

4-18-1994

Biracial Children Research Project

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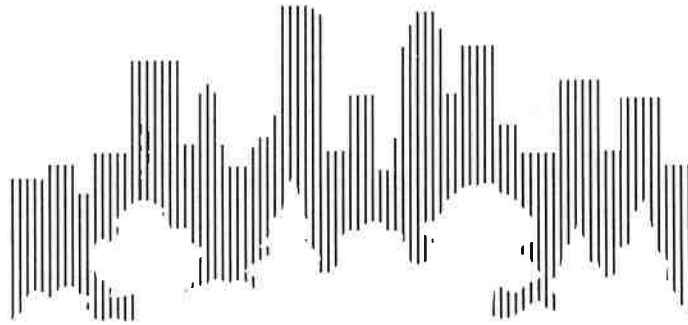
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**MASTER OF ARTS
IN SOCIAL WORK THESIS**

David Alan Branch

**MSW
Thesis**

Thesis
Branch

Biracial Children Research Project

1994

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Biracial Children Research
Project

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David Alan Branch, B.S.W., M.S.W.

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Augsburg College in Partial Fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Social Work

1994

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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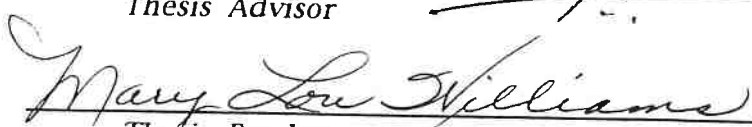
David Alan Branch

*has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirements
for the Master of Social Work Degree.*

Date of Oral Presentation: April 18, 1994

Thesis Committee:


Thesis Advisor


Thesis Reader


Thesis Reader

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my children, Matthew and Joseph, and to the other 5, 000, 000 children who are members of the "Melange Nation".

Know this; you will be counted and your voices will be heard.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to recognize and honor the following people for their support, understanding, wisdom, and patience. First and foremost I would like to thank my wife, Becky. For the past two years that I have been working my way through school, my wife has stood by my side. She has shown both patience and understanding throughout this challenging process. She has been the primary care-giver in the lives of our two children, many times without relief or thanks. This is just as much her project as it is mine. Without her support, patience, and love, there would be no Biracial Children Research Project. Thank you Becky.

I would like to thank my readers, Mr. Owen Turnlund and Professor Mary Lou Williams, for their insight, wisdom, and suggestions that helped finalize the Biracial Children Research Project.

I would like to thank Professor Vincent Peters, my thesis advisor and mentor, for his insight, wisdom, support, and encouragement helped me find the strength to proceed and complete this thesis project.

I would like to also thank Mrs. Dorwatha Adderley, Principal of Ascension school and the social service staff of Plymouth Christian Youth Center, Marit, Nancy, Ken, Shelly, Holli, Lolita, and Barb, for offering their encouragement and support. I would also like to thank Ms. Shanta Mims and Mr. Antoine Jimerson for their help in copying and mailing the Biracial Children Research Project survey.

Without the support of all those who I work with and those of whom assisted in the thesis project, this project would be still at the point of conceptualization. Thank you all.

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Biracial Children Research Project

Study Focus: Research

David Alan Branch

18 April, 1994

The purpose of the Biracial Children Research Project is to determine and develop elementary school social workers' awareness of the unique needs and issues related to biracial children.

Sixty-seven Minneapolis elementary school social workers were surveyed in order to assess their awareness level of issues related to African American and White racially mixed children. Issues that were identified by the Biracial Children Research Project dealt with; 1) school and community; 2) psycho-social; 3) racial identity development; 4) racial categorization; and 5) social workers use of referrals to agencies that serve biracial children.

The Biracial Children Research Project is a study aimed at adding to the knowledge base of social workers, so that they may more effectively work with this growing population of children with unique needs. The Project's findings indicate that this is area of development for elementary school social workers in the Minneapolis Public School system.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Biracial Children in America.

Social work theory and practice have produced several studies in the last ten years that attempt to enlighten and educate the profession through research about and treatment of multi-racial children. Research in this area of study is relatively new, although biracial children have existed in America since the first arrival of black immigrants in the United States in 1619. These early blacks often worked together with whites and sometimes intermarried. Prejudice was based more on class differences than on race, creed, or color until the introduction of slavery in the 1800's. (Logan, Freeman, and McRoy, 1991, p.4). Until the 1980's, very little research has been available on theoretical models for social work practice with biracial children. The 1980's brought more study to the increasing population of biracial children in America. According to Gibbs & Moskowitz-Sweet there are an estimated 1, 000, 000 biracial children in the United States (1991, p. 579). There are some estimates of biracial children that range between 600,000 and 5, 000,000 who are school age in the United States (Herring, 1992, p.123). According to the 1990 census, there were over 956,000 interracial marriages in the United States (Gibbs & Moskowitz - Sweet, 1991, p. 579). Of that number, 218, 000 marriages were between blacks and whites and the remaining 738,000 were between other combinations of interracial couples. Although there are six possible combinations (of biracial children) among the four major racial groups in the United States namely; whites, blacks, Asians, and Indians (Gibbs & Moskowitz - Sweet, p. 579).

Susan Kalish states that between 1968 and 1989, the proportion of mixed births increased from 1.0 percent to 3.4 percent for births for which the race of both parents is known. In terms of numbers this represents an increase from about 32,500 mixed-race births in 1968 to 117,00 births in 1989 (1992, p. 2).

