

“INTRINSICALLY INTERESTING”: THE RACIALIZED EXPERIENCES OF
MULTIRACIAL WOMEN STUDENTS AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE
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To multiracial women.

To scholars, practitioners, organizations, individuals, and institutions that actively work toward the dismantling of racist, sexist, and other oppressive systems that impact the realities of women of color.

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Jessica C. Harris

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MULTIRACIAL WOMEN STUDENTS AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE
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The purpose of this research was to explore the racialized experiences of 10 multiracial women undergraduate students at a predominantly White institution (PWI) located in the midwestern United States. This study focused on how multiracial women experienced and responded to their encounters with race on campus. Additionally, the intersections of race and gender in the lives of multiracial women students were examined. The study also explored the ways in which the institutional context impacted multiracial women students' experiences with race.

Critical race theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (CRF) were used as the analytical tools in this research and allowed for a focus on the intersections of race and gender in the lives of 10 multiracial women undergraduate students. These theoretical frameworks guided the decision to use critical qualitative inquiry and narrative inquiry to investigate the racialized experiences of the multiracial women student participants. Three qualitative interviews were conducted with each of the 10 women and made up the crux of the data collection process. The first and third interviews were more “traditional” and took place sitting down in an office on the Midwestern University (MU) campus. The walking method was utilized for the second interview. The walking interview provided

in-situ information concerning the 10 multiracial women’s lives and experiences with race on campus.

Four themes emerged from a thematic analysis of the data and were analyzed using a CRT and CRF framework. These four themes included (a) “Should I order fried chicken?”: multiracial women and racial stereotypes, (b) “I am biracial so it may not hit me the same way”: multiracial microaggressions, (c) “Terrible for your self-esteem”: manifestations of Whiteness, and (d) “Just get yourself involved, girl”: coping with racialized experiences. Findings suggest that the 10 multiracial women experienced race and racism in college. Participants’ narratives challenge dominant ideology and expose how America is not in a post-racial era and that multiraciality does not transcend racism. Findings from this study guide future research and practice that concerns higher education and multiraciality.

Lori Patton Davis, Ph.D.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The population of Americans who claim more than one racial background continues to grow at a drastic rate (Jones & Bullock, 2013; Jones & Smith, 2001), resulting in an increasingly visible and active multiracial nation (Root, 1996). In 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau allowed respondents the option to check “all that apply” for the first time. During this first year, 6.8 million respondents checked two or more racial categories. In 2010, the multiracial population increased by 32% (9 million respondents), with the single-race population growing by only 9.2% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This drastic growth has a direct impact on U.S. higher education because the median age of these “more than one race” individuals was reported at 23.4 years, signifying that the nation’s multiracial population is disproportionately young (Jones, 2005). This average age suggests that large portions of multiracial Americans are currently pursuing or are headed toward the pursuit of higher education. Unfortunately, even with these demographics in mind, higher education scholarship and practice that centers multiracial students remains stagnant and sparse, leaving the field uninformed about this population (Museus, Sariñana, & Ryan, in press).

Museus and colleagues (in press) recently reviewed five of the top journals in higher education and found that over the past 10 years, less than 1% of the articles

focused on multiraciality. Moreover, this 1% of scholarship unequivocally centers multiracial identity development (Osei-Kofi, 2012) and disregards research on multiracial students' experiences with race on campus. Museus and colleagues explained, "Most research on the experiences of mixed-race college students is focused on identity processes...inquiries that systematically examine these students' experiences with prejudice and discrimination are difficult to find" (p. 6). In other words, the work on multiracial identity development is insightful but may obscure more systemic understandings of multiracial students' experiences with race, prejudice, and discrimination in college.

The lack of literature on multiraciality and racialized experiences may also stem from the belief that the United States has entered a post-racial era (Carter, 2013; Osei-Kofi, 2013). Multiracial Americans, who exist betwixt and between socially constructed racial categories, have come to symbolize an end to race and racism (Osei-Kofi, 2012, 2013; Spencer, 2006). Spencer (2006) explained, "From sources as diverse as popular magazines and the federal government, we are told that racial divisions are breaking down and that a new multiracial population is rising in our midst" (p. 83). For instance, popular media, such as *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*, and *Time Magazine*, have recently touted multiracial Americans as the new face of the nation and/or "in style" (Senna, 1999, p. 12). The belief that multiracial individuals embody an end to race and racism implies that they too must transcend these experiences. Therefore the dearth of research on multiracial students in U.S. higher education may originate from the belief that these students *do not* encounter their race in college because they are raceless.

However, prior research has suggested that multiracial students *do* encounter racialized experiences. Museus and colleagues (in press) found that 22 multiracial college students encountered “invalidation of their racial identities, the external imposition of racial identities, the exclusion and marginalization from racial groups to which they belonged, challenges to their authenticity as members of their race, exoticization, and the pathologizing of their multiracial identities” (p. 6). Unfortunately, due to post-racial rhetoric and a strong focus on multiracial identity development, minimal research has expanded on the little known about multiracial students’ experiences with race on campus. In fact, Museus and colleagues’ research is one of the first empirical studies to focus on multiracial students’ encounters with racial prejudice and discrimination in higher education.

Whereas there is a dearth in knowledge about the racialized experiences of multiracial students, even less attention is paid to multiracial *women* students’ experiences with race in higher education. It is imperative that the field gain a more nuanced understanding of multiracial women’s racialized experiences for several reasons. First, prior scholarship (Jones, Abes, & Baxter-Magolda, 2013; Thornton-Dill & Zambrana, 2009) suggested that multiple identities, not just race, shape students’ experiences and outcomes in higher education. In other words, multiracial women’s experiences may differ from those of multiracial students as a group, that is, men and women taken together, and must be examined in a manner that exposes these differences. Second, racialized experiences may be even more confounding for multiracial women as opposed to multiracial men and monoracial women because of the discrimination they

face on the basis of their gender *and* multiple times over because of their multiraciality (Gillem, 2004). For these reasons, it is imperative that the field of higher education begin to understand better the racialized realities of multiracial women. Unfortunately, the extant research on this topic remains limited, leaving scholars and practitioners of education uninformed about the racialized realities of multiracial women students. Therefore this study aims to address this gap in research by examining multiracial women students' experiences with race in college.

Statement of the Problem

The little knowledge that focuses on “multiraciality in student affairs is unequivocally centered in student development theory” (Osei-Kofi, 2012, p. 248). In other words, research on this topic negates multiracial women students' experiences with race and places sole importance on racial identity development. Additionally, current research on multiracial identity in higher education rarely accounts for the intersectional nature of identities, more specifically the intersection between race and gender. Multiracial women may have to navigate both sexist and racist structures within their educational experiences, yet little is known about these intersections. Additionally, Black/White biracial students are the focus of or sample population of most higher education research on multiraciality (Rockquemore, 1999, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunσμα, 2008). Therefore those falling outside of this category, such as a woman with Latina, Asian, and Black heritage, are silenced in their inability to fit into a Black/White paradigm of race.

Moreover, the majority of the research (Basu, 2007, 2010; Bettez, 2010; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008) has negated the role that institutional context has on the racialized experiences of multiracial women students. This is because the small amount of previous literature on the topic (Basu, 2007, 2010; Bettez, 2010) has tended to focus on the role that social context and peer interactions have on multiracial women students' encounters with race. The lack of focus on institutional structures, such as curricula, policies, and procedures, results in an inability to critique interlocking and institutionalized systems of oppression that may influence women's experiences with race on campus.

Finally, current scholarship on multiraciality in higher education has often reinforced socially constructed racial categories (Osei-Kofi, 2012). Osei-Kofi (2012) asserted that the study of multiraciality in education is misleading in that it claims "to alleviate racism, abolish hierarchies, or transform the world" (p. 245). Existing research has reinforced notions of a colorblind, post-racial society because it paints multiracial peoples as transcendent of race and immune to racism. This dominant ideology may be a large reason why there is minimal empirical research on multiracial students' racialized experiences in college.

The above section elucidates how previous research on this population leaves the field uninformed about multiracial women students' racialized experiences in college. The limitations of current literature contribute to a misunderstanding of and invisibility for multiracial women in higher education (Museus et al., in press). These gaps expose

and suggest a need for comprehensive empirical research that examines multiracial women students' experiences with race in college.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the racialized experiences of multiracial women at a predominantly White institution (PWI). This study focuses on how participants navigate and respond to their racialized experiences. Additionally, the intersections of race and gender in multiracial women students' racialized lives on the college campus are examined. The research also explores the way in which institutional context impacts multiracial women students' experiences with race. The final purpose of this study is to make visible an otherwise invisible population and offer implications for future research and practice in higher education and beyond. Findings contribute significantly to the canon of research, which is severely lacking on multiracial women students in higher education.

Research Questions

This study was guided by one primary research question:

- What are 10 multiracial women undergraduate students' experiences with race at a PWI?

Three secondary research questions were also addressed in this study:

- How do these 10 multiracial women respond to their racialized experiences?
- How does gender impact the 10 multiracial women students' racialized experiences?

- How does institutional context impact the multiracial women students' racialized experiences?

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical race theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (CRF) are the theoretical frameworks that inform this research. CRT and CRF allow for a close critique and understanding of multiracial women students and their racialized experiences in the college environment. CRT was initially used to critique the American legal system's role in upholding White supremacy (Delgado, 1984). More recently, CRT has been applied to research in education as a tool of analysis that facilitates a critical examination of the systemic racism embedded within the U.S. educational pipeline (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Whereas CRT accounts for the realities of race in U.S. society, CRF focuses on the interlocking systems of oppression that women of color encounter on a daily basis. In other words, CRF addresses sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression that impede and impact the lives of women of color. CRF is grounded in the concepts of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) and antiessentialism (Grillo, 1995; Harris, 1990). These concepts focus on the intersection of multiple identities and engage the complexities of self, allowing for a more complete understanding of the individual identities and realities of women of color (Grillo, 1995; Harris, 1990; Wing, 2003).

In this study, CRT is utilized as a lens to critique race and racism in the lives of multiracial women on the college campus. CRF is used as a tool to focus further on the intersectional nature of race and gender in the racialized lives of these students. Taken

together, these frameworks allow for a critique and deconstruction of the interlocking systems of oppression, specifically racism and sexism that impact the experiences of 10 multiracial women students at a PWI.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the field of higher education in several integral ways. First, there is no published empirical research on the racialized experiences of multiracial women students in higher education. Although the corpus of literature on multiracial students in higher education is growing, scholarship focuses on multiracial identity development (Osei-Kofi, 2012), samples Black/White biracial students (see Rockquemore, 1999, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunisma, 2002), and fails to account for the intersectional nature of race and gender. This research examines the realities of sexism *and* racism in the lives of multiracial women to better comprehend their lived experiences. Additionally, although there is a plethora of research conducted on the racialized experiences of monoracial students (see DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso, 2006; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009), there has yet to be a study focused explicitly on this topic for multiracial women students.

Therefore this study explores a population, multiracial women, as well as a topic, their racialized experiences, that have yet to be researched in a higher education context.

In focusing on multiracial women students and their racialized experiences, this research is significant because it aims to disrupt the dominant ideology that multiraciality is a signifier of a post-racial society and that these women transcend race and racism. Findings allow for the (re)writing of this master narrative and elucidate what it means to

be a multiracial woman navigating a PWI. Moreover, this qualitative study lends a voice to multiracial women, who are often silenced and invisible within higher education research and practice. Finally, this research focuses on institutional context and institutionalized structures that may contribute to participants' experiences with race. Therefore this study is significant because it attempts to expose and deconstruct structures of oppression that multiracial women students may encounter on a daily basis. Findings from this research will guide implications and recommendations for higher education research and practice that focus on multiracial women and racialization on campus.

Key Terms

Prior to exploring the extant literature on this topic, it is important to focus on key terms that are used throughout this study. The below section outlines four terms that are pertinent to this research: race, racialization, racialized experiences, and patriarchy.

Race

Omi and Winant (1986) defined race as “a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (p. 116). This concept of race, though built around biological precursors (e.g., skin color and hair texture), is in fact a sociohistorical construct that is neither an essence nor an illusion. In other words, race is not permanent, tangible, or objective (an essence), nor is it a simple idea that can be eradicated quickly or easily (an illusion) (Omi & Winant, 1986). This aligns with CRT scholars' (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2011)

assertions that race is socially constructed, but that it continues to play a very real, permanent role in the lives of people of color in the United States.

Historically, race has been defined by skin color, language, dress, geography, and other social characteristics (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Crenshaw, 1988; Haney-Lopez, 2006). Omi and Winant (1986) addressed this historical construction of race in their racial formation theory, or the manner in which racial categories are constructed, retired, and maintained. “Racial formation is a process of historically situated projects in which human bodies are represented and organized” (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 117). These projects can be large and small, but they exist in the lives of every American, often unconsciously. Racial projects communicate racial meanings on a macro, institutional level, as well as a micro, individual level. The micro level represents an individual’s understanding of racial identity as a student, employee, American, and so on. The macro level represents the collective social structure, such as higher education, family, and/or legal parameters, which dictates racial meanings to individual people and groups (Omi & Winant, 1986).

These micro and macro levels interact with one another to create the common sense, everyday meanings attributed to race (Omi & Winant, 1986). For example, on the micro level, race is one of the first things noticed about an individual. Physical features, cultural knowledge, dress, and speech are used as clues to glean another person’s racial identity. Race is then utilized to gain knowledge about who a person is. This is why, when encountering multiracial individuals who are often racially ambiguous, the question “What are you?” is asked of them. The answer will not only assign them a race, but also

the meaning of that race. In this instance, if one answers, “I am multiracial,” that person may be seen as exotic, sexualized, and/or privileged, all of which are stereotypes surrounding multiracial peoples. These individual understandings translate to the macro level:

Our ongoing interpretations of our experience in racial terms shapes our relation to the institutions and organizations through which we are embedded in social structures. Thus we expect differences in skin color, or other racially coded characteristics, to explain social differences. (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 121)

Keeping with the above example, this quote suggests that a multiracial individual learns from macro level institutional structures, such as the media or education, that they are in fact exotic, sexual, and/or privileged. Therefore the micro level and the macro level interact with one another to racially code actions, objects, and in this example, multiracial identities.

Monoracial. Monoracial peoples include those who identify with one racial category. Examples include Black, African American, White, Asian, Native American, and Latino/a.

Multiracial. For the purposes of this study, multiracial is defined as any individual who identifies with two or more racial identities. The terms biracial, mixed-race, tri-racial, and mulatto/a (utilized in a historical context) are used interchangeably with multiracial.

Racialization

As previously mentioned, racial projects confer racial meaning to groups, individuals, and/or communities in the United States. This process is referred to as racialization or “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified

relationship, social practice or group” (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 65). Put simply, racialization occurs when a new race is created, usually for the benefit of dominant society. Therefore race is not created without meaning or purpose. When a new racial category emerges, symbols and significances are attached to the race. For instance, the end of the 17th century saw the consolidation of Ibo and Yoruba Africans into a “Black” racial identity (Omi & Winant, 1986). This new race, created through racialization, was said to be inferior, barbaric, and impure, thus justifying their enslavement. This set into motion not only meanings of Blackness but also meanings of Whiteness (Omi & Winant, 1986). The construction of Black and White identity as well as multiracial identity is explored in more detail in Chapter 2. For now, it is important to understand how racialization creates and shapes individual, group, and structural meanings of race in U.S. society.

Racialized Experiences

For the purposes of this research, the term *racialized experiences* refers to the encounters individuals have with their race. A racialized experience categorizes, defines, and/or racializes individuals due to their race. Simply put, this term refers to one’s experiences with race. Bonilla-Silva and Lewis (1999) asserted that the manner in which racialization and racialized experiences occur has changed over time from overt and extreme to covert and subtle. Therefore, there are many ways in which multiracial Americans may encounter, consciously and unconsciously, race in contemporary U.S. society. Outlined below are four common racialized experiences multiracial Americans encounter: racism, monoracism, colorism, and multiracial microaggressions.

Racism. To clarify, race is the notion that humans are biologically different than one another based on physical traits, such as skin color and facial features (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). Racism is discrimination, prejudice, persecution, mistreatment, segregation, or other oppressive acts practiced by one racial group to dominate another racial group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). Therefore race and racism are not one in the same but are inextricably linked. Racism can be overt and palpable (hate crimes or racial slurs) or it can be subtle and small (racial slights or a mispronounced name). Whereas there is a growing amount of research on the experiences of racism for students of color (see DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso, 2006; Yosso et al., 2009), there is an extreme dearth in research on the experiences of multiracial students and racism.

Colorism. “Hidden within the process of racial discrimination, is the often overlooked issue of colorism” (Hunter, 2005, p. 1). Colorism is discrimination on the basis of phenotype or skin color. In the United States, lighter-skinned Blacks and Mexican Americans reportedly attain more education, earn more money, and have better mental health than their darker-skinned counterparts (Arce, Murguia, & Parker Frisbe, 1987). This is to say that the common perception in the United States is that the lighter one’s skin, the better and the more privilege is conferred to that person (Hunter, 2005).

Colorism took root during the colonization and enslavement of Africans in the United States. Hunter (2005) explained,

Europeans and White Americans created racial hierarchies to justify their subhuman treatment of the people of color they colonized and enslaved. This was the beginning of the ideology of White supremacy. The alleged superiority of

Whiteness, and all things approximating it including White or light-skin, was the rule. (p. 2)

Therefore, the lighter one's skin, the closer that individual was to Whiteness and its accompanying privileges. The concept of colorism is pertinent to this research because several of the participants had lighter skin and/or European features. Therefore colorism is a very real concept for multiracial individuals in the United States.

Monoracism. Monoracism is “a social system of psychological inequality where individuals who do not fit monoracial categories may be oppressed on systemic and interpersonal levels because of underlying assumptions and beliefs in singular, discrete racial categories” (Johnston & Nadal, 2010, p. 125). Multiracial individuals can experience (mono)racism from both White people *and* people of color. Therefore multiracial peoples can experience racism based on their status as people of color and based on their status as non-monoracial people of color. Finally, as Bonilla-Silva and Lewis (1999) explained, this racism has become subtler over time, making it difficult for multiracial individuals to recognize and address monoracism.

An example of monoracism can be seen in the exclusion of multiracial voice from the canon of literature on race and racism for monoracial students of color (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). This omission sends a message to multiracial individuals that their experiences do not matter as much as monoracial peoples' narratives (Root, 1990). Johnston and Nadal (2010) asserted that these messages are a form of racism, but because they target multiracial individuals, they are in fact monoracism.

Multiracial microaggressions. As racism becomes more covert, scholarly interest in racial microaggressions has increased during the last decade (see Sue, 2010;

Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal, & Torino, 2008; Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009). Microaggressions are the “everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages” (Sue, 2010, p. 3). Any group can perform racial microaggressions, but the most harmful and insidious manifestations take place when there is an unequal distribution of power, that is, when there is one group in power (Whites) and the other is systemically disempowered (people of color) (Sue et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2009).

Microinsults, microassaults, and microinvalidations represent three kinds of microaggressions that are commonly committed (Sue & Constantine, 2007). *Microinsults* include communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a student’s racial heritage and/or identity. *Microassaults* are often more explicit and are characterized by verbal or nonverbal attacks meant to hurt students of color by name-calling, avoidant behavior, or other discriminatory acts. Finally, *microinvalidations* are subconscious microaggressions that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a student (Sue & Constantine, 2007).

Although there has been extensive research conducted on students’ of color experiences with microaggressions (see Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue & Constantine, 2008; Yosso et al., 2009), there has been no empirical research on multiracial Americans experiences with this subtle form of racism. This lack in research equates multiracial microaggressions to that of monoracial microaggressions for people of color. However, in 2010, Johnston and Nadal compiled extant literature on multiracial peoples’ racialized experiences and conceptualized five different themes of microaggressions that multiracial

Americans encounter. The authors posited that multiracial individuals encounter microaggressions on the basis of their multiple races. Therefore Johnston and Nadal concluded that there is a need to reach beyond conceptions of monoracial microaggressions and explore multiracial microaggression. Unfortunately, no empirical research has looked exclusively at multiracial peoples' experiences with subtle or overt forms of racism in higher education.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy refers to a society that is constructed by men and for men. However, both men and women participate in this society. Johnson (2005) explained, "A society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being *male dominated, male identified, and male centered*" (p. 5). A patriarchal society is male dominated in that the best jobs, governmental positions, scholarships, and so on are reserved for men. This dominance creates a power imbalance in which men often make more money, hold more power, and attain education at greater rates than women (Johnson, 2005).

A male-identified society paints men as the standard for normal, positioning them as superior to all other genders (Ferreira, 2005; Johnson, 2005). This male identification impacts the daily lives of men and women. For instance, male identities are constructed as strong, leaders, lawyers, and/or doctors. In opposition, female identity is seen as weak, subservient, teachers, and/or nurses. Thus patriarchy creates the roles and identities that men and women must follow to be successful in the United States.

Patriarchy is also male centered in that everything in society revolves around men and masculinity (Blood, Tuttle, & Lackey, 1983; Johnson, 2005). For example, movies,

newspapers, and television shows place men at the forefront of society. “Pick up a newspaper or go to any movie theater and you’ll find stories primarily about men and what they’ve done or haven’t done or what they have to say about either” (Johnson, 2005, p. 10). Centering men in U.S. society constructs their experiences as the model for all experiences. Therefore the male experience is the American experience. On a more local level, men are often centered in and dominate conversations (Tannen, 1990), lead meetings, and/or become the center of attention in classrooms (Johnson, 2005). Finally, a patriarchal society, which is male dominated, identified, and centered, is upheld through the control of women in that society (Ferreira, 2005; hooks, 2000; Johnson, 2005).

The domination, identification, and centering of men in U.S. society silences multiracial women. Hooks (2000) explained that when race and racism are talked about and addressed in a U.S. context, men are used as the prototype for entering these discussions. Therefore, because men are the focus of this discourse, race and racism are seen as issues that impact only men of color, rendering invisible the racialized experiences of women of color, and in this instance, multiracial women. Crenshaw (1991) agreed that antiracist discourse focuses on men of color and falls short of addressing patriarchal structures encountered by multiracial women. Moreover, although antiracist discourse may work toward racial equity for men of color, it reproduces structures of patriarchy and Whiteness that impact multiracial women on a daily basis (Crenshaw, 1991) because it places special attention on the realities and needs of men of color.

Sexism. Sexism is discrimination, prejudice, or mistreatment based on an individual's gender and/or sex. Sexism is created, perpetuated, and maintained by patriarchal systems (Blood et al., 1983; Johnson, 2005), because a patriarchal culture places all those who are not male at the margins of society. Sexism is ingrained and normalized within America and pervades the lives of both men and women (Johnson, 2005).

Hunter (2005) wrote, "Sexism and racism interact to create an additional form of oppression that is focused on sexuality" (p. 10). Therefore multiracial women are uniquely positioned within the boundaries of sexism. For example, multiracial women are constructed as hypersexualized, promiscuous, and oversexed (Collins, 2000; Stephens & Phillips, 2003). The sexualized and racialized image was created to justify the rape of women of color by White men (Collins, 2000; Stephens & Phillips, 2003; Yarbrough & Bennett, 2000). "The practice of raping women of color...serves patriarchal interests in oppressing women and serves racial interest as well by terrorizing communities of color" (Hunter, 2005, p. 10). The rape of women of color is just one example of how sexism and racism interact to maintain oppressive structures in the lives of multiracial women.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 contextualizes the need for this current research and provides a historical and contemporary overview of multiracial peoples in the United States. Critical race theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (CRF), the theoretical frameworks that inform this research, are explained in detail in this same chapter. Chapter 2 concludes with a review of extant literature on the racialized experiences of multiracial peoples in

the United States, multiracial women in the United States, and multiracial women students in higher education, respectively. Chapter 3 introduces the reader to a critical qualitative paradigm, narrative inquiry, and the methods and procedures used for collecting and analyzing the data for this research. Chapter 4 builds on Chapter 3 by offering detailed participant profiles of the 10 multiracial women undergraduate students that participated in this research. Findings that were produced from a thematic analysis of the narratives of the 10 multiracial women undergraduate students attending a PWI are presented in Chapter 5. The next chapter offers an analysis of these findings through a CRT and CRF lens. Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes, discusses, and draws intentional implications for research and practice from the research findings, thus concluding the dissertation.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews extant literature to substantiate the need for research on multiracial women students' experiences with race in college. The literature review is divided into five sections. It begins with an overview of critical race theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (CRF), two theories that are useful in critiquing and understanding multiracial women students' experiences with race. Second, a historical overview of multiraciality in the United States is presented. The two sections following the historical overview address the racialized experiences of multiracial Americans and the racialized experiences of multiracial women in the United States, respectively. The chapter concludes with a focus on extant literature that concerns multiracial women students' experiences with race in higher education.

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race Theory

CRT is pertinent to this research because it affords researchers the ability to critique and expose the social processes that create and maintain racist structures that marginalize multiracial women students. CRT is a framework that allows researchers to focus on these structures, ensuring “that those issues [race and racism] stay at the centre of their investigations, or lens, rather than at the comfortable rim” (Hylton, 2008, p. 10). This research utilized CRT as a frame to concentrate on the role of race in the lives of

multiracial women students, allowing for a deconstruction of systems that uphold White supremacy and impact the daily experiences of these women in a U.S. context.

CRT stemmed from civil rights lawyers' growing awareness "that dominant conceptions of race, racism, and equality were increasingly incapable of providing any meaningful quantum of racial justice" (Lawrence, Matsuda, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993, p. 3) for people of color. As mentioned earlier, CRT was used initially to critique the American legal system's role in upholding White supremacy (Delgado, 1984). More recently, CRT has been applied to research in education as a tool of analysis that facilitates a critical examination of the systemic racism embedded within the U.S. educational pipeline (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixson & Rosseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As educational scholars have begun to utilize CRT as a framework to critique institutionalized racism in higher education, core tenets of the theory have emerged (Lynn & Adams, 2002). However, CRT scholars do not subscribe to one set of tenets. For the purposes of this research, seven tenets of the theory are foregrounded. These relevant CRT tenets are briefly outlined in the next paragraph.

First, CRT acknowledges that racism is socially constructed, endemic, and embedded within every fiber of U.S. society, including education. Second, the theory challenges dominant ideology, such as beliefs in colorblindness, a post-racial society, and meritocracy. Next, interest convergence (Bell, 1980), or the assertion that advances for people of color will only occur when Whites benefit equally or greater from such advances, is yet another tenet. Fourth, CRT exposes the differential racialization of racial groups to serve the needs of dominant society. It also disputes ahistoricism and insists on

a historical and contextual examination of race and racism in the lives of people of color. Sixth, CRT accounts for the intersecting nature of multiple social identities and the many nuanced ways in which they impact racialized realities. Finally, to convey these realities, CRT contends that exploring the experiential knowledge of people of color lends a voice to populations that are often silenced (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006). The applicability of each of the seven tenets to understanding multiraciality in the United States and higher education is outlined in greater detail below.

Racial realism. Racial realism acknowledges that race is a socially constructed concept that has been invented and reinvented by people in positions of power to maintain a social order that preserves White privilege (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011; Omi & Winant, 1986). Due to societal construction, race is a malleable concept. Delgado and Stefancic (2011) explained, “Races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient” (p. 8). Although race is socially constructed, it continues to be a real and normal part of shaping everyday encounters of race and racism experienced by people of color in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). Subsequently, race and racism are endemic, embedded in, and permanent to U.S. society (Bell, 1992) and more specifically, higher education (Harper & Patton, 2007; Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). One of the main ways in which racial hierarchies and racism are maintained is through structural determinism.

Structural determinism. Within the above tenet is the theme of structural determinism, or the theory that society, as a whole and over time, has established and

determined a label for every racial identity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). These carefully crafted racial classifications force Americans to exist in pre-determined monoracial categories. For example, a medical form offers only broad monoracial categories (Black, Caucasian, Asian, etc.) for individuals to identify with. The lack of options on this form forces multiracial peoples to check one racial identity, such as Asian, which may not represent the way they self identify (Sanchez, 2010). Because legal and social systems, such as healthcare, are set up in ways that discount the complexities of various racial representations, individuals must assign themselves or be assigned to a category that may not be their primary identity (Espinoza, 1998; Sanchez, 2010).

Structural determinism also creates “the idea that our system, by reason of its structure and vocabulary, cannot redress certain types of wrong” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 26). For instance, Perea (1997) suggested that civil rights legal cases, and the way they are retold and remembered in history, omit Mexican Americans from law and society, thus making it difficult for them to find redress in the nation’s legal system.

Leong (2010) addressed this same issue for multiracial Americans:

Our legal system consistently fails to recognize racism directed at those seen as racially mixed. Race discrimination jurisprudence relies heavily on a familiar set of racial categories...Asian, Latino/a, White, Black, and Native American...the categories constitute the paradigm through which we view race. And antidiscrimination jurisprudence continues to reflect and reify those categories in recognizing and remedying claims of racial discrimination. (p. 470)

Delgado (1998) agreed that structural determinism creates a racial dichotomy in law that “assumes you are either Black or White” (p. 369). If one falls outside of these structured racial categories, they cannot and will not be recognized or protected by the U.S. legal system (Leong, 2010; Perea, 1997). This absence in recognition translates to a sense of

invisibility in the legal system and subsequently society for many minority groups, including multiracial peoples. Moreover, these racial categories are socially constructed within a racial hierarchy that places the White race at the top. This hierarchy pits non-White racial groups against one another, as they strive to gain agency and visibility in a system that does not often acknowledge them.

According to Rockquemore (2002), structural determinism constrains biracial Americans' racial identities and is supported by "institutional inequality and ideological racism that restrict the capacities of those with African ancestry to construct any identity other than that assigned to them" (p. 487). Therefore multiracial individuals may struggle with a lack of agency in the negotiation of their racial identity. Whereas Rockquemore asserted that biracial women have a lack of agency in their identification process, Robinson (2004) critiqued the lack of agency that the theory of structural determinism implies. He wrote that the theory of structural determinism

negates a host of other factors, including human agency....Race Critics can say that things (or a set of things) cause ordinary people to be subtextual victims, thus explaining the moment-to-moment existence of, say, the black community. If these things victimize ordinary people, it follows that ordinary people lack meaningful human agency. In this way, determinism becomes a reductionist model, emphasizing a limited range of causal social factors that explains why ordinary people like Mexicans suffer racism and racial discrimination. (p. 1383)

Although the theory of structural determinism may limit the agency that "subtextual victims" hold, the theory remains useful in the deconstruction of oppressive structures that uphold the status quo. This is because theorists of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Robinson, 2004) believe examining and exposing macro-level inequities fosters agency on a micro level. In other words, exploring the structures of determinism that exist in the

U.S. legal or educational system exposes how these entrenched notions of race influence multiracial Americans, allowing for a critique and deconstruction of these systems (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013).

Differential racialization. Differential racialization recognizes how “dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs such as the labor market” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011, p. 9). An example of the differential racialization for multiracial Americans is found in the U.S. Census. The 2000 U.S. Census has been praised for its allowance of Americans to check more than one racial category, thus acknowledging multiracial peoples’ existence in the United States. Though touted as a breakthrough in (multi)racial equity, the year 2000 was not the first time that a non-monoracial option was provided on the U.S. Census.

Prior to 1920, the U.S. Census included a category for mulatto, or mixed-race Americans (Payson, 1996; Rives, 2011). However, 1920 marked the last time multiracial peoples could identify as such, forcing them to mark one monoracial category, usually “Black” or “Colored,” on all future census surveys. After 1920, multiracial peoples experienced a drastic shift in their racialization from multiracial to monoracial (Rives, 2011). This shift benefited Whites because it supported claims “that any trace of Black made a person Black, Whites could assure themselves of their separateness and ‘purity’” (Payson, 1996, p.1248). Multiracial Americans’ racial identity moved from multiracial to monoracial to serve the interest and purity of White Americans. This differential racialization served the needs of dominant society and upheld the status quo in the 1920s and beyond.

Interest convergence. Bell (1980) asserted that interest convergence transpires when gains in racial equity are advanced only when it benefits White people in some way. For example, interest convergence occurs when White policy makers believe racial progress will benefit their concern more than others (Bell, 1980, 2005). Moreover, White Americans will tolerate advances for racial inclusion only if the changes are not too drastic and do not cause a major disruption of the status quo (Bell, 2005; Castagno & Lee, 2007; DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). Therefore advancements for people of color may occur, but only in an incremental and palatable fashion. This incrementalism stifles recommendations for more drastic systemic changes needed to make society more equitable.

Interest convergence is found in the lobbying for a multiracial category on the 2000 U.S. Census. In the years leading up to the 2000 Census, multiracial activist groups began to press the government for the inclusion of a “multiracial” category on the approaching Census. Overwhelmingly, White mothers of Black/White multiracial children led these activist groups and the overall multiracial movement (Spencer, 2011; Williams, 2006). Spencer (2011) posited that these White women were fearful of their children’s proximity to Blackness and therefore argued for a category that would classify them as something new: multiracial. The creation of a multiracial category would allow these children and their White mothers to distance themselves from Blackness and gain closer proximity to Whiteness (Spencer, 2011).

Unfortunately, this movement toward multiraciality did not disrupt the concept of race in the United States and provided incremental change for multiracial individuals

(Spencer, 2011). For instance, the way in which White mothers lobbied for the multiracial option failed to critique White supremacy and contributed to anti-Black sentiment (Spencer, 2011). Therefore the Census afforded White mothers peace of mind that their children would not be seen as Black, but their activism provided no real change nor disruption of White supremacy and racial hierarchies. In essence, White mothers gained much more than their children of color. This is just one way in which the principle of interest convergence exposes how advancements for people of color only occur when they benefit dominant White society.

Challenge to dominant ideology. CRT challenges dominant ideology and critiques liberalism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006). Dominant claims include beliefs in colorblindness, meritocracy, and post-racialism. This dominant ideology ignores the structural meanings and impacts of race and racism for people of color, which perpetuates the status quo and upholds White supremacy (Solórzano, 1997). In other words, dominant ideology does not acknowledge race and racism, making it difficult to eradicate them.

Challenging dominant ideology is central to this research because mixed-race individuals have become signifiers of racial progress that ushered in a post-racial era (Joseph, 2012; Lee, 2008; Osei-Kofi, 2012, 2013; Senna, 1998). Multiracial Americans are seen as bending and breaking racial categories and therefore transcendent of race. CRT critiques the dominant claim that multiraciality breaks down racial categories in asserting that a post-racial society does not exist, nor do multiracial individuals escape race and racism. Moreover, CRT's challenge to these claims exposes how dominant

ideology hides racist structures that perpetuate and maintain racial inequities. Osei-Kofi (2013) explained,

This perspective [of a post-racial society] foregrounds the right to racial self-identification and the affirmation of multiracial identities, within an assimilative mosaic of diversity, as being of great significance to the realization of a post-racial society rather than engaging with the ways in which racism and racialization perpetuate a racist social structure. (p. 43)

Therefore dominant ideology not only conceals oppressive structures but also allows for their continued operation in society as normal and commonplace. It is only when people recognize, expose, and challenge these structures that any real progress toward racial equity can be made.

Challenge to ahistoricism. CRT “challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in both a historical and contemporary context” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 117). Often, racial inequities are interpreted through an ahistoric framework, which disregards the role history plays in the lives of people of color. An ahistoric approach ignores inequities of the past and focuses on future, individual, and isolated offenses impacting people of color (Crenshaw, 1988). This tenet suggests that multiracial Americans’ racialized experiences in contemporary society cannot be focused on and truly understood without grounding multiraciality in American history.

Ahistoricism also contributes to a restrictive view of equality (Crenshaw, 1988) that focuses on equality as a process and not as an outcome. Delgado and Stefancic (2011) explained that a restrictive view of equality “applauds affording everyone equality of opportunity but resists programs that assure equality of results” (p. 28). For example,

racial quotas at an elite university may afford multiracial students the opportunity to enroll at the institution, but it does not ensure their retention, support, and/or academic success. As a result of restrictive initiatives, the onus for change is taken off racist institutional structures, allowing for the maintenance of the status quo. In other words, the elite university can blame the multiracial student for their lack of achievement rather than critique the White institutionalized structures that may hinder the student's success.

To address ahistoricism and the restrictive view it constructs, CRT scholars (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002) encouraged the positioning of current-day racial inequities within a historical and contextual framework. This tenet is pertinent to the discourse surrounding multiraciality in education because it “remains focused on the right to self-identification, individual experiences as multiracial, and the potential of multiraciality as anti-racist” (Osei-Kofi, 2012, p. 253). This individualistic view ignores the histories and the realities of multiracial students, disconnecting them from larger representations of race, racism, and racialization in the United States (Crenshaw, 1988). Therefore history must be taken into account when attempting to expose and deconstruct systems of oppression that impact the racialized lives of multiracial women.

Intersectionality. Race and racism do not exist in isolation of other identities. Instead, individuals' racialized experiences intersect with other identity-specific experiences to constitute unique personal and political lives (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Thornton-Dill & Zambrana, 2009). For instance, multiracial women may not be able to attribute their lived experiences to just their race *or* just their

gender. Instead, these two identities intersect and contribute to their daily encounters. Said another way, a multiracial woman may not be able to navigate society just as a woman or just as multiracial; she is simultaneously racialized *and* gendered. Therefore in order to avoid bifurcating multiracial women's lives, the intersections of their race, gender, and other social identities must be taken into account.

An intersectional approach to the experiences of multiracial Americans exposes the ways in which multiple identities interact with social, historical, and institutional systems to produce differing, antiessentialized experiences. Root (1990, 2004) accounted for the gender, age, and race of multiracial peoples in order to contextualize their differing experiences in the United States throughout history. She posited that the generations in which multiracial individuals grew up greatly dictated their racial identity and subsequently their experiences with race. For instance, multiracial Americans coming of age in the 1960s were exoticized because, at the time, being multiracial was still taboo, a novelty (Root, 1990, 2004). However, multiracial peoples born after 1980 grew up during a time when being multiracial was empowering, providing evidence that the sociopolitical context of what it means to be mixed-race in the United States has changed over time (Root, 1990, 2004). From Root's research, it was evident that race intersects with age and sociohistorical factors to influence the lived realities of multiracial Americans.

Finally, an "intersectional analysis provides an important lens for reframing and creating new knowledge because it asserts new ways of studying power and inequality and challenges conventional understandings of oppressed and excluded groups and

individuals” (Thornton-Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 5). Therefore this study utilizes an intersectional approach to expose interlocking systems of oppression that multiracial women may encounter. Moreover, an intersectional approach allows for the production of new knowledge that accounts for race and gender, rather than isolating these identities and treating them as if they are mutually exclusive (Thornton-Dill & Zambrana, 2009). The concepts of intersectionality and antiessentialism are expanded on further in the overview of critical race feminism.

Experiential knowledge of people of color. Lastly, in order for people of color to gain power and equity, CRT encourages a focus on stories or narratives that center the experiential knowledge and voices of marginalized populations (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso et al., 2009). The stories of people of color are central to understanding, analyzing, and exposing racist structures (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006). Yosso (2006) explained that in education, experiential knowledge is seen “as a strength and draws explicitly on the lived experiences of students of color by analyzing ‘data’ including oral traditions, *corridos*, poetry, films, *actos*, and humor” (p. 7). The way in which experiential knowledge is shared may take several different forms, but all forms aim to expose and deconstruct stock stories.

Stock stories or *master narratives* are ideas constructed by the dominant group to explain and justify the normalcy of seemingly inequitable processes (Delgado, 1989). An example of a stock story is the assertion that multiracial peoples’ increasing presence in the United States has ushered in a post-racial era. This post-racial myth ignores the racist structures that continue to pervade every fiber of the United States, making it increasingly

hard to address and redress the racialized experiences of multiracial Americans. CRT not only critiques stock stories but also offers a solution to deconstructing them: a focus on the experiential knowledge of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006). Focusing on the lived experiences of multiracial individuals allows for a counterstory to emerge that deconstructs the stock story written by dominant society.

The seven tenets outlined above are useful in critiquing and exposing structures that uphold White supremacy in America. However, CRT has more recently been critiqued for its inability to account for racial identities that fall outside of Blackness and Whiteness. For this reason, the framework's ability to address the lived realities of multiracial Americans has also been called into question (Gordon, 1997; Mahtani & Moreno, 2001; Montgomery, 2012). The next section explores in depth these criticisms of CRT but also argues for the theory's usefulness in focusing on multiraciality in a U.S. context.

Critical race theory and multiraciality. CRT as applied to education interrupts racist structures that are deeply ingrained in the U.S educational pipeline (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixson & Rosseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). It also offers tools for educators and scholars to analyze and expose these structures. Crenshaw (2011) explained, "Critical Race Theory, both in its traditional interactions and in an expanded articulation, can and should disrupt racial settlement and push for conceptual tools" (p. 1351). Although education scholars (see DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1997) have increasingly begun to utilize CRT

to disturb White supremacy within the academy, several scholars (see Brayboy, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Teranishi, 2002) have begun to problematize aspects of the framework and conceptualize offshoots, such as Latino critical race studies (LatCrit) and American Indian critical race studies (TribalCrit).

The Black/White binary, which is a product of structural determinism, is one of the central themes of CRT that has led to differing tensions. Castagno (2005) explained that the Black/White binary purports, “Race consists of only two constituent groups: Black and White....Many Americans ascribe to this paradigm because it allows them to simplify and thus make sense of a very complicated racial reality” (p. 454). The binary reduces race to only two categories, marginalizing all others who do not fit neatly into Black or White racial categories. CRT’s sub-disciplines call attention to how indigenous, Latino/a, and other populations fail to fit into a Black/White binary (Delgado, 1998) and negotiate race and racism in relation to other identity categories, such as ethnicity and nationality (Brayboy 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Teranishi, 2002).

Scholars (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011) acknowledged that CRT re-inscribes a binary paradigm where Blacks are the only archetypal racial minority group in which all other groups are compared to and analogized alongside. Delgado (1998) shared an example of the Black/White binary’s impact on those who fall outside of the paradigm. He posited that two individuals, one Black and one Latino, were vying for the same job. They were both equally qualified for the position, but due to antidiscrimination laws, the job was given to the Black applicant because Black individuals had a constitutional authority to sue the employer if not hired on the basis of race. These constitutional laws

were written with one race (Black) in mind, leaving the Latino applicant without the legal structures in place to pursue any recourse (Delgado, 1998). Therefore racial minorities, including multiracial peoples, who fall outside of the Black/White paradigm, remain unaccounted for in U.S. law and society (Delgado, 1998; Perea, 1997).

Whereas CRT offshoots address the issues that the Black/White binary presents, they continue to perpetuate a monoracial paradigm. For instance, CRT scholarship that critiques the Black/White binary does so by offering examples of how the paradigm silences monoracial groups. Delgado and Stefancic (2011) wrote that the binary silences “Asians, American Indians, and Latinos/as...insofar as their experience and treatment can only be analogized to those of Blacks” (p. 75). Within this critique of the binary, there exists no mention of multiracial individuals who fall outside of both a Black/White *and* monoracial paradigm. Moreover, CRT offshoots account for the experiences of monoracial groups of color, such as American Indians (TribalCrit) and Latino/as (LatCrit). Taken together, CRT and its offshoots account for the experiences of monoracial groups of color but have yet to address outright the lived realities of Americans who identify with two or more racial categories.

The monoracial undertones of CRT and its sub-disciplines have not gone unnoticed. Critics (De Reus, Few, & Blume, 2005) believed that the racialized politics CRT addresses essentialize people of color and create general understandings of their experiences. Additionally, these identity theories may be dangerous in their reinforcement of race as a biological category (Osei-Kofi, 2012). With this in mind, scholars (Gordon, 1997; Mahtani & Moreno, 2001; Montgomery, 2012) have begun to

work toward a critical mixed-race theory. However, there has yet to be a comprehensive conceptualization of this theory and its possible use in education. Additionally, there has been no scholarly work on CRT's inability to address multiracial peoples' experiences in education, and therefore the grounds for a new theory may be unjustified.

Though CRT has not been widely used to address the experiences of multiracial people in America, it can and should be applied to this population. The theory's critique of White supremacy and Whiteness is paramount to understanding multiracial peoples' realities. Montgomery (2012) explained that a CRT approach to research concerning multiracial Americans may expose the intricacies of how White supremacy and Whiteness shape the lives of mixed-race people in the United States. CRT is appropriate to examine multiracial peoples' lives because it critiques and confronts the "complexities of law, racial ideology, and political power" (Montgomery, 2012, p. 8) that contribute to past, present, and future racialized realities for multiracial Americans. Therefore this study utilizes CRT as a framework to expose and deconstruct systems that uphold White supremacy, such as the law, public policy, and education, that contribute to inequities for multiracial women. Whereas CRT accounts for multiracial women's experiences with race and racism, this research also calls for a critique of gender and systems that maintain sexism. Therefore the next section introduces CRF as a framework that exposes and deconstructs patriarchal structures that may impact the lives of multiracial women.

Critical Race Feminism

CRF is also used to frame this research. CRF allows for an intimate focus on the intersections of race *and* gender in the lives of multiracial women (Evans-Winters &

Esposito, 2010; Wing, 2003). CRF is used to critique and deconstruct interlocking systems of oppression, specifically Whiteness and patriarchy that impact the daily experiences of multiracial women in a U.S. educational context. CRT offshoots, such as LatCrit and TribalCrit, account for the complexities that other, non-Black, racial individuals encounter (see Brayboy 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). However, these offshoots continue to focus explicitly on race and its discontents. CRF on the other hand accounts for the unique interlocking systems of domination that women of color experience (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 2003). CRF addresses racism as well as sexism and other oppressions that impede and impact the lives of women of color, including multiracial women.

The concepts of intersectionality and antiessentialism are the foundations of CRF. The concept of intersectionality originated in the works of Patricia Hill Collins and Kimberlé Crenshaw (see Collins, 1990 and Crenshaw, 1991), who focused on the intersections of race and gender in the shaping of Black women's lived experiences with domestic violence. Crenshaw (1991) contended that when identities are treated as mutually exclusive entities, individuals who possess multiple marginalized identities are often erased. Focusing on the intersections of multiple identities engages the complexities of self and allows for a more complete understanding of identity (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991).

Crenshaw (1991) emphasized three different ways to approach intersectionality for women of color: *structural*, *political*, and *representational*. Structurally, women of color are relegated to the margins of society because the intersections of their race, class,

and gender are not taken into account. Instead, legal and social structures consider the gendered experiences of White women, who do not have the same racialized and classed realities as women of color, limiting their ability to be seen, heard, and succeed in society (Crenshaw, 1991).

Politically, “women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas” (Crenshaw, 1991, pp. 1251-1252). For example, women of color do not experience racism in the same manner as men of color, nor do they experience sexism in the ways that White women do. Therefore antiracist discourse, which focuses on men of color but falls short of addressing patriarchy, and feminist discourse, which centers White women, fails to critique structures of racism thus reproducing the oppression of women of color (Crenshaw, 1991).

Finally, representationally, the needs and concerns of women of color fall into a chasm created by the tension between women’s issues and issues concerning racism (Crenshaw, 1991). “When one discourse fails to acknowledge the significance of the other, the power relations that each attempts to challenge are strengthened (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1282). In other words, anti-racist and feminist discourses conflict, creating a chasm into which women of color, who are not represented by either discourse, disappear. However, when an intersectional approach is taken in examining the experiences of women of color, a more holistic and validating understanding of their experiences is acquired.

In an effort of transparency, it must be noted that this research focuses on a limited view of intersectionality, because it interrogates only two interconnected social identities: race and gender. This approach is intentional and necessary. First and foremost, race and gender are the two social identities that people notice most about others (Omi & Winant, 1986). Subsequently, opinions, ideologies, and thoughts are immediately attributed to Americans on the bases of their race and gender presentation. Therefore it is necessary to interrogate these two prevalent and influential social identities in the lives of multiracial women. Moreover, this research does not aim to explore other identities, such as religion or class, because there has yet to be a foundational base laid for the intersections of race and gender in the lives of multiracial women students in higher education. In other words, this research focuses on the intersections of race and gender because there has yet to be such a focus on multiracial women students. Findings from this research will guide future studies in the exploration of intersectionality beyond race and gender in the lives and experiences of multiracial women students in college.

CRF also challenges essentialist ideals of identity. The theory of antiessentialism posits that there is no single racialized and/or gendered voice in which women of color speak (Harris, 1990). Harris (1990) expanded on this notion:

The result of essentialism is to reduce the lives of people who experience multiple forms of oppression to addition problems: “racism + sexism = straight Black women’s experience”.... Thus in an essentialist world, Black women’s identity will always be forcibly fragmented before being subjected to analysis, as those who are “only interested in race” and those who are “only interested in gender” take their separate slices of our lives. (pp. 588-589)

An antiessentialist approach to women of color celebrates and acknowledges each individual experience, allowing for a holistic understanding of their raced and gendered experiences.

Essentialist notions of race may be damaging for multiracial individuals. Due to structural determinism, multiracial peoples are often classified as monoracial, such as Black, Latino/a, and Native American. Therefore their multiracial realities are denied, and their experiences are essentialized as monoracial. Grillo (1995) explained, “The confusion that a biracial child feels does not derive from being classified as Black, but from essentialist notions that being Black is one particular experience, and that this experience is not hers or his” (p. 26). Antiessentialism argues for a more nuanced, fluid understanding of race that allows multiracial individuals to identify as such.

These two theoretical frameworks, CRT and CRF, work together to frame and guide this research. CRT is utilized as a lens to critique race and racism in the lives of multiracial women. CRF is used as a tool to focus further on the intersectional nature of race and gender in the lives of these women. Taken together, these frameworks allow for a critique and deconstruction of the interlocking systems of oppression, specifically racism and sexism, that impact the daily experiences of multiracial women in a U.S. context.

Next, a history of multiraciality in America is offered. This history is pertinent to understanding the contemporary realities of multiracial Americans. More specifically, providing an in-depth, critical history of this population and topic disputes ahistoricism and replaces “comforting majoritarian interpretations of events with ones that square

more accurately with minorities' experiences" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 20). The following section critiques the commonly accepted histories of multiracial Americans and offers a more complex, detailed understanding of multiraciality in the United States.

Multiracial Americans: A Historical Overview

Prior to exploring the history and construction of multiraciality in America, it is critical to address the reality that this section may seemingly reinforce a Black/White binary. Certainly, this is not the aim of the overview. However, focusing on the roles of Whiteness and Blackness in the construction of multiracial identity is necessary. As will be explored, Whiteness and Blackness were created in opposition to one another, constructing them as polar opposites (Gerstle, 2001; Smith, 2008). This opposition emphasized "that Blackness signifies an entirely unique social position not shared by others, while simultaneously providing the outermost boundary in the assessment of Others" (Delioovsky & Kitoss, 2013, p. 167). The Black/White binary creates a matrix or racial hierarchy in which all "Others," those who are not Black and not White, understand their social positions.

The Black/White binary is created and maintained by mechanisms of structural determinism. Structural determinism contributes to the lack of vocabulary available to talk about multiraciality, a race that falls outside Black and White racial categories. Delgado and Stefancic (2011) explained, "It is hard to think about something that has no name, and it is difficult to name something unless one's interpretive community has begun talking and thinking about it" (p. 33). Therefore in order to understand

multiraciality, Whiteness and Blackness, the two racial categories (and language) that are most prevalent in a U.S. context, must first be understood.

Whiteness

Ferber (1998) described the need to interrogate Whiteness in research:

We cannot comprehend White supremacist racism without exploring the construction of White identity. White identity defines itself in opposition to inferior others; racism, then, becomes the maintenance of White identity....When researchers fail to explore the construction of “race,” they contribute to the reproduction of “race” as a naturally existing category. (p. 60)

The above quote suggests that to further understand the racial formation of Black identity, its meanings, and the implications this has for multiracial Americans today, it is necessary to examine the racial formation of Whiteness and White identity.

