

"You Can't Put People In One Category Without Any Shades of Gray:" A Study of Native American, Black, Asian, Latino/a and White Multiracial Identity

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science
In
Sociology

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May 2, 2011
Blacksburg, VA

Keywords: multiracial, identity, autonomy, whiteness, socialization

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explore variations in the development of racial identities for multiracial Virginians in the 21st century by focusing on the roles that physical appearance, group associations and social networks, family and region play in the process. Simultaneously, this study seeks to explore the presence of autonomy in the racial identity development process. Using Michael Omi and Howard Winant's racial formation theory as the framework, I argue that a racial project termed biracialism, defined as the increase in the levels of autonomy in self-identification, holds the potential to contribute to transformations in racial understandings in U.S. society by opposing imposed racial categorization. Through the process of conducting and analyzing semistructured interviews with mixed-race Virginia Tech students I conclude that variations do exist in the identities they develop and that the process of identity development is significantly affected by the factors of physical appearance, group associations and social networks, family and region. Furthermore, I find that while some individuals display racial autonomy, others find themselves negotiating between their self-images and society's perceptions or do not display it at all. In addition to these conclusions, the issues of acknowledging racism, the prevalence of whiteness, assimilation and socialization also emerged as contributors to the identity development process for the multiracial population.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank my family and friends for their unwavering confidence in my work and in me. Being able to talk to them on the phone, both on days when I was feeling confident and excited about my work and on days when I thought I would never finish, helped me push through to the end. I want to give a special thank you to my mom and sister for being my proofreaders when my brain became too foggy to look out for simple things like subject-verb agreement and basic grammar. And to Danielle for talking me through tough days over the past year.

I also owe a huge thank you to my committee for their mentorship throughout this process. By constantly pushing me to improve, each draft of the proposal and thesis turned out better than the last. I know, without a doubt, that I would not be as proud of this work without the help that they provided to me. In particular, to one of my co-chairs Dr. Kwame Harrison, thank you for your excitement about this project from the beginning. Your confidence in what this work could turn out to be kept me motivated when my own enthusiasm began to wane. To my other co-chair, Dr. Paula Seniors, thank you for teaching me the valuable lesson that one can never read or revise too much. Your detailed feedback on drafts strengthened not only this work but also my own development as a writer and scholar. To Dr. Laura Gillman, thank you for often seeming to know what I wanted to say even better than I knew it myself. Your meticulous edits on drafts throughout the process greatly improved the conceptualization of my main arguments and the overall readability of the document in many ways.

Finally, I want to thank Alex for being such a huge chapter in my life. Knowing you provided the inspiration for this work and I will never forget that.

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Chapter 1

Problem Statement

This study seeks to explore variations in the development of racial identities for biracial or multiracial Virginians in the 21st century. Simultaneously, this study seeks to explore the existence of autonomy in the racial identity development of these individuals. I use Diana T. Sanchez's definition of racial autonomy from "How Do Forced-Choice Dilemmas Affect Multiracial People?" which she defines as the extent to which multiracial people feel they can racially identify however they desire.ⁱ

With these two goals in mind, I begin this endeavor with the story of Susie Phipps. Phipps, a descendent of a white slave owner and a black slave, self-identified as white despite her interracial heritage. Phipps' birth certificate, on the other hand, racially identified her as black according to Louisiana state law. This law declared anyone with at least 1/32nd of black blood in his or her lineage as black. Phipps claimed that both her parents were white as well and that they raised her as a white woman. Still, she and other members of her family earned federal racial classifications of black and social racial classifications of mulattos given the interracial sexual relationship that occurred generations before her birth. Given this discrepancy between state identification and individual identification, Phipps sued the state in 1982 in an attempt to get her racial classification changed from black to white. Phipps' case proved unsuccessful as the court upheld the law that allowed for state identification of individual racial identity.ⁱⁱ This case pointedly relates to the two purposes of this thesis. What factors led to Phipps self identifying as a white woman – her physical appearance, her social networks, the generations between her lifetime and those of the interracial relationship between the slave owner and slave? Also, since Phipps self-identified as white and lived her life as a white woman, how could the state completely disregard her autonomy? Since Phipps' case, the state repealed the law that originally

classified her as black, but it remains a firm representation of circumstances surrounding biracial identity in the current generation. This study seeks to address these circumstances by focusing on factors that cause variation in the identity development of the bi- or multiracial population and the extent to which agency in choosing identity exists.

According to the January 2011 *New York Times* article “Black? White? Asian? More Young Americans Choose All of the Above” the multiracial population in the United States represents one of the fastest growing demographic groups in the country. In particular, college age students represent the largest group of multiracial individuals in history. Furthermore, these students proclaim more than ever the right to choose their own racial identities as opposed to having society dictate them.ⁱⁱⁱ Two months following the January publication, the *New York Times* published another article, “Black and White and Married in the Deep South: A Shifting Image,” confirming such reports through recently released 2010 Census data. In the article, reporter Susan Saulny notes, “reporting from the 2010 Census, made public in recent days, shows that the nation’s mixed-race population is growing far more quickly than many demographers had estimated, particularly in the South and parts of the Midwest.”^{iv} In addition to increasing rates of interracial marriage that produce biracial offspring, the article also finds that the increases in the multiracial population likely stem from older mixed-raced individuals who had long identified as only one race re-evaluating their identities.^v Similar reports appeared on our own campus in the *Collegiate Times* article “More Students Identifying as Multiracial” in February 2011. According to reporter Sarah Watson, within recent years Virginia Tech began to allow applicants to choose multiple races when applying to the university and that since then 1.5% of the student body identify themselves as multiracial.^{vi} As increases in biracial discourse continue to appear my own interest in the topic continues to grow as well. I chose to pursue this

topic due to my own six-year interracial relationship. As my relationship progressed so has my interest in the development of racial identities for the children produced from such relationships. For this reason, I feel personally connected to this topic, want to contribute to the growth of biracial scholarship and deepen by understanding of the legal, social and identity issues posed within the scholarship on the lived experience of biraciality.

Before continuing, I will define the terms used in this study. Given my emphasis on racial identity, this study includes discussions of different racial groups in U.S. society. I use the term white to refer to the social majority in U.S. society who hold the highest levels of social power. Throughout the study this term refers to the white population as a whole, including anyone whom successfully assimilated into the white racial group. I use the terms black or African American to describe the segment of U.S. society of slave or immigrant African descent. I use the term Native American to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of the U.S., however I do not claim homogeneity exists within this group. I generally refer to the population as Native American throughout this work but recognize the historical and present day existence of distinct Native American tribes and cultures. I use the term Latino or Latina to refer to those of Latin, Spanish, Mexican or similar descent, and Asian or Asian American to refer to those of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino or similar descent. I use all of these terms generally as a means for addressing a collective group because not all individuals fit neatly into these categories. Still, in accordance with Roger Sanjek in “Intermarriage and the Future of Races in the United States” I present and use racial classifications as a five-race framework.^{vii}

Additionally, I define here three other terms that appear throughout this study. Biracial refers to individuals whose parents are of two different races. Multiracial, on the other hand, refers to individuals whose parents are of at least two or more different races. Heritage for these

individuals could include a parent of one race and a parent of two or more races for instance. While I make this distinction now, I do not differentiate much between the two throughout the course of this study. Technically, a biracial person can also claim a multiracial heritage. As such, I use the terms interchangeably throughout. Furthermore, I did not distinguish between the two when recruiting participants for the study. The only mandatory criteria concerned that the participants claim a heritage of at least two races, though they may claim more than two. Finally, I use the term monoracial to refer to individuals identifying as only one race.

The multiracial population has always been present in U.S. society and I do not discredit their historical presence nor do I overlook their history throughout this work. However, I do recognize the timing and the socio-cultural and historical parameters in which I attempt to locate this study. Research, social and political commentary and activism regarding the biracial population increased significantly over the past several decades. For instance, the current generation started a proactive attempt to alter the recognition of the multiracial population in U.S. society. The result of this attempt, the Mark One or More (MOOM) movement, successfully called for changes to the 2000 U.S. Census to allow multiracial individuals to choose more than one race if they self-identified as such.^{viii} This movement, which I will also refer to as the multiracial movement throughout this work, resulted from the combined efforts of several multiracial activist organizations. One such organization, the not for profit group Project RACE (Reclassify All Children Equally) advocates for legislation allowing for a multiracial category on all documents requesting racial identification. Project RACE began at the hands of two white women with biracial children who hoped to see their children not have to choose between their racial heritages. To date, Project RACE claims success for the inclusion of multiracial categorization in nine states.^{ix} The Association for MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA) seeks “to

educate and advocate on behalf of multiethnic individuals and families by collaborating with others to eradicate all forms of discrimination” and significantly contributed to the multiracial movement in an attempt to do so.^x AMEA formed in 1988 as a not-for-profit association of several smaller organizations and became federally recognized as the premiere multiracial activist group during the MOOM movement. Clearly, these groups seek not only to bring attention to the multiracial population but also help increase the ability for individuals to self-identify. Still, this desire of self-identification has opponents, as I will address throughout the literature review of this work. Furthermore, one issue that I must critically address concerns that this advocacy on behalf of multiracial self-identification in large part stems from the work of white mothers. I will argue throughout this thesis that the increases in autonomously choosing one’s own identity represent an oppositional force against historical patterns of misidentification that attempted to maintain power. However, critically one must question whether it could also represent an example of continued white power given that white women seek to bring about change on behalf of their children.

At a time when there is an increasing attention directed towards the biracial population, one argument addresses the idea that choosing a multiracial identity represents the correct and ideal identification for people in this population. For instance, several models of biracial identity development assert that individuals will go through a series of stages in their lifetime in which they will build a healthy, biracial identity.^{xi} I will address these models individually later in the thesis, but in response to the notion of a biracial identity as the appropriate and healthy identity, I must ask the following: what about those in the multiracial population who choose to self-identify as monoracial? While I agree that the biracial population deserves the opportunity of a biracial self-identification, I also argue that healthy and informed monoracial self-identifications

occur as well. Using an exploratory, qualitative approach, this study develops an analysis of semistructured interviews to explore this possibility, and to aid in a better recognition of factors that may cause the variation between a multiracial and monoracial identity.^{xii} In aiming to address both the factors that may cause variation in identification of multiracial individuals and the extent to which they feel autonomous in choosing their own identity, I hope to add to the scholarship of biraciality. Furthermore, this study will contribute to literature on identity formation as a whole. Such literature adjusts according to changes in the global economy as well as the political and social economy within the U.S. At the cusp of the 21st century the multiracial population proves to be at the forefront of such changes in the U.S., thereby making it probable that this study will be sociological relevant and beneficial to both the future of biracial studies and identity formation literature.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

I use Michael Omi and Howard Winant's racial formation theory, as developed in *Racial Formation in the United States*, as the theoretical framework for this thesis.^{xiii} Racial formation theory considers social, historical and political issues for racial groups within American society. As each of these issues can and do change, Omi and Winant argue that the fluidity of race should serve as the determinant for how to approach race, racial relations between groups and racial identification. Omi and Winant define their theory as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed."^{xiv} They articulate that their theory should serve as an attempt to avoid what some would deem the utopian ideas of post-racialism, in which race represents an illusion of little importance in the present day and past, racist ideologies in which races represented fixed scientific, biological entities. I address both of these extremes in sections 3.5 and 3.11 of the literature review and both emerged within the interviews as well.

Conceptualization of the racial formation theory includes macro and micro levels of racial projects. Racial projects represent the link between structural and cultural interactions in U.S. society by perpetuating the existing racialized social structure and the relationship individuals hold to the institutions within it. According to the theory, the macro level includes institutions, public policies and social policies in which race represents a prominent factor. The micro level includes individual understandings and experiences of race based on the macro level racial definitions that develop according to social, economic and political factors of a given period. Omi and Winant use racial formation theory to argue that the micro level understandings of race lead to social movements and activism against racist macro level inequalities. This

advocacy results in a shift in the macro racial order and identifies race as a social and fluid concept contingent on society, the economy and political activities. As a part of racial formation, racial projects emerged throughout U.S. history that justified racial inequality through religious, scientific and political ways in order to secure power for the white hegemony. In response, oppressed groups have created their own racial projects in an attempt to dismantle such power, most evident by the Civil Rights Movements among African Americans in the 1960s and similar movements for equality among other racial minorities.^{xv}

Furthermore, Omi and Winant argue that hegemonic racial projects keep us embedded within the racialized social structure present in U.S. society because, whether at the macro or micro level, all society members are subjected to them. As such racial issues cannot be addressed without locating them within the context of their time, meaning that racial formation theory must always be historically situated. With this reliance on history the racial formation theory helps to uncover and explain the changes in our understandings of race, its significance to structures in society and the role of racism within those structures over time. Given the centrality assigned to the historical significance of race and racism, I attempt to address the history of such racial projects as they relate to the multiracial population throughout this study. In doing so, I posit the increasing autonomy in self-identification among the biracial population that opposes arbitrarily placed monoracial classifications as an emerging racial project and will use this theory as a lens for analyzing the data from the semistructured interviews. Throughout the thesis, I refer to this racial project as biracialism.^{xvi} In order to address biracialism as an emerging racial project in the current century I begin the next chapter by examining the conquest narratives of U.S. history and their effects on U.S. racial classifications.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

3.1 The Formation of a U.S. Racial Hierarchy and Its Effects

I begin by exploring the U.S. history of racial relations between groups and their racial classifications. Providing an overview remains important because an understanding of the history of racial classifications within U.S. society helps situate the circumstances of biracial individuals in the 21st century for two reasons. First, this history, as I will argue, created a systemized racial hierarchy in U.S. society that deemed whites as superior and all non-whites as inferior.^{xvii} Second, due to the institutionalization of such a hierarchy through conquest and exploitation, interracial relationships between groups occurred that produced mixed-race children. I present these two concepts now, but will further elaborate on them throughout the literature review. As Omi and Winant argue, the European arrival in the New World represents the first racial project in U.S. history. It did not merely represent a historical event, but rather created the racialized social structure via the exercise of exploitation and domination that remains intact today.^{xviii} I present below the historical analysis of racial classification in the U.S. as a chronology. While attempting to remain chronological, each of the developments of racial classifications I discuss did not occur distinctly from one another; they overlapped.

