stated, "I mean, I'm okay if they ask me, but if they just assume right away, it's like, that could be annoying."

Many of the participants felt they regularly experienced racial misidentification, and they began to question if anyone was able to see the truth of their multiracial identity. The participants preferred people ask rather than make incorrect assumptions; however,

they also recognized many people were uncomfortable talking about and asking questions about race.

The participants indicated that societal misidentification, even just one time, made them start to question societal perceptions of their identity. For the participants who articulated that society consistently misidentified them, they expressed a sense of paranoia that everyone may be making incorrect assumptions about their identity. They began to form their own assumptions about people assuming they identified with an incorrect racial or ethnic identity, and this led to feelings of self-consciousness, self-doubt, and paranoia, which affected their overall psyche. Cailyn described her conflicted emotions:

> I don't really know, because I feel like people are confused when they see me. And so, I think there are certain things about me that speak culturally to Blackness, things I say. But this, like, "Duh, you look – " like, I just don't think I could pass authentically as a Black person. And that's probably, I think, my own self-consciousness plays a role in that. So, I don't know, like- Yeah. Like, I don't know what people are thinking, because I'm making assumptions about what they're thinking.

She further described her feelings of anticipation:

> Usually, any space where I'm at, whether it's predominantly White or predominantly represented by people of color, I'm always waiting for them to ask. And I, like, count down how long it takes them to, like, figure it out.

Joseph explained how he assumed people misidentified him on a daily basis, even if nobody explicitly approached him.

When I'm in [the student union], for example, and the majority of the people who

work in [the student union] in the food services are Latinx people, and so I get

interesting looks from them. It feels like – and I'm just guessing. It feels like, "Are

you one of us?" Or they're looking at me kind of longer than I feel like they would

be looking at other people, and wondering, am I going to speak to them in

Spanish, or just wondering if I'm one of them. I think it's like a – and I think it's

coming from a good place intentions-wise. I understand why people would be

trying to seek out other people in their community on a predominantly White

campus. That makes a lot of sense. But I'm pretty sure that, almost on a daily

basis, someone looks at me or interacts with me, in a brief way, and probably

misidentifies me.

He further described his feelings of possible paranoia:

Right. I'm just getting the sense. I'm getting, like, long, extended stares. I'm sure

some of it has to be going on in reality and some of it has to be me – I don't want

to say being paranoid – but me, I could be over-thinking it too. I feel like it's got

to be a healthy dose of both.

Joseph's statements showed how his racial appearance frequently influenced how often

he considered others' perceptions of him, particularly because of how frequently he was

misidentified as Latino. This made it challenging for him to enter spaces with many

people from Latinx backgrounds without feeling paranoid they may be assuming he is

part of their community. He expressed difficulty separating reality from possible

paranoia, which reiterated the challenge for him to outwardly claim his multiracial

identity.

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Arieanna described feelings of paranoia over how people interacted with her, and she expressed concern that their possible misidentification of her identity may influence their interactions with her:

> I feel like I would just be more aware of how people interact with me. I'm not sure, if people misidentify me, if they would sort of talk to me differently or just assume more things or treat me differently as they would if they knew what my real race was.

Gwyn also understood that she could not assume to know what people were thinking; however, given her experiences of people consistently misidentifying her as Latina, she recognized that people were prone to making incorrect assumptions about her identity and may not see her as a multiracial person.

> …I mean, I don't really know people's thoughts in their heads sometimes, but there have been times where people just assume, like, you're Latino, or people come up to me and speak Spanish, and I'm like, "I don't know." Like, I don't speak Spanish.

As a result of Gwyn's lived experiences, she assumed the majority of photo reviewers in the study also identified her as Latina. Similarly, for many other participants, the people who asked or made incorrect assumptions about their racial appearance were the ones who informed the participants' opinions of how society perceived them. The participants expressed a sense of paranoia and in many instances, an assumption that the overwhelming majority of society must not see their true internal sense of identity reflected in their external racial appearance. Regardless of whether participants expressed multiple or minimal instances where racial misidentification occurred, these

experiences and interactions with others affected their beliefs regarding how society

racially identified them.

<div align="center">**Micro Level Factors**</div>

Although macro level factors such as the historical background surrounding the

definition of race ultimately impacted how society viewed the multiracial population and

participants' perceptions on how society viewed them, micro level factors also influenced

the impact of racial appearance on multiracial identity. As depicted in Figure 2, these

micro level factors consisted of relationships that are more direct with family members

and peers and contextual environments such as higher education. This section will

provide more in-depth analysis of the different micro level factors and how they impacted

the participants' understanding of their racial appearance in relation to their multiracial

identity.

<div align="center">**Being Multiracial in a Monoracial Family: "…The accumulation of all my**

knowledge wouldn't be possible without both cultures."</div>

When reflecting on their experiences with their parents, siblings, and extended

families, participants identified multiple benefits and challenges of identifying as

multiracial within a monoracial family. Parents of first-generation multiracial children

generally identify as monoracial, so oftentimes, they only know how to instill their

monoracial backgrounds and cultures onto their multiracial children. This dynamic

further influenced how the participants incorporated a sense of their monoracial halves

into their multiracial identity. Arieanna provided an example of this:

> …Growing up, my parents, they always made a point to take me to festivals, like
>
> a Filipino festival that they have every year, or my dad to African-American-

related museums. And my mom would dress my brother and I up in traditional

Filipino clothes and teach us about the history and culture.

Aimee also described how her parents helped instill their monoracial cultures in her, and

how this combination helped her expand her worldview.

> …I'm really grateful to have both parents, because sometimes I think the
>
> accumulation of all my knowledge wouldn't be possible without both cultures.
>
> And I think if I had just been born into one culture, I would be very closed-
>
> minded and spoiled, frankly. But I have both parents and having both parents has
>
> made me think everything through.

Ryan also described the advantages of having parents who shared their cultural awareness

and values:

> I think, even because my parents, simply their union, maybe what brought them
>
> together was that they're both very culturally aware people. Like, I've traveled a
>
> lot around the world, and I think just because that's a value that they have. But I
>
> think, because I see how there are so many similarities to different types of people
>
> and different family structures that a lot of people don't get to see, because they're
>
> only part of one group, I don't know, it's very nice. I enjoy it. I enjoy being able to
>
> be part of two different crowds…

Although Cailyn found peers who accepted her multiracial identity without expecting her

to conform to monoracial norms, she explained the challenge of identifying as multiracial

within her family:

> …With my peers here, it's accepted and that they're receptive to it, and I think that
>
> lends to their own education level and awareness of racial politics. But when I go

back home, it's different, even amongst family members. So, I'd say that my

Blackness has to take a precedent over my multiraciality because of the general

lack of understanding and inability to engage critically with racial dynamics with

folks back home, and in my family especially.

Although many participants such as Arieanna, Aimee, and Ryan described the advantages

of learning about their monoracial halves from their parents, other participants described

some of the challenges as well. Cailyn described the struggle to relate to her mother's

experiences as a White woman:

Oh. I feel like, if my mother were Black, the dynamic would be different, and I

think my connection to Blackness would feel different. I feel like I've gotten a lot

of White femininity messages, and I think my mom can't understand my

experience because she's White. And I think, it wasn't until after having very

meaningful relationships with Black women that I realized that my femininity was

different because I was raised by a White woman. So, I think that if I had a Black

mom, maybe that would be… I think the way I perceive of myself would be

different.

She further described the challenges her mother had of understanding her experiences as

a multiracial person of color, "And with my mom, like, trying to get her to understand

what it's like being her daughter but still being a woman of color." Joseph also described

the challenges of relating to his White mother and engaging in conversations about race

with his family:

I think I talk about race with my family way more than they would ever want me

to. I think they have tried to be receptive, but my mom is someone who definitely

wants to subscribe to color-blindness, has literally said things like, "I don't see

your dad's color." I'm like, that's interesting, because he's dark brown. And so, I've

had a lot of conversations with family about it, for sure. But even with them, I

know I can only bring it up so often, or I can only have certain kinds of

conversations, because at this point, I know what they would be receptive to or

what might be actually worth – like a pick-your-battles kind of thing.

Both Cailyn and Joseph eloquently described the challenges for monoracial parents to

understand fully their multiracial children's experiences. Other participants explained the

challenge of fitting into their extended families as well. Marisol, a second-year student

whose mother is White, and father is Hispanic, explained that although she felt her

extended family completely accepted her blended family, she still perceived they did not

fit in when they were in public settings:

It kind of makes you feel excluded a little bit. It's hard, because you don't look the

same, so you kind of stick out when you go out. And the Hispanic culture and

being Spanish, it's very family-oriented, so you go out in giant groups of all the

cousins, all the aunts, all the grandparents. So, when you do go out, you kind of

don't totally fit in into the group...But, other than that, I don't think it would make

me feel – it doesn't make me feel bad in any way.

In Arieanna's experience, some of her extended family was not as accepting of her

parents' interracial marriage; however, her parents helped her overcome the initial hurt of

rejection.

I feel like the initial hurt that – especially family members, not immediate family,

but sort of extended family, they would say that. But then, it doesn't bother my

parents. They don't see it. And since they don't have a problem with it, I don't see why I would. Because, initially, I always want to go and defend my parents, but since they're not bothered by it, I don't see why I would need to. But we don't really talk to those family members.

Both Marisol and Arieanna explained the possibility of feeling excluded among and within their own, extended family due to racial appearances and their multiracial backgrounds. Although they both did not allow the feeling of exclusion to negatively affect them, other participants such as Joseph and Cailyn described feelings of frustration when family members struggled to understand and accept their experience as multiracial people of color. Through their experiences, many of the participants alluded to the idea that society believed people only connect to a community if they visually blend into that community. Nevertheless, many of the participants did not feel this was a requirement for them to feel connected to their families. Through the interview process, Ryan started to question why he never felt he looked different than his parents,

People might not actually feel close to their parents because they look different. I hadn't thought about that. I hadn't thought about that that was a thing, because I guess I've never felt that way. Yeah, which is interesting, because I'm wondering why I don't. I guess, because – actually, that's weird. It's weird that I've never felt like I look different than my mom and dad, even though I do.

Dianna explained how it does not bother her if she does not racially appear the same as her [White] father:

I don't really mind. It's not like, oh, I have to look like my dad in some way…But it doesn't really bother me. It's just like, yeah, okay...I don't think so. I don't

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remember my family ever mentioning that, because I feel like, since I was born,

they just, like, knew and were like, "Yeah, okay." They just accepted, like, "It

doesn't matter."

Although many of the participants felt they may confuse society, and society might judge

them and make incorrect assumptions about them and their families, it ultimately did not

bother many of the participants to not racially appear like their parents or extended

families. Although society may not be as familiar with their experiences, for them, it was

normal and comfortable to be a part of a multiracial, interracial family. However, it

could still be challenging to connect to each other's experiences, especially with family

members who look racially different from the participants.

Part of being multiracial meant participants often felt like they stood out and

struggled to find others, particularly monoracial others, who fully understood their lived

experience of being multiracial. For participants with siblings, several of them indicated

the shared experience and comradery of the multiracial sibling experience. Ryan

described the influence of growing up with his twin brother and how it helped him

navigate monoracial spaces:

But because of him [twin brother], oftentimes in those [monoracial] settings,

when I was growing up at least, I'd have someone else in my ethnic background,

so I didn't necessarily feel isolated all the time, whereas I might have if I didn't

have a twin.

Arieanna described how her mother dressed both her and her brother in traditional

clothing, and Marisol described how her father sent her and her brother and sister to

Geneva or Spain where they were "just kind of totally immersed in the culture and

getting our language back up." Other participants described how their siblings shared in their journey to understand better their multiracial identity. Gwyn described how she felt her siblings would be able to better relate to the results of the photo review sessions, "So, I think my sisters and my brother, well, they'll definitely relate to it more, because they're biracial." The participants expressed multiple instances where having siblings helped them feel less isolated and more connected and comfortable with their multiracial identity.

Although many of the participants expressed a connection to their parents and siblings, many also expressed the challenges for their monoracial parents to connect to their multiracial experiences. Upon learning the results of the photo review sessions, participants reflected on how they thought their parents might respond if they saw the results. Nearly all the photo reviewers incorrectly identified Aimee with the overwhelming majority classifying her as monoracial White. Aimee expressed surprise at these results as she felt she phenotypically looked the most Asian compared to her siblings. Upon reflection, she stated:

> So, I think, for even the most Asian one [sibling] to look completely White to society, kind of tells my parents that all their children can be sold as White, they can sell a White race. And I wonder if my dad – I don't think he'd ever say it, but I wonder if he would be, like, slightly hurt that none of us look more Asian...I feel like, from an economic standpoint, he would always say, like, "No, because it's better for you to be White in the society that we live in." But as a dad with children, I feel like he might think differently, like, "I wish that they looked more like me so I didn't feel like such a foreigner in my own family."

Joseph further described how he felt his parents might react to the results in which all the photo reviewers identified him as Latino or Hispanic.

> I think, overall, they would not be surprised. I think they would both be not totally happy with it. I think my mom would be shocked a little bit, because I don't think she's ever truly understood that I walk through this life as a person of color, and this really illuminates that too...My dad would be unsurprised. My dad has told me often that I look Mexican, and not with particular excitement does he say that. So, I think he would be – he wouldn't be upset, but he certainly has his own prejudices toward, I think, Latino people. So, I don't think he would be jumping for joy over this.

Marisol described how she felt her dad would be surprised and possibly offended by the results in which none of the photo reviewers identified her Hispanic heritage:

> But I think my dad would be surprised, because since he is fully Spanish and that's all he thinks about and all he characterizes himself as, I think he'd be surprised that no one saw that in me, and maybe even a little offended.

In many of the examples highlighted above, the participants described how their parents might not be comfortable with the idea that their children were racially misidentified. In some cases, such as with Joseph, he felt his mother would be surprised because she did not realize people perceived him as a person of color. In other cases, such as with Aimee, she felt her parents might be surprised that society did not view her as a person of color. In both Aimee and Marisol's reflection, they recognized the possibility their parents may be disappointed that their racial and ethnic backgrounds were not visible to the photo

reviewers. This disappointment stemmed from the idea the reviewers were unable to see a piece of their culture and a racial and ethnic identity that was incredibly salient to them.

Many of the participants repeatedly stated they felt their parents would be surprised by the results of the photo review sessions, but they, themselves, ultimately were not surprised when they were misidentified. All the participants expressed multiple experiences of societal misidentification which meant they often felt obligated to justify and explain their multiracial background in many situations throughout their lives. Although many of the participants appreciated and recognized the importance of their monoracial parents instilling their monoracial cultures on them, they also ultimately described how their experiences as multiracial individuals differ from their parents and extended families.

Monoracial Peers and Searching for Community: "I was like the multiracial person trying to find my space on campus…"

Similar to trying to connect with monoracial family members, many participants also found challenges connecting with monoracial peers within the college environment. The participants expressed many instances and experiences where individuals asked and expected them to identify within their monoracial halves. However, when they tried to connect with others who identified with one of their monoracial backgrounds, they oftentimes felt uncomfortable and received messages of resistance and doubt as to the authenticity of belonging to that particular monoracial group.

As all the participants were current students within a traditional university environment, in many cases, participants joined monoracial organizations and tried to connect with other monoracial peers; however, they still felt out of place in one or both

monoracial spaces. No matter how hard they tried to prove their status within the

monoracial group, they did not always feel accepted. Marisol explained her experience:

> But the only events that I've been to where it's for a Hispanic community, I
>
> haven't really had the urge to go back, just because of how I've been – like, how I
>
> was received with not feeling fully Hispanic, because there is a difference.

Aimee also explained her challenge of finding peers who could fully understand her

different monoracial sides and how they influence and inform her multiracial identity:

> ...it's difficult because there's not a lot of people who can relate to a lot of
>
> experiences, because you can have friends who can understand the Chinese side,
>
> and you can have friends who understand the American side, but neither are really
>
> going to understand what it's like to have both worlds.

In Ryan's case, he did not bother joining monoracial organizations because he knew they

were not a true reflection of how he identifies:

> Yeah. And I think that might be why I'm not necessarily part of any cultural
>
> groups. I feel like it's easier to connect with them when that's, like, your identity,
>
> which isn't, like, the case for me. I don't just identify as any one thing.

Other participants began to recognize the struggle to feel fully connected in monoracial

spaces on campus and began searching for spaces where they could be free to identify

with all their racial backgrounds as a multiracial person. Joseph, in particular, struggled

to find a space, so he created his own organization:

> I was like the multiracial person trying to find my space on campus, that kind of
>
> thing. So, I was in the Filipino Org, and that didn't quite do it for me, and so I
>
> joined the Asian-American, the Pan-Asian kind of student union, and that didn't

quite do it for me. And then, that's when I actually – I think I went on a retreat or something, you know, some Student Affairs thing, and really reflected more on a multiracial identity and how that seemed like what was holding me back from feeling very connected to a Filipino or an Asian-American identity. And that's when I started a multiracial students organization on my campus. And I think, from then on, that's really been where I've been at, is just strongly identifying as multiracial.