Harris (1993) explained that since the founding of the nation, Whiteness has conferred immense privilege in both public and private spheres to those classified as White. Harris continued,

Whiteness determined whether one could vote, travel freely, attend schools, obtain work, and indeed, defined the structure of social relations along the entire spectrum of interactions between the individual and society. Whiteness then became status, a form of racialized privilege ratified in law....White privilege was legitimated as the status quo. (pp. 1745-1746)

The connection between Whiteness as property and national citizenship elucidates why White Americans are so preoccupied with preserving the purity of Whiteness. The American nation was built on property rights (Bell, 1987; Harris, 1993), and White men have historically been the holders of this property. For White men, property ownership confers citizenship as well as the right to make decisions about the nation in which they are citizens. However, the classification of *who* was White, and therefore American,

became increasingly contested as society grew more racially and ethnically diverse, due to immigration, the end of slavery, and other factors throughout the early 20th century (Haney-Lopez, 2006). To protect Whiteness and the property it conferred from this growing diversity, naturalization laws or laws that granted American citizenship were set in place (Haney-Lopez, 2006). These laws stated that one must be classified as White to gain American citizenship and subsequently American property.

In his book, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*, Haney-Lopez (2006) explored how the American legal system constructed racial categories and White privilege. In essence, the legal system carried out racial formation projects (Omi & Winant, 1986). Haney-Lopez wrote, “Law influences what we look like, the meanings ascribed to our looks, and the material reality that confirms the meanings of our appearances” (p. 102). In this instance, the legal system is used as a catchall term that connotes a macro institutional structure as well as a micro individual structure that helped to form the White race, and more importantly, what it meant to be White in the United States.

To bolster his argument that the law constructs race, Haney-Lopez (2006) focused on 52 U.S. court cases in which individuals argued that they were White and therefore deserving of American citizenship. People in power within the U.S. legal system decided on a case-by-case basis not only *who* was White, but also *why* they were White. The barometers used to gauge Whiteness included language, ancestry, phenotype, facial features, and scientific evidence, to name a few (Haney-Lopez, 2006). The mechanisms for deciding who was White in America were not unified across the nation. Therefore

although some individuals of the same race and/or ethnicity were granted citizenship (and Whiteness), others were not. For instance, Asian Indians were classified as White in 1910, 1913, 1919, and 1920, but not in 1909 or 1917 (Haney-Lopez, 2006). The legal cases Haney-Lopez explored shed light on the social construction and malleability of race in America. The non-uniform assignment and denial of Whiteness to plaintiffs shows how race and its meanings were arbitrarily conferred.

It is important to note that in 1870, Blacks were able to become American citizens (Haney-Lopez, 2006). Therefore individuals hoping to naturalize could claim a Black identity as well as a White one. However, only one court case argued for American citizenship under a Black identity. The other 51 naturalization cases Haney-Lopez (2006) explored claimed a White identity. The author explained that the stigma, discrimination, and dismal status of Blacks in America dissuaded individuals from identifying as such. Whiteness and Blackness were seen as polar opposites to one another (Haney-Lopez, 2006; Mahoney, 1995). One was socially desirable and employable, whereas the other was a condemnation, unemployable (Mahoney, 1995). The preference for Whiteness exposed how coveted and prized the racial status was for individuals hoping to naturalize.

Haney-Lopez (2006) also argued that the social construction of race constructs social relationships. In other words, an individual's racial designation informs the societal spaces and relationships they may navigate and enter into. Guess (2006) explained this further:

The terms "Blackness" and "Whiteness" represent conceptual machineries of universe-maintenance relative to the concept, "race." By employing Blackness and Whiteness as opposing dualisms...we seek to explain—but, in effect, allow

ourselves to tacitly legitimate and/or justify—the institutional order of American “race” relations. (p. 656)

Defining Whiteness creates a space for what it means to be non-White, such as Black.

These relational designations mold and maintain a racial hierarchy that places Whiteness as normative and superior. Blackness, in opposition to Whiteness, is non-normative and therefore inferior.

Blackness as a Threat to Whiteness

The racialization of Blackness operated in opposition to Whiteness. Africans brought to America were constructed as barbaric, ugly, and unclean; Whites, in opposition to Blacks, were painted as pure, civilized, and beautiful (Gerstle, 2001; Haney-Lopez, 2006; Smith, 2008). This racialization conferred a new racial meaning to what it meant to be Black in America. This concept of Blackness bestowed an inferior (barbaric, ugly, and unclean) status to Black Americans, justifying their oppression in the form of slavery (Smith, 2008; Takaki, 1993). Slavery was a way “by which the White man has sought to define the Negro’s status, his ‘place,’ and assure his subordination” (Van Woodward, 2002, p. 11). Thus the dominant narrative was begun that the Black race was inferior and deserved to be enslaved and oppressed by the superior White race (Omi & Winant, 1986).

However, in the late 19th and early 20th century, several national events threatened this dominant narrative and consequently, White supremacy. First, the end of the Civil War and the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation (1863) signaled an end to 300 years of slavery (Medford, 2006). The end of slavery meant that the forced subordination and oppression of African slaves was no longer legal. It also signaled an end, though

incrementally, to one of the largest racial formation projects the nation had seen, shifting the racial meaning and inferiority of Blackness (Medford, 2006).

Second, the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which stated, “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside” (The Civil Rights Act, 1866) also threatened White supremacy. The sudden classification of Blacks as U.S. citizens threatened the power and property of Whiteness, because it could no longer claim sole ownership of the nation. Suddenly, White Americans feared that Black Americans would encroach on their claims to employment, property, and other resources (Davis, 1991).

Finally, the end of World War I (1918) signaled another threat to White power and privilege. Southern Blacks began to migrate in mass to the North where the prospect of work was far more promising than in the South (Johnson, 2010). This “Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the North...critically threatened to reduce the pool of Black labor, and thus the ability to impose low wages across the southern labor market” (Johnson, 2010, p. 26). Without masses of free, enslaved labor, Whites suddenly found their economic security and property in crisis. At the same time, in the North, the era of the New Negro took root (Johnson, 2010; Rampersad, 1999). The New Negro, a term made popular by Alain Locke in 1925, referred to a new generation of African Americans who were confident and empowered at the end of WWI (Johnson, 2010; Rampersad, 1999). This new conceptualization of what it meant to be Black in

America challenged dominant ideologies that Blackness equated to inferior, uncouth, and barbaric.

The above events caused a great shift in racial meanings and posed “multiple challenges to White male supremacy...[unleashing] a furious torrent of hatred from Whites toward Blacks” (Johnson, 2010, p. 27). With the threat of these challenges, White Americans searched for ways to reify the supremacy and superiority of Whiteness (Steedman, 2012). Tischauser (2012) explained that after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation (1863), White Americans searched for a system that would continue to keep former slaves separate and unequal. The answer was once again found in the American legal system.

Quelling the Threat With the Law

To redraw the color line, or the separation between Black and White, the beginning of the 20th century saw an increase in *de jure* segregation, or segregation upheld by the American legal system (Khanna, 2011). These laws, which came to be known as Jim Crow laws, strictly mandated and enforced “separate but equal” facilities for Whites and Blacks in the United States (Khanna, 2011; Steedman, 2012).

Unfortunately, property remained separate but not equal, maintaining the status quo and supremacy of Whiteness.

For example, the second Morrill Act of 1890 stipulated that states that maintained segregated institutions of higher education must offer some educational opportunity to Blacks. The Morrill Act (1890) stated, “The establishment and maintenance of such colleges *separately* for White and colored students shall be held to be a compliance with

the provisions of this act if the funds received in such State or Territory be equitably divided as hereinafter set forth” (section 1).. While educational opportunities for Blacks were legally required, they could remain separate from, but equal to Whites. Facilities were indeed separate, but they were most definitely *not* equal. Johnson (2010) explained:

African American taxpayers were given separate and unequal access to higher education. In general no southern state fully funded Black institutions to the extent that they were entitled to under the Morrill Act....Southern states gave Black public institutions on average only 43 percent of the state funding they were entitled to if there had been a real equalization policy. (p. 150)

Due to this inequitable funding, Black colleges had noticeably different and inferior curriculums and resources than their White counterparts (Harper et al., 2009; Johnson, 2010). On the other side, the plethora of faculty, social activities, and academic support at White institutions ensured the success of White students in U.S. society (Cohen & Kisker, 2009).

Therefore Jim Crow laws, such as the Morrill Act of 1890, subtly secured the unequal distribution of resources between Black and White Americans. In essence, Jim Crow laws ensured the status quo by cementing White society’s place at the top of U.S. government, organizations, and institutions. Blacks remained where they always had been, at the bottom of the racial and social hierarchy. Jim Crow laws and the inequities they fostered became commonplace, endemic, and normal in U.S. society (Johnson, 2010). Therefore, the racial injustices that the laws created and maintained went relatively undetected, allowing Whites to move unquestioned and freely about spaces of power and privilege.

(De)Constructing Multiraciality

Prior to emancipation, mixed-race Americans held a privileged place in American society (Hunter, 2005; Khanna, 2011; Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992). This was because mixed-race peoples were often the result of the rape of enslaved Black women by White slave masters. The rape of Black women by White men was a violent method of social control (Hunter, 2005; Williamson, 1980) that maintained the racial hierarchy. For Blacks, the rape of Black women was an act of terrorism that reminded Black slaves of their inferiority to and ownership by White men. For Whites, the act of rape secured their prominent economic and social standings (Khanna, 2011). This was due to the fact that if the rape of a Black woman resulted in a child, the child would be classified as Black and born into slavery (Hunter, 2005). The act of rape created more slaves, who were often light-skinned, which equated to an increase in free labor and economic capital.

The mixed-race offspring of Black women and White slave masters were classified as Black by hypodescent, which is more commonly referred to as the one-drop rule (Hunter, 2005). Delgado and Stefancic (2011) claimed that the one-drop rule dictates that anyone who has one degree or drop of discernable African ancestry is therefore Black. Prior to emancipation, the rule was in place to ensure that the offspring of Black slaves and White masters would be classified as Black and therefore born into slavery (Hunter, 2005; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). However, these multiracial individuals often “occupied a status separate from that of Black slaves” (Payson, 1996, p. 1244). Due to their blood connections to White masters as well as their lighter skin tone, these individuals were given special privileges, such as access to education and even freedom

(Hunter, 1998, 2005). Hunter (2005) posited that the rape of Black women by White masters created a racial hierarchy that aimed “to systematically privilege lighter-skinned Blacks via their connection with the White slave owner and thus their connection with Whiteness” (p. 19). Over time, these lighter-skinned individuals were able to navigate spaces that darker-skinned Blacks could not, allowing for their growing visibility and privilege within White society and the creation of a Black light-skinned elite (Hunter, 2005; Rockquemore & Brunson, 2008).

With the abolition of slavery, the Civil Rights Act of 1866, and the growing threat to the destabilization of White supremacy, the racialization of multiracial Americans began to shift. At the beginning of the 20th century, White Americans feared that non-White Americans, including multiracial peoples, would encroach on their claims to supremacy. Therefore, to serve the needs of Whiteness, multiracial Americans, who blurred the strict color line, had to be set further apart from White Americans. Prior to emancipation, the one-drop rule classified mixed-race individuals as Black, but nonetheless Blacks who acquired a plethora of White privileges. However, at the turn of the century, “the [one-drop] rule was used to limit Black access to resources, to limit Black political power, and to maintain the myth of White racial purity” (Hunter, 2005, p. 18). Multiracial people were suddenly restricted from voting, education, political office, and other White privileges they previously held (Hunter, 2005). Once again, White society looked to the legal system to reify the color line. To halt the threat of racial mixing and its risk to White supremacy, the implementation of antimiscegenation laws began to sweep the nation.

Antimiscegenation Laws in America

Some of the most intentional and significant laws in securing White supremacy were U.S. antimiscegenation laws, or laws that legally separated the mixing of races by marriage and birth (Haney-Lopez, 2006). Haney-Lopez (2006) explained how these laws were crucial in creating and maintaining the color line between Black and White:

Cross-racial procreation erodes racial differences by producing people whose faces, skin, and hair blur presumed racial boundaries. Forestalling such intermixture is an exercise in racial domination and subordination. It is also, however, an effort to forestall racial blurring. Antimiscegenation laws maintained the races they ostensibly merely separated by insuring the continuation of the “pure” physical types on which notions of race are based in the United States. (p. 82)

These laws maintained White supremacy in two manners. First, they preserved the purity of Whiteness by re-inscribing who was White and who was Black (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). Second, they secured racial purity by controlling Black and White bodies by mandating laws on marriage, sexual relationships, and interactions with others (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). These two outcomes are explored below.

First, antimiscegenation laws defined who was White and who was not. The rule of hypodescent became legally couched within these laws. One of the most well-known examples of this rule is found in Virginia’s 1924 Racial Integrity Act (RIA), one of the strictest antimiscegenation laws to date:

For the purpose of this act, the term "White person" shall apply only to the person who has no trace whatsoever of any blood other than Caucasian; but persons who have one-sixteenth or less of the blood of the American Indian and have no other non-Caucasic blood shall be deemed to be White persons. (Racial Integrity Act, 1924, para. 5)

The one-drop rule was not a new concept to society, but the *de jure* codification of the rule was a new component (Mangum, 1940; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008).

It is critical to note the latter half of the above excerpt from the RIA refers to the Pocahontas clause. This clause stipulated that White Virginians who claimed the elite bloodline of John Rolfe and Pocahontas could maintain their title of Whiteness and its ensuing privilege as long as they had the right mixture of White and American Indian blood (Pascoe, 2009). This clause explores the differential racialization that occurred within states. For instance, one drop of Black blood designated an individual as Black, but one drop of American Indian blood would not necessarily classify that same individual as non-White. The Pocahontas clause served the needs of elite Whites in that they could continue to claim their royal American Indian blood and not have it taint their claims to White superiority and privilege by classifying them as “other.” Therefore mixed-race was constructed as abysmal, tainted, and illegal only when it served the needs of the White nation.

Second, antimiscegenation laws ensured that those classified as White and Black would not procreate and thus disgrace the purity of Whiteness through marriage, sexual relations, or birth (Pascoe, 2009). Marriage statutes swept the nation, with 38 states enforcing antimiscegenation laws by the end of the 19th century (Raimon, 2004). The below excerpt from the Racial Integrity Act (1924) explains these marriage parameters and their enforcement in full:

No marriage license shall be granted until the clerk or deputy clerk has reasonable assurance that the statements as to color of both man and woman are correct. If there is reasonable cause to disbelieve that applicants are of pure White race, when that fact is stated, the clerk or deputy clerk shall withhold the granting of the

license until satisfactory proof is produced that both applicants are "White persons" as provided for in this act. The clerk or deputy clerk shall use the same care to assure himself that both applicants are colored, when that fact is claimed....It shall hereafter be unlawful for any White person in this State to marry any save a White person. (para. 4-5).

The above excerpt identifies the importance, urgency, and steps taken in ensuring White Americans did not have sexual relations or join together in any other way with non-White Americans.

Antimiscegenation laws, such as the Racial Integrity Act, controlled the physical bodies of White women, who were seen as the mothers of the White nation. White women were not permitted to marry non-White men, and by the way, they were not able to give birth to non-White children. By controlling White women's bodies, antimiscegenation laws were influenced by Whiteness and patriarchy in an attempt to preserve White supremacy and male superiority. Hunter (2005) wrote, "White men controlled White women's sexuality and reproduction in order to maintain their patriarchal power over them and to maintain a sense of race purity by monitoring with whom White women had sexual relations" (p. 18). This patriarchal control also justified the lynching of Black men who were suspected of the rape of White women, even if there was little to no evidence. Haney-Lopez (2006) explained that lynch laws and antimiscegenation laws both "sought to maintain social domination along specifically racial lines, and at the same time, sought to maintain racial lines through social domination" (p. 82). Therefore the policing of White women's bodies and the subsequent, often public, murder of any Black male who threatened this purity maintained White supremacy through violence and control.

Although antimiscegenation laws reinscribed the color line by diminishing the validity and visibility of multiraciality, White supremacy was once again threatened during the second half of the 20th century. Starting in the 1950s, several legal cases began to alter what it meant to be a person of color, and more specifically multiracial in America. The role that two such cases, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), had in this change and (re)construction of multiracial identity are explored in the following section.

Shifting Multiraciality

The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (hereafter referred to as *Brown*) marked an official end to *de jure*, or legal segregation (Kizer, 1967). *Brown* overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision that stated separate but equal facilities were constitutional. *Brown* mandated that schools become integrated so that both White people and people of color have equal access to them. This forced integration threatened White supremacy because people of color were seemingly, once again, free to encroach on White resources. In other words, *Brown* repealed Jim Crow laws that legalized the separation and inequity between Blacks and Whites (Kizer, 1967). Whites fought against this integration and the possible blurring of the color line with violence, riots, and other racist acts aimed at people of color (Khanna, 2011).

In response to this increasing hostility and White fright, the Civil Rights Movement picked up momentum in the early 1960s (Davis, 2006). During this time, people of color, specifically Black Americans, began to unite with one another in the fight against racial inequities (Williamson, 1980). The 1960s were a time when the

United States saw slogans, such as “Black Power” and “Black is Beautiful,” that celebrated Blackness and rewrote the narrative of what it meant to be Black in America (Williamson, 1980). For example, whereas Blackness was once thought to be ugly because it did not meet the idyllic norms of European beauty, the slogan “Black is beautiful” asserted that Black features were in fact beautiful.

As the presence and power of the Black community grew, multiracial and lighter-skinned Blacks felt pressure to identify monoracially with Blackness (Davis, 2006). Doing so would increase the numbers and influence of Black Power and the Civil Rights Movement. Korgen (1998) wrote, “Blackness became something in which to take pride...biracial Americans of this era [the 1960s] viewed their racial self-definition as Black, or Afro-American, as a political statement” (p. 44). In the 1960s, the one-drop rule resurfaced to play an integral role in the identification of multiracial Americans (Davis, 2006). However this time, multiracial Americans identified monoracially, usually with Blackness, not as a forced act but as an act of resistance and empowerment (Williamson, 1980).

However, it can be argued that multiracial peoples’ identification with a monoracial identity was indeed a forced act positioned within the Black/White binary. In other words, *Brown* reinforced this dualistic paradigm, forcing multiracial peoples to either align with Blackness or be silenced in their non-Black, non-monoracial identities. Delgado (1998) explained that the Equal Protection Clause, which significantly supported the *Brown* decision, produced racial inequality because it only protects those who identify as Black. Therefore multiracial peoples, regardless of their racial background,

were forced to identify with Blackness if they wanted to gain visibility and be accounted for in 1960s U.S. society generally, and the Civil Rights Movement specifically.

Loving v. Virginia. Multiracial identification began to shift once again at the end of the 1960s with the Supreme Court decision in *Loving v. Virginia* (hereafter referred to as *Loving*). In June of 1958, Mildred Loving, a Black female, and Richard Loving, a White male, left their home state of Virginia, where it was illegal for a White individual to marry a person of color, and married in Washington D.C., where interracial marriage was legal (Wolfson, 2007). Within weeks of returning to Virginia, the couple was arrested and charged with miscegenation, a felony. The Lovings were imprisoned for 1 year and then, upon release, forced to leave the state of Virginia or face another 25 years in prison (Wolfson, 2007).

The Lovings were prosecuted under a Virginia antimiscegenation law that dated back to 1691 “when the House of Burgesses sought to reduce the number of mixed-race children born in the Virginia colony, particularly mixed-race children whose mothers were White” (Wallenstein, 1995, p. 37). Over the next 200 years, the law changed several times, usually increasing the nature and/or duration of punishment, but it remained a fixture in Virginia courts (Wallenstein, 1995). Following the stream of civil rights legal victories in the 1950s and 1960s, such as *Brown*, the Lovings filed suit against the state of Virginia, citing that the antimiscegenation law was unconstitutional (*Loving v. Virginia*, 1967). Overturned in district and state courts, the case won in the United States Supreme Court in 1967. The Lovings’ winning argument asserted that the right to marriage was a

fundamental one and that for the state to regulate such an act was an infringement on American liberty (*Loving v. Virginia*, 1967; Wolfson, 2007).

Loving is often credited for ushering in “generation-mix” or a growing generation of multiracial-identified people and multiracial empowerment (Root, 1996, 2001). However scholars (see Spencer, 2006) have disagreed as to whether or not *Loving* did much if anything to boost interracial marriage rates and increase the multiracial population in America. Furthermore, the discourse that surrounds the *Loving* decision is often ahistoric and denies the long history of interracial relationships in the United States (Maillard, 2008), romanticizing them as something new and groundbreaking (Osei-Kofi, 2012). Maillard (2008) explained, “Turning to a single court case to celebrate a social phenomenon that has existed at the margins of American culture mistakenly erases the past of racial amalgamation that preexisted the legality that *Loving* provided” (p. 2711). This ahistoricism places the onus for generation mix on the *Loving* case and erases the racialized realities of multiracial peoples and interracial couples that existed prior to 1967.

The *Loving* ruling also perpetuates a Black/White paradigm by attributing the end of antimiscegenation laws to the love of a Black woman and White man. Interestingly, it was the outcome of a different case, one that does not fit the Black/White binary, that significantly bolstered the Lovings’ argument. In 1948, the California state court decided that the marriage between Andrea Perez, a Mexican American female classified as White, and Sylvester Davis, an African American male, was legal under the Equal Protection Clause (Wallenstein, 1995). Regardless of the 1948 *Perez* revolutionary ruling, the case

remains seemingly invisible in the canon of race law because it falls outside of the Black/White paradigm that is so crucial to legal scholarship in the United States (Lenhardt, 2008).

Moreover, it is possible that *Loving* was merely a contradiction-closing case in which the court decision provided small gains for people of color, but large gains for White individuals (Bell, 1985; Delgado, 1999; Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). For instance, during the 1960s, the racism and outdated ideals of antimiscegenation laws were becoming increasingly apparent, calling into question the American legal system (Pascoe, 2009). Therefore in order to quell a possible rebellion against these laws and the U.S. government, *Loving* was used as a contradiction-closing case that allowed “business as usual to go on even more smoothly as before, because now we can point to the exceptional case and say, ‘See, our system is really fair and just. See what we just did for minorities.’” (Delgado, 1999, p. 445). Within this quote, Delgado (1999) exposed the interest convergence and incrementalism that occurs in several civil rights legal cases. *Loving* provided people of color with a victory that would seemingly change multiracial and interracial race relations in America. Therefore their plight for racial equity was quelled by the promise of repealing antimiscegenation laws. Repeal of the laws also allowed White America to instantly forget about the harmful history of antimiscegenation and take on an ahistoric, colorblind stance to interracial relationships and multiracial peoples (Pascoe, 2009).

Unfortunately, contradiction-closing cases rarely bring any real change to the minorities involved (Bell, 1985). *Loving* stipulated an end to all U.S. states’

antimiscegenation laws, but it took 33 years to abolish these laws from state constitutions (Cruz & Berson, 2001). The last antimiscegenation law was removed in 2000, only 14 years ago, from Alabama's state constitution. Only 59% of Alabama voters voted to remove the law (Cruz & Berson, 2001). Regardless of this apparent antipathy towards interracial marriage and multiracial individuals, multiraciality became increasingly more visible in the early 1990s. Once again, what it meant to be multiracial in America began to shift. The next and final section of this historical overview explores the multiracial movement and its meaning for mixed-race people living in America.

Multiracial Americans: Ushering in a Post-Racial Nation

Whether attributable to *Loving* or not, there has indeed been a “biracial baby boom” (Root, 1992) that began in the 1970s and has since gained momentum. The sheer increase in numbers of multiracial peoples in America has amplified the visibility of this racial group (Root, 1996). With more numbers and more visibility, a multiracial movement picked up steam in the 1990s. National organizations for the empowerment of multiracial Americans sprung up in the early 1990s. These organizations included The MAVIN Foundation, the Association for Multiethnic Americans, and Project Reclassify All Children Equally (RACE), all of which were founded in the late 80s and early 90s. Many of these advocacy groups were key players in lobbying for the ability to check more than one box on the 2000 U.S. Census (Osei-Kofi, 2012).

The increase in options for racial identification on the 2000 U.S. Census is one of the more prominent claims to progress for the multiracial movement. Other claims include the growing popularity of multiracial celebrities, such as self-identified

“cablinasian” Tiger Woods and of course, America’s first biracial, and not to mention non-White president, Barack Obama. Senna (1998) described the new mulatto millennium: “Pure breeds (at least black ones) are out; hybridity is in. America loves us in all of our half-caste glory” (p. 12). Suddenly, multiracial identity has become cutting edge, new, and sexy (Osei-Kofi, 2012; Senna, 1998).

Even more intriguing is that multiraciality has come to represent the end to race and racism in U.S. society. This post-racial ideology is attributable to multiraciality being placed as a symbol of fluidity, and ultimately the impermanence of race (Joseph, 2012; Lee, 2008; Osei-Kofi, 2012, 2013). The U.S. government feeds the notion that we have entered a society of interracial marriage, multiraciality, and racelessness (Spencer, 2006). “Armed with this federal data—data that takes on an unquestioned aura of truth—magazine writers then wax prophetic concerning the declining significance of race, the hipness of multiracial identity, and the coming of a new racial order” (Spencer, 2006, p. 84). For instance, in December 2014, Frey published an article in *Newsweek* entitled “America’s Getting Less White, and That Will Save It.” In his article, Frey claimed that the multiracial population is the fastest growing population in the nation, pushing out the White majority population and ushering in “significant changes in the attitudes of individuals, the practices of institutions and the nature of American politics” (np). *Time Magazine* and *National Geographic* have also jumped on the multiracial bandwagon, publishing covers with the “changing face of America” and asserting that race is dissolving due to the multiracial “fad” (Spencer, 2006) sweeping the nation. Scholars, as well as media, claim that multiraciality is the answer to deconstructing socially

constructed U.S. racial categories. Zack (1995) posited that to deconstruct race in general, the concept of mixed-race must first be theorized and written about.

The popularity of multiraciality in America does little to dispel race, racism, or racial orders. Carter (2013) agreed: “Praise of mixed race alone is barely a starting point” (p. 180). However, if a post-racial society, ushered in by a multiracial millennium, truly exists, why is biracial Barack Obama continually racialized as a Black president (Joseph, 2012)? Why, in 2009, did a Louisiana Justice of the Peace refuse to marry an interracial couple, claiming that interracial marriage does not work (Kellogg, 2011)? Although the dominant discourse posits that multiracial peoples’ “existence is seen as the antidote to racism” (Osei-Kofi, 2013, p. 33), literature on the contemporary lives of multiracial Americans suggests otherwise. To challenge the dominant discourse that multiracial Americans transcend race and racism, and that *there is* a need to focus on multiracial Americans racialized experiences, the current research on this population’s encounters with race are explored below.

Multiracial Americans’ Racialized Experiences

Johnston and Nadal (2010) focused on the racialized experiences of multiracial Americans after they observed that current literature failed to examine the population’s experiences with discrimination, prejudice, and racial microaggressions. The lack of attention paid to multiracial Americans’ racialized experiences may be due to several reasons, such as the belief that multiracial peoples transcend racism, or that their experiences with race are equivalent to that of monoracial Americans (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). To address this gap in literature, the authors proposed “a taxonomy of multiracial

microaggressions, or microaggressions based on multiracial status, which send hostile, derogatory, or negative messages toward multiracial persons” (Johnston & Nadal, 2010, p. 132). The taxonomy, composed of five themes, was derived from existing scholarship that concentrated on multiracial peoples’ racialized experiences. According to the authors, the five themes within multiracial Americans’ racialized experiences include (a) exclusion and isolation, (b) objectification, (c) assumption of a monoracial identity, (d) denial of a multiracial reality, and (e) the pathologizing of identity and experiences. In 2011, Nadal and colleagues set out to empirically prove the above taxonomy of multiracial microaggressions. Using a sequential mixed methods design, the authors found the presence of all five microaggressions among multiracial Americans.

The following section builds on this theoretical and empirical taxonomy by examining the existing literature on multiracial Americans’ experiences with race in each of these categories. The literature reviewed exposes the divergent manners in which multiracial Americans experience their race in U.S. society. The below section is essential to this research because it refutes the claim that multiracial peoples transcend racialized experiences, thus building a foundation and solid argument for the need to explore multiracial Americans’ experiences with race in a supposedly post-racial society. Finally, the extant literature exposes how racialized experiences are embedded and normalized within the daily lives of multiracial men and women, making it difficult to address and redress.

Exclusion and Isolation

Multiracial individuals often experience feeling isolated or excluded due to their status as “other.” Johnston and Nadal (2010) asserted that one form of isolation and exclusion stems from multiracial individuals’ being told, “You are not—insert race here—enough” (p. 132). The idea of not being Native American, Asian, or Latina/o enough causes multiracial peoples to feel like a social outcast (Johnston & Nadal, 2010).

For instance, Jackson (2010), in a qualitative study of 10 multiracial individuals, reported, “All of the participants in this study described at one point or another feeling like an outsider in their communities, or disconnected from their mainstream peers” (p. 52). Multiracial participants in Jackson’s research conveyed negative effects of feeling like an outsider, such as having few friends and feeling criticized for looking different. This ostracism, which was based on how multiracial individuals looked and were subsequently racialized, stemmed from both White communities and monoracial communities of color.

Exclusion and isolation often occur when multiracial individuals are told they must choose one monoracial category over another (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). Standen (1996) named this phenomenon, “forced-choice dilemma,” or when multiracial people are forced to choose *between* their multiple racial identities rather than from *within* them. In a quantitative study of 317 multiracial participants, Sanchez (2010) found that forced-choice dilemma had a significant correlation with depressive symptoms in multiracial individuals. The author discovered that depression stemmed from the perception that participants’ racial self-identification was limited to monoracial categories. Furthermore,

being relegated to monoracial categories led participants to believe that their multiracial background was not socially acceptable, resulting in negative feelings and views of self. Sanchez's study suggests that forcing multiracial people into racial categories is damaging to their psychological well-being, as well as their sense of identity.

The predetermined categories that create forced-choice dilemma are embedded and normalized within U.S. society and have been maintained by structural determinism. U.S. society has historically defined, recorded, and reported race within monoracial categories (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011), resulting in a lack of vocabulary and mechanisms that take into account multiracial peoples who exist outside of monoracial structures. Furthermore, placing multiracial individuals in monoracial categories equates their lived realities to those of monoracial Americans' experiences. This equation essentializes the experiences of not only multiracial people but also people of color by assuming that mixed-race realities are the same as monoracial realities.

Finally, multiracial individuals are also constantly fraught with messages of a monoracial society (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). Institutions and organizations only account for monoracial individuals, which excludes and silences the multiracial population from U.S. society. For instance, American media constantly casts characters that are monoracial, asserting that multiracial individuals do not exist. Moreover, when depictions of multiraciality *are* accounted for in the media, it is a misnomer that must be critiqued. For example, in the summer of 2013, a U.S. Cheerios cereal ad portrayed an interracial couple and their mixed-race child, which created backlash from the American public and a media firestorm. The reaction from this ad suggests that the portrayal of multiracial

Americans, and interracial relationships, remains unwelcome. Therefore the affirmation and portrayal of multiracial identity continues to be excluded from mainstream depictions of what constitutes a race and/or racial group in U.S. society.

Objectification

Monoracial individuals often objectify multiracial peoples. This objectification dehumanizes multiracial Americans by treating them as if they, and more specifically their race, are new, different objects that can be placed on display (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). The question, “What are you?” which multiracial individuals encounter often (Spencer, 2011), is a product of multiracial objectification. “What are you?” communicates to multiracial people that their race is different and must be called into question. Jackson (2010) found that study participants reported feeling uncomfortable when approached about their racial background. Their racial identity was repeatedly questioned by the phrase, “What are you?” which participants thought conveyed that they were strange and/or different. The author also observed that it was participants’ racial ambiguity (hair, eye color, phenotype, etc.) that elicited these questions from both strangers and friends.

Payson (1996) explained that multiracial objectification stems from “ambiguous morphology” (p. 1233) or when one’s identity is unclear to society. This ambiguity makes others uncomfortable, because without “knowledge of another’s race, individuals are left uncertain about how to define the relationship—what assumptions to make or prejudices to reveal” (Payson, 1996, pp. 1233-1234). In other words, society does not know how to racialize racially ambiguous beings. Therefore to rectify this uncomfortable

confusion, one may feel the need to objectify a multiracial person by asking, “What are you?” so that the answer will help them to fit this newly racialized object neatly into socially constructed monoracial boxes.

As signifiers of a post-racial society, multiracial individuals have become objects that serve dominant ideology. Joseph (2012) posited that this “mixed-race exceptionalism provides a distance from and metaphorical transcendence of controlling images of Blackness” (p. 158). Joseph explained this concept further in focusing on the multiracial exceptionalism that appeared throughout Barack Obama’s tenure as President. She claimed that the American public was not yet able to elect a Black president, but instead, was much more apt to elect a multiracial, light-skinned president who transcended racial meanings attributed to Blackness. Therefore “mixed-race functioned as a smokescreen for Obama’s racialized difference, Blackness, and foreignness” (Joseph, 2012, p. 158). The presidential elections of Barack Obama (2008, 2012) were touted as the end to race and racism in the United States. However, from this example, it is evident that multiraciality does not symbolize a post-racial America, as dominant ideology would suggest. Instead, it makes hyper-visible how multiraciality can be positioned as an object that is more palatable to White Americans than that of Blackness (Joseph, 2012).

Assumption of a Monoracial Identity

Influenced by rules of hypodescent, the United States has been constructed as a monoracial society. Through structural determinism, monoracial identities, such as White, Black, and Latino/a, are normative and have become the racial realities for the majority of Americans. With this in mind, it comes as no surprise that multiracial

individuals are relegated to monoracial categories because their racial identity does not fit into the current monoracial understandings of race in America. Furthermore, previous literature has indicated that multiracial individuals often base their racial identity on *others'* perceptions of their race (see Khanna, 2011; Korgen, 1998; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). Monoracial individuals, due to the way society is constructed, often assume multiracial individuals to be monoracial, which in turn influences multiracial Americans' decision to identify monoracially.

One of the main factors in how multiracial individuals believe they are perceived, and therefore identify, correlates to their physical appearance and cultural knowledge. Khanna (2011) interviewed 45 Black/White biracial Americans and found that due to the legacy of the one-drop rule, they were most often perceived as Black, even if they did not identify as such. One participant in Khanna's study stated, "Because it [being Black] shows up so much on your skin that you kind of at some level have to associate with being Black" (p. 50). Zack (2012) agreed that individuals identify as and are assumed to be Black if their physical characteristics align with what Black has been racialized to look like in America. When multiracial peoples do not identify with the monoracial identity assumed by others, they may face ostracism, isolation, and feelings of being pushed and pulled between two or more monoracial identities (Khanna, 2011; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002).

Remedios and Chaseteen (2013) conducted two differing quantitative studies with multiracial individuals and their interactions with monoracial people who accurately perceived their racial identity. The authors found that multiracial participants'

interactions with individuals who accurately perceived their racial identity and did not assume they were monoracial were more positive and led to self-verification. The authors concluded that assumptions of a monoracial identity for multiracial peoples are detrimental to self-verification. Additionally, the accurate perception of participants' racial identity was found to be valued more by multiracial participants than monoracial participants. Unfortunately, Remedios and Chaseteen also noted that these accurate interactions were less common for multiracial peoples when compared to their monoracial counterparts. In sum, accuracy of racial perception is more important to multiracial individuals than monoracial individuals whose racial identity is rarely wrongly assumed (Remedios & Chaseteen, 2013).

Within assumptions of a monoracial identity, the Black/White binary is prevalent. The Black/White binary stipulates that multiracial people fit into one of two distinct racial categories: Black or White. Due to this binary, all non-White racial identities are lumped into one racial classification: Black. This essentializes and transforms race into a perception that one size fits all, thereby excluding multiracial peoples from legitimate racial existence (Alcoff, 2003). Moreover, Gotanda (1992) posited that historical classifications of race were often based on African American ancestry. These classifications automatically designated a Black racial label to anyone with lineage other than White, regardless of the individual's true ancestry. Therefore multiracial individuals may not only be wrongly assumed to be monoracial, but may also be wrongly assumed to be monoracially Black (Gotanda, 1992). For instance, a multiracial woman with one

parent of Asian heritage and one parent of Latino/a heritage may be identified by others as Black simply because she does not “look” White.

Denial of a Multiracial Reality

The denial of a multiracial reality occurs when multiracial individuals are not allowed to choose and/or assert their own racial identity (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). This is closely tied to the above theme of assuming one’s monoracial identity. However, unlike the previous theme, denial occurs when monoracial groups or people of color are aware of an individual’s multiracial identity but refuse to acknowledge it. Johnston and Nadal (2010) explained, “Despite this awareness...multiracial people are still denied the freedom to create their own multiracial reality” (p. 136) and are told they must identify as monoracial by other monoracial individuals.

An example of this denial is found in the lobbying for the addition of a multiracial option on the 2000 U.S. Census. Non-White monoracial leaders and organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), argued against the creation of a multiracial option (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008; Williams, 2006). These organizations, as well as monoracial individuals of color, cited that the creation of a new, non-White racial category would fragment existing monoracial communities of color and result in a new racial hierarchy where multiracial Americans existed between Whiteness and socially undesirable otherness (Grillo, 1995; Khanna, 2011; Williams, 2006). In essence, these communities of color knowingly denied multiracial peoples the right to identify with anything but monoracial.

In the end, the multiracial option was struck down and a “check all that apply” option was utilized (Khanna, 2011; Williams, 2006). This option served the interests of monoracial communities of color as well as White society. The addition of a new racial category would have called attention to the social construction and fluidity of race, suggesting that race is not a biological, fixed concept. Adding an entirely new racial category to the Census suggested the impermanence and malleability of race, and the meanings associated with it. Furthermore, a “check all that apply” option reifies the one-drop rule and the ideology that race exists within monoracial paradigms that can be easily categorized and rank ordered (Rockquemore & Brunson, 2008). The addition of the “check all that apply” option quelled the plight of multiracial Americans while ensuring that the American racial hierarchy remained intact.

Romo (2011) expanded on what it meant for one’s multiracial reality to be denied. Breaking out of the Black/White binary, Romo interviewed 12 individuals who had one parent of Mexican heritage and one parent of Black heritage. The author referred to the participants’ racial identity as “Blaxican.” The 12 individuals identified as multiracial but were consistently told by monoracial peers and strangers that they did not fit with the meanings of Blackness *or* Mexicaness. In other words, they were not deemed as authentic Blacks or Mexicans. Participants also told stories of how their Blaxican identity was denied by peers, which resulted in exclusion from monoracial social circles, questioning of cultural authenticity, and feelings of being pushed and pulled between two monoracial identities (Romo, 2011). Romo found that physical features, specifically skin color, were large determinants as to whether or not participants were recognized by others as Black,

Mexican, or Blaxican. Participants also mentioned the presence of colorism in their racialized experiences. Some relayed that the darker their skin, the more racially authentic one was seen (Romo, 2011), possibly because they were viewed as more removed from White, dominant ancestry (Hunter, 2005).

Hunter (2005) explained that this colorism, or discrimination based on one's skin color, plays an integral role in communities of color and the acceptance or denial of racial identity. She wrote, "Because they are often light-skinned, many multiracial people who are part African American or Mexican American report feeling alienated from other members of their [monoracial] group" (Hunter, 2005, p.116). Although a community of color may claim a multiracial person, colorism and other features attributed to Whiteness may contribute to his or her feeling like an outsider within this same community. For example, the Black community may "claim" a multiracial person who phenotypically presents as non-White, however, light-skin color, a lack of cultural knowledge, and/or "good" hair may set that person apart from that same community (Johnston & Nadal, 2010).

Khanna (2011) explained further how skin color stratification impacts the assignment and denial of multiracial identity in America:

Color divisions that began during slavery continue to mark the experience of light-skinned Blacks within the African American community, granting them an elevated status while simultaneously creating resentment and envy towards those who might benefit from having light-skin. For today's biracial individuals, skin color—and other features such as hair texture, hair color, eye color, and facial features—continue to play a significant role in shaping their experiences and relationships with their Black counterparts. (p. 41)

The features Khanna (2011) mentioned are utilized as a racial litmus test to distinguish what monoracial group multiracial individuals will be assigned to. Unfortunately, a monoracial community's claim and racial assignment of multiracial individuals denies their racial reality as well as forces them into boxes they may not be willing or able to fit into. This denial of one's reality, and essentially racial identity, contributes to the erasure of multiracial Americans' presence from society.

Pathologizing Multiracial Identity

Finally, Johnston and Nadal (2010) asserted that individuals who do not identify with one race are often pathologized or viewed as psychologically abnormal. This pathology occurs in two different veins. First, family pathology occurs when multiracial individuals' family members and/or friends claim that a multiracial person was a mistake. For instance, multiracial Americans encounter questions of, "How did that happen?" in reference to their racial heritage (Johnston & Nadal, 2010).

Second, and more common, is the painting of multiracial individuals as confused and/or caught between two worlds. This theme dates back to the stereotype of the Tragic Mulatto (Spencer, 2011) and the Marginal Man (Park, 1928; Stonequist, 1937). The Tragic Mulatto character arose in 20th century literary fiction and painted a portrait of the multiracial American male who must navigate between two racial identities, creating chaos and disorder in his life (Spencer, 2011). The theory of the Marginal Man (Park, 1928; Stonequist, 1937) exposes how multiracial men lived betwixt and between two racial groups, and yet, were never fully embraced by either. Within both of these stereotypes, there exists a belief that a multiracial person's life will never be complete

and will ultimately end in failure and tragedy (Park, 1928; Spencer, 2011; Stonequist, 1937). This pathologization labels multiracial Americans as deficient, abnormal, and helpless.

In 2005, Shih and Sanchez claimed that multiracial identity development theories, such as the theory of the Marginal Man, reinforced notions that multiracial Americans struggle to form a racial identity and that their struggles contribute to poor psychological wellness. However, the authors argued that little empirical research focuses on, let alone supports, this pathologization of multiracial individuals. To ground this argument, Shih and Sanchez reviewed qualitative and quantitative research on multiracial identity development.

The researchers found that the only evidence that multiracial peoples struggle with identity development stemmed from qualitative clinical research studies. Furthermore, these “studies found participants reporting difficult racial identity-related experiences such as being rejected by others or being confused about belonging” (Shih & Sanchez, 2005, p. 587). Although the authors identified rejection and sense of belonging as identity-related experiences, these experiences may also be positioned as racial prejudice and discrimination that contribute to identity development (Kellogg & Liddell, 2012; Museus et al., in press). Unfortunately, due to the intense focus on multiraciality and identity, these racialized experiences are often ignored.

Shih and Sanchez’s (2005) review of qualitative and quantitative research led to inconclusive answers for whether or not multiracial identity confusion contributed to psychological maladjustment. Prior research suggested that multiracial peoples are

generally more depressed and have more behavioral issues than their White peers (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). However, when compared with monoracial peers of color, how well or poorly multiracial individuals compared depended on the outcome being explored. The authors concluded, “There might not be a simple answer to the question of whether multiracial individuals suffer from negative psychological adjustment to a greater extent than their monoracial peers” (p. 587).

The research by Shih and Sanchez (2005) suggests that there is no solid empirical evidence that supports the continued pathologization of multiracial Americans. The authors recommended that future research on multiracial individuals “focus attention on understanding interaction effects between other factors” (p. 587). For instance, the racial climate and encounters with prejudice and discrimination should be taken into account when researching multiracial Americans’ experiences. This research calls for a more systemic understanding as to why multiracial individuals have been and continue to be pathologized. Accounting for “social attitudes, the political developments, the philosophical understanding, and the historical context surrounding race and race relations” (Shih & Sanchez, 2005, p. 587) and how they shape the realities of multiracial Americans may help to rewrite the dominant narrative that multiracial individuals are destined for psychological issues.

The above review of literature concerning multiracial Americans’ racialized experiences exposes the multiple ways in which this population encounters their race in society. The review also reveals the embedded nature of race, racism, and the racialization of multiracial individuals in America. Multiracial men and women

experience racial discrimination in the form of exclusion and isolation (Jackson, 2010; Sanchez, 2010; Standen, 1996), objectification (Haritaworn, 2009; Jackson, 2010; Joseph, 2012; Osei-Kofi, 2013; Payson, 1996), assumptions of a monoracial identity (Khanna, 2011; Korgen, 1998; Remedios & Chaseteen, 2013; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002; Zack, 2012), denial of a multiracial reality (Hunter, 2005; Khanna, 2011; Romo, 2011), and the pathologizing of their racial identity (Brown, 1990; Haritaworn, 2009; Park, 1928; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Taken together, the above review of literature refutes dominant claims that the nation has entered a post-racial society (Carter, 2013; Osei-Kofi, 2013) and that multiracial Americans have the ability to transcend race and racism. Because a post-racial era does not currently exist and race and racism remain embedded in society, this literature provides a foundation and argument for exploring further the experiences of multiracial peoples' racialized experiences.

Although the research on multiracial individuals in America is important and necessary, several gaps remain within this growing canon of literature. The majority of extant scholarship focuses on Black/White biracial Americans' experiences with race (Khanna, 2011; Korgen, 1998; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002). This focus is problematic for two reasons. First, focusing on this population reinforces the Black/White binary, excluding individuals who do not have one Black parent and one White parent. Second, it restricts understandings of what it means to be multiracial in America to biracial peoples or to individuals who identify with only two races.

Moreover, extant literature is not comprehensive in its focus on racialized experiences. For instance, Johnston and Nadal (2010) focused explicitly on multiracial

microaggressions but leave the reader questioning if multiracial individuals experience overt acts of racism along with these covert forms. As another example, Romo (2011) detailed the denial of Blaxican identity, but little remains known about study participants' experiences with pathologization or assumptions of a monoracial identity. These gaps in the literature suggest a need for more comprehensive research that focuses on several areas of racial prejudice, discrimination, and encounters that manifest in both overt and covert manners.

Finally, approaching this literature with a CRT lens exposes the endemic nature of race and the realities of racism in the lives of multiracial Americans, both men and women. However, with a focus on intersectionality and antiessentialism, CRF demands a deeper interrogation into the intersections of multiple marginalized identities. Specifically, CRF calls for a more nuanced look at the unique racialized experiences of multiracial women. Gillem (2004) posited that little scholarly work has explored the experiences of Black/White biracial women. Although Gillem invoked the ever-present Black/White binary, her assertion as well as the above review of literature point to the realization that the racialized experiences of multiracial women in America have yet to be explored in depth. This is severely problematic because multiracial women's experiences with race are compounded by their multiple marginalized identities (Gillem, 2004; Root, 1990).

Grillo (1995) encouraged scholars of CRF to “[seek] out voices that are drowned out by essentialism in all its forms” (p. 30). The voices of multiracial women, which are silenced by sexist and racist structures, are such voices that must be sought out,

uncovered, and explored. CRF not only encourages but also allows for a focus on patriarchy, Whiteness, and other intersecting systems of oppression that may impact the daily lives of these women. Therefore in order to understand the little known about multiracial women's experiences with race in America as well as identify the gaps in this knowledge base, an overview of the extant literature on this topic follows.

Multiracial Women's Racialized Experiences

Scholarly work (Bettez, 2012; Storrs, 1999) has suggested that multiracial women in America have racialized experiences similar to those of multiracial peoples as a group, that is, multiracial men *and* women taken together. For instance, these women often encounter the "What are you?" question and feel that they must navigate monoracial spaces as multiracial beings (Storrs, 1999). In 2012, Bettez published a book from a comprehensive study about multiracial adult women's experiences with racial privilege and oppression. Bettez interviewed 16 multiracial women who had one White parent and one parent of color. Along with interview data, the author also collected documents from participants, conducted group interviews, and wrote follow-up emails to the multiracial women in the study. From the analysis of data, the author found that women encountered assumptions about their identity, denial of a multiracial reality, and a lack of fit or community with monoracial counterparts. Bettez's racialized themes for multiracial women mirrored those found in the general experiences of multiracial Americans, suggesting that multiracial women encounter many of the same experiences as their multiracial male counterparts.

Whereas these women were found to have experiences similar to those of their male counterparts, CRF proposes that a more nuanced understanding of multiracial women's encounters with race is necessary. The following review of literature on multiracial women in America explores these nuances and elucidates three overarching themes unique to multiracial women's experiences with race. These three divergent yet interrelated themes include triple jeopardy and the controlling images of the Jezebel and the Tragic Mulatta. The ways in which these three concepts impact the raced and gendered lives of multiracial women are expanded on below.

Triple Jeopardy

In "Triple Jeopardy in the Lives of Biracial Black/White Women," Gillem (2004), a clinical psychologist, wrote about Black/White biracial women's encounters with race and gender. Gillem expanded on Greene's 1994 theory of double jeopardy, which posited that Black women in America are discriminated against on account of both their gender and their race. In other words, both sexism and racism shape these women's lived experiences. Gillem added to Greene's theory and asserted that biracial women experience triple jeopardy due to discrimination based on their gender as well as twice over because of their "half" race. Black/White biracial women are "caught between two antagonistic worlds—not being either or both" (Gillem, 2004, p. 277) resulting in oppression from both White and Black communities. Root (1990) expanded on the notion of triple jeopardy by offering that multiracial women are put at a deficit because they are viewed as sex objects, have less power due to their gender, and experience resentment from the Black community due to colorism.

Gillem (2004) also claimed that controlling images, which paint Black/White biracial women in America as hypersexual, exotic, and fervent beings, compound the impact of triple jeopardy. Collins (2000) described controlling images as creations “designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life” (p. 69). Through controlling images, White society has created the parameters through which multiracial individuals are racialized and ultimately defined. These parameters are used to not only reaffirm the power and purity of Whiteness but to also relegate multiracial individuals to a space of inferiority and isolation (Pyke & Johnson, 2003). Two of the most prevalent controlling images for multiracial women in America are the Jezebel and the Tragic Mulatta, both of which are explored in full below.

The Jezebel

The Jezebel is a controlling image that continues to shape the racialized experiences of mixed-race women in America. The Jezebel is a woman of color with light skin, straight, or “good” hair, a slender nose, and other European characteristics (Stephens & Phillips, 2003; West, 1995). The Jezebel, like all women of color during slavery, was the sexual property of White men. In order to justify the rape of the Jezebel by White slave masters, her image was constructed as oversexed and promiscuous (Collins, 2000; Stephens & Phillips, 2003; Yarbrough & Bennett, 2000).

This image from the 18th and 19th centuries has carried into contemporary U.S. society. Stephens and Phillips (2003) described how a new image, the diva, is just a “toned-down” (p. 16) version of the historical Jezebel. The diva, like the Jezebel, has

light skin and long hair, is sexually tempting, seductive, and uses her body for material gain. The image of the Jezebel, seen in print media, movies, and television, to name a few, continues to permeate American consciousness and inform the stereotypes and beliefs society holds about multiracial women and their own sense of self (Root, 1990). For example, “Mixed-race women [today]...have more difficulty in relationships because of intersections of myths, lower status as women, and their search for an identity” (Root, 1990, p. 197). The historical, endemic remnant of this multiracial stereotype has also been found to be prevalent in several studies on multiracial women in the United States (Funderburg, 1994; Roberts-Clarke, Roberts, & Morokoff, 2004; Root, 1992).

Root (1992, 1994) asserted that biracial women may find dating to be troubling for three reasons: the hypersexualized stereotypes that plague them, the belief that they are more White than monoracial counterparts of color, and the belief that all dating for them is interracial dating. Roberts-Clarke et al., (2004) interviewed eight biracial women and found similar results to those of Root (1992, 1994). These women reflected on their romantic relationships with both White men and men of color. The women relayed how their partners would comment on being attracted to their light skin, good hair, and “bi-racialness” (Roberts-Clarke et al., p. 113). Participants also mentioned power dynamics within their relationships that invoked the intersections of race and gender. One woman said she preferred to date men of color, women of color, or White women, but not a White man. She explained, “American society indoctrinates White males with a false sense of superiority and entitlement” (Roberts-Clarke et al., 2004, p. 111). The authors’ research elucidates the ways in which gender and race intersect to shape the romantic

relationships multiracial women enter into and the ways in which they navigate these relationships.