3.1.1 A Brief History of U.S. Racial Classifications: Creating the Racial Hierarchy and Increasing the Multiracial Presence in U.S. Society

This chronology can only begin with the conquest of Native Americans, the original inhabitants of the United States. The Native Americans became subject to conquest by the Spanish, Mexican and English. While these nations varied in their means for conquest, the common theme that emerges from this history remains that the Native Americans became

racialized as non-white and inferior. This theme becomes apparent as I move on to discuss the incorporation of all racial minorities in U.S. history and represents one of the main argument of this analysis.^{xix}

One commonality among the Spanish, Mexican and Anglo settlers concerns the justification for their treatment of the population as a need to “civilize” the Native Americans. As Robert Berkhofer Jr. notes in *The White Man’s Indian* “the foundations of white policy were laid during the initial century or so of contact by each of the major European nations [...] for, at that time Native Americans as ‘Indians’ became colonial subjects in their own lands as Whites advanced toward their goals as imperial powers in the New World.”^{xx} According to Edward Spicer in *Cycles of Conquest*, the Spanish focused on the desire to enhance the Native American way of life, which they viewed as inferior, by enforcing Spanish customs and law through the creation of towns and mission communities.^{xxi} The towns were meant to serve for an immediate integration and assimilation into Spanish culture and tradition on the part of Native Americans while the mission communities were meant to create the possibility of a gradual transition into Spanish culture. Either way, the Spanish attempted to change the Native American way of life through 1) forcible imposition; 2) persuasion; and 3) demonstration that the Spanish way of life would benefit the population.^{xxii} Berkhofer further notes that the Spanish also exploited the Native Americans via compulsory labor service and requirements of tributes to the crown.^{xxiii} The Mexican settlers, after having gained their independence from Spain in 1821, adopted a seemingly equitable approach to the Native American population with the imposition of three measures. Spicer details that the three measures adopted by the Mexicans in the early 1800s included offering citizenship to the Native Americans, setting up democratic governments that allowed for the political incorporation of all citizens and advocating for both equality and

individual responsibility by distributing land to all citizens for individual growth and wealth accumulation.^{xxiv} However, Native American resistance to these measures caused the Mexicans to change their policies. Like the Spanish, they too came to view the Native American population as barbaric and inferior. They also began to attempt enforcement of the expected Mexican way of life on the population through colonization, deportation and education systems in hopes of persuading the Native Americans to succumb to Mexican authority.^{xxv}

The Anglo conquest also derived its acts from the same ideas of barbarism, inferiority and the need to “civilize” the Native American population. The Anglo and Native American relationship remained, at first, peaceful in large part due to the Anglo need for Native American knowledge and agricultural techniques. However, this relationship quickly changed as the Anglo settlers and then American citizens, at the end of the Revolutionary War, aimed to expand the nation. This expansion became tied to treaties and the reservation system that, as Stephen Steinberg notes in *The Ethnic Myth*, focused on “the dispossession of Indian land and the elimination of the Indians themselves.”^{xxvi} The reservation system took hold as a means to force the Native American population into areas deemed unsuitable or unwanted by the whites. For instance, after the Revolutionary War, the U.S. government created an Indian Territory in order to house all of the Native Americans displaced from the East coast of the country. However, as the U.S. continued to push and expand further and further West, “Manifest Destiny” resulted in the mandatory and forced evacuation of Native Americans from what was once Indian Territory onto reservations set up by the government in the 1830s. This evacuation, known in U.S. history as the Trail of Tears, exemplifies the brutal and racially motivated deportation of our country’s original inhabitants at the hand of our government. While forcing the Native Americans onto reservation systems, the government created the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to deal with the

population. Through this agency, the reservation system became a site for formal institutionalized mechanisms of assimilation tied to boarding schools. The U.S. government, driven by ideas of white racial and religious superiority, believed they could “civilize” and “Christianize” the Native American population through such a system.^{xxvii}

In effect, this history of European conquest of the Native Americans can only be identified as genocide. As Steinberg notes in *The Ethnic Myth*, “the combined effect of a century of warfare, the destruction of the Indian way of life, and devastating epidemics was the decimation of the Indian population.”^{xxviii} In “American Indian Blood Quantum Requirements: Blood is Thicker Than Family” Melissa L. Meyer highlights the role of multiracial individuals of part Native American descent and their assigned role in these attempts of assimilation. Meyer notes that the Anglo policy towards the Native Americans included allotting land to the multiracial native population due to a belief that this group “would serve as a ‘civilizing’ example to other Indians” and that despite their “irredeemable hybrid stock” they could propel the success of assimilation programs.^{xxix} This attitude towards mixed-race Native Americans proves especially disingenuous when one considers the sexual exploitation forced on Native American women during their conquest. Paula Marie Seniors notes this sexual exploitation in *Beyond Lift Every Voice and Sing*. She states that Native American women faced sexual exploitation from both the Spanish and Anglo settlers and that interracial sexual relations between the two, at the forcible hands of white men, were quite common. These sexual relations resulted in multiracial offspring.^{xxx} Therefore, in the conquest of the Native American population the U.S. effectively began to create its racialized hierarchy that indicated whites as superior and forcibly contributed to the growth of the multiracial population.

While displacing Native Americans from their land, the U.S. also began importing Africans into the country as slaves. Importing slave labor presented a cheap option for U.S. farmers, with the realization soon to come for white slave owners that slave labor proved reproducible. Nell Irvin Painter in *Creating Black Americans* notes that during the Atlantic slave trade, the U.S. imported at least ten million slaves into the U.S.^{xxxix} Slavery led to the creation of the plantation system in the South, with the main agricultural product of cotton. “King Cotton,” as history claims, propelled the U.S. into the world as a major agricultural player, and played a major role in the development of industry in other regions of the country. In the process, Africans and the generations of black Americans produced by slavery became morally, socially and politically defined as barbaric, threatening and inferior to the white majority in U.S. society. As racism became institutionalized for the justification of slavery, slaves became victim to physical beatings, denial of their culture and traditions, forced illiteracy and, in the case of women, rape. These acts, largely justified by racial ideologies developed to give legitimacy to the brutal exploitation of slaves, were propelled by scientific racism and its notion of biological differences between races. Such biologically determinist articulations of racial difference remained in place long after the end of slavery through the Jim Crow era leading to the justification of segregation and lynchings. While not meaning to gloss over scientific racism and its components, I will leave them for their own section within the thesis.¹ What remains important for this chronology concerns the pattern of racializing anyone not of European Anglo descent as inferior and non-white. This pattern began with the Native Americans, became institutionalized during slavery and has played a major role in the racializing of other races and

¹ Sections 3.5 and 3.6 of the Literature Review specifically address scientific racism

ethnic minorities into U.S. society.^{xxxii} Furthermore, the sexual exploitation of female slaves also contributed to the growth of the multiracial population.

The next group to become institutionalized into the racial hierarchy was the Mexicans who represent the first Latino group to enter U.S. society. Animosity towards the Latino population remains readily present in current political times, and most recently manifest in the attempts on the part of Arizona legislators to pass the SB 1070 bill as a means to combat illegal immigration. The Arizona SB 1070 bill attempts to combat illegal immigration by authorizing law officials to determine immigration status for anyone that they reasonably suspect of being an alien. Opponents of the bill argue that such language will legally allow law officials to racially profile and detain Latino/Latina Arizonans without due cause simply based on the perception that Latino/as represent a group that may be in the U.S. illegally.^{xxxiii} Immigration remains a key issue in the racialization of Latinos and racial relations between Latinos and other groups in U.S. society. Arguably, this proves traceable to the history of Mexican Americans beginning in the second half of the 19th century.

According to Edward Spicer in *Cycles of Conquest* and David Gutiérrez in *Walls and Mirrors* Mexican Americans became incorporated into U.S. society after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, which signified the end of the Mexican American War.^{xxxiv} This treaty resulted in the annexation of Mexican territories that now include the states of Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and parts of Colorado and Texas. After annexation, the inhabitants of these territories received U.S. citizenship and a promise from the U.S. government that their land would remain in their possession. However, the Anglo population refused to honor this treaty and classified Mexican Americans as degenerate, backwards and even inferior to the slave population.^{xxxv} This population also presented itself as a

new possibility for exploitation to the U.S. majority. Rather than enslaved or placed onto reservations, Mexican Americans became a source of cheap labor as the U.S. moved into the role of a more industrialized nation. As Gutiérrez points out, denied economic opportunities to accumulate wealth resulted from this labor while a loss of political power occurred due to the influx of European and Mexican immigrants. As with Native Americans and African Americans, Mexicans in the U.S. became racialized as non-white and inferior in order to justify their economic exploitation.^{xxxvi} While not representative of all Latino Americans, I focus on the experiences of the Mexican American population here due to the fact that they, along with the Chinese and Japanese immigrants entering the country at this time, played a key role in the economic development of the U.S. in its transition to an industrial power. For the same reason, I specifically address Chinese and Japanese Americans below.^{xxxvii}

Following abolition, Asian immigration to the U.S. increased significantly due in part to an increase in the opportunity for work. Similar patterns of labor and sexual exploitation continue for this group that further institutionalizes the racial hierarchy and contributes to the growth of the mixed-race population. For example, the 19th century and the turn of the 20th century saw Chinese immigrants working in large numbers, particularly in the West. Japanese immigrants also arrived in the U.S. This increase in immigration led to anti-Asian backlash from whites that resulted in two of the earliest racist immigration policies to become law. The first, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, effectively banned further Chinese immigration into the U.S., including Chinese women. It also denied U.S. citizenship to Chinese workers already in the country. Soon after, the Gentlemen's Agreement between the U.S. and Japan in the early 1900s effectively halted Japanese immigration. Though informal, the Gentlemen's Agreement called for the U.S. not to impose restrictions on Japanese immigrants and students already in the

country if Japan agreed to prevent more immigrants from entering the U.S. Both of these policies came about as a result of racist, anti-Asian nativism within the U.S that included segregation, poor working conditions and acts of violence against the groups.

According to Gary Okihiro in *Margins and Mainstreams*, black workers became viewed as a political liability given their recent freedom from slavery and as such, the Asian workers gained manufacturing and industrial positions as replacement for black workers.^{xxxviii} Robert Seto Quan in *Lotus Among the Magnolias: The Mississippi Chinese* also notes this replacement, as he states that southern planters sought out Chinese labor for the cotton, sugar, rice and tobacco fields in hopes that they “would either displace black labor or would force blacks to resume their former submission.”^{xxxix} Furthermore, this replacement of black workers with Asian workers not only occurred for economic reasons but also as a means to continue the racist treatment of minorities within the U.S.^{xl} Serving as another example of U.S. history racializing minorities as non-white, Asian immigrants became victim to exploitative conditions and racism. Additionally, with restrictive immigration laws that prevented Asian women from entering the country interracial marriages, and thus their mixed-race children, also increased as Asian men had little chance to marry within their own race.^{xli} In combination, the experiences presented here of the Native American, African American, Mexican, Chinese and Japanese populations in the U.S. resulted in large part from “Manifest Destiny” and its goals of Western expansion as a means to propel U.S. industrialization and economic growth globally. The whites’ need for labor in order to accomplish these tasks led to the exploitive treatment of these populations. In turn, this treatment socially and politically marginalized the groups, which holds direct bearing to this study given that one form of such marginalization included sexual exploitation and state mandated laws as to whom one could marry.

One final piece of these conquest narratives regards the white ethnic immigrants from Europe throughout the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. Mass increases in European emigration resulted from economic displacement caused by industrialization in Europe, fleeing of religious persecution and the continued demand for cheap labor in the U.S. Therefore, white ethnics also became victims to the goals of “Manifest Destiny” and the social hierarchy it created.^{xlii} Leading up to 1880, European immigrants to the U.S. came from Germany, Ireland and the Scandinavian countries. The Anglo white majority classified these immigrants as non-white. Similarly, from 1880-1930, the U.S. saw an increase in Jewish immigrants and immigrants from Eastern and Southern European countries. Like their Western European counterparts, U.S. hegemony classified them as non-white as well. Although of European origins, they found themselves placed in a racial caste that included Native Americans, Latinos, African Americans and Asians. Similar to these groups, white ethnics also found themselves victim to violence, prejudice, lack of economic opportunity and institutionalized racist policies such as the 1921 and 1924 Quota Laws. These laws enacted a strict quota system that promoted immigration from Western Europe and restricted immigration of all other groups that U.S. history defined as non-white.^{xliii} Furthermore, similar to the relations between Asian and black workers, white ethnics found themselves “not only exploited as laborers but also pitted against workers of other races” as Ronald Takaki notes in *A Different Mirror*.^{xliv} He further notes that in particular the Irish white ethnics came into competition with Chinese workers on both the east and west coasts of the U.S. The Irish in particular also became defined as inferior similarly to blacks for their “savagery” and presumed low levels of intelligence.^{xlv} Moreover, their classification of inferiority in some instances ranked lower than blacks as evident by the fact that whites required them to perform jobs that slaves could not due to a fear that the slaves would

become injured. Such acts imply that despite the racial animosity towards both groups, the Irish represented a more dispensable form of labor.^{xlvi}

One major conclusion drawn from this history of exploitation concerns the racialization of all non Anglo Western Europeans as a caste of racially inferior non-whites in U.S. society. A second concerns the effect that such classifications had on producing interracial relationships and multiracial children. Additionally, it represents a labor history in which each of the racial minorities became viewed and used as a form of cheap labor for whites and the development of the U.S. economic system.

3.1.2 Attempts to Maintain White Superiority Through Anti-Miscegenation Laws

The effects of the creation of a racialized hierarchy in U.S. society and the increases in interracial intimacies and their offspring developed alongside attempts to maintain white hegemony through anti-miscegenation laws that outlawed interracial marriages. Still, this did not prevent interracial relationships and marriages from occurring. For example, Evelyn Nakano Glenn in *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* notes that high rates of intermarriage between white men and Mexican American women occurred at the end of the Mexican American war. Since colonial times high rates of recorded intermarriages between whites and Native Americans have appeared as well.^{xlvii} Even higher rates of intermarriages between blacks and Native Americans occurred in the period leading up to the Civil War, especially in New England as noted by Tiffany M. McKinney in “Race and Federal Recognition in Native New England.”^{xlviii} Black and Native American interracial relations also occurred in maroon settlements, in which free blacks would live within Native American tribes.^{xlix} Additionally, interracial relations occurred as part of the sexual exploitation

of Native American and African American women and between Asian men and black women as a result of immigration policies.¹

Still, the state took an active role in preventing interracial marriages so as to protect the presumed sanctity and purity of the white race. As informed by the racial formation theory, race represents an element of social structure and macro level racial projects represent the link between that structure and societal culture. The government's attempts to regulate marriage across racial lines serve as an example of a macro level racial project that perpetuated misunderstandings of race and justified racial inequality for centuries. James R. Browning in "Anti-Miscegenation Laws in the United States" and Larry D. Barnett in "Anti-Miscegenation Laws" provide excellent summaries of these laws throughout the nation. Browning notes that 29 states still prohibited interracial marriage in 1951. All of these states prohibited the marriage between whites and blacks, while fourteen forbid marriage between whites and "Mongoloid persons," four forbid white and Native American marriages and six considered "racial intermarriage with such abhorrence that its prohibition is provided for in their Constitutions."ⁱⁱ In 1964 Barnett addressed the fact that 19 states still upheld anti-miscegenation laws. Each of these states banned intermarriage between blacks and whites, but many also forbid intermarriages between whites and "varying degrees of Oriental, Indian, West Indian, or Malaysian ancestry."^{lii} From these two quotes, the hegemonic racial project of anti-miscegenation laws at the macro level becomes evident. Their implementation was not localized, but rather enforced throughout all of U.S. society. Furthermore, the true ideological aim of the laws, in their attempt to maintain white racial purity, becomes evident. This proves true given their prohibition of all race mixing between whites and non-whites, which only further solidified the institutionalized racial/economic structure in U.S. society of whites and 'everyone else.'