Joseph discussed the importance of finding a space where he could identify as multiracial instead of struggling to form connections in monoracial spaces. Cailyn also described her quest to find a "third space" where she could connect with other people who also identified as multiracial:

So, I don't want to be on either of those sides, because I find them problematic. So, I think there is some solitude in trying to find a third space that is a little more conscious and aware. And I find camaraderie amongst people who share multiracial identity, who align themselves – who perceive of that identity similarly to the way I do, too, because I'm certain that there are multiracial people who internalize both of those dichotomous views about multiraciality. So, I'm trying to find – I'm in this third space, and I'm trying to assert this third space, and I find some allyship and friends along the way, but I don't feel necessarily alone. But I don't know how to articulate that third space.

Cailyn described confusion over how to articulate a "third space" which would allow her to fully connect with her multiracial identity. Monoracial peers may influence and spur this confusion due to their potential lack of acceptance and understanding of multiracial

identity. It may also be further complicated by the participants' comfort in accepting

their monoracial identities within themselves and their families. Additional research by

Renn (1998, 1999, 2002) and King (2008) support the challenge for multiracial students

to feel acceptance in monoracial groups as well as some communities of color.

Individual level Factors

As depicted in Figure 2, different levels of factors move between and among the

macro level to the micro level to the individual level where participants themselves

shaped the impact of racial appearance on multiracial identity as well as their reactions to

the macro and micro level factors. Important to note was that the participants did not

indicate a need to silo the different factors within specific levels but indicated they all

interacted and influenced each other. This interdependence was particularly evident

within the individual level as participants explained their internal identity and how they

felt external factors did or did not play a role.

In this section, I identified multiple examples of how macro and micro level

factors intersected at the individual level. I also described how the individual level

focused more on how the participants internalized the macro and micro factors and made

sense of them in terms of their overall sense of their multiracial identity.

Within this section, I discuss the implications of how the participants described

their strong ties to their multiracial identity, regardless of how they felt others perceived

their racial identity. The section then includes an explanation of how the participants

expressed challenges to identifying as multiracial when societal expectations pressured

them to compartmentalize their identity within their monoracial halves. The section then

provides an explanation as to how and why participants felt they needed to defend their

multiracial identity. I then further explain the impacts of being misidentified, in large part due to racial appearance, and how this affects the participants' sense of self. While the participants all expressed confidence in their identity as multiracial individuals, they also expressed limitations in their ability to outwardly identify because of the constraints placed on them by societal definitions and expectations. I then move into a description of the importance of expanding how society defines race as the current that limited definitions of race tend to exclude multiracial individuals and limit society's ability to better connect and understand the multiracial population.

After describing the importance of providing a more inclusive definition of race, I then explain the impact and influence of higher education on multiracial advocacy. The participants expressed their interest in finding spaces where they could connect with their multiracial identity and advocate on behalf of the multiracial population. The section concludes with an account of the benefits the participants expressed that were a direct result of their multiracial identity. Although their racial appearance may have caused society to struggle to accept and understand them, the participants indicated that this had the opposite effect on themselves. The experiences of being misidentified, marginalized, and misunderstood helped the participants gain important skills such as empathy, an increased ability to see multiple perspectives, and the ability to remain open-minded when meeting new people.

Strong Internal Multiracial Identity: "I know what I am"

In all cases, regardless of how the participants felt society racially identified them, they were adamant that it did not affect their internal sense of self as a multiracial being. Upon seeing the results of the photo review sessions, Aimee realized that nearly all the

reviewers identified her incorrectly as monoracial White/Caucasian, but when asked how this may affect her multiracial identity, she responded, "I still view myself as White mixed with Asian. I don't think that other people perceiving me as White would ever make me believe that I were just White, because that just doesn't make sense."

All of the photo reviewers also consistently misidentified Arieanna, and she stated that it ultimately did not affect her internal sense of self as a multiracial person, "I don't think I would change or alter what I'm doing with my life and how I go about things. I just feel like, once I know, like, yes or no, or just the simple fact, I'll just plug it in the back of my mind and just carry on."

Unlike Arieanna and Aimee, the photo reviewers identified Dianna more consistently as multiracial; however, whenever she was misidentified, she did not feel it affected her sense of self, "I know what I am. And if someone mistakes me, I can always, like, tell them. It's not a big deal. It's just based on their own past experience with people, I think."

Regardless of the results of the photo review sessions, the participants all determined that the way others racially identified them did not deter them from maintaining a strong internal connection to their multiracial identity. Although they felt a strong connection to their internal identity, many of them still struggled to process situations when others incorrectly identified them. Many of the participants recognized that their multiracial background might not be initially obvious in their racial appearance, but their reactions to how this affected their overall sense of self varied. The most consistent theme clearly described by all participants was their strong ties to their multiracial identity, regardless of how they felt others might perceive their racial identity.

Monoracial Halves vs. Multiracial Whole: "Yeah, but what are you? Are you Asian

or are you White?" And I'm like, "I'm biracial."

Regardless of how often others incorrectly identified them, the participants still felt a strong connection to their multiracial identity. However, they also expressed feeling constrained by society's constant demand that they fit into an easily defined racial category. Cailyn described this tension between self-defined identity and societal definitions of identity:

> So, I was going to the doctor, and the person at the desk asked me what my race was, and so I said Black and White, kind of knowing that he probably didn't have two options for me, but I just wanted to put it out there, like, "I'm Black and White." And then he's like, "You can only choose one." So, I was like, "Black." And he's like, "Are you sure?" And I was like, "Yeah, I'm Black." And he's like, "Let me name all the categories for you, and you can choose from one of these." Like, he wanted me to be anything but Black. He was just like, "I got American Indian, I got non-White Hispanic, I got White Hispanic." And I was like, "You can just put Black." Yeah. So, they just want to put me into a category that makes sense to them.

Kodi explained how he felt others expected him to understand Black culture in the United States because they assumed he identified as an African American man.

> And there are often-not too often, but there are oftentimes when I'm expected to know something, and I have to tell people, I was not raised in a Black household. Like, I am a Black person. My parents are Black people. But I was not raised on Black culture. I was raised on Latino culture.

Kodi further explained how he felt society expected him to adapt to a certain culture because of his racial appearance:

> Over the last ten years, to really identify with Black culture, it's made it so hard, that I don't resonate with these experiences because I have a different upbringing. And people expect me to, because of how they view me, because of how they look at me. They expect me to know these things, and they expect me to have this same level of appreciation for it that they do, and it's straight-up awkward when I don't.

Zerah also described the tension between how she identified her culture and how others expected her to define her culture:

> Just today, someone was naming an artist, and they were flipping out that I didn't know who it was. I'm just like, "I'm sorry. That's just not the music I listen to. That's just not me." And they're getting upset, and they're like, "You're not cultured. You know, what are you doing?"… And then, they start to challenge my knowledge, and then it's just like, "I'm smart. I'm here for a reason." I don't understand how my culture is associated here, I guess, like, not having enough knowledge. I think that they're two completely separate things. I'm not knowledgeable as much in American culture because I choose not to adapt to that culture. I want to stick with my culture as long and hard as possible, because that's what I want; that's what I identify as.

Zerah expressed feeling invalidated by others who expected her to conform to their definition of being Black in the United States. These feelings were further complicated once people found out the truth of her multiracial and multicultural identity, yet still

questioned and challenged her right to culturally identify with her multiracial

background. Zerah described this pressure:

> Now I identify myself as Black, and that's because I work for the Students of
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> Color in STEM organization[pseudonym], and looking at the statistics of
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> Black/African-Americans now, and just looking at my skin tone, and people
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> telling me, "No, you're Black, you're Black," I just feel obligated, like I have to
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> help the statistics, really. And, you know, every time I check off on the box, I just
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> say, "Okay, you know, I'm Black." Like, let me help the statistics. Like, yes I got
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> into college. Yes, I'm in engineering. And that's what I – I feel like it's more of an
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> obligation as to why I'm checking that off. But personally, I would classify
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> multiracial/Caribbean…And I wish I could go back to checking on the box
>
> "other/multiracial," but after seeing statistics, and everywhere I go, my peers are
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> saying, "Oh, you're Black," and I don't see the option to say "Caribbean" on
>
> paper, the motivation has just decreased over time.

Internally, Zerah saw herself as multiracial Caribbean, but outwardly she chose to

surrender to society's perception of her as a Black/African American out of a sense of

obligation. She admitted that because of her racial appearance, she could "pass" as

monoracial, and she received pressure from her colleagues and peers to identify as such.

Gwyn also explained the societal pressure and expectation to identify as monoracial:

> …like, before even like "check two boxes" was available or "multiracial" was
>
> available, it was very Black-and-White. And I still think a lot of people think that
>
> way. Like, if I identify as biracial, they're like, "Yeah, but what are you? Are you

Asian or are you White?" And I'm like, "I'm biracial." And they're like, "Well,

choose one." They like to compartmentalize, I think.

Arieanna described a similar experience of people asking her to further define her

multiracial background:

Mainly because I get a lot of – growing up, I got a lot of "half-breed," "mulatto,"

which was incorrect, I think, more Black-and-White than Black-and-Asian. Now I

get a lot of questions of, "What are you?" Not, "Where are you from?" but, "What

are you?"

Arieanna, Gwyn, and Zerah explained how society still expects multiracial individuals to

identify as monoracial, and if they do not, then society will pick for them. Given the

constraints on how societal definitions of race tend to be limited to monoracial terms,

society tends to compartmentalize race within monoracial categories. Although the

multiracial population is growing, there are still limits on their ability to claim all their

races. The participants expressed frustrations with the pressure they felt to define

themselves based on their monoracial halves instead of their multiracial whole. Joseph

explained this pressure and expectation that he should identify more strongly with one of

his monoracial backgrounds over the other:

When people think about multiracial identity – so, for me, I'm Filipino and White

– I think one of the kind of questions that people have is, "Which side do you

identify with? Which is more salient?" And it's tricky for me, because I grew up

in a predominantly Black environment. I don't think that I really look that Asian-

American or White. So, it's like, I don't particularly feel very connected to either

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of those things in a way that a lot of people I know might feel connected to one or

the other based on how they look or based on where they grew up.

Joseph further described how he felt he must "act" Asian in order to be accepted as part

Asian.

It's almost like I have to try and put in a lot of effort into being, like, Asian. I feel

like I have to do it, like it's a performance or it's a thing that I have to have

checkmarks on a list to kind of get the credentials.

Zerah also explained how she felt forced into certain monoracial expectations and

culture, "I feel like it's being forced on me to adapt and listen and read and do American

cultured stuff, and I have my own."

Although all the participants were very confident in their identity as a multiracial

person, they all indicated challenges, influenced by factors primarily within the macro

and micro levels, to identifying as multiracial. Even after people discovered their

multiracial identity, they still felt pressure to prove their association with their different

monoracial backgrounds. Marisol described this pressure to prove her Hispanic

background:

…Whenever I mention that I'm multiracial or if I show up to, like, a Hispanic

event – like, I've signed up for certain organizations for stuff that, when I show

up, a lot of people are like, "Are you really Hispanic? Do you speak Spanish, or

what's going on?" Because I don't have an accent, and a lot of times people

expect an accent when you have Hispanic in you, or they expect you just to have

some showing of being Hispanic, when I'm very much seeming American and

Caucasian. But what surprises them is that when I do speak Spanish, I don't sound

like a foreigner; I sound Hispanic.

Arieanna described a similar experience:

…Mainly because I lean more towards the African-American side of my

appearance. And so, sometimes when I talk about how I'm Filipina, that side of

the culture, if I'm talking to other people, some of them will try to stop me and go,

"Well, are you really? Is it just sort of a little bit?" as in, they're thinking, like, an

eighth. And so, "No, it's 50 percent. It's even. It might not look it, but…"

Dianna also explained how others asked her to prove her connection to her Chinese

background:

I feel like they expect me to have certain characteristics about myself, like, "Oh,

since you're part Chinese, you know how to speak the language, right?" And I'm

like, "No, I don't know." So, I feel like, especially since I'm part Asian, they

expect me to know certain cultural things about my Chinese half, or whatever.

Ryan also described challenges of feeling fully accepted in monoracial environments:

I mean, I guess, maybe when I'm in environments with, say, a lot of Indian

people, because I personally don't know Hindi. I guess that's been less a priority,

maybe, since I wasn't ever full, and I've had other things, I guess. So, sometimes,

when I'm in those crowds, even though I do fit in, I don't feel like I'm necessarily

a true member, or something. Sort of the Caucasian, too, because I am colored.

And in both, I'm not full, right? So, there's the whole, like, you can fit in, but at

the same time, like, you're not necessarily a regular member, I guess.

The participants expressed many instances where society seemed to think they had the right to challenge the participants' identity when their societal assumptions did not align with the participants' self-definition of their racial background. Instead of society accepting them as multiracial, they were consistently asked to "prove" that they belonged within their monoracial halves by speaking another language and being familiar with cultural traditions and norms. When people asked participants to prove their monoracial connection, it made the participants feel like people viewed their multiracial identity within their monoracial halves and not the blending of their monoracial halves.

In Defense of My Identity: "…this continues to illuminate how hard it is for me to identify as multiracial."

Being raised by monoracial parents and living in a society, which expected multiracial people to identify with their monoracial halves meant the participants were accustomed to living a duality which required them to flip back and forth between their different monoracial identities. Yet they still struggled to find acceptance in monoracial spaces. This struggle, combined with the impact of their racial appearance on societal misperceptions of their race, influenced how they defined their multiracial identity. Upon receiving the results of the photo review participants, Joseph saw that every reviewer identified him as Hispanic or Latino. He explained how this collective reaction affected his ability to claim his multiracial identity:

> I think that this continues to illuminate how hard it is for me to identify as multiracial. Going back to that conversation about different kinds of multiracial people, some, I think, might be termed "exotic" or might be racially ambiguous. There's not a lot of ambiguity here. People really just see me as a monoracial –

even though it's not really a race – a monoracial Latino person…So, but no, this isn't – internally, in my sense of self, this doesn't shake that at all, because my experiences of being multiracial are so, you know, internally embedded, that this doesn't do much other than add an extra step in the conversation of me living out my identity of being a multiracial person. It's just the extra step of having to explain to people that I am…So, certainly, this informs my multiracial experience, but it doesn't make me feel less. That's still a salient identity to me, and I think it still describes my lived experiences very well.

Upon learning the results of the photo review session, Marisol also described the challenge of staying "grounded" in her Hispanic heritage because nobody was able to identify her Hispanic background correctly based on her racial appearance:

I definitely think it's harder to kind of stay grounded in my Hispanic heritage because of these views, just because when it's consistently everyone thinking you're Caucasian or White, it kind of gets to you where you just start to identify as that as well, or you just get tired of explaining, "No, I'm this," so you just say, "Yeah, I'm White, or Caucasian." On the other hand, though, people consistently categorizing me as White makes me want to kind of fight back and tell them, "Well, no, I am multiracial."

Part of the experience of identifying as multiracial is to live in a society that does not necessarily recognize, understand, and at times, accept the multiracial population. Joseph specifically described how he felt a strong, internal connection to his multiracial identity; however, he must go through extra steps in order to be able to outwardly "live out" his identity as a multiracial person and help others truly understand that being multiracial

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meant he differed from many monoracial norms. Cailyn also described the "gray area" and the tug of war between how she identified and how society identified her, and how this affected her view of her identity.

> I think it's – that's where I feel like I sit in the middle, the gray area of that space, being tugged between both and constantly, like – I don't know how to describe it. But I just feel like I'm in – it's not the sunken place, but just, like, where I stand has a lot more to do with other people's perception's rather than my own and what I assert as my identity.

Kodi also expressed his frustrations over being able to claim the truth of his identity and how it was constantly in flux with how society viewed him:

> I fucking hate those [demographic survey] forms, because they always – they always, always, always have the separate Hispanic or Latino category, and they have the list of other categories, and mixed African-American is just not Hispanic or Latino. I'm Hispanic and Latino. I'm not historically African-American in the American construct of the word, but when I leave my house, I am an African-American. No one sees that, you know, I am Dominican and Panamanian. They see a Black man. They see, you know, somebody whose parents were in Harlem in the '60s or something like that. I don't know. But, you know, that's – so, I check both boxes, because, you know, that's, like – I identify with my ethnicity. I identify as Afro-Latino. But I'm African-American as well, because that's what society has placed me as. That's what this society has placed me as. And if it didn't matter, I wouldn't care. But it matters significantly.

Kodi went on to explain how societal perceptions matter because they oftentimes influenced the way they treated him.

> And, you know, the way that you're perceived by other people is very important. So, when people perceive me as a second-class citizen, whether or not they believe that in their own mind, for me, that doesn't matter as much, because society has a conditioned way that, you know, most people will take that with their initial – you know, will add that to their initial impression of you whether they know it or not. It's kind of subconscious. And then, you know, for the people who consciously have something against it, that's just even worse.