The numbers found by Kalish (1992) are only a partial reflection of the number of biracial children. Her numbers were taken from census data that does not include domestic partnerships or single parent families who label their children monoracially. The overall number of biracial children can be based only on an estimate for several reasons.

- (1) The United States government chooses to categorize biracial children by the single race guidelines of the parent of color; and
- (2) according to Johnson (1992) the usual estimates (*of biracial children*) are likely to underepresent these children.

For example, children born to unwed mothers, are typically identified by records that label the children monoracially (p.38).

Terminology

The Biracial Children Research Project recognizes that there are many combinations of biracial and multi-racial children in America. The Project also recognizes that there are many different words labels used to describe the ethnicity of these children. For example, multi-racial, mixed, interracial child, bicultural, biracial, and many others. However, for the purposes of this study the author is choosing to limit his focus here to African American-White American racially mixed children and the term biracial will be used when identifying these children.

- 2) Interracial marriages end up in divorce more often than other marriages;
- 3) Biracial children have more social and psychological problems than other children;
- 4) Minorities are more accepting of biracial children than are non-minorities; and
- 5) The biracial nature of a child is an individual difference far greater than any other individual difference (e.g., handicaps, gender, gifted intellect) (p.165 -166).

Interracial marriages were prevented until 1967, when such laws were officially declared unconstitutional, *Loving v. Virginia* (Eshelman, 1990, p. 247) . The relationships that African Americans have had with White Americans is one that is based on a history of oppression, discrimination, violence, and slavery. Thus, these relationships and marriages are treated by many within both races as both socially unacceptable and taboo.

The Biracial Children Research Project is a direct attempt at breaking down the taboos and dispelling the myths surrounding the important issues that effect biracial children, that have stigmatized and hindered their healthy maturation into adolescence and adulthood.

A Personal Statement

The third and final reason to choose this population of biracial children is that the author of this study is the father of two biracial children, ages two and four. The author has attempted to create an atmosphere within his home that is representative of both racial heritages and cultures. This atmosphere is one that allows the authors children to feel comfortable with both parts of their culture. The message sent from home is that they do not have to choose sides.

heritages. Through this dualistic approach a positive biracial identity can begin to develop.

Social work professionals who serve biracial children and their families need to become aware and sensitive to the unique needs of these children and families. This project hopes to add to the knowledge base of social work practice and help assist in the future development of models for working with biracial children.

The Social Environment: School and Community

It would be logical to assume, as with all children, that biracial children come in contact with various institutions; including public or private school systems, , mental health centers, social welfare agencies, and small community agencies. School professionals in particular are facing the growing challenges of identifying and sensitizing themselves to some unique needs of biracial children (Johnson, 1992, p.39). The elementary school years are characterized by cognitive, psychological, and social growth. At this stage, children understand the concept of race and incorporate attitudes about their race and that of others into their personality. Experiences within the school setting can have significant impact on a child's racial identity perceptions (Logan, Freeman, and McRoy, 1990, p.101).

There have been several articles written in the last 5 years (Wardle, 1993, 1992, and 1991; Herring, 1992; and Logan, Freeman, and McRoy, 1987), that attempt to answer how school social workers can provide effective services to the unique needs of biracial children. Wardle (1991) attempted to examine specific techniques that social workers could use in a school setting to help them work more effectively with biracial children and their families. Wardle (p. 219), suggests that social workers initiate training sessions for other school staff, provide written material, and advise school administrators

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The recurring issues in the BCRP literature search and review were those of 1) the development of a positive racial identity in biracial children; and 2) social workers becoming change agents and more sensitive to the needs of biracial children; (Johnson, 1992; Jacobs, 1992; Gibbs & Hines, 1992; Wardle, 1993, 1992, 1991, 1989; Kerwin, et. al., 1993; Poston, 1990; Gibbs & Moskowitz-Sweet, 1991, Gibbs, 1987; Brandell, 1988; Wilson, 1987; Tizard & Phoenix, 1993; and McRoy & Freeman, 1986.).

Positive Racial Identity

The following articles and books highlighted positive racial identity development as the major key in the overall healthy development of the biracial child.

Poston defined racial identity development as pride in one's racial and cultural identity. He goes on to add that racial identity is important for several reasons:

- 1) it helps shape individuals' attitudes about themselves, attitudes about individuals from their racial/ethnic group, attitudes about individuals from other racial/ethnic minority groups, and attitudes about individuals from the majority; and
- 2) it dispels the cultural conformity myth, that is, all individuals from a particular minority group are the same, with the same attitudes and preferences (1990, p.69).

Since healthy identity development is crucial to the formation of a normal personality, the issue of identity of children of mixed heritage is critical (Wardle, 1989, p.11).

consultation, or intervention in a school setting. The authors employed the following criteria to select the cases:

- 1) the student/client had been seen at least three times in order to obtain sufficient clinical and demographic information;
- 2) the student/client's behavioral and psychological symptoms were sufficiently severe to warrant a DSM-III diagnosis of identity disorder; and
- 3) the student/client verbalized some feelings of ambivalence, confusion, or rejection of his or her racial or ethnic background.

The authors were careful to point out that the data were collected in several different settings over several years with specific clients chosen by the authors and not through random selection (p.581). Gibbs & Moskowitz-Sweet identify four goals for their study:

- 1) identify major conflicts experienced by biracial and bicultural youth;
- 2) to delineate clinical, sociocultural, and environmental issues in assessment of biracial youth and their families;
- 3) to propose specific strategies of intervention in school settings; and
- 4) to suggest implications for social work practice and training (p.579 - 581).