In most instances, as noted by Glenn, the anti-miscegenation laws attempted to protect the purity of the white race by protecting white women. The laws solidly sought to prevent interracial relationships between white women and non-white men.^{liii} On the other hand, the laws did not address with the same vehemence the interracial relationships between white men and non-white women. Still, in these instances the anti-miscegenation laws purposely benefited whites. For instance, concerning marriage between white men and Native American women, anti-miscegenation laws successfully prevented Native American wives from gaining their husband's inheritance. In other instances, the anti-miscegenation laws prevented other non-white women, such as Latinas, from accumulating wealth via their marriages.^{liv} Furthermore, the laws often did not attempt to outlaw intermarriage between two non-white partners. Gary Okihiro, in *Margins and Mainstreams*, describes the high rates of intermarriage between Asian men and black women as a result of racist immigration policies that prevented admittance of Asian women and wives into the U.S. and anti-miscegenation laws which outlawed the possibility of Asian men marrying white women. He notes that for these Asian men, marrying a black woman offered the only option for a legal marriage.^{lv} Similar occurrences of Asian male and African American female marriages appear within the Mississippi Chinese group discussed earlier in this review.^{lvi} Generally, anti-miscegenation laws affected all non-white men in their attempt to prevent any sexual relationships between them and white women. As Henry Yu points out in *Thinking Orientals*, anti-miscegenation statutes called for removing rights to citizenship, and thus the ability to acquire wealth and status, of any woman who married an 'Oriental' immigrant by relying on the fears that interracial sex would 'mongrelize' the white race.^{lvii} In *Filipino American Lives* Yen Le Espiritu also notes the use of anti-miscegenation laws to protect white womanhood in relation to single Filipino men who were viewed as "sexual threats."^{lviii} To

combat this perceived threat California amended its anti-miscegenation laws in 1933 to also forbid Filipino-white intermarriages along with twelve other states that did the same.^{lix}

Still, with undeniable instances of racial intermarriage throughout history, anti-miscegenation statutes remained in U.S. law and society until 1967 when the Supreme Court overturned them in the *Loving v. Virginia* case. The 1967 decision found that such laws could not exist given the freedoms promised by the 14th amendment, even though they had for a century. In overturning the anti-miscegenation laws, the Supreme Court dismantled the longest lasting and final legal form of racial inequality. Additionally, the decision provided the first opportunity for interracial couples to live equally in comparison with monoracial couples and prompted an increase in rates of intermarriage. For instance, Roger Sanjek notes that legally 65,000 interracial marriages were recognized in 1970, 167,000 in 1980 and 211,000 in 1990.^{lx} Furthermore, the decision created the first opportunity for non-whites to legally marry whites, which increased the rates of such marriages. Jennifer Lee and Frank D. Bean analyze recent interracial marriage data in “Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification” and find that Asians, Latinos and blacks intermarry with whites more frequently than any other race.^{lxi} While the authors do not distinguish between husbands or wives this implies that white women (and men) increasingly marry across racial lines. What implications arise from the fact that since 1967 white women are increasingly marrying outside of their race and producing biracial children, especially given the fact that the power of white mothers in particular plays a significant role in the recent surge of activism for self-identification?

Interracial marriages continue to increase today for some in the population. A recent study completed by the Pew Research Center notes the highest recorded statistics for interracial marriages in recent years. For instance, in 2008 14.6% of all new marriages in the U.S. occurred

between spouses of a different race or ethnicity from one another with 9% of whites, 16% of blacks, 26% of Latinos and 31% of Asians marrying outside of their race. Gender patterns also emerge in recent intermarriage data, with black males marrying outside of their race at higher percentages than black women and Asian women intermarrying at higher rates than Asian men. The study also found no gender disparities in intermarriage rates within the white and Latino populations. The increase to 14.6% in 2008 more than doubled the 1980 data that stood at 6.7%. Due to these dramatic increases in interracial marriage rates and the 2000 Census allowing multiracial individuals to self-identify, this study becomes important because the implications of its findings could offer valuable information for future research.^{lxii}

3.2 Racial Passing

Racial passing represents perhaps one of the most important features of racial identity that warrants discussion due to the fact that it represents the option of choice in self-identification. Carla Bradshaw, in “Beauty and the Beast: On Racial Ambiguity,” defines passing as an “attempt to achieve acceptability by claiming membership in some desired group while denying other racial elements in oneself thought to be undesirable.”^{lxiii} Historically, passing referred to individuals who gave up their minority ethnic identity to live as white in society. This phenomenon sometimes occurs by accident, where whites would assume a white identity for an individual without question. Adrian Piper in “Passing for White, Passing for Black” and Nikki Khanna and Cathryn Johnson in “Passing as Black: Racial Identity Work among Biracial Americans” identify passing as a way for individuals to enact political and/or sociological revenge due to the fact that it represented the only way for them to not only receive the benefits they knew they deserved but also balk against the rigid racial hierarchy.^{lxiv} In other instances, passing occurs deliberately; individuals completely separate themselves from the minority world

and take on new identities as white. Subsequently, this never allows them to return to their minority life.

A recent example of permanent passing concerns Anatole Broyard, a Creole multiracial of black and white descent. Broyard passed as white, married a white woman and raised a white family while working as a literary critic in New York. Broyard allowed some in his life to know the truth of his racial heritage but most did not know including Bliss Broyard, his daughter. She did not find out about her black ancestry until her father's death proved imminent. After learning the truth, Bliss began to explore her heritage and the life her father left behind. As she states on her personal blog she has begun to view racial identity as "the sum of a person's experiences, the culture and times in which he or she was raised, how a person is seen by the world, and how he or she sees him or herself. For my part, I don't deny one identity nor claim another."^{lxv} She goes on to declare that since learning of her father's passing she tries "to reclaim the history and family that my father prevented me from knowing."^{lxvi} Willard B. Gatewood in *Aristocrats of Color* notes the significance of permanent passing by describing it as "fraught with high social costs, such as separation from family, loneliness, and, most important of all, the constant threat of exposure."^{lxvii}

This phenomenon of the ability for individuals to decide to which racial group they belong, whether temporarily or permanently, dispels the biological notions of race and supports the fluidity of race as a social construct. However, passing becomes stereotypically negative in that it implies attempts to enter only the white race. In her Ph.D dissertation entitled "Racing and E-racing the Stage: the Politics of Mixed Race Performance," Antonia Nakano Glenn argues for passing as an understanding not of a multiracial individual living as only white, but rather as a multiracial individual living as monoracial. Khanna and Johnson identify a similar notion. They

find that while passing was considered to be a “relic of the past” their study participants exhibit strong levels of autonomy in defining their own racial identities and that choosing to pass for black represents one way in which they exhibit this autonomy.^{lxviii} Moving away from the negative connotation historically attributed to passing as “becoming white” and beginning to view it as an attempt to live monoracially, it provides insight into the lives of biracial individuals in the 21st century who self-identify as one race by presenting a choice for their self-identification.^{lxix} U.S. Census classifications long denied this option to self-identify by choice so I now turn to a discussion of the history of these classifications and the ideologies that justified them.

3.3 The Multiracial Population prior to the 20th Century

As indicated throughout this work, the multiracial population does not represent a new group within U.S. society. Although much of my historical focus concerns multiraciality in the 20th century I aim to address prior history briefly in this section by describing Census classifications in the 19th century. I then move on to discuss racial concepts of the 20th century with a focus on Virginia’s history. In doing so, I hope to show that these sections also represent further examples of dominant racial projects within the racial formation theory that successfully maintained the racial hierarchy in U.S. society. To do so, I explore the question of how U.S. society came to define and classify the mixed-race population within this hierarchy. Ann Morning addresses this issue of how mixed-race individuals fit into the hierarchy in “New Faces, Old Faces: Counting the Multiracial Population Past and Present” with a historical analysis of Census classifications for multiracial individuals in the 19th century. She notes that multiracial categories appeared sporadically throughout the 19th century on the U.S. Census and that their “appearance and disappearance can be traced to the social, political and economic outlooks of

the nation's white citizenry at the time."^{lxx} This quote adds validity to the racial formation theory, used as the theoretical framework for this thesis. As political and social circumstances changed, so did the classifications of racial groups in U.S. society.

Prior to 2000 the Census only included two multiracial categories: mulatto and mixed blood. The mulatto included those of black and white heritage and mixed blood included those of Native American and any other heritage. No other multiracial category, for example, ones that included Asian or Latino heritage were included. According to Melissa Nobles in *Shades of Citizenship* and a 2006 Panel on Hispanicity by the National Research Council, beginning in 1850 Latino/as were classified with a question pertaining to their "Mexican origin" as perceived by country of origin and the language they spoke, while Asians intermittingly began to be included as the distinct ethnic categories of Chinese and Japanese between 1870 and 1900.^{lxxi} The first option for biracial identification did not appear until 1850 when inclusion of the mulatto category occurred. This option remained in place, more or less, until 1920. In 1890 the option became further detailed with the inclusion of quadroons (having 1/4 black ancestry) and octoroons (having 1/8 black ancestry).^{lxxii} Morning notes that this inclusion, and in particular the more detailed measuring of "black blood," became used as a scientific method to test fertility rates and other biological distinctions between the races, which played a heavy role in the perpetuation of scientific racism. Scientific racism, an ideology that claimed to scientifically prove biological distinctions and levels of superiority and inferiority between the races, became prominently used as justification for racial inequality in the 20th century.^{lxxiii}

Therefore, the mixed-race Census categories became heavily dependent on blood quantum, or degrees of appearance of one type of blood in a multiracial person's heritage. The quadroon and octoroon represent the use of blood quantum for those of at least partial black

heritage and aimed to measure the levels of black blood present within an individual. However, when used in the case of mixed bloods in the 19th century, blood quantum use began to measure levels of white blood within multiracial individuals of Native American heritage. The levels used in these cases included full 1/2, 1/4 and 1/8 fractions. In terms of the mixed-race Native Americans, blood quantum as a means for measuring white blood likely stemmed from the fact that whites assumed and hoped that the addition of white blood would serve as an example for monoracial Native Americans in terms of how they could ‘become civilized’ in order to assimilate into white mainstream culture.^{lxxiv} In this case, the ‘mixing’ of bloods tied into the U.S. assimilation model imposed on Native Americans during their conquest that included educational reform as a means to uplift the Native American population out of their perceived ‘barbarity.’^{lxxv} This distinction of blood quantum use between the only two federally recognized multiracial categories in the 19th century becomes further evident by U.S. Census instructions for how to include multiracial individuals. For instance, beginning in 1870, instructions for Census takers detailed that the mulatto category included quadroons, octoroons and any person who appeared (physically) to have African ancestry. In *Shades of Citizenship* Melissa Nobles cites the precise language of these instructions as stating “be particularly careful in reporting the class *Mulatto*. The word is here generic, and includes quadroons, octoroons, and all persons having any perceptible trace of African blood. Important scientific results depend upon the correct determination of this class.”^{lxxvi} In terms of the mixed blood category’s instructions, 1870 Census takers were to identify anyone of partial Native American descent as a mixed blood if they socially and regionally lived among the Native American population.^{lxxvii}

3.4 Census Classifications in the 20th Century

In *Shades of Citizenship* Melissa Nobles also traces the Census classifications of the 20th century. She notes that at the turn of the 20th century, the 1900 Census did not include the mulatto category. It reappeared on the 1910 and 1920 Censuses with instructions dictating “the term ‘mulatto’ includes all persons having some proportion or perceptible trace of negro blood.”^{lxxviii} This idea of ‘any amount of black blood’ became institutionalized under the scientific racism ideology through the term “one-drop rule.” In terms of multiracial Native American heritage, the 1900 Census continued the use of the blood fractions according to white blood to identify an individual as a mixed blood. Other racial classifications still did not recognize multiracial individuals of non-black or Native American descent. Following the pattern from the prior century, Asian classifications continued to enumerate specific ethnicities in addition to Chinese and Japanese such as Filipino and Korean. However, in 1980 the panethnic label of Asian Pacific Islander appeared despite the dramatic ethnic differences within the Asian American community, as discussed by Eileen O’Brien in *The Racial Middle*.^{lxxix} Latino/a classification followed its similar pattern too, with Mexican being included as a category in 1930, but no other ethnic identifications of Latino/a origin appearing.^{lxxx} For much of the remaining century, when no multiracial category appeared, instructions for classifying biracial individuals as monoracial became prominent. Moreover, these instructions implemented the concept of hypodescent by dictating that the monoracial classification assigned be that of the minority race. For example, between 1930 and 1960, if of white and any non-white heritage, the instructions indicated to classify the individual according to the race of the non-white parent; if of black and Native American heritage the individual would be classified as black. Any other individuals of multiple racial minority heritages became classified according to the race of the father.^{lxxxi}

The Office of Management and Budget derived the instructions for racial classifications in the latter quarter of the century from the release of Directive 15 in 1977. This directive mandated that all federal agencies collecting racial data must use the following four racial categories: white, black, Asian or Pacific Islander and American Indian or Alaskan Native. The directive also mandated that all federal agencies must collect data about the Hispanic origin of every individual. (Note: I use the terms American Indian and Hispanic here rather than Native American and Latino according to the language of Directive 15). Having already been classified as monoracial for most of the century by way of Census instructions, this directive institutionalized static racial categories that no longer even recognized multiracial individuals. The government, and by extension U.S. society, now legally recognized only a set number of races. Furthermore, the pattern of classifying biracial individuals continued to follow its predecessors from earlier in the century through the use of hypodescent (assignment to the most socially inferior race) and the “one-drop rule.” As Yen Le Espiritu and Michael Omi note in “Who Are You Calling Asian?”

The state – as represented by the Census Bureau – has routinely distorted or disregarded the reality of interracial families and multiracial individuals. Through the categories it uses to count and classify ethnic and racial groups, the census has often legitimated the hypodescent rule, bolstered the claim of white racial purity, and imposed an arbitrary monoracial identity on individuals of mixed parentage.^{lxxxii}

As illustration of this quote, Carlos Fernández in “Government Classifications of Multiracial/Multiethnic People” describes that under use of Directive 15 if an individual listed more than one race the Census only reported the first race listed and any who wrote in ‘multiracial’ earned a visit by a Census taker so that a monoracial classification could be obtained.^{lxxxiii} Furthermore, in “The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as a Significant Frontier in Race Relations” Maria P.P. Root details the implementation of the 1978 Office of

Management and Budget policy for classifying biracial individuals that called for individuals to be classified as “people in their community would.”^{lxxxiv} This implies that the perceptions and categorization by society members based on one’s physical appearance should define them. Moreover, biracial babies became subject to identity assignment at birth. From 1978 to 1989 biracial babies with one white parent and one non-white parent became classified as the minority race and those with two non-white parents became classified according to the race of their father, following the precedent set by Census instructions from 1930-1960.