Cailyn also explained her frustrations of being misidentified and the possible implications of being misidentified:

> I think people racialize me the way that they want. They make assumptions about me. I actually have experienced that more recently with some peers who – I think it was very well intentioned – not wanting to ask about what my identity is and just accepting me as a light-skinned person of color. And that's how they accepted me in, like, POC [people of color] spaces…And I think, also, being kind of ambiguous, people – having a lot of experience being racialized as a part of communities that I don't belong to. So, until I assert my racial identity in those spaces, I think that kind of changes. And so, if someone's operating under the assumption that I'm Latina, then they're treating me as though I'm a Latina person, until I tell them that I'm a Black person, and then their schema has to change or shift. I think that people aren't receptive or still have trouble wrapping their minds

around me being multiracial or Black and, like, fluidly navigating both of those

spaces.

Similarly, Aimee emphasized how she felt particularly offended when people

misidentified her as part Hispanic:

I think that is the response that, in my past, has offended me the most, is being

White and Hispanic, because it puts me into this disadvantaged place where

people then make assumptions about being Hispanic on me, and those

assumptions are not at all comparable to being Asian.

Kodi, Cailyn, and Aimee eloquently described the frustration and significance of being

consistently misidentified, and additional participants including Joseph, Zerah, and

Marisol further emphasized the challenge this placed on their ability to outwardly claim

their multiracial identity. This tension between self-versus social definitions of racial

identity caused many participants to feel defensive and paranoid about how often they

were misidentified and what this ultimately meant in terms of how they were treated.

Tensions Between Self versus Societal Definitions of Identity: "…they're not getting

my perspective…"

As explained in the macro level section above, the participants indicated feelings

of paranoia due to their experiences of individuals misidentifying them based on their

racial appearance. They shaped their perceptions from interactions with those who

approached them with inquiries and/or incorrect assumptions (indirectly influenced by

historical and societal factors) about their racial backgrounds. Several participants

admittedly recognized that their lived experiences of society consistently misidentifying

them tended to be one-sided as they rarely had the chance, prior to this study, to gain

perspectives from others other than contact, typically from random, curious strangers.

During the second round of interviews, many of the participants expressed

feelings of curiosity to learn the results of the photo review sessions while simultaneously

expressing their assumptions that they could accurately guess the results based on their

prior experiences of receiving societal misidentification. Dianna specifically described

her feelings:

Yeah, I guess just curious...I guess I'm not too worried about, like, "I hope people

identify me correctly," because –I'm not worried about that, just because I guess

I've had so much experience with being misidentified that I'm not really that

concerned with it.

Upon learning the results of the photo review sessions, Dianna realized that many of the

reviewers guessed her multiracial background correctly, and many guessed her as

monoracial Asian. The results surprised her because her typical lived experience when

people approach her to ask about her racial identity was that they assumed she was mixed

race. She never knew what others might assume about her racial background, so she was

surprised to discover how many of the photo reviewers assumed she was monoracial

Asian.

I don't think I ever noticed people just assuming one, because I feel like, when

they usually ask, they're already suspicious, "Oh, she's probably a mix." So, I feel

like most people who ask that probably think I am. But then, like, the overall

population does not think that? I never notice that.

The results of the photo review sessions also confused Gwyn. She was convinced she would know the outcome of the photo review sessions since she felt people consistently misidentified her as Latina or Hispanic in her everyday life. She stated, "I guess I kind of already think I'll know what the results might be." However, once she saw that nearly half of the photo review participants correctly identified her as multiracial, she was surprised.

> I'm, like, in shock right now. I think this is so funny. I think it's – because it completely, like, shows that I was wrong, but not in a bad way, but my conception about what other people, their conceptions of me are very different than what I thought...Right, that's crazy to me, that people were able to pick it out. But it's kind of comforting, I think, too, because people do realize what I am.

She further emphasized her surprise and tried to decipher why she was so doubtful that people would be able to see her multiracial background:

> …These results really caught me off guard. I didn't expect them. And I think I was not giving people the benefit of the doubt when I was like, people are just going to assume I'm Latina, whatever. Maybe that was a defense mechanism for me to just safeguard myself against being mislabeled or something...

> Similarly, Cailyn was surprised by how many photo review participants correctly guessed her multiracial background, "Wow, a lot of people thought I was half Black and half White, which is actually kind of nice. I'm, like, surprised. That's so affirming." She further explained how she based her perception of how society sees her on only the people who ask about her background, so to see the photo reviewer responses challenged her pre-conceived notions of societal perceptions:

I think I'm most surprised at how many folks perceived of me to be African-American or Black, because...Well, I guess, you know, there are people who don't ask, and then the people who do ask are the ones that are surprised. So, I'm sure the people who don't ask may just assume or know, but I'm only engaging with who are asking, so that's why I think it's just interesting. It's challenging my schema of people's perception of me, a little bit. It's mostly affirming.

Although Kodi was overwhelmingly identified as monoracial Black/African American, as he assumed would be the case, he expressed surprise and curiosity at the couple of reviewers who guessed he was possibly multiracial, and "I would just ask the people who guessed mixed why – you know, what prompted them to say that? You know, how they picked up on that, because, like I said, most people don't."

Ryan was expecting his appearance would confuse most participants, and found it reassuring that while the responses were not necessarily accurate; many still identified him as multiracial:

…I think I just find it amusing, seeing, again, how many people don't have any idea. But in some ways, I'm happy about it, because I like – it's nice knowing, I guess, people know I'm multiracial, and at least I'm not being – I think it's probably a good thing I'm not being stereotyped then, because people don't really have an idea about how to stereotype me.

All the participants reported multiple experiences when individuals misidentified them due to their appearance, and this resulted in many of them believing the majority of society misidentified them. As soon as a single person misidentified them, this could cause them to assume most people misidentify them. This led to a sense of paranoia as

participants continued to doubt that society had the capacity to identify them correctly. All the participants expressed feelings of curiosity to know what people thought when they looked at them, since their experiences up until participating in this study consisted of only the limited population of people who spoke up and said something or asked.

When participants saw that the photo reviewers correctly identified, or even partially correctly identified their racial identity, they experienced positive feelings such as affirmation, comfort, and happiness. They were also surprised and shocked when photo reviewers guessed correctly because of their prior experiences of being so consistently misidentified. This surprise was another aspect that set apart multiracial identity from monoracial identity in that the participants reacted as though it was a gift when the photo reviewers identified them correctly. Something so simple, that many monoracial individuals may take for granted, was something special and pleasantly surprising to the multiracial participants.

Interesting to note was how the most surprising responses for the participants occurred when the photo reviewers provided an accurate response, and this caused positive emotions; however, for the participants who did not experience any accurate responses, this led to more negative feelings. When asked if the results of the photo review session ultimately mattered to her, Marisol stated, "Yeah, I definitely think it matters, because I'd like to be able to live with both those races, when it's pretty much, right now, it seems like it's only one."

Because of her lived experiences, Marisol did not expect any of the photo review participants to see any of her Hispanic heritage; however, it did not stop her from feeling disappointed when the results met her expectations. "I'd say I'm a little disappointed that

not a single person got partly Hispanic. But it was expected…But, yeah, that's just…I wish there was one person there who had maybe seen it."

Joseph was also used to society constantly misidentifying him as a monoethnic Latino person, and the photo review results confirmed his expectations; however, he expressed frustration at this constant misidentification and how people did not seem to understand or care about the impact this had on his daily life.

> But the interesting thing about this is, they're not hearing or seeing that the impacts – or they're not getting my perspective, or the perspective of the people in the photographs. So, I think there's sort of a, "Oh, I think he's Hispanic. Oh, he's Filipino and White? Oh, man, that was a tough one, okay." But then, it's sort of – there's not the presence of, like, what is that impact on me? Times 26 [photo reviewers], times 365 days a year for my entire life. You know what I mean? They don't understand the implications, maybe, in how that impacts me.

Dianna was also confused as she was trying hard not to get offended by the reviewers who incorrectly guessed her racial background, "I mean, I think I should just keep trying not to get, like, offended or anything." Aimee expressed similar tension and confusion over how to process the results showing all the participants identified her as monoracial White:

> I'm trying to decide whether or not I'm offended...Because I feel like it's a good thing to be White, inherently, but I guess I do wish it were more noticeable that I were Asian...I guess, if it were more noticeable, then people would understand that that's a part of me.

Aimee explained how she tied in people's ability to identify her multiracial background correctly with their ability to better understand her as a multiracial person. When participants were consistently misidentified, and their true racial background was not visibly and readily apparent, then they felt as though a large part of their identity was misunderstood. While they understood why and how their racial appearance might give off confusing cues about their racial and ethnic identity, they still struggled not to feel offended, hurt, or discouraged. Consequently, irrespective of the accuracy or inaccuracy of the photo review results, the participants were still not convinced that society fully understood their multiracial identity. As Caitlyn stated, "It is still more complex than what they're able to assume and project onto me based off of their own assumptions or exposure to other folks who they know are mixed race, or whatever…"

Regardless of how often the participants were correctly or incorrectly identified, it was apparent that up until their participation in this study, the incorrect assumptions they received from their prior lived experiences were the ones that informed their opinions of how society perceived them. While participants such as Gwyn, Caitlyn, and Ryan expressed positive feelings of affirmation when they realized many of the photo review participants correctly identified their racial background, others such as Joseph, Marisol, Dianna, and Aimee expressed confusion, frustration, and disappointment when the photo reviewers misidentified their multiracial identity—even though they were correctly anticipating the results.

In multiple instances, the participants indicated feeling limited in their ability to self-identify as multiracial. Joseph further explained how the results of being

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consistently misidentified instilled negative, discouraging feelings and challenged his ability to claim his multiracial identity.

> I think there's the potential for some people to be racially misidentified and see it as, it's not bad, or it could even be flattering. I don't know. But for me, it makes me – it definitely is never a positive feeling, and it makes me – it certainly makes me question, like, to what extent can I really self-identify or proclaim an identity or identities when I know the power of what people project onto me? So, in that way, it's disheartening and kind of discouraging, because it's like, dang, I'm out here doing Asian-American advocacy work, doing the most as far as trying to be an Asian-American or Filipino-American, whatever that means, and at the end of the day, I'm still going to walk down the street and somebody's going to be like, "There goes a Mexican guy." I really do feel that way.

The impact of societal misidentification, in large part due to racial appearance, made the participants question their sense of self. It also called into question who defined self-identity and highlighted the power and influence of society when constructing self-identity. The participants expressed limitations in their ability to self-identify because of the constraints placed on them by societal definitions and expectations, even if those definitions were incorrect. While the participants all expressed confidence in their identity as multiracial individuals, when individuals challenged their identity and misidentified them, this, at times, led to hurtful, discouraging feelings of self-doubt. However, the strength of their connection to their multiracial identity helped them develop a thick skin and a sense of pride. Many of the participants, such as Arieanna described below, recognized the importance of accepting themselves and all their racial

backgrounds, regardless of any misidentification or misinterpretation of their racial and culture identities.

> About myself, I feel like it's [my multiracial identity] taught me that I'm really proud of who I am, comfortable in my own skin, because – I don't know. Some of the kids tried to pick on me, not even kids, even adults. They would try to make comments on it. And instead of seeing it as an insult, I sort of flip it and say, "I don't see why you think that's a bad thing. I think it's great. I'm proud of who I am." And also, about others, it taught me that it doesn't really matter what you can say to sort of justify who you are…Others are going to believe what they want to believe, and they're going to say what they want to say. I feel like, as long as I'm proud of who I am, I don't really care about what they think.

This tension between self and societal definitions of multiracial identity caused the participants to engage in deep self-reflection and ultimately caused many of them to engage in exploring their multiracial identity. It also caused them to appeal for change in how society viewed the multiracial population.

The Need for a More Inclusive Definition of Race: "Put yourself in other people's shoes and see things from their perspective."

The participants consistently expressed the importance of society recognizing the truth of their self-defined identity. They further explained how their multiracial background helped inform much of their identity and making incorrect assumptions about their racial identity limited a person's ability to better connect and understand them. Ryan described some of these limitations:

I think that a lot of people don't really – they get to see my physical appearance; they don't really get to know anything else about me. And sort of how I celebrate my culture and act and how I identify on a personal level. So, I think, just knowing my [multiracial] background would be interesting.

Several participants also expressed the importance of correcting people's false interpretations of their racial identity. In particular, prior to learning the results of the photo review session, Arieanna did not feel it was as important to justify her identity to others; however, once she learned how many people incorrectly identified her racial identity as Indian, she recognized how this does ultimately matter to her. When asked what (if anything) she would want the photo reviewers to know about her, and what she hopes they learned, she responded:

Arieanna: I'm not Indian.

Interviewer: And is it important to you to make sure they [photo reviewers] know you aren't?

Arieanna: I didn't think it was before, because I didn't think a large – I mean, it happened occasionally that some people thought I was Indian, but apparently it seems like more people think I'm Indian than I am…I hope that they learned to not assume. And I hope that they learned that just skin tone and skin color does not just make a race. And I hope they learn that multiracial is a check box that they can fill. It doesn't just have to be one or the other.

Upon learning that nearly all the photo reviewers only saw the Caucasian side of her multiracial identity, and none of the reviewers identified her Asian background, when

Aimee was asked the same questions about what she wanted the photo reviewers to know and learn, she similarly responded:

> I'm not just White…I think that my worldview and practices, morals, everything about me is also incredibly influenced by my Asian background. I think I also don't like to just be categorized as White because, in some ways, I don't have the privileges that an entirely White person has, and that's from being mixed as well as being female…that you shouldn't assume what people are or what their worldview is based on their race especially… It's hurtful, and it also creates this immediate dynamic of power between people, where, if they're making assumptions about you and you're hurt, then you're automatically in this, like, weaker position, because they haven't even given you the opportunity to explain yourself. Yeah. By offending you, they've automatically taken this kind of privileged position, regardless of their own race, by assuming what you are.

Aimee thoughtfully described the dangers of upholding a definition of race that did not include multiracial. She explained how it was limiting, hurtful, and encouraged an unfair power dynamic, which privileged monoracial people and silenced the multiracial population. Kodi similarly reiterated this belief through his response:

> I mean, I guess, you know, that being Afro-Latino, it doesn't necessarily mean that I'm not African-American. It's just, you know, there's more. There's a lot more to where I come from. There's a lot more to, you know, what my family is and my experience, I guess.

When asked what he hoped the photo reviewers learned from participating in the study, Kodi expressed his hopes:

That mixed-race people are a lot more common than you think, and that when you

see somebody, you don't know where they come from. You don't know what

they're like, what their experience is. And not necessarily that that's something

that should be taken into consideration, but, again, being an African-American

Latino in America, there are perceptions that people have of me upon meeting me.

And I would just hope that they would learn that you can't – not that you – no,

yeah, you can't bring those into meeting a person or just getting to know someone

in general, because you have to find – you have to discover their experience...You

have to discover their experience, because your perceptions are probably wrong.

Kodi explained how it takes effort to know a person, and it requires that people minimize

their initial stereotypes based on what they see, and instead engage in more interpersonal

interactions and "discover their experience." All the participants shared their desire for

more people to challenge their assumptions and definitions of race, become more open-

minded and get to know the individual, not just the outward image. They stressed the

importance of having society recognize that there is a place for multiracial in how race is

constructed.

The photo reviewers consistently identified Marisol as monoracial White with no

references regarding her Hispanic ethnicity, and when asked to describe what, if

anything, she wished the reviewers learned by participating in the study, she responded:

I think I'd want them to know that being multiracial is actually, like, super

important to me. And I think that I'd just want them to know that because a lot of

the times I think people don't – I don't know how to express this. A lot of the

times, I think people don't – like, they can't see how narrow-minded they are. So,

one thing that I feel really strongly about is kind of being a well-rounded person

and being able to put yourself in other people's shoes and see things from their

perspective.

Both Gwyn and Zerah also responded similarly and described how they hoped more

people would take the time to ask questions and think more deeply about someone's

racial background as it may have a strong impact on their identity. Gwyn stated:

I hope they learned to question people's races and ethnicities and, I guess, not

really compartmentalize, or I hope they learn to, like, maybe ask questions if they

are curious or want to be correct in identifying someone or assuming something

about someone.

And Zerah reiterated how she could not select one of her identities over the other, so she

hoped people could be more open-minded when they view people and make assumptions

based on racial appearance.

I hope they learn not to misclassify and to provide a little bit more variety in their

answers...the different categories I classify myself as, and I see them equally, I

can't just take one over the other.