Their findings indicated major conflicts in the following areas:

- 1) their dual racial or ethnic heritage;
- 2) their social marginality;
- 3) their sexuality and impulse management;
- 4) their separation-individuation from their parents; and
- 5) their educational and career aspirations.

- 2) to trace some of the conditions which influenced whether or not the children adopted a realistic and viable racial identity.

Two methods of data collection were used: An identity test based on the racial identity testing model developed by Clark and Clark in 1939 and 1947; and an in-depth interview investigating the racial attitudes of the mothers of the children surveyed.

Modifications were made on the Clarks' Doll Studies by using color photographs of individual children, as well as, interracial and same race families. Participants were asked to identify children that looked like them, to identify children that resembled their peer group and to also categorize the pictures of children according to race.

Findings of the study suggested that not all mixed-race children suffer from racial identity confusion and do not conform to the stereotype of the social misfit, caught between the social worlds of black and white. Not all mixed race children are torn between racial loyalties to their parents and not all spend their lives trying to make themselves acceptable to one racial group.(Wilson, 1987, p. 176).

The Wilson study is unique because it attempts to show that biracial children have the ability to integrate a positive racial identity within a society that defines everyone monoracially. This may have been the first study to develop a sense of hope and encouragement to biracial children to grow into positive and healthy adults.

A limitation to the study is the question of generalizability to African American and White American racially mixed children. The study's sample group were only British mixed race children. Whites and Blacks in Britain have not had the added dynamic of a history of slavery. Although, oppression has existed in Britain, it has not existed to the extent that it has in America. So

Stage II. Post-color constancy: Biracial label and racial ambivalence.

The child usually attains this stage at about age four and a half. The child's racial self-concept rests not only on the knowledge that his or her color will not change (Color constancy), but also on the coemergence of a biracial label the child has internalized and begins to use as a cognitive base to construct their racial identity.

Stage III. Biracial identity: in this stage the child discovers that racial group membership is correlated with but not determined by skin color. Rather, racial group memberships is determined by parentage. (Jacobs, 1992, pp. 200 - 203).

This article is more generalizable to a larger group of biracial children because it reflects a study of American biracial children. Although the study used a relatively small sample, the use of interracial couples as study participants as interviewers should be considered an asset that potentially increased participants comfort level and thus, the study's reliability.

The Social Environment: School and Community.

Several of the articles strongly suggested that children of interracial relationships and marriages be treated and served as a child possessing two racial heritages (McRoy & Freeman, 1986; Wilson, 1987; Wardle, 1989, ; and Poston, 1991.).

Social workers have traditionally followed United States government racial classification by identifying children of mixed racial heritage monoracially and have provided services for them that are culturally specific to only one race. For example, most biracial children are placed in African American foster homes. Sometimes this placement is not inclusive of the

However, a gap emerged within the studies found. There is an assumption throughout the research findings that suggests that social workers' are already adequately trained to effectively serve biracial children and that social workers can effectively train teachers, school faculty, and other professionals in how to best meet the biracial child's needs. Social workers awareness level of the many issues identified by the studies weren't examined within the research studies found. Also the importance of the school environment was not fully explored in the articles found by the BCRP. Wardle (1992) does make an attempt, but does not explore the basic issue of whether school social workers' are aware of the basic issues related to biracial children or whether social worker's feel this is an area of need. As with any group of people, without a basic understanding or awareness of the issues related to biracial children, social workers cannot effectively serve them.

In light of the previous studies presented by the literature review, the intent of the Biracial Children Research Project becomes: To survey school social workers in the Minneapolis Public Schools elementary school system to explore their awareness level of biracial children within the system. Specific issues that were identified in the literature review that will be explored by the study are:

- 1) Positive racial identity development.
- 2) Socialization patterns.
- 3) Referral sources and local agencies serving biracial children.
- 4) Categorization of biracial children by the Minneapolis Public schools; and
- 5) Labeling; e.g. mixed or biracial.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

There are several important concepts that constitute the framework for the research of this project. Theories and concepts considered for the purpose of this study are: racial identity development in childhood; identity development in adolescence; differentiation of self in adulthood; and systems theory that links the three concepts together. These theories and concepts incorporate the intrapersonal and the interpersonal. They are incorporated in this study to help us understand the biracial child and adult as a dualistic individual. There are many issues that biracial children must face as they grow and mature into healthy adults. The ability to develop as healthy human beings is strongly correlated to their ability to develop a positive racial identity and a positive sense of self.

Racial Identity Development

As previously cited , racial identity development is the most crucial element determining whether or not the biracial child will develop a positive identity (Wardle, 1989).

Carter (1991) proposes that racial identity development progresses through a sequence of four stages. Each stage is composed of: 1) different racial identity attitudes; and 2) each racial identity attitude has a corresponding state of psychological functioning attached to it. The four stages are as followed:

The first stage being the Pre-encounter stage.

Pre-encounter is a stage in which the individual devalues their race or racial group and attempts to deny membership in that

Psychologically , the individual may feel anxious about his or her new identity and hostile towards Whites.

In the biracial child this may be reflected by an immersion into the search for a biracial identity or it may mean an immersion into the culture of the African American parent or White parent. At this point, a rejection of both parents culture may occur or a rejection of the culture of just one of the parents.

Carter's fourth and final stage is Internalization.

At this stage the person internalizes a positive Black identity. The Internalization attitudes have associated with them an awareness and acceptance of a bicultural identity structure. Implicit in the descriptions of Internalized racial identity attitudes is the notion that one may be psychologically healthy (1991, p. 106).