Funderburg (1994) interviewed 46 Black/White biracial Americans. The author posited that U.S. norms of beauty are based on European ideals, such as White skin, light eyes, straight or wavy hair, and so on. Funderburg also found that the myth of biracial women as exotic and hypersexualized had a negative effect on dating relationships. Women participants reported feeling used by Black and White men as objects, as if they were their trophies. The women claimed that Black women resented them for dating Black men, and that they were seen as trying to pass for White when they dated White men. Gillem (2004) agreed that biracial women's lighter skin tone and the White spaces this allows them to navigate may cause resentment and tension with monoracial women of color.

The Tragic Mulatta

The Tragic Mulatta, the Tragic Mulatto's female counterpart, is another controlling image of the multiracial woman. Much like the Jezebel, the Mulatta was constructed to place multiracial peoples in a category that was inferior to Whiteness, but not quite at the status of Blackness (Spencer, 2011). The Tragic Mulatta (also referred to as the Tragic Octoroon, Tragic Quadroon, etc.) was a fictional image seen in literature throughout the 18th and 19th centuries (Dawkins, 2012). The story of the Mulatta always ended the same: tragic. The Mulatta was a product of White and Black parents (Bird, 2009), but passed as a White woman (Zackodnik, 2004). In a turn of events, the Mulatta's Black heritage was revealed, stripping her of Whiteness and the societal privileges it

conferred. The Mulatta suffered became disturbed, and existed in a state of horror (Zackodnik, 2004), all because of her nearly White skin but knowingly Black ancestry. Noteworthy is that the tragedy of the Mulatta centers on her femininity and fragility as a woman (Raimon, 2004).

Joseph (2012) wrote extensively about the Tragic Mulatta as seen in two landmark films, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Imitation of Life* (1959). She explained how the Tragic Mulatta character in each of these films “reflect[s], reproduce[s], and circulate[s] a specifically mixed-race African American female racialization and sexualization” (Joseph, 2012, p. 98). She described the character further:

The tragic-mulatta characters in *Birth of a Nation* and *Imitation of Life*, like many other tragic mulattas on screen, share certain features...they were viewed as beautiful and hypersexualized; they were emotionally unstable, fragile, or hysterical; they were manipulative liars; they were angry at the social structure of which they imagined themselves victims; they attracted Black men and White men alike; they were used in psychological pain and distress; and their struggles often represented the struggles of the entire film, and the struggles of the entire nation. (p. 98)

Though the Tragic Mulatta was introduced to the nation in the early 20th century, her image has not dissipated (Joseph, 2012). In fact, this controlling image has remained prevalent throughout U.S. history, though the story of the pathologized Tragic Mulatta has changed slightly over time (Dawkins, 2012).

Dawkins (2012) explained, “An updated take on tragic mulattoes would describe them as pathological, obsessed with monoracial identities and refusing multiracial identities” (p. 26). Edwards and Pedrotti (2004) asserted that the myth of the Mulatta is based in facts, but has been taken to the extreme. They claimed, “While biraciality can cause difficulties for many individuals, it may be even more detrimental to think of them

as relegated to a lifetime of splintered identity” (Edwards & Pedrotti, 2004, p. 35).

However, society continues to view multiracial individuals as tragic (Shih & Sanchez, 2005), creating a lasting impact on the lives of multiracial women, who are portrayed as confused, in pain, and ultimately, tragic (Joseph, 2012).

From the small amount of literature on multiracial women, it is evident that they have unique, distinct encounters due to their intersecting raced and gendered identities. However, the literature remains limited for three main reasons. First, there is once again a clear focus on Black/White biracial women, which preserves a binary paradigm. This focus on the Black/White binary leaves little space for those who identify outside of a Black/White paradigm. Therefore women who identify with more than two races and/or do not identify with Blackness and Whiteness are excluded from the minimal amount known about multiracial women’s experiences with race.

Second, a majority of the literature on multiracial women stems from the discipline of psychology. This approach further pathologizes multiracial women in focusing on splintered identity, confusion, and implications for counseling. For example, Root (1990), a leader in the multiracial movement and a psychologist, said that multiracial people “begin life a marginal people” (p. 185) and experience extreme stress in the search for identity. This focus places the onus of multiracial women’s fractured identity on the individual rather than on racist and sexist structures that may impact their raced and gendered realities.

Third and finally, the current literature on multiracial women’s experiences with race is limited to their interactions with monoracial peers, specifically with Black women

and romantic partners. Again, this focus negates structures, such as workplace policies or government benefits that may contribute to the racialized encounters of multiracial women in America. With these gaps in mind, it is crucial that future research deconstruct the Black/White binary, steer away from the pathologization of multiracial women, and critique racist and sexist structures that extend beyond peer interactions.

Thus far, Chapter 2 has explored extant literature that exposes the racialized experiences of multiracial men and women, and multiracial women, respectively. Throughout the above review of literature, it is apparent that race and racism are realities and endemic within the lives of multiracial women. This chapter now turns to an even more specialized focus on the racialized experiences of multiracial women by exploring the literature on this population and topic in higher education. It is important to focus on multiracial women students' experiences with race because multiracial individuals are currently pursuing, or are headed toward the pursuit of higher education more than ever before (Jones, 2005). With this growth, it is imperative that higher education scholars and practitioners turn a critical eye towards multiracial women students' experiences with race on American college campuses to better inform both research and practice. Unfortunately, the current literature on multiracial women continues to fall short. Below, the gaps in this extant literature are explored and identified to substantiate the need for future research on multiracial women students' racialized experiences in higher education.

Multiracial Women Students in Higher Education

Theories of Multiracial Identity Development

Prior to exploring the racialized experiences of multiracial women in college, it is important to briefly review the literature on multiracial identity development in higher education. This topic is significant for two reasons. First, “the work on multiraciality in student affairs is unequivocally centered in student development theory” (Osei-Kofi, 2012, p. 248). The majority of research, and therefore what is known about multiracial students, relates directly back to identity development.

Second, multiracial students’ experiences with race have a direct impact on their racial identity development (Kellogg & Liddell, 2012). Root (1990) explained, “It is the marginal status imposed by society rather than the objective mixed-race of biracial individuals which poses a severe stress to positive identity development” (p. 188). In other words, it is the societal construction of and experiences with race that contribute to multiracial students’ development of multiracial identity. For instance, Kellogg and Liddell (2012) found that the denial of a multiracial reality, assumptions of a monoracial identity, and encounters with racism, all of which are racialized experiences encountered by multiracial women, played a critical role in the shaping of multiracial students’ racial identities. Museus and colleagues (in press) also noted that issues attributed to multiracial identity development, such as forced-choice dilemma, may be seen as a form of prejudice and/or discrimination based on one’s race. Therefore an overview of multiracial identity development is offered below in order to provide a foundation for the little known about multiracial women students’ experiences with race on the college campus.

Just as multiracial identity in the context of U.S. society has changed and shifted throughout the years, so too have multiracial identity development models. Aligning with an emerging multiracial consciousness (Daniel & Collins, 1994), higher education saw a growing interest in the racial identity development of mixed-race Americans throughout the 1990s. Prior to this movement, models of multiracial identity development focused on monoracial students (e.g., Cross, 1971), pathologized multiracial peoples (Park, 1928), or described multiracial individuals as living a limited, marginal lifestyle (Stonequist, 1937). However in the early 1990s, these models were critiqued, rejected, and replaced by Poston (1990) and Root's (1990) stage models of multiracial identity development.

In "The Biracial Identity Development Model: A Needed Addition," Poston (1990) outlined five different levels that biracial individuals traverse over a lifetime. Poston's model strayed from monoracial models, but his theory had several limitations. First, as a stage model, Poston placed biracial identity as stagnant, suggesting that identity development happens linearly, which negated the fluidity of race and exploration of self (Renn, 2003; Root, 1996). Additionally, this model did not take into account the historical and societal factors of race and racism that may influence the identity choices of multiracial individuals (Renn, 2008).

Also in 1990, Root proposed an identity development model for multiracial individuals. Unlike Poston (1990), Root's model took into account societal racism, internalized oppression, and the differences in development for men, women, and different racial makeup. Diverging from deficit, pathologized thinking, Root offered four positive outcomes for multiracial identity: acceptance of the identity society assigns,

identification with both racial groups, identification with a single racial group, and identification as a new racial group. Root stated that multiracial individuals could identify with all four outcomes at different times in their lives or simultaneously. Overall, the model diverged from linear stage models and offered a more fluid option for multiracial identity.

Although Poston (1990) and Root (1990) contributed to the growing canon of psychological literature on multiracial identity, higher education would have to wait 10 more years for someone to research and conceptualize a multiracial identity development theory for undergraduate students in the United States. In 2000, Renn published findings from her research on the patterns of situational identity formation for multiracial college students. Utilizing a qualitative approach, Renn found that 24 multiracial college students identified across five different identity patterns. The five categories include holding a monoracial identity, holding multiple monoracial identities and shifting according to a situation, holding a multiracial identity, holding an extraracial identity by deconstructing or opting out of racial classifications, and holding a situational identity where one identifies differently in different contexts (Renn, 2000). The author also detailed how campus peer culture and physical campus space impacted participants' identity choices.

In 2004, Renn expanded on the five identity patterns by conducting research across six institutions and surveying 56 students. Her research confirmed the five identity categories she first posited in 2000. However, this time, Renn's research expanded on how the campus environment impacted students' racial identities. The author found that ecological influences of identity for multiracial students included physical appearance,

cultural knowledge, and the campus peer culture (Renn, 2004, 2008).

Several studies (see King, 2011; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002, 2008; Wallace, 2001) followed up on Renn's (2004) research and confirmed many, if not all five categories of multiracial students' racial identity choices. However the research on multiracial identity development remains limited in scope. Current research rarely if ever focuses on the intersections of identity, such as race and gender. This dearth in research allows interlocking systems of oppression, such as patriarchy and White supremacy, to remain hidden. For instance, within Renn's scholarship, little work on gender differences was explored. Female participants mentioned encounters with their race, but Renn did not explore these racialized themes in depth. In Renn's book, *Mixed-Race Students in College*, one participant relayed, "Issues of exoticization have been really central to me and to my development, in the way that I've been accepted and the way that people have dealt with me" (p. 172). Citing exoticization, this participant's quote speaks volumes about the ways in which multiracial women's race and gender intersect to influence their campus experiences and identity. Unfortunately, gender was a non-issue in the analysis of data. In fact, in Renn's 258-page book detailing the findings of the study, gender was referenced in only 18 pages.

Research on multiracial identity development has also been problematized for its reification of racial categorization, stereotypes, and myths. Texeira (2003) believed that work on multiracial identity perpetuates historical ideals of multiraciality, such as colorism and the Mulatta stereotype. Additionally, scholarship on multiracial identity development in college is "framed in relation to processes of racial categorization, thus

unintentionally legitimating the notion of biological ‘race’” (Osei-Kofi, 2012, p. 253).

Work on multiracial identity development may unwittingly reinforce conceptions of race as a biological factor in its assertions that multiracial students navigate race in five manners.

Whereas the work on identity development has limitations such as those mentioned above, the body of literature also has suggested that multiracial students experience prejudice and discrimination on the basis of their mixed-race identity (Museus et al., in press). Unfortunately, the research on identity development fails to address more systemic encounters with race on the college campus for multiracial women students. Museus and colleagues (in press) explained, “Most research on the experiences of mixed-race college students is focused on identity processes, and inquiries that systematically examine these students’ experiences with prejudice and discrimination are difficult to find” (p. 6). Even more difficult to find are the racialized experiences of multiracial women students. In an attempt to address this gap, the next section explores the small amount of literature that focuses explicitly on multiracial women students’ experiences with race in higher education.

The Racialized Experiences of Multiracial Women Students

In an extensive study on the experiences of multiracial students, Rockquemore and Brunisma sampled 177 Black/White biracial college students in the mid-1990s about their racial understandings of self. Several pieces of literature have been published from this study’s data (Brunisma, 2005, 2006; Brunisma & Rockquemore, 2001; Rockquemore, 1999, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunisma, 2002, 2004), increasing the understanding of

Black/White biracial students' racialized encounters in college. Although the larger study was not explicitly focused on multiracial women, Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2004) devoted one article to the themes found in the lives of multiracial women students. The authors reported that biracial women students experienced feelings of triple jeopardy on campus:

We find evidence that a triple jeopardy exists for biracial women because they experience societal pressures to "do gender" in a specific way (West & Zimmerman, 1987), and to emulate racist standards of beauty (Hunter, 1998). In addition, they face the reality of being multiracial in a society that assumes monoraciality. (p. 97)

This triple jeopardy exposes both the sexism and racism these women must navigate in the academy. Furthermore, triple jeopardy gave way to feelings of social isolation and rejection by monoracial peers of color on campus. Within this research, the authors found that the peer environment and social interactions gave rise to feelings of discrimination on the bases of race and gender, as well as feelings of isolation and rejection.

Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002) also found tension between biracial women and monoracial women of color on campus due to physical appearance. For example, one participant relayed, "There are some Black [women] who are so bitter towards people who have light skin" (p. 96). In 2002, Rockquemore utilized the same data set to examine the experiences of 16 Black/White biracial women. She also found that one of the larger themes throughout the data related to negative interactions with monoracial Black women. One participant explained, "They [Black girls] didn't like me, 'cause they said I thought I was 'all that,' 'cause I'm light-skinned and I got pretty long hair and the boys like me" (p. 491). These quotes demonstrate how phenotype, and more specifically

colorism shapes racialized interactions between monoracial women of color and multiracial women students on campus.

Although Rockquemore and Brunnsma's study (2002) is one of the most extensive research projects concerning multiracial college students, the authors' focus on Black/White biracial individuals reinforces a binary paradigm of race. Additionally, although gender differences are highlighted in certain articles (Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2004), Rockquemore and Brunnsma's data set did not focus explicitly on this population. Finally, the majority of findings in this study relate directly back to multiracial students' racialized experiences with peers. The focus on the peer environment may mitigate the impacts that other institutionalized structures and components have on the racialization of multiracial women students.

Basu (2007) also found evidence that multiracial women experience their race in peer interactions on campus. The author focused on the ways in which multiracial women students navigated social spaces on campus. Basu's study of 14 female biracial college students sheds light on the impact cultural knowledge and physical appearance had on study participants' sense of belonging in their campus environment.

In Basu's (2007) research, several participants with Latina heritage explained that their inability to speak Spanish left them feeling ostracized by the Latino peer community on campus. Being a non-Spanish speaker made their multiracial identity even more visible and marked them as different (Basu, 2007). Participants in Basu's study with Black ancestry explained how their "good" hair acted as a social barrier to gaining full access to the Black community on campus. One woman stated, "Black women have a

hard time with me because of my hair....I don't have African structured hair....So I couldn't fit in. I could only go up to a point" (Basu, 2007, p. 41). Like those of Rockquemore and Brunson (2004) and Rockquemore (2002), Basu's findings elucidate the way in which multiracial women's interactions with peers result in racialized encounters on the college campus. Moreover, these studies explicate on mixed-race women's interactions with other monoracial women of color. In 2010, Basu built on her previous research and examined multiracial women's experiences with race in their encounters with male peers.

Basu (2010) set out to explore the gender differences in biracial men and women's experiences with racial identity and racial stereotypes in college. Effects of the historical Jezebel character appeared in the findings of the author's qualitative study of five male and nine female biracial college students attending a small 4-year institution in the Northeast. Basu discovered that the themes of exoticization and sexualization were much more prevalent and impactful for women participants. Further, Basu identified that female biracial students encountered feelings of objectification, exoticization, and hypersexualization from both men and women students on campus.

For example, biracial women students felt that male peers stereotyped them as "being more sexually available...as an object or a 'trophy'" (Basu, 2010, p. 112). One Black/White biracial woman detailed,

I think [biracial] women are exoticized....I think they are expected to be very sexual, honestly ...and I think the media plays into this....Oh look, I have this exotic creature with me. It's...kind of like a cultural trophy...it's like you're interesting, but...[the word] exotic...it's bad. (Basu, 2010, p. 112)

This quote explores the intersections of both the participant's race and gender. The

woman student suggested that because of her intersecting identities, she is hypersexualized, exoticized, and objectified. Additionally, the participant hinted at the controlling images, perpetuated by the media, that play into women's racialization by other peers on campus.

Basu (2010) also found multiracial women students' peers continually made assumptions about their racial identity. One participant relayed a story in which friends who had known her for quite some time continually referred to her as Chinese and assumed she had grown up in China. The woman was in fact White and Chinese and was a U.S. citizen. Another participant communicated a story in which she was asked if she was adopted because she did not look like her monoracial mother. Johnston and Nadal (2010) classified this as "mistaken identity" for multiracial students, or when others assume no relation to family members because they do not look like them.

Basu's (2010) research sheds a great amount of light on the racialized experiences of multiracial women on the college campus. However, like previous research, her findings and overall focus of the study were centered in "social group participation" (Basu, 2010, p. 97), which may obscure the racialization that occurs for these women in other areas of an institution's context. Basu's study touched on other aspects of the campus environment, but more attention must be paid to these racialized encounters and structures that fall outside of peer interactions. As an example, study participants relayed ways in which they felt racialized, and more specifically, objectified by professors in the classroom. A participant described, "One professor...liked putting [the biracial students] on the spot....She [the professor] said to the whole class...what did you guys think of her

[the biracial student]?” (p. 109). This quote illustrates that multiracial women students encounter their race within the classroom and that pedagogical approaches may impact these women’s experiences with race. Therefore faculty as well as peers impact women’s experiences with race at higher education institutions. Unfortunately, current research has yet to gain a more in-depth understanding of how other campus structures beyond peers relate to the racialized experiences of multiracial women students. Finally, Basu’s research also focuses on biraciality, which limits understandings of how women with multiple racial heritages experience race in higher education.

Bettez (2010) was one of the few scholars to focus explicitly on the racialized experiences of multiracial women in higher education. Bettez conducted individual and focus group interviews of five mixed-race undergraduate female students and one female graduate student. In 2010, she published her findings in “Mixed-Race Women and Epistemologies of Belonging,” an article that explored the reality of exoticization in multiracial female students’ lives. Findings from Bettez’s study also focused heavily on peer encounters for multiracial women.

For instance, several participants directly linked their racialized and gendered experiences back to the way male peers viewed them as Tragic Mulattas. In talking about visits to a White fraternity house, one participant relayed, “I always feel like the little mulatto house slave or something like that” (Bettez, 2010, p. 148). This participant went on to explain how careful she was in selecting White romantic partners, making sure that White men were okay with dating outside their race.

Still, another participant asserted that she does not want to be viewed as “that sort of like, confused, the tragic mulatto kind of role” (Bettez, 2010, p. 151). This participant referred to the questions she must ask herself when entering a romantic relationship in college. She went on to explain her awareness in dating a White person who may “live in a little bubble world that doesn’t recognize, you know, where minorities are at” (Bettez, 2010, p. 151). On the other hand, she was concerned that Black men date her because she is light skinned, and therefore exotic. Within the narratives Bettez (2010) collected, the controlling image of the Tragic Mulatta was a very real part of the lives of these women and subsequently played an integral role in shaping their experiences with race and gender on campus. Overall findings from Bettez’s 2010 study propose that multiracial women students encounter racialized experiences when interacting with their peers on campus.

The title of Bettez’s (2010) article suggests a sense of belonging for multiracial women students, but participants also spoke on the sense of social exclusion and isolation they experienced due to the intersections of their race and gender. For instance, a Cameroonian and Russian woman explained how the more time she spent with the African American community on campus, the more she identified with that racial identity, but that she continued to feel like an outsider. Bettez purported that the situational and fluid identity this woman took on allowed for constant shifts in one’s sense of belonging, as multiracial women navigated becoming insiders and/or outsiders. Finally, Bettez noted that “no matter what path a mixed-race woman chooses, she can be perceived as a traitor to both Whites and people of color—a traitor to either side of her

family, a traitor to equity, a traitor to cultural preservation, and a traitor to cultural purity” (p. 150). In essence, Bettez believed that multiracial women are in a constant state of flux, attempting to find ground and balance in a college community that may be racially destabilizing.

The above studies, though minimal, shed light on the racialized experiences of multiracial women in college. However, there is still a great deal of knowledge missing on this topic and population. First and foremost, the sample populations of several of these studies (Basu, 2007, 2010; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008) draw almost exclusively from biracial women students’ racialized experiences. Moreover, studies required participants to identify with Black and White heritage only, subsequently reinforcing a Black/White binary (Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). This limitation masks the experiences of multiracial women *and* biracial women who do not identify with Black and/or White heritage. The majority of the extant literature also fails to explicitly examine the racialized experiences of multiracial women. Instead, encounters with race and racism are circumstantial findings from studies that concentrate on belonging (Basu, 2010), social contexts (Basu, 2007), and identity (Renn, 2003, 2004, 2008; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). Currently, no empirical research has focused explicitly on multiracial women’s experiences with race and racialization in college.

Moreover, the existing research that sheds minimal light on multiracial women students’ racialized experiences may inadvertently hide institutional structures by centering the importance of peer interactions in research questions and findings. In other

words, because research and subsequent findings focus on multiracial women's social and peer interactions on campus, the possible influence of other structures in women's racialized experiences remain vague. For instance, governmental forces, such as affirmative action, may play a crucial role in shaping the racialized experiences of multiracial women students (Leong, 2010). Sociohistorical factors, like the one-drop rule, may also have a lasting influence on the ways in which multiracial women encounter their race on campus. As a final example, the amount of other multiracial students on campus may play an integral role in multiracial women's experiences with race on campus. However, these differing aspects of the campus context are invisible in current research, contributing to the failure to interrogate structures beyond peer interactions that may uphold patriarchy and Whiteness. The omissions of structures that impact racialization on campus contribute to the lack of holistic understanding of multiracial women's racialized experiences on campus.

With these above gaps identified, it is imperative that future research interrogate the role that institutional structures (hereafter referred to as institutional context) play in multiracial women students' racialized experiences. Institutional context, according to Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, and Allen (1998, 1999) consists of four institutional forces: a school's historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion, compositional diversity, psychological climate, and behavioral climate. Peer interactions and relationships, which concern the majority of the scholarship on multiracial women students' experiences with race, are located within the latter dimension. Governmental policies and procedures and sociohistorical factors are two external factors that shape institutional context (Hurtado et

al., 1998, 1999). Figure 1 depicts these four internal and two external dimensions. Each component exists individually, but all six components are interconnected with and impact one another (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005).

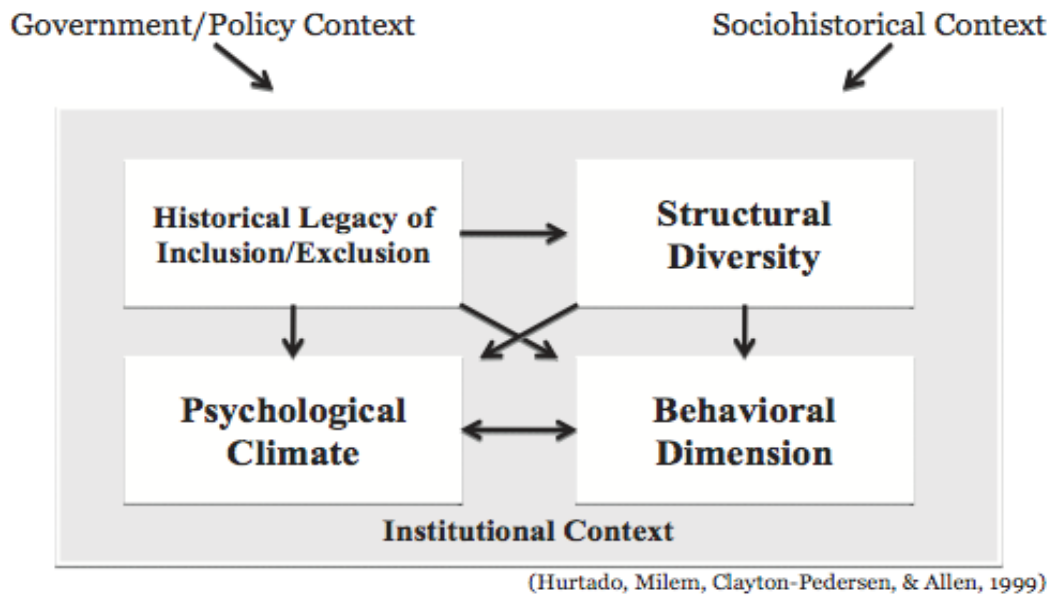


Figure 1. Institutional context defined by Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, and Allen, 1999. In *Enacting Diverse Learning Environments: Improving the Campus Climate for Racial/Ethnic Diversity*, p. 18.

There are two reasons why it is important to interrogate how institutional context impacts multiracial women students' racialized experiences on campus. First, a focus on peer culture limits understandings of how other aspects of the institutional context may influence and perpetuate multiracial women students' experiences with race. For instance, peer interactions do not account for the ways in which diversity of the faculty and/or student body impact these women's racialized encounters or how the institutional mission may influence experiences with race. The roles that curriculum, student organizations, and the built environment on campus play constitute other aspects that

remain unexamined in multiracial women's encounters with race in college. Focusing on one component, peer interaction, within the institutional context stymies a more systemic approach to multiracial women's racialized experiences.

Second, a focus on institutional context aligns with the aims of CRT and CRF. Examining the institutional context, which is composed of political, sociohistorical, and institutional factors, gets at a more systemic understanding of multiracial women's racialized experiences. In other words, structures that uphold White supremacy and patriarchy may be more critically examined when all contexts of an institution, beyond peer interactions, are interrogated. Therefore, it is imperative that institutional context be taken into account in future research on multiracial women's racialized experiences.

In summation, the majority of research (Basu, 2007, 2010; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunisma, 2008) on multiracial women's racialized experiences foregrounds the role peer interaction has in shaping these encounters. However this is only one aspect of an institution's context that contributes to multiracial women's racialized realities. Moreover, peer interactions do not exist in isolation from other areas of campus. In fact, the peer environment is impacted by and has an impact on other aspects of an institution's context (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999). Unfortunately, these other components and their role in influencing multiracial women's racialized experiences have yet to be interrogated. For instance, nothing is known about multiracial women's interactions with faculty, staff, curriculum, and campus policies, and their impact on these students' experiences with race. Therefore to gain a more holistic understanding of multiracial women students' experiences with race, it is imperative to investigate beyond

the peer culture and inquire about their racialized interactions in all aspects of the institutional context.

Chapter Summary

The racialized experiences of multiracial women students in American higher education remain relatively unexplored. Chapter 2 offered a historical overview of multiraciality in the United States from the 1920s to present day, which exposed the differing intricacies of race for multiracial peoples throughout U.S. history. A review of the racialized experiences of multiracial Americans exposed the way in which they encounter their race in contemporary U.S. society, including exclusion and isolation (Jackson, 2010; Sanchez, 2010; Standen, 1996), objectification (Haritaworn, 2009; Jackson, 2010; Joseph, 2012; Osei-Kofi, 2013; Payson, 1996), assumptions of a monoracial identity (Khanna, 2011; Korgen, 1998; Remedios & Chaseteen, 2013; Rockquemore & Brunσμα, 2002; Zack, 2012), denial of a multiracial reality (Hunter, 2005; Khanna, 2011; Romo, 2011), and the pathologizing of their racial identity (Brown, 1990; Haritaworn, 2009; Park, 1928). When taking a closer look at multiracial women's encounters with race, it becomes clear how these experiences are compounded by their intersecting identities. In other words, sexist and racist structures influence the exoticization, hypersexualization, colorism, and tensions these women face on a daily basis (Gillem, 2004; Root, 1990).

Turning an eye to multiracial women students' experiences with race in higher education, there is a great amount of literature that focuses on multiracial identity development (see Renn, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2008). However, the emphasis on identity

leads to a dearth in deeper understandings of multiracial women students' experiences with race on campus, because it fails to interrogate "the larger history of 'race' and the ways in which social, institutional, and structural realities inform racialization"(Osei-Kofi, 2012, p. 253). The small amount of literature that does exist suggests that multiracial women, despite post-racial rhetoric, *do* have encounters with their race in higher education (see Basu, 2007, 2010; Bettez, 2010; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). However, these studies are limited in that they reinforce a Black/White binary (Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008) and do not account for all aspects of an institution's context (Basu, 2007, 2010; Bettez, 2010; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). Taken together, these gaps result in the lack of a critique of interlocking systems of oppression, including monoracism, sexism, and racism, that may play into multiracial women's experiences with race.

This study addresses the gaps in the current literature by focusing on (a) multiracial women students who fall outside of a Black/White binary, (b) the interlocking systems of oppression for multiracial women students, (c) the racialized experiences of these students, and (d) the impact that institutional context has on multiracial women students' experiences with race. These identified gaps directed me, the researcher, to ask the below research questions:

This study is guided by one primary research question:

- What are 10 multiracial women undergraduate students' experiences with race at a PWI?

Three secondary research questions were also addressed in this study:

- How do these 10 multiracial women respond to their racialized experiences?
- How does gender impact the 10 multiracial women students' racialized experiences?
- How does institutional context impact the multiracial women students' racialized experiences?

A qualitative paradigm is best suited to explore and answer the above research questions.

Chapter 3 introduces critical qualitative and narrative inquiry as well as the methods and procedures used for collecting and analyzing this study's data.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the racialized experiences of 10 multiracial women at a predominantly White institution (PWI). This study focused on how participants navigated their racialized experiences. Additionally, the intersecting identities of race and gender were explored in the 10 multiracial women's collegiate experiences. This study also investigated the ways in which institutional structures shaped these students' experiences with race. The research employed a narrative approach to discover the racialized realities of multiracial women students at a PWI.

In this chapter, the definition and utilization of critical qualitative inquiry is explained. Next, narrative inquiry is defined, and the rationalization for using a narrative approach is offered. Third, the author's position within the research is explored. Fourth, the research design, which includes sampling procedures, data collection, and research site, is detailed in depth. The data analysis process is explored next. Finally, I explicate on the procedures to increase the trustworthiness of the study.

Critical Qualitative Inquiry

To explore the racialized experiences of 10 multiracial women at a PWI, a critical qualitative inquiry paradigm was utilized. Critical qualitative inquiry reaches beyond dominant traditions of qualitative research that fail "to address the fundamental philosophical underpinnings of inequity in higher education" (Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz,

& Gildersleeve, 2012, p. 4). Critical inquiry centers equity at several levels of analysis, affording researchers the ability to expose inequitable power relations in higher education and subsequently deconstruct dominant structures (Merriam, 2009; Pasque et al., 2012). Critical inquiry seeks to inform social justice, social change, and emancipatory practices for marginalized groups, including multiracial women students, within higher education.

This approach to research intersects with several tenets and aims of CRT and CRF. First, critical qualitative inquiry exposes and deconstructs the dominant ideology that is embedded in higher education research and practice. Pasque and colleagues (2012) viewed the “hesitancy of higher education scholars to engage with or employ critical methodologies as symptomatic of larger social processes at work within and beyond the academy” (p. 48). These social processes allow academics to approach research on marginalized populations through a meritocratic, color-blind, and individualistic frame (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Pasque et al., 2012). Such an approach to research stifles any significant advances that may be made through research that concern marginalized populations. It also maintains the status quo so that those in power continue to control the production of knowledge in the academy (Pasque et al., 2012).

Furthermore, interest convergence exists within this dominant approach to research. Pasque et al. (2012) explained that traditional notions of educational research hide “conservative agendas within a commonsense rhetoric intended to solicit the support of the very communities these movements work to disempower” (p. 62). Because academic capitalism drives mainstream research, rarely are the voices of marginalized

populations accurately or sensitively represented in studies that attempt to focus on these groups.

Whereas mainstream research supports and furthers dominant ideology and interest convergence, critical qualitative inquiry, like CRT and CRF, aims to expose and deconstruct these prevailing systems and oppressive methodological philosophies. This line of critical inquiry grounds the realities of traditional, oppressive research in history, thus fighting ahistoricism. Like CRT and CRF, critical qualitative research also advances a social justice agenda (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Pasque et al., 2012). Parker and Lynn (2002) asserted, “Qualitative research, action, and CRT can be seen as a way to link theory and understanding about race from critical perspectives to actual practice and actions going on in education for activist social justice and change” (p. 18). This social justice agenda also accounts for the intersectional nature of identity and aims to advance progress for all marginalized social identities.

Finally, a critical qualitative approach to research centers the voices of marginalized individuals and groups in an attempt to deconstruct the status quo (Pasque et al., 2012). There are many ways that this approach can foster liberation, but they all aspire to diverge from the traditional scientific methodologies that support dominance, academic capitalism, and abstract liberalism in hopes of offering more liberatory, praxis-oriented research (Canella & Lincoln, 2009; Perez & Canella, 2013). Therefore approaching this research with critical qualitative inquiry allowed for a focus on 10 multiracial women students’ voices and the exploration of their realities, which have the power to deconstruct inequitable structures in higher education (Pasque et al., 2012).

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative is best suited for capturing detailed lived experiences of one or more individuals and the way they encounter the world (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Therefore to get at the essence of 10 multiracial women students' experiences with race at a PWI, a narrative research design was utilized in this study. Moreover, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explained, "People by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (p. 2). In other words, narrative is both a phenomenon to be studied (the racialized realities of 10 multiracial women students) as well as the method to study phenomena (describing, collecting, and telling about these realities).

Narrative inquiry exists within and between a three dimensional space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These dimensions include interaction, continuity, and situation. First, individuals and their experiences cannot be understood in isolation. Instead, people have personal interactions that must be placed into a social context. These personal and social interactions define the first dimension of narrative. Continuity, the second dimension, takes into account the past, present, and future, exposing how experiences contribute to and build on other experiences. Additionally, this dimension accounts for the fact that peoples' stories are temporal. Place, or situation, is the third and final dimension of narrative inquiry. Place creates a contextual landscape in which characters are constructed and lives are lived (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). These three factors create a three-dimensional space that narrative inquiry exists

within. This three-dimensional space is pertinent to this research because multiracial women's racialized experiences (social interactions and continuity) are interrogated within an institutional context (continuity and situation).

Finally, critical race theorists and critical race feminists agree that narrative methodology has significant value in research (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Wing, 2003). Parker and Lynn (2002) explained,

Connections can be made in educational research through the use of narrative in CRT, which has already been a part of literature and commentary on racism, and feminist research that uses narrative with regard to women's lives and activist scholarship. (p. 18)

Narrative as methodology challenges racism and sexism by exploring the counterstories that exist for marginalized populations (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This approach to research lends a voice to silenced individuals, such as multiracial women, and exposes structural oppressions embedded within society (Arriola, 2003). Arriola (2003) explained, "Narratives...are essential to the task of exposing the impact of systemic racism" (p. 408). In this study, a narrative approach captured the racialized experiences of 10 multiracial women undergraduate students, while simultaneously exposing the oppressive structures within these participants' lives as they named their own realities.

Researcher's Position

Important in narrative research is the reflexivity, positionality, and/or wakefulness of the researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). All three of these terms, which I use interchangeably, require the researcher to examine, reflect on, and write about their biases, assumptions, and values throughout the research. Researcher reflexivity is crucial to qualitative inquiry because it acknowledges the lens in which the researcher interprets,

approaches, and subsequently shapes the study (Krefting, 1991; Ruby, 1980).

Additionally, past and present experiences, as well as a researcher's preconceptions should be explored in detail to increase a study's credibility (Krefting, 1991; Ruby, 1980). Therefore to add to the trustworthiness of the study, I investigated my own experiences and preconceived notions as they pertained to this research.

I identify as a multiracial woman and have, for as long as I can remember, been a student. Therefore I was able to relate to the experiences of the participants in this study. My identity and experiences also impact my understandings of what it means to be a multiracial woman navigating educational spaces that are dominated by Whiteness and patriarchy. Therefore, it was advantageous for me to outline the experiences I had had within these educational spaces as they related to race so as to delineate between my reality and the reality of my participants.

I was 10 when I realized my (multi)racial identity was contentious not only in society, but also to those closest to me. While on vacation in California with my grandmother, she asked me, "Would you like to go outside and play in the sun, Jessica?" I simply answered, "No." She looked at me with piercing eyes and said, "You know. You should go get tan. You're too White. You're not Black enough." Even at the age of 10, I knew she was not just talking about my skin color. This was the critical moment that I became not Black, not White, and not enough.

These feelings have waxed and waned throughout my life. I have continually felt pushed and pulled between Whiteness and Blackness. The push is from both sides, where I have found myself ostracized by both communities. The pull is also towards both sides.

The privileges of Whiteness and my proximity to it are alluring. However, I choose not to identify as White and strongly identify with my Black ancestry. Moreover, as I engaged in this research, my multiracial identity, and pride in such, steadily increased.

Within educational spaces, I have been assigned a monoracial identity, invalidating my multiracial heritage. Just the other day, a Black colleague asked if I had been invited to a dinner held by the diversity office on campus. I replied “No.” She then clarified that it may be because the staff in the office perceived me to be White. That comment cut me deep because I do not identify as White. On the other end, there have been multiple times when I have been assigned a Black identity by faculty, students, and family. Although this does not hurt as much, or really at all, I always find it intriguing that I am not allowed to define myself as something that falls outside of a Black/White binary.

I have felt exoticized and objectified by complete strangers in the campus environment. Not a week passes where some “exotic” characteristic is brought to my attention. This week, it was my eyes. I was sitting in the second floor of my institution’s education building, and a young White male passed by and said, “Your eyes are so exotic!” The week before it was a White woman who said she wished she had my skin tone. These comments also come from people I know. I’ll never forget the time a White woman cohort member said, “I want little multiracial babies just like you!” I can’t escape these subtle slights that I encounter on a daily basis.

Hypersexualization, specifically by male peers, has become a very real and prevalent part of my adult student life. Aligning with the literature (Basu, 2010;

Funderburg, 1994; Roberts-Clarke et al., 2004), my forays in dating have been met with feelings of being exoticized and objectified by both White men and men of color (the majority of whom were students alongside me). Ironically, a few days after I began this dissertation, my partner at the time, who was a White male and doctoral student at my institution, told me that I was a liar, a cheater, and untrustworthy. Needless to say, these accusations were unfounded and exposed the racist and sexist beliefs (Jezebel) that those close to me internalize and perpetuate. While dating, I've also been made to feel like a "trophy" or prize, which I attribute to the intersections of my gender and multiraciality, and their proximity to European norms of beauty. The historical and contemporary implications these experiences have had on me as a multiracial woman in a White male-dominated academy are manifold.

I relay these instances with my race, gender, and their intersections to name my own realities as a multiracial woman student, both past and present. Furthermore, all of these instances, sans the encounter with my grandmother, occurred in educational spaces between peers, faculty, staff, and the surrounding campus community. Traversing my education as a multiracial woman has informed who I am personally and professionally. Additionally, as I currently identify as a multiracial woman doctoral student, I acknowledge that all three of these salient identities led me to this research topic, and ultimately the current study.

The above reflection outlines how I view the world, approach this research, and position myself in the study. I acknowledge that my reality is only one of many and may not be the reality of my participants. To remain reflexive in this position throughout the

research process, I kept a research journal. This journal contained my thoughts, opinions, observations, and biases that appeared during data collection and analysis. This research journal ensured that I remain aware of my reality, as well as the reality of study participants. Additionally, referring back to the entries in the journal proved helpful during the analysis of data. For instance, while analyzing the data, I noticed that hypersexualization and/or the Jezebel character did not represent a common reality for the 10 women. When looking to corroborate this realization, I read through the notes I wrote in my journal. One specific note helped me in my analysis. It read, “Women seem to be more concerned and impacted by White women than by hypersexualization and/or men on campus.” Research notes helped me to fill in details that were missing or unclear when I reviewed participants’ narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Research Design

Setting

Midwest University (pseudonym), or MU, is a public 4-year institution located in a small town in the midwest region of the United States. MU is a Research I institution that is highly residential and draws 65% of undergraduate students from in state. In the fall of 2013, undergraduate enrollment was recorded at 30,949 students. Approximately half of these students were women and half were men. White students made up 74% ($n = 22,962$) of the undergraduate student population, whereas 23% ($n = 7,156$) of the student body identified as racial minorities. Within this 23% racial minority student population, 803 students identified with two or more races, approximately half ($n = 450$) of which were women. Therefore 2.6% of the undergraduate student body at MU identified with

two or more races, and 1.5% ($n = 450$) of the undergraduate student body identified as women from two or more races.

MU was founded in 1820 as a seminary for men. In 1838, the seminary transitioned to Midwestern University and quickly became one of the leading institutions of higher education in the state. MU did not begin to admit women until 1867. It would take 52 more years for a woman of color, a Black woman, to graduate from MU with an A.B. in English in 1919. Although the racial diversity on MU's campus slowly increased in the years following 1919, the institution did not offer students of color campus support services until the latter part of the 20th century. For instance, in 1973, both the Latino/a Cultural Center and Black Cultural Center were established. The Asian Cultural Center was established in 1998. There are currently no student support services specifically for multiracial students attending MU.

Sampling and Participants

Purposeful sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009) was utilized to select participants for this study. Purposeful sampling is a sampling method in qualitative research that allows the researcher to select participants that can provide thick, rich descriptions of the phenomena in question (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

Criteria for participation included

1. Individuals must have been currently enrolled undergraduate students at MU and have spent one or more academic semesters at the institution;
2. Individuals must have identified their gender as woman;

3. Individuals must have identified, at some point in their tenure at MU, with two or more racial groups and/or as multiracial.

The first criterion was necessary to ensure that participants had been immersed in the campus environment for one or more semesters, because it was important that they would have had time to experience the institutional context at MU. The second criterion allowed for an explicit focus on multiracial *women* students.

The third criterion aimed to deconstruct the Black/White binary and focus on women who identified with multiple differing races. This study did not control for racial makeup of multiracial participants. In other words, this research did not focus on Black/White biracial students, or multiracial students with one White parent and one parent of color. Instead, the third criterion aimed at a deconstruction of the Black/White binary and focused on women who identified with multiple, differing races. Additionally, as previous research on multiracial identity has suggested, these women may have identified as multiracial in one context, as extraracial in another, and as monoracial in yet another (King, 2011; Renn, 2000, 2003, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunson, 2002, 2008; Wallace, 2001). With this in mind, study participants identified with, whether in the past or in the present, two or more races at some point during their time at MU.

Finally, there is no prescribed number of participants for narrative data collection. Instead, the sample size must relate directly back to the research question(s), be sufficient enough to reflect the overall population (Seidman, 2013), and ensure saturation and redundancy within one's sample population (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore to gain

understanding of the racialized experiences of multiracial women at MU, 10 undergraduate students who met the above criteria were recruited for this study.

After receiving International Review Board (IRB) approval, participants were recruited through campus identity and social justice-based list-servs that were relevant to this research (Appendix A). For example, list-servs for the Latina/o Cultural Center, Native American Cultural Center, and Minority Scholarship programs were utilized. At the same time, snowball sampling, through individual emails, was employed. For snowball sampling, I reached out via email to faculty, staff, and graduate students that I knew personally and asked them to identify individuals who may have an interest in and/or fit the criteria for participation in the research (Appendix B). These faculty, staff, and graduate students were asked to pass on the IRB-approved message and study information sheet to potential participants.

Potential participants were asked to contact me via email if interested in the study. When an individual expressed interest, I sent her an introductory email, which included a short questionnaire (Appendix C). The answers to the questionnaire did three things. First, they helped ensure participants met the study criteria. Second, when individuals met the criteria, the questionnaire helped to guide the beginning of the first interview. For instance, I asked participants why they were drawn to the research. How the participant answered this question guided my approach to and understanding of the first individual interview. Third, the questionnaire acted as a data point, which is explored in more depth below. Once identified, I emailed the pool of participants that met the study criteria to set up the initial interview day and time.

Admittedly, in the beginning of participant recruitment, I aimed to recruit and interview no more than 6 multiracial women. However, I received an overwhelming response to the invitation to participate. Nearly 25 women expressed interest in the research. However, some of these women did not meet the study criteria, and others did not return my emails. In the end, I made the decision to expand my survey and interview all 10 multiracial women who expressed interest in the study, met the criteria, and set up an initial interview with me. This expansion proved advantageous, because a sample of women who reflected an array of racial heritages, backgrounds, and experiences is represented in the final data. More information on the 10 multiracial women in this study is described briefly in Appendix D and in more detail in the next chapter.

Data Collection

Three data points were collected for this research. The main source of data for this research was collected over three different individual interviews with each participant. Prior to conducting interviews with the 10 participants, a pilot interview was conducted with a multiracial woman graduate student who attended MU for undergraduate studies and was currently attending the institution for graduate school. This pilot interview helped me focus the questions I asked future participants. Moreover, the interview allowed me to refine and define what I wanted to get out of the three interviews with the undergraduate participants.

All three interviews were guided by broad, unstructured interview prompts (Appendix E). Each interview served a purpose and gleaned data that were integral and related to answering the research questions at hand. The study's theoretical frameworks

(CRT and CRF), the Campus Climate for Diversity Framework (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999), and extant literature informed all three interviews. Extant literature allowed me to focus in on gaps and already-explored areas in the literature. Because there was a great deal of information on racial identity development, I steered clear of this subject in the interviews. I also identified gaps in the literature, such as multiracial women's experiences with race in the classroom, with administrators, and with romantic partners, that I wanted to explore in the interviews.

Additionally, CRT and CRF reminded me to critically examine the structures that uphold White supremacy, patriarchy, and other oppressive environments for multiracial women (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This call to action also led me to ask participants questions about the multiple components of the institutional context in which multiracial women may encounter their race. In other words, to glean more information about the racialized encounters of multiracial women students, questions regarding institutional structures, such as policies, procedures, and curriculum, were asked.

In order to expand on these institutional structures and context, the Campus Climate for Diversity Framework (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999) was loosely used to guide the prompts for all three interviews. However, the framework was not tested in this study, nor was its utilization related to campus climate at MU. Instead, the framework allowed me to ask questions of participants that got at the ways in which six dimensions of the institutional context may have impacted their racialized experiences. As mentioned earlier and depicted in Figure 1, these six dimensions consist of four

institutional forces: the school's historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion, compositional diversity, psychological climate, and behavioral climate. The other two dimensions taken into consideration—governmental policies and procedures, and sociohistorical factors—represent two external factors that shape the institutional context (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999).

This study does not require an expansive overview of the campus climate framework, because it was only used as a guide to create an interview protocol that captured more systemic issues of race and racism on the college campus. For instance, the framework reminded me to ask questions concerning affirmative action, structural diversity, curriculum, administrators, and peers, to name a few. (To learn more about the framework, refer to Hurtado et al., 1998 and Hurtado et al., 1999.) Additionally, the institutional context and the way in which scholars may critically use this concept in research is explored in more depth in Chapter 7.

The first and final interviews were traditional sit-down interviews. This stationary method of interviewing requires study participants to answer interview questions by recalling prominent experiences from memory. Carpiano (2009) explained, "Participants may more readily access the salient features of their lives during a [sit-down] interview versus discussing the contexts in which their lives play out" (p. 267). Additionally, the nature of the sit-down interview allows for a focus on the dialogue between the researcher and the participant. Whereas the sit-down interview method is a common and informative mode for qualitative data collection, it often separates "informants from their routine experiences and practices in 'natural' environments" (Kusenbach, 2003, p. 462).

This separation may be problematic, specifically when research questions focus on participants' experiences within a specific space, place, and/or time.

Therefore the second interview utilized the go-along or walking interview method. The go-along interview is especially effective when used in conjunction with individual sit-down interviews (Carpiano, 2009). Kusenbach (2003) explained that walking interviews allow researchers "to observe their informants' spatial practices *in situ* while accessing their experiences and interpretations at the same time" (p. 463). The decision to use the walking interview method was simple. The research questions led me to inquire about participants' lived racialized experiences within the campus environment and how environmental structures may have contributed to the multiracial women's experiences with race. These inquiries were teased apart during the walking interview, which examined "a participant's relationship with the environment" (Jones, Bunce, Evans, Gibbs, & Hein, 2008, p. 3). The go-along method provided a unique way for me to observe the campus environment as well as take note of how the 10 multiracial women students, in real time, perceived, navigated, and interacted within these institutional spaces (Carpiano, 2009).

The first (sit-down) interview took place over the last week of March 2014 and first week of April 2014. This interview was open-ended and semi-structured. Utilizing a less formal interview structure allowed participants to define the world in unique ways (Merriam, 2009). Each interview started with a prompt to the effect of, "Tell me a little bit about yourself." From there, I encouraged participants to tell me about their lives prior to MU and how they came to find themselves at the institution. After this foundation was

built, the first interview turned to a focus on the experiences on campus of each multiracial woman . Each initial interview lasted anywhere from 70-110 minutes. At the end of the first interview, I provided participants with a campus map, which would be used during the walking interview. I asked them to look at the map and circle integral spaces and places to their campus experiences. I explained that we would use the map to tour the campus on our second interview. We then set up the time and meeting place for the second (walking) interview and the final (sit-down) interview.

The second (walking) interview took place during the second and third weeks of April 2014. Each woman met me at a designated day and time. All walking interviews left from the same location, at the entrance of a building located on the northeast side of campus. Fortunately, weather never deterred a walking interview. Moreover, to account for this ableist interview method as well as the threat to confidentiality that walking around campus with a graduate student holding a recorder may present, women were welcomed to forego the walking interview. In the end, all 10 women participated in the walking interview over the span of 2 weeks. These interviews lasted 45 to 120 minutes. Again, interview prompts were left intentionally broad so that the campus environment and the participant could narrate the tour. Prompts got at the campus experiences that these multiracial women had at MU, specifically as they related to race, gender, and institutional structures. Furthermore, I asked questions in the second interview that built on and/or clarified information that was shared during the first interview. After the analysis of data, it was evident that the walking interview was especially advantageous at getting at the women's experiences with the peer environment at MU and more

specifically, their interactions with Whiteness within this environment. This reality is further explored in Chapters 5 and 7.

The final (sit-down) interview took place the fourth week of April and the first 2 weeks of May 2014. This final interview lasted anywhere from 30 to 70 minutes with each participant. The purpose of the interview was to clarify any lingering thoughts and/or questions I had for the participants. I asked questions in this final interview that pertained to the codes and themes that emerged from the data from the first and second interviews. I also shared the emerging codes and potential themes with participants and asked for their thoughts and feedback on my analysis. This final interview allowed me to delve in even deeper with participants and afforded me the ability to gain a thicker description of their experiences with race at MU.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The first and final interviews were sent out for transcription, whereas I transcribed the second, walking interview. The sit-down interviews took place on the MU campus in a public, centrally located building. However, the room within the building was in a private setting so that the participant felt comfortable talking freely with me. Finally, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Seidman (2013) pointed out the possible power structures between the researcher and the participant. For instance, a researcher and a participant may be of varying races, genders, and/or religions, implying different degrees of power in the research situation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These power dynamics may not be able to be mitigated, but they can and should be acknowledged by the researcher. To help address these power relations, an informal, conversational approach was used for

both interviews. Moreover, by allowing participants to control walking interview routes, and subsequently the interview, this method helped to alleviate power dynamics that inherently exist between researchers and participants (Kusenbach, 2003). I wrote in my research journal:

The walking interviews were amazing because I was able to step back as the researcher and let the participant guide the entirety of the interview. They told me, or rather showed me what was salient to their lives on campus....It was as if I was merely a visiting friend they were showing around campus.

Through the walking interview, a more balanced relationship was built between the participant and me. I was on her “turf” rather than in an interview room, which may have been perceived as my “turf.”

My field journal, which contained field notes taken throughout the research process, was used as a second data point. “Field texts assist memory to fill in the richness, nuance, and intricacy of the lived stories and the landscape” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 80). This journal encompassed my notes from interviews and the analysis process as well as my thoughts from the reflexivity process I embarked on throughout data collection.