All the participants expressed their desire for society to recognize the truth of

their multiracial background, to try to remain more open-minded, and to challenge pre-

conceived notions of racial appearance. Aimee described how society lacked the ability

to understand multiracial identity and how this had larger, impactful implications:

I think there are larger implications in the representation of interracial people. I

think that there's not enough spaces for interracial people. I think people don't

understand the implications of being interracial and what that identity can mean to

that individual. And so, in not even recognizing other people as interracial, you

can't even begin to understand all of the factors which shape their world. I guess

that could lead people to just make more assumptions, as well, which leads

interracial people to being offended more.

Aimee further described her surprise that so many people struggled to identify multiracial

individuals and hinted at the need for the multiracial population to advocate for their right

to be seen and accepted.

I thought that more people would be able to identify multiracial people. And I

thought that there was a larger awareness around it. However, this is kind of

evidence, to me, that multiracial groups still have fight… In, like, a full

appreciation for what multiracial means, and for all of the implications that it has.

The participants all explained the possible negative effects of making quick judgements

on people based on racial appearance. The current definitions of race and ethnicity in the

United States focus on a monoracial perspective thereby making it challenging for

individuals to consider multiracial individuals and how they may fit into the definition of

race. The participants also expressed the importance of having others take the time to

learn more about their multiracial background as they felt this was one of the most

important ways they could advocate for themselves and challenge others to think about

race and ethnicity in more broad and inclusive terms.

Multiracial Advocacy and Higher Education: "Paying it forward"

Although the context of higher education was a micro level factor, the way the

participants internalized the effects of the college environment at the individual level

directly affected their desire to advocate for themselves and the multiracial experience.

Many of the participants expressed an interest in finding spaces where they could connect with their multiracial identity and find communities where they felt fully accepted. In many cases, they were inspired to better understand their multiracial experience in context with others and advocate on behalf of the multiracial population. Joseph described his connection with other multiracial individuals and his desire to "pay it forward."

> I feel a strong connection to people who have shared experiences with me, which, in a lot of cases, is other multiracial people. Or just, you know, I think there's a lot of sort of similar experiences across identities as well. So, I wouldn't say that I only latch on to multiracial students, but I think they're an example of one student group where I see them potentially going through some of the things I went through, having some of the same kind of identity development things going on, and me wanting to sort of facilitate and help and support them through that in a way that I would have probably benefited from when I was in their shoes. So, sort of like that giving back piece, I guess, paying it forward.

Gwyn also described how she specifically sought out opportunities to join organizations and engage in educational opportunities related to multiracial identity and advocacy, "So, I'm in Kappa Lambda Psi Multicultural Sorority, and then I'm also the multiracial-biracial advocacy intern at the Community Advocacy Center [pseudonym]. And I do a lot of undergraduate studies on Asian-American identity and, like, multiracial identity and stuff like that." Additionally, Gwyn explained how the results of the photo review sessions further inspired her to advocate, educate, and spread awareness about her identity:

…because I know people don't look at me and think, "Oh, she's biracial." I think

it's something I kind of have to educate people on. So, maybe it's influenced me in

that people don't see that I'm biracial, and then I kind of want to educate people

about that and also spread awareness about being biracial in general.

Other participants, such as Kodi, discussed his interest in connecting with others who had

similar, shared experiences:

Like, it really, really hits home for me, that experience, and it makes me wonder

about who else has this experience, because it's not something that I hear from

Black people, people that I interact with are instantly into Black culture, and

that's not my experience.

Cailyn discussed her willingness to engage in multiracial advocacy, and the emotional

labor associated with constantly having to educate and advocate in environments and

with people who uphold a monoracial worldview.

And coming to realize how embedded monoracism is in a lot of spaces, and also

just the lack of awareness amongst faculty too, which, not to their discredit, but

just the struggle of having to consistently educate others about it and try to elevate

it as something that is important and that's worth thinking about in all of my

classes has been a little bit tiresome. But, on the contrary, I have found support, at

least. I think, even if people don't understand, they welcome the voice in the

room. But to be the resident mixed person, it's always like, "Well, this doesn't

consider multiracial identity," is exhausting and must be annoying for people.

Although Cailyn admitted to the challenges of advocating for more multiracial

awareness, she and many of the participants still chose to engage in advocacy work

because they believed in the importance of educating others on their multiracial perspective and how it differed from monoracial norms. In all cases, where participants described engaging in advocacy work, research, and organizations, it was all within the context of higher education. Institutions of higher education provided the space to connect with other multiracial individuals and others who may be more racially and politically aware.

Many participants described how their multiracial identity evolved over time, and how their experience in college had a direct impact on their current understanding, awareness, and connection to their multiracial identity. Aimee stated:

> So, I think the idea that identity has changed over time as I've kind of grappled with it. Like, in middle school, it was something that kind of made me special. In high school, my identity didn't matter at all. But now, in college, it's actually provided a community for me. So, being able to identify as multiracial has connected me with people who I otherwise wouldn't have, and also been able to provide with people who understand the culture.

Ryan described a similar experience:

> You know, I guess, when I was younger, it was more of, like – I didn't even really think about it much. Like, I didn't really think of my identity as a mix…I think, like, around probably high school time, when I was starting to think about more myself, I guess. And I think it's cool. I think I'm pretty – like, I'm proud of my heritage, at least. I think I have some really great things that have come to me from both sides of my family, and a whole lot of resources between having those

two different types. So, I definitely value that…Yeah. I think coming to college

has made me, if anything, a little more aware of that.

Joseph explained how his undergraduate college experience made a significant impact on

how he viewed his identity:

So, then I went to college, and that's when, for me, everything got shook up. So,

that's when, as I alluded to, I just met so many more Asian-American people, so

many more Filipino-American people in particular. And I think that's when I tried

to explore a Filipino-American identity, because it was the first time where I

actually had lots of – because I joined the Filipino Student Organization, and so

this was my first time meeting – I think I'd met maybe two people outside of my

family that were Filipino in the first 18 years of my life, and then I went to college

and there was several hundred. So, it was very different. So, I'm like, "Okay, let

me see what this is about, since they're here. I think this is for me, this

organization."

Arieanna explained how she changed when she attended college:

And growing up, I went to predominantly White high schools...So, all my friends

before college were mainly Asian or White. So, growing up, that was my

community. And then, flip to college. I've only recently, I guess, become a big

part of an African-American community, joining the Black Engineering Society

and being an active member in the Students of Color in STEM organization

[pseudonym]. So, it's kind of an interesting shift in where I went.

Dianna described how college allowed her to feel more accepted as a multiracial person:

Nowadays, in college, I don't really have as many problems or other people like, "Oh, you can't speak Chinese?" It was more just, like, middle school, because now people are just like, "Oh, okay, that's cool." Like, "Okay, you're mixed; that's fine."

Cailyn also described how her undergraduate college experience influenced her connection to her racial identity:

In college, I tried very hard to be Black. I was at a PWI. There was only 4% Black students there. And it was an environment that I was adjusting to that I hadn't been exposed to before. So, cultivating a woman of color identity was contingent upon understanding what Black femininity meant to me, and still realizing that – or still constantly being reminded that there is a degree of separation by virtue of my appearance that I had trouble explicating, I didn't know how to articulate. And then I took a class on multiracial identity, and it gave me all the vocabulary I needed and the historical understanding that I needed to situate myself and situate my multiracial identity. And as I continued to engage with literature and build community with people and trouble the ways in which race is discussed, I think that's where I am now. And I feel very much like my multiracial identity is not just something that describes me, but it's also a political statement. So, I went from neutrality to something that's a little more, I'd say, radical.

Many participants explained how their multiracial identity was not as salient to them as children as it was as young adults. As they grew older, they gained more of an awareness of the differences between their experiences and the experiences of their monoracial peers and family members. Many of the participants credited the context of higher

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education as a means for them to further explore, advocate, and accept their multiracial identity.

Benefits of Being Multiracial: "…Multiracial people are usually a little bit more open-minded…"

The participants' reactions to their multiracial identity as well as their reactions to different macro and micro level factors is explained within the individual level. As depicted in Figure 1, part of being multiracial meant understanding their monoracial halves; however, it was not possible for the participants to compartmentalize their monoracial identities separately from their multiracial identity. The participant's connection to their monoracial halves undoubtedly informed their multiracial identity, and although society constantly asked them to "prove" their connection to their monoracial halves or pressured them into selecting only one of their halves, ultimately their multiracial identity was more about the ways in which their monoracial halves interacted and informed each other. For the participants, identifying as multiracial meant connecting all the pieces of their racial and ethnic backgrounds in a way that made them whole. Although there were certainly challenges to claiming their multiracial whole, especially since they felt society supplied constant pressure to identify in monoracial terms, they ultimately enjoyed and appreciated the benefits of being multiracial.

Regardless of the challenges to claim their multiracial identity, many of the participants recognized and appreciated the benefits of their multiracial background. As Marisol stated, "Another thing I really think that is beneficial is just having both cultures, because you have double the traditions and double the experiences." Ryan also explained a benefit of being part Caucasian is possibly benefiting from White privilege as a

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multiracial person, "And I think, because I'm part Caucasian rather than – I mean, I think Caucasians are still favored, generally, as a race in America, and I think that has made it easier, then, to be multiracial, to be honest." In an earlier quotation, Aimee mentioned that her father may be somewhat relieved from an economic perspective that she was consistently misidentified as White. She mentioned that the results of the photo review sessions may have initially disappointed her father because the reviewers were less inclined to see the Chinese ethnicity she inherited from him; however, the results may have also helped him feel relieved to know that she was also more likely to experience White privilege because of it.

For the participants who identified as multiracial mixed with White, several of them such as Aimee and Ryan, indicated their understanding and awareness of White privilege and their capacity to benefit from it. While many of the participants described the ongoing struggle to identify with their multiracial whole, particularly when they recognized that their White monoracial identity clashed with their status as a person of color, they ultimately seemed to acknowledge the benefits of not just their White privilege, but their multiracial privilege as well.

The most significant and consistent advantages of being multiracial stated by all participants was their increased ability to see multiple perspectives. Marisol described this open-mindedness:

> …Multiracial people are usually a little bit more open-minded than people who only come from one race, and that's just because you are surrounded by multiple different cultures and traditions. And so, when you grow up in one place in one house all your life with one culture and both your parents are surrounded by that

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culture and that's all you're being taught, that's all you're going to believe when

you grow up. So, it's a little bit harder to be open-minded, I think.

Arieanna further described her ability to empathize with others and related it to her

multiracial background:

I think it's made me take better care into how I view other people and their

situations. Not saying that if you're only from one race, you can't empathize with

other races, but I think because I have the different perspectives and I know how

it is in different cultures, to be raised, and how it's totally not the same in every

household, it gives me more of, I guess, a method to try to step back and think of

how other people are going through their lives.

Joseph explained how being multiracial helped him not only see multiple perspectives but

also better understand and appreciate the importance of identity.

I think being multiracial, for me, helps me to kind of see multiple perspectives

and helps me to sort of understand the ways in which – just, like, the importance

of identity, I think, because it's been so crucial in my life.

Cailyn described how her multiracial identity helped her better understand, empathize,

and relate to others:

I think I've embraced a fluidity of identity and expression. And I think that it's

made me more empathic, empathetic as a person, and I think that I also feel

attuned to other people's journeys with their own identity, even if it's not a

racialized identity, be it gender identity or sexual identity. Just the parallels of

navigating multiple spaces and self-ascribed and asserting your own identity, with

being given limited options, and cultivating your own sense of self with that. I

wouldn't liken certain issues. I don't want to conflate trans issues with multiracial

issues, but I think there are parallels in terms of where you're existing in society

and being pushed and pulled. And so, I've felt as though, as I've learned more

about myself, I've just become more empathetic about the process with others.

And it's also made me more – I think it's forced me to hold myself accountable in

learning about other identities and issues that impact communities that I don't

belong to.

As multiple participants explained, their experiences as a multiracial person helped them

better understand their privileges as well as the struggles with identity beyond just race

and hold themselves accountable in learning about other identities and outside

communities. Experiences with being misidentified, marginalized, and misunderstood

helped the participants understand and empathize with others who had similar

experiences. Although they indicated many benefits of being multiracial, they

overwhelmingly and consistently agreed that the most impactful benefit was having an

increased ability to see multiple perspectives and maintain an open-mind.

Summary

Although I found a consistent pattern of the participants operating within their

monoracial identities, I also found the participants always contextualized and grounded

their monoracial experiences within the context of their multiracial identity. As depicted

by Figure 1, participants explained how their racial appearance affected their multiracial

identity within their monoracial halves. In Figure 2, participants explained the impact of

merging their monoracial identities together to create a more complex picture of their

multiracial identity. Within the context of both Figure 1 and Figure 2 are the macro,

micro, and individual factors, which influenced the participants' abilities to define the impact of their racial appearance on their multiracial identity development.

The grounded theory, which emerged from this study, explained how the participants never felt removed from their internal identity as a multiracial individual, even when operating within their monoracial identities. The theoretical model explained how the macro, micro, and individual factors influencing multiracial identity development led participants to better understand the ways in which their monoracial halves interacted and informed each other and how identifying as multiracial helped them better connect all the parts of their racial and ethnic backgrounds in a way that made them whole.

Everyone's multiracial identity puzzle looks different, and all the pieces fit uniquely together for each person. For the participants, some pieces were easy to connect, while others were more challenging to determine how they fit into the overall picture. This particular puzzle comes with no specific instructions or box with a picture of what is inside, yet all the participants were gifted with their puzzle and felt as though they must attempt to complete it. While they may receive attempts at help at the macro and micro levels even when they may not ask for it, they are the primary people responsible for the direction and process of completing their puzzle.

The participants seemed to understand that completing their puzzle is a life-long process, and the pieces will constantly change, and the overall picture will constantly evolve. They needed to trust that all the pieces would always be available and accessible, but it would take time and they may never finish. This is absolutely not a sign of failure as their puzzle is much more about the journey than the result.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The previous chapter introduced and explained an emergent-grounded theory of the impact of racial appearance on multiracial identity development. This chapter links the emergent-grounded theory to this study's guiding research questions, relevant literature, implications for future practice within higher education, limitations and challenges, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Results of Emergent Grounded Theory in Relation to Research Questions

The purpose of my study was to investigate the role of racial appearance (phenotype) in the construction of multiracial identity among college students. My study stemmed from ideas derived from prior research and the guiding research questions. These questions included: (a) how does racial appearance play a role in the self-identification of multiracial individuals; (b) how does racial appearance influence societal perceptions of multiracial individuals; (c) how does self and societal racial identification impact multiracial identity development; (d) what are the differences and similarities in how multiracial individuals define their identity and how they perceive society to define their racial identity; and, (e) if societal perceptions differ from self-identification, how does this impact multiracial identity development?

How Does Racial Appearance Play a Role in the Self-Identification of Multiracial Individuals?

Initially, it would seem that racial appearance did not play a role in the self-identification of multiracial identity. Every participant in my study remained firm in their identity as a multiracial person regardless of how often they were misidentified.

However, a more complex response was required when addressing the question of how

racial appearance played a role in the overall self-identification of multiracial individuals.

While the participants expressed confidence in their internal sense of self as multiracial

individuals, they also expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to externally claim

their multiracial identity, especially if their racial appearance consistently led to incorrect

societal assumptions about their identity. Although the participants remained unshaken

in their personal connection with their multiracial identity, it was evident that many of

them struggled with a variety of negative emotions such as confusion, guilt, anger,

disappointment, and rejection when people did not accept or recognize them as

multiracial. Even participants who did not indicate negative emotions when misidentified

described struggles to have their multiracial identity acknowledged by others and

described ways they made a conscious effort not to let it bother them.

The participants all expressed incidents where they wanted to be able to operate

fully within their multiracial whole; however, they expressed experiences where they felt

people pressured them to operate within their monoracial halves specifically because of

their appearance. All the participants described incidents where their racial appearance

caused others to question their identities and challenged their claim on a multiracial

identity. The participants internalized these experiences and began to understand that

they may never be recognized on the outside the same way they identify on the inside.

Increased conflict with their external identity caused participants to struggle with their

internal identity, particularly how others accepted their self-identity.

How Does Racial Appearance Influence Societal Perceptions of Multiracial

Individuals?

Findings indicated that racial appearance influenced societal perceptions of multiracial individuals in that society still views race in monoracial terms making it challenging for people to see beyond just one race (Herman, 2010; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). This stems from the historical context of race in the United States including miscegenation laws that informed attitudes and beliefs and established strict, hierarchical boundaries of racial identity within monoracial terms (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Spencer, 2009). The ways in which society still struggles to identify, accept, and even consider multiracial identity, and the ways in which society operates under very particular assumptions of what people from different racial backgrounds should look like, is a result of the effect of these laws. The majority of society still internalizes these assumptions, or stereotypes, of racial appearance in monoracial terms (Brunsma, 2005). My study clearly reflected this as the photo reviewers overwhelmingly identified the participant photos using monoracial descriptors. This was further emphasized by the responses of the participants as they all indicated they experienced misidentification, some more than others, solely because of their racial appearance. The emerging theory in this study suggested that frequent monoracial misidentification and multiracial lack of identification can pose challenges for individuals desiring to claim a multiracial whole.