In the biracial child, this stage may be applied to the child who has come to an understanding that they are neither African American nor White, that they are a unique individual possessing two distinctly different cultural heritages. They are biracial, and define themselves as such. Whether it is by calling themselves Mixed, Interracial, Multiracial, or Biracial, these are all ways of defining themselves.

Identity Development in Adolescence for the Biracial Child

In the life of the biracial child, developing a sense of identity then becomes more necessary (and more problematic) wherever a wide range of possible identities is envisaged (Erickson, 1968, p.245). The biracial child is required to maneuver through a cycle of identity development and racial identity development. Erickson's theory of Psychosocial Development

and unfulfilled (in adolescence and in adulthood), (p. 201). Many biracial youth, according to the literature review, (Johnson, 1992, p.39; and McRoy and Freeman, 1986, p.165.), have an increased difficulty of progressing through stage five of Erickson's Model if they have not achieved a positive sense of their racial identity in early childhood.

Bowenian Theory: Differentiation of Self

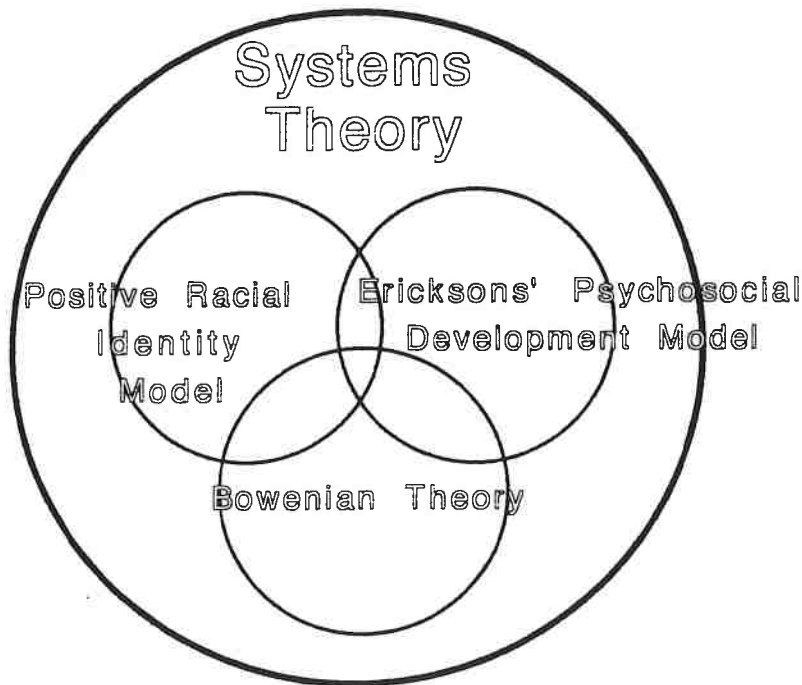
Intra-personally, the biracial child must come to terms with his or her own unique duality. Without acceptance of this uniqueness and denial of this duality, the biracial child will become stuck within his or her own undifferentiated life. According to Bowenian theory , the *undifferentiated* person hardly distinguishes thoughts from feelings; their intellects are so flooded with feelings that they are almost incapable of objective thinking. Their lives are governed by an accretion of feelings from those around them, either blindly adhered to or angrily rejected, resulting in little autonomous identity. Instead they tend to be fused with others. They either conform or assume pseudo-independence through counter-conformity (M. Nichols & R. Schwartz, 1991, p. 367).

On the contrary, the *differentiated* person is able to balance thinking and feeling: capable of strong emotion and spontaneity, but also capable of restraint and objectivity that comes with the ability to resist the pull of emotional impulses. They are able to integrate an *adaptive level of functioning* in the face of stress. They have the capacity to make the conscious effort to be objective and behave rationally in the face of pressures of emotionality(1991, p. 367).

Hines, 1992; Wardle, 1993, 1992, 1991, 1989; Kerwin, et. al., 1993; Poston, 1990; Gibbs & Moskowitz-Sweet, 1991, Gibbs, 1987; Brandell, 1988; Wilson, 1987; Tizard & Phoenix, 1993; and McRoy & Freeman, 1986.).

The framework of racial identity development in childhood, identity development in adolescence, differentiation of self in adulthood and systems theory to encompass the impact that the society has on the biracial individual (see Figure 1.) . This theoretical framework will guide the BCRP study and the development of the a training model for school based social workers.

Figure 1.
Venn Diagram of Biracial Children Research Project Theoretical Framework within a Systems Theory Perspective.



about theoretical frameworks or have a school social work component.

3. Studies pertaining to children of African American and White American mix.
4. Studies that incorporated research on positive racial identity development in biracial children.

As result of this search, over thirty-five sources were collected.

Study Sample

Sixty - seven elementary school social workers in the Minneapolis Public School system were surveyed through a mail-out questionnaire. The sample was taken from the total population (n=92) of Minneapolis Public School Social Workers on the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Sixteen male and fifty-one female school social workers were surveyed in order to determine school social workers awareness of issues related to biracial children. The participants will be asked to complete the survey and return it in a self-addressed stamped envelope provided by the Biracial Children Research Project. To increase the rate of response (along with the self-addressed stamped envelope) letters of support from Gerald Hickman, Administrator of Student Support Services, and Owen Turnlund, Executive Director of Plymouth Christian Youth Center (PCYC) were included in the survey packet. A letter from Mr. Turnlund was included to show the community support of the project. PCYC has had a twenty year association with the Minneapolis Public Schools through its Alternative School and Friendship Group programs.