Finally, participants filled out two questionnaires that were used as the third and final data point. The first questionnaire helped me identify whether or not participants met the study criteria (Appendix C). Within this questionnaire, participants were asked why they were interested in participating in the study and in what ways they had previously thought about their race on campus. The resulting answers from this questionnaire acted as another data point and provided context and background for the beginning of the first individual interview. The second questionnaire was given to each of

the 10 women during the final interview (Appendix F). The questionnaire asked for demographic data as well as information that proved important to this research throughout the interviews. For example, the majority of women in this study mentioned that skin color played a large role in their experiences with race at MU. Therefore this final questionnaire asked, “How would you describe yourself phenotypically? (e.g., light skin, olive skin, etc.)?” The final questionnaire enhanced my understanding of how these women identified racially, spiritually, ethnically, and more.

Data Analysis

During and following the collection of the narratives of the 10 multiracial women students at MU, I conducted a thematic analysis (Riessman, 2007) informed by narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The thematic analysis focused on content across individuals’ narratives, rather than (re)constructing life histories (Riessman, 2007). Scholars “who use thematic narrative analysis, are not generally interested in the form of the narrative, only its thematic meanings and ‘point’” (Riessman, 2007, p. 62). This research was concerned with themes and meanings within the multiracial women’s racialized experiences, rather than reconstructing their encounters with race. Therefore Fraser’s (2004) Phases of Line-By-Line Narrative Analysis was used to conduct a thematic analysis of the qualitative data. The five phases of analysis this research followed included (a) hearing the stories, (b) transcription, (c) memo writing, (d) interpretation of the transcriptions, and (e) examining commonalities and differences between participants.

Hearing the Stories

Data analysis began with a reflection on each interview. Particular attention was paid to the emotions, actions, and behaviors of the interviewee and the interviewer. Reflecting on the interview provided context for the meanings being made during data collection and at the start of analysis. To remain reflexive and cognizant of the interpretations made through the interactions of the participants and me, a reflective, handwritten research journal was utilized. I reflected and wrote after each interview throughout the three rounds of interviews. Therefore the reflection process was continual.

Transcription of the Data

The first and third interviews were transcribed by a transcription service within 1 week of each interview. I feared that the transcription service would not be able to capture the observations, gestures, and behaviors of the participants during the walking interview, therefore I decided to transcribe the second interviews. These transcripts were turned around within 48 hours of the walking tours. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Pauses, silences, and fillers, such as “um, uh, huh,” were included in the raw data because they might imply meaning (Fraser, 2004). Interview transcripts were sent to each participant to check for accuracy.

Analytical Memo Writing

Saldaña (2009) urged researchers to use analytic memo writing that lends toward reflection and documentation of the emerging patterns found in the data. After each interview was transcribed—the first and final by a transcription service and the second by me—I read through each individual transcript and wrote memos in the margins of the

documents. Memo writing allowed me to make sense of the data I was collecting. It afforded me the ability to write thoughts, hypotheses, and/or questions that helped me tease through the data and guide me toward next steps and questions in the research process. For instance, while I made memos on the first set of transcripts, individual codes for multiracial microaggressions emerged, such as “the denial of multiracial identity” and “being forced to choose.” While making memos across the 30 transcripts, I brought together these five individual codes under the one theme of “multiracial microaggressions.”

Analytical memos also helped me address inconsistencies in the data within and across participants. Throughout all three interviews, I made notes of observed contradictions in my research journal and addressed these contradictions in subsequent interviews with participants. For instance, several of the women mentioned that they had not experienced prejudice and/or discrimination on the basis of their race at MU. They would then relay, in the same interview, an instance of prejudice or discrimination that upset them or that they noticed. Re-reading the transcripts, I recognized inconsistencies, cross-referenced them with my researcher field notes, and followed up on the contradictions with each woman.

Analytical memos written in the margins of the first interview transcripts helped to guide the prompts and discussions for the second interview. I made a conscious decision not to start a coding list until the analytical memos were conducted for the second interview. Therefore emerging codes did not drive the focus of the second interview. Instead, my memos and notes as well as my journal allowed for a deeper

exploration of the women's narratives in the second interview. A more formal coding process began at the end of analytical memo writing for the second interview transcripts.

Interpretation of Individual Transcripts

CRT and CRF informed the interpretation of the data. However, I made a conscious decision that these frameworks not inform the analysis of data in an a priori manner. Therefore codes informed by CRT and CRF were not decided on prior to the analysis of the data. Instead, the two theories sensitized my analysis of the research. While combing through the transcripts, I continually questioned how the data and the emerging codes related back to CRT and CRF. Some of the questions I asked myself while coding included

- What were some of the ways in which the multiracial women encountered the endemic nature of racism on campus?
- How did dominant ideologies, such as colorblindness, meritocracy, and post-racialism appear in the narratives of these women?
- In what spaces and places did the women experience an intersection of both their race and their gender?
- What was the role of Whiteness in the experiences of the 10 multiracial women at MU?

These questions overlaid the analysis of the data, allowing the emerging codes to be interpreted through understandings of CRT and CRF. This process proved very useful when it came time to analyzing the themes through a CRT and CRF lens. Because these

theories informed the data analysis process, they were more easily teased apart and interrogated in a theoretical analysis informed by CRT and CRF.

With CRT and CRF informing my analysis, I embarked on line-by-line coding of each transcript. The coding process took place by hand and all codes were kept on an excel worksheet. The analytical memos that already existed in the margins of each transcript were helpful in the initial coding process. In vivo codes were used to identify codes *within* each individual transcript. In vivo coding is best used in “studies that prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 74). This strategy of coding allowed for participants’ voices to speak through the data rather than having preexisting structures determine the findings of the research. Moreover, my field notes were particularly helpful in this and the final stage of the analysis process. This is because I often identified a code after reading a transcript or set of transcripts that mentioned a phenomenon multiple times. To make sure this was an appropriate code as well as find (or jog my memory) other participants who talked about the same phenomenon, I referred back to my research notes. For example, while reading all the transcripts, I identified “beauty” as a code. Looking back in my research journal, I saw that beauty, specifically as it related to Whiteness, was a major topic on the walking interviews. Therefore the research journal pointed me toward participants’ quotations that could be utilized from the second set of interviews as well as led me to interrogate why the walking interview was particularly relative to beauty.

After the second interview, I embarked on a cyclical coding process (Saldaña, 2009) and coded each individual transcript three times. Fifty-nine codes emerged from a

thematic analysis *within* and *across* the first two sets of 10 interview transcripts (20 transcripts in total). Codes began to form within individual transcripts, but they were brought to life and given more weight when all transcripts were cross-analyzed. The initial list of 59 codes was used to help generate prompts for the final interview. The final coding process and the generating of themes are described below in the final step of Fraser's (2004) line-by-line analysis.

Examining Commonalities and Differences

The final phase of data analysis involved focusing on the similarities and differences in the codes that emerged from a thematic analysis *across* all three rounds of interviews (Fraser, 2004). I coded the final interview transcripts in the same manner as the first two. After the final interview took place, the codes from the interpretation of all 30 transcripts were "clustered together for analysis" (Fraser, 2004, p. 194) giving way to broader themes that stretched *across* the data. I continued to explore the anomalies and inconsistencies throughout this phase of data analysis, which strengthened the trustworthiness of the study's findings.

The final cyclical coding process allowed me to narrow the codes in this research from 59 to 29 codes. I then clustered these more tailored codes together to produce themes. Four broad themes emerged from a thematic analysis of the data, including (a) racial stereotypes, (b) multiracial microaggressions, (c) Whiteness, and (d) coping. To further understand how these themes were generated, please refer to Appendix G for my coding map.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers often call into question the usefulness of validity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Seidman, 2013). Instead, the concept of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which includes credibility and dependability, is utilized to confirm participants' stories. Within this study, I used several strategies to increase trustworthiness. First, I employed member checking, which is one of "the most crucial techniques for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). After the transcription of all three interviews, I asked participants to review raw data for accuracy. Individually, I sent participants their three transcripts and asked them to review the documents. Additionally, after the final interview, I wrote up and summarized the initial themes I found in the data. I then sent these summaries to participants, who were asked for feedback on the four themes generated from the data analysis. "This strategy of revealing research materials to the informants ensures that the researcher has accurately translated the informants' viewpoints into data" (Krefting, 1991, p. 219). About half of the participants read and responded to these summaries.

In response to transcripts, the women responded via email with "thank you" and "looks interesting!" In response to the emerging themes, participants were a bit more vocal. A majority of the women agreed with what was being found in the data. Five women agreed with the findings and reflected on how this study and my questions made them more cognoscente of their race on campus. Interestingly, the women had more to say about what *was not* found than what was found. They explained that perhaps the Jezebel and Tragic Mulatta were not issues on campus because race is no longer a factor,

and/or the multiracial movement has changed the way people see multiraciality in America. These statements amongst others added to my growing realization that my participants adopted dominant ideologies of colorblindness and post-racial ideology. This realization is explored more in-depth in the findings chapter of this dissertation.

Providing a rich, thick description of participants and findings was another approach used for establishing credibility. Rich, thick description refers “to a highly descriptive, detailed presentation of the setting and in particular, the findings of a study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 227). This detailed account was achieved by supporting findings with participants’ quotations, describing the setting in depth, and providing comprehensive accounts of each participant (Merriam, 2009).

Peer debriefing was also employed to establish trustworthiness throughout the research process. This strategy allowed peers, both close to and removed from the research, to offer comments, thoughts, and suggestions on the research findings (Merriam, 2009). Peer debriefing took place in several manners. First, because this research was conducted for a dissertation, peer reviewing was built into the committee review process. Four professors reviewed and offered feedback on the findings and analysis of this research. Second, a White male whom I trusted and believed to be critical and invested in educational equity reviewed Chapters 5 and 6 and offered suggestions. It was helpful to acquire feedback from an individual removed from the research. Third and finally, an Afro-Latina woman colleague and I spent several hours talking about the themes that were generated from my analysis of the data. Talking through this process with a woman who knew a great amount about this study, both through her own research

interests and her lived experiences, proved advantageous. She offered several suggestions for enhancing the findings and the overall study. For example, she urged me to look at (and sent me) literature that connected phenotype, specifically being a lighter-skinned person of color, and one's aptitude to adopt a post-racial ideology. This suggestion helped me explain why women described incidents with racism, but did not explicitly acknowledge it.

Triangulation of the qualitative data sources was also useful in adding trustworthiness to this research (Denzin, 1989). By comparing and combining the information that stemmed from divergent data sources, this research explored varying aspects of the 10 multiracial women's racialized experiences at MU (Denzin, 1989). Comparing data from the three qualitative interviews, the researcher reflexivity journal, researcher observations, and the two questionnaires exposed consistency and anomalies across the participants' narratives. Contradictions that arose from the triangulation of the data were not alarming. Instead, they provided more nuanced understandings of the data and contributed to the overall credibility of the research. For instance, several of the women referred to themselves as both multiracial and monoracial throughout the interviews and on the questionnaires. When looking more intricately at these data sources, it was apparent that these multiracial women's race was fluid, but that they also identified with certain racial identities in certain spaces. Triangulating these inconsistencies exposed more intricate stories within the qualitative data that are explored in the findings.

Finally, reflexivity was employed throughout the research process in a journal to ensure this study's trustworthiness. I kept a journal throughout the research process that detailed my thoughts, feelings, and observations of the research. All five of these strategies, providing thick descriptions, member checking, peer debriefing, triangulation, and reflexivity, enhanced the trustworthiness of this research.

Limitations

Several strategies were included in this study to increase trustworthiness. However, this research is not devoid of limitations. First, the 10 participants included in this dissertation were self-selected. Therefore the women may have participated in the research because they had something to say, whether good or bad, about multiraciality and MU. This bias may have obscured the experiences of the multiracial women who did not think about or have much to say about race on campus. Furthermore, snowball sampling may have influenced a community bias, where multiracial women knew and/or referred one another from the same organizations, classes, and/or activities on campus. Although some of the women were in the same organizations, only one participant mentioned another participant by name. In general, women came to this research from all over campus, bringing different interests, majors, and experiences.

Another limitation of this study surrounds the concept of intersectionality. First, the question of how multiracial women students experienced their race guided this research. The ways in which gender impacted these racialized experiences was a secondary question. It is possible that this ordering, the impact of race *and then* gender, hierarchically consigns these identities to two separate realms of importance. Second,

whereas the intersectionality of race and gender is accounted for in this study, other identities that fall outside of these paradigms are not a focus of the research. Socioeconomic status, age, ability, and other social identities may have impacted these women's experiences with race in college, but are not teased apart in this study. Moreover, the 10 multiracial women had divergent backgrounds when it came to racial heritage, religion, and relationship status, but other characteristics, such as sexuality, social class, and age were homogenous factors in participants' demographics. (Women were given the option to write in their sexuality, social class, age, and more on the demographic questionnaire. These answers led me to classify demographics across participants as homogenous. See Appendices C and D).

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the research design that exposed 10 multiracial women students' experiences with race at a PWI. Critical qualitative analysis and narrative inquiry were detailed. The process for data collection and analysis were also shared. Finally, this chapter closed with the procedures followed to ensure and enhance trustworthiness in the study. Next, Chapter 4 presents detailed profiles of the 10 multiracial women who participated in this research.

CHAPTER 4. PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Description of the Multiracial Women Participants

The profiles of 10 multiracial women undergraduate students attending MU are detailed in this chapter. Each profile sheds light on where these women grew up, how they came to enroll at MU, and their overall experiences at the institution thus far. (All participants, organizations, and other identifiers are given pseudonyms in this chapter and throughout the remainder of the dissertation.)

Jenna Ali, First Year, “Half Black/Multicultural”

Jenna was born in a small town about one hour west of MU. Jenna and her older brother were both born with “Waardenburgs' syndrome (or plebaldism) with white forelock and white spots.” Waardenburgs' syndrome is a rare genetic disorder that may cause deafness, facial abnormalities, and/or varying pigmentation in the hair, eyes, and skin. Jenna described that the syndrome only caused her to have “spotted” skin and hair pigmentation.

At the time of her birth, both of Jenna’s parents were employed as professors at the state university located in the small town in which she was born. When talking about her parents’ backgrounds, Jenna explained, “My dad’s Black, and my mom is White. And my dad...so he’s Muslim but I’m not really, but I’m not Arab at all but my name is.”

Jenna does not identify with a religion, but her father's religious beliefs impact Jenna's values. For instance, Jenna does not drink because her father does not drink.

In first grade, Jenna's family moved to the town in which MU is located. Because Jenna grew up in the same place she went to college, she lovingly referred to herself as a "Townie." She grew up in a predominantly White, upper class environment. Jenna explained that due to this environment, she was not "considered Black" by her friends, except when it came to her curly hair. Therefore, Jenna did not identify as Black, but she did not identify as White either. She considered herself extra-racial, or "I feel like I'm not anything."

Jenna did not want to go to college, but her parents pushed her toward "college, college, college" because they were university professors. Jenna did not want to leave her town, so she set her sights on MU and immediately enrolled at the institution when she was accepted. During her first year at MU, Jenna made the short trip home to see her parents often.

At the time of the interviews, Jenna was still dating her boyfriend from high school, who was a White male, a "Townie," and an MU student. She was currently living on campus but had plans to move off campus to an expensive apartment complex for her second year at MU. Jenna was also a member of Upward Scholars. The mission of the MU Upward Scholars program is to support students with exceptional records of academic achievement, leadership, and a passion for inclusivity that add to the diversity of the student body on campus. Upward Scholars is both an academic and a scholarship program. Jenna was still not convinced that college, with all of its structure, was for her,

but she continued to challenge herself as a neuroscience major and planned to join the MU orientation team during her second year.

Monica Cruz, Junior, “Biracial”

Monica Cruz was born and raised in a small town in northern Indiana by a White woman and two older sisters. Monica’s father, who was Black, died when Monica was 18 months old. She explained that she grew up poor and “did not come from much.” Monica made it a point to express that her White mother raised her to be a Black woman.

Monica’s mother also raised her to be a Muslim, but Monica no longer practices nor identifies with Islam. She included that she is very close to her mother.

During her early education, Monica attended institutions that were predominantly White. However, in high school, she transferred to a public institution that was more racially diverse. At this high school, Monica’s peers taunted her for being White. However, Monica relayed that she rarely encountered Black peers’ telling her she was not Black enough. She was proud of being biracial and believed it gave her the ability to navigate several different cultures.

Monica did not plan to attend MU. She wanted to go far from home for college, but in the end, she enrolled at MU because the institution offered her a great deal of money. In fact, she exclaimed that MU practically paid for her to attend the university. Monica got married while attending MU. In the first interview, her husband, who she had known since high school, and she had just filed for divorce. He was also an MU student.

Prior to attending MU, Monica knew she wanted to major in social work. She was passionate about the field and appreciated the amount of critical thinking and diverse

curriculum that was included in her academic program. Through her social work classes, she became involved with the Diversity Awareness Office (DAO) on campus. Monica spent the majority of her time in DAO, which was located in the Black Cultural Center (BCC) at MU. Monica was also a part of Upward Scholars and the Sexual Assault Prevention group at MU. She was heavily involved on campus and had enjoyed her time at MU.

Gabrielle Johnson, Senior, “Mixed-Race”

Gabrielle was born and raised in a northwest suburb of Chicago, Illinois. Her father is Black and her mother is White. She identifies as “mixed-race” as well as “African American and White.” Interestingly, Gabrielle was almost always assumed to be a Latina woman, not mixed race, not White, or Black. Gabrielle has one sibling, an older sister, who also attended MU as an undergraduate. Her older sister took a job at MU after graduation, and the two saw a lot of one another throughout Gabrielle’s tenure at the institution.

The Chicago suburb that Gabrielle grew up in was predominantly White. Both of her parents worked during her childhood, so she grew up with nannies, all of whom were White. Her parents both retired when Gabrielle was 14, allowing them to stay home with her after school and on weekends. She explained that she remains very close to both of her parents. Gabrielle’s family is middle class, but her mother received a large inheritance when her father (Gabrielle’s grandfather) passed away. Subsequently, Gabrielle grew up in a wealthy White neighborhood and attended one of the best-ranked high schools in the state of Illinois.

Gabrielle relayed that she did not “notice my race when I was little.” Her parents did not talk to her about race or about being mixed-race. However, Gabrielle explained that when her older sister went to college, she would come back home for holiday breaks and bring up topics that concerned race at the dining table. This is when Gabrielle and her family began to speak about race. In the first interview, Gabrielle pointed out that ever since the Civil Rights Movement, race is not a big deal in America. Therefore, she fights more for gender equity, identifies as a feminist, and believes her gender is often more prevalent in her experiences than her race.

MU was not Gabrielle’s top choice for college, but in the end, she chose the institution so she could be close to her sister. She also felt like the school reached out and recruited her through the Minority Visitation Program (MVP). MVP is an overnight program that brings admitted racial minority students to MU for a weekend visit. Participants of the program get a glimpse of life at the institution by spending time with current students, staying in a residence hall, meeting other admitted students, and more. Gabrielle said that MVP helped her feel comfortable about her choice to enroll at MU.

During her 4 years at MU, Gabrielle became heavily involved with MVP and the office that is in charge of the program, the Minority Recruitment Office (MRO). She was one of the lead student coordinators in the office and claimed “MRO is my community.” Gabrielle relayed that she loved her time at MU because she had a diverse community that she found through MRO. At the time of the last interview, Gabrielle was set to graduate in May 2014 with degrees in Criminal Justice and Sociology. She had plans to move back to Chicago and attend law school.

Jane Lau, Third Year Senior, “African, Arawak Indian, German, White, a Bit of Chinese”

Jane was born in the Dutch Caribbean but moved with her family to the suburbs of Chicago at the age of 2. Jane’s mother is White (Swedish, French, and English) and an American citizen, and her father is “African, Arawak Indian, German, and a bit Chinese” and a native islander of the Dutch Caribbean. Jane and her two older brothers were homeschooled by their mother until 6th grade. In 6th grade, Jane entered a mainstream private school. She explained that the transition to this school was very rough because, all of the sudden, she was surrounded by other students, all of whom were White.

The White girls in Jane’s 6th grade classroom taunted her, ignored her, and bullied her. She was made to feel “weird” and different. Jane’s experiences with White students, specifically White women, did not get better in high school. She was continually “belittled” because of her non-White hair and middle class status. Although she eventually found a small group of “outcast” women to call friends, Jane expressed that braving her childhood environment took a toll on her self-esteem. She relayed that she never quite got over growing up with the “girls who are so much more beautiful than me because they fit in....They were beautiful because boys really, really like them.” Jane said she puts on an air of confidence, but that on the inside, she still struggles with the belittling experiences of her childhood.

Jane’s parents expected her to continue on with college after high school. She had her heart set on another institution, but it was far too expensive to attend. In the end, MU was the school that gave her the most money via three different scholarships, including

an Upward Scholars scholarship. While at MU, Jane worked three jobs and took summer school and online classes so she could complete her degree in 3 years. She did this for financial reasons so that she would only have to pay 3 years and not 4 years of tuition, fees, and other expenses. Although Jane made great friends at MU, she was not involved in many extracurricular activities. Her jobs, homework, and visiting her serious boyfriend at another institution took up a great deal of time.

Vanessa Ortiz, Junior, “Mexican/Black American”

Vanessa Ortiz was born to a Mexican mother and Black father and was raised in a large city in central Indiana. Vanessa’s parents are now divorced, and her mother is remarried to a man who has Black and White racial heritage. Vanessa did not grow up with her biological father and remains close to her mother. However, she explained that she identifies more with Blackness because she looks more Black, can’t speak Spanish, and did not grow up experiencing Mexican culture.

Vanessa grew up in a racially diverse community and had friends from all different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Her high school was predominantly Black. Vanessa asserted that she did not experience racism or talk much about race because she was from such a diverse community. However when she arrived at MU, she said it was a “rude awakening” to be surrounded by “a lot of White people.”

Growing up, “it was a given” that Vanessa would go to college after graduating from high school. Vanessa always knew that she wanted to attend MU because several family members attended the institution. She was also drawn to the institution’s Journalism School. Vanessa knew from a very young age that she wanted to study

journalism. Once she was admitted to MU, she participated in MRO's MVP weekend. During that weekend, Vanessa knew she had made the right decision to attend MU. She also knew that she wanted to become involved in MRO once she arrived on campus in the fall.

Once on campus, Vanessa did become involved with MRO, but she did not stop there. She held a lead role in organizing both the National Association of Black Journalists and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists at MU. She was also involved in the Sexual Assault Prevention group. She held an off-campus job at a nearby restaurant. During the final interview, Vanessa was readying for a school-sponsored trip to Kenya. She planned to return to MU in the fall of 2014 to complete her final year at the institution.

Elizabeth Ramos, Sophomore, "Biracial (Caucasian and Latina/Hispanic)"

Elizabeth Ramos was born in California to a White mother and a Mexican father. She has two younger sisters. Elizabeth grew up in California surrounded by both her mother and father's family. She proclaimed that her early childhood was extremely diverse and full of divergent cultural experiences. During her formative years, Elizabeth's father commuted between Nevada and California for work. His commute and the time he spent away from the family took a toll on Elizabeth's mother who decided to move the family out to Nevada when Elizabeth was in elementary school.

Living in Nevada was a different experience for Elizabeth. She said that she did not know what racism was until she arrived in Nevada. Whereas she found a diverse friend group in her neighborhood and throughout most of her education, this changed

during her final years of high school. She joined an accelerated academic program that was made up of predominantly White students. Elizabeth expressed that she did not notice how White the program was until it came time to apply for colleges. She relayed that the White students in the program believed the students of color in the program would only get into elite colleges because of affirmative action policies.

From the beginning, Elizabeth's parents stressed the importance of education, therefore, college was a given. When it came time to apply to institutions, Elizabeth looked for schools with top business and entrepreneur programs. She applied to seven different colleges and decided to enroll in the institution that accepted her and gave her the most money. In the end, MU was the institution that accepted Elizabeth, made her feel wanted and valued, and provided her with a full ride. Prior to attending MU, Elizabeth almost exclusively identified as Mexican, Latina, and/or Hispanic. However during her first year in college, she began to identify with more than one racial heritage.

Elizabeth, who was a sophomore at the time this research took place, was heavily involved at MU. She was a business major and spent a great deal of time in the Business School, which is top ranked at MU. Like other women in this research, she was involved in Upward Scholars and was a member of MRO. She expressed that she loved MRO because the group of students it attracted were "accepting." Finally, Elizabeth was the only woman in this research that was involved in a Greek letter organization at MU. Though, she claimed that her sorority was unlike other sororities on campus in that it was dedicated to diversity, multiculturalism, and service.

Marlaya Raza, Senior, “White/Pakistani”

Marlaya is from a small town located in central Indiana. Her mother is White and her father is Pakistani. She has one older brother and a younger sister and brother.

Marlaya grew up feeling that she was closer to her mother, but after her parents divorced when she was a child, Marlaya began to spend more one-on-one time with her father.

Although she never felt like her father shared much Pakistani culture with her, it was an identity that she continued to identify with.

Marlaya described the Indiana community she grew up in as “incredibly non-diverse,” with about “97 to 98% White people.” Her family was one of two non-White families in the town. However, Marlaya asserted that she never experienced prejudice or discrimination on the basis of her identity while growing up in Indiana. In fact, she relayed, “I just kind of like grouped myself in with that [White community] because...there was not anybody like, pushing us to the outsiders.” Marlaya went on to explain that she sometimes forgot about her Pakistani side in such a White community.

When it came to the college search process, Marlaya was determined not to attend MU. She saw it as a backup school. However, in the end, “it came down to financial aid.” Marlaya received a large scholarship from MU, making it hard to pass up the opportunity to go to college for such a low cost. Although the institution was her backup school, Marlaya expressed that she did not regret her decision to attend the school because she was happy at MU.

Throughout her 4 years at MU, Marlaya became involved in the Taekwondo Club. She said that the Club made up her largest friend group and that it drew students from all

different backgrounds and heritages. Marlaya also took her major, Computer Science and Telecommunications, very seriously. She met great students and professors through her academic courses. At the time of the last interview, Marlaya was set to graduate in May 2014 and had already lined up a full-time job with a software company.

Sarah Richardson, First Year, “Mixed/Caribbean”

Sarah was born and raised on the Caribbean island of Saint Martin. She explained that she is a “mix of mixes” because both of her parents are from mixed racial backgrounds. She used the term “mulatto” to describe both of her grandfathers who married women with Caribbean, Spanish, and Latin American heritage. Sara often referred to herself as Black while in the United States and relayed that people assumed her to be Latina. Her parents divorced while Sara was young. Both of her parents are remarried, her mother to a White American man and her father to a Romanian woman.

Sarah attended a Dutch school in the West Indies until 3rd grade but transferred to an American school in 4th grade. She grew up learning American culture and not knowing “any history at all about my island.” Sarah explained that there were practically no White people that attended her school and that the first time she saw “pink skin” was when she met her future stepfather. Furthermore, she described the community she grew up in as mixed and racially diverse. Sarah posited that race was not a topic of conversation on the Island because everyone was mixed up with all sorts of races and cultures.

Sara moved to America to attend MU. She said that there was no choice in the matter of moving to the Midwest or in what institution she would attend for college. Her stepfather, who lived in the state in which MU was located, told Sara she had to move to

that state and attend MU. Throughout the three interviews, Sarah talked at length about the culture clash she experienced during her first year at the institution and in the Midwest. Admittedly, being surrounded by White people who she was “not really good with” was hard for her. She did, however, plan to continue on for a second year at MU. Sarah spoke briefly about being involved with MRO and Upward Scholars. She said that the few friends she made during her first year at MU were made through both of these programs.

Vivian Rock, Junior, “Japanese and English”

Vivian Rock arrived at MU by way of a small suburb to the northwest of Chicago, Illinois. Her mother is Japanese and her father, “ethnically speaking,” is English. Vivian grew up attending Japanese School on Saturdays. She grew up in a predominantly White environment where the majority of families with whom she interacted were upper class. Vivian described her family’s socioeconomic status as middle class. While in high school, she worked at an upscale country club in her neighborhood. Vivian said that she experienced a very sexist and racist environment while working at the country club, but that it paid well so she stuck with it.

College was a given for Vivian. Both of her parents are doctors and therefore pushed Vivian toward higher education. Vivian applied to several schools in the Midwest, and in the end chose MU. She decided on the institution because it had a great marketing program, which was what she wanted to major in; she could drive home; and MU gave her the most money in scholarships.

After describing why she picked MU, Vivian mentioned that she wished she had researched the “social aspect” of the institution before enrolling. She did not expect that MU would be such a “party school” that was centered on Greek life. This party culture was especially apparent to Vivian as a resident assistant (RA) at MU. Vivian applied and took the job as an RA her sophomore and junior years to help pay for school. However, being an RA made her feel a bit “detached” from students and campus life, because she did not want to party and put her position at risk. Vivian also explained that her focus on academics and getting good grades made her an outlier on campus. Looking back on her time at MU, Vivian wished she had become more involved.

Georgia Wolfe, First Year, “Asian America and Native American”

Georgia grew up in a large city in Indiana with her Asian mother, Native American father, and two younger brothers. She grew up as a “daddy’s girl” but had more recently grown closer to her mother. She also grew up surrounded by her mother’s side of the family, which included several of her aunts and her cousins whom she is close to. Her father’s side of the family did not live near the city she grew up in. Therefore Georgia felt that she did not have as much cultural knowledge about the Native American aspect of her heritage. Georgia grew up in a community that was made up of predominantly White and Black individuals. She was often one of the only Asian students, besides her cousins, in social and academic spaces.

College was a given for Georgia. Like so many other participants in this research, MU offered Georgia the most money through the Upward Scholars scholarship. The financial aid was hard to pass up, so Georgia enrolled at MU immediately. When she

arrived at the institution, she was surprised by the racial makeup of the student body. It was the first time that she was not the only Asian student. In fact, Georgia posited that Asians, both domestic and international, were a majority population at MU. Due to this, Georgia often identified as Native American to stand out in the sea of White and Asian students. However, Georgia was disappointed by the lack of scholarships MU offered to the few Native American students on campus.

At the end of her first year, Georgia had not yet become involved on campus. She explained that this might have had to do with her leaving campus often to see her boyfriend, who is also mixed-race, at a college located approximately two hours north of the MU campus. Georgia hoped to be more involved and feel more connected to the institution during her second year at MU.

Chapter Summary

Several similarities and differences emerged across the lives and experiences of the participants in this research. For example, the multiracial women explored different co-curricular and extra-curricular activities offered on campus, such as MRO, Upward Scholars, Orientation, and the National Journal of Hispanic Scholars. They were also drawn to an array of academic majors, including business, social work, journalism, and neuroscience. Their interests, both academic and social, spanned across the MU campus.

Participants also brought an array of racial identities and subsequently realities to this research. The women represented several different racial/ethnic backgrounds, including Arawak, Native American, Japanese, and Pakistani. Additionally, the manner in which women racially identified exposed the intricacies within multiracial identity. For

instance, Jenna and Monica both had White mothers and Black fathers, but Jenna claimed a “half Black” racial identity, whereas Monica identified as “biracial.” Each woman came from a divergent background, both racially and otherwise, which allowed for a focus on the complexities of intersecting identities.

One final noteworthy difference amongst the 10 participants concerned the communities they grew up in. Whereas a majority of the women were born and raised in the Midwest, 2 were raised in the Caribbean, and 1 participant came to MU via the West Coast. The nuances of each community, regardless of location, were distinct and impactful for each participant. For example, several participants were raised in upper class, predominantly White communities. The women who grew up in these communities spoke noticeably less about the White environment at MU. Several of the other women grew up in racially diverse communities (which they identified as such) and were more apt to comment on the White environment at MU.

Similarities also existed across the 10 multiracial participants. All of the women identified as heterosexual, were traditional-aged college students (18 to 22), and lived on campus at some point during their time at MU. Only one woman was a first generation college student, and the majority of the participants expressed how college was a given, not an option. Furthermore, when it came time to choose a college, almost all of the participants chose MU because the institution offered them the most money through scholarships. All but 2 participants were at MU on scholarship(s).

Above, it was mentioned that participants’ racial identities diverged from one another. Although this remains true, they also shared similarities surrounding their race.

For instance, a majority of the participants identified their mothers as White and their fathers as non-White. All 10 participants identified as lighter skinned (Appendix D). On the final written questionnaire, the women described their phenotype as light skin, olive, the perfect tan, and so on. Participants' light phenotype may have informed their assumptions that all multiracial women, themselves included, were lighter skinned. This assumption is apparent and explored further in Chapter 5. Finally, the similarities and differences of participants provide a balance for understanding the intricacies of the multiracial women's experiences with race at MU.

Chapter 4 introduced the reader to the 10 multiracial women students who were involved in this research. Each profile aimed to provide an introduction to the participant, her journey to MU, and brief thoughts about her time at the institution. Next, Chapter 5 explains in detail the themes that emerged from a thematic analysis of the narratives of the 10 women involved in this research.

CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings that were produced from a thematic analysis of the narratives of 10 multiracial women undergraduate students attending MU. To answer this study's research questions, Chapter 5 presents four broad themes: (a) "Should I order fried chicken?": multiracial women and racial stereotypes; (b) "I am biracial so it may not hit me the same way": multiracial microaggressions; (c) "Terrible for your self-esteem": manifestations of Whiteness; and (d) "Just get yourself involved, girl": coping with racialized experiences. These themes and the sub-themes within them are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they intricately intersect with one another to describe the racialized experiences of 10 multiracial women students.

"Should I Order Fried Chicken?": Multiracial Women and Racial Stereotypes

The first theme presented in this research is racial stereotypes. Racial stereotypes are an integral component of the racial formation project in the United States (Omi & Winant, 1986). "Racial stereotypes lead people to a series of unsubstantiated beliefs" (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 62) about how certain racial groups and individuals should behave, operate, and exist within U.S. society. Though racial stereotypes are socially constructed and therefore not based in fact, they continue to be a very real part of society.

The women in this study talked about their understandings of stereotypes as they related to racialized groups on campus, and how they perceived these "unsubstantiated

beliefs” impacted students at MU. Sarah spoke generally about the presence and influence of racial stereotypes on campus:

I feel like some people here [at MU] have looked to their stereotypes. Like, I feel like Asian people are pressured here to actually be smart. Like, I feel like White girls here...they actually do fall into the stereotype. I don't know if it's their fault or not, but they all have blonde hair and wear shorts, they all just, I don't know, they all just seem alike to me. And even African Americans, like they either have to be athletic or some of them are just like ghetto people. Even if they may not truly be like that, they feel like they have to follow the societal code. And I don't know, I think they just act that way because that is what people expect them to do.

In another interview, Sarah added more to her thoughts on the “societal code” of stereotypes:

They [Americans] live by what they hear, which is, “Oh, stereotype, you must stay in stereotype groups. Oh, you are this, you must abide by this.”...I mean, a stereotype is just for no reason, because that's how a group of people were studied and that's how they concluded the stereotype, but you don't have to live up to it. I mean, stereotypes are true, but I don't know.

Within the first quotation, Sarah explored how the stereotypes she observed at MU dictated to students how they should act, behave, and dress on the basis of race. Within the second quote, Sarah grappled further with the tensions between the societal construction of stereotypes and her perceptions of MU students' confirming these racial stereotypes. These perceptions and the endemic nature of racial stereotypes at MU were present across the multiracial women's narratives. During analysis, three sub-themes of stereotypes emerged within the larger theme of racial stereotypes. These sub-themes include, “She has to think she's better than everybody else,” “Would watermelon be better?,” and White women as “imitations of each other.”

“She Has to Think She’s Better Than Everybody Else”

The multiracial women mentioned the stereotypes they encountered from monoracial peers because they were perceived to be mixed-race. Overwhelmingly, the women believed that their fellow students bought into the racial myth that mixed-race, light-skinned women think they are “better” than their monoracial peers of color. When asked about multiracial stereotypes, Sarah relayed, “Oh, mixed-race people think they are better than everybody else.” Vanessa, who identifies with Mexican and Black ancestry, also explained that multiracial women, herself included, were perceived as “snooty and rude.”

Several of the women believed that the multiracial myth of being better stemmed from the beauty and exotic nature often attributed to mixed-race individuals. Vivian, who is Japanese and English, explained, “People say multiracial people are generally more attractive.” On the walking interview, Gabrielle elaborated on the physical features that made multiracial women “more attractive.” Gabrielle explained, “A lot of people look at like mixed people because they are like the pretty ones. Ya know? They have perfect skin, good hair, and all that stuff.” Above, Gabrielle referred to the European features that made multiracial women exotic, near White, and therefore “pretty” (Hunter, 2005). Multiracial women in this study recognized that they emulated European standards of beauty, which may have influenced others’ perceptions of their “snooty and rude” behavior.

After describing the beauty and exotic nature that was attributed to mixed-race women, study participants went on to link these characteristics to the multiracial

stereotypes they perceived others at MU held of them. Gabrielle, who identified as mixed race, relayed how being “half-White” played into the stereotype that multiracial women were pretty and subsequently thought they were better than monoracial peers of color:

They’re [monoracial students of color] like, “Oh, well you know like she’s half White, so then she probably thinks she’s better than us.” And you know, people always talk about the light-skinned versus dark-skinned debate. Like, “Oh, she’s light-skinned, she’s mixed, like so she has to think she’s better than everybody else.” And like it’s not, it’s really not even like that, it’s, it’s really not.

Gabrielle’s proximity to Whiteness played a role in the ways she internalized stereotypes of multiraciality. She believed that her White heritage led others to perceive her as “better than everybody else.” Moreover, Gabrielle mentioned how skin color, specifically being light-skinned, played a large role in how she was perceived on campus. The realities of being light skinned and the colorism that accompanied this physical attribute were prevalent in the narratives concerning stereotypes of multiracial women at MU.

Colorism. Participants stated that having light skin resulted in tensions between monoracial communities of color and multiracial women on campus. While sitting down in the middle of campus after our walking interview, Gabrielle explained this tension:

Especially in the minority communities, being mixed is like revered, and it’s like, especially like mixed women, it’s what men want. But then you have the issue where if you are a mixed woman, you are under the assumption all men want you, so women don’t like you. So it might be a privilege, but it is also kind of a hindrance, because, like it’s hard to break through that stereotype of like, “Oh they must think they are better than everyone else.”

The above quote explains how Gabrielle perceived her peers racialized her based on her identity as a mixed-race woman. Gabrielle was racialized by the stereotypes attributed to light-skinned and/or multiracial women. She mentioned how “being mixed is like revered” because “it’s what men want.” Hunter (2005) explained how light-skinned

women of color, who have phenotypically White traits, are more valuable and desirable to American men, regardless of color, than are darker-skinned women. The value of light skin stems from the historical construction of beauty, which is centered in Whiteness. The most beautiful women in society are the “whitest and the lightest” (Hunter, 2005, p. 28) and are subsequently placed at the top of the American skin tone and beauty hierarchy. Those at the top or near top of these hierarchies are better positioned to receive resources, such as jobs, education, and spouses (Hunter, 2005).

The beauty hierarchy also pits heterosexual women against one another. Gabrielle perceived this tension between women in saying, “All men want you, so women don’t like you.” Hunter (2005) explored how the beauty hierarchy operates within sexist and racist paradigms “to create a queue of women from the lightest to the darkest, where the lightest get the most resources and the darkest get the least” (pp. 70-71). Hunter went on to explain that this “queue” signifies a perceived line (ordered from lightest skin to darkest skin) in which all heterosexual women must wait in order to receive a male spouse. This queue “is implicitly understood by all women” (Hunter, 2005, p. 71). In the above quote, Gabrielle hints at the implicit nature of the beauty queue, multiracial women’s place within it, and the tension it causes amongst all women.

Participants with Black racial heritage spoke specifically about the Black community and colorism on campus. While walking throughout campus, Sarah explained,

I was lighter skinned than the Black girls that would tell me that [you’re so pretty] and I felt that they were just put down by their skin color. I don’t know what this dark skin/light-skin bullshit is. I see this guy, he posts on his Instagram like, “Oh,

them light-skin girls are all the same.” Like, what does that mean? Aren’t y’all the same, like, African American?

This quote explores how Sarah perceived colorism operated within the Black community at MU. Sarah insinuated that her light skin made her pretty in the eyes of Black women. As she assumed her place in the beauty queue, she also realized that “Black girls” who had darker skin tones than her were “put down” by their lower status in the queue. Sarah’s words also expose how men in the Black community played into the stereotypes of “light-skin girls,” essentializing them as “all the same.”

Vanessa, who identifies with Black and Mexican heritage, also spoke about the stereotypes she felt the Black community at MU held of multiracial women on campus. On the walking interview, she relayed,

Being at a PWI, [there are] White Western ideas of beauty and stuff...I’ve learned about shadeism and colorism and all that stuff, and even in the Black community, we are fighting against each other, like the dark skin light-skin thing...It is definitely interesting to think of it beauty wise, because people prefer lighter skin.

Sarah and Vanessa’s narratives expose the stereotypical assumptions they perceived to be made about multiracial women based on their physical attributes. Moreover, Vanessa astutely mentioned “White Western ideas of beauty” and its ties to colorism in the Black community.

Participants with Black heritage also mentioned the tensions they felt with Black women students. Jenna, who has a Black father and White mother, described some of the conflicts she faced with Black women at MU:

I don’t think any Black girl has like been mean to me or been aggressive. I think it’s just they think that I think that I’m better than them. So maybe there’s like a

little like disconnect...if anything, I would say that I am deep down probably not friendly to them...I guess we're not friendly to each other.

During the walking interview, Jenna talked again about colorism and the stereotype of the light-skinned multiracial woman. This time, she went into more detail as to why she thought Black women students did not like her:

I feel like they [Black women students] might be jealous of me. Not to sound like rude, but like full Black women are jealous of mixed women because they don't have that many opportunities, because the White women are taking their husbands, because people don't want Black women as wives anymore.

Jenna internalized the stereotype that "full Black" women were no longer desirable to Black men. Instead, White women were "taking" Black men away from them, leaving Black women with fewer opportunities. Jenna's comment is intriguing for two reasons. First, she is a product of this "stolen" relationship in that her mother is White and her father is Black. Second, and closely related, Jenna insinuated that Black women's jealousy towards her stemmed from her own ability, by way of her mother's Whiteness, to also "take" Black men away from "full" Black women.

"Would Watermelon Be Better?"

Interestingly, the multiracial women relayed their experiences with monoracial stereotypes more often than they spoke about the aforementioned stereotypes about mixed-race women. They talked extensively about how they were ascribed stereotypes that concerned monoracial people of color. Participants believed that more often than not, their peers at MU viewed them as monoracial and attributed monoracial ideologies to them.

For example, Vivian talked about how “Asians are stereotyped and stigmatized” as the “model minority.” She found this label to be unfair because others judged her before they got to truly know her. In the second interview, while walking past the residence hall she worked in, Vivian described a time when she was ascribed the model minority stereotype:

I'll keep to myself. Like, even when residents are around and they'll think that I'm like studying a lot, which I mean, I guess I do compared to some...and they're always like, “Oh you're always studying.” And I'm like, “Noooo, I just happen to have to use my computer for everything”...It's probably because I'm quiet and the Asian stereotype that we're always studying.

Vivian's residents first assumed that she was monoracially Asian, which denied her multiracial identity. Her residents then racialized Vivian, via the model minority stereotype, on the basis of this incorrect monoracial categorization.

Like Vivian, Georgia also spoke about how others assumed her to be a model minority because they perceived her to be Asian. She relayed an interaction with her boyfriend that occurred the night before her third interview. Her boyfriend asked for help with his math homework, but when Georgia was unable to help him, he exclaimed, “I don't understand how you could be Asian and be really bad at math!” Georgia also spoke about other stereotypes that were attributed to her because she was half-Asian. She described how she preferred to stay away from people who held “Asian stereotypes...that like I eat dogs or like I can't drive well.” Within these quotes, the ways in which stereotypes operated to monoracially racialize the multiracial women are seen. In the above examples, the multiracial women with Asian heritage were perceived to be

monoracial Asian, which connoted to others that they were the model minority, bad drivers, and had odd eating habits, to name a few.

Asian stereotypes were not the only monoracial ideologies attributed to multiracial women. Jane, who is White, Black, and Asian, was stereotyped as a monoracial Black woman. Like Georgia, she had a recent incident to share about her encounters with monoracial stereotypes. She explained,

I kinda get bit annoyed of stereotypes because when people try to fit me into something, even last night. Uh, my male White roommate...goes like, "Should I order fried chicken tomorrow and ask you how to make it and how to eat it...or would you order hotdogs or hamburgers or popsicle sticks?" I mean, you can't just, people literally just classify me as one race...and he's like, "Well, would watermelon be better?" and I'm like, "Please stop!"

Again, like Georgia, this hurtful comment stemmed from someone that Jane was close to. This quote also elucidates others' confusion with multiracial women's multiple races. Jane's friend explicitly asked her what monoracial identity, Black (fried chicken and watermelon) or White (hot dogs and popsicles), he should categorize her as so that he could base his racial understandings off of this categorization.

Elizabeth also talked about how she was wrongly stereotyped as a monoracial Mexican woman: "I guess sometimes I have seen it where they know I'm Mexican and that's all they think I am. That I can't afford things." Stereotypes are damaging enough, but these ascribed stereotypes may be even more detrimental because there is an assumption of a monoracial identity and a denial of a multiracial identity within these monoracial myths (two concepts that are described in more detail in the following theme).

Though stereotypes are social constructs and not based in fact, they still influenced how the multiracial women experienced their race on campus. These women lamented that the imposition of monoracial stereotypes led to forced-choice dilemma and to their own confusion with racial identity. Jane described how monoracial stereotypes seemingly impacted others' expectations of her behaviors and actions:

I kinda get annoyed by stereotypes because people try to fit me into something....“We’re gonna push these stereotypes on you. This is how you are supposed to act.” Or, “This is the kind of food you’re supposed to like.” Or, “This is who you’re supposed to hang out with.” And that is, that’s what I feel people are trying to put me into categories, and I just wanna be myself...there are definitely stereotypes that are put on me.

Sarah echoed Jane’s assessment of the impact of monoracial stereotypes: “I think the more mixed you are, the more they dislike you...unless you follow [monoracial] stereotypes and you categorize yourself. Everybody will accept you for those.” The above quotes elucidate how the multiracial women who had monoracial stereotypes pushed on them felt incongruence between who they were and the monoracial stereotypes they were “supposed to” perform.

The performance of racial identity helps in further understanding the dissonance participants encountered with monoracial stereotypes. Butler’s (2002) work on the performance of gender guides one to understand how race is performed, thus maintaining racial stereotypes and the status quo:

[Race is] instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movement, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered [and raced] self...The appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (p. 179)

Race, therefore, is nothing more than an act. It is a repetitive impersonation of dominant ideologies, such as stereotypes (Butler, 2002), that maintains White supremacy.

The repetitive performance of race “sets up pathologizing practices and normalizing sciences in order to produce and consecrate its own claim on originality and propriety” (Butler, 1993, p. 125). In other words, performance constructs and cements distinct racial categories, namely White and non-White, all of which are monoracial, to secure the status quo. Dominant society dictates through stereotypical scripts *who* performs what roles and *how* those roles are performed. For instance, dominant ideology relays that Asians and all those who “look” Asian must be smart, bad drivers, and quiet. Multiracial women in this study who did not identify with a monoracial category were at a loss when they were expected to perform a monoracial identity. As Jane explained, “I just wanna be myself.” Unfortunately, there were no multiracial roles for these women to perform, only monoracial (which in itself is problematic).

Finally, the performance of race, and specifically multiraciality can be subversive (Butler, 1993) in that it extends beyond and deconstructs the carefully crafted behaviors, acts, and languages attributed to monoracial identities. When multiracial women do not perform the stereotypical behaviors attributed to their monoracial identities, the naturalness and originality of White supremacy and monoracial categories and their stereotypes are called into question. The performance of a multiracial identity suggests that racial identities are not fixed, nor normal.

The performance of identity and monoracial stereotypes also played into multiracial women participants’ experiences with a type of “monoracial stereotype

threat.” Stereotype threat occurs when individuals of color grow anxious about confirming negative stereotypes attributed to their race (Steele & Aronson, 1995). For instance, a Black student may grow nervous before a test because she or he does not want to perform poorly and corroborate the stereotype that Black individuals are not intelligent.

Multiracial women in this study experienced stereotype threat, but it impacted these women in a slightly different manner than what is currently known about stereotype threat for monoracial students (see Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Like their monoracial peers of color, the multiracial women expressed anxiety about confirming the monoracial stereotype that was attributed to them. However, these women were also concerned that their performance would confirm that they were indeed monoracial and not multiracial. Jenna, throughout the three interviews, talked about monoracial stereotype threat. She explained, “When I say my ethnicity [half-Black]...like if I say my dad is Black, I feel like automatically people are like probably, you know, assuming things maybe that like I’m less smart, or less capable or less composed.” Jenna expressed her concern in being perceived as a Black student, which she perceived was correlated to being “less smart, or less capable, or less composed.”

Jenna described further how this monoracial stereotype threat impacted some of her daily decisions:

I always felt like, like I still to this day feel like I put on an outfit, and I’m like, “Is that ghetto, like is that perceived as Black?” Just because I feel that there is a connotation. You don’t want to be like that, which sucks, it’s like it’s a race....But, yeah, like I know there was also times like I barely wore my hair

down. So like, “Look, her hair is puffy, like she’s Black.” Or, “Like she has Black hair.”

This quote was taken from Jenna’s response to the question, “How do you identify racially?” She explained how she self-identified as half-Black and tried her hardest through performance to not be perceived as part of the “Black group.” Due to the threat of being perceived as Black and therefore stereotyped as Black, Jenna restructured how she dressed and wore her hair. Her story exposes the impacts that monoracial stereotypes had on multiracial women in this research. Moreover, it caused them to reflect on their own stereotypical understandings of monoracial peers of color. As Jenna insinuated, multiracial women are not immune to the internalized stereotypes that pervade U.S. society and higher education. They too hold and perpetuate racial biases, a realization that may “suck.” Moreover, participants’ experiences with multiracial and monoracial stereotypes were not mutually exclusive. Multiracial women in this study battled beliefs about mixed-race women as well as racial myths pertaining to a single race they were assigned by others.

White Women as “Imitations of Each Other”

Participants spoke at length about the “stereotypical White woman” that attended MU. A majority of the 10 mixed-race women in this study mentioned that the White women at MU all looked the same and were one homogenous group. Participants mentioned the stereotypes they held of White women on campus. Across the multiracial women’s narratives, participants created a sketch of the “stereotypical White woman” at MU.

Georgia described the “stereotypical White woman” as “probably in a sorority, probably White, and blonde, and thin.” Other participants built on Georgia’s comment and provided greater depth in their descriptions of these women at MU. Sarah asserted,

I feel like White girls here, I don’t know maybe it’s just their mentality, but they actually do fall into the stereotype....They all have blonde hair and wear shorts—they all just, I don’t know, they all just seem alike to me....The White girls always have their hair in a bun, they have Uggs on, they try to hold like a coffee cup with something, and they have like an oversized sweater with like these black pant things...it’s stereotypicalness.

Jenna also spoke about the White women on campus and added to Sarah’s “coffee cup” characteristic by saying that White women loved to go to Starbucks. She explained, “I feel like there is the White, I don’t know if there is like the White sorority, with the White girl Starbucks.” Jenna’s mention of “White girl Starbucks” suggests that Starbucks is a characteristic attributed to White women at MU.

Through the act of going to Starbucks, carrying Starbucks, and/or drinking Starbucks, one performs Whiteness. This is because Starbucks, and the act of consuming specialized coffee drinks, “has become a marker of whiteness, Westernization, and bourgeois sophistication” (Spracklen, 2013, p. 143). Moreover, Starbucks prides itself on creating a brand and an environment that emulates European living rooms and an air of privilege in which friends sit in leather chairs in front of the fire and talk over coffee (Gaudio, 2003). This environment references a U.S. middle class lifestyle and patterns of consumption (Park & Wee, 2012), which links Starbucks, Whiteness, and middle class consumerism.