3.5 Scientific Racism

Many of the circumstances of racial classification presented thus far found their justification in scientific racism, which included eugenics and the “one-drop rule.” Eugenics refers to the attempts to prohibit perceived negative traits from entering a group through sexual reproduction and often resulted in forced sterilization of women. The “one-drop rule” refers to a biological notion that “one drop” of non-white blood, attained through interracial sexual relationships, tainted the purity of the superior white race.^{lxxxv} In many instances, the “one-drop rule” became the basis for Census classifications as addressed above. The multiracial population is not legally subject to the “one-drop rule” for identification purposes in the present day but its remnants remain profound. While the argument of race as a social construction usually prevails over scientific explanations for racial differences in the modern day, scientific racism formed the foundation of racial thought in U.S. society for a significant period of time. Addressing this ideology historically situates racial formation in the U.S., especially given its focus on preventing the mixing of races via interracial unions. Interracial relations and the acknowledgement of the multiracial population, as argued during the heyday of scientific racism, degraded the superiority of the white race and threatened their power.^{lxxxvi}

According to Marvin Harris in “Rise of Racial Determinism” scientific racism stemmed from a feud between monogenesis and polygenesis during the 18th century. The outcome of this feud provided the basis for the adoption of scientific racism as a racial project in the 19th century. Monogenesis declared that all human beings shared a common ancestry with Adam and Eve, as created in the eyes of God. As such, monogenesis argued that racial differences occurred as an evolutionary process due to environmental or regional factors and that racial imperfections could disappear through control of one’s environment. It was believed that such control would return imperfect human beings to the whiteness and purity of Adam and Eve. Advocates of monogenesis, such as Johann Blumenbach, argued for controlled climate, diet and interracial relations as a means to prevent racial impurity from forming as early as 1770.^{lxxxvii} On the other hand, polygenesis argued against the common ancestry of all human beings and for the idea of distinct creations for racial groups. The polygenesis view held that distinct races existed and levels of superiority existed between them. The polygenesis view, in moving away from the theological origins of monogenesis, came to use science as their means for justification of a racial hierarchy. Polygenesis, for all practical purposes, proved victorious in this feud. After the publication of Darwin’s work the claim of separate, distinct creations for racial groups held no validity, but the science of proving racial inferiority as justification for a racial caste system, with whites at the top, became the dominant racial ideology throughout the 19th century and early 20th century.^{lxxxviii} U.S. history became built on this racial hierarchy to justify classifications and treatment of minority races as barbaric and inferior, as discussed in section 3.1 of this thesis. Furthermore, eugenics and especially the “one-drop rule” became the backbone of justification for the anti-miscegenation laws that held a place in U.S. society until 1967.

As already mentioned, anti-miscegenation laws, as a racial project, attempted to maintain the purity of whiteness by preventing racial mixing. Presumed reasons offered as to why such laws were needed included that whites were intellectually superior to non-whites and that interracial relationships and children would dilute the white intelligence. A relatively recent example of this argument, as persuaded by scientific racism, is the work of Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray from 1994 titled *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. Written nearly 30 years after the overturn of anti-miscegenation laws, this controversial work continued to argue for biological and genetic distinctions between racial groups that result in different levels of natural intelligence. For instance the authors write, “it seems highly likely to us that both genes and the environment have something to do with racial differences.”^{lxxxix} In opposition, Stephen J. Gould writes in *The Mismeasure of Man* that Herrnstein and Murray’s work “encompass the classical corpus of biological determinism as a social philosophy.”^{xc} It is on this idea of biological determinism that scientific racism emerged as a racial project in U.S. society.

Realizing that this brief explanation hardly addresses scientific racism in great detail, I opt to move on to a discussion of some specifics in Virginia history for several reasons. For one, Virginia represents the site of this study and its history therefore deserves consideration. Secondly, this history includes distinct examples of the scientific racism ideology, allowing for a more comprehensible understanding of some of its components such as the “one-drop rule.” Third, Virginia helps bring the historical analysis I attempt full circle in terms of multiracial identity. This is due to the fact that some of the earliest records of interracial relationships occurred at Jamestown in the 17th century and that a Virginia couple filed the lawsuit that finally struck down the remaining anti-miscegenation statutes.

3.6 Importance of Virginia

Within one generation of the settlement at Jamestown, Virginia began to address the issue of “race mixing.” In 1662, the state enacted penalties on interracial unions and designated that the status of any child would reflect that of their mother. By 1691, the state no longer only penalized interracial relations, but legally outlawed them.^{xc1} This, of course, did not prevent a multiracial population from emerging in Virginia. For instance, Arthur H. Estabrook and Ivan E. McDougle’s *Mongrel Virginians*, an example of scientific racism, was an ethnographic study of a tribe in the Virginia Blue Ridge Mountains who descended from white, black and Native American heritage.^{xcii} Despite the fact that the authors claim to present an objective study, their analysis provides an excellent example of conditions, social classification and racism towards the multiracial population in Virginia history as institutionalized by scientific racism. The authors note that the multiracial tribe self-identified as of only Native American descent and lived segregated lives from both the black and white communities in Virginia, both of which viewed the tribe with disdain. General findings of the study report the tribe as highly sexual, unintelligent and of low moral character. Such pseudo ‘scientific’ claims lay the foundation for racial stereotypes that persist to the present day, including those of hypersexual black men, women and Native American women. The authors describe the tribe as “below the average, mentally and socially, they are lacking in academic ability, industrious to a very limited degree and capable of taking little training.”^{xciii} They go on to attribute what little success they could identify within the tribe as a result of white superiority when they say “some of them do rather well the few things they know, such as raising tobacco or corn - a few as carpenters or bricklayers, but this has been the result of years of persistent supervision by the white landlords.”^{xciv}

These claims also relate to the stereotype of mixed race Native American women as dependent on whites. In *Beyond Lift Every Voice and Sing* Paula Marie Seniors quotes this stereotype “as mongrel and deficient, as doomed, and as members of a dying race,” meaning the stereotype successfully implies that they could not survive without white intervention.^{xcv} Despite the objectivity claimed by the authors, what becomes apparent from *Mongrel Virginians* concerns the importance that scientific racism as a macro level racial project and its components held in terms of racial relations and classifications. The authors ultimately conclude that the study of this tribe provides evidence for the idea that the intellectual and social levels of the black and Native American races, and especially multiracial mixtures, remained below average when compared to the white race.^{xcvi}

In *Unequal Freedom* Evelyn Nakano Glenn notes that the biological notion of whites as superior, as justified by scientific racism, became institutionalized through Virginia’s use of the “one-drop rule” in particular. In the 18th century the state began to use aspects of the “one-drop rule” ideology to define and classify racial groups in the state. For instance, in 1785, the state legally defined an individual as black if they had a black parent or black grandparent. In other words, this identified anyone with one-quarter black ancestry as black. By 1910, the state reduced this ratio of black blood to 1/16, and in 1919, began to include classifications for the Native American population as well. By 1919, anyone with one quarter or more Native American blood became defined as such.^{xcvii} This right of the state to set racial classifications stemmed from the 1896 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision. In “Race, Identity, and the Law” Thomas J. Davis describes the case in detail. Homer Plessy, a Creole of multiracial black, white and Native American descent, willingly participated in the events leading up to the case as part of a “carefully planned legal confrontation” by the Citizen’s Committee to test Louisiana’s

Separate Car Act.^{xcviii} The Separate Car Act called for segregation of white and non-white passengers on trains while the Citizen's Committee, comprised of mostly Creole members, celebrated their multiracial identity and objected to segregation that ignored this choice. Ultimately, the Citizen's Committee orchestrated the events leading up to the case in order to legally determine who had the right to declare one's identity – the government or the individual? To do so, Plessy, who phenotypically looked white but was federally classified as black, purchased a train ticket and attempted to board the white designated area. When told to move to the colored section of the train he refused. In reaching the Supreme Court, the decision rendered confirmation of the legality of the Separate Car Act (i.e. segregation) and continued government involvement in classifying racial identities as either white or non-white, regardless of one's choice in identity or racial heritage.^{xcix}

Scientific racism's heyday in Virginia history occurred under the work of Walter Plecker as the first registrar of the state's Bureau of Vital Statistics. Plecker advocated for eugenics and viewed the Native American and black races as legitimate threats to the white race, particularly if interracial relations between the groups occurred. His views, as expressed in "Shall America Remain White?" were that "a mongrel race of white-black-red mixture [were] the most undesirable racial intermixture known."^c Therefore under his direction, the state passed the Racial Integrity Act of 1924. The act took effect on March 20, 1924 and served as Virginia's attempt to maintain the purity of the white race by declaring marriage between whites and non-whites as illegal. It did so with the following statement: "it shall hereafter be unlawful for any white person in this State to marry any save a white person."^{ci} The act goes on to define a white person as "the person who has no trace whatsoever of any blood other than Caucasian" while allowing for interracial marriage between whites and only those "persons who have one-

sixteenth or less of the blood of the American Indian and have no other non-Caucasic blood.”^{cii}

The act served to create a binary caste of white and non-white in Virginia, in effect classifying Native American, black, and multiracial Virginians as non-white. Anti-miscegenation laws appeared earlier than 1924 in Virginia’s history but the Racial Integrity Act’s language became the standard for miscegenation definitions in Virginia, with similar definitions adopted in several other states. With the passing of the Racial Integrity Law, Plecker successfully institutionalized the “one-drop rule” to classify anyone with nearly any trace of non-white blood as such. The blood quantum level requirements seen in earlier legislation became void. Beginning in 1924 Virginia’s population only included whites and non-whites, with the non-white caste including multiple racial categories and anyone of multiracial heritage, as defined by any amount of non-white blood.

This racist standard of classification and its preventative measures against intermarriage dominated Virginian racial relations until 1967. Its demise came at the struggle of two Virginia citizens for their right to marry freely across racial lines. Richard Loving, a white man, married Mildred Jeter, a black woman, in Washington, D.C. on June 2, 1958. After returning to their home in Virginia, the state arrested the newly married Lovings for violating the law according to the 1924 Racial Integrity Act. The Lovings faced trial and accepted a plea bargain that required they not return to Virginia in each other’s company and that they leave for a period of twenty-five years. Moreover, after the completion of their twenty-five year exile, they still could not return to their home in Virginia or else face the same criminal fate. In essence, because Richard and Mildred fell in love with each other and acted on that love regardless of their racial identity they became forcibly removed from their home, had their marriage and its legality put on trial and forced to start a life outside of their childhood homes where each of them had family. After

living out of the state for four years, the Lovings longed to return to Virginia and their families and thus began their legal battle against the institutionalized racism of anti-miscegenation.

The Lovings' case proved successful, and in 1967 the Supreme Court federally overturned all remaining anti-miscegenation laws in the United States. Language of the case records indicate that “the fact that Virginia prohibits only interracial marriages involving white persons demonstrates that the racial classifications must stand on their own justification, as measures designed to maintain White Supremacy” and that “there can be no doubt that restricting the freedom to marry solely because of racial classifications violates the central meaning of the Equal Protection Clause.”^{ciii} With this victory, the Lovings successfully participated in an oppositional micro level racial project that began a transformation of understandings of race in U.S. society. The racial projects of scientific racism as an ideology and anti-miscegenation laws as a legal structure fell victim to the Lovings' opposition to such inequality. With the history offered thus far, both national and local to the site of this study, I now move into discussion of more contemporary issues as they relate to biracial identity scholarship.

3.7 Recognizing the Possibility of Multiple Identities within the Multiracial Population

While not representing a new group within U.S. society, ideas of changing the classifications of members within the multiracial population began to emerge in the last quarter of the 20th century. I argue that multiracial people began to use their agency, following the federal overturn of anti-miscegenation laws, to actively oppose the hegemonic power of the government and other social structures that had long upheld the notions of white superiority and the need to classify between white and non-white. I address these ideas of change specifically in later sections of the literature review, but first offer some commentary by drawing from identity

formation literature and general contributions concerning the multiracial population and variation in their identity development.

Contributions from identity formation literature, especially in relation to biracial identity scholarship, rely on symbolic interactionism. In particular, social interaction emerges as a prominent concept in that “race and identity arise out of a social process in which meanings are created and modified through social interaction with others. Society shapes an individual’s identity, while at the same time, the individual plays an active role in shaping his/her own racial identity.”^{civ} In other words, neither the individual nor society single handedly influences one’s racial identity formation; rather the combination of the two and the relationship between them create the process of identity development. This concept ties in well with the theoretical framework used for this study given that Omi and Winant argue that race, as a fluid social concept, changes at a societal/macro level due to changes within individuals at the micro level. These changes, in relation to one another, occur alongside changes in political and social circumstances.^{cv} However, the idea of a socially imposed identity that contrasts with self-identification must be acknowledged in regard to the multiracial population. In *Mulattas and Mestizas* Suzanne Bost highlights the dual role of society and the individual in articulating her *mestizaje* identity conceptualization. She recognizes that on the internalized individual level mixed-race people may assume a variety of possibilities and fluidity in their identity. However, this fluidity becomes subject to the historical narrative of U.S. history that includes conquest, exploitation and the lingering effects of assumed racial classifications.^{cvi} Similarly, in “A Rose by Any Other Name,” Daniel A. Nakashima articulates that individuals in the mixed-race population both ‘do race’ and have ‘race done to them.’ This refers to the idea that the multiracial population navigates “a racial existence where, in some instances, they identify

themselves and their ethnicity to others – and in other instances, people classify them with no real interest in how they identify themselves.”^{cvi} In *Language, Race and Negotiation of Identity* Benjamin H. Bailey also offers similar insights. In studying Dominican Americans (a historically multiracial group) he too recognizes the possible conflict between self-identification and social categorization. He claims that regardless of one’s individual choice in identity, its validity comes under scrutiny from society as a whole. He states, “in face-to-face interaction, fluidity and choice of identity are constrained by the historical and social relations that are actualized in present-day received categories. These received categories shape the ways that individuals are seen and classified by others.”^{cviii} Furthermore, Bailey argues that language becomes the prime means through which the Dominican Americans in his study negotiated between individual choice and the imposition of an identity (typically African American or Latino) from U.S. society. Social categorization on the Dominican island does not rely as heavily on phenotypic characteristics, as it does in the U.S. Therefore, Dominican Americans may phenotypically look African American according to U.S. standards but will not claim an African American identity. Instead; they will use the often shared use of the Spanish language to differentiate themselves in order to declare that they are Dominican and not African American or Latino in order to oppose U.S. racial categorization.^{cix}

Other contributions from identity formation literature highlight the active role that individuals play in pursuing autonomy in their identity development alongside the effects of societal perceptions. For instance, Erving Goffman notes in *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* that individuals may attempt to cover or conceal identities perceived with social stigma; David A. Snow and Leon Anderson, for their part, write of “identity work” in which individuals adopt strategies to create and maintain identities for themselves in their article

“Identity Work Among the Homeless.”^{cx} In “The Me and the Not-Me: Positive and Negative Poles of Identity” George J. McCall offers similar insights of individual power in identity formation by detailing what he terms the “Me” and “Not-Me” declarations in which individuals may actively choose to align (declaring that is me) or separate (declaring that is not me) themselves from identities externally imposed from society at large.^{cx} Building on such works in the field of identity development, the combined roles of society and individual agency within the development of multiracial identities became more prominent. Biracialism, as I have argued as a racial project, advances on the recognition of higher levels of autonomy for multiracial individuals.