The participants were taken from the Minneapolis Public School system because of familiarity of the principal investigator with many of the

questions, and overall interest of the questionnaire. According to Rubin and Babbie (1993, p.254-55) this study would fall under the category of non probability sampling; purposive sampling is one form of non probability sampling.

Researcher David Royse states that the respondents (in a purposive sample) have to have certain characteristics in common in order to be selected for an interview (survey)(p. 116). In this study the common characteristics are:

- 1) Elementary school social workers.
- 2) All employed by the Minneapolis Public Schools.

A pre-test questionnaire was given to twelve social work professionals who work within the school system (but not for the school system) to help determine the effectiveness, clarity, and potential bias of the questions in the survey. A pre-test is recommended by Rubin and Babbie(1993, p.255) when using purposive sampling .

The goal of the Biracial Children Research Project is to determine school social workers awareness of issues related to biracial children. The project will also attempt to give an estimate of biracial children within the Minneapolis Public Schools, racial categorization of these children, and to examine if awareness levels differ based on race, age, or gender.

Questionnaire Structure

The following is an outline and brief description of the structure of the questionnaire that was mailed out to the sixty - seven school social worker within the sample group. Each part relates to issues identified in the literature search and review and issues from personal experience.

work were not asked for. Information requested only attempted to reflect these basic sample demographics:

- *Degree currently held.
- *Level of licensure held.
- *Length of employment.
- *Employment status
- *Gender.
- *Age.
- *Race.

The demographics were chosen to assist in determining similarities and differences in the awareness levels of the issues related to biracial children along gender, race, age, and educational lines. The total length of the questionnaire is three pages and takes approximately ten minutes to complete.

Study Limitations

The BCRP study may be limited by the following issues:

- 1) The mail out survey format's reliability is limited due to the fact that there is no guarantee that the questionnaire was filled out by the intended respondent, or that the respondent will comprehend all of the issues, and the survey format is generally short in structure (Royse, 1991, p. 104).
- 2) The sample size is relatively small. The sample size only reflects MPS elementary school social workers. Comparison to the St. Paul Public School system could have increased the generalizability of the study.
- 3) There are an estimated 5, 000, 000 multi-racial children in the United States. This study limits itself, intentionally, to African American and White racially mixed children. Therefore the

- 1) Provide comments and suggestions to help improve on clarity, design, and length of the surveying instrument.
- 2) Time themselves from start to finish.

Since the purpose of the pre-test was to examine structure and content, not all questions were analyzed. Comments were identified and if they were consistent throughout, the suggestions were accepted and changes were made.

The most comments came from Part II - Issues related to Biracial Children. This section used a Likert Type scale to help determine social worker awareness of specific issues related to African American/White American racially mixed children. Many of the comments from the pre-test participants about the statements in this section dealt with question clarity and bias. Many commented on the questions as leading and overtly seeking specific answers from them. The overall pre-test findings are summarized in Table 1.

The pre-test allowed the author to gain insight into how the issue, being personal to me, created a certain amount of bias and was leading many of the respondents toward predictable responses. The pre-test responses also provided the Biracial Children Research Project with ideas about how to restructure certain questions and areas within the body of the questionnaire.

different schools (M. Andol, personal communication, February 1994). They were encouraged to notify the social workers within each school they do groups, that the survey was coming and to remind them to return it as soon as possible.

The second procedural step was the actual mailing of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was mailed out to sixty - seven social workers on February 18, 1994. The participants were given one and a half weeks to return the questionnaire. Rubin and Babbie(1993, p. 340.) suggests that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and good reporting.

Third procedural step was contacting the Minneapolis Public School elementary school principals. The elementary school principals were contacted by phone the day the study survey was mailed out for the following reasons:

- 1) to inform them that the school social worker(s) in their building were being asked to participate in a study.
- 2) to request them to encourage their social worker to participate in the study.
- 3) to ensure that the proper chain of command is being respected.

The principals were also offered the option of receiving an abstract of the Biracial Children Research Project.

The project's methodology seeks to examine, through the analysis of the questionnaire responses, school social workers' awareness of the five basic issues listed below that relate directly to the healthy development of the biracial child in the Minneapolis Public School system.

Issues related to biracial children:

- 1) Positive racial identity development.

Chapter 5

Presentation of Findings

In this chapter the researchers will present the findings of the survey conducted by the Biracial Children Research Project on Minneapolis Elementary School Social Workers. On February 18, 1994, sixty-seven elementary school social workers were mailed a three page survey that sought to gain insight into their awareness of issues related to biracial children within the Minneapolis Public School System. The survey sought to gain insight of their awareness on several different levels.

Questions and statements on the social environment sought social workers awareness of; terminology, frequency of referrals and use of agencies serving biracial children, estimated number of biracial children in the schools and the number of biracial children receiving social work services, and how schools categorize biracial children.

In the second part of the survey, questions and statements sought to explore school social workers awareness of psycho-social issues identified in the literature review, that impact on biracial children. These included behavior, socialization, attitudes and information about the numbers of biracial children and positive racial identity formation. Issues related to categorization; foster placement and racial identification were also explored within this section.

In the third section of the questionnaire the BCRP sought basic demographical information from the survey participants. No personal identification was sought from the survey participants. For example, names of the social workers were not asked for, nor, names of the school(s) in which

The minimum age range of the school social workers age was 24 - 30 (n= 5) and the maximum age range was 61 - 70 (n=1). Forty-three percent of the respondents were between the ages of 31 and 40 (n=15). Twenty-three percent were between the ages of 41 and 50 (n=8).