Whereas Starbucks and White women at MU were attributed to one another, other components, such as clothing and accessories, also aligned with the stereotype of the White MU woman. Jane described,

They [White women at MU] wear Hunter rain boots when it's cloudy outside because it might rain. They wear black leggings. They wear like a tank top or a t-shirt that has a bar's name on it. They are wearing like a nice shirt with like a terrible sweatshirt over it....She wears the same bag, it's from Italy, it's \$250, I looked online. They all have it. They wear North Face close to winter....Oh and they always have Starbucks, or they are in Starbucks, or they are talking about Starbucks.

While on the walking interview, Gabrielle corroborated Jane's description of the stereotypical White woman on campus:

They all just like, alright you're wearing leggings and an oversized shirt and maybe a bra. You have your hair in a top knot....And maybe you have the Longchamp bag, they're like black or maybe like navy blue, and they have like a brown strap....It's from France and they are expensive for no reason. So they all look, like they are all like imitations of each other.

Across the narratives of the multiracial women, several similarities in the descriptions of White women on campus emerged. Starbucks, oversized shirts, black leggings, sororities, and expensive accessories were just some of the characteristics attributed to White women. Participants also mentioned their perceptions of these White women as being "partiers," "wealthy," and/or "privileged." Multiracial women in this study did not refer to White women with positive characteristics and/or descriptions. Moreover, all of the women talked about White women across the interviews, but their descriptions and feelings of these women came across the strongest during the walking interview. This may have been because White women students surrounded us as we walked throughout campus, and participants were triggered by their presence. However some participants

recognized that their own identity and actions reflected stereotypical characteristics of White women, which resulted in cognitive dissonance for these multiracial women.

For instance, after describing what she thought was the stereotypical White woman on campus, Jenna mused, “But then I feel like sometimes I am that [White] girl, because I have the big puffy jacket, which I mean I’m not in a sorority. I’m not that type of girl at all, but um, I don’t know.” Vanessa also brought up the issue of falling into the stereotypical White girl category. She explained, “Some people say I dress like a White girl...I’m not Black enough. I can’t sing or I can’t step and I can’t dance and I don’t do spoken word.” Vanessa felt that she did not conform to stereotypes of what it meant to be Black but rather conformed to stereotypes of what it meant to be White. Gabrielle also relayed a story about her performance of Whiteness:

My Black friends say like, “Oh, Gabrielle, like, you’re acting very White right now”...I like my Katy Perry and Miley Cyrus. I like Starbucks and sunglasses. I like typical, like if you go on Twitter you will see “Things White People Say and Like,” “Things Black People Say.” I think I would say more of the things that White people say than the Black people say.

All three of these women struggled with the idea that they performed stereotypical White characteristics. Although they asserted that they did not identify solely with Whiteness, their racial understandings of White women suggested that they might be closer to Whiteness than they thought. Additionally, Jenna, Vanessa, and Gabrielle took a binary approach to their identity and stereotypes. If they performed aspects of White stereotypes then they did not perform Black stereotypes. There was no middle ground, or in this case, multiracial ground.

Once again, the multiracial women were pushed and pulled by monoracial stereotypes, but this time by racial myths that concerned White women. When participants performed aspects that were attributed to Whiteness, such as going to Starbucks or wearing a puffy jacket, they expressed concern in their performance of Whiteness. Important to note is that participants with Black heritage were the only ones to mention the tension between conforming to White characteristics as a multiracial being. This nuance may relate back to the ideology that race is constructed around a Black/White binary paradigm. For instance, if these women identified with and/or performed Whiteness, they were no longer seen as Black. Furthermore, performing Whiteness is attributed to passing as White, which is looked down upon in the Black community (Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Storrs, 1999). Therefore the multiracial women may have been concerned that taking on White attributes would ostracize them from the Black community.

“I Am Biracial, So It May Not Hit Me the Same Way”: Multiracial

Microaggressions

Several multiracial women students in this study relayed encounters with overt racism on campus. However, participants often minimized (a coping strategy explored later in this chapter) this overt discrimination. Instead, the mixed-race women talked more openly and frequently about subtle forms of racism. These subtle forms of racism or racial microaggressions are “everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages” (Sue, 2010, p. 3). Whereas one single microaggression

may go unnoticed and not have much impact on the aggressed, these subtle slights accumulate throughout one's life (Sue, 2010). Elizabeth mentioned this build up: "I think it was just the little things adding up throughout the years." The accumulation of racial microaggressions may result in major negative outcomes for students, including the depletion of psychological, mental, emotional, and physical health (Sue et al., 2009). For undergraduate students of color, racial microaggressions also result in a hostile campus climate, feelings of self-doubt, and isolation (Solórzano et al., 2000).

Racial microaggressions in higher education have become increasingly researched, but within a monoracial paradigm (see Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). This second theme strongly suggests that this form of subtle racism existed for, and was unique to, the participants in this study. As noted in Chapter 2, Johnston and Nadal's (2010) taxonomy of multiracial microaggressions include exclusion and isolation, objectification, assumption of a monoracial identity, denial of a multiracial reality, and the pathologizing of identity and experiences. The first four of these microaggressions were present in some form across the narratives of the multiracial women in the study attending MU. However, the pathologization of identity was not apparent in the interviews. An additional microaggression, the imposition of a monoracial identity, was also present amongst the racialized realities of these women and almost always occurred as a result of the assumption of a monoracial identity or the denial of a multiracial reality.

On the walking interview, Monica talked explicitly about the differences in microaggressions that multiracial women students faced as opposed to their monoracial peers. She asserted,

I think it could pass me [racial discrimination] if it were something that was like not noticeable and it would pass me and I would think about it later and realize what it was....I am biracial so it may not hit me the same way it hits another person....I don't know if I really experience it like other people may.

Monica acknowledged that she experienced subtle racial slights, but she also recognized that her experiences with this phenomenon were different than her monoracial peers of color. All multiracial women involved in this research encountered at least one of the five separate but interrelated multiracial microaggressions during their tenure at MU. These five subtle slights include (a) denial of a multiracial reality, (b) assumption of a monoracial identity, (c) imposition of a monoracial identity, (d) objectification, and (e) forced to choose.

Denial of a Multiracial Reality

Denial of a multiracial reality occurred when monoracial individuals were aware of the multiracial women students' multiple racial identities but refused to acknowledge them. In essence, the multiracial women in the study were denied the opportunity to identify as such. Monica claimed that she experienced this denial on campus because "biracial" was not recognized as a racial category. She decried, "I understand that being biracial is not a thing. So I'm Black. It's not a thing, so I'm Black." Due to this lack of acknowledgement, Monica and other participants were forced to fit into monoracial categories. Perpetrators of this multiracial microaggression ranged from individuals to groups to institutional structures.

On an individual level, peers denied the multiracial women's racial identities. On the walking interview, Sarah relayed a story of a White male who came into her residence hall room freshman year. The man curiously asked the question, "What are you?" Sarah explained how she answered the question and her peer's reaction:

I'm like, "Oh, I have Latin American in me, I have Dutch, I have African, and yeah." And he was like, "Oh, you're Spanish." And I said, "If I just told you I have this, this, and this in me, does that mean, I'm like...?" It just irritated me.

Sarah took the time to explain her multiracial realities, but her male peer immediately reduced her to one race. Moreover, the race Sarah was assigned had nothing to do with her racial or ethnic heritage, which frustrated her.

Sarah's encounter was with an acquaintance, but other women in the study experienced denial from close friends. While accompanying her friend to an event at the Black Cultural Center on campus, Georgia experienced the denial of her multiracial reality. She relayed,

My friend was like, "You will just be known as that Asian girl, like everyone knows you're the Asian girl like in there." Like, I don't know why she calls me Asian. I think it's just easier for her, well, like instead of saying Asian-Native American.

While walking throughout campus, Georgia spoke of another time, when her boyfriend, someone she was intimate with, denied her multiracial reality: "He [my boyfriend] was just like, 'Obviously my type is Asian.' I think he identifies me...I never thought about this until now, but, like my boyfriend identifies me more as Asian, not even Native American." The multiracial women's confidants often knew their multiple racial identities. However, even with this information, peers refused to acknowledge this fact and instead, placed them into monoracial categories that denied their multiracial realities.

Additionally, Georgia posited that this denial most likely took place because it was easier for others to understand their identity within a monoracial paradigm.

The multiracial women also described how MU, as an institution, denied their multiracial realities. Similar to peer interactions, participants told stories concerning institutional groups and structures that denied their existence at the institution. MU was knowledgeable on multiracial women's existence on campus. Recently, in 2011, the institution implemented a "check all that apply" option on their admissions form. This was the same year that they reported back using a "more than one race" category. Therefore MU was aware that multiraciality was an identity and a reality for some of the students on campus. Unfortunately, the multiracial women in the study did not feel that the institution supported them in this identity choice. Instead, they relayed that MU did not believe their racial identity was a real thing that needed to be acknowledged. Monica explained,

Like it's [biracial] not a thing....When you take a survey, any well-done survey is going to have "select any that apply"....There's not very many well-done surveys, especially here on campus. They're not well done because they're not done by students who are thinking about it. So they put you in a little box. So if I am doing a survey, and it doesn't let you select multiple, I quit the survey because I'm not doing it. Like it's [biracial] not a real thing. People don't realize you could be multiple things. We have this need to box people into one. So when I need to be boxed into one, I'm Black. Does that piss me off? Yes. I understand that I'm not just that. I'm these multiple things. So it's not a real thing. Biracial is not a real thing.

Monica's inability to declare her multiracial reality on campus surveys relayed to her that MU did not see her multiracial identity, and therefore her experiences, as "real." She also recognized that whereas this denial manifested in a survey, it represented students and

administrators' failure to account for individuals who fall outside of a monoracial paradigm.

Finally, campus resources also signified a denial of the participants' realities. Georgia often referenced the lack of Native American support systems on campus. She attributed this lack of support for Native American students to their low enrollment (American Indian students made up 0.1% of the MU undergraduate student body). In other words, Georgia claimed that the institution thought there was no need to support such a small student population. Unfortunately, this lack of resources for Native American students denied half of her racial identity. On the walking interview, she claimed,

If you're Asian, you can go to these certain centers, and they have festivals for them. Ya know? If you're Black, they have like all these frats and all that. And if you're White, you get to do everything. And same thing for Hispanics, like they also have like a certain core group. But like Native Americans, they don't have a core group, so they just would not know what to do with me.

Although MU had resources for several monoracial groups on campus, Georgia acknowledged that their support for Native American students was severely lacking. As a result, Georgia felt she was forced to identify with her Asian heritage because the other half, Native American, was not recognized at MU. Whether identifying as multiracial or with two or more races, participants often felt these non-monoracial and therefore non-traditional identities were denied. However, it is important to note that racial makeup may play a large role in these participants' encounters with racialization, specifically multiracial microaggressions. For instance, in Georgia's narrative, claiming heritage(s)

from a severely marginalized population further complicated her encounters with the denial of her multiracial reality.

Assumption of a Monoracial Identity

All 10 multiracial women in this study mentioned that their racial identity was often assumed to be monoracial. This multiracial microaggression aligns with the multiracial women's experiences with monoracial stereotypes. Peers, staff, and institutional structures at MU committed this microaggression. The assumption of a monoracial identity is different than the denial of a multiracial reality in that those who assumed women to be monoracial were not aware that they were in fact, multiracial (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). In other words, perpetrators of this microaggression did not knowingly deny mixed-race women's racial identities.

The women often used the word "assume" when describing this subtle slight. Jenna relayed, "People *assume* that [my race] and like you have no idea. So it definitely annoys me, but like some people have asked if I'm Indian. I don't look Indian at all!" Jenna, who has no Indian heritage, encountered assumptions of her identity, an interaction that annoyed her.

Gabrielle also invoked the term *assume* when describing this microaggression that is specific to mixed-race women:

When people *assume* things about me, but like their *assumptions* are usually wrong. So even if you try to *assume* things about me, you're probably wrong, you're probably incorrect. So you could try to put me in this box, but once everything is out in the open, like, the box, it's closed.

Assumptions, like the denial of identity, almost always led to these women's being reduced to a monoracial category, which, as Gabrielle mentioned, was incorrect. In the

walking interview, Gabrielle explained further why others on campus assumed her to be certain races:

Depending on how it [my hair] is, it tells people, it decides. If I have my hair straight, people think that I'm Latina. If I have my hair curly, people think I'm Latina or Indian... just like depending on the way I have my hair, that's like a signifier of what people assume I am.

Hair was a large reason why Gabrielle and other multiracial women in the study were assumed to be a certain race. Across the board, participants mentioned how their hair made them different from White women. Hair was also a cultural signifier that participants must be a monoracial person of color. Whereas hair was a “clue” to the multiracial women's identity puzzle, their last names were even more integral to the assumption of identity.

On the walking interview, Sarah spoke about the monoracial assumptions she encountered and how her last name acted as a cultural signifier that led to incorrect racial assignments:

I get an automatic *assumption* that I am Spanish...Yeah, I usually get automatic Spanish. My last name doesn't help, because its Venezuelan or Aruban...They just start speaking Spanish to me. Like, “Yeah, you're Latino right ?” I'm just like, “No, I don't know what you're saying to me. I'm sorry. No.”

Sarah's story exposes how monoracial identity is assumed, but so are the expectations that align with the assigned race. In Sarah's case, it was assumed she was Spanish and therefore must be able to speak Spanish. The quote again points to how cultural signifiers, such as last name, led others to assume the multiracial women's monoracial identities. Several multiracial women in this study also spoke about the confusion that

occurred when last names and physical features did not align with others' assumptions of their monoracial identity.

For instance, prior to meeting, Elizabeth's first-year roommate assumed she was full Mexican. The roommate later told Elizabeth, who is Mexican, German, and Austrian, about this assumption, explaining that her last name led her to conclude Elizabeth's monoracial Mexican identity. Elizabeth described, "She [my roommate] told me when she met me she was confused because my name was Elizabeth Ramos, but when she looked me up on Facebook, I looked White. So she wasn't sure if it was the same person." Elizabeth's roommate first assumed her to be Mexican because of her last name. However, after looking at her physical features on Facebook, she concluded that Elizabeth was White. Both of these conjectures placed Elizabeth into monoracial categories, neither of which she fully identified with. Elizabeth later expressed that the juxtaposition between her last name, physical features, and her identification with a multiracial identity often garnered confusion from others on campus. She called this misalignment a "juicy contradiction."

The multiracial women also encountered assumptions of identity outside of their peer interactions and environments. Participants spoke about the institutionalized assumptions that they faced on campus. Jenna elucidated the way in which staff at the Black Cultural Center assumed that she identified with her Black heritage:

You come to MU and it's like, I don't know, I'm like it always makes me so angry. Because like, I got an email from like the Black Cultural Center, and they're like, "Yeah, you are on our freshman list." I was like, "I'm on your freshman list because you found out I was Black. This is a racial profile, and I don't want to be on this emailing list." I hate email lists; and I emailed them, I was like, "You're racial profiling and like, I don't want to be in this." And they

were like, “Oh sorry. You must have signed up.” I was like, “No, I didn’t sign up. If I signed up, I wouldn’t be emailing you saying like...”

Jenna was insistent that she did not sign up for the Black Cultural Center’s email list-serv. She also pointed out that on her admissions application to MU, she checked both “Black” and “White.” Therefore, if the Cultural Center received her racial demographics from the Admissions Office, they assumed that she identified as monoracial Black, making Jenna angry that she was not seen as the racial identity she indicated.

Although assumptions of identity often stemmed from strangers and/or acquaintances, there were some stories that relayed how these multiracial microaggressions were perpetrated by friends and colleagues. On the walking interview, Gabrielle told a story involving a male staff member at MU whom she had worked with for more than three years. The colleague urged Gabrielle to sign up for the Black Graduation ceremony. When Gabrielle finally signed up, she let her colleague know. He then asked, “So are you going to do Latino grad as well?” Gabrielle was caught off guard and a bit mystified at the realization that he had assumed that she was of Latina heritage for the past 3 years. Gabrielle’s story elucidates how the multiracial women were never immune to or safe from multiracial microaggressions, specifically the assumption of a monoracial identity. Additionally, this example conveys how others may acknowledge mixed-race women’s multiple identities, but that within this acknowledgement, there still may be an assumption as to what those multiple identities are.

Imposition of a Monoracial Identity

The denial of a multiracial reality and the assumption of a monoracial identity almost always resulted in the imposition of a monoracial identity. Participants had a

monoracial identity imposed on them when peers, staff, and the institution *told* them what race they must identify with. Gabrielle described her encounters with this multiracial microaggression: “So people don’t really know what I am. So they assume what I am, and they tell me what I am, what I actually am. They say, ‘You’re this, because you don’t look that way.’” Gabrielle described how the assumption of a monoracial identity led others to “tell” her what single race she was.

Monica relayed another example of what this imposition looked like for mixed-race women students in this study. She relayed, “I yelled at one of my friends this past weekend...who was like, ‘well you're White,’ I was like, ‘Actually... I'm really sick of hearing that out of your mouth.’” An imposed White racial identity was not something new to Monica. Instead, it was something she encountered several times over from her close friends. Monica, like the other women, was angered and frustrated by this imposition of identity, which almost always accompanied one of the two multiracial microaggressions described above.

Elizabeth talked across the three interviews about the time her multiracial identity was denied by a male instructor, who later imposed a single racial identity on her. This incident happened during an Upward Scholars class session her first year at MU. Elizabeth explained that each class session followed a theme, and on the day in which this incident took place, the theme was student activism. Frank Kaufman, a Black man and graduate student, was leading the class. For students to learn about student activism, Frank required Upward Scholars students to take part in an activity. He told the class that they would ride the MU campus bus, in silence, throughout the class period. The silent

bus demonstration would commemorate Rosa Parks and the 1955 resistance of bus segregation. It would also protest the dismal and stagnant percentage (4%) of Black students at MU. Elizabeth found herself at a loss because she did not identify as Black, nor another monoracial identity of color. She also felt that Frank was discouraging her from identifying with her White heritage.

Elizabeth explained this experience and her concern at length:

But then, um Frank Kaufmann who was a graduate student [instructor] at the time...he identifies as African American. He entered that class and started teaching, and he talked about how we needed to stand up against the White man and show them that we're still here, and they can't, um, supremacy should no longer be there. "We are going to do a bus boycott, and we are all going to get on the bus...and not get off for an hour, just to show that we are there, so nobody else could get on." But with Upward Scholars, it's very even, with females that are African American, Hispanic, or Latino, Native American, and then mixed. And there are a couple of White people as well....So for some people, it was okay to hear that, but then for a lot of us, it was like, "Well, you are *telling* me I can't pick, like I can't be both, I have to be one or the other."...It was, "Okay now you are *telling* me I have to be Mexican, not that I'm not Mexican, but I have to be because the White half of me is wrong."

Frank was well aware that Elizabeth and several of her classmates identified as multiracial, many having White ancestry. Unfortunately, the instructor bypassed their racial realities, causing Elizabeth to feel that she must deny her White heritage and identify as a monoracial student of color while participating in the boycott. The above story explores how Elizabeth felt she could not identify as mixed-race or White during this class session, because Frank was "telling" her White heritage was "wrong." Instead, she felt that she was expected to identify as a monoracial person of color, more specifically a Mexican student. Elizabeth's story also hints at the historical remnants of hypodescent, or the one-drop rule. Her narrative explores how Frank knew she and other

students in the class were multiracial with White heritage, but talked to the overall class as if everyone existed within a monoracial paradigm.

Like Monica, Elizabeth was distraught after a monoracial identity was imposed on her. After class, Elizabeth explained how she went home and “balled my eyes out, because I didn’t know what I was doing and I didn’t know who I was. . . . I realized that I was letting them try to define me.” To get out her frustrations, she wrote a poem about her classroom experience. What follows is an excerpt from Elizabeth’s prose:

Why should I be what you say I must? Can I not be crossbred? Can I not defy the natural order and become something else? But since I have already been created, why do you still try to rationalize my existence and categorize me as some preexisting creature. You train me to obey, to identify myself under the description that you have given me. But your description lacks clarity, lacks continuity, lacks an accurate definition of what I truly am. You do not understand me and instead of trying to, you cast off half my soul into exile. I am but one body, one mind, one spirit, one soul. I cannot be torn limb from limb and seen as a self-sufficient life form. A body with no head is not a body but a headless corpse; incapable of function and service. So why do you torment me? Why do you judge me? Why do you persuade me to be something I am not.

Elizabeth’s words convey her frustration, confusion, and anger with her interaction in Upward Scholars. She was not only impacted by the denial of her multiracial reality but also by the imposition of a monoracial, Mexican identity. This double aggression often caused pain and discomfort for several multiracial women involved in this research.

Objectification

Acts of objectification directed towards multiracial Americans dehumanize these individuals by treating them as if they, and more specifically their race, are new, different objects to be placed on display (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). The multiracial women’s experiences with feeling objectified on the basis of their racial identity fell into two

categories. The first, tokenization, occurred when the multiracial women were placed on display by the institution and made to be the token for diversity on campus. Second, the multiracial women students were exoticized by male peers or made to feel different and interesting because of their multiple racial identities.

Tokenization. Participants study indicated they felt like a token for diversity at MU. The women expressed that MU saw them as diverse, “intrinsically interesting” objects to be placed on display. Jane talked outright about MU’s desire to use her and her racially diverse friend group as tokens for diversity. She said, “We [my friends and I] call ourselves the Diversity Club because we know that MU wants to take our picture and put that on a bus.” Jane explained that her friend group was racially diverse, and therefore a group that MU wanted to flaunt on campus to assert its commitment to diversity. Like Jane, several other multiracial women in the study expressed their awareness that MU used their multiracial presence as an object to connote diversity at the institution. Unfortunately, they also believed that although MU acknowledged them when it came to promoting diversity on campus, the institution did not fully support them as multiracial women living and learning on campus.

Sarah, who is mixed/Caribbean, explained the tension between her being used as an object by the institution and MU’s failure to support her. She described,

I don’t think they [administrators at MU] really care. They just say, “Oh, we have you, we are diverse now. Okay, bye, I’ll see you later.” I don’t think that they really care, but as long as your numbers look good, like they don’t care.... You just have to have the numbers so that they can sell you. “We are MU. We are diverse.”

Sarah conveyed how MU as an institution used her as an object that could be positioned in such a manner that increased numerical diversity. Unfortunately, she did not feel that MU cared about her beyond the institutional desire to promote racial diversity. Whereas Sarah spoke about her objectification within a broader organizational context, other women in the study talked about this multiracial microaggression within academic spaces.

In two different interviews, Elizabeth relayed how the Business School used her as a token for diversity. Overall, she had great things to say about the Business School. However, the one time she experienced discord within this academic space was when she felt tokenized:

I mean, sometimes I feel like I get stereotyped as being the chosen minority...the chosen minority for things...when they know that I'm Latina. So, "She's only selected because she's Latina. Look at the rest of them, they're all Latina; maybe they need a different one."

In this instance, the administrators that positioned Elizabeth as a token for diversity did so because they perceived her to be a "different" type of Latina. When pressed further on the walking interview about her status as a "different" type of Latina, Elizabeth explained, "People will point it out, that I am the ideal minority because I don't look like one. Like I could get away with being White and when people need to say they have a minority they do." Elizabeth was different because she was a more palatable (more White/light) Latina. Elizabeth's experience with objectification overlapped with several other racialized themes already touched on in this section. For example, she was denied a multiracial reality, and subsequently, a monoracial identity was imposed on her.

Jane also faced tokenization in academic spaces. She relayed instances of being a “native informant” in the classroom. According to hooks (1994), students of color are often the “only ones” in predominantly White environments. Due to this “only one” status, students of color are asked to be the informant or voice for all people of color. The idea of the “native informant” as it relates to multiracial women is intricate and intriguing, because not only were mixed-race women placed in this role, but they were also assigned a monoracial identity. Jane elucidated this phenomenon:

Okay, so for example, um any time in a class...they would ask something about like the Black women experience; and they would ask me, and I have to speak for the entire race. And that's so ridiculous. I am like kind of a Black woman. But not by any means the one you want to talk to. Because I'm not; I don't know, that was really annoying to me. And so whenever we would talk about race in class, I felt so stared at.

Within the classroom, Jane, who identified as “African, Arawak Indian, German, White, and a bit Chinese,” was used as a tool or object that would inform her classmates on the “Black women experience.” Unfortunately, as a multiracial woman, she felt uncomfortable with her imposed Black identity and inability to speak on the topic.

Multiracial women in this study experienced tokenization in their extracurricular as well as curricular activities. Gabrielle talked explicitly about the leveraging of her multiple identities by MU administrators. On the walking interview, she provided an example of how the staff at the Minority Recruitment Office (MRO) used her as an object that could navigate multiple racial communities on campus:

I think they appreciate it [my multiraciality], um, especially the administration, because not only am I, you know, that diversity that they need to talk about, but...I can connect with the majority population of MU, which is upper class White Americans, because I come from that kind of community. So I think they really appreciate me in the office.

Due to her multiracial identity, Gabrielle felt that administrators of MRO expected her to relate to current and potential students of color as well as the White majority population at MU. Gabrielle was positioned as an object that could both be the token for diversity as well as connect with the homogenous White community.

Exoticization. Objectification also manifested in exoticization. Exoticization occurred when monoracial individuals expressed their fascination with the multiracial women's race, and more specifically their physical features. Participants encountered exoticization at MU when peers inquired, "What are you?" Gabrielle spoke about a time when she went to a diversity recruitment event at the Black Cultural Center. She explained how she felt several inquisitive eyes on her when she entered the Center:

When I got there, they were kind of like, "Who is this person that's like sitting here?" It's like, "What is she? What is she?" That's a question that I could see in people's eyes the whole time. Like, every time I like go [to the Black Cultural Center], most of them they're like, I can just see like, "What is she?"

Gabrielle went on to explain that she experienced the "What are you?" question often. She attributed this to the idea that "people can never figure out what I am." She then made the astute observation that monoracial people are rarely asked "What are you?" and that this line of inquiry was specific to multiracial people. Unfortunately, as the above quote elucidates, even when the multiracial women provided an answer to this question, they often continued to be met with resistance and skepticism.

The "What are you?" question is problematic because it suggests that multiracial women are not the norm (i.e., monoracial), and therefore must be placed into monoracial categories in order to be accepted by dominant society. Once multiracial women are

categorized by a monoracial label, they are more easily racialized. As seen in the sub-theme of “Would watermelon be better?” participants were assigned a monoracial identity and then racialized, that is, stereotyped based on that (mono)racial label.

Five participants talked about exoticization in combination with beauty. Due to their “exotic” features, participants expressed the ways in which men at MU objectified them by making unsolicited comments that concerned their physical features. Jane spoke about several instances in which male students felt the need to comment on her physical features. She described one such instance:

And apparently this is the Midwest. We're an ethnicity; we are seen as absolutely gorgeous. I get a lot of attention. I was walking down the street last year, wearing earrings, and this guy comes up [and says], “You are like the most beautiful woman I have ever seen....I just needed to tell you this.” And 3 days ago in class, a guy waited up after class to say that to me. So it's extremely flattering, but it's just like kind of unnerving.

On the walking interview, Vivian also spoke about a time when male peers approached her because of her physical features:

Mixed-race people tend to be glamorized, and that kind of like seeps into other things, like even everyday life like, “Oh you're so cute, blah, blah, blah. Oh you're half.” Yeah, so that kind of stuff happens...it can still be pretty awkward. I mean, I don't know if they said it just because I'm half or am I actually kind of cute?

Both Jane and Vivian described how others gave them attention because they were different from the homogenous group of White women at MU. Similar to the native informant phenomenon, the multiracial women were seen as exotic because their surroundings were homogenous. While walking and talking throughout campus, Georgia described this in saying, “There are so many generics here, but I am like one of a kind....People give me a nickname like ‘exotica’ or something, and people are like,

‘You’re very exotic compared to other people.’” The predominantly White environment made the multiracial women stand out.

Forced to Choose in Order to Fit

All participants expressed how monoracial understandings of race ruled the MU campus. Due to their multiple racial identities, participants acknowledged that they felt they did not fit into these certain monoracial spaces and peer groups at MU. Therefore they were forced to choose one monoracial identity in order to, or at least attempt to, fit in on campus. Several of the instances women in this study shared related directly back to Standen’s (1996) forced-choice dilemma. For example, on the walking interview, Jenna explained how multiracial women in order to fit in had to choose a monoracial group to affiliate with:

I feel like it’s you know, it’s more about molding you into something else. So it’s like [at MU] you can be Black and you can embrace that and do that or you can do this....I guess there’s not really an option to be multiracial. You can be Black, or you can be White, or you can be Mexican, like you have to pick one or you cannot choose any....You get to school and you figure out, “Who am I going to *fit* in best with?” And then, “Okay, I like the Black people; I’m going to act like them, I’m going to try to fit in”; or, “The White people, I’m going to tone it down and go hang out with them.”

For Jenna, there was no option of fitting in with multiple groups or existing as a multiracial woman. Instead, she had to “act” White or “act” Black in order to fit in with the racialized peer groups that existed on campus.

Monica also spoke about the lack of fit that she experienced at MU. Building off of Jenna’s experiences with peer groups, she described the exclusion she felt within institutional organizations:

I love MRO, but I do feel like even there sometimes, I feel like I don't *fit* in...because I am mixed and not full. And the majority of people in MRO are either 100% Latino or African American. Um they, they're really accepting of me...[but] sometimes it doesn't feel like I know what's going on...because I'm half and half.

Because they did not identify with a monoracial identity, both Monica and Jenna did not fit into peer groups and organizations at MU that were created and maintained with monoracial understandings of race. Gabrielle also mentioned that institutional spaces caused this lack of fit and forced choice. She explained that there were designated organizations for Black students and Latino students, but the institution did not “ask you, ‘Do you want to be a part of like, mixed people USA?’” Due to this lack of fit into monoracial categories and no option to be a part of a mixed organization, the women in this research felt they had to choose one identity over the other in order to belong to campus groups.

Elizabeth also felt that she was forced to pick one monoracial identity in order to fit into certain spaces on campus. In response to this choosing, she expressed, “It’s hard to be just one or the other, I can’t. And to try and do that, fit in that way, is odd.” The mixed-race women felt that being asked to choose one race was “odd” as well as “uncomfortable.” These women had to decide if they wanted to remain excluded because of their multiracial identity or choose one monoracial identity and attempt to fit in on campus.

Long-standing traditions and events at MU also led to this forced choice. Vanessa spoke about bifurcating her identity for graduation. As a multiracial woman, she questioned whether or not she wanted to or even could go to both Latino graduation and

Black graduation. She mused, “I have to consider. I have to choose. Or can I go to both or should I just go to the overall like big commencement?” Because there was no multiracial or multicultural graduation in which Vanessa could participate, she had to choose one or the other or both.

Even when the women in this study *did* decide to identify with one racial identity, they still encountered exclusion. In all three interviews, Gabrielle expressed how she felt ostracized by the Black community at MU. During her first year at MU, she attempted to make multiple connections with the community but never felt “visible” within the group. She explained, “I really tried to connect with the Black culture and like Black MU, but I wasn't fully accepted.” Georgia also talked about the lack of fit that stemmed from her monoracial peer group, in saying, “Because I’m like half Asian, like I, like they don’t immediately, they don’t immediately like accept me compared to like other Asians who will just look Asian.” Both women spoke about the absence of acceptance within monoracial peer groups. Even when the women were willing to bifurcate their identities in order to fit in, they experienced a lack of acceptance from monoracial peers and continued to experience a lack of fit.

Similarly, the multiracial women participants cited that they were not accepted into monoracial communities at MU because they perceived that peers saw them as “not enough.” Due to being “not whole,” the multiracial women understood themselves to be “not enough” for monoracial groups and individuals. Gabrielle expressed her confusion with this “not enough” concept in her relationship with her roommate:

My roommate and I were like, we were getting to know each other, and she would like go hangout with like a whole bunch of people who are also my friends, but

she wouldn't invite me. And I don't know if that's because of like me as a person or because I wasn't Black enough.

Gabrielle had to question whether or not her racial identity excluded her from “hanging out” with her friend group. Gabrielle later expressed that this “not enough” feeling stemmed from the idea that she grew up in a White community and was perceived as more White than Black. On the walking interview, Vanessa also talked about her inability to conform to what it meant to be Mexican. She explained, “I’m not a Spanish speaker and they’re having Spanish speakers talk on the air, and I’m like... ‘Damn it.’... Sometimes in those aspects, I don’t feel like I’m enough.... Like I can’t speak Spanish, like I’ve tried.” In talking about not being enough, several of the women mentioned their inability to perform certain cultural cues and expectations, such as speaking Spanish or liking certain foods, that could validate their identity. Within these cultural expectations, the realities of stereotypes as the measuring tool in which multiracial women are deemed to be “enough” of a certain race are exposed.

The phenomenon of being forced to choose in order to fit in was mentioned extensively by almost all of the mixed-race women that participated in this research. They felt as if monoracial peer groups and institutional structures did not accept them, which caused them to experience a lack of fit and forced-choice dilemma. However, a few of the multiracial women did not express experiences with this microaggression. For instance, Marlaya mentioned that she was able to explore herself at MU and felt welcomed by several clubs and organizations, specifically the Taekwondo club. Across the interviews, Marlaya talked about the Taekwondo club, which she explained was

“diverse,” involved almost all of her friends, and did not draw attention to difference. She explained further:

I don't feel I was impacted by it [monoracial cliques on campus] just because the group of people that I'm around is pretty diverse, and I feel like there's not as many cliques within that group...it's more about taekwondo. Like you come in and everybody wears a white uniform and everybody looks the same, and the only thing that distinguishes you is your belt rank.

Marlaya joined the Taekwondo club at the very beginning of her first year at MU, seemingly insulating her from the experiences that other participants expressed with lack of fit. Marlaya's positive and welcoming experiences with a diverse organization is not surprising, because one of the ways in which participants responded to their racialized experiences was to seek out diverse communities, such as the Taekwondo club. This response and others are explored further in Theme 4: “Just get yourself involved, girl”: Coping with racialized experiences.

“Terrible for Your Self-Esteem”: Manifestations of Whiteness

Whiteness was another theme that emerged from the stories of the 10 multiracial women in the study. Whiteness is defined as a collection of ideas, norms, and practices, to name a few that have been created throughout history to confer a superior status to those who fit into the parameters of what it means to be White (Haney-Lopez, 2006; Harris, 1993). As participants spoke about their collegiate experiences, it was evident that Whiteness, and manifestations thereof, pervaded MU's campus. Both institutional and individual systems on campus upheld Whiteness. The multiracial women spoke in detail about the manifestations of this Whiteness. Three sub-themes of Whiteness emerged from

a thematic analysis of the qualitative data, including “Susie, Ann, and Bill” have privilege, “Oh My God, I love White girls!,” and “damn little cliques.”

Prior to exploring these sub-themes, it is important to discuss two points concerning Whiteness at MU. First, whereas participants did not explicitly name “Whiteness,” they relayed interactions with manifestations of Whiteness, such as White privilege, White standards of beauty, and the White supremacy, maintained through Greek life. Second, the multiracial women, with and without White heritage, named the impact of Whiteness at MU. However, those women who had grown up in predominantly White communities spoke noticeably less about and expressed less frustration with the manifestations of Whiteness on campus. Georgia explained that the racial homogeneity at MU did not “phase” her, because “I guess I am just used to being around like predominantly White areas.” Elizabeth on the other hand grew up in a multiracial community in California and on the walking interview expressed, “I can’t handle being in a room of all White people [because] even when I’m home, I’m not in a room of all White people.” Therefore the community in which the multiracial women grew up influenced the impact of and their interactions with the predominantly White environment at MU.

“Susie, Ann, and Bill” Have Privilege

Overwhelmingly, the multiracial women in this research mentioned the White privilege that they perceived existed for White students at MU. *White privilege* is the concept that White individuals receive unearned societal advantages, courtesies, and resources (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) that place non-Whites at a disadvantage. White

people are often oblivious to this privilege, though they continue to use and enjoy it. Additionally, “White privilege is a cornerstone of white identity and acts as a bridge that translates the social construction of whiteness into the realm of praxis...[White privilege is] used to construct whiteness, and racialization more generally” (Inwood & Martin, 2008, pp. 377-378). The multiracial women observed privileges conferred to White MU students and also recognized that they were not afforded these same privileges. Therefore the conferral of White privilege to Whites and the denial of these same privileges to the multiracial women secured the racial status quo by reinforcing the “inherent” differences and inequities between White and “other.”

Several of the women spoke more generally about the White privileges they perceived White students held. While walking throughout campus, Monica described her observations of White privilege at MU:

I think a lot of people who are of the majority have the privilege of just being or just relaxing or just taking things easy without having to worry about what that looks like...but it's just like, you can do whatever you want. You can go out on the weekends and be a complete asshole and no one will care.

Monica's quote explains how the ability to be “a complete asshole” and not be reprimanded or critiqued was a privilege of Whiteness. In the same interview, Monica exclaimed, “They [White students] can just be. They can just exist.” When asked if she could “just be,” Monica replied that women of color “have to be a stellar, well-spoken person. You have to be that ‘wow moment’ for people.” Whereas White privilege afforded White students the ability to “just be,” the multiracial women were exempt from this privilege and had to prove they were “stellar.”

Because Whiteness pervaded MU's campus, it was seen as the norm. This was also a privilege, though unnoticed, for White students. For instance, White students could walk around campus and see people that looked like them, allowing them to feel like they belonged in that space. On the walking interview, Vanessa relayed how she, as a non-White woman, could not identify with the majority of students she encountered while walking throughout campus:

Sometimes it's [the White environment] overwhelming, and it's hard to identify with some people; and then when you see people of color on campus, you like smile at them because you haven't seen them in a really long time...yeah and you acknowledge each other....I don't know if it's just like to console one another or whatever....It's like we see each other, like through all the White faces and stuff.

Vanessa stated that through all of the "White faces and stuff," it was hard to find, let alone associate with other students of color. However when she did encounter other students like herself, they would console one another on the Whiteness they navigated at MU.

Several women in the study spoke about their observations of White privilege and its operation within the MU classroom. Sarah relayed a story in which she felt intimidated by the camaraderie amongst the White students. She explained,

There are so much [White] kids in one class, it's just like...I feel intimidated because I don't want to go to the teacher because Susie, Ann, and Bill, Timothy, are going to talk to her, and it's like a line to talk with the teacher. And it's like, "Forget it. I don't need to."

Sarah expressed her perceptions of not being valued in the classroom because she was not a White student. After telling the above story, she went on to speak about a time in which she raised her hand to ask a question in class, but the White professor ignored her. Instead, the professor called on several White students before getting to Sarah's question.

Adding to Sarah's narrative, Georgia was also frustrated by the preferential treatment and privileges bestowed on White students and offered an explanation for why this happened. She proposed, "Maybe because like yeah, like the majority of my professors are Whites. So, it's easier for them [White students and White professors] to like connect with one another and maybe it's like harder for me too." Because they were not able to connect to their professors via Whiteness, both Sarah and Georgia felt that their experiences in the classroom were negatively impacted. They did not ask questions in class, and they did not "connect" like their White peers did. In essence, the privileges White students held in the classroom placed the multiracial women at an academic disadvantage. Moreover, it is important to highlight that White students and White professors most likely viewed these privileges as normal, just the way things are.

Within the above quotes, the multiracial women implied that certain privileges were conferred to White students at MU. White students could walk across campus and see people who looked like them. White students had their questions answered immediately after and during class. White students could also connect more easily with their White professors, who made up the majority of the faculty at MU. However, the crux of the multiracial women's experiences with White privilege was found in their stories and interactions with the Greek system at MU. White privilege, which constructs and maintains Whiteness, was deeply ingrained in Greek social events, historical buildings, traditions, and much more.

"When I think of Greek, I think of...White." When participants mentioned Greek life at MU, they indicated that this meant White Greek life. On the walking

interview, Marlaya explained, “I feel like the fraternities and sororities, that’s where the White people, they’re dominated by the White people. You don’t see too many Asians or Latinas or anything like that, in that type of community.” Vivian echoed Marlaya’s thoughts on the racial makeup of Greek life at MU. She claimed, “When I think of Greek, I think of like White people, like Whites just in Greek life....And I know there are people who are minorities in the Greek system, but that’s just unusual and pretty rare.” Although nine historically Black Greek letter organizations (BGLOs) and seven Greek member organizations within Multi-Cultural Greek Council (MCGC) exist at MU, their presence is eclipsed by the 55 traditionally White organizations that have a long-standing history on campus. Twenty percent of the undergraduate student population was in Greek life at MU. Although this was not the majority of the student body, participants repeatedly mentioned the Whiteness in the Greek system. Moreover, when women spoke about Greek life, they often mentioned the privileges that it conferred to the (White) students who were part of the system.

The Greek system privileged and centered the history of White students at MU. The multiracial women in the study spoke about two of the largest events on campus, which were run by and grounded in MU’s Greek life. The first, MU Dance Marathon (MUDM), was a relatively new philanthropic event spearheaded by Greek chapters. The second, Pick Six, was an annual boat race that has remained an MU tradition over several decades. Pick Six was arguably the largest and longest-standing student event to take place at MU. Alumni and current students descended on MU the weekend of the boat

race to watch the event and take part in the massive parties that occurred during the same weekend.

Gabrielle spoke about the White privilege that accompanied these two Greek-sponsored campus events:

You hear about Pick Six, which is another White Greek thing to do, you know like you don't really hear about like the other, those are like the two big things [Pick Six & MUDM] that MU has a name for....Like that's what MU is known for, like they're not, they're not known for other things...they're just going to remember Pick Six, like that's the history.

Gabrielle described how both Whiteness and Greek life were ingrained within MU. In fact, she asserted that those were the two things that MU was known for. It was not diversity, it was not sports nor academics; it was about Greek life. According to several multiracial women in the study, Greek life concerned only White MU students. Therefore “MU is known for” and privileges White students (past and present), which marginalizes the experiences of non-White students, including multiracial women.

Monica, while walking around campus, also mentioned how the history of White fraternities at MU was woven into the fibers of campus. She pointed out, “and they [Greek chapters] have their names all over things.” She talked about the ways in which buildings, statues, and plaques throughout campus displayed the names of White Greek fraternities and White male alumni. These fixed structures privileged the history of Whiteness and White Greek men at MU. Campus buildings, plaques, and other structures convey racialized stories that privilege the histories and realities of one racial group, while marginalizing others (Inwood & Martin, 2008). Inwood and Martin (2008) explained, “Historical markers and memorials serve as a guide to this broader [campus]

space, highlighting specific people, places and acts” (p. 378) that focus on certain histories and become collective memory of an institution through the built environment. Monica observed how White culture was preserved and privileged through the environmental memorialization of Greek fraternities. She recognized the identity and importance of Whiteness that was built into MU’s campus; unfortunately this identity did not reflect, validate, or honor her own identity as a multiracial woman.

“Oh My God, I Love White Girls!”

Multiracial women talked extensively about their encounters with and perceptions of White women on campus. Through the exploration of stereotypes, this chapter has already covered some of thoughts and racial ideologies that multiracial women held of White women at MU. This current sub-theme provides more details on the mixed-race women’s views and experiences with White women at MU. Specifically, “Everybody’s name is Heather” touches on White women in sororities, “I’m not the ‘trademark for beauty’” focuses on White ideologies of beauty, and “Guys might be more interested in White women” explores multiracial women and dating on campus.

“Everybody’s name is Heather.” Almost all of the multiracial women students in this research referenced their negative perceptions of White sorority women in MU’s Greek system. Jenna spoke about the homogeneity that stemmed from the plethora of White women in sororities at MU. On the walking interview, she declared, “Most of the sorority girls that I have met, like they are all the same, kind of vapid, they all dress the same.” Jane expanded on Jenna’s sentiments and went deeper in describing White women in Greek life:

The girls who are all the same—there's, I mean, there is a specific outfit they wear, they are the same. I have nothing against sororities, but you can always tell if someone is in one. And why is that? It's because they dress the same, they behave the same, they take the same classes, and it seems like the same person 10 times, all sitting together.

White women within the Greek system at MU all looked the same, acted the same, and dressed the same way. On the walking interview, Gabrielle joked about this uniformity in saying that if someone asked her to find a White sorority woman “wearing black leggings and a white top and she has long blonde hair...in the middle of a campus bar on Saturday night” she would have to comb through “80 people” who fit the above description.

The multiracial women's narratives concerning White women in Greek life conveyed the parameters of what was required to be in a traditionally White sorority at MU. Sorority sisters were White, blonde, wore a certain outfit, carried a specific bag, and acted “vapid.” From this description, which stemmed from a great deal of the participants' narratives, the multiracial women did not feel they could fit into White Greek life. In fact, several of the women spoke about how they stuck out in the homogeneity of Greek life. As mentioned in Chapter 4, only one participant was a member of a sorority at MU, and she claimed it was unlike any other PanHellenic sorority on campus because it was diverse.

Sarah provided an example of how the reverberating sameness of White women in the Greek system caused her to be seen as different. Although Sarah did not mind being seen as different, she did not appreciate others' reactions to her non-normative, that is, non-White, identity. She explained,

I feel different...It's like, “Oh, I'm the only one who looks like this. Yeah, you look like her because you both have like the same blonde hair, same nose, same

blue eyes, like you all look the same.”...I think it’s great that I’m different. Like I love being different, but I just don’t like how people react to me being different....Everybody has to have like blonde hair, I guess blue eyes, everybody has to have drinks from Starbucks, like everybody has to wear the short shorts, like everybody has to have the accent, everybody’s name is Heather....I don’t fit into a social norm.

Although Sarah began by asserting that she did not mind not fitting into the sorority girl stereotype, she later expressed how problematic it was that people on campus reacted to her as if she were a foreign object. Due to her inability to fit into the White homogeneity of campus, she did not feel like she could belong to a sorority. She felt like a visible outsider.

Elizabeth and Monica also spoke about how they were made to feel different, and not in a good way, from the Whiteness that pervaded sorority life. Both women mentioned this difference in conjunction with multiracial microaggressions. Elizabeth noted how her non-White racial identity was put on display at a sorority event. She said, “They would all point out that I was Mexican and that it’s sort of odd. It was just more like, ‘Oh, you’re Mexican?’ because of my last name--‘Oh you’re Mexican? Oh, that’s interesting.’” Elizabeth was assumed to be monoracial due to her last name, which was a multiracial microaggression. Moreover, the White women in the sorority found it “interesting” that she was Mexican. Compared to the Whiteness of Greek life, Elizabeth was labeled as different and therefore “odd.”

Monica explained that multiracial and biracial women were probably not the ideal candidates for White sororities. However, she entertained the thought that she and other multiracial women might be accepted into a White sorority as a token for diversity, which aligned with objectification, a multiracial microaggression. She thought out loud,

Being multiracial and biracial, it's like, I don't think that in the like predominant Greek cultural here that's valued, taken seriously maybe. I don't even know.... I would be worried that if I went to sorority, and like they could like suddenly claim they have this diverse thing. I would be worried about that. I would be very worried....I feel like I see that happen a lot. Like, I feel that happens a lot as a biracial person, you are the token, or multiracial, you are the token.

Monica would not have been surprised if she was accepted into a White sorority so that the organizations could “claim” diversity. In other words, she could see herself being objectified and placed as a token in the Greek house. As noted in the previous theme concerning multiracial microaggressions and objectification, several participants felt that they were placed in White spaces to serve as representatives or tokens for diversity. It was only because of this tokenization that Monica thought White women would be open to including multiracial women in their organizations. The White Greek community, and more specifically White women in sororities at MU, did not accept multiracial women because they did not fit into a “societal norm” and diverged from parameters of Whiteness.

“I’m not the ‘trademark for beauty.’” Beauty and the concept of who was valued as beautiful on MU’s campus represented another sub-theme that naturally emerged from the larger theme of Whiteness. The multiracial women in this study continually referenced White women as the standard for beauty. A majority of these women relayed that MU’s “version of beauty” was something to the effect of “a White woman, so uh, who’s thin, and ah, dresses well, and probably has straight hair.” Such White women were everywhere on campus, which was made apparent when the mixed-race women continually pointed to White women during the walking interviews. White

women's homogenous presence acted as a constant reminder that multiracial women did not meet the standard of beauty set by society and maintained within MU.

On the walking interview, Monica explained how being constantly surrounded by White women did "terrible things for your self-esteem." When asked if she felt beautiful on campus, she responded with a story worth quoting at length:

Oh beauty...I found something the other day online...like 18 things of privilege, or like White people of privilege do not realize. And it was like, #4 was like, "You can open up any book or any movie and not realize that you were like raised as the trademark for beauty."...I'm like short and curvy, and a lot of people here I think are like really thin. And I remember like in high school, I always thought I was pretty. I really did, and then I came to college and I'm like not pretty anymore....There are a lot of White people and just people that don't look like me anymore. And so, I didn't think I was pretty anymore...it's just not what dominant people look like. I find myself straightening my hair more. I find myself having to exercise more because, eh, gotta be skinnier! And that type of stuff is hard to admit...it does suck, but that's how I feel about it. It's terrible; I could never wear shorts that short [points to a White woman wearing workout shorts]. I can't wear extra small leggings. My body type is not...I feel like a lot of women of color have a similar body type to me; it's just not...it's not White.

White privilege is implicit in this sub-theme and in Monica's narrative. White women could walk around campus without "realizing" they met and maintained the standards of beauty set by society and upheld at MU. Monica on the other hand, who is "short and curvy...like a lot of women of color," did not feel beautiful on campus. Her self-esteem took a hit when she arrived at MU. As a result, she attempted to conform to White standards of beauty by straightening her hair, losing weight, and other "types of stuff."

Like Monica, several multiracial women involved in this study mentioned hair in connection with beauty. Hair was a signifier that multiracial women were not White and therefore different from the beautiful White women on campus. Jenna called her hair a "foreign object," and Sarah referred to it as a "hybrid monster." Both women referenced

their hair on the walking interview and explained that this physical feature called attention to their racial difference. On the walking interview, Jane described the connection between beauty, Whiteness, and hair in more detail:

I feel like an outsider like usually when it's raining. Because usually my hair misbehaves so much; everyone else's hair looks so cute under their baseball hats and their umbrellas, and I can't do that and it's like the fit in thing, and I just have to remind myself of that silly line from [the movie] *What a Girl Wants*, where he is like, "Why are you trying so hard to fit in when you were born to stand out?" And so, definitely it's hard when like everyone has a specific style, and like the middle part right now where like straight hair is so beautiful, and like Jennifer Aniston can do it, why can't we? ... So it's just like hair and back to beauty and how it fits in and do I fit in here? Um, maybe if my hair was different I would.

Jane expressed how her hair made her stand out and feel like an outsider amongst the White women with straight hair and middle parts on campus. Like Monica, Jane pondered how she could conform to White norms of beauty in order fit in. However, in the end, she concluded that due to her hair and its non-White qualities, she would most likely never fit in, nor be perceived as beautiful while at MU.

The multiracial women in this research internalized White ideals of beauty. Frederickson and Roberts (1997) explained how women learn what is and is not beautiful from society, and more specifically, American media (which is centered around ideals of Whiteness). These learned standards of beauty become internalized and are used to construct individuals' views and critiques of their own bodies. This internalization results in women's perceptions and formations of their physical image (Frederickson & Robertson, 1997). In other words, a White standard of beauty is the filter through which women make meaning of, form, and assess their appearance. For instance, Monica relayed that the White standard of beauty on campus caused her to no longer think she

was pretty, because she did not look like White women, that is, the standard of beauty. Therefore to feel more beautiful, the multiracial women drew on their internalized understandings of beauty and attempted to emulate these understandings. Participants spoke about straightening their hair and working out more in an attempt to be slim, more like White women, and subsequently, hopefully, perceived as beautiful.