How Does Self and Societal Racial Identification Impact Multiracial Identity Development?

Participants sometimes chose, and other times felt pressured, to operate within their monoracial halves suggesting the intersection between self and societal identification impacted multiracial identity development. Participants described feeling

most complete and most connected when they understood their monoracial backgrounds within the context of their multiracial identity. For example, Cailyn described her desire for a space, which allowed her to connect with her multiracial identity, and Joseph described how he felt a strong, internal connection to his multiracial identity and how it differed from monoracial norms.

This research question was best explained by referring back to Figures 1 and 2 and recognizing society as a factor within the micro level (smaller-scale interactions between individuals) and also recognizing that society was influenced by macro level factors (overarching social processes). The way the participants internalized how society defined, and at times, limited them ultimately affected their identity development at the individual level (learning, adapting, self-understanding).

In this study, photo reviewers incorrectly identified all participants multiple times; however, some were identified incorrectly more often than others due to their racial appearance. In addition, some participants were identified more frequently than others as multiracial; however, in many instances, photo reviewers were unable to correctly identify their monoracial backgrounds. The participants did not seem to mind when this occurred. As long as the photo reviewers recognized their more salient, multiracial identity, the participants indicated this was more important than the reviewers correctly identifying their monoracial identities.

The participants indicated that in addition to identifying the correct monoracial mix, they also considered a photo reviewer response of "multiracial" (without identifying a specific monoracial mix) as a correct description of their identity. This outlook was captured by the emergent-grounded theory showing how the participants chose to identify

within their monoracial halves as well as their multiracial whole. They felt a strong sense

of connection to both of their monoracial identities; their parents instilled in them pride in

their different monoracial halves; and, they recognized different ways in which they

could connect to monoracial others. However, there were instances where they felt

pressured to identify within their monoracial halves or expected to identify within a

completely incorrect monoracial identity, because of their racial appearance. For

participants who could pass as monoracial, they were often assumed monoracial and

treated as monoracial by their peers and others within society. They were also, at times,

encouraged to identify as monoracial instead of multiracial.

When societal racial identification was at odds with their self-identification,

participants oftentimes indicated negative emotions and a sincere longing to have their

internal identity as a multiracial individual recognized and valued by others. Participants

had to move fluidly between their external and internal identities and find ways to

reinforce their internal sense of self when society constantly questioned and challenged

their identity because of their external racial appearance. In many cases, they struggled

with their identity development because they recognized their external identity (as

perceived by others) might never match their internal identity. Some participants, such as

Ryan, Arieanna, and Dianna, were able to find a sense of acceptance and an ability to

separate themselves from the impact of societal misidentification, while others, such as

Aimee, Cailyn, Joseph, Kodi, and Marisol, seemed to internalize the effects and more

strongly felt the impacts of racial misidentification. While they all stated the importance

of identifying as multiracial, many of them also stated the challenge of being accepted as

multiracial, particularly if their racial appearance went against societal stereotypes.

What are the Differences and Similarities in how Multiracial Individuals Define Their Identity and how They Perceive Society to Define Their Racial Identity?

The participants in this study consistently identified as multiracial and described instances of identifying within their monoracial halves. At times, they felt forced and other times they willingly identified within their monoracial halves. The participants always indicated they felt like their most authentic selves when they were identifying as multiracial. They also described times when they felt no choice but to identify with their multiracial identity such as when participating in monoracial spaces and feeling like an outsider, even if they identified with part of that monoracial background. They felt like outsiders as a reaction to monoracial attitudes and actions based primarily on their appearance.

Participants who experienced consistent misidentification as part of their normal, lived experience fully anticipated the photo reviewers would misidentify them. In the small number of instances when this did not occur, the participants were shocked and pleasantly surprised that the photo reviewer responses challenged their assumptions. In the majority of cases, the participants correctly anticipated the inaccurate racial identification by the photo reviewers. This highlights one of the key differences between how multiracial individuals defined their identity and how they perceived society to define their racial identity: the participants always identified as multiracial; however, they rarely expected society to identify them as multiracial.

Participants consistently expressed the importance of society recognizing the truth of their self-identity. The participants felt incorrect assumptions about their racial identity hindered someone's ability to connect with them. They also voiced their beliefs

that, because of their multiracial status, they were more open-minded about race and how they define race. In addition, they expected other multiracial individuals to hold the same views. The results of the photo reviews indicated that multiracial photo reviewers were just as likely to identify the participants as monoracial. Many participants expressed disbelief and disappointment when they observed how consistently even the multiracial photo reviewers misidentified them. This propensity for mismatch demonstrated a similarity in how everyone, regardless of their racial or ethnic background, struggled to recognize multiracial identity, and how challenging it was to overcome deeply ingrained stereotypes of racial appearance in monoracial terms.

If Societal Perceptions Differ From Self-Identification, How Does This Impact Multiracial Identity Development?

When societal perceptions differ from self-identification, the participants indicated multiple challenges to their multiracial identity development. Misidentification of multiracial individuals was typically informed by racial appearance, pre-conceived notions of what different races look like, and a limited definition of race that did not include multiracial (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Herman, 2010; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Rockquemore, 1999; Root, 1990). As the results from this study indicated, when this occurs, multiracial individuals may feel trapped by societal definitions of their race and race in general. They may also feel a certain level of expectation to conform to societal definitions which may lead to paranoia, unconscious enabling of the status quo, as well as a desire and willingness to advocate for change.

All the participants indicated their desire for society to recognize the truth of their multiracial background and to remain more open-minded about perceptions and

definitions of race. Assumptions about race, especially based on racial appearance, can be limiting and hurtful. Additionally, these assumptions can encourage an unfair power dynamic, which privileges monoracial people and silences the multiracial population. The participants felt that misidentification and operating under a definition of race that excluded multiracial limited people's ability to better connect with and understand them.

The participants recognized how current definitions of race and ethnicity in the United States stemmed from a monoracial view thereby making it more challenging to consider how the multiracial population may fit into the definition of race; however, the participants expressed the importance of having others take the time to learn more about the multiracial population. They also described the need for the multiracial population to advocate for their right to be seen and accepted and to challenge others to think about race in terms that are more inclusive. The participants expressed how advocacy played a role in the way in which they internalized the impacts of a limiting definition of race. They recognized that in order to have their multiracial identity more accepted and understood by others, they needed to advocate, educate, and help re-define race. They also expressed an interest in connecting with other multiracial individuals and felt this helped them better understand, develop and connect with their multiracial identity.

Relationship of the Current Study to Previous Research

In this section, I specifically link the emerging theory with relevant research discussed in Chapter Two. I begin by setting my emerging theory within the context of existing identity development models. I then review aspects of my emerging theory and situate them within existing research beginning with self and societal perceptions of multiracial individuals, viewing oneself within monoracial halves versus a multiracial

whole, defending a multiracial identity, and the context of higher education and its impact on multiracial students.

Identity Development Models

Renn (2003) encouraged the move away from linear, racial identity models and instead pushed for an ecological model to better explain the identity development of multiracial individuals (Poston, 1990; Renn, 2003, 2008). Like Renn's (2003) model, which was rooted in Bronfenbrenner's Human Ecology Model (1979, 1993), my study found similar ecological factors which influenced how my participants processed the impact of their racial appearance on their multiracial identity development. Renn (2003) found influences within her research which fell directly within each of the four nested levels in Bronfenbrenner's model; however, in my study, the influences were best explained within three levels—individual, macro, and micro. My model also focused on relating these factors within the context of the participants and how they made sense of them within the individual level.

Different from Renn (2003) and other existing research (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Herman, 2010; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Rockquemore, 1999; Root, 1990), I was specifically interested in better understanding the impact of racial appearance on my participants' multiracial identity development. Therefore, I intentionally selected participants who strongly identified with their identity as a first-generation multiracial individual, allowing me to focus less on their overall multiracial identity, and focus more on the specific impact their racial appearance had on their multiracial identity.

Another key difference between my model and others, such as Renn's (2003), was that the influences found within the micro and macro levels of my model impacted the

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participants differently at the individual level depending on whether they were identifying within their monoracial halves or their multiracial whole. Although all the participants indicated a strong connection to their multiracial identity, they also at times preferred to identify within their monoracial halves and at times felt pressured to identify within their monoracial halves. Renn (2003) and Root (1996) found that multiracial individuals chose to negotiate the different aspects of their racial identities. Results from my study indicate the participants' racial appearance further complicated their ability to do so. Some participants found it challenging to publicly claim their monoracial halves because their racial appearance did not reflect their self-defined identity. Conversely, some participants found it challenging to claim their multiracial identity because society consistently assumed they were monoracial due to their racial appearance and their ability to "pass" as monoracial. During these occurrences, the impacts of influences within my model at the micro and macro levels played a significant and differing role. For example, the influence of parents was instrumental in helping many of my participants understand, accept, and embrace their monoracial halves and the associated cultures and norms associated with their monoracial halves. However, given that the parents all identified as monoracial, participants also described the challenge that parents oftentimes did not understand the unique experiences of being multiracial or the impact racial appearance, in particular, had on their ability to claim their own identity.

My study was unique in that it focused on multiracial identity development within the context of racial appearance. Central to all my findings were the impact of my participants' internal understanding of their multiracial identity and how societal assumptions of their identity based on their racial appearance influenced their internal

sense of self. By honing in on racial appearance, I was better able to understand how my

participants struggled to balance their internal and external identities and how this

struggle ultimately affected how they understood and defined their multiracial identity.

Although they recognized they would always struggle to control the way society defined

their external identity they also recognized the control they had over their internal

identity. For this reason, every participant chose to identify strongly with their

multiracial identity, even if society did not necessarily view them as such, as this is what

they felt was the most authentic.

Self-versus Societal Perceptions of Multiracial Individuals

My study also examined the impact of racial appearance on societal perceptions

of multiracial individuals, particularly, how self-versus societal perceptions affected

multiracial identity. Authors such as Rockquemore inspired me and Brunsma (2002)

whose research stemmed from proven research that race is a social construct. In addition,

Root (2000) expressed that both the oppressed and the oppressors play a role in

embedding the racial system within the political system. My study upheld this concept

where I found many examples of my participants unconsciously enabling the status quo.

Some prior research demonstrated a link between physical appearance and racial

identity development (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Rockquemore and Brunsma

(2002) in their research highlighted: how one's external phenotype influenced societal

perceptions of race; how individuals perceived their own skin color and racial identity;

and, how they understood their racial appearance and identity through the perspectives of

others. Additional researchers (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Herman, 2010; Rockquemore

& Brunsma, 2002; Rockquemore, 1999; Root, 1990) linked these concepts specifically to

biracial identity development. Their findings suggested that social structures influenced internal racial identity. An individual's social networks may include family members, classmates, and peers as well as an array of environments such as higher education, all of which may influence the way a biracial person may shape his or her identity. The inherent problem with societal influences occurred when there was a mismatch between appearance and identity. My study found similar influences by my participants' social networks and environments on their internal and external perceptions of their racial identity.

To help me better understand the impact of self-versus societal perceptions on multiracial identity development, I examined prior research such as Herman (2010) which showed how society still viewed race in primarily White and Black terms. My results showed similar results in that the photo reviewers most commonly identified my Black and White participant correctly with 65% of photo reviewers accurately identifying her as mixed-race Black and White. However, my study also confirmed that most photo reviewers still saw and defined race in not just Black and White terms, but monoracial terms. The majority of photo reviewers identified my multiracial participants with monoracial identities. Like Herman (2010), my analysis was framed in terms of congruence not so much accuracy of the photo reviewers' responses; however, my study took the results a step further in that I described how the tendency to define race in monoracial terms affected multiracial identity development.

Prior researchers discovered that second-order expectations (perceived external or societal expectations), are the key determinants of social action (Troyer & Younts, 1997). The theory Troyer and Younts (1997) developed helped frame the concept of first order

(self-expectations to guide social interaction) and second order expectations and

solidified the importance of second order expectations' influence over the ways in which

individuals related to themselves and others. My study showed that once individuals

were introduced to the context of multiracial identity the influence of second order

expectations became more complex. My participants indicated that regardless of how

society may incorrectly identify them, this did not shake their internal sense of identity as

a multiracial person. While the participants were quick to say they did not care how

society viewed them, and they remained strong in their internal identity, my study

suggested that it did influence their external identity and may have led them to question

whether others accept them as multiracial. This sense of multiracial paranoia led them to

question how society may perceive, treat, and identify them.

Prior researchers conducted a study designed to explore the impacts of appearance

and other social variables, such as sense of belonging within monoracial groups, on racial

identity (Ahnallen, Suyemoto, & Carter, 2006). Their results challenged the theory that

second-order expectations (Troyer & Younts, 1997), or the perception of how society

classifies or misclassifies multiracial individuals primarily influences the construction of

multiracial identity. Instead, their results found that first-order expectation (Troyer &

Younts, 1997) or one's self expectations of racial identification play an independent role

in multiracial identity development. My study considered both first-order expectations

(individual level) and societal perceptions (macro/micro level) and discovered that both

play a significant role in my participants' multiracial identity development. First- and

second-order conceptions informed the concept highlighted in my study that multiracial

individuals viewed their identity in terms of their monoracial halves as well as their

multiracial whole. This was predicated on the belief that second-order (societal) influences encompassed individuals who did not identify as multiracial. Hill (2002) discovered the common tendency for interviewers in his study to identify participants correctly when comparing participants' self-defined skin tone and racial identification with interviewer's perceptions of participants' skin tone and racial classification. Hill found that within one's own self-defined racial group, they are likely to encompass more comprehensive knowledge than other social groups, but inner-group differences are not as easily distinguishable for individuals in other racial groups.

This was a common assumption within my study as well; however, the results did not support it. My participants assumed people who identified similarly to them would be able to better identify their multiracial background; however, the multiracial photo reviewers in my study misidentified at the same or similar rate as the monoracial photo reviewers. This result surprised my participants.

Prior research concluded that individuals display limited abilities to observe physical characteristics of others because they filter social perceptions through an inherently biased lens ultimately contributing to the perpetuation of racial conflict and stereotypes (Hill, 2002). My study supports that people hold biased views on race. Moreover, my findings describe the impact of this bias related to racial appearance on multiracial individuals and found that society still viewed race in monoracial terms. Whereas Hill (2002) focused on the individuals who made incorrect assumptions, my study focused on the receivers and the impact of those assumptions on them.

Prior researchers found that in many instances, multiracial individuals struggled to internally define their racial identity, and this oftentimes led to a sense of identity confusion (Shih and Sanchez, 2005). My study results differed in that my participants expressed a strong internal sense of identity as a multiracial individual, but they also expressed how society constantly challenged their internal identity due to their external identity.

Multiracial Whole vs Monoracial Halves

Prior research incorporated many students who did not physically appear like someone from a monoracial group, which led to many of their peers questioning their legitimacy to identify within that monoracial group (Renn, 1998, 1999, 2002). Renn's research (1998, 1999, 2002) described how students often felt rejected by monoracial student groups as well as communities of color. King's (2008) research described challenges of multiracial students' experiences as feeling invisible, being constantly questioned about their racial identity, and feeling as if they needed to justify or prove their identity. My study supported these findings as well. Participants often felt society pressured them to operate within their monoracial halves, but always within a multiracial context. Although they were very comfortable accepting their different monoracial backgrounds, they did not feel as though others were as accepting.

Additional research further investigated the impact of this lack of acceptance (Campbell & Troyer, 2007). In their research, they examined the implications of external or social misclassification of race based on social and psychological factors such as mental health, depression, and suicide specifically in relation to American Indian adults. Their research compared participants who were correctly racially identified with

participants who were incorrectly racially identified and found the population more often misidentified were more likely to report psychological and social distress. My study found that the rate at which misidentification occurred did not seem to impact how often participants expressed negative impacts. Participants who were most often identified correctly (Cailyn and Gwyn) still expressed distress at being misidentified and misunderstood.

Past studies focused on the potential positive effects of identifying as multiracial (Bining, Unzueta, Huo, & Molina, 2009). Their research showed positive psychological outcomes such as increased self-esteem and social engagement when multiracial individuals had the opportunity to claim more than one race. In contrast, my study found a combination of negative and positive impacts of navigating both monoracial and multiracial spaces. The participants in my study also described how operating in monoracial spaces as a multiracial person is part of the process of multiracial identity development. Echoing prior research, my study also explained the unique experience of being multiracial in monoracial spaces, which led to both positive and negative effects.

Root (1996) is one of the foundational authors influencing multiracial research. She wrote about border crossings as a nonlinear model for biracial identity development by introducing a theory that relied on a people's ability to self-define their race in, across, and in-between categories. She indicated that to bridge the border, a person should not straddle both sides with one foot in each border, but must have both feet in both or all groups. Another way to bridge the border was when a person knew how to shift between an individual's racial foreground and background based on different settings. Root described a third interpretation of border crossings as sitting on the border and identifying

it as a central point of reference. The last border crossing occurred when people created a home camp, a place where they felt supported and would sometimes venture out of their camp to visit others.