Ninety-seven percent of the respondents (n=34) were employed full time by the Minneapolis Public Schools and seventy-six percent of the respondents (n=27) have been employed as school social workers between zero and five years .

The Social Environment: Presentation of School and Community Issues.

The survey sought school social workers understanding of how the environment impacts biracial children. This information was sought by using:

- 1) questions that explored descriptive words or labels used for children who are both African American and White American. (Table 2.);
- 2) questions that explored school social workers use of referrals to agencies that provide services/resources to biracial children (Table 3.);
- 3) questions that sought an estimate of the number of biracial in the elementary public school system, as well as, an estimate of the number of biracial children receiving social work or special education services (Table 4); and
- 4) questions that sought to understand how biracial children are racially categorized in the public schools (Table 5.).

In Part One of School and Community, Section S4, participants were asked to give an estimate of the total number of biracial children in their school and an estimate of the total number of biracial children receiving social work or special education services.

The participants who responded to the question gave responses that had a minimum value of 4 (n=2) and a maximum value of 3000 (n=1). For reporting purposes the maximum number range of 3000 was not included in the cumulative number. This number (3000) was left out of the cumulative total due to the fact that there is not an elementary school in the MPS that is that large and the BCRP interpreted that the respondent may have been attempting to reflect the total number of biracial children in the MPS elementary schools. Nine of the respondents either left the question blank or wrote in "unknown".

According to the school social workers who responded to the survey, there are an estimated 1,165 biracial children in the elementary schools of the Minneapolis Public Schools. Of that number, there are an estimated 386 biracial children in the Minneapolis elementary school system receiving social work or special education services. That is, an estimated 33.1% of biracial children in the MPS receive social work or special education services.

Presentation of Likert Scale Responses: Issues related to Biracial Children.

The questions and statements within this section of the survey asked respondents to participate in a likert type scale that was seeking to examine psycho-social issues identified in the literature review, that impact biracial children.

The overall likert statements were grouped into four categories:

- Group One.** Statistical information available on the numbers of biracial children (Table 6).
- Group Two.** Psycho-social issues: racial identity formation, self-esteem issues, and family issues (Table 7).
- Group Three.** Training and attitudinal issues of school social workers (Table 8).
- Group Four.** Categorization and foster care placement issues related to biracial children (Table 9).

Listed on the following on pages in Tables 6 through 9 are the grouped Likert scale responses. These responses ranged from; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (DA), Strongly Disagree (SDA), Don't Know (DK), and No Response (NR).

Table 8.
Percentage Distribution Table of Likert Scale Responses to Group Three: Statements E, H, and I.

	<u>Likert Scale</u>					
	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DA</u>	<u>SDA</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>NR</u>
Group Three:						
E. Extensive training is needed for social workers in the area of working with biracial children.	6%	48%	26%	3%	12%	6% = 100%
H. Social worker's attitudes towards interracial marriages and domestic partnerships does not impact on their ability to work with the biracial child.	12%	0%	54%	26%	8%	0% = 100%
I. Workshops/seminars have been offered by the MPS that deal with issues relating to biracial children.	0%	17%	34%	3%	43%	3% = 100%

Table 9.
Percentage Distribution Table of Likert Scale Responses to Group Four: Statements K and L.

	<u>Likert Scale</u>					
	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DA</u>	<u>SDA</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>NR</u>
Group Four:						
K. The biracial child should be considered the same race as the parent of color.	0%	8%	36%	8%	23%	23% = 100%
L. Biracial children in foster care should only be placed in African American foster homes.	3%	6%	68%	12%	8%	3% = 100%

Chapter 6

Discussion of the Findings

In this chapter the researcher will explore the issues that were identified by the researcher in the first chapter and discuss how they relate to the BCRP research questions. The research question sought to determine school social workers awareness of specific issues identified in the literature review and from the project's outcomes, develop a training seminar for school social workers', to be implemented in the Minneapolis Public School system.

The discussion will begin with the Likert type scale groupings that were identified in the study methodology chapter 4 and the findings presented in chapter 5. This chapter will explore overall sample findings and follow with a discussion of the relationships between the grouped Likert scale responses of the following variables of race, gender, and age. The discussion will end with its' implications to current and future social work practice.

Likert Scale: Discussion of Total Sample Group

The survey participants were asked to respond to the Likert scale, entitled, "Issues Related to Biracial Children". The Psycho-social issues to be explored within the Likert scale were identified in the BCRP literature review as impacting the psycho - social development of biracial children. Several other issues were also explored, such as, school social workers training, attitudes, foster placement, and racial categorization.

The Likert statements were then grouped into four categories, to aid in the presentation and discussion of the responses.

The four groups were:

is an increase of biracial children, may reflect an increased awareness of these children by participating in the BCRP.

Twenty - eight percent (n=10) of the respondents stated that they did not know whether or not the numbers of biracial children were increasing the MPS. Forty - eight percent (n=17) of the respondents stated that they did not know whether or not the numbers of biracial children were increasing nationally. This indicates that many of the school social workers were lacking information on biracial children to formulate a response to the statements in Group One of the Likert scale.

School social worker's responses to Group Two of the Likert scale were skewed towards Disagree and Strongly Disagree. This group of statements dealt specifically with issues psycho-social issues related to biracial children.