Recent literature reflects this recognition by articulating several options available to multiracial individuals. Maria Root, for instance, in *The Multiracial Experience*, articulates what she terms border crossings as possibilities for how biracial individuals try to fit into their social worlds. Root identifies four possible border crossings for multiracial individuals. Root’s first crossing regards those individuals with “both feet in both groups,” meaning that the individuals hold multiple perspectives simultaneously resulting in a biracial identity in which the individual accepts all races of their heritage equally. Root’s second crossing includes those individuals who shift between aspects of their lives and therefore tend to embrace different parts of their identities at different times and in different circumstances. Root’s third crossing consists of an individual who remains on the border. The individual does not navigate between racial worlds but rather identifies him or herself as exclusively multiracial. The individual constantly views themselves as part of both racial worlds, but never one more than the other. In contrast to those in the first crossing who also claim a biracial identity, these individuals will likely identify simply as biracial or multiracial with no distinction or mention of their racial groups. Those in the first

crossing tend to identify as biracial by claiming to be both one race and another. Therefore, the language chosen to describe one's identity becomes the distinction between these two groups. Root's final crossing includes individuals who shift between their racial identities. In contrast to the second crossing, individuals in the fourth crossing will find a home in one racial world for a significant period of time and identify as that race while doing so and then possibly move into another racial world forcing them to change their identity accordingly.^{cxii}

Other scholars have similarly articulated Root's arguments in more recent years. For instance, Kellina M. Craig-Henderson, in *Black Men in Interracial Relationships*, distinguishes between majority group identifiers, minority group identifiers, universalists and synthesizers. The majority group identifiers tend to identify themselves according to the race of the parent whose race is most socially dominant. Minority group identifiers in contrast tend to identify with the race of the parent that is the minority. Universalists tend to create their own identity regardless of their parents' racial identities. Synthesizers tend to accept and acknowledge all aspects of their racial heritage equally.^{cxiii} Similarly, in "The New Color Complex: Appearances and Biracial Identity" Kerry Ann Rockquemore and David L. Brunnsma identify four types of identity options for biracial individuals that include a singular identity, a border identity, a protean identity and transcendent identity. In this article Rockquemore and Brunnsma look exclusively at biracial individuals of only black/white heritage, however this typology can extend to all multiracial individuals. Those with a singular identity adopt what I term a monoracial identity throughout this study. Those with a border identity choose to identify exclusively as biracial. Those with a protean identity shift between their identities, sometimes choosing either of their monoracial heritages and sometimes choosing a biracial identity. Those with a transcendent identity claim to have no racial identity.^{cxiv} Root, Craig-Henderson and

Rockquemore and Brunnsma's contributions highlight aspects of the racial formation theory. Towards the end of the 20th century, biracialism began to emerge as a racial project opposed to the racial hierarchy that only allowed for imposed monoracial identities. By positing different possibilities of choices available to members of the multiracial population these contributions exemplify this biracialism as a growing interpretation of racial dynamics in U.S. society that recognizes fluidity in the available identification options for mixed-race individuals.

Along with individual identity development paths, larger society's view of biracial individuals remains important for a general understanding of biracialism due to the fact that all of society becomes subject to shifts in racial formation. Michael C. Thornton, in "Hidden Agendas, Identity Theories, and Multiracial People," reviewed relevant literature to find three distinct ways in which society approaches biracial identification. These three approaches include the problem approach, the equivalent approach and the variant approach.^{cxv} The problem approach, as its name implies, views the multiracial population as a problem and in doing so perpetuates negative stereotypes about the multiracial population. This approach views the biracial individuals as not fitting into the larger racial scheme of U.S. society and as such define them as "the other" or "in between" two ideal worlds. George Yancey and Richard Lewis Jr. address the negative impact such a view holds for biracial individuals in *Interracial Families* by articulating the stereotype of multiracial individuals as incapable of fitting into and connecting with monoracial groups. This implies that feelings of self-doubt and misunderstanding of one's identity can manifest themselves into poor psychological and social development. Yancey and Lewis, as well as Margaret Shih and Diana T. Sanchez in "Perspectives and Research on the Positive and Negative Implications of Having Multiple Racial Identities" argue against such an approach, positing instead that multiracial individuals generally show no signs of psychological

distress or weakness when compared to monoracial individuals.^{cxvi} Yancey and Lewis further argue against this problem approach since it lends credence to the racist idea of the unsuitability of interracial marriages due to effects the offspring will experience. This stereotype remains prominent. For example, as recently as 2009 a Justice in Louisiana attempted to deny a marriage license to an interracial couple. The Justice, Keith Bardwell, claimed that he denied the marriage license out of concern for any children the couple may have because he does not believe that interracial marriages last long and that the children will not be accepted within society.^{cxvii} This indicates that the Justice, Keith Bardwell, employs the problem approach in his understanding of mixed-race children by assuming that they will not be able to successfully find their place U.S. society.

The second approach, known as the equivalent approach, views biracial identity as being similar to monoracial identity by assuming that all individuals seek to assimilate into the norm of U.S. society. This approach alludes to the idea that everyone strives for the same goal of acceptance. While it remains true that some monoracial individuals struggle with identity development as well, the problem with this approach regards the focus on assimilation.^{cxviii} Historically synonymous with fitting into the ideas of white racial superiority, assimilation implies that the correct path for both biracial and monoracial individuals follows attempts to becoming “white.”^{cxix}

Thornton’s final approach, the variant approach, highlights the differences in and between biracial identity developments within individual members of the biracial population. Not all biracial individuals will share experiences or understandings of their racial identification; even further, biracial individuals with the same background may not share the same experiences. I surmise that different experiences will determine the path to identification development the

individual will take. This approach, I would argue, represents the fairest assessment of multiracial identity development as it takes into account the individualistic aspects of development by acknowledging that simply being biracial does not create a group cohesiveness among biracial individuals. Additionally, it allows for exploration of factors that cause variation in multiracial identity development and for an understanding of why some individuals will choose to self-identify as biracial and others will choose to self-identify as monoracial. I include all of these approaches given the exploratory nature of this study. Due to the lack of cohesiveness between individuals of mixed-race heritage (i.e. different racial admixtures and experiences), different factors and circumstances will vary in the roles they play in the identity development process of my interview participants.

3.8 Biracial Identity Development Models

Having discussed some general contributions to the biracial identity literature I now explore more specific models of biracial identity development. The models presented here, all written in the 1990s, exemplify the increase in research on multiracial identity occurring during that decade. While outdated in terms of the years written, these models represent a large focus of the sociological and psychological research on how biracial individuals “should” identify. Newer research helps to further the discourse on multiracial identity but the models of identity development still cited today emerged in large part during the 1990s. All of these models focus on the lifespan of the individual and the situational differences that will occur throughout the biracial individuals’ life in comparison to a monoracial individual. Additionally, each of these models results in the acclamation of a biracial identity as the healthy identity for this group. By a healthy identity, these scholars argue that assuming a biracial identity will be the most socially and psychologically beneficial identity for the individual. At the turn of the 20th century, a newer

model joined the literature, which deviates from this idea of a biracial identity as the healthy and correct form of identification, as I will assess later in this section.

However, before moving into reviews of the specific models I want to include work here by Minkah Makalani that criticizes this shift towards declarations of biracial identities, as espoused by most of the models discussed below. In his article “A Biracial Identity or a New Race?” Makalani specifically addresses those of at least partial African American descent, but claims that the push for agency on behalf of individuals to identify themselves as biracial “has no historical basis and would have a negative political impact on African Americans.”^{cxx} He argues that advocacy for biracial self-identifications aim to erase race and racism from society (a concept I explore in a later section) and that it presumes that the African American community can no longer efficiently battle racism and its effects. While Makalani’s arguments mostly stem from the fact that he finds both theoretical and applied faults in much of the work within the field of biracial identity, I acknowledge and include his criticisms here because I designed this study in such a way that it alleviates some of the issues Makalani proposes. For instance, in positing biracialism as an emerging racial project I do not argue for a biracial identity being the only option available to individuals within this population, but rather for it representing one option available to such individuals while the key factor of having the choice – the autonomy of choosing one’s own identity – remains the force in battle with systemic racial hierarchies and the power of white hegemony.^{cxxi} Still, my position does not negate the lingering questions concerning biracialism and whether or not it will actually succeed in helping to dismantle U.S. society’s reliance on social categorization. I am arguing that biracialism is increasing and that it will likely continue to increase as the multiracial population continues to grow. In effect, the increases in mixed-race people self-identifying by choice and in opposition to society’s attempts

to arbitrarily classify them will add to the shift in racial understandings that began with the ‘mark one or more’ option to the 2000 U.S. Census. In 2000, mixed-race individuals became legally allowed to identify according to their own self-image but this remains in contrast to society’s reliance on fixed racial categorization in purely social settings. The disconnect between law and social interaction remains ever present. In contrast to Makalani’s argument that increases in multiraciality will harm minority racial groups, I foresee biracialism as an avenue through which the mixed-race population and minority populations can achieve further recognition in opposition to whiteness. I find merit in my argument given that multiracial scholarship has begun to further recognize the fluidity of options available to mixed-race people in terms of how they will develop their identities. Such scholarship includes Root, Craig-Henderson and Rockquemore and Brunnsma’s articulations of variations in identity as discussed above and the Continuum of Biracial Identity (COBI) model that I present below.^{cxix} Furthermore, Susan Saulny documented increases in biracialism in her discussion of students on the University of Maryland campus who advocate for their right to choose their own identity regardless of the identities that society imposes on them in “Black? White? Asian? More Young Americans Choose All of the Above.”^{cxix}

Monoracial scholarship has begun to document the effect of growth in the multiracial population as well. For instance, Eugene Robinson details a group that he titles the “emergent” in *Disintegration: The Splintering of Black America* that must be addressed as having an effect on social understandings of race. He argues that the “emergent” include biracial people of African American heritage who are significantly increasing in number. Along with African immigrants, African American elites, African Americans living in poverty and middle class African American, Robinson argues that the emergent biracial individuals all encompass ‘blacks in

America' that no longer represent either a social or economic collective black population.^{cxxiv}

Robinson further argues that U.S. society “is about to see an unprecedented wave of interracial marriages and the largest cohort of interracial children in American history” that will contribute to shifts in racial understandings.^{cxxv} Results from the interview analysis of this study also validate this argument given that I found five participants in my sample to exhibit biracialism. Still, while I make this argument, I acknowledge that the future of biracialism is still largely unknown and I believe its chances for success rely on the notion that mixed-race people must not only choose their own identity but also actively oppose any categorization they receive that contrasts that choice.

Now returning to review of the models, the first, by W.S. Carlos Poston, addresses the changes or stages a multiracial individual will go through throughout their lifetime that culminate into the acceptance of a multiracial identity. His stages include personal identity, choice of group categorization, enmeshment/denial and appreciation. During personal identity the child will likely notice racial differences but begin to develop their identity based on information from their parents. The choice of group categorization stage finds biracial individuals forced to choose one monoracial identity while rejecting the other racial aspects of their heritage. Characterized by individual feelings of guilt for having chosen to self-identify as only one race that does not fully represent their heritage, enmeshment/denial leads to the appreciation stage in which the individual accepts their biracial identity and self-identifies as so.^{cxxvi}

Another model, by Christine Kerwin and Joseph G. Ponterotto, also finds acceptance of all racial aspects in one's heritage as the positive identity. Their stages include preschool, entry to school, preadolescence, adolescence, college/young adulthood and adulthood. In the preschool

stage the individual will begin to notice differences between racial groups by noticing differences between their parents. Upon entry to school, the child will begin to receive questions about their racial identity and will begin to classify themselves and their peers according to descriptive similarities. This need for classification will strengthen during the preadolescence stage so the child will begin to classify according to racial groups rather than simply descriptive characteristics, though differences in physical appearance will still play a large role in these classifications. The adolescence phase represents the most difficult time for the child, as he or she, will begin to feel pressure to choose one racial group. During this time, the individual becomes likely to self-identify as monoracial. During the college/young adulthood stage, the individual will become more secure in their identity and thus likely to begin to accept and see him or herself as biracial rather than rejecting parts of a given heritage. The final stage, adulthood, finds the individual able to fully accept his or her biracial heritage and thus argues that the individual will positively self-identify themselves as biracial.^{cxxvii}

While I agree with these scholars that a possible positive racial identity for biracial individuals includes a self-proclaimed biracial identity, I argue a major gap present in these models concerns that they assume the preference of a biracial identity as better and healthier than a monoracial identity. If so, why do some multiracial individuals identify as one race? Because of social and historical factors that force them to do so or do some make the informed decision to only classify themselves as one race? Perhaps some multiracial individuals choose a monoracial identity as a way to adhere to the historical bipolarization of race between white and non-white that has long ruled racial relations in U.S. society. However, I would argue that some do not and that the possibility of developing a healthy monoracial identity that opposes the history of imposed identification exists.

The most recent model I include in this review reflects this idea. Kerry Ann Rockquemore and Tracey Laszloffy in *Raising Biracial Children* note that social scientists “have shifted their position on what is considered *the* ‘healthy’ ideal for mixed-race people.”^{cxxviii} Rockquemore and Laszloffy argue that their model, the Continuum of Biracial Identity (COBI), acknowledges that not all individuals of this population will assume a biracial identity, but rather that several possibilities exist in terms of the identifications these individuals will choose and that “no one way is better, or more correct, or more valuable than another.”^{cxxix} The COBI presents a continuum with monoracial identities on either side, blended identities with possible emphasis on either of the monoracial identities moving towards the middle and a truly blended identity, the biracial identity espoused in other models, situated in the middle. In essence, the COBI model denies the existence of a “right” way for multiracial individuals to self-identify and even further “disputes the notion that a ‘biracial’ identity is the only psychologically healthy possibility” by focusing on the fact that variations in self-identification among the members of the multiracial population exist.^{cxix} This model better supports the racial formation theory that guides this research given its acknowledgement of variance in identity development that represents the dynamic nature of racial projects. Furthermore, the transition in this newer model reflects the changing path of literature on multiracial identity and better supports the goals of this research given its claim that autonomy in self-identification may lead to different identifications among individuals within the biracial population. However, the simple act of self-identification does not automatically contribute to biracialism as a racial project that opposes the history of assigned identities in an attempt to maintain the power of whiteness. Self-identification that successfully acknowledges and negotiates between the self-image one holds and societal

perceptions one receives will actively oppose this history of assigned identities and thus indicate the presence of autonomy in identity formation.

3.9 Factors Affecting Identity Development

Several factors may affect the paths of identity formation for mixed-raced individuals. I address the factors of physical appearance, group associations and familial relationships. An individuals' physical appearance represents one of the most important factors to consider in biracial identity development given that the phenotypic traits, such as skin color, facial features, body types and hair texture, represent a physical means by which individuals get placed into racial categories by members of society.^{cxxxix} Remnant from the "one-drop rule" and the use of blood quantum, in many cases if someone phenotypically looks non-white, society will assume this fact and assign them a non-white identity. This assignment may or may not fall in line with the self-identity chosen by individual, but it often exists nonetheless. This social assignment of a racial minority identity became institutionalized, and legalized, through the U.S. Census classifications throughout much of the 20th century, as previously discussed in this work.