Similarly, in my study, the participants discussed operating within their monoracial halves (shifting sides depending on the situation) and creating a home camp. For my participants, this seemed to hinge on identifying as multiracial as opposed to their monoracial halves. One of the primary differences between Root's (1996) and my study was that I specifically focused on how racial appearance affected participants' ability to engage in border crossings. When racial appearance was involved, it was more challenging for my participants to engage in border crossings and find acceptance. It was also more challenging for them to pick a home base when society continued to force monoracial categories on them.

In Defense of My Identity

One aspect of my study examined the impact of the tension between internal versus societal definitions on racial identity. This tension caused many participants to feel defensive and paranoid about how often they were misidentified and how this ultimately influenced how they were treated. Current research depicted potential benefits and challenges to encouraging a more inclusive racial classification system. Jaschik (2006) found one possible benefit within higher education was that it allowed multiracial individuals the ability or right to choose for themselves how they racially identified. My study also supported the importance of allowing participants to define their own identity and viewed the issue within the context of the individuals themselves, as opposed to the effects this may have on the larger society. Based on my findings, it was best for the

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participants to have the ability to have all their racial backgrounds recognized and for them to have the freedom to claim their multiracial identity and feel acceptance by others within society.

Critics of expanding the way society defined and accepted race in the United States indicated it gave multiracial individuals the opportunity to claim more Whiteness (Brunsma, 2005; Marable, 1997; and Spencer, 2009). However, I did not find this to be true for my participants who identified as part White. I found almost the opposite to be true. None of my participants expressed any wish for society to identify them as monoracial White, and claiming their multiracial identities allowed them to feel more accepted by people of color. Although they did not always feel accepted in monoracial spaces, it was still important for the majority of them feel society accepted them as a person of color.

Of my participants who identified as people of color, they indicated this stemmed primarily from their lived experiences. Brunsma (2005) found that White participants from the dominant, societal culture were much more likely to identify the children in his study of White and people of color racial combinations with the people of color portion of their racial heritage. This finding reiterated how historical context influences the way society views race in monoracial terms. This was shown in my study when the photo reviewers overwhelming and consistently identified participants a monoracial.

Higher Education Context

In this study, many of the participants expressed an interest in finding spaces where they could connect with their multiracial identity and with others who identified similarly. Additional research also showed the importance of a campus environment

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where multiracial students could find safe spaces as well as other individuals who identified as multiracial where they can have conversations and explore their identity (Ahnallen, Suyemoto, & Carter, 2006; King, 2008; Renn, 1998; 1999; 2002). Shang (2008) and Chaudhari and Pizzolato (2008) specifically linked the impact of the higher education environment with multiracial identity development. My findings supported the importance of finding spaces, peers, and family members where individuals could feel accepted and comfortable. Additionally, my study included the impact of the multiracial family (i.e., siblings, monoracial parents, extended family members) on multiracial identity development and offered new insights into how this contributed to multiracial identity development. Living as a multiracial person within an interracial family meant my participants had to understand their multiracial identity within each of their parents' monoracial identities and accept that their parents and extended families may never be able to fully understand their experiences.

Limitations

When reflecting on the design, implementation, and conclusions of this study, I found several important limitations for readers to consider. To begin, there were several limitations surrounding the participants selected for this study. I intentionally selected participants who identified as first-generation multiracial and targeted students with an interest in discussing their racial appearance concerning their identity development as a means of establishing a level of commonality among the participants. However, by limiting the study in this way, I may have also limited the scope of differing perspectives and experiences. In addition, some participants, somewhat tested the limits of my participant profile.

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Marisol identified as Hispanic (specifically, Spanish) and White. Although the U.S. Census considers Hispanic an ethnicity and not a race in the United States, I still chose to include participants who identified as Hispanic and/or LatinX in my study if they chose to include themselves within my first-generation multiracial definition. In Marisol's case, she was the only participant who identified as multiracial White whereas all the other participants identified as multiracial people of color. Given that this study focused specifically on racial appearance and its impact on multiracial identity development, one may argue that a multiracial White participant's experience of being identified as monoracial White is different from a multiracial person of color's experience of being identified as monoracial White.

Kodi identified as multiracial African Latino. Similar to Marisol, I chose to include Kodi in my study since he self-identified as a first-generation multiracial student, and I made the decision to include Hispanic and/or LatinX within the definition of multiracial; however, both Marisol and Kodi's backgrounds called into question the potential for differences between multiracial and multiethnic experiences. One may argue that the risk of confounding race and ethnicity warrants separating them for research purposes.

Zerah identified as multiracial and 100% ethnically Guyanese. Guyana is a racially diverse country, which adds a unique element to her story. Her primary connection to her racial identity is rooted in her Guyanese, mixed-race culture whereas the other participants felt more connected to their multiracial experience situated within United States' culture. One may argue that including a participant who identified as both

multiracial and monoethnic may differ from the experience of being first-generation

multiracial and multi-ethnic.

I chose to still include Marisol, Zerah, and Kodi in my study because they

provided interesting and relevant perspectives. I also wanted to ensure that I included a

diverse array of multiracial experiences, and I wanted to make sure I did not limit the

definition of first-generation multiracial according to my own biases. I allowed the

participants to determine for themselves if they fit the terms of the study and gave them

the opportunity throughout the interviews to provide their justification and rationale

through their stories and responses.

Both Joseph and Cailyn met the terms of my participant profile in terms of their

age and self-defined, first-generation multiracial identification; however, they both also

identified as graduate students in programs that have a strong emphasis in student identity

development. Their responses showed a strong sense of self-reflection and awareness

around their multiracial identity, and one may argue that their more advanced

understanding of the topic may differ from the experiences of many of the undergraduate

participants. If this is the case, then combining their responses excluded this potential

difference.

In addition to several participant limitations, I also found limitations regarding the

photo reviewers. For example, I was able to recruit only a limited number of

Black/African American/Caribbean American photo reviewers. One participant

mentioned this as a possible limitation since her assumption was that individuals

identifying as one or more of these races may be more likely to recognize multiracial

identities in participants who identify as part Black/African American/Caribbean

American. In addition, a significant percentage of photo reviewers were majoring in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields which one participant mentioned as a possible limitation as she believed individuals in these majors may not be as exposed to diversity within their STEM curriculum and co-curricular opportunities. I chose to keep these photo reviewers in the study because none of the results or prior research indicated that academic major played a significant role in the way individuals view or define race.

Additionally, I found several study design limitations. Firstly, it is important to note that the primary purpose of my study was to conduct an in-depth investigation into the experiences of the participants rather than to create a theory generalizable to other individuals, and to do so, I intentionally limited the study to a single campus with a small number of participants. In addition, some photo reviewers recognized some participants, and when this occurred, I immediately removed the participant photograph and did not allow them to answer questions about that participant. This meant that not all participants received the same number of responses to their photograph, which may have then limited my ability as the researcher to interpret the results. Lastly, several participants indicated their concern that a photograph was not necessarily an exact replica of the experience of a real-life meeting. Since the participants and photo reviewers never met face-to-face, the participants were unable to advocate for themselves and explain their racial identity in their own words. While this was not the initial point of the study, some of the participants indicated concern that using a single photograph may not be the most effective means of collecting data on their perceived racial or ethnic appearance.

Another important topic to mention was that I intentionally did not transcribe photo reviewer interviews and consequently, did not code or attempt to find emerging themes from the photo reviewer interviews. I reached this decision because I felt the primary information I needed to gather from the photo reviewers was their basic demographic information and their response to the racial appearance of each participant, of which I gathered by taking notes during the interview. This study focused on the participants' reactions to the photo reviewers' responses as a means of developing a theory to explain the impact on their multiracial identity development, and I wanted the emphasis to remain on my 10 participants and not as much on the photo reviewers. However, this emerging theory may inspire researchers to look at this topic from the perspective of society (photo reviewers) as opposed to the multiracial individuals themselves. Although I chose not to transcribe the photo reviewer interviews and justified my reasons for doing so, there exists the possibility that if I had done so, I may have found supplemental information garnered from the photo reviewer interviews that could have helped strengthen the overall findings. The risk of venturing too far off the primary course of this study ultimately led me to decide to use only my notes from the interviews as opposed to the verbatim interview transcriptions.

One of the most significant concerns I had regarding this study was my personal connection to the topic. As is the case with qualitative research, I, as the researcher, had a significant amount of influence on the process and the results of this research, and I struggled to navigate my thoughts and my lens as a multiracial individual within a highly personal topic. Upon reflection of my experience throughout this study, there was a possibility that because I could relate so personally to many of the stories and experiences

of the participants, I was less likely to ask follow-up, probing questions and just assumed

I understood the depth of their experiences. Furthermore, in the first round of interviews,

I intentionally informed the participants of my own multiracial identity. While I shared

this information in an attempt to establish rapport and hopefully help the participants feel

more comfortable sharing open and honest responses, I may have also unintentionally

created a situation where the participants felt compelled to share information that they

thought I would want to know, or information in which they felt I would more personally

relate. To try and reduce the possibility of this situation occurring, I worked with peer

debriefers to review my interview questions as well as the ultimate results.

Strengths

In addition to the limitations of the study, I found multiple strengths. To begin,

the participants were highly engaged, thoughtful, honest and committed to the

experience. They all expressed a desire to add to the limited multiracial research

currently in existence and seemed thankful for the opportunity to share their stories in the

hopes that it may make a positive impact on the advancement of the multiracial

experience. I engaged in member checks with the participants on two occasions to insure

I interpreted their quotations correctly and remained true to the messages they conveyed

during the interviews. I also used four peer debriefers to challenge my findings, offer

additional suggestions, and provide alternate perspectives.

Regarding the design of the study, using a constructivist grounded theory

methodology allowed me to create a theoretical explanation of significant and meaningful

issues in the participants' lives (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mills et al.,

2006). Given my personal connection to the topic, the constructivist approach allowed

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me to not only accept that I am a part of the world I was investigating, but also to construct the emerging grounded theory through both the data and my interpretation of it as influenced by my interactions, cultural backgrounds, and perspectives (Charmaz, 2000).

My ability to connect on a personal level with the participants meant that I chose to be highly involved in the process, to be open and transparent, and to be more interactive during the interviews. While I tried to listen more often than speak, when participants mentioned something I could relate to, I would let them know. I did so in an effort to establish confidence and rapport with the participants and help them feel comfortable sharing their stories and trust that I have the capacity and personal motivation to interpret them correctly.

The opportunity to use my research as a way of advocating for my participants and educating others on the multiracial experience was a strength of the study; however, it was also a limitation in that the advocacy had to occur through me as the researcher. The design of the study did not allow the participants to advocate on their own behalf. With the photo reviewers, I intentionally chose to end each interview with a conversation about their results and used the interaction as an opportunity to educate the reviewers about the challenges of identifying as multiracial in the United States and the potential effects of society misidentifying them. I initially debated whether to incorporate this conversation during the debriefing session; however, I felt I needed to uphold my constructivist, critical lens and advocate for my multiracial participants. I made sure to ask each photo reviewer if they wanted to know how each of the participants identified and tried to engage in an honest conversation where they could also challenge what I was

saying and freely ask questions. The ultimate result was positive as every photo reviewer expressed initial surprise when they received the debrief which informed them that each participant identified as first-generation multiracial (Appendix H). Many of them expressed some embarrassment as well as a wish that they had been able to identify more participants correctly. They all expressed an interest in discussing the results, asking questions, and learning more about the study.

During the second round of participant interviews, one of the last questions I asked each participant was what they wished the photo reviewers knew about them. Each participant expressed their desire to have the photo reviewers not only recognize the truth regarding their identity but also understand that their racial appearance had a strong impact on their identity as a multiracial person. Essentially, how they look was more than skin-deep and had a significant and profound influence on their identity as a multiracial person. Their responses re-affirmed my decision to use the debrief session with each photo reviewer as an opportunity to educate them on the multiracial experience. At the end of the second round of interviews, I made sure to debrief with each of the participants and informed them of the conversations I had with the photo reviewers. I felt it was important for the participants to know that I was not remaining silent but chose instead to advocate for them since they were not present to advocate for themselves.

Implications of the Findings

Although the emerging grounded theory findings were limited to the ways in which racial appearance affected multiracial identity development, the study fits within the broader scope of prior, related research related to multiracial identity development.

This study, in combination with other studies, encouraged higher education administrators to understand that the multiracial experience differs from the monoracial one. A significant part of the multiracial experience means multiracial individuals must navigate not only their monoracial identities, but they must also understand and accept the complexity of when their monoracial halves blends. Being multiracial can also mean struggling to be accepted and comfortable in monoracial spaces. In addition, part of the experience of identifying as multiracial was to live in a society that was not necessarily inclusive of the multiracial population.

Also important for higher education administrators to recognize are the ways in which they may be intentionally or unintentionally upholding a limited definition of race that primarily considers monoracial diversity and how this may exclude the multiracial experience. For example, several of the participants indicated concern when they felt either forced or pressured to identify as monoracial, particularly on forms and demographic questionnaires. In some cases, they discussed how they felt identifying as multiracial might take away support and solidarity for their marginalized, monoracial identities.

This study also encourages campus officials to recognize how multiracial students may feel pressure, guilt, and conflict when filling out demographic questionnaires because they believe their response may negatively affect the monoracial experience if they choose to identify as their authentic multiracial self. Also important to recognize are the ways in which these surveys and questionnaires may not be inclusive of the multiracial experience as several of the participants indicated how they never saw options they could select which truly allowed them to claim their full racial identity. This study

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encourages campus officials to consider re-examining their demographic questionnaires to be more inclusive of the needs of multiracial students. One way to do so is to ensure that any policy changes and funding initiatives and are not based solely on the results of the demographic surveys, and to make sure students are aware of this when filling out the surveys. This may help reduce the feelings of pressure and guilt to identify with their monoracial halves in order to help promote monoracial initiatives. Campus officials may also want to review the different ways demographic questionnaires allow students to racially identify and see if there may be limitations to the definitions of the racial classifications and options.

Another important implication of this study was that multiracial students might feel trapped by societal definitions of their race, and race in general. For the participants, this led them to feel a certain level of expectation to conform to societal definitions, which then led to feelings of paranoia about how people may be misidentifying them, and feelings of guilt and confusion that their racial appearance was misleading and confusing to others. When many participants felt they could be most free to express themselves was when they were interacting with others who also identified as multiracial. Therefore, it was important for higher education and student affairs administrators not to assume that multiracial students feel accepted and comfortable in monoracial spaces. In addition, it is equally important that they recognize the importance of creating and allowing spaces on campus for multiracial individuals to connect with each other and learn about different resources and allies who can help support them and their experience. College campuses also need to increase the number of administrators and student, staff, and faculty leaders who are not only willing but also well informed enough to serve as mentors to multiracial

students as they navigate the complexities of their identity development. It may be confusing and challenging for potential mentors to understand that even when operating under their monoracial halves, multiracial students may very likely still identify the most strongly with their multiracial identity. Therefore, it is imperative for mentors to try to recognize the salience of students' multiracial identity and accept that many multiracial students may move fluidly between their monoracial identities as well as their multiracial identity. In addition, when they are operating within their monoracial identities, their perspective, awareness, and understanding may be very different from other monoracial students who do not identify as multiracial.

My findings suggested that all 10 participants felt a strong, internal sense of their multiracial identity; however, where they indicated concern was when their internal identity conflicted with limited societal definitions and understanding of their multiracial experience. This implied the importance of creating both safe spaces for multiracial students to connect with other students who identify similarly, and more intentional diversity programming specifically targeting monoracial populations. This programming can help people recognize and learn about their perceptions of race and how they may be limiting themselves and others such as the multiracial population. In addition to diversity programs, my results will hopefully encourage universities to consider expanding their curriculum and incorporating additional student activities and events that help reduce incorrect assumptions about multiracial students. Such activities need to be more inclusive to the multiracial experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

Through the process of conducting my study, analyzing the results, and creating an emerging theory to address the impact of racial appearance on multiracial identity development, I discovered additional areas where research was needed to further explain the external impacts on multiracial identity. Researchers can employ this emerging theory as a guide for future studies, which may further expand the knowledge and content base surrounding the impact of racial appearance on multiracial identity development.