The Disagree (DA) and Strongly Disagree (SDA) responses reflected that social workers had a basic awareness of the issues presented. However, further explanation leads the researcher to question if the social workers in the MPS are working with biracial children without consideration of their racially mixed heritage. According to the BCRP's literature review, the best way to work with biracial children is to encourage and develop their dualistic racial identity (Wardle, 1992). The tendency to provide social work services without regards to their dualistic racial identity can be correlated to color-blindness, that is, working with someone without recognizing their color.

An African American man explained how people who are "color blind" impact him.

and ethnicity do not matter; or being the same race as the parent of color. According to the responses that were given, school social workers may also be encouraging biracial children to accept those two choices.

Other responses given indicate some confusion on the subject. This is reflected by those who responded Don't Know (DK) to the statements presented in Group Two.

The disagreement and lack of awareness that stemmed out of Group Two is validated by the responses to the statements in Group Three. The statements in this group reflected school social worker's training about biracial children.

Eighty percent (n=28) of the respondents Disagreed, Strongly Disagreed or did not know if the MPS had offered workshops or seminars that related to biracial children. Fifty - four percent either Strongly Agreed (SA) or Agreed (A) that extensive training was needed for school social workers in the area of biracial children. These findings suggest that there is a need and desire for training on the issues related to biracial children. The findings of Group Three were also validated by all of the survey participants (100%, n=35) stating that they would be interested in attending a seminar to gain further awareness of the issues related to biracial children

To the statements in Groups Four, the participants either Disagreed (n=13; 36%) to categorizing biracial children by the color of the minority parent, and to placing them only in African American foster care placements (n=24; 68%).

This was a surprising finding because the Minnesota Minority Heritage Act, 1992, Chapter 557, for adoption and foster placement is followed by most social work professionals. According to Foloran and Hess (1993) most biracial children are placed in African American foster homes with poor results

identification is not made by one of those two individuals, then school personnel will make a racial selection based on visual interpretation of the child's race (R. Jibben, personal communication, April 29, 1994).

Table 10.
Cumulative Frequency and Percentage Distribution Table of SSW Categorization of Biracial Children in the MPS.

<u>Racial Category</u>	<u>Cumulative Frequency</u>
White	0% (n=0)
African American	68% (n=24)
White and African American	74% (n=26)
Other	94% (n=33)
No response	100% (n=35)

Table 11.
Cumulative Frequency and Percentage Distribution Table of SSW Responses to Who Determines Racial Categorization in the MPS.

<u>Who determines racial categorization?</u>	<u>Cumulative Frequency</u>
Social Worker	0% (n=0)
Student/Child	12% (n=4)
Parent	43% (n=15)
Minneapolis Public Schools	60% (n=21)
Other	97% (n=34)
*(Parents, teachers, and school secretary)	
*(Chose two or more multiple combination of responses; e.g. student/parent, social worker/parent, ect.)	
No response	100% (n=35)

If social workers are in disagreement with the categorization of biracial children, then they need to create the effort to: 1) become a change agent within their school to advocate for a biracial category to the racial identification of children; 2) begin to advocate for a biracial or multiracial

Both age groups strongly agreed or agreed that the numbers of biracial children were increasing.

The overall scope of the survey suggests that there were no statistical difference when individual variables were explored for the Likert type scale groupings. This indicated to the BCRP that other variable, such as, education may be having more of an impact on the study results. Ninety - seven percent (n=34) of the participants were trained as social workers on the MSW level. This may indicate that social work programs are not addressing the diversity issue, beyond that of the four major racial groups (African American, Asian American, Native American, and Latino American).

Implications for Social Work Practice

From the study findings it appears that school social workers' awareness of biracial children and the issues related to them is at best, peripheral. This limited awareness was reflected by:

- 1) Only 39% "Agreed" that the number of biracial children are increasing;
- 2) An overall lack of awareness of statements in Group Two, of the Likert type scale, Issues Related to Biracial Children; and
- 3) An expressed need for training about this population of children by the survey respondents.

Four major implications for social work practice stem from the results of the BCRP study.

- 1) Social Worker's are receiving diversity training that is limited to the five major racial groups. Programs for advanced social work education need to begin to look at issues that go beyond the typical racial categories and begin to include discussions and theoretical approaches to working with multiracial individuals.

according to single race guidelines impacts biracial children.

- 4) Research a comparison between Minneapolis Public Schools and the St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS).
- 5) Research MPS and SPPS teachers awareness of biracial children.

The Biracial Children Research Project hopes that this study has aided school social workers in becoming more aware of the difficult issues facing biracial children. The BCRP hopes that the information is internalized and used by social worker within the school system, in community based agencies, and those who work on the macro level of the counties.

The needs of biracial children are unique and at times, difficult to understand. The social work practitioner must accept the challenge so that a growing population of children may be recognized, counted, and served to the best of the professions ability. The following quote by Jaimie Markham (1994, p. 22 - 26), sums up the philosophy and hopes of the Biracial Children Research Project.

Chapter 7

Biracial Children Research Project: Model for Seminar on Working with Biracial Children

The following is an outline for a seminar on working with elementary age biracial children in the Minneapolis Public School System. The seminar was developed with the outcomes of the BCRP and the BCRP's theoretical framework as a guide for the seminars outline.

Biracial Children Research Project: Working with Biracial Children, A Seminar Outline for Social Workers.

Seminar Goal:

To provide MPS social workers within the elementary schools with a greater understanding of the unique needs and issues that relate to African American and White American racially mixed children.