Through this institutionalization via U.S. Census classifications, similar assignments of racial identities become predominant in purely social settings. Kym Ragusa, of black and white heritage, writes of this societal perception in her autobiography *The Skin Between Us*, saying, "I had the feeling, all too familiar, of wanting to climb out of my skin [...] My skin, dark or light, depending on who's looking."^{cxxxix} In mentioning both the darkness and lightness of her skin, Ragusa personifies the classifications assumed by society as some viewed her skin as dark and some viewed it as light and would assume an identity based simply on their perception. Ragusa goes on to describe her physical appearance as a mystery to her with her skin "fawn-colored, with yellow and olive undertones. I'm pale most of the time, although in cold weather my

cheeks, ears and the tip of my nose turn bright red. My knees and elbows are ashy, just like most of the other little black girls I knew in Harlem.”^{cxxxiii} This quote alludes to an issue some multiracial (and even some monoracial) individuals must address. They may be unsure of how to identify themselves due to their physical appearance and the perceptions they receive from society members which forces them to negotiate between the two. This becomes especially pertinent considering that regional differences may produce different perceptions from society members. Therefore, the individuals must negotiate the disparity that may exist between their chosen identities and the categories in which society places them in order to possess racial autonomy. Anne Xuan Clark comments on the question of society’s perceptions in her essay entitled “What Are You?” Clark, of Vietnamese and white heritage ponders “when they look at me, what do they see? The product of two cultures, intertwined into one unique individual?”^{cxxxiv}

Lisa Graham also comments on the need for society to place multiracial individuals into categories in her essay “Everybody Seemed to Be Either White or Black, a Full Race.” Being half white and half Filipino Graham says, “a lot of people don’t know what my nationality is because I don’t look full Filipino or full white. They try to guess what I am. Everyone thinks that I am Mexican. Usually, when people try to figure out someone’s nationality, they only think of one race.”^{cxxxv} She further comments on social categorization and its reliance on physical appearance when she re-tells a story of her childhood in which she told her teacher in elementary school that she did not know what race to mark herself as on a standardized form. Her teacher’s reply was to mark whatever race she most looked like. Unfortunately, for Graham and for other members of the multiracial population, forming identities can be more convoluted than simply relying on what one looks like.^{cxxxvi}

Additionally, the role of physical appearance for multiracial individuals could relate to the prevailing notion of whiteness as good and beautiful. This idea, termed color symbolism, reflects the institutionalized history of the racial hierarchy in U.S. society in which whites hold the superior position. In “How Does It Get Into My Imagination” Elizabeth Yeoman describes that “white images of goodness and beauty are still vastly more pervasive” while darkness, either implicitly in terms of skin color or as allusions to it, is “still equated with the exotic, the occult and, often, with evil.”^{cxvii} In a content analysis of color symbolism within the fairytale complex Dorothy L. Hurley also articulates this fact in her article “Seeing White: Children of Color and the Disney Fairy Tale Princess.” Hurley notes the disturbing nature of color symbolism and its pervasiveness in terms of perpetuating white privilege. She further argues that an individual’s self-image will be affected by the availability of literary, film or television personalities that they can relate to; since the majority of heroines in fairy tale stories are white then whiteness becomes internalized within the individual as something to desire.^{cxviii} I would additionally argue that the embedded notion of assimilation as the way to ‘deal’ with issues of race further perpetuates this notion as well since throughout history racial minorities and immigrants were expected to assimilate themselves into white society.

Still, society’s reliance on physical appearance does not indicate that strong racial identities do not develop, whether monoracial or biracial, for members of this population. In fact, the possibility remains that individuals can transcend the social importance placed on their physical appearance. I argue that while some individuals may struggle with the role their physical appearance plays in their racial identity development, as evident by Ragusa’s thoughts concerning her appearance as a child, Clark’s questioning of how society views her and Graham’s realization that society attempts to monoracially categorize her, many overcome this

struggle and become further aware of their own agency in deciding their identity. Regardless of skin color and other physical features, these individuals may reach a complete level of awareness and develop a healthy identity for themselves, whether that identity be a biracial or monoracial one. In these cases, the individuals would exhibit autonomy in their racial identification, which would contribute to the racial project of biracialism that opposes arbitrarily imposed racial categorization.

Group associations and social networks represent another factor that may affect biracial identity development. If multiracial individuals surround themselves with a multiracial group of friends is it more likely that they will develop a multiracial identity? On the other hand, if an individual's main social network consists of a majority single race will they become more likely to view themselves as monoracial?^{cxix} Of course, variation of experiences for multiracial individuals concerning their group associations seems likely. Furthermore, access to different types of groups may play a large role in their effect on biracial identity development. The region in which the individual grows up and the racial make-up of their neighborhoods and schools all become factors in the discussion of how group associations affect identity development. For example, Jennifer Lee and Frank D. Bean show the regional variation in multiracial identity reporting in their article "Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification." In areas with higher numbers of immigrants and levels of diversity, such as the West coast, larger numbers of individual identify themselves as multiracial. On the other hand, areas with less diversity and lower numbers of immigrants tend to show less reporting of a multiracial identity.^{cxl} This represents one aspect of the importance of this study. I addressed group associations with my interview participants, and will be able to discuss regional variances within the state of Virginia (i.e. between more urban Northern Virginia and more rural Southwest Virginia) and how these

variances play a role in the social networks available while contributing to the identity development process.

Familial relationships, and the influence of parents, in particular, represent another important factor that can affect biracial identity development.^{cxli} In *A White Side of Black Britain* France Winddance Twine argues that families represent micro level sites in which racial projects become negotiated, thereby acknowledging the central role that families play in the identity development process.^{cxlii} The presence of both parents as compared to a single parent household could heavily affect the individual's identity development. With both parents present the likelihood of representations of both racial cultures becomes stronger, with a single parent household the individual may become more likely to be exposed to only one set of traditions. Whether the parents actively involve their children in activities and organizations that reflect their racial heritage could play a part as well. Similarly, parents may pick up the historical pattern of telling their children to identify as one race, typically the minority race, given that society may likely perceive them as a minority anyway. For example, in *Secret Daughter* June Cross writes of her childhood as biracial of black and white heritage. Her mother gave her away to a black family due to the fact that early in her childhood it became evident that she could not pass for white. Cross articulates that her mother knew that society would define her as black and felt that letting her grow up with a black family would alleviate problems of her racial identification.^{cxliii}

This also brings up issues of power, particularly power held by the parents in being able to identify their children a certain way. These issues of power, especially if a parent tells their child how to identify, will likely play a role in the level of autonomy that individuals have in self-identifying. If a parent tells a child how to identify and the child then accepts that racial

identity and becomes proud of it does it actually exhibit agency on their part in having chosen that identity or did their parents impose the identity on them? Furthermore, what effects result for the children in terms of how they come to view other races? For instance, in *Black Men in Interracial Relationships* Kellina M. Craig-Henderson articulates that one of her study participants, of biracial heritage himself, told his children to identify themselves as white due to the belief that they would live an easier life that way. However, in his interview with Craig-Henderson this participant comments on his children's "identity problems" because in telling them to identify as white they ended up dis-identifying completely with the black race.^{cxliv}

Issues of power also arise if one of the parents is white. Given the undeniable existence of white privilege, white parents of multiracial children play a significant role depending on whether or not they acknowledge both their racial privilege and racism in society.^{cxlv} Furthermore, the strength of the relationships between mother and child and father and child will likely affect the racial identity development of the child. If the parents do not exhibit feelings of rejection should their child choose to self-identify with only one race, then the likelihood of a healthy monoracial identity may increase. However, if the parents of the race not chosen by the child cannot avoid feelings of rejection it could cause feelings of guilt in the child, which could complicate their identity development. Finally, how the parents deal with the stresses and possible victimization to prejudice and discrimination due to their interracial relationship may affect how their child will develop their racial identity. An important factor here includes the acceptance or rejection of extended family members.^{cxlvi}

3.10 The Multiracial Movement

Having already offered a brief look at U.S. Census classifications of biracial individuals historically (sections 3.3 and 3.4), I now move to a review of the literature concerning the change

to the 2000 Census, its results and effects. As the racial formation theory argues, racial projects can occur at the macro level. The growth of biracialism successfully altered the racial project of federal Census classifications by allowing individuals to self-identify as more than one race. Historically, multiracial Census classifications were only recorded according to the ideology of scientific racism through blood quantum, perceived levels of racial mixture based on appearance or the race of the parents. In line with the theoretical framework of this study, groups contested the inequality in this racial project that denied the ability to self-identify.

Therefore, the changes to the 2000 Census as a result of decades worth of activism in favor of a multiracial category becomes significant to the purposes of this research. Kim Williams in *Mark One or More: Civil Rights in Multiracial America* highlights the history of this activism at length and the role of its key players. These key players include activist groups such as the Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA) who advocated for a stand alone multiracial category and monoracial civil rights organizations, largely led by the NAACP, who typically opposed the collection of data that includes multiracial identification options.^{cxlvii} In “Who Are You Calling Asian?” Yen Le Espiritu and Michael Omi note that the Asian Pacific American groups National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC) and the National Coalition for an Accurate Count of Asians and Pacific Islanders also opposed multiracial classification.^{cxlviii} A compromise reached between the two factions resulted in the option to ‘mark one or more’ as opposed to a stand-alone multiracial category.

Williams notes that the multiracial movement began towards the end of the 20th century in the 1980s and that it reached national height by the 1990s. During this decade, AMEA, along with other national networks such as Project RACE, began to adamantly request the presence of a multiracial category on the Census and other federal documents. Williams writes that the

groups “shared the conviction that it was inaccurate and unacceptable to force multiracial Americans into monoracial categories.”^{exlix} Melissa Nobles affirms this notion in *Shades of Citizenship* when stating, “multiracial discourse is built on the premise that persons who have multiple racial heritages should be able to claim and assert all of them and not be forced to choose or assume only one.”^{cl} In other words, use of Directive 15, which only allowed for monoracial identification as the standard for federal racial classifications discriminated against the multiracial population.^{cli}

This conviction developed in large part from multiracial individuals and mothers of multiracial children. For instance, Project RACE began at the hands of a white woman, Susan Graham, who disagreed with her local school system classifying her biracial children according to the black minority race of their father due to the fact that she did not want an institution defining her children. AMEA arose from the activism of Carlos Fernández, of white and Mexican heritage, who refused to identify himself as monoracial.^{clii} Given this, I again comment on the issue of power within this context. While I argue that biracialism can potentially combat white hegemonic power, what implications exist between multiracial individuals asserting their right to choose and white mothers asserting the right for their children? While both seek the same ends, does the effect of white mothers’ advocacy for biracialism undermine the autonomy sought? Again, biracialism as the presence of autonomy in self-identification relies on the notion that individuals will knowingly and actively assert their choice in identity in opposition to socially imposed identities used throughout history in order to maintain the superiority of whites.

While monoracial activist organizations came to view the multiracial movement as a threat, due to the fact that it might reduce the statistical number of minorities which in turn would affect civil rights agendas and funding, Williams also notes that these organizations began

to view the multiracial movement as a conservative conspiracy due to the fact that many Republican conservatives supported them. As already mentioned, Minkah Makalani argues in favor of the view that the multiracial movement threatens civil rights power, especially within the African American community. He argues that the movement assumes that African Americans cannot successfully combat racism and that allowing for federal recognition of a biracial identity will in fact create a biracial race that will have to find a place in the current racial hierarchy present within U.S. society. Furthermore, he argues that this new race will find its place above blacks in the hierarchy and therefore lead to continued oppression of the African American community in terms of social and economic means and opportunities.^{cliii} Founder of AMEA Carlos Fernández, on the other hand, acknowledges such arguments but counter argues that civil rights benefits for minority communities do not typically arise out of sheer numbers but rather by regional differences in economic status of members in the minorities groups. Furthermore, Fernández argues that inclusion of multiracial individuals, when identified as such, may in fact help monoracial minority groups in terms of appropriating political districts.^{cliv} These differences in opinion and perceived threats on either side exhibit the idea that emerging racial projects tend to be contested within society before they successfully create any shifts in the racial order. Furthermore, these differences highlight the power struggle within and between the multiracial movement and advocates of monoracial civil rights. While I argue that biracialism, in conjunction with the continued struggle for civil rights among monoracial minority populations, works to fight the power of white hegemony in U.S. society by dismantling the long held notion of a racial hierarchy, the issues between the two groups remain ever-present. The success of biracialism in its ability to aid in the opposition to white hegemony will require that mixed-race individuals acknowledge and actively disengage with history's pattern of imposing identities. If

not, self-identification will only continue to reinforce the racial hierarchy by adding more levels to it.

In spite of these conflicting perspectives on the inclusion of multiracial identification, the movement gained a victory in 2000 when changes to the U.S. Census allowed individuals to mark one or more races to identify themselves, even though it did not achieve the initial goal of a stand alone multiracial category. Zach Burgess of the *Philadelphia Tribune* notes that since this Census change, the number of multiracial individuals rose to approximately 5.2 million.^{clv} In “Racial Identities in 2000” Reynolds Farley claims a higher number, with 6.8 million individuals marking two or more races on the 2000 Census.^{clvi} I cannot explain the discrepancy between these two numbers, nor can I ensure the circumstances in which these individuals chose to self-identify as more than one race. Additionally, in comparison to the entire population they remain a small percent of the total but the importance of the statistics shows that when given the opportunity to self-identify as biracial many did. Of course, the future implications of this increase cannot yet be determined, but may become clarified as the racial project of biracialism continues to mature.

As mentioned, despite representing a fundamental change in U.S. racial classifications, the 2000 ‘mark one or more option’ did not achieve the stand-alone multiracial category that many activists sought. In *The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals* Joel Perlmann and Mary C. Waters claim that the adoption of the mark one or more option resulted from a compromise within the power struggle identified above between the movement’s activists, such as AMEA and Project RACE, and civil rights organizations, such as the NAACP and other ethnic organizations. This compromise came about through challenges from both those who wanted a stand alone multiracial category and those who wanted no

inclusion of multiracial identity. Again, this serves as an example of the fact that racial projects are always contested. They note the concern of the civil rights organizations that “if individuals are allowed to indicate origins in more than one race group the counting of races that undergirds so much civil rights legislation will be muddled and enforcement of civil rights thereby weakened.”^{clvii} By allowing individuals to mark one or more, rather than simply identifying as multiracial, both groups received some of what they wanted – civil rights organizations still could use Census data while the multiracial population no longer had to choose only one race.