“Guys might be more interested in White women.” The standards of beauty that seeped throughout MU also influenced the multiracial women’s forays into dating and romantic relationships. Because they did not fit into White norms of beauty and because there were plenty of White women around for men to choose from, the mixed-race participants wondered if male peers would find them attractive. Monica relayed that she was recently divorced from a Latino male who was also a student at MU, whom she was convinced wanted her to be (more) White. She explained,

[My ex-husband] liked women who did not look like me. They were blondes. They were not very curvy....I just always knew that his type was very different from me, and then when he cheated on me with a [White] woman who was very different from me, like I’d been expecting it all this time. That felt terrible for me. I mean because it shattered like my self-esteem....He constantly was speaking with other girls throughout the entire marriage, just like, you know, women that were White.

The relationship with her ex-husband was damaging to Monica’s self-esteem.

Throughout the interviews, she questioned why men were not attracted to curvy, “strong” women such as herself. Coming out of this relationship, Monica expressed a great deal of concern about her dating prospects, while walking and talking throughout campus:

Like how many people are going to be attracted to me like this [gestures to her natural hair]? Like me, in this form of me? Like how many people are going to be attracted to that? Like, I don’t look as, the hair is not as White anymore; there are certain features that are not as White anymore. Am I going to be attractive to

people? You have to think about it...Mexicans love them [White women], Black men love them [White women]. I mean I don't get disappointed, but I'm just like, I literally see people like, "Oh my God, I love White girls!"

Monica once again referenced her natural hair and the way it made her different from the White women at MU. Due to her inability to conform to standards of beauty set by society and adopted by MU, she was convinced that men of different races would not be attracted to her. In a subsequent interview, Monica was resigned to the notion that she would have to wait until after college to meet someone that would date her. This thought conveyed how Monica believed the White environment and not her looks was the issue at hand.

Also on the walking interview, Vivian relayed how her non-White features made her less desirable to men on campus. She talked about her complexion and how it did not "match" the norms of beauty at MU:

I think I am confident in my appearances, but I don't know if I, like I'll have moments where I think like, "I don't know if that guy thinks I'm attractive" and I'm like, "Darn, I don't know"...Because like, I just feel like there is that stereotype of like, they want a girl who looks a certain way and I have like a darker complexion, so I don't really match that.

Vivian was led to question whether or not her darker complexion when compared to White women at MU would deter male students from finding her attractive. The value placed on Whiteness and White women on campus caused her to question her appearance and destabilized her confidence.

Some of the mixed-race women who spoke about beauty and dating referred specifically to their interactions with White men on campus, or rather the questioning of their interactions with White male peers. Gabrielle explicated on this thought:

I haven't been able to like go out and like actively um, get like a White boyfriend or something because I wouldn't get anything in return like I mean it's not reciprocal. So I don't even waste my time most of the time. Like you know a guy might just be more interested in White women.

Gabrielle, like other multiracial women in the study, doubted the possibility that White men would want to date her. These women expressed that White men on campus would rather date White women. Interestingly, Jenna was the only participant who was currently dating a White male MU student. In the first interview, she expressed that her boyfriend would tease her about how White she acted. Jenna also explained that she did not like to bring up race with her boyfriend for fear it would draw attention to the racial differences between them, that is, that he was White and she was not.

In the above quotes, the multiracial women expressed concerns about their dating prospects and relationships with men on campus. Whereas some participants, such as Gabrielle, mentioned their interactions with White men, others, like Monica, addressed their inability to appeal to Mexican and/or Black men. Participants' concerns that men of differing races, White and non-White, did not find them attractive exposes the pervasiveness of White ideology at MU. In other words, White standards of beauty were not contained and maintained within the White community. Instead, the multiracial women perceived men of color as well as White men to find White women more attractive than they were. Monica may have said it best in relaying that people at MU are "like, 'Oh my God, I love White girls!'"

"Damn Little Cliques"

All multiracial women in this study referred to the social cliques that existed on MU's campus. The women described cliques as being grouped by monoracial categories.

In other words, students of certain monoracial identities, such as Black, Latina/o, and Asian, gravitated toward one another and socialized according to their race. Sarah explained this phenomenon:

Yeah, and I just notice like a lot of people don't like, and they don't mix here. Like, a White is supposed to stick to Whites; African Americans, African Americans; Indians with Indians; Asians with Asians. And they kind of like when you try to talk to them, they will be like cliquish.

Although these are Sarah's words, they reflect the observations of nearly all 10 multiracial women involved in this study.

The White clique was the largest and most visible clique that the 10 multiracial women commented on. Monica explained, "Since MU is majority White, like I don't really see their clique because there's just so many White people." White peers made up the greatest portion of the student body, which may explain why it was the clique with the largest presence on campus. Moreover, the history of this Whiteness and the White clique were ingrained in the campus culture, as seen in the narratives above. The multiracial women suggested that because the White clique was all encompassing, students of color formed their own cliques to feel more comfortable on campus.

Georgia explained her theory as to why monoracial students of color grouped together by race at MU. She posited, "I just think like they group together so that they feel like more comfortable in an environment that's predominantly White." Due to the overwhelming Whiteness on campus, monoracial students in the minority found comfort in their own communities of color. Building off Georgia's narrative, Elizabeth explained how MU as an institution fostered racial segregation on campus:

It always bothered me, to be honest, that there, not that there's a Black Cultural Center, because I mean there's a Latino Cultural Center, and there's an Asian Cultural Center and there's a Buddhist temple and all that. But it bothered me that there is a residence hall where a floor is dedicated to just African Americans. I think just the fact that MU is—I guess like originally it was set up to give that support because I think it was created back when segregation was so pretty prominent. But now, I just question why you still need it because now you're basically saying, you know, come to MU but we're going to segregate you by your choice. So it creates that separation.

Georgia mentioned that resources set up for monoracial students of color created not only monoracial cliques but also segregation between each respective clique. Sarah also talked about MU's role in creating and maintaining these monoracial cliques:

They [MU] do a good job of creating safe havens for differential cultures so they can remain in their damn little cliques. I think they do a fine job with that. Once you're in your Asian community, you want to stay with your Asian community and you don't want to break out, because you feel like, "Oh I'm home" or like in a safe zone.

Furthermore, Monica explained that BGLOs and organizations in MCGC "create separation" between students from differing racial backgrounds on campus.

In talking about racial cliques on campus, Monica, Georgia, and Elizabeth referred to the institutional resources, such as residence halls and culture centers that were available to monoracial students of color on campus. Historically, these spaces were meant to be a "safe zone" for minoritized students at MU. However, the multiracial woman did not look favorably on these institutional support systems because they formed and maintained monoracial cliques *and* created the perception of impermeable boundaries between these cliques. The multiracial student participants did not find it easy to navigate or permeate these monoracial cliques. In fact, they did not know how they "fit into this picture" when it came to a community or clique on campus.

None of the mixed-race women involved in this research knew about a clique or space that was specific to multiracial women students on campus. Nor were there cliques that were multiracial in that they incorporated a mix of different races. Instead, cliques were formed around monoracial understandings of race. On the walking interview, Sarah explained these monoracial cliques and lack of a multiracial space, in depth:

It's not like there can be a mixed clique because, one, there's not that much mixed kids, and if there are, they are trying to blend in with another clique to be accepted....I'd be happy with a mixed clique, Black, Asian, all the races. However, given the option to be in a clique, I would like a multiracial clique because they would understand at least what's going on. And I bet that's how other people do feel in their other cliques.

Also on her walking interview, Jenna echoed Sarah's sentiments:

I've never seen like a group of multiracial people, I mean in my experience, it just does not happen. Because I mean there are not that many, and I feel like it's hard in and of itself to find another person who is multiracial and be like "okay!"... You can't be yourself because you're, there is not like a group of just you. Unless you want to be by yourself. You have to figure out what works best for you, or you can hang out with both, but I don't feel like there is a multicultural group for one to be a part of.

Both Sarah and Jenna posited that there were not a great deal of mixed-race women on campus. Furthermore, they believed that women of mixed heritage often chose a monoracial identity in order to be accepted into a monoracial clique, and therefore they did not often know if someone was mixed or not. Sarah also insinuated that students who belonged to monoracial cliques were surrounded by peers that "understand at least what's going on," but that she, as a multiracial woman, did not have that same luxury. Finally, cliques played a large role in the forced-choice dilemma and lack of fit, a multiracial microaggression that the participants encountered at MU. Due to racial groupings and

their impermeable boundaries, cliques excluded the multiracial women and/or forced them to choose one monoracial identity over others in hopes of fitting in.

“Just Get Yourself Involved, Girl”: Coping With Racialized Experiences

The previous three themes, “Should I order fried chicken?”: multiracial women and racial stereotypes, “I am biracial so it may not hit me the same way”: multiracial microaggressions, and “Terrible for your self-esteem”: manifestations of Whiteness, detailed ways in which the 10 multiracial women undergraduate students experienced their race at MU. More often than not, their encounters with these racialized experiences on campus were not positive. Subsequently, in an attempt to navigate and survive these experiences with race, the multiracial women developed a taxonomy of coping strategies. According to Museus (in press), “Coping responses can be viewed as mechanisms by which people understand, reframe, or react to a particular experience, such as their encounters with racial prejudice and discrimination in higher education” (np). The 10 multiracial women in this research utilized five divergent coping responses, including “I constantly have to explain myself”; “When I touch my skin, I don’t turn pink”; “I was looking for more diversity”; “I avoid them by all means”; and minimizing racialized experiences. These five coping mechanisms are explored in greater depth below.

“I constantly have to explain myself.” In response to their racialized experiences on campus, the multiracial women participants often took the time to explain their multiple racial identities to individuals. These women took the time to explain their identities because they felt others “need to learn [because] it [multiracial identity] is not something they are educated in.” This coping mechanism was most often utilized when

the women were asked, “What are you?” Jane was asked this objectifying question so frequently that she drew a family tree on the inside of her planner. When individuals asked her, “What are you?” she would pull out her planner and refer to the drawing. She explained further her thoughts on creating the family tree:

I really don't want to explain my family tree to every stranger. And I was doing that to the point where I, I wrote it down in my planner, a tree, and when people would ask, I just flipped to the page and handed it over. Because it was something I was explaining every day.

In another interview, Jane stated, “I feel like I constantly have to explain myself while other people don't.” Jane felt that her physical ambiguity, coupled with her Asian last name, caused individuals to constantly inquire about her racial heritage. These conversations became taxing. She coped with these discussions by providing a stock explanation for people that inquired about her identity.

The multiracial women in this study relayed that they often explained their heritage to make others feel more comfortable with their racial ambiguity. Elizabeth expressed, “I can't just walk into a room of Mexican people I have never met before usually, and just be Mexican. I will get looked at first and have to explain that I am Mexican before it is comfortable.” Elizabeth felt the need to explain her White and Mexican ancestry so that people in the room might become comfortable with her ambiguous identity. Explaining their identities provided the multiracial women comfort because they were able to explain their multiple realities and refute monoracial categorization.

“When I Touch It [My Skin], I Don’t Turn Pink”

Related to the explanation of their identity, the multiracial women took the time to prove their racial background. Women pointed to visible features that would show or prove to others that they were mixed with certain races. Elizabeth pointed to her physical features when she needed to convince people she had more than just White heritage. Near the end of the walking interview, she described,

One of the ways that I prove to people is that my skin is yellow [slaps forearm skin multiple times with hand] like an Asian’s; when I touch it, I don’t turn pink. That’s how I prove to a lot of people. Or that my eyes are almond shaped, they’re not regular, or that my hair, my eyebrows are black and there is brown in them, they match my skin tone.

Also on her walking interview, Georgia mentioned that she proved her racial heritage by showing she was knowledgeable about Native American culture. She relayed,

I feel like, in a way, I have to prove myself that I’m like worthy of being able to claim it [Native American heritage]....[I] use what little knowledge I know of the words of the language, words, and maybe talk about stories my grandma has told me or things I’ve read in history text books or stuff.

Both Elizabeth and Georgia took the time to point out racial signifiers, such as skin color, eye shape, and cultural knowledge, that led others to believe they were indeed the race(s) they claimed to be.

In another interview, Georgia talked more in-depth about proving her identity. This time, she alternated between the performances of her monoracial identities in order to prove her background. She explained, “So I don’t feel the need to code switch until I feel challenged to. Unless, I feel like I need to like assert the fact that I’m Asian and like I know what I’m talking about.” Georgia performed monoracial identities only when she felt she needed to prove her cultural ties to her Asian heritage or Native American

heritage. Khanna and Johnson (2010) termed this over-performance as accenting.

Accenting is when a multiracial individual places emphasis on a preferred monoracial identity in order to highlight or accentuate it (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). Multiracial individuals employ this “identity work” (Snow & Anderson, 1987) in order to prove that they can fit into and belong to monoracial groups (Khanna & Johnson, 2010).

Gabrielle also spoke about her need to accent her monoracial identities (Black and White) in order to fit in with multiple monoracial groups at MU. While passing the Admissions Building on campus during the walking interview, she described how she altered the performance of her racial identity when working in Admissions:

Depending on who I am around, I can be, ya know, a little more, I don't even know how you would say it, just like a little more stereotypical African American. And depending on who I am around, I will bring out my quote unquote, “White side.” Especially, this happens a lot when I am doing tours, and say I have a tour of mostly African American students who probably don't see me as African American. So I'll start, I'll start talking a little differently and like drawing out my words and trying to make it sound, and without like saying it, like I, I connect with you. But if I'm around like, like a tour group that is like the majority students, I'll just be like, I guess, like normal me.

Gabrielle utilized accenting to prove her affinity with one monoracial identity over another. It also helped her to connect with either African American students or White students, but not both at the same time. In another interview, Gabrielle expressed that when she switched to either identity, she had to “overcompensate” for, or accent that race. To her, this overcompensation would prove to others that she was more Black or more White than the other race.

Proving process. Complementing the proving of their identities, the multiracial women responded to tokenization by proving their intelligence. Fries-Britt and Turner

(2001) identified the *proving process* as a way for students of color to assert their intelligence and combat negative racial stereotypes. The women in this research embarked on this journey to prove their worth and intellect to peers and classmates. As mentioned previously, Monica asserted that being a woman of color meant you had to work harder: “There has to be a drive, you have to be a stellar well-spoken person, you have to be that ‘wow moment’ for people.” Jenna substantiated Monica’s assertions:

I always feel like I have to prove my merits and I have to go out of my way...like in that [chemistry] class, I definitely felt like I had to know what was going on in the chem lab, like do my stuff, get good grades, just so like there was that distinction.

These multiracial women who experienced stereotype threat and the questioning of their ability in the classroom felt they had to be “stellar” and work extra hard in order to disprove myths attributed to their assumed monoracial identity. Jenna said it best when explaining that she had to prove her “merit” and assert that she was not simply a token for diversity or an affirmative action admit. Research on the proving process continues to focus on monoracial students of color (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001), but there has been no research on the process or the impact of the process for multiracial students, let alone multiracial women students.

“I Was Looking for More Diversity”

Another coping mechanism the multiracial women in this study utilized involved the creation of a diverse community on campus. For the most part, this strategy allowed them to feel insulated at a PWI. Elizabeth explained this phenomenon when she talked about her experiences at Greek recruitment:

They [White sorority women] would just talk about things that I just had no relation with whatsoever. About going on boat cruises or things. Like I don't, I've never done that so I know nothing about it...I could tell that I was looking for more diversity, just because that's what I am like.

Elizabeth was not able to connect with the White community because they did not share her experiences or background. However, she knew that she would feel comfortable in a diverse community because it is not only what she came from but also what she physically embodied. Elizabeth ended up joining a sorority that she claimed prided itself on multiculturalism and acceptance of all types of women. She relayed, "[My sorority] is unlike any other PanHellenic sorority, it's super diverse." Throughout the three interviews, Elizabeth expressed how happy she was with her choice because her multicultural sorority provided a diverse peer group that doubled as a support system.

Multiracial women in this study attempted to surround themselves with people from different backgrounds and areas of campus, which resulted in more positive campus experiences. Diverse communities not only protected them from Whiteness, it also provided a permeable social group that the women felt comfortable in. Vanessa explained the need for a diverse community at MU:

Campus is definitely White for the most part, but because I surround myself with these organizations and stuff I do, I get to see that diverse clip of campus. Because other people who aren't involved in them are like, "Where are people that look like me on campus?" Because I have like seen people say that before, and I was like, "Just get yourself involved girl, like, you'll see them."

Vanessa found her social community in the organizations that she participated in throughout her years at MU, particularly MRO. She cited that involvement in extracurricular activities allowed her to meet and connect with people who looked like her, that is, people of color, on campus.

Campus resources were crucial in aiding the women in the creation of their diverse communities. All of the women who coped via support systems mentioned that Upward Scholars and/or MRO were integral in the building of these supportive communities. Gabrielle had been involved with MRO since her first year at MU. She asserted that it was the reason she was able to connect to the institution. She claimed,

That's why it's [MRO] important because it helps create a community for people who feel very marginalized. MRO is my community....And so, I felt more at home in a multicultural setting...with like people that are African American, people that were Latino, people that were White. And so, that's why I really connect with the MRO community.

Sarah and Jane spoke about their experiences with Upward Scholars and how it connected them to the few women of color they were now close to. For instance, Jane explained that her friends, the ones MU wanted to take a picture of and put on a bus, came from Upward Scholars. On the walking interview, Sarah introduced me to two of her female friends of color, both of whom she met through the scholarship program. For both women, Upward Scholars fostered a community, though small, that allowed them to befriend women of color.

The creation of diverse communities was impactful and positive in the lives of these multiracial women at MU. However, the women did not believe that the institution did much, if anything, to foster these communities. The mixed-race women in this research relayed that they had good interactions with faculty and staff at MU but did not believe that "higher management" cared about their existence nor their support. Monica pondered, "We have really great staff, and there is really great faculty here too, but like, what's happening on administrative levels?" Gabrielle explained further why she thought

top-level administrators, and therefore the institution, neglected diversity. She provided, “Higher management, they’re you know, they’re White and they don’t really understand diversity issue.” Although diverse communities were integral in the multiracial women’s survival at MU, the creation of such communities was left to their own devices.

Unfortunately, these women did not feel that the institution and White decision makers at the institution cared about mixed-race women enrolled at MU.

“I Avoid Them by all Means”

The multiracial women in this study utilized avoidance as another coping mechanism. More often than not, this coping strategy was employed in response to multiracial microaggressions and occasionally when encountering Whiteness. The women avoided these racialized experiences in three manners: avoiding discussions, avoiding spaces, and avoiding inquiries. These three avoidant strategies are explained in detail below.

Avoiding discussions. Participants did not always employ avoidance as their first coping strategy. In fact, several of the women would begin with the explanation of their racial identity. However, some mentioned that their racial rationalizations were not well received or heard by others. The women would then default to the avoidance of any further discussion. Vivian relayed how she would explain her identity to people on campus, and if they did not accept her description, she would simply walk away:

[I tell them] “I think you should just believe me on this one.” I just leave it at that. If they persist, I’m like, “Okay, well I’ll see you around,” like “Bye.” I’m not going to waste my time like if somebody’s that stubborn; I’m not going to really waste my time.

Vivian, like several other multiracial women in this study, responded to negative racialized experiences with one coping mechanism (explaining), but when it failed, she would revert to avoidance of any further discussion.

Above, Vivian mentioned that starting a discussion about her identity would be a waste of her time. Other mixed-race women in this study mentioned that debating their identity was not “worth” it. Georgia explained how she avoided talking to others who were “too arrogant” to listen. She said, “I just learn to like sometimes shut my mouth when, I’m like, people are getting too arrogant and it’s not even worth trying to explain.” Monica echoed Georgia’s assertions: “There’s no point in like talking to people that don’t want to hear about it.” When the multiracial women felt they could not get through to others on campus, they simply walked away and avoided any further conversation, because it was not worth their time and would most likely go nowhere.

Avoiding spaces. Participants avoided physical spaces to cope with several of their racialized experiences. This evasion of place was utilized in response to multiracial microaggressions and manifestations of Whiteness. In regards to multiracial microaggressions, Jane avoided the spaces in which she felt tokenized by both her peers and faculty. She expressed, “And I actually clump up. I don’t talk because it’s like my word is taken heavier than everyone’s else’s because I’ve experienced race. And I took, yeah, I’ve avoided all like race and journalism classes because of that.” In the first section of this quote, Jane relayed that she avoided discussions about her race because she often felt like a native informant for Black women, a group she did not identify with. In the second half of the quote, Jane spoke about avoiding certain classes that might cause her

to be the token for diversity. Therefore, she evaded the classroom, a physical space, in fear of encountering objectification.

Other women in this study avoided certain spaces in which they knew they would encounter Whiteness. In all three interviews, Sarah commented on the tense relationships she had with White women in her current residence hall. She was currently coping by ignoring the White women, but also planned to move out the following year so she would not have to see them on a daily basis. She described, “I don’t care; this year is over. I’m not going to have to see those girls again...just have to try to get to next year and just ignore it.” At the time of the interview, Sarah was minimizing the impact of Whiteness by ignoring it. However, her long-term plan for coping involved avoiding the spaces these White women frequented.

Because it fostered racial segregation and cliques, Monica disliked Greek life at MU. Subsequently, she attempted to avoid cliques and the Greek system all together. She said, “I avoid them [cliques] by all means. I don't really appreciate the [Greek] system at all....I find it takes a lot of my energy and that's why I don't address them.” Monica mentioned that she not only avoided cliques, but also students in the Greek system because it “takes a lot of energy” to be around them. In avoiding certain spaces on campus, multiracial women in this study attempted to decrease their encounters with Whiteness and multiracial microaggressions. Unfortunately, this coping strategy can have deleterious impacts on the multiracial women, because they are not able to move freely about campus.

Avoiding inquiries. The multiracial women also attempted to avoid inquiries into their identity. They seemingly anticipated their encounters with multiracial microaggressions. Therefore the participants aimed to ward off these slights prior to their occurrence. They did this by dropping hints about their racial heritage. Gabrielle explained how she would provide subtle clues about her mixed-race ancestry when entering a classroom for the first time:

When people do assume and I sometimes, I try and get obvious like with my races... like a new faculty member, and they're looking at me, like I can tell when people are trying to figure me out. And if I was kind of like, maybe obvious in not so many words, like say, "Oh yeah my dad's from [the Midwest], my mom's from Manhattan" or something. Or like, "Oh my dad is in a Black fraternity...my mom was in a White sorority." So, like alright, come on, figure...so sometimes I only drop those hints...because I could get, I get so like annoyed.

Vivian also utilized this avoidance tactic:

I just tell them straight away because I think they're curious, and then they get it wrong, and I'm more bothered by the fact that they get it wrong versus them just asking me. So I just tell them because I don't want to be frustrated with them.

Gabrielle and Vivian told others that they were mixed-race prior to having them assume that they were monoracial or their being asked the "What are you?" question. Both women decided to come out as multiracial in order to thwart various microaggressions, such as assumptions and impositions. Moreover, both women explained they avoided inquiries so that they would not end up "annoyed" or "frustrated" with the perpetrators of such aggressions.

Minimizing Racialized Encounters

Finally, the multiracial women in this research coped with negative racialized encounters by minimizing the magnitude of these interactions. They minimized their

experiences with race in two manners. First, they were resigned to the fact that these encounters were just a way of life. Second, they acknowledged others' experiences with racism, but claimed that they, as multiracial women, did not actually encounter racial prejudice and/or discrimination.

Just the way it is. Participants accepted the reality that stereotypes, multiracial microaggressions, and Whiteness would always be a part of their lives. In fact, they explained that they had battled against these negative racialized experiences for a great deal of their lives, so they did not expect anything to be different at MU. In other words, their experiences with race at MU were “just the way” things were and would continue to be.

For instance, in talking about the lack of women of color in the Business School during her walking interview, Vivian cited, “It doesn't really bother me; I don't know what to say, that's just the way it is.” Elizabeth, who was also in the Business School, provided similar thoughts on being one of few women of color in an academic space. She relayed that she was the only woman of color in her speech and debate team growing up, therefore, when it came to the homogeneity of the Business School, she exclaimed, “So, I'm used to it!” Vivian and Elizabeth described how this homogeneity was a part of their past and current realities, whereas Monica explained how it would also be a part of the future. In talking about the Whiteness at MU, Monica sighed, “I guess it's just part of the package deal, but like...it's just gonna keep happening.” Vivian, Elizabeth, and Monica were seemingly reconciled to the idea that Whiteness and homogeneity were and would always be a force within their lives.

The multiracial women in this study also utilized this coping mechanism when encountering multiracial microaggressions. On the walking interview, after telling the story of her colleague of 3 years who assumed she was both Black and Latina, Gabrielle described how she responded to this man's assumption and imposition of identity:

I just kind of try and laugh it off because it's already awkward enough for them. Um, but it's like, it's irritating obviously, but like that's the life I lead. I have been dealing with it for 22 years; it's not going to change...I mean it's like, it's annoying, but like honestly, you just get used after a while.

Gabrielle described how throughout the 22 years of her life, she had encountered the assumption that she was Latina. Though irritating, encounters with microaggressions were nothing new to her. In fact, it was just a part of life that she had become used to.

“Removed [from racism].” From the first three themes outlined in this chapter, it is evident that all 10 of the multiracial women in this study had at least one story to tell regarding negative racialized experiences at MU. However, several of these women indicated that they did not actually encounter prejudice and discrimination on the basis of their race. Instead, the women acknowledged the realities of racial prejudice and discrimination that monoracial students of color faced at MU, but asserted that they themselves did not encounter racial aggressions.

For instance, in her final interview, Monica explained how the lack of racial diversity on campus might negatively impact Black students:

I look and think about it all the time, because like, “You [MU] don't have that much diversity.”...If I were to say like, “people” and when I say “people,” I, I mean mostly probably, probably Black people who realize when they come here, you know, there's not a lot of people who look like them....But so that, I think that that's an issue, like Black people are aware that this is not necessarily the most friendly.

Interestingly, Monica self-identified as Black *and/or* biracial throughout the three interviews. However, when speaking about Black students and the isolation they encountered on campus, she removed herself from this negative situation. When asked about this incongruence, Monica could not offer a coherent explanation. Instead, she attempted to explain, “I don’t know, what I wanna say...the degrees of separation, like how separated away is it from the actual, like firsthand discrimination.” Monica felt separated or removed from “firsthand discrimination,” claiming that these acts did not impact her in a direct manner.

Similarly, Jenna relayed an incident of racism that caused a great deal of backlash on campus. A billboard in a residence hall asked, “Can Santa Claus be a Black man?” The billboard went on to ask whether or not this Black Santa would visit the Ghetto on Christmas Eve. Jenna expressed that she could see why Black students might be offended, but that she was not impacted by the billboard. Unlike Monica, Jenna had an explanation for this phenomenon. She explained, “I personally didn’t feel attacked. I felt like my dad was attacked.” She also proposed that because she did not fit into the “stereotypical” Black girl category, “I’m like removed” from the racism at MU. Because she was not monoracial Black, nor stereotypically Black, Jenna claimed that she was removed from racialized incidents on campus. Although no complete explanation was offered for this exempt status from racism, it is certainly a coping strategy that requires more attention because it relates to mixed-race women in higher education.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to detail the findings that emerged from a thematic analysis of the narratives of 10 multiracial women undergraduate students attending a PWI. “Should I order fried chicken?”: multiracial women and racial stereotypes, “I am biracial so it may not hit me the same way”: multiracial microaggressions, and “Terrible for your self-esteem”: manifestations of Whiteness constituted the three overarching racialized experiences that the multiracial women in this research encountered. The fourth and final theme, “Just get yourself involved, girl”: coping with racialized experiences, detailed the five ways in which the participants responded to and coped with these racialized experiences. In order to more fully answer this study’s research questions and to interrogate the structures at play in the lives of these 10 mixed-race women students, the next chapter, using CRT and CRF as frameworks, analyzes the findings that were detailed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6. ANALYSIS

Narratives of the 10 multiracial women undergraduate students attending a PWI provided rich, detailed accounts of their experiences with race on campus. Societal and institutional structures that have been constructed and maintained over time deeply impacted these multiracial women's racialized encounters at MU. Additionally, the intersections of race and gender influenced the ways in which the women navigated these experiences. To further understand and critique these experiences, structures, and intersections, this chapter presents an analytical discussion of the research findings.

Critical race theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (CRF) are the theoretical frameworks in which the women's narratives are analyzed. Taken together, these two frameworks allow for a closer look into participants' racialized experiences at MU. CRT is utilized as a lens to critique race and racism in the lives of the multiracial women. CRF is used as a tool to focus further on the intersections of race and gender in those women's lives. These frameworks allow for a critique and deconstruction of the interlocking systems of oppression, specifically racism and sexism, that impacted the experiences of the multiracial women in this study at MU. Several tenets of CRT and CRF are pertinent to this analysis, including (a) racial realism, (b) the link between interest convergence and differential racialization, (c) Whiteness as property, (d) challenging ahistoricism, (e)

intersectionality and antiessentialism, and (f) the connections between experiential knowledge and challenging dominant ideology.

The Structures of Racial Realism

Race is a socially constructed concept that has been manipulated and maintained by people in power, such as Whites, to ensure the status quo (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011; Omi & Winant, 1986). Throughout time, race and racism have become endemic, ingrained, and commonplace within U.S. society. Though race is socially constructed, it remains a very real and influential component in the lives of the multiracial women in this study. Participants explained the endemic nature of racism in their lives by relaying their encounters with race and racism as “just the way it is.” In other words, these women viewed their encounters with race on campus as normal and commonplace.

In detailing their experiences with multiracial microaggressions, stereotypes, and Whiteness, participants conveyed how they had experienced racial discrimination and/or prejudice on campus. However, when asked explicitly, “Do you feel like you have experienced prejudice and/or discrimination on the basis of your race at MU?” several of the women answered, “No.” Additionally, the women refuted their racialized encounters by utilizing the “removed [from racism]” coping mechanism in which they claimed they were “separated” or “removed” from incidents of racism on campus. The contradiction between the women’s narratives and their assertions of not encountering prejudice or discrimination exposes the deeply ingrained and endemic nature of racism in U.S. society and higher education. Over time, racism and racist acts have become more subtle, making it difficult for multiracial individuals to recognize and address racism (Bonilla-Silva &

Lewis, 1999). Although they talked at length about racism in the form of microaggressions, stereotypes, and manifestations of Whiteness, many of the women did not recognize these subtle slights as prejudice or discrimination. Moreover, these racialized acts were so ordinary that they no longer noticed them. One woman described, “I think I am kind of numb to it [multiracial microaggressions].”

The multiracial women’s experiences with monoracial and multiracial stereotypes also expose the social construction of race. Stereotypes are a critical component of the racial formation project in the United States (Omi & Winant, 1986). These racial myths dictate how to perceive and treat individuals and groups on the basis of skin color and other physical features. Furthermore, these racial myths have become normalized within U.S. society (Omi & Winant, 1986). Participants believed that their light skin and good hair led peers to perceive them as being stuck-up and arrogant. This finding confirms Nadal and colleagues’ (2011) previous realizations that multiracial Americans encounter stereotypes that are “based on their multiracial identity but also based on each individual race with which they identify and/or are perceived” (p. 42).

Stereotypes and racial ideologies were some of the main reasons these multiracial women experienced the “What are you?” question. This finding (within the sub-theme of objectification) confirms previous research (Jackson, 2010; Payson, 1996) that explained that when an individual is racially ambiguous, as several of the multiracial women in the study were, others become uncomfortable with their inability to assign a monoracial identity to that individual. Being racially ambiguous not only made it difficult for others to assign one race to the multiracial women, it also made it hard to assign racial

ideologies to them. Therefore, because they had no monoracial identity, the mixed-race women in this research were treated as if they had no identity at all.

Stereotypes are products of a racist and sexist system made to uphold the social order. Race and gender are two of the first social identities that are visible to people. Subsequently, race and gender are two of the foremost identities that ideologies are based on (Omi & Winant, 1986). For instance, the notion that multiracial women are hypersexual and exotic stems from historical understandings of the Jezebel stereotype. As a reminder, the Jezebel is a controlling image that constructs light-skinned women of color as overly sexual and promiscuous. This image, both historically and presently, justifies the exoticization, objectification, and even rape of these women by men (Collins, 2000; Stephens & Phillips, 2003; Yarbrough & Bennett, 2000). Race and gender are intertwined in this stereotype, because light-skinned women of color, not just women and not just people of color, are perceived as Jezebels. Finally, although these racial stereotypes have changed over time, “the presence of a system of racial meanings and stereotypes, of racial ideology, seems to be a permanent feature of U.S. culture” (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 63), making the stereotypes the participants experienced on campus prevalent and hard to redress.

How the women in this study were racially identified and then stereotyped also exposes the social construction of race. This research confirms previous findings (Khanna, 2011; Korgen, 1998; Remedios & Chasteen, 2013; Renn, 2003, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008) that suggested multiracial women’s phenotypic characteristics, such as skin tone, eye shape, and hair color, are used to assign them a

monoracial identity. For instance, if a multiracial woman has brown skin and curly hair, she is identified as Black. She is then racialized or assigned characteristics, such as lazy, sexual, or untrustworthy, on the basis of this monoracial identity (Omi & Winant, 1986). Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2008) explained that “the connections between skin color (phenotype), race (racial classification), and racial identity” (p. 75) seem fixed and inherent, but are social constructions that uphold a racial order. These tacit racial understandings of the “color-race-identity connection” (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008, p. 75) are disseminated through everyday acts, such as watching TV, making them commonplace, fixed, and endemic. This current study exposes the importance of phenotype in the multiracial women’s racialized experiences, specifically in the “color-race-identity connection,” which is used to arbitrarily assign multiracial women monoracial stereotypes.

Multiracial microaggressions were also endemic, subtle forms of racism that the multiracial women in this research encountered at MU. Pierce (1995) explained, “Probably the most grievous of offensive mechanisms spewed at victims of racism and sexism are microaggressions” (p. 281). Microaggressions are classified as “most grievous” because these subtle forms of racism build up over time and may result in stress, a lack of self-confidence, and isolation for students of color (Pierce, 1995; Yosso et al., 2009). This research confirms as well as adds to Johnston and Nadal (2010) and Nadal and colleagues’ (2011) previous findings concerning multiracial microaggressions. It supports previous findings of exclusion and isolation, objectification, assumptions of a monoracial identity, and the denial of a multiracial reality. However, it also

problematizes previous microaggressions, that is, the pathologization of multiracial women's identity, and builds a case to add other subtle slights, such as the imposition of monoracial identities, to the existing taxonomy. Moreover, this current research sheds light on the nuances of interpersonal and institutional multiracial microaggressions the participants encountered at MU.

This research exposed how interpersonal multiracial microaggressions occurred on an individual level at MU. The multiracial women experienced microaggressions in their interactions with students, faculty, and staff. For example, the participants were told they were monoracial, men approached and objectified them on the basis of their exotic features, and these women perceived they would not be accepted into monoracial peer groups as a multiracial being. These interpersonal microaggressions were supported by institutional microaggressions that set precedence in the campus environment.

The multiracial women spoke at length about the ways in which institutional structures resulted in encounters with microaggressions. Examples of institutional multiracial microaggressions included forced-choice dilemma on campus surveys, the inability to relate to and be recognized by the dominant culture on campus, and the experiencing of a lack of fit within campus support systems constructed around monoracial understandings of race. These microaggressions continued to occur because "racism pervades institutions of higher education via university culture, organizations, informal rules, implicit protocols, and institutional memories" (Yosso et al., 2009, p. 672). Racism is structurally ingrained in every ounce of an institution, making it commonplace, normal, and increasingly difficult to expose and critique.

Structural determinism was implicit within the construction and maintenance of both individual and institutional multiracial microaggressions. Literature on structural determinism has explored how race is constructed around a Black/White paradigm of racial categories (Delgado, 1998; Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). However, broadening this research to include multiracial women and not just Black/White biracial or biracial participants exposed the ways in which the women were impacted by structural determinism beyond the binary. Participants' narratives exposed how race existed within a monoracial, and not a Black/White paradigm on campus. For instance, the mixed-race women relayed that support services for Black, Latina, Native American, and Asian students were available at MU, but that no services existed specifically for multiracial students. These women also expressed that services for multiracial students may never exist on campus because the institution and individuals within it neither acknowledged nor affirmed identities that existed outside of a monoracial paradigm.

Finally, it is important to note that monoracism is a better word to use within this discussion concerning race and racism. Johnston and Nadal (2010) explained that monoracism is "a social system of psychological inequality where individuals who do not fit monoracial categories may be oppressed on systemic and interpersonal levels because of underlying assumptions and beliefs in singular, discrete racial categories" (p. 125). Structural determinism gave rise to monoracial understandings of race on both an individual (amongst staff, faculty, and White students and non-White students) and institutional level at MU. Subsequently, the participants experienced prejudice and discrimination because they were not able to conform to these preexisting structures.

Therefore an exploration of the endemic nature of racism *and* monoracism in the lives of multiracial individuals is necessary in the future.

Interest Convergence and Differential Racialization

Participants did not feel that administrators at MU acknowledged or affirmed their multiple racial identities. These women spoke about the ways in which they felt the institution continued to create spaces, uphold policies, and support campus organizations that minimized their realities as multiracial students. However, participants described a few moments when the institution *did* acknowledge their presence on campus. Unfortunately, this visibility occurred only when it benefited White administrators (Bell, 1980). For instance, Sarah explained that the institution did not care about her until it came time to report the number of students of color at MU. She believed that administrators and therefore the institution acknowledged her only when they needed to claim or “sell” her as part of a “diverse” MU. Therefore the multiracial women perceived their bodies to be positioned and tokenized at the interest of the university. As another example, Jane thought that MU administrators wanted to tokenize her friend group, which she nicknamed “the diversity club,” by taking a picture of them and placing it on the side of the campus bus. The tensions between multiraciality and institutional tokenization have not been found nor explored in previous research on this student population.

Participants’ narratives regarding interest convergence and tokenization exposed the marketplace approach MU took to diversity (Iverson, 2007). This marketplace ideology supported diversity initiatives at MU for the main purpose of gaining “a

competitive edge and to achieve prominence in the academic marketplace” (Iverson, 2007, p. 599). As a result of this approach, students of color, including the multiracial women, became commodities that could be bought and sold to represent diversity and subsequently raise an institution’s overall market value. MU only “cared” about multiracial women when it benefited institutional gains and increased the school’s overall status (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Iverson, 2007).

Whereas tokenization and a marketplace approach to diversity served the needs of the White institution, it also provided small gains for the multiracial women. Therefore the interests of the White institution converged with the interests of the multiracial women in this research, resulting in interest convergence. For instance, Jane questioned if she was hired as an RA because she was non-White. She went on to explain how being an RA afforded her friendships, leadership experiences, and above all, money. Georgia also spoke about how her status as a minority student afforded her an Upward Scholars scholarship. In fact, during the walking interview, she expressed that she thought she should receive more money from the scholarship program because she was an “ideal model” of a diverse student (referring to the uniqueness of being both Asian and Native American). Finally, Jenna expressed the advances that multiracial women gained through institutional tokenization:

I do admit that I don’t deserve a lot of the things that have been given to me. And it’s the same with the orientation job. Like I got that because I’m very diverse and they [MU] want to like send out the most-weird, diverse people to show people around to: “This is MU, this is us.”

Jenna began by talking about the scholarships she was given but thought she did not deserve, simply because she was non-White. She went on to express how she was chosen

as part of the MU Orientation Team because she was “diverse.” Throughout the interviews, the women expressed that being “weird” or mixed-race and interesting appealed to MU but also advanced their own interest through scholarships and leadership opportunities.

Unfortunately, although the multiracial women experienced advances on the basis of MU’s interests to sell and manipulate diversity, no real systemic change was made. This is because a marketplace approach to diversity allows institutions to work toward a specific level of diversity and not extend beyond that predetermined level (Castagno & Lee, 2007). Once a predetermined level of racial diversity is reached, PWIs become satisfied, but multiracial women suffer from the superficial multiculturalism put in place to placate students of color. Castagno and Lee (2007) explained further, “It does not necessarily follow that a diverse institution will either address all the concerns faced by students of color or work toward greater equity and social justice” (p. 4). Whereas MU acknowledged the multiracial women’s presence within structural diversity (as of 2012 they started reporting the numbers of students who identify with more than one racial identity), they failed to implement structures of success and support for these women.

This “superficial multiculturalism” was mentioned in the narratives of the multiracial women in this study. Participants conveyed how high-level administrators at MU, who were “White and...don’t really understand diversity issues,” failed to address the more systemic issues of multiculturalism on campus, such as hiring diverse faculty and fostering interactions across racial cliques. Furthermore, MU administrators addressed surface-level issues for monoracial students of color and altogether ignored the

realities of the multiracial women. In other words, surface-level diversity initiatives, such as cultural festivals, superficially accounted for monoracial students on campus but ignored the needs of multiracial students. Instead, the multiracial women were categorized as monoracial students of color, which “erases the variation within identity categories and depicts different social and institutional experiences as monolithic ‘issues of diversity’” (Iverson, 2007, p. 596). However, findings from this study suggest that multiracial identity and experiences did not equate to monoracial identity and experiences, and therefore should not be lumped into a monolithic, monoracial student-of-color experience.

Finally, when the multiracial women were acknowledged via interest convergence, they were also differentially racialized in order to benefit the White institution. Gabrielle pointed out that administrators at MU appreciated her multiraciality because she was able to perform Whiteness and connect with White prospective students as well as perform Blackness and connect with Black prospective students. Elizabeth also believed that her racial identity was differently objectified and leveraged to serve the needs of the institution. She claimed that she was viewed as a model minority because she could pass as White but also added to the diversity of the Business School when they needed a token student of color.

Differential racialization, like interest convergence, served the needs of the White institution and aligned with the marketplace approach to diversity. The multiracial women were placed into monoracial categories, such as White, Black, or a “different” kind of Latina, for the purposes of drawing more students, both White and students of

color, to the institution. As marketing tools, multiracial women were expected to draw both White students, who would add revenue to the institution, as well as students of color, who would add to the commoditization of diversity on campus. Although the women were made visible by these marketing campaigns, their realities and needs as mixed-race women were continually denied.

Whiteness as Property

Whiteness pervaded MU's campus and the experiences of the 10 multiracial women living and learning at the institution. Harris (1993) wrote about four property functions of Whiteness, including (a) reputation and status property, (b) rights to use and enjoyment, (c) the absolute right to exclude, and (d) rights of disposition. These property functions are integral to understanding the manifestations and impact of Whiteness for the multiracial women on campus.

Reputation and status property. Harris (1993) asserted that there is a “reputational interest in being regarded as White as a thing of significant value, which like other reputational interests, was intrinsically bound up with identity and personhood” (p. 1734). In other words, to be White confers a certain reputation and status to an individual. This reputation and status constructs White people as pure, honest, and inherently good, making Whiteness a valuable and enviable property individuals aim to possess (Harris, 1993).

The multiracial women in this study relayed that being a White woman at MU equated to being a beautiful woman at MU. In the eyes of these women, to be White was to be beautiful. Participants' perceptions of beauty aligned with the historical

construction and racialization of Whiteness. Hunter (2005) explained, “White skin, and thus whiteness itself, is defined by...civility, rationality, beauty, and superiority” (p. 2). Therefore to be White at MU equated to having the reputation of being beautiful, as well as civil, rational, superior, and so on.

Harris (1993) posited that “the set of assumptions, privileges, and benefits that accompany the status of being white have become a valuable asset—one that whites sought to protect” (p. 1713). As seen in the sub-themes, “Susie, Ann, and Bill have privilege” and “Oh my God, I love White girls!” the status of Whiteness conferred benefits, both monetary and otherwise, to those who possessed White characteristics and White beauty. Multiracial women in this study described the standards of female beauty at MU as having blonde, straight hair, White skin, and expensive clothing and accessories. Participants went on to explain that this beauty was valuable in several manners, but especially when it came to finding a romantic male partner on campus. They assumed that males on campus preferred to be with beautiful White women rather than multiracial women who were different from the White norms of beauty.

The value conferred to White women through beauty “maintains patriarchy at its most basic level because its essence is female presentation for the male gaze” (Hunter, 2005, p. 28). This ideology, which confers a coveted status to holders of Whiteness and beauty, allows for a closer examination of the multiracial women’s experiences with colorism at MU. Hunter (2005) explained that in the “marriage market,” the whiter a woman is, the more value she has to men and to the market. In essence, whiter is lighter, better, and more valuable (Hunter, 2005). Whiteness is placed at the top of the “beauty

queue,” which creates a skin-tone hierarchy wherein all American women are taught that the lighter one’s skin, the more men, jobs, and overall success one will encounter (Hunter, 2005). This hierarchy pits heterosexual women of color against one another in a fight for resources and assets that are given to White women first, and then, eventually, to lighter-skinned women of color.

Rights to use and enjoyment. Harris (1993) explained how Whiteness is both an identity and a property interest. Therefore Whiteness can be experienced (identity) as well as deployed (property interest) as a powerful tool to gain, secure, and take advantage of White privileges. White individuals “use and enjoy” Whiteness whenever they take advantage of the privileges bestowed on them simply because they are White (Harris, 1993).

One privilege that White students received was the ability to walk throughout campus and see others who looked like them. Several multiracial women in this study explained how society and MU privileged White women and their beauty. Additionally, the multiracial women stipulated that White students on campus can just “be.” They do not have to prove themselves, defend their place at the institution, or question what space they fit into. On the other hand, the participants, as multiracial women, expressed that they did not have these same privileges. Instead, they relayed their experiences with being seen as affirmative action admits, the constant questioning of their identity, and the proving process they embarked on to justify their place at the institution. White students used and enjoyed their privileges by just “being,” whereas the multiracial women did not have the same option or privilege to exist on campus unnoticed.

Participants cited that White students were similar to, and therefore more visible to White faculty at MU. For instance, White students were the first to be called on in the classroom by White professors. Therefore White students used and enjoyed their connections with other White individuals, specifically faculty, on campus. The multiracial women, who fell outside the parameters of what it meant to be White, were not able to use and enjoy these same academic privileges.

Harris (1993) explained that when White privileges are used and enjoyed, Whiteness becomes even more powerful, and the status quo becomes secured. Harris's assertion appears in the multiracial women's experiences with and perceptions of the Greek system at MU. These women relayed their beliefs that the Greek system at MU was for White students only. The Greek system conferred insurmountable privileges to White Greeks, such as on-campus housing, alumni networks, and the ability to fund and host social events.

The multiracial women in this study also mentioned that the history of Greek life and therefore Whiteness were ingrained in MU. The built environment, which they traversed daily, was emblazoned with fraternity logos that memorialized White male alumni. Moreover, Greek life was not just a manifestation of White privilege and racism, it was also a patriarchal system that upheld sexism. To be White on campus meant that you could be oblivious to the racism at MU. To be a White man on campus meant that you could be oblivious to both racism *and* sexism. Still, other women in the study claimed that the legacy of MU, specifically Pick Six and MUDM, was built on and

revolved around Greek life and Whiteness. These buildings, events, and traditions continued to be “used and enjoyed” throughout MU’s history by White students.

Since the late 1800s, MU’s Greek system has grown exponentially. Although Black Greek letter organizations and multicultural Greek organizations exist on campus, the crux of the membership and overall control of Greek life continues to belong to White students. This is because Whiteness is a type of property that becomes strengthened by law, policies and procedures, and other institutionalized structures over time. For example, Whites-only clauses, which legally permitted the exclusion of students of color from White Greek letter organizations, were only recently abolished during the 1950s to 1970s (Torbenson, 2009). Even after the lifting of White clauses, students of color rarely considered joining these Greek organizations because they perceived the clauses to exist in a *de facto* manner (Chen, 2009). Moreover the legacy of this exclusion continues to protect Whiteness and its property interest. Houses, Greek chapters, plaques, and events were all founded during a time (prior to 1970) in which Whites could legally exclude Blacks. Therefore these houses, chapters, and plaques continue to tell the history of White Greek life, while subsequently maintaining the presence and importance of Whiteness on campus (even when these laws have been abolished). White students who are the beneficiaries of this legacy use, enjoy, and deploy this property at will. All others, including the multiracial women in this study, were excluded from using and enjoying Whiteness as property and privilege at MU.

The absolute right to exclude. Whiteness also functions as an exclusionary practice. “The possessors of whiteness were granted the legal right to exclude others from

the privileges inhering in whiteness; whiteness became an exclusive club whose membership was closely and grudgingly guarded” (Harris, 1993, p. 1736). Because exclusion defined who could belong to Whiteness and who could use and enjoy the privileges this status conferred, Whiteness was forged via this exclusion. Whiteness also marks those who are excluded from its ranks as different and subordinate, which resulted in feelings of isolation, lack of fit, and exclusion for the multiracial women in this research attending MU. This finding aligns with previous research (Johnston & Nadal, 201; Nadal et al., 2011; Sanchez, 2010; Standen, 1996) that suggested multiracial women often feel isolated and excluded from monoracial peer groups, organizations, and institutions.

At MU, the multiracial women in the study perceived that they would be excluded from historically White sororities because they did not fit the parameters of Whiteness. Elizabeth relayed that the way she dressed was not compatible with White sorority women on campus, whereas Gabrielle said she was “too big” to belong to a White sorority. Therefore these multiracial women were excluded from Greek membership and therefore Whiteness because they were different than White women. Of course, as of 2014, White sororities cannot legally exclude non-White women from membership. However, there were other ways in which White Greek women and the overall Greek system at MU excluded multiracial women from the ranks of Whiteness.

The one multiracial woman in this research who participated in Greek recruitment relayed how out of place she felt when, during recruitment, White sorority women asked her about her clothes and inquired about the Mexican origin of her last name. Other

women in the study did not even attempt to participate in Greek recruitment because they knew it was for White women only, and they would not be accepted. Therefore the reputation and status of White sororities on campus excluded the multiracial women from membership. Additionally, the process by which new members are chosen within White Greek chapters remains shrouded in mystery and protected by White Greek legacies/alumni (see Luckerson, 2013; Willingham, 2013), making it hard to interrogate the racism at play in the recruitment process. In the end, the systems of Greek life and Whiteness at MU were upheld through the unquestioned and normalized legacy of exclusion of non-White bodies from Greek organizations.

According to the perceptions of participants, the exclusion and isolation of non-White students from White activities was one of the main reasons that racial cliques existed on campus. White students formed the largest “exclusive club,” which was “grudgingly guarded” (Harris, 1993, p. 1736). Therefore monoracial students of color came together to support one another and form their own respective racial cliques where their identity was appreciated and supported (Tatum, 1997; Villalpando, 2003). Although the majority of students of color are excluded from Whiteness, the multiracial women in this study explained that monoracial students of color were able to coalesce with one another. Unfortunately, several participants also cited that they were not often able to fit into these monoracial cliques of color.

The multiracial women were excluded from Whiteness and the privileges it conferred because they were too different, that is, not White. This exclusion debased those who were not White and subsequently strengthened White identity at MU. In

response to this Whiteness, monoracial students of color created their own communities in which they could find comfort. However, several of the multiracial women claimed that they did not fit into monoracial cliques of color because they were not seen as monoracial, that is, too White. These cliques were forged against Whiteness and strengthened monoracial students of colors' collective and group identities (Tatum, 1997) but did not often provide comfort for the multiracial women.

Rights of disposition. Traditionally, property is an alienable or transferable right. Yet Whiteness is an inalienable right, which complicates its classification as property. However, Harris (1993) asserted that the inalienability of Whiteness should not preclude it from being deemed property. Instead, this characteristic exposes Whiteness' inability to be bought, sold, and commoditized (Harris, 1993). The right of disposition ensures that those who do not fit the parameters of what it means to be White do not easily access Whiteness. Instead, Whiteness is selectively bestowed on those who fit the parameters. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) explained, "When students are rewarded only for conformity to perceived 'white norms' or sanctioned for cultural practices (e.g., dress, speech patterns, unauthorized conceptions of knowledge), white property is rendered alienable" (p. 59). Therefore students who conform to socially constructed characteristics of what it means to be White, such as possessing light/White skin, being thin, and/or consuming Starbucks, are eligible to have Whiteness transferred to them.