One area where this emerging theory may help inform future research is in the experience of multiracial White students, such as Marisol, to better understand their lived experiences and the impact of being multiracial White on their multiracial identity development. In addition, one of the interesting findings of this study centered on the participants' references to their families. This study's emergent theory may be helpful to future research that focuses on multiracial families as well as the multiracial sibling experience as it relates to racial appearance and multiracial identity development. Furthermore, this study's research may be highly relevant to describing the depth of the multiracial experience as it relates to the second-generation multiracial experience and ways in which it may be similar and differ. Moreover, the emerging theory explained in this study may be useful as a means of understanding how racial appearance influences the identity of multiracial students who choose to identify as monoracial. Finally, it may be helpful to apply this emerging theory to the experience of multiracial students pursuing academic programs that place an emphasis on identity development in their curriculum and gather their perspectives as to how well they feel the programs incorporate their experiences as multiracial students.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to relate the emergent theory to the study's research questions and current literature, provide an overview of limitations and strengths of the emergent theory and overall study, provide implications for individuals working within higher education, and offer recommendations for future research and future trends. During the process of engaging in this study, I became more aware of the experiences of other multiracial individuals within higher education and how they conceptualized their racial appearance within the context of their multiracial identity. The participants in this study actively engaged in a journey of self-awareness, discovery, and reflection. By providing their honest responses and feedback regarding their lived experiences, I was able to develop an emerging theory to capture the complexity of racial appearance and its impact on multiracial individuals' understanding of their identity. First and foremost, the participants described multiracial as a distinct group identity separate from the monoracial experience. They explained ways in which being multiracial meant operating from their monoracial halves while simultaneously understanding and accepting the complexity of when their monoracial halves blend together. They also described the challenge of feeling pressured by society to adapt to a world that may treat them as a race or ethnicity that is not authentic to their self-defined multiracial identity.

Regardless of how the participants viewed their monoracial halves, or how they felt society viewed their monoracial halves, they consistently contextualized and grounded their monoracial experiences within the context of their multiracial identity. This context was further informed by their experiences as college students within a higher education environment. For the participants in this study, their internal sense of self stemmed from their multiracial background, and they described the importance of

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maintaining this strong, internal identity regardless of how their racial appearance either supported or impaired society's ability to identify them correctly as multiracial.

I hope readers of this study will gain an awareness of the unique issues faced by multiracial individuals, students in particular, and recognize ways in which they may be able to better support and engage in multiracial advocacy. Important for readers to note are the ways in which the multiracial experience differs from the monoracial experience, particularly within the context of higher education. Although multiracial individuals often operate within their monoracial halves, their perspective may be very different from other monoracial individuals since their multiracial identity influences their awareness and understanding of themselves and others. Oftentimes, multiracial individuals feel society pressures them to operate within their monoracial halves, and this is primarily due to the way race is defined and conceptualized in the United States in primarily monoracial terms. One of the primary messages for readers to obtain is the danger of maintaining a stagnant definition of race. The way we, as a society and a country, choose to define race needs to evolve, just like we, as a people and a country, continue to evolve. There is a danger in remaining stuck in our racist past, but there is also an extreme challenge in not only recognizing the impacts of historical context on the way we view race, but also trying to proactively change it. To do so, we need to look at the past, present, and the future, and do our best to adapt, change, grow, and accept. We are hindering our own progress when even significantly open-minded, social justice advocates and educators fail to see multiracial in how they comprehend race. When multiracial individuals operate within their monoracial halves, it should be a choice, not pressured because of limited definitions of race and associated stereotypes of racial

appearance. What others think matters as it ultimately can affect the way they treat

others. If we can make greater efforts as a society to expand our minds and re-evaluate

how we see race, then we will ultimately create a more inclusive, aware, and accepting

society for all individuals, particularly those who identify as multiracial.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL IRB APPROVED

Recruitment Email: Phase I Interview Participants

Dear [*insert name*],

My name is Aileen Hentz and I am a Ph.D. student from the Department of Counseling, Higher Education, & Special Education at the University of Maryland. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about multiracial identity development. You're eligible to be in this study because you may identify as a first-generation multiracial college student. First generation multiracial is defined as an individual who identifies as multiracial and was raised in an environment where his or her parents are each from a different monoracial background and do not identify as multiracial. I obtained your contact information from [*describe source*].

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two (2) interviews each approximately sixty (60) minutes in length. The first interview will involve questions regarding your multiracial identity and your experiences living as a multiracial individual. You will also be asked to either provide a digital photograph or allow me to take your digital photograph. Your photograph will be viewed by approximately twenty (20) photo review participants who will be asked to answer questions related to their impression of your racial appearance. Your name and/or personal background information will remain anonymous. In the second interview, you will be provided with the photo review participants' responses and given the opportunity

to react and respond. I would like to audio record your interviews and then use the information to help inform my dissertation.

 For participating in my research study, you will receive a $10 amazon gift card for each interview you complete.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at anhentz@umd.edu

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Aileen N Hentz

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IRB APPROVED

Using Grounded Theory to Explain the Impact of Racial Appearance on Multiracial Identity Development: Phase I Interview Participants First Interview Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Please provide the following demographic information:

Age:

_____

Year in School:

_____

Major:

_____

Gender:

_____

Sex:

_____

Socioeconomic status:

_____

Personal Racial Ancestry

    1. How would you describe your parent's race and/or ethnicity?

2. How do you think your parents view their race or ethnicity?

3. How would you describe your racial ancestry?

Multiracial Identity

4. How would you describe yourself with it comes to your race or ethnicity? Do you use any terms or labels, and if so, what?

5. How would you define multiracial?

6. How do you feel your multiracial identity has influenced the way you see the world?

7. What does it mean to you to be multiracial in the United States today?

8. Based on your experiences as a multiracial individual, how do you feel society views multiracial individuals in the United States today? Please provide an example if possible.

9. Based on your experiences as a multiracial individual, do you feel your multiracial identity has influenced the way others view you? Why and/or how? Please provide an example if possible.

10. What has your experience as a multiracial individual taught you about yourself and others?

11. Has your multiracial identity changed over time? If so, please describe.

12. What are some of the challenges you've experienced (if any) as a multiracial individual? Please provide an example.

13. What are some of the benefits of being multiracial? Please provide a personal example.

Racial Appearance

14. How do you define racial appearance?

15. Please describe your racial appearance:

16. Please describe your parent's and (if applicable) your sibling's racial appearance:

17. Please describe your racial appearance in relation to your immediate family's racial appearance.

18. If you do not feel you racially appear similar to your immediate family, please describe how this makes you feel.

19. Please describe your racial appearance in relation to your extended family's racial appearance.

20. If you do not feel you racially appear similar to your extended family, please describe how this makes you feel.

21. Please describe how you believe society may define your racial appearance:

22. Do you believe you have been racially misclassified by others? If so, how often do you feel you are racially misclassified by others? Please explain.

23. If you have experienced racial misclassification, please describe at least one time when you felt you were racially misclassified.

24. If you have experienced racial misclassification, please explain how this experience makes you feel.

25. Has your racial appearance influenced how you think about your multiracial identity? If so, how has your racial appearance influenced how you think about being multiracial?

Level of Reflection Regarding Multiracial Identity

26. What communities do you feel like you are a part of? Please describe (gender, age, race, etc.).

27. How often do you discuss race with your family? Friends? What are those conversations like?

28. What types of activities are you involved in? Why did you elect to become involved in them? And what is your level of involvement?

Using Grounded Theory to Explain the Impact of Racial Appearance on Multiracial

Identity Development: Phase I Interview Participants Second Interview

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. As you are aware, approximately twenty (20) participants looked at your photograph and described how they racially identified your photograph and explained why. How do you think they responded to your photograph and why?

2. Prior to sharing with you the results of the photo review, please describe your feelings and/or emotions regarding the anticipated results.

According to the participants who reviewed your photograph, the results indicate the following [*provide responses specifically associated with interview participants' photograph*]

3. What is your reaction to the photograph review responses of your racial identity?

4. What is your reaction to the explanations provided by the photo review participants as to why they chose to racially identify the way in which they did?

5. Do the results ultimately matter to you? Please explain your response.

If misclassification occurred

6. Are you surprised that you were racially misclassified? Why or why not?

7. Please describe your feelings and/or emotions regarding the results:

8. How do you think your family might respond if they knew the results of the photo review?

9. How do you think these responses influence how you view yourself and your racial identity?

If no misclassification occurred

10. Are you surprised that you were not racially misclassified? Why or why not?

11. Please describe your feelings and/or emotions regarding the results:

12. How do you think your family might respond if they knew the results of the photo review?

13. How do you think these responses influence how you view yourself and your racial identity?

APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT EMAIL PHOTO REVIEWERS IRB APPROVED

Recruitment Email: Phase II Photo Review Participants

Dear [*insert name*],

My name is Aileen Hentz and I am a Ph.D. student from the Department of Counseling, Higher Education, & Special Education at the University of Maryland. I am writing to invite you to participate in my dissertation research study. I obtained your contact information from [*describe source*].

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to review approximately 10-15 photographs. You will then be asked to briefly explain your reasoning for identifying each image the way in which you did. The session should last approximately 20-30 minutes. You will also be asked to provide demographic information including your age, gender, race, hometown, home state, and academic major. You must be at least 18 years of age in order to participate. The study will occur in a mutually agreed-upon location (example: on-campus office).

For participating in my research study, you will receive a $5 amazon gift card.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at anhentz@umd.edu

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Aileen N Hentz

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Using Grounded Theory to Explain the Impact of Racial Appearance on Multiracial

Identity Development: Phase II Photo Review Participants

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Please provide the following demographic information:

Age:

_____

Year in School:

_____

Major:

_____

Gender:

_____

Sex:

_____

Hometown:

_____

Home state:

_____

1. Please describe how you racially identified each person in each photograph:

2. Briefly explain the reasoning behind how you chose to racially identify each person in each photograph:

3. Please describe how you racially and/or ethnically identify:

4. Please describe how you define monoracial and multiracial:

5. How often do you discuss race with your family? Friends?

Participants Informed Consent
University of Maryland College Park

Initials_____ Date _____

Project Title	Using Grounded Theory to Explain the Impact of Racial Appearance on Multiracial Identity Development: Phase I Interview Participants
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Aileen Hentz at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am inviting you to participate in the study because you indicated you identify as a first-generation multiracial college student. First-generation multiracial students include only individuals raised in environments where the parents are each from a different monoracial background and do not identify as multiracial.
	The purpose of this research is to examine the influence of racial appearance on multiracial identity development by specifically focusing on the implications of perceived societal misclassification.
Procedures	The procedures involve two interviews each approximately 60-90 minutes in length. Interviews will occur in a reserved interview room in Benjamin Hall or at a mutually agreed upon location. All interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.
	The first interview will involve questions regarding your multiracial identity and your experiences living as a multiracial individual.
	At the end of the interview, you will be asked to either provide a digital photograph or allow me, Aileen Hentz, to take your digital photograph. Your photograph will be viewed by approximately twenty (20) photo review participants who will be asked to answer questions related to their impression of your racial appearance. Your name and/or personal background information will remain anonymous

	In the second interview, you will be provided with the photo review participants' responses and given the opportunity to react and respond. You will be given a minimum of two (2) opportunities to review my interpretation of the comments you make during the interviews and provide me with your feedback. This process will occur via email. You will receive a $10 amazon gift card for each interview your complete.
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There may be some risks from participating in this research study. Given the sensitive nature of race and physical appearance, you may have an emotional and/or negative psychological response to this study. Social classification plays a significant role in the construction of racial identity; therefore, social misclassification may heighten stress levels and feelings of invalidation and identity confusion. You do not have to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. If you find that you are in need of emotional support as a result of this study, please consider using either of the following resources. UMD Counseling Center: http://counseling.umd.edu/ UMD Mental Health Center: http://www.health.umd.edu/mentalhealth/services

	Although every attempt will be made to keep your information anonymous and confidential, there is still a risk of the potential for the loss/breach of confidentiality.
Potential Benefits	There are no direct benefits from participating in this research; however possible benefits include a better understanding of the ways in which you may be influenced by your social world thereby a better understanding of yourself.
	There are positive effects associated with the ability of multiracial individuals to identify with all of their racial backgrounds. This study will give you the opportunity to explain how you choose to identify with all of your racial backgrounds. This study will also give you the opportunity to explain from your perspective the importance of expanding the awareness of the unique needs associated with multiracial students.
	I hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the multiracial student experience.

Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by keeping all collected data in either a locked filing cabinet and/or by using password-protected computer files. Your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. You will be given the opportunity to either select a pseudonym or have one selected for you by me, Aileen Hentz, in order to help protect your identity. I, Aileen Hentz, will be the only person with access to the identification key linking your pseudonym with your data. 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 or if I am required to do so by law.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. 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. If you are an employee or student, your employment status or academic standing at UMD will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study. You will be told of any significant new findings which develop during the study which may affect your willingness to participate in the study. If you decide to stop taking part in this study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:

	Aileen N Hentz 3179 Glenn L Martin Hall University of Maryland 301-405-1980 anhentz@umd.edu
Participant Rights	*If you have questions about your rights as a research participant* *or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:* **University of Maryland College Park** **Institutional Review Board Office** **1204 Marie Mount Hall** **College Park, Maryland, 20742** **E-mail: irb@umd.edu** **Telephone: 301-405-0678** *This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.*
Statement of Consent	*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 will receive a copy of this signed consent form.* *If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.*
Signature and Date	**NAME OF PARTICIPANT** **[Please Print]**
Signature and Date	**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**
Signature and Date	**Please check the boxes below to confirm the following:** ☐ I agree to be audio-recorded during the interviews

	☐ I agree to allow my photo to be used as part of the photo review
Signature and Date	**DATE**	

Photo Reviewers Informed Consent

University of Maryland College Park

Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Aileen Hentz at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am inviting you to participate in the study because you indicated an interest in my research. The focus of the study involves race and ethnicity. Additional details regarding the purpose of the study will be provided in a debriefing form at the conclusion of the photo review session.
Procedures	The procedures involve one review of approximately 10-15 photographs. You will be asked to look at the photographs and classify each image according to race and/or ethnicity. You will then be asked to briefly explain your reasoning for identifying each image the way in which you did. The session should last approximately 20-30 minutes.

You will also be asked to provide demographic information including your race, gender, age, hometown, home state, and academic major.

The photo review will occur in my (Aileen Hentz) office in 3179 Glenn L. Martin Hall or at a mutually agreed upon location. The meeting will be digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

You will receive a $5 amazon gift card for completing the photo review. |
| **Potential Risks and Discomforts** | There may be some risks from participating in this research study. Given the sensitive nature of race and physical appearance, you may have an emotional and/or negative psychological response to this study. You do not have to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. |

	If you find that you are in need of emotional support as a result of this study, please consider using either of the following resources.

UMD Counseling Center: http://counseling.umd.edu/

UMD Mental Health Center:

http://www.health.umd.edu/mentalhealth/services

Although every attempt will be made to keep your information anonymous and confidential, there is still a risk of the potential for the loss/breach of confidentiality. |
| **Potential Benefits** | There are no direct benefits from participating in this research; however possible benefits include a better understanding of the ways in which you may be influenced by your social world thereby a better understanding of yourself. |
| **Confidentiality** | Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by keeping all collected data in either a locked filing cabinet and/or by using password-protected computer files.