In “Census 2000: Assessments in Significance” Rainier Spencer further elaborates on this compromise, which developed in large part not only to appease both groups but also as an attempt to adhere to the government’s purpose of collecting racial data – to have statistics that will allow the government to watch for indications of discrimination.^{clviii} In assessing the impact of the 2000 changes, Spencer argues that the multiracial movement proved both victorious and at a loss. They lost their desired goal of a stand alone multiracial category, but the ‘mark one or more’ option still allows them to self-identify in the way they deem appropriate.^{clix} In terms of the civil rights organizations, Spencer finds them victorious as well. He notes that the statistical representation of monoracial minority groups did not lose large numbers.^{clx}

3.11 A Post-Racial Society?

In the 1990s, perhaps in large response to the increases in interracial marriages, multiracial births and self-identifications as biracial or multiracial, U.S. political discourse posits that our society now exists in a colorblind era. This notion of colorblindness implies that race no longer matters because we have “moved past” race. In “I Did Not Get That Job Because of a Black Man...: The Story Lines and Testimonies of Color-Blind Racism” Eduardo Bonilla-Silva attributes four claims as the basis of the colorblind ideology: 1) discrimination no longer occurs

and ended during the Civil Rights era; 2) classic liberalism and individualism in U.S. society hold higher importance than racial matters; 3) differences experienced by racial groups arise naturally and 4) cultural explanations for racial minorities explain the discrepancies between them and the white majority.^{clxi} In *“Color-Blind” Racism*, Leslie Carr writes at length about this ideology and those who support it from both the liberal and conservative political spectrums in U.S. society.^{clxii} Carr argues that despite claiming to move past race, colorblindness actually represents a racist ideology, the roots of which stem from classic liberal doctrines of freedom found within our capitalistic society. An example would be holding each individual responsible for his or her own achievements within the system because the capitalist marketplace sees only individuals and not individuals of race.^{clxiii}

Furthermore, while both liberals and conservatives condemn blatant racist projects such as slavery and Jim Crow segregation the colorblind ideology argues, “all of this was corrected by the establishment of equal civil rights and that was where things should have stopped.”^{clxiv} According to Carr, law and politics represent the avenues through which the colorblind ideology maintains its racism so that whites retain dominance in U.S. society via claiming equality and colorblind attitudes despite the structural inequalities still present between whites and non-whites. Tim Wise supports this notion, along with a recent study by the New Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, which finds that implementation of colorblindness actually diminishes the likelihood of individuals recognizing and acting against acts of discrimination and racial prejudice.^{clxv}

As the U.S. transitioned into the 21st century, an ongoing discourse began to arise depicting that we now exist in a post-racial society. In November 2008 we elected Barack Obama, our first black President of the United States, which largely solidified this ongoing

discourse. Similar to colorblindness, post-racialism as defined by Sumi Cho, represents the implementation of the colorblind ideology. In further detail Cho defines post-racialism as the

twenty-first-century ideology that reflects a belief that due to the significant racial progress that has been made, the state need not engage in race-based decision-making or adopt race-based remedies, and that civil society should eschew race as a central organizing principle of social action.^{clxvi}

Cho goes on to declare that

What is new and distinct about post-racialism (as compared to say, colorblindness) is that the state's retreat from race-based remedies is only possible in a society that is perceived as having made significant strides in racial equality, at least symbolically. The election of Barack Obama as president provides the watershed moment to allow the transition from the civil-rights era to the post-racial era.^{clxvii}

These two quotes position post-racialism as an extension of the colorblind ideology in that one incident — in this case the election of Barack Obama — allows for the implementation of policies that assume the unimportance of race. Furthermore, post-racialism creates a retreat from race in three forms: material, sociocultural and political. The material retreat simply means that a post-racial society has no need for state imposed remedies for racial inequality, such as affirmative action. The sociocultural retreat focuses on the attitudes of whites in particular who find no justification in claims of racial inequality due to progress made during the civil rights era. The political retreat focuses on the idea that racially organized political entities, such as the NAACP, have no place in a post-racial society because race no longer represents a salient issue.^{clxviii}

In developing the concept of post-racialism further, Cho identified four central features, all of which relate to the three forms of racial retreat. These features include radical progress, race-neutral universalism, moral equivalence and a distancing move. Radical progress refers to the “great strides” against racism made in U.S. history that refutes the need for racial solutions.

Drawing from the colorblind philosophy, the victories of the Civil Rights Movement (i.e. the Civil Rights Act) and even the *Loving v. Virginia* decision would represent such strides. I would argue that post-racialist proponents would include the changes to the 2000 Census classifications as one of these “great-strides” and as Cho points out, the 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama represents one as well. Race-neutral universalism dictates that social policies should benefit all U.S. citizens with no distinctions or special policies implemented on behalf of racial minorities. This race-neutral universalism also advocates for the rejection of anything based on racial identity, which could include the U.S. Census and other forms that collect racial data. The moral equivalence feature argues that race represented a main social concern of the 20th century but that it holds no place in the 21st century. Finally, the distancing move refers to those who adhere to a post-racial ideology and as such steer clear of civil rights advocates and racial inequality affiliations.^{clxix}

Both the colorblind and post-racial ideologies represent examples of racial projects as posited by the racial formation theory that attempt to remove race as an element of our social structure rather than allow for shifts to occur within our racial understandings according to social and political circumstances. Therefore, an understanding of the colorblind and post-racial discourses inform my project and what I hope to achieve due to the fact that biracialism, as an attempt to increase recognition of autonomy in self-identification, seeks to acknowledge racial heritages, traditions and cultures within the growing diversity of U.S. society. Still, such diversity does not take away from the social relevance of race, but rather adds new dimensions to it. Omi and Winant also argue that their theory seeks to avoid such hegemonic racial projects as colorblindness and post-racialism that attempt to represent some ‘utopian ideal.’ As such, despite their popularity in political discourse I would argue, as does Tim Wise in “We Have a Black

President, but that Doesn't Resolve the Deep Racism Built into the American Psyche” and Peter Halewood in “Laying Down the Law: Post-Racialism and the De-recination Project” that post-racialism does not represent the current needs of U.S. society. Attempts to adhere to post-racial policies and colorblind ideologies only further perpetuate racial inequality because they deny the existence of such inequality and do little to combat it.^{clxx} If the U.S. does represent a post-racial society, projects such as this would become unnecessary.

Contrarily, this study remains important because it will further the understanding of the multiracial population in U.S. society. Even though present since its inception, institutionalized means of false and forced identification affected this population, as I have attempted to address in the history presented thus far. While often referring to disparities in health, education, employment, housing and other areas of social life between racial groups institutionalized racism and its effects on social interaction plays a part in the identity development process as well. Therefore, arguing for a post-racial society dispels the need to address the effect of this racism on the biracial population, their variations in identities and the level of autonomy they possess in the ability to self-identify according to their choice. Contrary to the colorblind and post-racial ideologies, I argue that race still plays a role in the social structures and institutions of our society. Whether the racial identification developed by an individual be monoracial or biracial I argue for the acknowledgement of the ability for multiracial individuals to self-identify along a continuum that may result in either. If done so autonomously, the identification will work towards dismantling the racial classification hierarchy in U.S. society.

3.12 Author's Commentary on the Issues at Play

Before detailing the specific implementation of this study I want to briefly offer some commentary on some of the more salient issues at play in this work, some of which I alluded to

throughout the literature review and some of which the time and scope of this study in terms of its research questions do not adequately provide an opportunity to address. The issues I comment on here largely arose in the proposal defense for this project and as such warrant at least a few words of recognition.

First, while I attempted to design this study in a manner that would allow me to specifically address factors that play a role in identity formation and biracialism (as I have posited as the increase in autonomy of self-identification) within the timeframe of completing a Master's Thesis I need to comment on the complexity of biracial identity as a whole. My study does not address all of the issues of power, social advantage, capital and others that become embedded within the broad topic of multiracial identity. I have included these issues throughout my literature review as they relate specifically to the study at hand, but I am not claiming to present a thoroughgoing contribution to the topic of biraciality. This project is small in scope and sample size but still one that I believe can significantly contribute to the understanding of the topic.

Second, while this study heavily focuses on the individual participants and their stories of their own racial identity development, as mentioned in the literature review identity development requires acknowledgement of the relationship between both the individual and society. Therefore, this project is sociological in that my participant's stories are important, but they also represent a part of something much larger that can contribute to the macro level understanding of the biracial population.

Third, I have argued throughout that biracialism represents a racial project that combats the long history of imposed racial classification and as such advocate for its continued growth in terms of autonomous self-identification within the multiracial population. However, the truth

remains that identity in some aspects is always imposed. In analyzing the interviews I am exploring the presence of autonomy for my interview participants' identity choices but do not acknowledge structural, societal, political, historical and perhaps familial power (i.e. white mothers) that may prevent some individuals in the population from being able to claim an autonomous identity. I also critically address the contest between one's autonomy and whiteness as it presents itself throughout my analysis of the interviews. Furthermore, the contest between biracialism as a means for dismantling the current racial hierarchy and its effect on monoracial minority power within their own struggles for civil rights still remains to be resolved. In connection to these issues, this study, while focusing exclusively on the multiracial population, also requires recognition of identity development for all people. The questions of 'what is identity?' and 'how does identity attach itself to holistic views of the self?' become issues that need to be acknowledged. In the scope of this study, I attempted to address these issues in relation to my sample as a representation of the mixed-raced population, but these questions also become vital to the identity development of monoracial people. Throughout this study I argue that the identity development process for multiracial individuals requires negotiation between how they view themselves and how society views them, but this negotiation also takes place in the identity development of monoracial individuals. Additionally, monoracial individuals feel the same effects of imposition and assumptions about their identity from society at large. Identity development is a process that all people go through, it does not focus exclusively on one's race nor does it only occur for the multiracial population. This study focuses on the identity development process for mixed-race people, but the need to comment on this fact proves crucial to understanding the larger implications of this study in terms of its contributions to identity literature and for suggestions of future research.

Finally, while setting out to explore biracial identity I recognize that in some aspects this study moves beyond the sole topic of biraciality. As I just mentioned the study relates to the issue of identity development regardless of multiracial heritage. In addition, the issues of self-image, the prevalence of whiteness, socialization, assimilation and others emerged as significant topics throughout the completion of the thesis. I attempted to address these issues where appropriate in the literature review and critically analyzed them in relation to my interview participants.

Chapter 4

Research Questions

This thesis aims to address two overarching research questions: why do variations (for example between a biracial or monoracial identity) exist in the racial identities of biracial individuals? And, to what extent do biracial individuals possess autonomy in their ability to self-identify? In addressing the first question, a subsequent question includes: what factors cause variations in identity among members of this population? As section 3.9 shows, research identifies several known factors that contribute to identity formation for the multiracial population. In posing articulation of these factors as one of my research questions, I can assess their validity within the lives of interview participants. In doing so I further the scholarship on biracial identification by addressing potential factors in identity development from a localized and age controlled perspective because I can focus exclusively on the regions within Virginia. The social and political circumstances for multiracial, college-aged Virginians may be different from those in other states and regions. The racial formation theory relies on the importance of social and political circumstances as determinants for racial understandings in society. Therefore, by focusing exclusively on Virginia I can generalize the role of such circumstances in the racial project of biracialism in our state.

In addressing the second research question, a subsequent question includes: do they find acknowledgement, acceptance, and/or respect of their self-identification from other aspects of society? These questions refer in large part to the literature presented throughout Chapter 3 of this thesis. This literature highlights historical patterns of assigned legal and social classifications to many members of the multiracial population, an increase in awareness and activism on behalf of multiracial self-identification and scholarly research which posits a bi/multiracial identity as

the healthy identity for members of this population. Addressing the extent to which my participants feel able to self-identify by choice and to have that choice respected may potentially challenge existing scholarship on biracial identification because of the possibility that participants will self-identify as monoracial. This study comes at an ideal time in the shifting definitions of biraciality and who encompasses it; as such, I aim to provide a stepping-stone to further research that contributes to both identity formation literature and multiracial studies.

Chapter 5

Methods and Data

5.1 Interviews and Recruitment

In order to answer these research questions I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews with 11 multiracial individuals recruited from the Virginia Tech campus. The semistructured interviews relied on the use of an interview guide (Appendix A) but also allowed me to follow leads according to responses given by adding questions, rephrasing questions, or changing the order of questions in any given interview. I approached this research topic with the goal of exploring it through the voices of individuals that encompass the multiracial population. I sought to learn their experiences, their understandings and their choices in racial identification as the means for answering my research questions. I chose the interview methodology so that the participants could speak freely about their experiences and identity development. As the racial formation theory articulates, micro level racial projects include individuals' perceptions of racial awareness, which I believe proved best presented in a one-on-one conversation with my participants.

I began recruiting for participants by placing an ad in Virginia Tech's newspaper, the *Collegiate Times*, and posting flyers that advertised the study in buildings on the Virginia Tech Campus (Appendices B and C). Additionally, I also asked colleagues and faculty to announce the study in their undergraduate classes. Finally, I relied on snowball sampling techniques by asking each participant to pass on word of the project to their friends at the end of each interview. The only recruitment criteria I used required that the participants be at least 18 years old and that they have parents of at least two more races. In doing so, I did not recruit individuals of specific racial

heritages and hoped not to deter any who self-identified monoracially from participating in the study.

Due to the sensitivity of topics concerning race and racial identification, I must comment on the confidentiality and steps taken to protect my participants. I made each participant aware of the possibility that some of what we discuss during the interview may make them feel uncomfortable, or that some information they may not want to share at all. Therefore, I informed them that they could decide not to answer particular questions or that they could opt out of the interview at any time after it had begun. Additionally, I assured their confidentiality, in terms of identifiable demographic information, by allowing them to pick a pseudonym of their choice.

Once a participant came forward with interest in the study I met with them in a public place on the Virginia Tech campus. Before beginning the interview, I provided each participant with a consent form (Appendix D) that explained the study, its research goals and their involvement in detail. I recorded and personally transcribed all of the interviews, most of which lasted around one hour.

5.2 Participants and their Characteristics

My recruitment efforts resulted in a sample of 11 Virginia Tech students of various multiracial backgrounds. Despite snowball attempts to recruit more male participants, females dominated the sample with 8 of the 11 interviews being with female students and the remaining 3 with males. The ages ranged from 18 years old to 31 years old with the average age being nearly 22 years. All but one of the participants were undergraduate students, although 1 participant did not identify their year of study. Out of those that did the sample produced 2 freshmen, 2 sophomores, 1 junior and 4 seniors. The only graduate student in the sample is in the 3rd year of her PhD program in the College of Veterinary Medicine. Other academic pursuits include 5

participants pursuing Liberal Arts majors that include Psychology, Human Development and English. One participant is pursuing an Animal and Poultry Science major, 2 were engineering majors and 2 students were in the Pamplin College of Business in BIT, Accounting and Business Management.

Nearly all of the participants, 9 out of 11, grew up in Virginia. One participant was born in Switzerland and grew up in Chile, another was born in Washington, D.C. and grew up in Maryland. Out of those who grew up in Virginia, one attended high school in the state but did not identify where and spent most of his adult life living in different areas as a member of the Marine Corps. Three grew up in the Hampton Roads area, specifically in Hampton, VA, Virginia Beach, VA and Poquoson, VA respectively. One grew up in Edinburg, VA in the Shenandoah Valley and four in the Northern Virginia region, specifically Alexandria, VA, Herndon, VA, Sterling, VA and Annandale, VA. Though most of these cities represent more urban areas in the state, regional differences were discussed with the participants as comparisons between the rural area of Blacksburg, VA, where they all live now, and where they grew up.

The multiracial heritages of the participants significantly varied. Three of the participants in the sample identified at least one of their parents as biracial, one identified one parent as a multiethnic Pacific Islander and the other seven identified both of their parents as monoracial. Of the three with at least one biracial parent, one has a Filipino mother and a Filipino and white father, another has a white and Native American mother and a black and Native American father and the third has a white and Filipino mother and a white father. The participant who identified one parent as multiethnic has a white mother and a Filipino and Chamorro father. The remaining participants identified their parents as follows, one with a white mother and a Nicaraguan father, one with a black mother and a Korean father, two with white mothers and black fathers, one with

a Korean mother and a white father, one with a Peruvian mother and a white father and the last with a white mother and a Chilean father. Appendix F offers a visual representation of these characteristics along with the pseudonyms chosen by the participants.

5.3 Limitations

The two largest limitations to this study concern the time frame in which it needed to be completed and the recruitment of multiracial students on a predominantly white college campus. Combined these limitations resulted in a small sample of 11 interview participants. I do not claim that this sample adequately represents the entire multiracial population in U.S. society; however I do believe it to be a strong sample in its purposes of exploring the research questions posed within a regionalized perspective. Given that nearly all of the participants grew up in or around Virginia, and that all of them currently live in Virginia, the role of region and its effects on the identity development process can be adequately addressed. The issue of autonomy in self-identification can also be adequately addressed and then analyzed in relation to the macro level racial project of biracialism within the larger multiracial population.