The multiracial women participants mentioned the disposition of Whiteness at MU. One of the largest displays of this disposition was seen in the homogenous descriptions of White women. Participants consistently named the characteristics that

conferred Whiteness and its accompanying privileges to White women students. The White norms these women met included possessing blond hair, light/White skin, and wearing Uggs, black leggings, and Longchamp bags, to name a few. When women possessed these characteristics, they were rewarded by being allowed to enter into White spaces that strengthened their White identity and access to White privileges. As mentioned previously, several participants stated that they did not fit these parameters of Whiteness, and therefore Whiteness would not be passed on to them.

For the most part, women in this study claimed they could not conform to Whiteness because of their “different” physical features, such as curly hair and not possessing a thin physique. However, a few participants also mentioned that social class played a role in their inability to fit into the norms of Whiteness at MU. For instance, the women expressed that they would not be able to afford the Longchamp bag or Hunter rain boots that White women wore. Therefore to be White also meant that you were well off and privileged in your social class.

Although the rights of disposition shut the multiracial women out of the acquisition of Whiteness, it did not preclude them from performing Whiteness. Several multiracial women in the study, regardless of racial heritage, explained that they often conformed to the characteristics of Whiteness. For instance, Elizabeth listened to “White music,” like Katy Perry, Gabrielle “talked White,” and Jenna wore some of the same clothes as “stereotypical White women.” The performance of Whiteness did not bring the women any closer to being seen as White by White MU students. On the other hand, students of color often called attention to how White these multiracial women were. Even

though participants' peers of color saw them as White, these perceptions were not enough to confer Whiteness to them. Only the holders of Whiteness, White individuals, can pass down and dictate who inherits Whiteness.

A Challenge to Ahistoricism

To critically and fully analyze the racialized experiences of the 10 multiracial women students at MU, their narratives must be placed “in both a historical and contemporary context” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 117). Viewing these women's experiences with a historic and contemporary lens affords an understanding of how racial inequities of the past continue to influence the multiracial women's lived realities in the present. For instance, participants' experiences with colorism and multiracial stereotypes are best understood and deconstructed when grounded in the historical construction of multiraciality of the 1900s.

Colorism and the controlling image of the Jezebel appeared in the 1900s to maintain racial orders that placed Whiteness at the top of the racial hierarchy in America (Collins, 2000; Hunter, 2005). These two concepts pitted lighter-skinned women of color against darker-skinned women of color. Colorism instilled in these women that the lighter one's skin, the closer one was to Whiteness and its privileges (Hunter, 2005). The Jezebel, which encompassed aspects of colorism, constructed light-skinned women as better than darker-skinned women, more exotic, and more appealing to men (Collins, 2000; Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

The multiracial women in this study attending MU in 2014 mentioned encounters that were informed by these historical creations. Aligning with previous research (Basu,

2007, 2010; Funderburg, 1994; Roberts-Clarke et al., 2004), participants in this study perceived tensions between themselves and other women of color on the basis of their light skin, good hair, and near-European features. Moreover, these same mixed-race women feared that students of color perceived them as “snooty and rude.” These personal characteristics and racial understandings were not based in fact. Instead, they were informed by historical remnants of light-skinned women, which have been perpetuated throughout time by social mechanisms, such as mainstream media (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Even more concerning is how colorism and the multiracial stereotypes of mixed-race women maintained a racial divide within and between communities of color, and between women of color specifically. These concepts perpetuated internalized racism within the Black community at MU and encouraged women students of color to tear one another down, rather than coalesce to deconstruct Whiteness and patriarchy.

Viewing the 10 multiracial women’s experiences with race through a historic lens also allows for a critique of the systems of Whiteness that have existed at MU since its inception. Historically, U.S. higher education was made by and for White men (Cohen & Kisker, 2009), and MU is no exception. Although the institution opened its doors to women students of color in 1919, racist and sexist structures remained on campus. For instance, several multiracial women in the study spoke about how the built environment at MU acted as a constant reminder that White men owned and continued to own the institution. The mixed-race women also referenced how Pick Six and MUDM catered to White students on campus and discounted the realities, needs, and histories of women of color. Grounding these women’s narratives in a historical context exposes how

inequitable structures, such as the built environment and long-standing events and traditions, have been created and maintained over time to uphold and hide racism and sexism on campus.

Additionally, ahistoricism contributes to a restrictive view of equality (Crenshaw, 1988) that focuses on equality as a process and not as an outcome. Delgado and Stefancic (2011) explained that a restrictive view of equality “applauds affording everyone equality of opportunity but resists programs that assure equality of results” (p. 28). The multiracial women spoke at length about the ways in which MU fostered restrictive views of equality, which influenced their encounters with forced-choice dilemma, lack of fit, and multiracial microaggressions.

Mirroring previous research (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Nadal et al., 2011; Sanchez, 2010; Standen, 1996) that details the phenomena of exclusion and isolation for multiracial Americans, participants spoke about the ways in which they did not feel comfortable within certain spaces on campus. The multiracial women did not feel welcome within campus support services that were traditionally set up to serve monoracial students of color. Moreover, some of these same women took MU’s inability to account for their multiple identities as a sign that multiraciality was not valued or accepted on campus. Administrators’ lack of support for the multiracial women aligns with the restrictive view of equality that is often utilized in higher education. To understand this restrictive view and how it operates within student services at MU, history must be taken into account.

Since the 1960s, higher education institutions have responded to demands of monoracial students of colors for equality with race-oriented student services (ROSS) and ethnic studies departments (Patton, 2006). Literte (2010) explained that support services for monoracial students of color “exist as the universities’ responses to cultural nationalists’ demands for recognition and inclusion, and in turn, they represent the legitimization and institutionalization of African American/Black, Native American, Asian Pacific American, and Latino/a identities” (p. 117). Even with their continued presence in higher education, ROSS may function as a restrictive right for students of color because they often do not address the systemic inequities that exist on college campuses. Whereas they offer a much needed space for (monoracial) students to coalesce, this approach to equity allows business as usual, that is, White Supremacy, to continue within the larger social milieu of campus.

Moreover, funding and resources for ROSS have been slowly cut over time, severely impacting the way these student services function and operate (Literte, 2010). Delgado and Stefancic (2011) described further how these restrictive views operate in education, and with ROSS specifically:

But after the singing and dancing die down, the breakthrough [ROSS] is quietly cut back by narrow interpretation, administrative obstruction, or delay. In the end, the minority group is left little better than it was before, if not worse. (p. 29)

This is because the growing multiracial population has begun to challenge monoracial understandings of race in higher education, and therefore destabilize traditional support services for monoracial students (Literte, 2010). However, the decline of support for ROSS across higher education institutions has impacted their inability to cater to both

monoracial students of color and this growing multiracial student population. Therefore with a lack of funding and the reality that staff often equate multiracial to monoracial (Literte, 2010), multiracial students continue to be rendered invisible in the academy.

The multiracial women in this research were forced to pick *between* monoracial support services. Furthermore, a lack of multiracial services and organizations for these women resulted in a dearth in multiracial awareness on campus. One woman explained that everyone knew where the Black Cultural Center was at MU and that that was where the Black students hung out. However, no one, including the multiracial women in this study, knew about the existence of many, if any, other multiracial students on campus because there were no organizations or support systems that acknowledged nor affirmed their existence. Although the multiracial women were given the opportunity to check all that apply on their application for admission (a restrictive right), they were invisible upon stepping foot on campus because there were no expansive initiatives geared toward multiraciality at MU.

Finally, restrictive views of equality, such as ROSS, may alienate student groups from one another (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). Delgado and Stefancic (2011) explained that rights, such as institutional support service, often separate racial groups from one another “rather than encouraging them to form close, respectful communities” (p. 29). Due to these restrictive rights, the multiracial women perceived the racial cliques on campus as impermeable. Once again, these surface-level rights deterred coalition building between and within racial minority groups, ensuring the continued dominance of Whiteness at MU. Importantly, it must be stressed that monoracial students of color are

not to blame for the racial balkanization on campus. Additionally, ROSS is not at fault for creating racialized cliques or maintaining the status quo. Racial balkanization is a product of Whiteness. It is only when the structures that support the supremacy of Whiteness are exposed and destabilized that students of color, including multiracial students, will no longer need safe spaces, such as ROSS, on campus. This implication for practice will be further detailed in the next chapter.

Intersectionality and Antiessentialism

When intersections of identity are not taken into account, individuals who possess multiple marginalized identities often become erased (Crenshaw, 1991). Identities become essentialized, resulting in a claim that there is one monolithic voice that accompanies each identity. To address these issues, critical race feminists have argued for a focus on the intersections of multiple identities so that the complexities of self are engaged, allowing for a more complete understanding of identity (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991). Applying CRF to this research allows for a deeper interrogation into the intersections of race and gender, and more specifically racism and sexism, and how they impacted the lived experiences of the 10 multiracial women in this research.

Intersectionality. In 1991, Crenshaw introduced the theory of intersectionality in her research on how the intersections of race and gender shaped Black women's lived experiences with domestic violence. Although Crenshaw's research on Black monoracial women remains relevant to the study at hand, there is admittedly an added or perhaps different component of intersectionality that the multiracial women faced at MU.

Participants fell into a chasm created between White women and men of color as well as monoracial women of color. Multiracial women felt they must identify as monoracial women of color; otherwise, they would become non-existent. This differing conceptualization of intersectionality and how it relates to the multiracial women's experiences at MU are detailed below.

Structural intersectionality. In her research, Crenshaw (1991) emphasized three different ways to approach intersectionality for women of color, including structural, political, and representational. Structurally, Crenshaw claimed that women of color are relegated to the margins of society and are continually disenfranchised because social structures, such as educational institutions, only account for the experiences of White women. In the sub-theme, "Oh my God, I love White girls," the multiracial women cited that MU privileged the existence and experiences of White women on campus. However, these women also acknowledged that there were sororities meant for Black women and Latina women, but that there was no multicultural or multiracial sorority where they belonged.

MU welcomed their first historically White sorority in the 1870s. The campus now houses 22 historically White sororities. The first National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) sorority was chartered at MU in the early 1920s. Between NPHC and the Multiracial Greek Council, 7 sororities currently exist that have roots in providing academic and social support for women of color. Out of these 29 sororities, not one espouses a commitment to multiracial women. This is just one of the ways that structures at MU discounted the needs, experiences, and existence of the 10 multiracial women in

this study, who existed outside of a monoracial paradigm that accounted for White women (traditionally White sororities) and monoracial women of color (BGLOs and MCGC organizations).

Although Crenshaw (1991) posited that a lack of focus on structural intersectionality relegated monoracial women of color to the margins of society, this current research reveals that structural intersectionality is even more complex for multiracial women. For instance, even when structures at MU, such as BGLOs or cultural centers, accounted for women of color on campus, they continued to marginalize multiracial women who did not fit traditional understandings of what it meant to be a (monoracial) woman of color. Even when structures accounted for, though minimally, the intersections of gender and race for monoracial women of color, these monoracial understandings of race continued to erase multiracial women.

Political intersectionality. Politically, “women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas” (Crenshaw, 1991, pp. 1251-1252). According to Crenshaw (1991), women of color do not experience racism in the same manner as men of color, nor do they experience sexism in the ways that White women do. Findings from this current research support Crenshaw’s assertion, but also indicate that the multiracial women at MU did not experience racism like men of color, nor did they experience racism like monoracial women of color. Moreover, the mixed-race women’s experiences with sexism often diverged from those of White women and monoracial women of color.

The theme of multiracial microaggressions exposes how the multiracial women in the study experienced racism and sexism differently than monoracial women and men of color. Multiracial microaggressions were specific to women with multiple racial identities. Furthermore, because a monoracial identity was often imposed on them, the multiracial women also battled monoracial microaggressions. Therefore participants experienced racism on the basis of being perceived as a monoracial woman of color and a multiracial woman.

The racism encountered by the multiracial women was not the same as that of men of color because of the intersections of gender and race, and therefore sexism and racism. Moreover, these intersections also caused the multiracial women's experiences with sexism to be different than those experienced by White women and some monoracial women of color. This difference is evident in the sub-theme of objectification, and more specifically exoticization.

Racism and sexism intersected to influence the participants' experiences with exoticization at MU. For instance, they explained that male peers often found the need to comment on their bodies, physical features, and "exotic" look. This finding aligns with Basu's (2010) research on multiracial college women and their perceptions of being exoticized and sexualized by male peers on campus. Mixed-race women in this research cited that they experienced this exoticization because they were different than the majority female population, that is, White women on campus. Moreover, the women also explained that their "good hair" and light skin made them different than monoracial women of color, specifically Black women on campus. Therefore the multiracial women

did not experience sexism like their White counterparts nor other monoracial women of color.

The political intersection of race and gender also exposes the tensions between multiracial women's encounters with exoticization by White men and their perceptions that these same White men would not find them attractive, that is, dateable. Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004) also found that the multiracial women questioned their dating prospects on the basis of their multiple races. In her essay, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," hooks (1992) offered an explanation for the contradictions found between exoticization and not dating multiracial women at MU.

Hooks (1992) detailed the ways in which White men eat, consume, and then forget women of color. Within this research, the process of "eating the other" occurred when White men gazed upon and commented on the bodies of multiracial women, calling attention to their difference. Moreover, exoticizing multiracial women played to the sexual fantasies of White men, who believe that Brown bodies "were more worldly, sensual, and sexual, because they are different" (hooks, 1992, p. 23). When White men consume women's bodies via exoticization and sexualization, they simultaneously secure White supremacy and patriarchy in their domination over the Other (hooks, 1992). "Eating the other" is a way for White men to briefly encounter difference and then return to the comforts of Whiteness. Hooks explained further,

To make one's self vulnerable to the seduction of difference, to seek an encounter with the Other, does not require that one relinquish forever one's mainstream positionality. When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating

racess, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other. (p. 23)

Exoticizing multiracial women was a way for White men to safely experience difference, to dabble in a dangerous encounter with the Other, without losing their White identity. However, dating, making a commitment to the Other, would have been a transgression and moved White men beyond Whiteness, threatening the status quo.

The differential meanings of exoticizing and dating multiracial women for White men resulted in the contradictory encounters that the women in this study experienced at MU. Although White men could exoticize women without threat to their Whiteness (in fact, as hooks [1992] wrote, this exoticization reinforced men's power), making a real commitment to the Other threatened the boundaries between Whiteness and Otherness. Hooks described, "One desires contact with the Other, even as one wishes boundaries to remain intact" (p. 29). Seemingly, the multiracial women had an understanding of this "look but don't touch" approach White men took. Whereas they felt exoticized by the male gaze, they were aware that something more, that is, dating, was not probable. This phenomenon is unique to women of color and further nuanced for the multiracial women, who were constantly consumed by the male gaze.

Representational intersectionality. Finally, Crenshaw (1991) contended that representationally, the needs and concerns of women of color fall into a chasm created by the tension between women's issues and issues concerning racism. Interestingly, the multiracial women in this research did not explicitly mention this chasm between gender and race. However, a different chasm—between intersecting racial identities—was present for participants.

Participants repeatedly mentioned feeling a lack of fit at MU because the institution adhered to sociohistorical understandings of race. For example, Elizabeth felt that MU administrators asked the question “Why are you here?” when she attended monoracially oriented events and spaces on campus. Several other participants expressed that they would welcome a campus group for multiracial women, but that others on campus would not understand what the group was for because “biracial is not a thing.” Due to these monoracial understandings and their manifestations on campus, the women in this study felt they had to choose between their racial identities. The needs, concerns, and opportunity for a holistic identity for these women fell into a chasm created by the tension between their multiple races, or more specifically the tension created by monoracial understandings of race.

The concept of intersectionality was present in the lives of the 10 multiracial women in this study. However, an intersectional analysis reveals that these women experienced the intersections of their multiple racial identities as well as the intersection of their race and gender. Below, a CRF analysis continues by interrogating the ways race and gender intersected to essentialize participants.

Antiessentialism. The multiracial microaggressions, multiracial stereotypes, and monoracial stereotypes that the participants encountered essentialized them in several different manners. First, microaggressions, such as the denial of a multiracial reality or being forced to become a native informant, and monoracial stereotypes, placed them into monoracial categories. These women became part of a monolithic group in which they were simplified as “monoracial women of color.” This essentialism is damaging for the

multiracial women who did not identify as monoracial and therefore did not experience and navigate the campus as monoracial beings. Grillo (1995) explained, “The confusion that a biracial child feels does not derive from being classified as Black, but from essentialist notions that being Black is one particular experience, and that this experience is not hers or his” (p. 26). In other words, forcing multiracial women to fit into a “monoracial women of color” category essentializes their identity and their experiences.

Racial essentialism and gender essentialism converged in the sub-themes of objectification and exoticization. Because of the White, homogenous racial makeup of MU, the multiracial women felt they stuck out and were perceived as different and exotic when compared to White women on campus. Medina (2010) explained how this exoticization essentialized multiracial women and reduced them to objects: “The essentializing of The Other is combined with its exoticization, which turns others into completely foreign beings, radically unlike ourselves, with whom we have nothing in common and therefore nothing to share or discuss” (Medina, 2010, p. 139). The multiracial women in this research were lumped into one exotic category, which essentialized their identities and relegated them to the “foreign” margins of campus. Moreover, this objectification allowed White constituents at MU to “define their own reality, establish their own identities, [and] name their own history” (hooks, 1989, p. 42) as well as define the multiracial women’s realities and identities.

Finally, the multiracial women participants experienced essentialism in their encounters with colorism and beauty on campus. At MU, Whiteness was normal and White women were the standard for beauty. Therefore these women (regardless of racial

heritage) felt that monoracial women of color, and more specifically Black women, perceived them to act better on the basis of their lighter skin tone. This finding aligns with extant research that explores colorism and exposes the tension between multiracial women and Black women in college (Basu, 2007; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunsmas, 2008). Unfortunately, these understandings of beauty and colorism once again essentialized the multiracial women in this study, further marginalizing their existence on campus. Ali (2004) explained, “The discourses of ‘colorism’ and ‘essentialism’ have become intricately woven, resulting in a form of essentializing as a means of claiming a position of power in the face of the normative standard of European beauty” (p. 88). This essentialism fragmented participants’ identity and erased the social and historical realities of what it meant to be a multiracial woman at MU (Harris, 1990).

The Power of Experiential Knowledge to Challenge Dominant Ideology

To reiterate, stock stories or master narratives are ideas constructed by the dominant group to explain and justify the normalcy of seemingly inequitable racial processes and outcomes (Delgado, 1989). Delgado (1989) explained,

The dominant group creates stories....The stories of narratives told by the ingroup remind it of its identity in relation to the outgroups and provide it with a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural. (p. 2412)

These “ingroup” narratives eclipse and silence the lived realities of the “outgroup.”

Furthermore, these master narratives pervade society and are taken as fact by both the dominant group, that is, White people, as well as by many members of the subordinate group, that is people of color.

Recently, with the ushering in of the multiracial movement, a new master narrative has been constructed about and around multiracial Americans. There are three main ideologies that have molded and controlled the rhetoric concerning multiraciality in the 21st century. First, multiracial Americans, who do not fit into socially constructed monoracial categories, are touted as transcendent of race and racism (Osei-Kofi, 2012; 2013). In other words, multiracial Americans do not experience their race and do not encounter racism. Second, it is a fact that the multiracial population is growing in America (Jones, 2005; Jones & Smith, 2001). Subsequently, it is also part of the master narrative to assert that sometime in the near future, we will all be multiracial (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Finally, these two former ideologies join together to support the ideology that America has entered a post-racial/post-racism and colorblind society (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Gallagher, 2003; Joseph, 2012; Lee, 2008). Due to the ideology that all Americans will soon be multiracial and because multiracial peoples do not experience race or racism, race is no longer a factor within American society. Unfortunately, these master narratives, which are often taken as truths, serve the agenda and interests of White Americans. Multiraciality has become a smokescreen for the endemic yet subtle racism that is commonplace in today's society. Said another way, when a person of color cites racism, White individuals claim that racism does not exist because race mixing is accepted and prevalent in society. Therefore claims to racism are unfounded and false.

To combat this dominant ideology, theorists of CRT and CRF (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso et al., 2009) encourage a focus on narratives that center the experiential knowledge and voices of marginalized populations. Yosso (2006) explained

that in education, experiential knowledge is seen “as a strength and draws explicitly on the lived experiences of students of color by analyzing ‘data’” (p. 7) that include oral histories, poetry, and other non-dominant ways of knowing. Within this research, the stories of the 10 multiracial women were central to exposing and critiquing the three dominant ideologies mentioned above.

Dominant society asserts that everyone will soon be multiracial in America. However, the narratives of the multiracial women in this research suggest that even when one embodies multiraciality, this identity is often not respected or acknowledged. These women continually referenced how they were placed into, or forced to assimilate to monoracial conceptions of race on campus. Their multiracial identity was rendered invisible at MU.

MU, through its data collection procedures, knew multiracial women existed on campus, but the multiracial women in this study did not feel that it cared beyond the collection of these data. There were no organizations, cultural centers, or support systems set up for multiracial students. Instead, the women had to choose to affiliate with one monoracial identity and utilize those institutional services or could create their own diverse communities. Multiracial women theoretically existed within the institution, but practically, they were non-existent. For instance, Jenna expressed that a multiracial group could never exist on campus because students and administrators did not understand or acknowledge multiraciality as an identity. Therefore although multiracial peoples are placed on display as being the future prototype for America, they continue to be placed into monoracial boxes. Again, theoretically, multiracial peoples’ existence is marketed,

but practically, these Americans will continue to be placed into constricting monoracial categories. This finding challenges the post-racial rhetoric increasingly utilized by dominant society,

The multiracial women in this study also spoke at length about their experiences with race on campus. They encountered discrimination on the basis of their multiracial identity as well as imposed monoracial identities. Several of the women explained how they were approached, objectified, and exoticized by male peers because they were multiracial and racially ambiguous. The mixed-race women also mentioned how they were stereotyped on the basis of one monoracial identity, such as being categorized as Asian and therefore a model minority. Whereas it is important to avoid a hierarchy of oppression, or Oppression Olympics, it should be noted that study participants were often racialized twice over as monoracial *and* as multiracial. Therefore in no way did the multiracial women escape race—multiracial or monoracial—nor racism on the basis of their race. However, these same multiracial women often claimed they did not experience racial prejudice, discrimination, or racism on campus. Additionally, some participants explained that they were exempt from racism because they were “removed” from race.

As previously mentioned in the discussion of the CRT/CRF tenet regarding the structures of racial realism, the above contradictions in participants’ experiences with race and racism are attributable to the endemic and ordinary nature of racism. Additionally, the women’s incongruent narratives also expose the internalization of dominant ideologies, including post-racial rhetoric, colorblind ideology, and the assertion that multiracial Americans transcend race and racism. For instance, one woman in the

study explained how her parents married in the 1980s when there was still racism. She went on to say that her Black father continued to be hypersensitive about race and racism, which annoyed her because racism did not exist in the town in which she grew up. This woman invoked post-racial rhetoric. Taking a colorblind approach, other women in the study relayed that race should not play a part in admissions practices, housing policies, and/or social communities at MU. Often they claimed that everyone was the same and therefore should be treated the same. In the final interviews, I asked the women, “What are your thoughts on the multiracial movement and its ability to end racism?” About half of the women agreed that the acceptance of and interest in multiraciality pointed toward a post-racial America.

Aligning with Bonilla-Silva’s (2010) work on the frames of colorblind racism, this research exposes how the multiracial women were impacted by and had internalized dominant ideologies. Bonilla-Silva found that though Black Americans did not adopt all of the frames of colorblind racism, such as minimization of racism, naturalization, and so on, these frames had an impact on Black ideology. This is because “an ideology is dominant if most members (dominant and subordinate) of a social system have to accommodate their views vis-à-vis that ideology” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 152). Within this current research, it was apparent that the multiracial women, like Black individuals in Bonilla-Silva’s research, adopted the ideologies set and maintained by White Americans. Exposing these internalized ideologies within the women’s narratives should in no way insinuate that they were racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Instead it points to how deeply

embedded White ideologies are in one's consciousness, making it increasingly difficult to address and deconstruct.

The narratives of 10 multiracial women at MU formed a counterstory that refuted the stock stories concerning multiraciality in America. These women encountered race and racism on campus. Moreover, these narratives countered the mentality that multiracial identity is everywhere, and moreover, acknowledged. Taken together, these revelations dismantle the dominant rhetoric that America has entered into a post-racial era. Race is still a factor in America and racism still occurs. Moreover, higher education institutions are not immune to and are a major site for reproducing race and racism.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to analyze the narratives of 10 multiracial women undergraduate students attending MU. The theoretical frameworks of CRT and CRF were utilized to expose the racist and sexist structures at work in the lives of these women. Specifically, seven tenets of CRT and CRF—racial realism, the link between interest convergence and differential racialization, Whiteness as property, challenging ahistoricism, intersectionality and antiessentialism, and the connections between experiential knowledge, and challenging dominant ideology—were explored. Chapter 7, the final chapter, provides an overview of the study, a discussion of the research questions, implications and recommendations for practice and future research, and concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER 7. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I summarize, discuss, and draw intentional implications from the findings of the research at hand. First, an overview of the study is presented. A discussion of the findings and their connection to the research questions follow the overview. Third, implications for practice and recommendations for future research are outlined in detail. Finally, a conclusion is offered.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore the racialized experiences of 10 multiracial women undergraduate students at a PWI located in the midwestern United States. This study focused on how multiracial women experienced and responded to their encounters with race on campus. Additionally, the intersections of race and gender in the lives of these multiracial women were examined. The research also explored ways in which the institutional context impacted the multiracial women students' experiences with race.

Previous literature has exposed how multiracial Americans experience exclusion and isolation (Jackson, 2010; Sanchez, 2010; Standen, 1996), objectification (Haritaworn, 2009; Jackson, 2010; Joseph, 2012; Osei-Kofi, 2013; Payson, 1996), assumptions of a monoracial identity (Khanna, 2011; Korgen, 1998; Remedios & Chaseteen, 2013; Rockquemore & Brunσμα, 2002; Zack, 2012), denial of a multiracial reality (Hunter,

2005; Khanna, 2011; Romo, 2011), and the pathologizing of their racial identity (Brown, 1990; Haritaworn, 2009; Park, 1928). Multiracial women's racialized experiences are further compounded by their intersecting identities. In other words, sexist and racist structures influence the exoticization, hypersexualization, colorism, and racial tensions women encounter in U.S. society (Gillem, 2004; Root, 1990).

Within the realm of higher education, understandings of multiracial women students' experiences with race are sparse. The small amount of literature that does exist has suggested that multiracial women, despite post-racial rhetoric, *do* encounter their race in college (see Basu, 2007, 2010; Bettez, 2010; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). These encounters include experiences with colorism and tensions with monoracial women of color (Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002), assumptions of racial identity (Basu, 2010), feelings of triple jeopardy (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2004), lack of fit with monoracial peer groups (Basu, 2007; Bettez, 2010), and exoticization by men (Basu, 2010; Bettez, 2010).

Whereas extant literature begins a conversation on multiracial women's experiences with race in college, these studies are limited in several ways. Previous research reinforces a Black/White binary (Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008) and does not account for the influence of the institutional context beyond the peer environment (Basu, 2007, 2010; Bettez, 2010; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). These gaps result in the lack of a critique of interlocking systems of oppression, including monoracism, sexism, and racism, that play

into multiracial women's racialized experiences on campus. These gaps in the literature led to the following broad research question:

- What are 10 multiracial women undergraduate students' experiences with race at a PWI?

Three secondary research questions were also addressed in this study:

- How do these 10 multiracial women respond to their racialized experiences?
- How does gender impact the 10 multiracial women students' racialized experiences?
- How does institutional context impact the multiracial women students' racialized experiences?

In order to fully understand the systems that contributed to the multiracial women students' experiences with race, critical race theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (CRF) were used as analytical tools to focus on the intersections of their race and gender. Collectively, these frameworks allowed for a critique and deconstruction of the interlocking systems of oppression, specifically racism and sexism, that impacted the experiences of multiracial women participants. Several tenets of CRT and CRF were useful in analyzing the findings that emerged from a thematic analysis of the narratives of participants. These tenets included racial realism, the link between interest convergence and differential racialization, Whiteness as property, challenging ahistoricism, intersectionality and antiessentialism, and the connections between experiential knowledge and challenging dominant ideology.

The study's theoretical frameworks guided the decision to use critical qualitative inquiry to investigate the racialized experiences of multiracial women students at a PWI. As explained earlier, critical qualitative inquiry reaches beyond dominant traditions of qualitative research that fail "to address the fundamental philosophical underpinnings of in/equity in higher education" (Pasque et al., 2012, p. 4) and centers equity at several levels of analysis, affording researchers the ability to expose inequitable power relations in higher education (Merriam, 2009; Pasque et al., 2012). CRT, CRF, and critical qualitative inquiry led to the decision to use a narrative approach as the research method.

Critical race theorists and critical race feminists agree that narrative methodology has significant value in research (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Wing, 2003). A narrative approach challenges racism and sexism by exploring the counterstories that exist for marginalized populations (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Arriola (2003) explained, "Narratives...are essential to the task of exposing the impact of systemic racism" (p. 408). Therefore a narrative approach best captured the racialized experiences of multiracial women by allowing them to name their realities as well as expose the systems of oppression that impacted their experiences with race on campus.

Snowball sampling was used to recruit multiracial women undergraduate students for this study. Recruitment emails were sent to designated faculty, staff, and graduate students asking them to identify individuals who might have an interest in and/or fit the criteria for participation in the research. Twenty-five women responded to the invitation to participate in the study. Of these, 10 women participated in the entirety of the data

collection process, that is, completed all three interviews. Their narratives were included in the data analysis and research findings.

Three qualitative interviews were conducted with each of the 10 women and made up the crux of the data collection process. The first and third interviews were more “traditional” and took place sitting down in an office on the MU campus. The walking method was utilized for the second interview. The walking interview provided *in situ* information concerning the 10 multiracial women’s lives and experiences with race on campus (Kusenbach, 2003).

During and following the collection of the narratives of the multiracial women students, a thematic analysis (Riessman, 2007) informed by narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) was conducted. The thematic analysis and this research focused on content across individuals’ narratives rather than (re)constructing life histories (Riessman, 2007). Fraser’s (2004) Phases of Line-By-Line Narrative Analysis was used to conduct a thematic analysis of the raw data. The five phases of analysis this research followed include (a) hearing the stories, (b) transcription, (c) memo writing, (d) interpretation of the transcriptions, and (e) examining commonalities and differences between participants. Four themes emerged from this analysis and were analyzed using a CRT and CRF framework. These four themes included (a) “Should I order fried chicken?": multiracial women and racial stereotypes; (b) “I am biracial so it may not hit me the same way”: multiracial microaggressions; (c) “Terrible for your self-esteem”: manifestations of Whiteness; and (d) “Just get yourself

involved, girl”: coping with racialized experiences. Below, a discussion of these four research findings and how they begin to answer the research questions is fostered.

Discussion of the Research Questions

Guiding Research Question: Multiracial Women Students’ Experiences With Race

The main research question that guided this study asked, “What are multiracial women students’ experiences with race at a PWI?” For the purposes of this research, the term “racialized experiences” referred to the encounters that multiracial women students had with their race. A racialized experience categorizes, defines, and/or racializes individuals based on others’ perceptions of their race. Mixed-race women involved in this study experienced three racialized experiences, including stereotypes, multiracial microaggressions, and manifestations of Whiteness.

“Should I order fried chicken?”: Multiracial women and racial stereotypes.

Consistent with previous research (Nadal et al., 2011), the multiracial women in this study felt they had both monoracial and multiracial stereotypes placed on them by peers, faculty, and staff at MU. These stereotypes racialized the multiracial women and placed them into neatly defined categories that dictated how women should behave and exist within society (Omi & Winant, 1986) and subsequently, on campus. The women perceived that their monoracial peers of color thought they were “stuck up” or acted “better” because they were multiracial. However, these same women were stereotyped as the model minority or intellectually inept, which were stereotypes attributed to monoracial Asians (Kao, 1995) and monoracial Black students (Solorzano, 1997), respectively.

The stereotypes that the multiracial women participants held of White women were also a part of their experiences with race. This was because these women's racial ideologies of White women on campus impacted and complicated their understandings of their own race. Three participants mentioned conforming to the stereotypes they held of White women, which led them to question their own racial identity. In essence, because the multiracial women performed aspects of stereotypical Whiteness, they encountered dissonance with their multiple racial identities. Therefore both multiracial and monoracial stereotypes impacted the ways in which the multiracial women were perceived on campus as well as how these same women perceived themselves. Often, this categorization and stereotyping was done at the hand of individuals close to the multiracial women.

Nadal and colleagues (2011) posited that "microaggression based on stereotypes" was a multiracial microaggression. However, this research suggests that it is a much larger form and function of racialization for the 10 multiracial women at a PWI. The stereotypes participants encountered as well as held about White women is a new contribution to existing research on this population in higher education. Moreover, the nuances found with monoracial stereotype threat contribute to the existing literature (Aronson et al., 2002; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Steele & Aronson, 1995) that focuses on the threat stereotypes pose to monoracial students of color.

Stereotypes based on colorism and the tensions this causes with biracial Black/White women and monoracial Black women have been detailed in previous higher

education research (Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). However, this current research broadens previous findings by focusing on multiracial women (extending beyond a Black/White binary), colorism, and the resulting tensions with Black women and White women on campus. The theme of stereotypes exposes the historical remnants of colorism and the Jezebel image that exist for multiracial women today. The prevalence of stereotypes for multiracial women is relatively new territory for higher education research and must be teased out and focused on in future research and practice.

“I am biracial so it may not hit me the same way”: **Multiracial microaggressions.** The microaggressions that women in this study encountered can be classified as racialized experiences because participants believed that the subtle slights they encountered at MU were based on others’ curiosity and perceptions of their race. For instance, the “What are you?” question “put race on display” and made the multiracial women students “feel dehumanized and abnormal” (Johnston & Nadal, 2010, p. 135). Multiracial microaggressions defined and categorized the multiracial women on the basis of their race.

A CRT analysis explicitly refers to multiracial microaggressions as racism (though subtle). This is because microaggressions occur when there is an unequal distribution of power, that is, when there is one group in power (Whites) and the other is systemically disempowered (people of color) (Sue et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2009). Microaggressions are a product of this inequitable system, and their subtleness allows them to go undetected so that they are harder to address and deconstruct than is overt racism. This is one of the main reasons why the women in this research relayed

experiences with multiracial microaggressions, but also asserted that they had never experienced racial prejudice or discrimination on campus.

In 2010, Johnston and Nadal created a taxonomy of multiracial microaggressions. This taxonomy included exclusion and isolation, objectification, assumption of a monoracial identity, denial of a multiracial reality, and the pathologizing of identity and experiences. Whereas this taxonomy is a necessary addition to the literature on multiracial individuals, it does not pertain specifically to higher education and the college environment nor does it account for the intersections of race and gender in these subtle encounters.

The multiracial microaggressions found within the narratives of the multiracial women in this study empirically build on Johnston and Nadal's (2010) and Nadal et al. (2011) existing taxonomy. Exclusion and isolation, objectification, assumption of a monoracial identity, and denial of a multiracial reality were present within this research, as well as in Johnston and Nadal's and Nadal and colleagues taxonomy. This current study found a fifth microaggression, not previously mentioned by researchers, within the narratives of the 10 multiracial women participants. This additional microaggression occurred when they experienced the imposition of a monoracial identity or when people told them that they were of a certain (mono)race.

One multiracial microaggression detailed by Johnston and Nadal (2010) and Nadal and colleagues (2011) was not present in the narratives of the 10 multiracial women in this research. The pathologization of a multiracial identity was absent from the narratives of participants, suggesting that they did not perceive to be seen as crazy,

confused, and/or “tragic.” The absence of this microaggression refutes the construction of the Tragic Mulatta character, supporting that the controlling image is indeed a myth.

In 2011, Nadal and colleagues empirically tested Johnston and Nadal’s (2010) theoretical taxonomy and found the presence of all five microaggressions within their mixed methods research. They also added “microaggressions based on stereotypes” as an additional, sixth microaggression. The authors found that multiracial participants experienced stereotypes on the basis of both their monoracial and multiracial identity. This finding is consistent with that of the multiracial women in this research. However, in the analysis, stereotypes were not classified under multiracial microaggressions because it was evident that they took on a life and meaning of their own. Moreover, the stereotypes that the multiracial women internalized about White women were not mentioned by Nadal and colleagues (2011) and had little to do with microaggressions.

Whereas Johnston and Nadal (2010) and Nadal et al.’s (2011) research is integral to the discussion of multiraciality in society, little research has focused on multiracial microaggressions in higher education. In fact, Museus and colleagues (in press) have been the only scholars to draw attention to this topic and population. These authors found that multiracial college students encountered “invalidation of their racial identities, the external imposition of racial identities, the exclusion and marginalization from racial groups to which they belonged, challenges to their authenticity as members of their race, exoticization, and the pathologizing of their multiracial identities” (p. 6). Museus and colleagues’ research corroborates the additional microaggression, “the external imposition of racial identities,” experienced by the women in this current study.

Museus and colleagues' (in press) research is the only comprehensive study to look at microaggression for multiracial students in college. No research has focused explicitly on multiracial *women's* experiences with multiracial microaggressions in higher education. The small amount of research that concerns multiracial women in college suggests that they do experience subtle discrimination on campus (Basu, 2010; Bettez, 2010 Rockquemore, 2002) and that their experiences with this discrimination are different than those of their male counterparts (Basu, 2010). This current research builds a strong foundation for a taxonomy of racial microaggressions that are unique to multiracial women at a PWI.

Moreover, analyzing these microaggressions through a CRT and CRF lens contributes a great deal to the realm of higher education research and practice. These analytical frameworks exposed the institutional and individual structures on campus that created and maintained multiracial microaggressions. This analysis leads to more systemic recommendations that root out systems of Whiteness and patriarchy in the lives of multiracial women on campus. This is an addition to the field because research on multiracial women has yet to be approached and analyzed through a critical lens.

“Terrible for your self-esteem”: **Manifestations of Whiteness.** The Whiteness that permeated MU manifested in several different racialized experiences for the multiracial women students in this study. For example, Whiteness was held as a superior status on campus and was seen as the norm. Therefore the multiracial women, who did not fit the parameters of Whiteness, were racialized as inferior and different. This superiority and normality of Whiteness manifested in several ways for the participants.

For instance, the status and reputation of Whiteness created it as the most beautiful.

Therefore the multiracial women who were not White were not seen as beautiful on the basis of their race. Moreover, the permanence of Whiteness and White women on campus led the multiracial women in the study to question their romantic relationships with men at MU.

The White privilege that White students and White faculty used and enjoyed on a daily basis is another example of how Whiteness acted as a racializer in the lives of the multiracial women. Due to the historical legacy of Whiteness at MU, the multiracial women in this research experienced a lack of fit in the classroom in trying to connect with professors and within the Greek system, all on the basis of their race. Due to the pervasiveness of Whiteness on campus, the multiracial women felt they were different, not the norm. Moreover, these women did not fit into the monoracial categories and cliques of color that existed in opposition to Whiteness at MU. Due to this lack of fit, multiracial women in this study experienced dissonance with their race and forced-choice dilemma in an environment that privileged Whiteness and monoracial identities.

Previous literature that concerns multiracial women in higher education exposed some of the manifestations of Whiteness found in this research. For instance, Basu (2007), King (2011), and Bettez (2010) explored the isolation and lack of fit that multiracial women encountered on account of having multiracial bodies that did not fit into monoracial campus spaces. Although isolation and lack of fit was prevalent in this current research (and was also labeled as a multiracial microaggression), the theme,

manifestations of Whiteness, exposes the racist structures that maintain White supremacy and lead to racialized experiences for multiracial women.

A CRT and CRF analysis of this theme exposes the nuances concerning the multiracial women and Whiteness at MU. For instance, previous research has focused on the difficulties that multiracial women encounter while dating on campus (Basu, 2010; Bettez, 2010). Digging deeper in this finding, this research places these romantic relationships, or lack thereof, in a historical context that exposes the Whiteness and patriarchy within exoticization, dating, and “eating the other” (hooks, 1992).

Sub-Question: Multiracial Women Students’ Responses to Their Racialized Experiences

The first sub-question asked, “How do multiracial women students respond to their racialized experiences?” There were three overarching racialized experiences that the multiracial women in this study experienced at MU, including racial stereotypes, multiracial microaggressions, and Whiteness. Unfortunately, participants’ encounters with these themes and therefore race on campus were not positive encounters. Subsequently, the women developed a taxonomy of coping strategies in an attempt to respond to and survive these racialized experiences.

Students of color often use coping mechanisms to lessen the deleterious outcomes of racialized experiences (Truong, & Museus, 2012; Wei, Heppner, Ku, & Liao, 2010). Past research also implies that gender impacts the way in which students of color cope with racialized experiences on campus (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). Unfortunately, the majority of research on coping for students of color is geared

toward monoracial students. Therefore this current research fosters a conversation on the coping mechanisms the 10 multiracial women students utilized. These multiracial women employed five divergent coping responses: (a) “I constantly have to explain myself”; (b) “When I touch it [my skin], I don’t turn pink”; (c) “I was looking for more diversity”; (d) “I avoid them by all means”; and (e) minimizing racialized experiences. These five strategies fall into three larger categories of coping responses. These strategies include problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping.

The multiracial women who utilized problem-focused coping attempted to eliminate the sources of discrimination and prejudice they faced on campus. These particular coping strategies were used in response to stereotypes and multiracial microaggressions. Their problem-focused coping mechanisms included explaining and proving. These two mechanisms tackled the source of their racialized encounters head on, hence their categorization as problem-focused coping responses (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Interestingly, the women who cited that they did not experience prejudice and discrimination on the basis of their race utilized problem-focused coping more often than those who acknowledged the racism they encountered. For instance, several of the women who said they did not experience discrimination on campus expressed how they would explain their racial identity when asked, “What are you?” These women explained that they took the time to explain and prove their identities because they wanted to educate others on the realities of multiraciality. Although the women felt unaffected by prejudice and discrimination, these subtle racialized encounters and resulting coping

mechanisms may have resulted in undetected emotional and psychological impacts (Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2009; Wei et al., 2010).

The multiracial women in this study also responded to their racialized experiences at MU with emotion-focused coping. This general category of coping contains both positive and negative strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Negative emotion-focused coping may involve distracting oneself by stress eating or watching television. Positive emotion-focused coping includes venting to confidants and journaling (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Within this research, the multiracial women utilized positive emotion-focused coping to aid in the creation of a diverse support system on campus. The creation of a diverse community was a positive coping mechanism that led to other positive outcomes for the multiracial women, such as student involvement and the creation of social networks that spanned across campus. This coping mechanism is the only one that has been previously detailed in existing literature. Basu (2010) reported that multiracial women found comfort in attending an international student group because it offered diverse surroundings.

Finally, participants employed avoidant coping responses in an attempt to circumvent encounters with race and racism on campus. These women avoided conversations, spaces, and inquiries where their race could be called into question. For instance, some of the multiracial women avoided places on campus where they thought MU staff and students would question their race and therefore their presence in that space. When women in this study *did* come into contact with racialized inquiries, they minimized these experiences, explaining that the way in which they experience their race

“is just the way it is” and that there is no use in expecting something different.

The fourth theme from this research, “Just get yourself involved, girl”: coping with racialized experiences, explored the ways in which the multiracial women students responded to their experiences with race on campus. The subject of coping with racialized experiences for multiracial women students is new terrain. This research begins a conversation on not only women’s experiences with race on campus, but also their responses to these encounters. Whereas some coping mechanisms were more constructive, such as building a diverse community, others may have been damaging to the 10 mixed-race women students’ emotional and psychological well-being (Wei et al., 2010). These divergent responses and their overall impact on multiracial women must be researched further.

Sub-Question: The Impact of Gender

The multiracial women did not experience their race in isolation of other social identities. Instead, participants spoke about intersectional experiences with race and gender. They often referred to themselves as “multiracial women,” reflecting their positionality as “multiracial” and “women.” Furthermore, participants’ experiences with beauty, colorism, exoticization, and dating related directly back to the intersections of race and gender.

In 2004, Gillem posited the theory of triple jeopardy, or that Black/White biracial women face discrimination on the basis of their gender as well as twice over because of their “half” race. The 10 multiracial women undergraduate students in this study described how they encountered triple jeopardy on campus. The women spoke about their

encounters with racism and sexism from the White community. For instance, a White intoxicated male racialized one participant by saying she was a foreigner who would not get the cultural reference he made to Johnson & Johnson, a well-known American corporation. He then sexualized and objectified her by asking if she wanted to have sex with him. This encounter occurred at the intersections of the participant's race and gender. This research adds to Gillem's (2004) theory by exploring how multiracial women, not just Black/White biracial women, experience triple jeopardy on campus.

Participants also spoke about the sexism and colorism they felt from communities of color on campus. These multiracial women students relayed that due to their lighter skin, good hair, and other near-White features, they felt tension between monoracial women of color, specifically Black women. This finding is consistent with extant literature that details these same tensions for multiracial women students (Basu, 2007; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunson, 2008). Multiracial women in this study also perceived that multiracial stereotypes, such as their thinking they were "better," were placed on them by monoracial peers of color. These experiences with colorism and multiracial stereotypes from communities of color were also products of a racist and sexist system.

Although previous research explored colorism, exoticization, and other intricacies that result from the intersections of race and gender in the lives of multiracial women, this research, through a CRT and CRF lens, places these realities in a historical context. The historically constructed beauty queue objectified the multiracial women, placing them as objects to be looked at and commoditized by the male gaze (Hunter, 2005).

Therefore colorism and stereotypes of multiracial women served a racist agenda in that they separated communities of color on campus. They served a patriarchal interest in that they continued to oppress the multiracial women through objectification. This sexism and racism interacted to foster many of the encounters participants relayed about colorism, dating, beauty, and exoticization.

Participants' racialized encounters with male peers at MU stemmed beyond beauty. This current research offers a glimpse into how male privilege and gender inequities influenced the multiracial women's racialized experiences. These women expressed inequitable power dynamics in their interactions with men on campus. For instance, one woman spoke about the power in the male physique. When asked why she did not confront the White male that asked her to have sex with him and ascribed her a foreign identity, she replied, "I'm not going to fight it because I don't want to put myself in physical danger." Therefore dominance through physicality played into the power that men held on campus. Two other women relayed that their boyfriends microaggressed them. However, they explained that they did not point these microaggressions out to their male partners because they did not want to call attention to their difference and/or agitate the relationship. Therefore women in this study experienced and navigated both their race and gender in several of the interactions they had with men on campus.

The above discussion expands on Gillem's (2004) assertion that Black/White biracial women experience triple jeopardy. The women in this study, who were multiracial and often fell outside of a Black/White paradigm of race, also experienced discrimination on the bases of their gender and multiraciality. However, a large

contribution of this research is the assertion that “for multiracial individuals, the ‘mix’ matters” (Garrod, Kilkenny, & Gomez, 2014, p. 3). Previous research (Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2004, 2008) has focused on Black/White biracial students, obscuring the realities and nuances of multiracial women and the possible importance of racial/ethnic background in racialized experiences. All of the women with Black heritage in this research mentioned their hair in conjunction with racialization. Several of these same women also mentioned how their hair influenced their interactions with White men on campus. Interestingly, when asked about hair, women with Asian heritage did not have much to say regarding the subject. Therefore the impact of and experiences with beauty and triple jeopardy were different for each individual woman given her racial heritage, physical features, and other characteristics. This distinction should be explored in future research.

The controlling image of the Jezebel was also present across the narratives of the 10 multiracial women in this study. More specifically, sexism and racism intersected to inform the multiracial women’s interactions with men on campus. The above example of Vivian provides a snapshot of the outright sexualization that a few multiracial women in this study faced from male peers. Several of the women mentioned how male students of all different backgrounds treated them like objects. Men approached the women and asked them if they could touch their hair, as if it were a “foreign” object. The participants also experienced exoticization at the hands of male peers. Men found women beautiful and intrinsically interesting, enough to stop them in the street and let them know their exotic features had caught their attention. In 1 week, two different men approached Jane

and commented on her exotic beauty. This sexualization and exoticization occurred on the basis of not only multiracial women's race but also their gender.

Finally, whereas triple jeopardy and the controlling image of the Jezebel were present in the narratives of the multiracial women in this research, the controlling image of the Tragic Mulatta was not apparent. This finding, or lack thereof, aligns with the absence of pathologization within the taxonomy of multiracial microaggressions for the multiracial women. There is no concrete reason why this controlling image was not present, but it may surround the idea that all of the multiracial women participants, at some point or other across the three interviews, claimed an affinity for their mixed-race heritage. This pride in their heritage stemmed from the relationships they held with their parents. Almost all of the women explained that the main reason they did not identify with just one race was because it would deny one of their parents' racial heritages. Furthermore, it is possible that this theme was not present in the literature because the pathologized Tragic Mulatta and the hypersexualized Jezebel are mythical images that have been perpetuated throughout history. This research suggests that women do not internalize this myth and controlling image.

Sub-Question: The Impact of Institutional Context

The final sub-question in this research interrogated how the institutional context at MU impacted the experiences of 10 multiracial women students. Previous literature on this population focused on interactions with peers and experiences within the peer environment (see Basu, 2007, 2010; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). This narrow emphasis resulted in a lack of examination of other systems, policies,

and procedures that impact the racialized experiences of multiracial women in higher education. Therefore the discussion of this final question begins a necessary conversation on the influence that differing campus dimensions have on multiracial women students' experiences with race.

A great deal of participants' racialized experiences involved their peers and took place within the peer environment. For instance, the multiracial women in this study described tensions with Black women students on the basis of colorism or "shadeism." Participants also spoke about the ways in which White sorority women at MU influenced their feelings of difference and inadequacies with beauty. This supports previous research that focused on the importance of the peer environment in multiracial women's campus experiences with race (Basu, 2007, 2010; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008). However this current study sheds light on how peer interactions were influenced by or experienced in conjunction with another aspect of the institutional context at MU.

External forces, including governmental policies and procedures and sociohistorical factors, played a role in shaping the multiracial women students' experiences with race at MU. In regards to governmental policies and procedures, the concept of affirmative action and the myths of meritocracy that accompany it influenced participants' concerns of being labeled as "affirmative action admits" by their classmates. Additionally, placing the women's narratives in a sociohistorical context helps to expose the ways in which sociohistorical factors impacted the racialized experiences of these multiracial women students at MU. For instance, societal understandings of light skin,

which are perpetuated through U.S media outlets (Collins, 2000; West, 2012), seeped into the women's experiences with and perceptions of colorism, beauty, and the stereotypes they encountered. MU's campus was not isolated from the U.S. media and therefore felt the influence of the racial ideologies that news, magazines, and popular music perpetuated.

The historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion was another large influence in the lives of the 10 multiracial women. In 1992, Hurtado explained that the legacy of inclusion and exclusion at U.S. institutions impacted the contemporary practices, procedures, and climate at colleges and universities. MU began as an institution that served only White men. Shortly after its transition to a university, it began to admit White women in 1867. The institution existed for nearly 100 years before admitting the first student of color. Greek life was introduced to MU in 1845, at a time when the institution served only White students. Greek life remained traditionally White until the introduction of the first non-White Greek letter organization to campus in the early 1900s. Therefore the Greek system, like MU, was founded on Whiteness and remained all White for over 65 years.

Unfortunately, even with the introduction of students of color to campus in the early 20th century, this White foundation remained at MU. For instance, the multiracial women participants cited the way in which physical structures on campus, such as buildings and walkways, held the historical remnants of White Greeks. White students in Greek life could be housed within the center of campus, whereas BGLOs and organizations in MCGC were not afforded these same privileges. Additionally, the main

events and traditions that MU was known for, Pick Six and MUDM, were focused on and around White students. The legacy of Whiteness continued to seep throughout MU.