Your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. You will be given the opportunity to either select a pseudonym or |

	have one selected for you by me, Aileen Hentz, in order to help protect your identity. I, Aileen Hentz, will be the only person with access to the identification key linking your pseudonym with your data. 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 or if I am required to do so by law.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. 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. If you are an employee or student, your employment status or academic standing at UMD will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study. You will be told of any significant new findings which develop during the study which may affect your willingness to participate in the study. If you decide to stop taking part in this study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator: Aileen N Hentz 3179 Glenn L Martin Hall University of Maryland 301-405-1980 anhentz@umd.edu
Participant Rights	*If you have questions about your rights as a research participant* *or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:*

	University of Maryland College Park **Institutional Review Board Office** **1204 Marie Mount Hall** **College Park, Maryland, 20742** **E-mail: irb@umd.edu** **Telephone: 301-405-0678** *This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.*
Statement of Consent	*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 will receive a copy of this signed consent form.* *If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.*
Signature and Date	**NAME OF PARTICIPANT** **[Please Print]**
Signature and Date	**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**
Signature and Date	**Please check the box below to confirm the following:** ☐ I agree to be audio-recorded during the photo review session
Signature and Date	**DATE**	

APPENDIX F: INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT RESULTS FROM PHOTO REVIEW SESSIONS

Reviewer	SelfIDRace	Age	Year	Sex	Hometown	Aimee Race/Ethnicity
1	Black/African	20	3	F	Baltimore	White
2	White	20	3	F	Gaithersburg	N. European, Russian, Scandinavian
3	White	20	3	M	Bestrehan	Jewish/White
4	Asian	31	Fac	F	Riverside	European/Polish
5	White & Hispanic	18	1	F	Crownsville	White
6	Hispanic	18	1	F	Dover	White or Hispanic
7	White	30	2	M	Hays	Russian/White
8	White	21	4	M	Nashville	White
9	Ethiopian/White	22	4	M	Baltimore	White
10	Japanese/White	22	4	F	Hyattsville	Pass
11	Half Caucasian/Half SE Asian	18	1	F	Rockville	Caucasian
12	White somewhat Jewish	19	2	M	Laurel	Pass
13	White	29	4	M	Portage	White
14	White	21	4	F	Millersville	White
15	Persian	26	4	M	Tehran	White Eastern European
16	White	22	4	F	Wilmington	White
17	Indian	20	2	F	Columbia	White
18	Mexican	18	1	M	*	Caucasian
19	Caucasian & Middle Eastern	20	3	M	Rockville	White
20	Caucasian/Ukranian	18	1	F	Howard County	White maybe mixed
21	Indian American	19	2	M	Laurel	Caucasian
22	White	22	4	M	Severna Park	White
23	Russian American	20	3	M	Novosibirsk	Caucasian/European/French

24	White	22	3	M	Plano	White maybe Jewish
25	Asian American	19	2	F	Ellicott City	Caucasian
26	White/Latina or Hispanic	20	2	F	Chile	White maybe mixed

Reviewer	SelfIDRace	Age	Year	Sex	Hometown	Arieanna Race/Ethnicity
1	Black/African	20	3	F	Baltimore	Mix Caribbean
2	White	20	3	F	Gaithersburg	South Asian
3	White	20	3	M	Bestrehan	Indian
4	Asian	31	Fac	F	Riverside	Indian
5	White & Hispanic	18	1	F	Crownsville	Indian
6	Hispanic	18	1	F	Dover	African American
7	White	30	2	M	Hays	Indian/Pakistani
8	White	21	4	M	Nashville	SE Asian
9	Ethiopian/White	22	4	M	Baltimore	African American, possibly Indian
10	Japanese/White	22	4	F	Hyattsville	Filipino or Latino
11	Half Caucasian/Half SE Asian	18	1	F	Rockville	Indian
12	White somewhat Jewish	19	2	M	Laurel	Black maybe mixed
13	White	29	4	M	Portage	Black
14	White	21	4	F	Millersville	Indian maybe and Black
15	Persian	26	4	M	Tehran	Indian/Pakistani
16	White	22	4	F	Wilmington	Indian
17	Indian	20	2	F	Columbia	Indian
18	Mexican	18	1	M	*	SE Asian or Indian
19	Caucasian & Middle Eastern	20	3	M	Rockville	Indian
20	Caucasian/Ukranian	18	1	F	Howard County	S. Asian/Indian/Malaysian
21	Indian American	19	2	M	Laurel	African American & Indian or S. Indian
22	White	22	4	M	Severna Park	African American
23	Russian American	20	3	M	Novosibirsk	Filipino
24	White	22	3	M	Plano	Indian
25	Asian American	19	2	F	Ellicott City	S. Asian or SE. Asian
26	White/Latina or Hispanic	20	2	F	Chile	Black/African American or Indian

Reviewer	SelfIDRace	Age	Year	Sex	Hometown	Cailyn Race/Ethnicity
1	Black/African	20	3	F	Baltimore	African & White
2	White	20	3	F	Gaithersburg	Half Black/Half White
3	White	20	3	M	Bestrehan	Central Asian, Persian, Iranian
4	Asian	31	Fac	F	Riverside	African & White
5	White & Hispanic	18	1	F	Crownsville	Black or mixed w/ White
6	Hispanic	18	1	F	Dover	African American
7	White	30	2	M	Hays	Half Black/Half White
8	White	21	4	M	Nashville	Half Black/Half White
9	Ethiopian/White	22	4	M	Baltimore	Half Black/Half White
10	Japanese/White	22	4	F	Hyattsville	Asian or Half Black/Half White
11	Half Caucasian/Half SE Asian	18	1	F	Rockville	Hispanic or African American
12	White somewhat Jewish	19	2	M	Laurel	Black or mixed Hispanic
13	White	29	4	M	Portage	Mixed Black and White
14	White	21	4	F	Millersville	Middle Eastern
15	Persian	26	4	M	Tehran	Half Black/Half White
16	White	22	4	F	Wilmington	African American
17	Indian	20	2	F	Columbia	Half Black/Half White
18	Mexican	18	1	M	*	Half Black/Half White
19	Caucasian & Middle Eastern	20	3	M	Rockville	African American
20	Caucasian/Ukranian	18	1	F	Howard County	Mixed White w/ S. Asian or Hispanic or African American
21	Indian American	19	2	M	Laurel	Hispanic
22	White	22	4	M	Severna Park	African American & Hispanic

23	Russian American	20	3	M	Novosibirsk	African American & Caucasian
24	White	22	3	M	Plano	Black
25	Asian American	19	2	F	Ellicott City	Mixed African American/Hispanic or Middle Eastern
26	White/Latina or Hispanic	20	2	F	Chile	African American

Reviewer	SelfIDRace	Age	Year	Sex	Hometown	Dianna Race/Ethnicity
1	Black/African	20	3	F	Baltimore	Asian
2	White	20	3	F	Gaithersburg	Half White, half Asian
3	White	20	3	M	Bestrehan	Native American
4	Asian	31	Fac	F	Riverside	Mix Asian & White
5	White & Hispanic	18	1	F	Crownsville	Pass
6	Hispanic	18	1	F	Dover	Asian
7	White	30	2	M	Hays	Inuit/Alaskan
8	White	21	4	M	Nashville	Mix Asian & White
9	Ethiopian/White	22	4	M	Baltimore	Asian
10	Japanese/White	22	4	F	Hyattsville	Hispanic or, mix Asian & White
11	Half Caucasian/Half SE Asian	18	1	F	Rockville	Half White, half Asian
12	White somewhat Jewish	19	2	M	Laurel	Asian maybe mixed Hispanic
13	White	29	4	M	Portage	Mix Asian & White
14	White	21	4	F	Millersville	Asian possibly Filipino
15	Persian	26	4	M	Tehran	Asian or Hispanic
16	White	22	4	F	Wilmington	White maybe Asian
17	Indian	20	2	F	Columbia	Mix Asian & White
18	Mexican	18	1	M	*	Pass
19	Caucasian & Middle Eastern	20	3	M	Rockville	Asian
20	Caucasian/Ukranian	18	1	F	Howard County	Pass
21	Indian American	19	2	M	Laurel	Asian
22	White	22	4	M	Severna Park	Mix Asian & White
23	Russian American	20	3	M	Novosibirsk	Asian/Chinese
24	White	22	3	M	Plano	Asian
25	Asian American	19	2	F	Ellicott City	Mix Asian & White
26	White/Latina or Hispanic	20	2	F	Chile	Latina

Reviewer	SelfIDRace	Age	Year	Sex	Hometown	Gwyn Race/Ethnicity
1	Black/African	20	3	F	Baltimore	White
2	White	20	3	F	Gaithersburg	Half white
3	White	20	3	M	Bestrehan	White
4	Asian	31	Fac	F	Riverside	Latina
5	White & Hispanic	18	1	F	Crownsville	Asian
6	Hispanic	18	1	F	Dover	Asian or Hispanic
7	White	30	2	M	Hays	White
8	White	21	4	M	Nashville	Caucasian not White
9	Ethiopian/White	22	4	M	Baltimore	Asian/White
10	Japanese/White	22	4	F	Hyattsville	Mixed White/Asian
11	Half Caucasian/Half SE Asian	18	1	F	Rockville	Half Asian/Half White
12	White somewhat Jewish	19	2	M	Laurel	White maybe Asian mix
13	White	29	4	M	Portage	Maybe Asian
14	White	21	4	F	Millersville	White maybe Native American
15	Persian	26	4	M	Tehran	Half Asian/Half White
16	White	22	4	F	Wilmington	White
17	Indian	20	2	F	Columbia	Mixed White/Asian
18	Mexican	18	1	M	*	Half Asian/Half White
19	Caucasian & Middle Eastern	20	3	M	Rockville	Asian; maybe Middle Eastern or Filipino
20	Caucasian/Ukranian	18	1	F	Howard County	White
21	Indian American	19	2	M	Laurel	Caucasian
22	White	22	4	M	Severna Park	Mixed White/Asian
23	Russian American	20	3	M	Novosibirsk	Mixed White/Asian
24	White	22	3	M	Plano	Asian
25	Asian American	19	2	F	Ellicott City	Caucasian
26	White/Latina or Hispanic	20	2	F	Chile	Caucasian

Reviewer	SelfIDRace	Age	Year	Sex	Hometown	Joseph Race/Ethnicity
1	Black/African	20	3	F	Baltimore	Hispanic
2	White	20	3	F	Gaithersburg	Latino
3	White	20	3	M	Bestrehan	Hispanic
4	Asian	31	Fac	F	Riverside	Latino
5	White & Hispanic	18	1	F	Crownsville	Hispanic
6	Hispanic	18	1	F	Dover	Hispanic
7	White	30	2	M	Hays	Hispanic
8	White	21	4	M	Nashville	Hispanic
9	Ethiopian/White	22	4	M	Baltimore	Hispanic
10	Japanese/White	22	4	F	Hyattsville	Pass
11	Half Caucasian/Half SE Asian	18	1	F	Rockville	Hispanic
12	White somewhat Jewish	19	2	M	Laurel	Hispanic
13	White	29	4	M	Portage	Latin
14	White	21	4	F	Millersville	Mexican
15	Persian	26	4	M	Tehran	Hispanic
16	White	22	4	F	Wilmington	Puerto Rican
17	Indian	20	2	F	Columbia	Hispanic
18	Mexican	18	1	M	*	Hispanic
19	Caucasian & Middle Eastern	20	3	M	Rockville	Hispanic
20	Caucasian/Ukranian	18	1	F	Howard County	Hispanic
21	Indian American	19	2	M	Laurel	Hispanic
22	White	22	4	M	Severna Park	Hispanic
23	Russian American	20	3	M	Novosibirsk	Hispanic
24	White	22	3	M	Plano	Hispanic
25	Asian American	19	2	F	Ellicott City	Hispanic
26	White/Latina or Hispanic	20	2	F	Chile	Latino

Reviewer	SelfIDRace	Age	Year	Sex	Hometown	Kodi Race/Ethnicity
1	Black/African	20	3	F	Baltimore	African
2	White	20	3	F	Gaithersburg	Black
3	White	20	3	M	Bestrehan	Black
4	Asian	31	Fac	F	Riverside	African American
5	White & Hispanic	18	1	F	Crownsville	Black
6	Hispanic	18	1	F	Dover	African American
7	White	30	2	M	Hays	Black
8	White	21	4	M	Nashville	African American
9	Ethiopian/White	22	4	M	Baltimore	African American, maybe mixed
10	Japanese/White	22	4	F	Hyattsville	African American
11	Half Caucasian/Half SE Asian	18	1	F	Rockville	African American
12	White somewhat Jewish	19	2	M	Laurel	Pass
13	White	29	4	M	Portage	Black
14	White	21	4	F	Millersville	Black
15	Persian	26	4	M	Tehran	African American
16	White	22	4	F	Wilmington	African American
17	Indian	20	2	F	Columbia	Black, maybe Mexican, Mix
18	Mexican	18	1	M	*	African American
19	Caucasian & Middle Eastern	20	3	M	Rockville	African American
20	Caucasian/Ukranian	18	1	F	Howard County	African American
21	Indian American	19	2	M	Laurel	African American
22	White	22	4	M	Severna Park	African American
23	Russian American	20	3	M	Novosibirsk	African American
24	White	22	3	M	Plano	Black
25	Asian American	19	2	F	Ellicott City	African American
26	White/Latina or Hispanic	20	2	F	Chile	African American

Reviewer	SelfIDRace	Age	Year	Sex	Hometown	Marisol Race/Ethnicity
1	Black/African	20	3	F	Baltimore	White
2	White	20	3	F	Gaithersburg	White
3	White	20	3	M	Bestrehan	White/Scottish/Irish
4	Asian	31	Fac	F	Riverside	White
5	White & Hispanic	18	1	F	Crownsville	White
6	Hispanic	18	1	F	Dover	White
7	White	30	2	M	Hays	White
8	White	21	4	M	Nashville	White
9	Ethiopian/White	22	4	M	Baltimore	Pass
10	Japanese/White	22	4	F	Hyattsville	White
11	Half Caucasian/Half SE Asian	18	1	F	Rockville	White
12	White somewhat Jewish	19	2	M	Laurel	White
13	White	29	4	M	Portage	White
14	White	21	4	F	Millersville	White
15	Persian	26	4	M	Tehran	White European Descent: Irish/German
16	White	22	4	F	Wilmington	White/American
17	Indian	20	2	F	Columbia	White
18	Mexican	18	1	M	*	Caucasian
19	Caucasian & Middle Eastern	20	3	M	Rockville	White
20	Caucasian/Ukranian	18	1	F	Howard County	Caucasian
21	Indian American	19	2	M	Laurel	Caucasian
22	White	22	4	M	Severna Park	American/Caucasian
23	Russian American	20	3	M	Novosibirsk	Caucasian
24	White	22	3	M	Plano	White
25	Asian American	19	2	F	Ellicott City	Caucasian
26	White/Latina or Hispanic	20	2	F	Chile	Caucasian

Reviewer	SelfIDRace	Age	Year	Sex	Hometown	Ryan Race/Ethnicity
1	Black/African	20	3	F	Baltimore	Indian
2	White	20	3	F	Gaithersburg	Filipino
3	White	20	3	M	Bestrehan	Hispanic
4	Asian	31	Fac	F	Riverside	Mix: Asian/White/Latino
5	White & Hispanic	18	1	F	Crownsville	Hispanic
6	Hispanic	18	1	F	Dover	American or Hispanic
7	White	30	2	M	Hays	Italian/Hispanic
8	White	21	4	M	Nashville	Hispanic
9	Ethiopian/White	22	4	M	Baltimore	East Asian Pacific Islander
10	Japanese/White	22	4	F	Hyattsville	Latino/Hispanic/or Asian mix
11	Half Caucasian/Half SE Asian	18	1	F	Rockville	Mix: Caucasian/Indian/Hispanic
12	White somewhat Jewish	19	2	M	Laurel	Filipino; looks Hispanic
13	White	29	4	M	Portage	Latin
14	White	21	4	F	Millersville	Maybe part Asian and White
15	Persian	26	4	M	Tehran	Hispanic or Nepal
16	White	22	4	F	Wilmington	White maybe mixed
17	Indian	20	2	F	Columbia	Pakistani
18	Mexican	18	1	M	*	Many thoughts: Latino, Indian, Iranian, from Spain
19	Caucasian & Middle Eastern	20	3	M	Rockville	Mix Indian & Latino
20	Caucasian/Ukranian	18	1	F	Howard County	Hispanic
21	Indian American	19	2	M	Laurel	Middle Eastern
22	White	22	4	M	Severna Park	Tricky: Asian & Hispanic
23	Russian American	20	3	M	Novosibirsk	Mix: Asian/Indian/Hispanic
24	White	22	3	M	Plano	Filipino
25	Asian American	19	2	F	Ellicott City	Middle Eastern

26	White/Latina or Hispanic	20	2	F	Chile	Central Latin American or Asian

Reviewer	SelfIDRace	Age	Year	Sex	Hometown	Zerah Race/Ethnicity
1	Black/African	20	3	F	Baltimore	African
2	White	20	3	F	Gaithersburg	Black
3	White	20	3	M	Bestrehan	Black
4	Asian	31	Fac	F	Riverside	African American
5	White & Hispanic	18	1	F	Crownsville	Black & Indian
6	Hispanic	18	1	F	Dover	African American
7	White	30	2	M	Hays	Indian
8	White	21	4	M	Nashville	Black
9	Ethiopian/White	22	4	M	Baltimore	African American
10	Japanese/White	22	4	F	Hyattsville	South Asian
11	Half Caucasian/Half SE Asian	18	1	F	Rockville	African American
12	White somewhat Jewish	19	2	M	Laurel	Black
13	White	29	4	M	Portage	Black
14	White	21	4	F	Millersville	Pass
15	Persian	26	4	M	Tehran	Pass
16	White	22	4	F	Wilmington	Pass
17	Indian	20	2	F	Columbia	Black maybe mix w/Indian
18	Mexican	18	1	M	*	African American
19	Caucasian & Middle Eastern	20	3	M	Rockville	African American
20	Caucasian/Ukranian	18	1	F	Howard County	South Asian
21	Indian American	19	2	M	Laurel	African American
22	White	22	4	M	Severna Park	African American
23	Russian American	20	3	M	Novosibirsk	African American
24	White	22	3	M	Plano	Tough; Black or indian
25	Asian American	19	2	F	Ellicott City	Indian
26	White/Latina or Hispanic	20	2	F	Chile	African American

Appendix G: Photo Reviewer Debrief Form IRB Approved

Project Title	Using Grounded Theory to Explain the Impact of Racial Appearance on Multiracial Identity Development: Phase II Photo Review Participants
Purpose of the Study	The purpose of this research is to examine the influence of racial appearance on multiracial identity development by specifically focusing on the implications of perceived societal misclassification. I apologize for withholding the full purpose of the study until after participants concluded the photo review session. The reason behind withholding information explaining that the study is specifically about multiracial identity development was an attempt to minimize influence on participant responses. Participants have the right to withdraw their answers at any time.

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