Seminar Objectives:

To provide a seminar that helps facilitate an increase in social workers awareness of biracial children with the MPS through:

- 1) an understanding of how school social workers can help the biracial children cultivate a healthy and positive racial identity;
- 2) an understanding of how the school environment can help biracial children cultivate a healthy and positive racial identity;
- 3) an understanding of how the community at large impacts biracial children: and
- 4) an understanding of how the school can impact the families of

Appendix A

Biracial Children Research Project:
Survey Questionnaire Cover Letter

Sample Cover Letter

Dear School Social Worker,

You are invited to be in a research study that is seeking to determine social workers awareness of issues related to biracial children in the Minneapolis Public School System. The researchers recognize that there are many combinations of biracial and multiracial children in the Minneapolis Public School System. However, for the purposes of this study and questionnaire, we are looking specifically at African - American/White American racially mixed children.

This student research project is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Augsburg College Masters in Social Work Program.

You were selected as a possible participant because social workers are responsible for the delivery of social services within the MPS. The questionnaire seeks to determine school social workers awareness of issues relating to African - American/White American racially mixed children. This questionnaire has been mailed to all elementary school social workers within the MPS. If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to complete the attached questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

There are no risks or direct benefits to you for participating in this study. This research project is not sponsored by the MPS. However, Gerald Hickman, School Social Work Services, has given his support of the research project. Owen Turnlund, Executive Director of Plymouth Christian Youth Center, also endorses the project. (See attached letters of support).

There is no way for administrators or myself to identify who returned any given questionnaire. The questionnaire design makes it impossible to identify individual participants or their schools. Therefore anonymity will be kept. Only the project researchers will have access to the questionnaires. Public school administrators may see the final study report, but it is not possible for them to see individual responses. For information purposes only, your principal has been notified of the research study.

Although many social workers are being surveyed, your participation is critical to the success of the study. In the interest of contributing to the knowledge base of social work practice, would you kindly complete the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope.

Please return the survey by March 1, 1994. If you have any questions, you may contact me at Plymouth Christian Youth Center, 2301 Oliver Avenue North, 55411 or at the Project address above. You may phone me at (612) 529-8211 or (612) 622-8527(pager). The projects Thesis Advisor is Professor Vincent Peters, he may be contacted at (612) 330-1633. Thank you.

Sincerely,

David A. Branch, LSW
Graduate Student

Appendix B
Biracial Children Research Project:
Letters of Support



MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

807 NORTHEAST BROADWAY
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55413-2398

ICIAL EDUCATION

January 19, 1994

Institutional Revue Board
Augsburg College
2211 Riverside Avenue
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55454

Dear Sirs:

I am writing in support of David Branch's proposal to conduct a research project with Minneapolis School Social Workers regarding their knowledge and training on issues related to the needs of biracial children. I understand that the study will be undertaken as a part of his work towards the Masters Degree of Social Work.

Sincerely,

Gerald Hickman
Administrator
Student Support Services

GH:mo

Appendix C

**Biracial Children Research Project:
Survey Questionnaire**

Biracial Children Research Project: Participant Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain insight on social workers awareness of issues related to biracial children. The researchers recognize that there are many combinations of biracial children and multi-racial children in the Minneapolis Public School system.

However, for the purposes of this study and questionnaire, we will be looking specifically at African-American/White American racially mixed children. Therefore, when the term biracial is used in this questionnaire it is important to answer the questions based on your awareness of this population of children.

General Instructions:

1. Either a pen or pencil may be used to complete this questionnaire.
2. Most of the questions may be answered by placing an **X** in the appropriate box.
3. Other questions will ask for **written responses**.
4. Other questions may ask you to **circle** your response to the question.
5. **You may write in any additional comments whenever you wish to do so.**

Please return the questionnaire to the Biracial Children Research Project in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided to you

by March 1, 1994.

Once again the Biracial Children Research Project would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

Part II. Issues related to Biracial Children:

BC1. Please read each of the following items carefully and rate your agreement or disagreement by placing an X in the appropriate blank.

	Strongly agree	agree	disagree	Strongly disagree	don't know
a. The number of biracial children in the MPS is increasing.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Single race children are more likely to "act-out" in school than biracial children.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. There are at least 1,000,000 biracial children in the United States.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Single race children have difficulty making friends with children who are Biracial.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Extensive training is needed for school social workers in the area of working with biracial children.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Biracial children are more likely to have a higher self-esteem than single race children.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Biracial children are more likely to come from dual parent homes.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. Social worker's attitudes towards interracial marriages and domestic partnerships does not impact on their ability to work with the biracial child.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
i. Workshops/seminars have been offered by the MPS that deal with issues relating to biracial children.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
j. Biracial children are more likely to have friends who are biracial.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
k. The biracial child should be considered the same race as the parent of color.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
l. Biracial children in foster care should only be placed in African American foster homes.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Appendix D

**Biracial Children Research Project:
Statement of Notification to MPS Principals**

Biracial Children Research Project:
Statement of Notification to MPS Principals

This following statement was communicated via phone on February 22, 1994 to Minneapolis Public School Principals whose school social worker was mailed a BCRP survey.

My name is David Branch. I am a graduate student in the Augsburg College Masters in Social Work Program. As partial fulfillment of the program requirements I am required to do a research based thesis.

My research project is entitled the "Biracial Children Research Project". The project's goal is to determine school social worker's awareness of issues related to biracial children. Your school social worker should be contacted by the project survey sometime during the week of February 21, 1994. Gerald Hickman of Student Support has given his support to the importance of the project.

The questionnaire takes approximately ten minutes to complete. Please encourage your school social worker to participate in this study.

If you would like a FAX of the project's abstract I will be happy to get that to you as soon as possible.

Two principals requested a FAX of the abstract.

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