Interestingly, the way in which MU administrators addressed this Whiteness and the impact it had on monoracial students of color continued to marginalize the multiracial women in this study. Higher education institutions responded to demands of the monoracial students of colors for equality with race-oriented student services (ROSS), ethnic studies departments, and the hiring of more faculty of color (Patton, 2006). However, these responses to student unrest were structured around monoracial understandings of race. Therefore due to the historical legacy of Whiteness and the ways in which this Whiteness has been addressed for students of color, administrators at MU continued to marginalize multiracial women living and learning on campus.

The historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion gave rise to the lack of structural diversity, another component of the institutional context at MU. Because a majority of the student body and faculty were White, White ideology and White supremacy were used, enjoyed, and actively performed in several, if not all, areas of campus. For instance, within the classroom, White faculty and White students were perceived as being more willing and able to relate to one another. Participants expressed their concern that White faculty paid more attention to White students because they shared a connection.

Moreover, because a majority of the population at MU was White, White culture was glorified. The lack of structural diversity explains why multiracial women rarely if ever saw themselves reflected in the curriculum. In fact, only one participant could relay a time when she read about herself as a multiracial woman in course curriculum. She also

expressed how empowering it was to be reflected in the curriculum. However, this participant attributed her curricular experience to the fact that her professor was a man of color and therefore more appreciative and understanding of different cultures. Unfortunately, the majority of professors at MU are White and continue to honor their own culture in the classroom.

Structural diversity and the predominantly White environment also influenced the multiracial women's experiences with objectification. Hurtado and colleagues (1998) explained, "In environments that lack diverse populations, underrepresented groups are viewed as tokens. Tokenism contributes to the heightened visibility of the underrepresented group, exaggeration of group differences, and the distortion of images to fit existing stereotypes" (p. 286). The homogenous climate of MU not only contributed to the participants' experiences with tokenization, but also to their experiences with exoticization, beauty, and stereotypes. Whiteness was the norm on campus, but these women did not fit into this homogeneity. Subsequently, they became hyper-visible, exoticized, and made to feel different because they did not meet the standards of Whiteness.

Interestingly, when asked if they would like to see more multiracial women and/or women of color on campus, participants almost always answered, "No." When pressed about their answer, several of the women explained that they would prefer to see upper administration at MU begin to support the students of color they already had at the institution. Multiracial women in this study expressed that administrators at MU espoused a commitment to diversity (a restrictive view of equality), but in fact, they did not follow

through on supporting these students once they were on campus. The women preferred that MU acknowledge and support the students of color already on campus, rather than bring more students of color into the university.

Several participants explained “higher management’s” failure to support students of color generally, and multiracial women specifically. For example, mixed-race women claimed that it was the institution’s fault that racial cliques existed on campus. The women cited that there were no programs, education, or organizations on campus that fostered interactions across difference. Moreover, there were no programs that acknowledged or promoted the existence of multiraciality on campus. Therefore the institution supported the existence of the racial silos at MU. Whereas other aspects of the institutional context were influential in creating negative racialized experiences for multiracial women on campus, in the eyes of these multiracial women, senior administrators were at fault for maintaining the oppressive structures that contributed to these encounters with race.

It was clear that a great deal of the multiracial women students’ encounters with race occurred with fellow students and within the peer environment. However, these peer interactions did not exist in isolation. Instead, they were often the manifestation of other aspects of the institutional context, such as the historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion or the structural diversity at MU. Aspects of the institutional context interacted and overlapped to create and maintain racist and sexist structures that these multiracial women encountered at MU.

Critiquing the institutional context of MU allowed for multiple areas and components of the campus to be interrogated, resulting in new understandings of the multiracial women participants' racialized experiences in college. Prior to this research, multiracial students' experiences with race in college focused on peer interactions, which is just one piece of an institution's context. This focus negates the reality that institutional structures and external pressures may also craft multiracial students' racialized experiences. Utilizing the Campus Climate for Diversity Framework (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999) to loosely guide the interviews significantly contributed to and supported understandings of the participants' interactions on a micro (peer) and macro (institutional and societal) level. For instance, this research exposed the women's racialized realities within academic programs (e.g., Upward Scholars), extracurricular activities (e.g., Greek life and Karate Club), student organizations (e.g., MRO and Orientation Team), policies and procedures (e.g., affirmative action and demographic reporting), and structural diversity (e.g., Whiteness and racial cliques). All of these moving pieces interacted with one another to create a holistic narrative about the lives of the multiracial women in this study. Moreover, exploring participants' experiences with this frame complemented the aims of CRT and CRF to take a more systems approach to the interrogation of structures that uphold race, racism, and other oppression in society and higher education.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this research suggest that the 10 multiracial women *did* experience their race while living and learning at a PWI in the Midwest. Participants' narratives challenged dominant ideology and indicated that America *is not* in a post-racial era and

that multiraciality *does not* transcend racism. Therefore “the very act of engaging multiraciality cannot be assumed to be progressive by definition, and an increased number of people identifying as multiracial should not be seen as an antidote to racism” (Osei-Kofi, 2012, p. 253). Osei-Kofi (2012) also warned educators against reifying multiraciality and race as fixed and biological. Instead, White supremacy as well as patriarchy must be interrogated so that multiracial students begin to feel acknowledged, supported, and accepted on campus.

The ways in which Whiteness have been privileged within higher education must be examined and deconstructed. Greek systems have provided privileges for White men and women since the 1800s. Campus housing, parties, alumni events, scholarships, and much more are offered to (White) students in Greek life. These same privileges are denied to students who belong to BGLOs, MCGC, or are not a part of the Greek system.

CRT calls for race and racism in Greek organizations to be placed into a historical and contemporary context. Barone (2014) suggested that institutions and traditionally White Greek organizations “document and use racist histories and demonstrate a commitment to developing race-conscious collegians devoted to making chapters, campuses, and society more inclusive for all people” (p. 68). Whereas Barone suggested that inclusion might come from “developing race-conscious collegians” within Greek systems, I advocate for the complete eradication of these systems that privilege and oppress non-White students across campuses. There is no doubt that this implication will be met with resistance, because White administrators will most likely be the ones revoking (White) privilege from current members of the Greek system. However,

dissolving the Greek system is the only way for real, tangible, and systemic change to take place on campus. In fact, although this implication may seem drastic, it is only one step in the right direction to actualize inclusion on campus. Even with the end of Greek life, there will remain residual effects of the Greek system that will continue to confer privileges to White students, such as the remnants of statues and plaques on campus and social events.

For instance, although Greek chapters may be gone, the social events, such as Pick Six and MUDM, which used to be a collaborative effort between all Greek organizations, will remain. With the end of Greek life on campus, administrators must take charge to set up a system that will delegate roles and duties to individual students and student groups in an attempt to make these events a collaborative effort between all students. Furthermore, education that focuses on diversity and inclusion must be a mandatory component of leadership education on campus.

This education must be explicit in the White supremacy, patriarchy, and other systems of oppression that are maintained on campus. Education should also get at the social construction of (mono)race and the ways in which students and staff uphold these constructions. It is only when students and staff know and reflect on how they maintain these oppressive systems that they may actively work to abolish them. Institutions should also partner with multiracial organizations, such as ProjectRACE, and such social justice programs as the Social Justice Training Institute (for both students and staff), to facilitate and offer this education on campus.

The end of Greek life not only damages a historical social system that privileges White students, it also frees up a great amount of resources, including human, financial, and physical. All of these resources can and should be funneled into actualizing inclusion on campus. Money from Greek life should be used to offer the above trainings, hire new staff, and revamp curriculum. It should also be used to hire a team of external reviewers that continually assess the campus climate at the institution. This is one of the ways in which the college can know if it is improving and what it may do to continue to improve its efforts in inclusion. Staff can now focus on how to infuse student organizations with inclusion rather than focus on the White Greek system and their parties, sanctions, and other issues. Finally, Greek houses will be vacated following the end of Greek life. These houses would be perfect to host multiracial women's support groups, house international students, and foster other diversity initiatives, such as service-learning-themed housing.

White students do not need to be a part of Greek life to take part in White privilege. The multiracial women in this research mentioned the privilege within White student-White faculty interactions that took place in academic spaces. The multiracial women explained that it was easier for White students to get along with White faculty because they had more in common. Participants also believed that they could connect better with professors they had something in common with. Unfortunately, not many of these professors and subsequent connections existed for multiracial women at MU.

To address this issue, faculty from diverse backgrounds must be sought out and hired in order for multiracial women to feel connected to their academic experiences.

Whereas multiracial women faculty members are certainly the preference here, it is not

the requirement. In fact, two participants talked about their connections with White male professors who were married to women of color and/or had children of mixed-race heritage. It is paramount that the faculty within MU become diverse in thought, experience, and identity. Once these faculty are on campus, an intentional mentoring system must be set up between professors and multiracial women students. Weekly or monthly meetings should take place between faculty and students that concern topics, such as study habits, professional development, and other academic issues of interest to multiracial women.

Curricula at institutions must also begin to reflect the voices of multiracial women that exist on campus. One participant spoke about the time she felt her realities as a multiracial woman were reflected in class. She relayed a story where a professor assigned readings by Gloria Anzaldua, who she wrote about the boundaries and borderlands of identity. This participant was touched by the simple gesture of reading about multiraciality. Therefore professors, regardless of their background, must begin to account for a plethora of identities—outside of a White male paradigm—within the curriculum. Readings, videos, and guest speakers should reflect the diversity of identity in the classroom and society. This will not only affirm marginalized students' identities but also inform students in the majority of the lived realities that diverge from their own.

In order for faculty to do this, they must be trained in pedagogies that push the envelope and account for all students' cultures. For example, culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) outlines an “effective pedagogical practice...that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity

while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469). This type of pedagogy moves away from the White norms of the academy toward a more inclusive environment that supports success for those not in the majority (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lynn, 1999). Professional development that focuses on innovative and culturally relevant teaching practices should be offered to faculty so that they may implement inclusive pedagogy in the undergraduate classroom. Centers for teaching and learning (CTLs) must implement resources that allow for the dissemination of culturally relevant teaching practices. For example, CTLs could compile scholarly literature on CRP and place this information online. Incentives, such as free lunch or an after-work social, should also be offered to faculty who take part in workshops on CRP. It is imperative that this pedagogy be introduced to faculty in order to create an academic environment that fosters equity and excellence for multiracial women.

Although increasing the structural diversity of faculty at MU is an implication for practice, in the minds of the multiracial women in this study, it was not necessary to do the same for the student body. Whereas there should be attempts made to increase the enrollment of students of color at the institution, the multiracial women participants explained that administrators should focus on supporting the few multiracial students already on campus. These women believed that MU took a restrictive rather than expansive view of diversity. In other words, the institution espoused a commitment to students of color and multiracial women but did nothing to follow through with this espousal.

To address this restrictive view of equality, institutional administrators must learn how to account for multiracial women's realities. Collaborating with the MAVIN Foundation (2006) is a brilliant way to achieve this goal. The foundation has five educational initiatives geared toward supporting mixed-race students in college. One such initiative offers training and consulting for higher education faculty and staff so that they may support multiracial students in educational success. Partnering with MAVIN is extremely advantageous for all institutions that aim to support their multiracial students on campus.

The multiracial women in this research cited that the lack of understanding and support from senior administrators at MU was one of the main reasons that impermeable racial cliques were created and maintained on campus. Participants understood that students of color needed to form racial cliques because it was "important for their identity" and survival on campus. However, the institution did nothing to deconstruct the White supremacy that gave rise to the need for students to self-segregate. Instead, restrictive views taken by administrators at MU allowed for racism and racial balkanization to continually exist on campus. For instance, one woman questioned, "Why don't we all just hang out? But we go to our respective culture centers and that's all." This participant spoke about the way in which ROSS enforced racial cliques on campus and inhibited interactions across difference. To address this reality, the inequitable distribution of resources to White students, past, present, and future, must be interrogated. This interrogation could begin with the above suggestions geared toward Greek life and White privilege. However, it also encompasses the fostering of

interactions across difference. More intentional programs that bring students together, whether they are one-day events or year-long campaigns, should be implemented on campus. This could look like a one-day diversity retreat or a year-long dinner and diversity dialogue series where all students on campus are invited to join. Moreover, interactions across student organizations, including traditionally White Greek organizations, must be fostered and encouraged by the institution.

Although racial balkanization is not a detrimental phenomenon (Villalpando, 2003), the impact it had on the multiracial women in this study was heavy. These women, whose identities were not acknowledged by MU, were made to fit into monoracial spaces or not fit in at all. To address this forced-choice phenomenon and lack of fit, multiracial students must be given a space to congregate. However, there must also be intentionality in creating spaces and events that foster interactions across race and other identities on campus. Additional resources beyond this space should also be allocated to multiracial women on campus. For instance, the institution should set up a multiracial student organization and/or support group that would meet regularly in this new space. The group would provide a place to talk about the experiences of being multiracial at a PWI. Additionally, one of the best ways for an institution to know if it is making progress in its efforts of inclusion is to simply ask those it aims to include. This space could also be used as a time and place to ask multiracial women what they feel is improving, what still needs work, and any other factors that may need to be addressed. Administrators must rely on students to guide improvements and assess the changing climate on campus. Finally, human resources, which may be funded from the old Greek life budget, should be

dedicated to maintaining this space and developing programs that support multiracial students. It is imperative that staff members who work within this new space provide education to all campus constituents on the realities of race, racism, and monoracism in higher education and society.

Aligning with CRT and CRF, it is important to highlight the implications that participants explicitly voiced throughout the interview process. These multiracial women had their own thoughts on how MU administrators could increase interactions across difference and deconstruct racial cliques on campus. The women claimed that it was the institution's job, and more specifically that of "higher up" administrators to educate all students on the importance of interacting across difference. Several of the women suggested that all MU students be required to take academic courses that would increase cultural competence and awareness and broaden understandings of identities and individuals different than their own.

With this suggestion in mind, it is imperative that PWIs implement an educational component regarding race and other social identities into their curriculum. This academic offering must be more complex than a one-and-done semester-long required course mandated during students' first years. Instead, this curriculum should span 3 to 4 years and accompany students on their college journeys. For the purposes of student buy-in, the courses should also be vast, intentional, and intriguing in content. Moreover, they should extend beyond race and explore other social identities and their intersections. Overall, the courses must focus on how identities are socially constructed and manipulated throughout time to privilege one group and disenfranchise others. This educational process will

challenge commonly held stereotypes; expose racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination; and begin to push against Whiteness and other systems of oppression on campus and beyond.

Several colleges, including MU, have begun to collect demographic data on their multiracial student populations (Padilla & Kelley, 2005). However, as one multiracial woman in the study insinuated, nothing much is done with these data beyond their collection. In fact, the multiple races this participant indicated on her admissions form were used to place her into two separate monoracial categories. Procedures for identifying and honoring the multiple races that students marked on forms, surveys, and other documents are paramount to actualizing an expansive approach to diversity on campus. This could be as simple as starting a list-serv that serves multiracial students or as extensive as setting up a faculty-student mentoring program for these students. In the end, it is critical that institutions not only offer students the option to check more than one race, but also utilize such data to support students who fall outside of a monoracial paradigm. Practitioners should also use the data to identify multiracial women on campus and ensure that the needs of these students are continually assessed and addressed. Simply asking multiracial women students what is and is not working for them on campus is a great place to begin.

Finally, national associations that are geared toward higher education, such as the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), should be held

accountable for educating institutional administrators on the realities of multiracial students on campus. This education is crucial, because some administrators are skeptical of racial identities that fall outside of a monoracial paradigm (Literte, 2011).

Furthermore, the multiracial women in this research acknowledged the skeptical nature of administrators, which often forced them to fit into monoracial categories in order to be acknowledged on campus. Therefore national associations have a responsibility to expand educators' understandings of multiracial women's existence and experiences on campus. Higher education organizations should also collaborate with associations that aim to root out racism and other oppressions within the academy. Holding joint conferences or consulting with Critical Mixed-Race Studies or the Critical Race Studies in Education Association would significantly bolster the knowledge base and power of ACPA, AERA, ASHE, and NASPA. Administrators should also look to become members of these alternate organizations, which often have a more explicit, critical focus on supporting students of color broadly and multiracial women specifically. Education offered by these associations must explore beyond identity development a topic that reinforces ahistoric and individualistic understandings of multiracial students (Gallagher, 2006; Osei-Kofi, 2012) and gets at the realities of racism and sexism in the lives of these women. When these associations acknowledge multiracial students, then so too will administrators within these organizations. It is only when administrators believe that multiraciality is real and that it is not some miracle race that transcends racism, that multiracial students' needs will be assessed and addressed.

Recommendations for Future Research

Exploring the racialized experiences of multiracial women in U.S. higher education is a new, innovative, and necessary area of research. Therefore it is no surprise that there are many more questions than answers concerning this population in college. This current research answers some of these initial questions but also guides future areas of inquiry on multiraciality in higher education.

CRT and CRF helped to expose the ways in which racism and sexism are ingrained within and endemic to the experiences of 10 multiracial women students attending a PWI in the Midwest. Examining the institutional context of this institution allowed for a closer examination of how racism and sexism were created and maintained on campus. Focusing on the institutional context proved important to the experiences of the multiracial women in this research. Therefore it would be advantageous for future research to examine additional institutional types and their impact on multiracial women students' experiences with race. For instance, would the racialized experiences of multiracial women look different at a historically Black college or university, a Hispanic-serving institution, or a women's college?

Other differing aspects of the institutional context should also be taken into account. Future research that centers the geographical region of the institution is important. This is because the history of inclusion and exclusion and race relations are extremely different in varying regions of the country, such as the South and the North. Therefore a comparative study that accounts for several institutional types located in different regions of the United States is necessary to more fully comprehend multiracial

student's experiences with race in U.S. higher education. Additionally, this study should include all genders and examine how racialized experiences compare to and differ when gender is accounted for. For instance, does gender impact the way in which multiracial students cope or experience multiracial microaggressions? Does this coping look different for different genders and different institutional types?

This study's findings also exposed the nuances within the racial category of "multiracial." For instance, almost all of the Black/White biracial students encountered issues with colorism, but other multiracial women in the study did not express these experiences. Additionally, multiracial women in this study experienced triple jeopardy, but this played out differently for women from different racial heritages. This observation suggests that multiracial students, when disaggregated by racial/ethnic makeup, do not experience race in the same manners. Scholars (Gallagher, 2006; Osei-Kofi, 2012) have claimed that thinking about biracial people as a group is misleading because these individuals, who are often lumped together, have a plethora of diverse experiences due to their racial/ethnic makeup, lived realities, and histories. Therefore future research should explore the nuances of multiracial women's racial heritage in their racialized experiences on campus.

Exploring the multiple intersections of identity that impacted multiracial women students' experiences with race was beyond the scope of this research. Although race and gender, and more specifically racism and sexism were pertinent to the lived realities of mixed-race women in this study, these participants also spoke about the intersections of other identities, such as social class and religion. The intersections of race, class, gender,

age, ability, and so on should not go unexamined in future research on multiraciality in higher education. Furthermore, the participant sample should be expanded so that multiple identities are accounted for. All of the women in the current sample identified as heterosexual, and only one woman was first generation. Examining the similarities and differences for women with different social identities beyond race and gender will prove beneficial to our understandings of multiraciality and intersecting identities in higher education. It was also evident that pre-college characteristics, such as parents' education and the racial makeup of the communities that the 10 multiracial women grew up in, impacted their experiences at MU. Therefore the impact of pre-college characteristics or inputs for multiracial students in higher education should be further researched.

Admittedly, the above suggestions for future research are vast, but I also offer suggestions on how to conduct this research. Whereas I believe in utilizing a qualitative paradigm to capture the realities of students, a quantitative paradigm is necessary to explore the above aspects of multiraciality. Capturing a plethora of students' experiences across several institutions with a quantitative rather than qualitative data collection method will save time, money, and other resources. Furthermore, the quantitative data will provide a springboard for more qualitative research, resulting in a sequential mixed-methods study that captures a magnitude of multiracial students' experiences. Quantitative data would be used to conclude relationships. For instance, questions could be asked and answered, such as, "Do multiracial women who belong to a sorority report more encounters with discrimination than their non-Greek counterparts?" Data could also be used to explore the impacts of racialized experiences. For instance, "Are multiracial

women who report frequent encounters with racial discrimination more or less academically engaged than their monoracial peers?” Such data could be disaggregated in a plethora of ways to guide further discussion and future qualitative studies that explore similar questions.

The contradictory findings within this research should also be explored further. The tension between relaying experiences with racism but not acknowledging these encounters should be interrogated. Specifically, the manners in which multiracial women internalize dominant ideology and the impact this has on their campus experience should be questioned. The tension between claiming non-White racial identities and performing Whiteness should also be focused on. Particularly, the ways in which multiracial women perform race and gender in different spaces and places on campus should be investigated.

Finally, the tensions between exoticization and not being desirable to White men on campus should be looked into. This particular tension and the male appetite (remember hooks’ [1992] “Eating the Other”) for women of color are intriguing, because higher education enters a time when sexual assault is a pressing, more visible issue. Unfortunately, research and media coverage on sexual assault in college focus on White women survivors, obscuring the realities of survivors who are women of color. It is evident from this current research that the multiracial women were visually consumed by men on campus, but what about those who are physically consumed, that is, sexually assaulted. The focus on sexual assault and multiracial women is particularly necessary, because this act is historically grounded in the rape of women slaves to control communities of color and maintain patriarchy and Whiteness through acts of sexual

violence (Hunter, 2005). Therefore future research should use a critical approach to interrogate sexual assault for women of color, and specifically multiracial women in higher education.

Interestingly, several multiracial women in this study pondered what monoracial students, faculty, and staff at MU really thought about them. Although it was and remains necessary to center the voices of multiracial women, it is only one piece of a larger picture. Interviewing monoracial faculty, staff, and students on the subject of multiraciality is a great way to paint a larger picture of and further contextualize multiracial women students' experiences with race on campus. To gain a better understanding of these women's experiences, an in-depth ethnographic study of one institution would be fascinating. An ethnographic approach would build on the foundations of this research and paint a more detailed, in-depth picture of the campus climate and women's experiences within it. A longitudinal study of a small sample of multiracial women would also be engaging. It was clear that there were several nuances between time at the academy and satisfaction with peer experiences and encounters with discrimination. For instance, the first-year students in this research expressed their want of a diverse community but had not yet found this niche. Moreover, at a time when multiraciality is becoming a reality in society and the academy, it would be advantageous to follow longitudinally the changes that are being made on campus for this growing population.

There are also multiple implications for future research that can be explored with the existing data from this dissertation research. First, taking a critical approach to issues

of multiraciality in higher education is crucial. Osei-Kofi (2012) agreed: “In order to accomplish this, we must move from an analysis focused on ‘race’ and identity to a structural analysis that rejects the fiction of ‘race’ and instead engages deeply with the processes of racialization and racism” (p. 254). However I argue that the theoretical frameworks of CRT and/or CRF must expand in future research that aims to critically analyze the realities of multiracial women in a U.S. context. Although the frameworks worked well for the present research, several theoretical conundrums emerged when analyzing 10 multiracial women’s experiences at a PWI through these frameworks. For instance, CRT recognizes that racism is endemic to U.S. society. However, when looking at multiracial individuals, it should be noted that monoracism is also endemic. Moreover, when looking at multiraciality, a different approach should be taken with the concept of differential racialization. The multiracial women in this research were differentially racialized on day-to-day bases to serve the interest of the White campus as well as throughout history. An entire new construct regarding colorism and beauty is also a necessary addition to CRF. Finally, the concept of intersectionality must be broadened to account for the multiple racial identities that mixed-race women embody. The intersections of one’s multiple races with other social identities are pertinent to the way in which multiracial women students experienced their race in college.

Second, the four themes presented in Chapter 5 do not exist in isolation from one another. Instead, there is a fluid story that can and should be told about the interactions within and between stereotypes, multiracial microaggressions, Whiteness, and coping mechanisms for the multiracial women in this study attending MU. For example,

mechanisms of Whiteness at MU gave rise to the stereotypes and microaggressions that the multiracial women experienced, and their response was to cope with these phenomena. This is just one of the many stories that can be woven from the existing themes presented in this dissertation. Weaving these themes together affords educators a more complete understanding of how participants' racialized experiences interacted with one another to influence their daily lives on campus.

Two final implications for future research come from my reflections on the methodological aspects of this study. The first included the walking interview as a method of data collection, which proved to be one of the best decisions I made as a researcher. This mode of interviewing brought forth information that I would not and did not glean in a sit-down interview. Specifically, the walking interview brought out participants' concerns and interactions with White women, beauty, and dating on campus. I urge researchers working with minoritized populations on campus to entertain the implementation of the walking interview in future research. Moreover, researchers need to continue to think outside of the box when it comes to research methods more generally, and data collection specifically. Whereas the sit-down interview is a traditional and acceptable form of data collection, it may not always be the best way for a researcher to gain the information she or he seeks. It is imperative that researchers look within and outside of the field of higher education for new, innovative, and critical modes of inquiry.

Finally, the Campus Climate for Diversity Framework (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999) loosely guided this research. Coupled with CRT and CRF, I wanted the framework to help me interrogate systems of oppression, both internal and external to the institution,

that influenced the multiracial women students' experiences with race. This pairing, CRT, CRF, and the campus climate framework worked quite well together to expose these systems. Therefore future research should begin to theorize what a framework that more concretely merges rather than just couples these theories and frames together would look like. This theorizing would add a critical component to Hurtado and colleagues' (1998, 1999) framework, which does not currently interrogate or disrupt White supremacy within academia. A new theory would prove useful in disrupting the oppressions that are embedded in the multiple dimensions of the campus context.

Conclusion

The multiracial population within U.S. higher education is growing at a rapid rate (Jones, 2005). Unfortunately, higher education research and scholarship have failed to keep up with this demographic shift (Museus et al., in press) and continue to treat multiracial students as if they have the same realities as monoracial students of color. Findings from this research confirm that multiracial women experience their race, in conjunction with their gender, in unique ways. These women's campus experiences cannot be equated to nor addressed as the same as those of White women, multiracial men, or monoracial students of color. Findings from this research refute the claim that multiracial individuals transcend race and racism and that America has entered a post-racial society.

This study's findings build significantly on the academy's understandings of stereotypes, microaggressions, Whiteness, and coping for multiracial women students. Previous studies on stereotypes and stereotype threat (see Aronson et al., 2002; Fries-

Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Steele & Aronson, 1995) within the academy have focused on monoracial students of color. This research expands these concepts to account for multiracial women's realities with stereotypes. Findings suggest that women experience monoracial and multiracial stereotypes as well as the internalization of stereotypes that concern White and non-White monoracial students on campus. Findings also confirm previous research on multiracial students' experiences with unique microaggressions (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Nadal et al., 2011), but add to this existing taxonomy by exposing the intricacies of multiracial microaggressions for women existing at a PWI. As of yet, coping strategies for multiracial women have never been explored within higher education. This study explored how the multiracial women participants coped with their racialized experiences and builds a strong foundation for future research that concerns these strategies for survival.

Finally, this study pushes the boundaries of existing research concerning multiraciality in higher education. Previous research on multiracial students focused on identity development, which reinforces race as a biological, fixed category and ignores inequitable structures that lead to racialization and the maintenance of the status quo (Osei-Kofi, 2012). By utilizing critical frameworks (CRT & CRF) and exploring the institution's context, the roles of White supremacy and patriarchy in the lives of multiracial women were exposed and deconstructed. As a result, findings from this research offer scholars and practitioners suggestions on how to be intentional in their approaches to multiracial women students in higher education. It is only when we move beyond dominant ideology, fixed notions of identity, and monoracial understandings of

race that we may move toward a more equitable, inviting academy for multiracial women students.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Email to Campus Listservs

I would like to invite multiracial women undergraduate students to participate in my dissertation research that will explore the racialized experiences of multiracial women students at a predominantly White institution. If you have identified with, or currently do identify as a multiracial woman and have attended Indiana University, Bloomington for more than one year, please think about joining this study.

Please contact me, Jessica Harris, if you are interested, have questions, or wish to participate in this research. In addition, please feel free to share this recruitment notice and information with colleagues, friends, or post to listservs to which you belong. You can contact me as follows:

Jessica Harris
Phone: 503-887-6623
Email: jh72@indiana.edu

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Email to Faculty, Staff, and Graduate Students

Hello [enter name here],

I am looking for participants for a study that explores the racialized experiences of multiracial women at Indiana University, Bloomington. If you know of an undergraduate student who has identified with, or currently identifies as a multiracial woman and has attended Indiana University, Bloomington for more than one year, I would be grateful if you would forward this email to them. The attached document provides general information about the study. If interested in participating, multiracial women undergraduate students may contact me at jh72@indiana.edu.

Additionally, please feel free to share this recruitment notice and information with colleagues and/or peers that may be able to reach out to other multiracial women undergraduate students. Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jessica Harris

Email: jh72@indiana.edu

APPENDIX C

Invitation Email and Questionnaire to Potential Participants

Dear [enter possible participant's name here],

Thank you for showing interest in this research, which explores the racialized experiences of multiracial women students at Indiana University, Bloomington. As a participant in this study, you will be asked to answer the questions at the end of this email. Additionally, as a participant, you will be asked to participate in three individual interviews with the researchers. Each interview will last 60-90 minutes. In the second interview, you will be asked to draw your own campus map that consists of the places and spaces you frequent at IU. You will lead the researcher on a campus tour based on the map you created. This activity will take no more than 60 minutes.

If you would like to participate in the above research activities, please fill out the questions below and return it to me at this email address. This will help me understand if you fit the criteria for participating in this research. After I receive the completed questionnaire, I will email you back to either set up a time to participate in the interviews or let you know you do not fit the criteria. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions, concerns, thoughts, etc.

Would you be interested in participating in two focus group interviews (#1 above) or individual interviews and the map exercise (#2 above) or both?

Are you pursuing a bachelor's degree?

How long have you attended Indiana University, Bloomington?

When do you expect to graduate?

What is your major(s)?

What is your minor(s)?

What is your hometown?

Do you live on campus?

What is your gender identity? (e.g., man, woman, transgender)

How do you identify racially? Please list all racial identities that you have identified with while attending this university.

Why are you interested in participating in this research?

Jessica Harris

Phone: 503-887-6623

Email: jh72@indiana.edu

APPENDIX D

Participant Chart

Pseudonym	Race	Year	Hometown	Major	Religion	Phenotype	Age	Sexual Orientation	Relationship Status	Scholarship	First-Gen?
Jenna Ali	Half Black, "multicultural"	First Year	Bloomington, IN	Neuroscience	Non-practicing muslim (dad) and catholic (mom)	olive, (mocha), waardenburgs' syndrome (or plebaldism) with white forelock and white spots	19	Straight, Heterosexual	Not married, boyfriend	Yes	No
Gabrielle Johnson	Mixed-Race	Senior	Barrington, IL	Criminal Justice & Sociology	Episcopalian	Caramel	22	Straight	Single	No	No
Elizabeth Ramos	Mexican, German, Austrian	Sophomore	Henderson, NV	Entrepreneurship & Corporate Innovation, International Business, and Marketing	Non-denominational christian	Light olive	19	Heterosexual	Single	Yes	No
Sarah Richaardson	Mixed/Caribbean	First Year	St. Maarten	Human Resource Management	Thelemite	Olive	18	Straight	Single	Yes	No
Monica Cruz	Biracial	Junior	South Bend, IN	Social Work	None, raise muslim	Light Skin	21	Straight	Single, Divorced	Yes	No
Vanessa Ortiz	Mexican/Black American	Junior	Indianapolis, IN	Journalism	Not religious	Hazelnut	21	Straight	Single	No	Yes
Georgia Wolfe	Asian and Native American	First Year	Indianapolis, IN	Human Development and Family Studies	Agnostic	The perfect tan, in the summer soft caramel	18	Straight	In a relationship	Yes	No
Vivian Rock	Japanese and English	Junior	Rolling Meadows, IL	Marketing	Agnostic	Cream	21	Heterosexual	Single	Yes	No
Jane Lau	African, Arawak Indian, German, White, and a bit Chinese	Third Year/Senior	Moken IL	Journalism and Sociology	Christian, non-denominational	Light tan, olive in summer	21	Straight	In a serious relationship	Yes	No
Marlaya Raza	White/Pakistani	Senior	New Palestine, IN	Computer Science and Telecommunications	Atheist	Olive	20	Straight	Single	Yes	No

APPENDIX E

Interview Prompts

Interview #1

Grand question: Tell me more about yourself.

Prompts:

- Tell me a little bit more about how you identify racially.
- Describe for me your experiences with race prior to coming to college. What was the role of community, family, friends, etc. in your racial identity prior to college?
- Describe for me your high school experience?
- Tell me about your family and friends while growing up
- Explain your decision to apply to and enroll at this institution.
- Tell me about some of the expectations you had for college. How have these expectations met, or not met, your experiences in college?
- Tell me more about your interactions with peers on campus
- How have faculty and/or staff at the institution impacted your time in college?
- Please share with me some of your thoughts about diversity at this institution
- Describe for me some of your experiences within the classroom and/or academics at MU

Interview #2

Grand question: Tell me more about your experiences at MU

Prompts:

- How do you identify or experience your race differently in different areas of campus?
- Do you ever feel like you have to apologize or explain your multiple races to people? Do you have to “set people straight” when they question your identity?
- Do you feel visible on campus? Hypervisible? Invisible?
- Tell me more about your interactions off campus.
- Explain for me your ideal peer community at MU
- Tell me more about the racial cliques on campus
- What do you think is seen as the “beautiful woman” at MU?
- To you, what does it mean to be multiracial/biracial/more than one race at MU?

Interview #3

Grand question: Wrap Up/ Exploring commonalities and Differences

Prompts:

- How is MU committed or not committed to you as a multiracial woman?
- Tell me more about your interactions with other multiracial women on campus? Tell me your thoughts on, Does adding more multiracial women matter to you?

- How do you know MU attempts diversity?
- Have you ever felt confused about your racial identity at MU?
- What impact has Greek life at MU had on your experiences in college?
- Share emerging codes and themes with the participants and solicit their thoughts and feedback.

APPENDIX F

Final Participant Questionnaire

Name:

Pseudonym:

Hometown:

Age:

Relationship status:

Mother's race:

Father's race:

Your race:

Your culture:

Year:

Major(s):

Do you live on or off campus?:

Are you a first generation college student?:

What is your sexual orientation?:

How would you describe yourself phenotypically? (e.g., light-skin, olive skin, etc.)?

Religion:

Are you at IU on a scholarship?:

If so what one?:

Do you think you have experienced prejudice and/or discrimination at IU because of your identity as a more than one-raced person and/or being a woman?

APPENDIX G

Coding Map

Stereotypes	Multiracial Microaggressions	Whiteness	Coping
White women	Denial of ID	White men	Prove
Multiracial stereotypes	Ascription of ID	Hair	Justify
Monoracial stereotypes	Assumption of ID	Racial cliques	Avoidance
Colorism	Forced choice	Beauty	Bystander
	Object/exotic	White women	Diversity community
	Microaggressions	White privilege	MU Admin sucks
	Exclusion	Dating	
	Affirmative action		
	Token		

Final stage. Codes were collapsed into themes.



Monoracial stereotypes	Multiracial stereotypes	Colorism	Stereotypes	Object/exotic	Ascription of ID
Token	Denial of ID	Exclusion	Forced choice	Microaggressions	Racism
Beauty	Greek Life	White men	Racial cliques	MU Admin sucks	Dating
Avoidance	Explains	Prove	Bystander	Minimize	Hair
Diversity community	White women	Affirmative action	Assumption of ID	White privilege	

29 codes after all three interviews and three cycles of coding.



Curriculum	MRO	Diversity	Lack of diversity	Racial cliques	Diversity community
Experiences depend on discipline	Great experiences with faculty	Upward Scholars	MU attempts diversity	MU administration sucks	Structural diversity
Running from stereotypes	Not great experiences with faculty	Leveraging ID as a shocker!	Code switching	Others leveraging women's ID	Affirmative action
Forced Choice	Feeling different	Martinsville	Racism	Multiracial microaggressions	Assumption of ID
Colorism	Denial of ID	Gender	Object/Exotic	Exclusion	Token
Home environment	Male privilege	White privilege	Monoracial privilege	Multiracial privilege	Cultural knowledge
Performance of Whiteness	Hair-cultural signifier	Bystander racism	Prove racial ID	Racism is just the way it is	Justify racial ID
Stereotyping	S.E.S.	Whiteness	Beauty	Greek Life	White men

Religion	Language	Scholarships	Blending in	Post-racialism	Dating
White women	Parental influence on college	Hair-not white	Denying parental heritage	Other mixed women on campus	

59 codes after the first two interviews and three cycles of coding.

Jessica C. Harris

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, Higher Education and Student Affairs April 2015
Minor: Critical Theory and Social Justice
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

Dissertation: “Intrinsically interesting”: Exploring the racialized experiences of multiracial women undergraduate students at a predominantly White institution

Master of Education, College Student Affairs May 2011
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

Bachelor of Arts, Critical Theory and Social Justice May 2008
Concentration: Critical Race Studies
Minor: Religious Studies
Occidental College, Los Angeles, CA

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles

Linder, C., **Harris, J.C.**, Allen, E.L., & Hubain, B. (in press). Building inclusive pedagogy: Recommendations from a national study of Students of Color in higher education and student affairs graduate programs. *Equity and Excellence in Education*.

Patton, L.D., Haynes, C.M., **Harris, J.C.**, & Ivery, S.M. (2014). Perhaps the field of education isn't so nice after all: A review essay and examination of critical race research in postsecondary contexts. *National Association of Student Affairs Professionals Journal*, 15(2), 135-148.

Griffin, K.A., Bennett, J.C., & **Harris, J.** (2013). Marginalizing merit?: An analysis of gender differences in Black faculty D/discourses on tenure, advancement, and professional success. *The Review of Higher Education*, 36(4), 489-512.

Books

Harris, J.C., & Linder, C. (Eds.). (under contract). *A Critical Examination of the Complexities of Sexual Violence on the College Campus*. Stylus Publishing.

Book Chapters

Harris, J.C. (in press). Black/White biracial women undergraduate students and the structural determinism of racial identity. In L.D. Patton & N. Croom (Eds.), *Critical Perspectives on Black Women and College Success*. New York: Routledge.

Harper, S.J., Patton, L.D., & **Harris, J.C.** (in press). Using critical race theory to (re)interpret widely-studied topics related to students in U.S. higher education. In A.M. Martinez Aleman, B. Pusser, & E.M. Bensimon (Eds.), *Critical Approaches to the Study of Higher Education*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Harris, J.C. (in press). (Re)building the ivory tower: Critical race pedagogy as a tool for liberatory education. In T. Marsh & N. Croom (Eds.), *Envisioning a critical race praxis for leadership: Critical race counterstories across the P-20 pipeline*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Harris, J.C., Haywood, J.M., Ivery, S.M., & Shuck, J.R. (2015). “You’re so articulate!?”: Battling microaggressions as Women of Color doctoral students. In J. Martin (Ed.), *Racial battle fatigue: Insights from the front lines of social justice advocacy*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Patton, L.D., **Harris, J.C.,** Ranero, J., Villacampa, I., & Lui, J. (2014). Undergraduate women of color in higher education: Engaging issues beyond the numerical hype. In S.J. Quayle & S. R. Harper (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (2nd ed.), (pp. 37-54). New York: Routledge.

Griffin, K.A., Bennett, J.C., & **Harris, J.** (2011). Analyzing gender differences in Black faculty marginalization through a sequential mixed methods design. In S. Museus & K. Griffin, (Eds.), *New Directions for Institutional Research*, No. 151, (pp. 45-61). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Book Reviews

Harris, J.C., & Linder, C. (2014). Mixed: Multiracial college students tell their life stories. [Review of the book]. *Journal of College Student Development*, 55(8), 856-858.

Submitted Articles

Harris, J.C., BrckaLorenz, A., & Nelson Laird, T. (under review). Engaging in the margins: Exploring differences in biracial students’ engagement by racial makeup. *The Review of Higher Education*.

Harris, J.C., Barone, R., & Patton, L.D. (revise and resubmit). Who Benefits?: A Critical Race Analysis of the (D)evolving Language of Inclusion in Higher Education. *Thought & Action*.

Harris, J.C. (revise and resubmit). Utilizing and expanding critical race theory to account for multiracial students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*.

Hubain, B., Allen, E.L., **Harris, J.C.,** & Linder, C. (revise and resubmit). Counter-stories and consciousness: Representations of the racialized experiences of students of Color in higher education and student affairs graduate preparation programs. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*.

Works in Progress

Harris, J.C. (in preparation). Take a walk with me: Utilizing the go-along interview method in higher education research. Targeted submission to *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*.

Davis, S. & **Harris, J.C.** (in preparation). But we didn’t mean it like that: A critical race analysis of racially charged campus incidents. Targeted submission to *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*.

PEER REVIEWED PRESENTATIONS

Conference Presentations

Harris, J.C. (2015). *Take a walk with me: Utilizing the go-along interview method in higher education and student affairs research*. Paper accepted for presentation at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Chicago, IL.

Harris, J.C. (2015). *How to support multiracial women at a predominantly White institution*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators in New Orleans, LA.

- Harris, J.C.,** BrckaLorenz, A., & Nelson Laird, T. (2014). *Engaging in the margins: Exploring differences in biracial students' engagement by racial makeup*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in Washington, DC.
- Harris, J.C.,** & Patton, L.D. (2014). *The challenges and triumphs in addressing students' multiple identities for Black Culture Centers*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in Washington, DC.
- Harris, J.C.,** Haywood, J.M., Ivery, S.M., & Shuck, J.R. (2014). *"You're so articulate!": Battling microaggressions as Women of Color doctoral students*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in Washington, DC.
- BrckaLorenz, A., Nelson Laird, T., & **Harris, J.C.** (2014). *Faculty and graduate student instructors' perspectives on professional development*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education in Dallas, TX.
- Harris, J.C.,** & Haynes, C.M. (2014). *Employing critical race pedagogy in critical race theory courses*. Session presented at the annual meeting of the Critical Race Studies in Education Association in Nashville, TN.
- BrckaLorenz, A., Haeger, H., **Harris, J.C.,** & Blockett, R.A. (2014). *Out and about on campus: Engagement, climate, and perceptions of LGBTQ collegians*. Roundtable presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Philadelphia, PA.
- Harris, J.C.,** & West, J. (2014). *Coloring outside the lines: Advocating for multiracial students on the college campus*. Session presented at the annual meeting of the American College Personnel Association in Indianapolis, IN.
- Linder, C., **Harris, J.C.,** Allen, E., & Hubain, B. (2013). *Inclusive pedagogy: Experiences of graduate students of Color in higher education graduate preparation programs*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in St. Louis, MO.
- Harris, J.C.,** Linder, C., Hubain, B., & Allen, E. (2013). *Exploring the racialized experiences of students of Color in higher education master's programs*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in St. Louis, MO.
- Ivery, S.M., & **Harris, J.C.** (2013). *Black women in the academy: An analysis of the experiences of Black undergraduate women through the decades*. Roundtable presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in San Francisco, CA.
- Linder, C., Allen, E., **Harris, J.C.,** & Hubain, B. (2013). *The experiences of students of color in student affairs graduate preparation programs*. Session presented at the annual meeting of the American College Personnel Association in Las Vegas, NV.
- Harris, J.C.,** & Barone, R. (2013). *Who benefits?: A critical race theory analysis of the (d)evolving language of inclusion in higher education*. Session presented at the annual meeting of the American College Personnel Association in Las Vegas, NV.
- Patton, L.D, & **Harris, J.C.** (2013). *Intersecting at the margins: Black culture centers' approaches to students' intersectional identities*. Session presented at the annual meeting of the American College Personnel Association in Las Vegas, NV.

- Harris, J.C.** (2012). *Ain't I a Dr.?: The experiences of Black female doctoral students in an inclusive excellence program*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in Las Vegas, NV.
- Harris, J.C., & Ivery, S.M.** (2012). *Black women in the academy 1972-2012: A historical and future analysis of the experiences of Black undergraduate women*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in Las Vegas, NV.
- Harris, J.C., & Deal, K.** (2012). *Colorblind campus climates: A critical race exploration of campus climate assessments*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in Las Vegas, NV.
- Harris, J.,** Cowan, S.U., Pattisapu, K., & Elliott, A. (2012). *Biracial women speak*. Research paper presented at the University of Denver's Annual Diversity Summit in Denver, CO.
- Harris, J.,** Pattisapu, K., & Elliott, A. (2012). *Breaking the binary: Experiences of biracial undergraduate women*. Research paper presented at the University of Denver Women's Conference in Denver, CO.
- Cunningham, E., Bazile, S., Griffin, K.A., **Harris, J.,** & Hazelwood, A. (2012). *From full-time employee to full-time student: Considering doctoral programs*. Roundtable presented at the annual meeting of the American College Personnel Association in Louisville, KY.
- Griffin, K. A., Bennett, J.C., & **Harris, J.** (2011). *Intersecting at the margins: A gendered discourse analysis of Black faculty experiences with teaching, research, and service*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in Charlotte, NC.

Invited Presentations

- Linder, C., Hubain, B., **Harris, J.C.,** & Allen, E. (2013). *Experiences of students of color in student affairs graduate preparation programs*. Webinar presented for the American College Personnel Association's Career Central.
- Harris, J.** (2010). *Open space technology; Exploring identity, oppression and social justice in our campus community*. Session presented at the second annual Social Justice Symposium at the Pennsylvania State University.
- Harris, J.** (2010) *Theater of the oppressed: Exploring power and privilege within leadership*. Session presented to Pollock Hall Resident Assistants at the Pennsylvania State University.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| Research Assistant, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) | July 2014-Present |
| <i>Center for Postsecondary Research, Bloomington, IN</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as the Project Manager of a \$33,600 AAC&U grant funded longitudinal research project focusing on teaching, learning, and engagement in undergraduate STEM education • Assist the Director of NSSE in daily operations to ensure the success of survey administration • Prepare conference presentations, literature reviews, research proposals, and other scholarly works to disseminate and share NSSE findings with the field of higher education | |

Research Assistant, Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) July 2013-June 2014
Center for Postsecondary Research, Bloomington, IN

- Designed, tested, and piloted a new FSSE related survey instrument geared toward the experiences of graduate student instructors
- Recruited institutions for pilot study and served as the main contact throughout survey administration
- Presented survey findings and related research at regional and national conferences

Project Associate, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) July 2012-June 2013
Center for Postsecondary Research, Bloomington, IN

- Managed project logistics, activities, and timelines for institutions participating in NSSE
- Served as the main point of contact for institutions participating in survey research
- Assisted in various stages of report production and data management

Research Assistant, Center for Multicultural Excellence August 2011-June 2012
The University of Denver, Denver, CO

- Planned, implemented, and assessed professional development workshops for graduate students of color
- Facilitated and maintained relationships between graduate students of color and the Center
- Compiled and analyzed literature and campus climate data to aid in the implementation of Inclusive Excellence at the University of Denver
- Supported efforts to encourage and retain graduate students of color

RESEARCH FUNDING

Harris, J.C. (2014). *Exploring the racialized experiences of multiracial women students at a predominantly White institution*, (\$9,000). Lead Investigator. Holmstedt Dissertation Year Fellowship, Indiana University.

Harris, J.C. (2013). *Exploring the racialized experiences of multiracial women students at a predominantly White institution*, (\$300). Lead Investigator, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Multiracial Knowledge Community.

Patton, L.D. & **Harris, J.C.** (2012). *Intersecting in the center: Black culture centers and intersectional approaches to supporting Black students' multiple identities*, (\$2,500). Co-Investigator, American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Foundation.

Harris, J.C., Pattisapu, K., & Cowan, S.U. (2012). *Beyond monoracial: Biracial and multiracial experiences in America*, (\$1,972). Principal Investigator, Women's Library Association Collection Development Program, University of Denver.

Harris, J.C. (2008). *The educational reform system in Accra, Ghana*, (\$4,000). Principal Investigator, Values and Vocations Grant, Occidental College.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, C750: Critical Race Theory in Education Summer 2013
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
Instructor of Record: Dr. Lori Patton Davis

Teaching Assistant, U548: College Student Development Theory Fall 2012
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
Instructor of Record: Dr. Lori Patton Davis

Teaching Assistant, HED 4284: Diversity in Organizations Spring 2012
The University of Denver, Denver, CO
Instructor of Record: Dr. Frank Tuitt

Instructor, College and Career Connections Summer 2011
Impact Northwest, Portland, OR
Instructor of Record: Jessica C. Harris

Teaching Assistant, CSA 507: Social Justice Issues in Higher Education Fall 2010
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
Instructor of Record: Dr. Sue Rankin

STUDENT AFFAIRS & PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Diversity Action Plan Intern, Global Diversity and Inclusion November 2012-January 2013
The Portland State University, Portland, OR

- Researched innovative, intentional, and effective strategies to help implement diversity at Portland State
- Offered feedback on the institution's Diversity Action Plan and added suggestions for fostering campus diversity in areas such as curriculum and community engagement
- Edited drafts of the institution's Diversity Action Plan for grammatical errors

Program Coordinator, Paul Robeson Cultural Center August 2009-May 2011
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

- Coordinated and assisted innovative cultural programming and student services to educate the campus community about issues of social inequity and social justice
- Recruited and planned for the 30 member Social Justice League and Intergroup Dialogue Sessions
- Built relationships and provided advising support to culturally-based student organizations
- Supervised, trained, and evaluated 2 graduate students
- Managed an annual budget of \$12,000

House Director, Stanford High School Summer College June 2010-August 2010
Stanford University, Stanford, CA

- Responsible for the overall management of one residential community for 80 high school students
- Supervised, trained, and evaluated five undergraduate Resident Assistants
- Provided on-call crisis management coverage for over 500 residents
- Facilitated social justice, leadership, and diversity training for 30 staff and program participants

Community Standards Intern, Residence Life & Housing Services January-May 2010
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

- Held daily meetings with first year students to address incident reports regarding concerning behavior in the residence hall community
- Assigned sanctions that appropriately challenged and supported students through developmental stages
- Updated, maintained, and filed student disciplinary records after conduct meetings

Program Coordinator, Children and Family Enrichment August 2008-August 2009
Metropolitan Family Service, Portland, OR

- Recruited volunteers and community organizations to help implement after school enrichment programs for students from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds attending North Clackamas elementary schools
- Created and provided data and written reports as required
- Tracked and maintained a budget of \$145,000

HONORS & ACCOLADES

Scholarship Recipient, Travel Scholarship (\$400), Association for the Study of Higher Education, 2012
Scholarship Recipient, Inclusive Excellence Scholarship (\$4,500), University of Denver, 2011-2012
Scholarship Recipient, Leadership Scholarship, Occidental College, 2006-2007

SERVICE

Professional Service

Reviewer, *Journal of College Student Development*, 2014-Present
Reviewer, *The Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs*, 2014- Present
Assistant Reviewer, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 2014- Present
State Representative, National Association of Student Personnel Administrator's Multiracial Knowledge Community, 2014-Present
Committee Assistant, Association for the Study of Higher Education's Bobby Wright Dissertation of the Year Award Committee, 2012-present
Conference Session Chair, Association for the Study of Higher Education, 2014
Conference Proposal Reviewer, Association for the Study of Higher Education, 2012-2014; American College Personnel Association, 2013; National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2014.

University Service

Member, College of Education Student Association, The University of Denver, 2011-2012
Co-President, Student Affairs Student Organization, The Pennsylvania State University, 2010-2011
Member, Black Graduate Student Association, The Pennsylvania State University, 2009- 2011
Member, Women's Studies Graduate Organization, The Pennsylvania State University, 2009-2010
Professional Development Chair, Student Affairs Student Organization, The Pennsylvania State University, 2009- 2010

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American College Personnel Association (ACPA)
American Educational Research Association (AERA)
Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)
Critical Race Studies in Education Association (CRSEA)
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)