Additionally, the recruitment efforts resulted in a heavily female sample, with 72% of the respondents being women. Therefore, the male perspective on biracial identity development remains not as well documented in this study. Despite the fact that I geared my snowball recruitment attempts towards gaining male participants time constraints in completing the thesis could not be avoided. Furthermore, the recent study “Passing as Black: Racial Identity Work among Biracial Americans” by Nikki Khanna and Cathryn Johnson found the same limitation in their sample. They articulate the possibility that racial identity may be “more salient for women than men; men’s self-concepts may be more tied to other identities, such as those based on occupation.”^{clxxi} I cannot confirm the validity of this argument, and Khanna and Johnson

themselves admit that to know whether this actually occurs needs further study, but it may provide at least a partial reason for why more females than males showed interest in participating in this study.

5.4 Coding

In order to analyze the interview data I used a three-stage coding strategy that included open coding, axial coding and selective coding as defined by W. Lawrence Neuman in *Social Research Methods*.^{clxxii} The first stage, open coding, consisted of reading through the data and condensing it into preliminary categories/codes. These preliminary codes reflected the research questions in that the codes included self-identifications, physical appearance, group and social networks, family and autonomy. The second stage, axial coding, consisted of re-reading the data and codes created during the open coding stage and organizing the codes while identifying key themes and points of similarity or difference between the information provided by the participants. The final stage, selective coding, consisted of revisiting the data to find select pieces that support the themes identified during the axial coding stage. In this stage, I pulled specific stories or quotes directly from the interviews that illustrate the themes and similarities or differences identified. I present and analyze these stories and quotes in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

Results

6.1 Racial Self-Identifications

When asked to identify their current racial identities the sample significantly varied in the answers that they provided.² Some of the participants identify themselves exclusively as monoracial while others as exclusively multiracial. In these cases, the participants maintain these identities when asked for their racial classifications on forms or applications. However, several of them identify themselves as being more in line with one aspect of their racial heritage despite the tendency to identify themselves differently on forms and applications. Those who vary on these terms tend to socially identify more with one aspect of their heritage and then choose to identify themselves as multiracial on forms by checking two or more boxes or choosing ‘other.’ Specifically, several of the participants attempt to assimilate to whiteness in their social lives while identifying their minority heritages on forms and applications. Several possible explanations for this disconnect between a social identity and a self-chosen standardized classification can be identified. It’s possible that the multiracial movement itself explains why the participants choose a multiracial identity on forms because most of the participants’ lives have coincided with the movement in full. With an average age of 22, the participants grew up in the decades during which multiraciality became an increasingly dominant discourse that promoted fluidity in identity development.^{clxxiii} Another possibility could be that by choosing a multiracial identity, that in some instances include a racial minority identity, the participants hope to gain from race-based policies and programs (such as affirmative action) that attempt to level the playing field between whites and non-whites. Perhaps, the participants continue to

² In discussing the results of the interviews I use the pseudonyms chosen by the interview participants throughout.

negotiate their identities and the fluidity that a multiracial heritage provides in terms of options in describing oneself. In “Hidden Agendas, Identity Theories, and Multiracial People,” Michael C. Thornton detailed the variant approach as a means through which the multiracial population could be understood. The variant approach recognizes the heterogeneity within the mixed-race population that creates different circumstances for individuals. In turn, this influences and creates variation in their identity formation. Discrepancies between the participants’ choices in social identification and standardized identification reflect the differences in circumstances presented in this approach.^{clxxiv}

The participants socially identifying in one way while choosing a different identity on standardized forms also represents a manifestation of what Kerry Ann Rockquemore and David L. Brunnsma describe as a protean identity in “The New Color Complex.” Mixed-race people who develop a protean identity often shift their identities by choosing to classify as multiracial in some instances and monoracial in others.^{clxxv} This pattern could also exemplify, through the lens of multiraciality, an enactment of what Eileen O’Brien describes as ‘ethnic switching’ in *The Racial Middle*. O’Brien describes ‘ethnic switching’ as a behavior in which individuals of Asian heritage may at times choose their ethnic identities, while panethnically identifying as Asian American at others.^{clxxvi} This understanding of ‘ethnic switching’ could apply to the mixed-race population as well. At times, some of the participants choose to identify as one race in contrast to other instances where they identify as multiracial, which includes them within the larger mixed-race population. Furthermore, this pattern could exemplify what Mary C. Waters describes as instances of declaring a situational ethnicity in *Ethnic Options*. Waters details a situational ethnicity as one that relies on “the particular social contexts and structures affecting an individual’s invocation of one ethnic identity or another.”^{clxxvii} This concept would explain why

some participants choose to exert their ethnic heritage in certain situations and not in others. However, Waters further argues that this choice also becomes subject to the beliefs of society as a whole, who in large part still adhere to fixed notions of racial and ethnic categories that can be easily determined via physical appearance, which may conflict with the choices made by the individuals.^{clxxviii} This notion strongly correlates to the articulations of Suzanne Bost, Benjamin H. Bailey and Daniel A. Nakashima that describe the need for negotiation between one's individual choice in identity and society's imposition of identity.^{clxxix} The disconnect between these two extremes exists for both monoracial and multiracial people, as Waters also indicates, and could explain the reasoning behind shifting identities for the participants in this study.^{clxxx}

For instance, Amanda, who has a Filipino mother and a biracial white and Filipino father, was very petite with dark hair and dark eyes. She had a characteristically Asian phenotype. She informed me that she identifies herself as Asian American on forms but that she sees herself as white. She says, "I identify myself being white because of course I look Filipino and of course I am Filipino but the way I was raised and the culture I was raised in I feel more white."^{clxxxi} Amanda's (Filipino/white) quote directly parallels the autobiographically described experiences of Amy Lee in "Turning Against Myself." Lee, a monoracial Chinese American, described attempting to disassociate herself with Asians by denying the color of her skin. In her essay she says she actively behaved in such a way that defined her as "yellow on the outside but all white on the inside."^{clxxxii}

Additionally, in contrast to all of the other participants, Amanda (Filipino/white) admitted to being unaware of the option to choose two or more races on forms and applications. She also argued that race should not be a determinant for opportunities, meaning that seeking the assistance of race-based policies does not explain why she chooses Asian American on

standardized forms. She further detailed that her parents told her and her sister that they were Asian, but that her parents also raised her to be white. This conflict between being told you are one thing and living another illustrates Amanda's (Filipino/white) continued negotiation of her identity. Likely, her parents told her that she was an Asian American because society would assume that identity for her. However, they also socialized her to pass for white by not instilling Filipino traditions and culture throughout her childhood. By not being exposed to her Filipino heritage Amanda (Filipino/white) learned to socially identify with the white race. Similar to the argument put forth by Benjamin H. Bailey in *Language, Race and Negotiation of Identity*, Amanda (Filipino/white) finds herself in the received category of Asian American by society. Bailey argues that historical social relations dictate the received categories of race that inherently conflict with the option of fluidity for multiracial individuals. Due to this fact, Amanda (Filipino/white) chooses an Asian American category on forms, but continues to negotiate her chosen identity of white in her everyday life.^{clxxxiii} Furthermore, Amanda (Filipino/white) represents an example of a majority group identifier according to the arguments put forth by Kellina M. Craig-Henderson in *Black Men in Interracial Relationships*.^{clxxxiv} Majority group identifiers choose their identities based on the social levels between the races that make up their heritage. Being Filipino and white, Amanda recognizes the social advantage of whiteness and chooses to align herself with it through acts of assimilation, although she has not effectively reconciled this choice with the ramifications of her Asian-like physical appearance.

Eric, who has a white mother and a black father, identifies himself as white but embraces the option to alter this identity when asked for his racial classification. Eric (black/white) was tall with curly, dark hair. His skin was not particularly dark, which allows him to easily pass for white. He says, "if there is an 'other,' or a biracial/multiracial box then I check that and scribble

in half black and half white, but if I had to say what I truly identify with it would be white.”^{clxxxv}

Eric (black/white) casually mentioned the availability of increased opportunities through affirmative action due to his half black heritage. Though he did not explicitly state that attempts to benefit from affirmative action explain his choice of identifying as multiracial on applications, it could provide at least a partial explanation for why he does. Eric (black/white) shifting between a monoracial white identity and a multiracial identity exemplifies Rockquemore and Brunson’s protean identity from “The New Color Complex.”^{clxxxvi} His choice to embrace the fluidity that his heritage offers by sometimes choosing multiracial on standardized forms also represents an option that many mixed-race people are beginning to use. For instance, in “Black? White? Asian? More Young Americans Choose All of the Above,” Susan Saulny quotes the president of the Multiracial and Biracial Student Association at the University of Maryland, Michelle López-Mullins. When asked how she classifies her race on standardized forms such as the Census and applications López-Williams stated, “it depends on the day, and it depends on the options.”^{clxxxvii} However, I would argue that Eric’s (black/white) choice of socially identifying as white and choosing multiracial on forms and applications appears to be more of a performance of his race. In *Authentic Blackness* J. Martin Favor discusses the performance of race in attempts to attain authenticity of one’s race. He articulates that in performing race an individual may embrace different identities at different times “in the process of achieving different ends.”^{clxxxviii} Eric (black/white) alluded to this concept of performing race several times throughout his interview.

In talking of his father Eric (black/white) declared that he does not ‘act black,’ indicating that he distinguishes between modes of behavior that correspond to black culture versus white culture. He further illustrated this idea in telling me a story about his childhood when his father

dated a woman with a black son around his age. He described how he forced himself to imitate ‘black behavior’ based on TV shows he had seen and the actions of this black child and his black friends in an attempt to fit into their group. He did not feel comfortable in these attempts to act ‘authentically’ black, which I would argue helps to explain why he identifies himself as white. His attempts to ‘authentically’ act black relate to the experiences described in *Kinky Gazpacho* by Lori L. Tharps. Tharps, a monoracial black woman, grew up in a middle class suburban area that prevented her from fully embracing her African American racial identity. Much like Eric (black/white), Tharps felt the need to authenticate her blackness but found it difficult to do so, which resulted in feelings of discomfort and embarrassment in predominantly black settings. Similarly to Eric (black/white) describing his imitation of stereotypical ‘black behavior’ he had seen on TV shows, Tharps describes attempting to find black friends in college who also fit African American stereotypes that indicated their authenticity. Such friends had to “know what collard greens were, didn’t recoil at the thought of eating pig feet and chitterlings on special occasions and might have one or two relatives named Boo-Boo who might or might not still be in jail.”^{clxxxix} Tharps provides evidence of the identity development process and negotiation between social circumstances and individual self-image as something that members of the monoracial population also experience. Specifically, this quote from *Kinky Gazpacho* indicates her attempts to use stereotypes as a means to authenticate blackness, much like Eric (black/white) did, particularly when it comes to the performance of race in terms of language.

To illustrate this point, Eric (black/white) described himself as having a decent vocabulary that he equates with white culture. In terms of black culture he described the use of Ebonics, or singularly black slang, as necessary in attempts to communicate with black people. In each of these instances, Eric (black/white) described past attempts to ‘act black,’ to perform

blackness, that made him feel uncomfortable. In doing so, Eric (black/white) alludes to what Elizabeth Yeoman and Dorothy L. Hurley define as color symbolism that equates white as good and black as bad while simultaneously perpetuating African American stereotypes.^{cxv} This becomes especially evident when he describes his vocabulary, which represents white culture, as superior to the stereotypical idea that all African Americans speak through Ebonics. Therefore, though Eric (black/white) attempts to express fluidity in his identity on forms and applications (perhaps also in attempts to gain opportunities that he might not otherwise) his experiences in performing race contribute to his chosen identity as white.^{cxvi}

Robin, who has a Peruvian mother and a white father also chooses a multiracial identity when asked on forms and applications but stated that “I know I’m white and I’m American, but I consider myself Spanish or Hispanic.”^{cxvii} Robin was of a medium build with dark hair and vibrant dark eyes. She did not have particularly dark skin, and in most places could probably easily pass for white if she chose to do so. Robin’s (Peruvian/white) interview clearly indicated her pride in her multiracial background, but also focused on her increasing interest in further embracing her Peruvian heritage. Robin’s (Peruvian/white) identification as multiracial on forms and applications does not occur as an attempt to receive benefits as a racial minority. Rather, as a member of the multiracial movement generation, Robin’s (Peruvian/white) self-classification of multiracial falls in line with the arguments for multiraciality as a more holistic representation of individuals who have parents of different races. Kim Williams in *Mark One or More* and Melissa Nobles in *Shades of Citizenship* describe the goals of the multiracial movement as an attempt to alter the inaccurate and unacceptable imposition of monoracial identities for multiracial individuals. The movement called for these individuals to be able to assert all of their heritages and not have to choose between them.^{cxviii} Robin (Peruvian/white) articulated this idea in

describing a multiracial heritage as one that provides greater opportunity for growth within the individual. Still, she described her increasing interest in her Peruvian heritage as a way in which she can combat racism. She says:

I feel I need to represent that which is underrepresented. I feel like there's a lot of clarity that people need and I would love to bring it back, I don't know how, but there's this obvious misunderstanding between Hispanic culture and people differentiating between Spain, Italy, Peruvian, Puerto Rico. I guess its like in high school I was part of that lump, I was Spanish it didn't matter. As I've grown up I've tried to hone it down, no I'm Peruvian what you're talking about is another culture. It definitely helped my identity. If there weren't these misunderstandings maybe I wouldn't try so hard to identify myself as Peruvian but with this lack of clarity I try to differentiate.^{cxci}

Therefore, Robin (Peruvian/white) does not socially identify herself as Spanish or Peruvian in an attempt to live monoracially or to deny one part of her racial heritage. Rather, she does so in order to promote ethnic distinctions between groups that U.S. society label as panethnic Latino/a in an attempt to combat racial misunderstandings and racial prejudice. In *The Racial Middle*, Eileen O'Brien argues that such interplay between race and ethnicity is characteristic for members of the Latino/a population due to the fact that they are often mistaken for an ethnicity that does not actually represent their heritage.^{cxv} In Robin's (Peruvian/white) experiences people assumed she could be lumped into a panethnic label of Latina or Spanish without attempting to recognize the traditions and cultural aspects specific to her Peruvian heritage. Furthermore, society assumed that she should identify within this panethnic categorization. In line with Robin's (Peruvian/white) arguments for why she chooses to focus on her Peruvian heritage, O'Brien claims that Latino/as "tend to protest this form of sweeping generalization as neglectful of crucially important differences."^{cxvi}

Robin's (Peruvian/white) promotion of her Peruvian identity, as a piece of and not distinct from her multiracial identity, also exhibits what France Winddance Twine conceptualizes as racial literacy in *A White Side of Black Britain*. Twine argues that racial literacy "is a way of

perceiving and responding to racism that generates a repertoire of discursive and material practices.^{xxcvii} In doing so, racial literacy views racism as a contemporary (rather than historical) issue that affects individuals in varying degrees and circumstances that needs to be acknowledged, discussed and combated.^{xxcviii} Robin (Peruvian/white) acknowledges the contemporary effects of racial misunderstandings and prejudice towards the Latino/a population and uses her identity as a means for which she hopes to alleviate racism's effects.

These differences confirm that variations exist within the identity development of multiracial individuals. However, these variations do not only include dichotomies between monoracial and multiracial identities. At times, such identities can overlap as indicated by the participants who socially identify with one race in a stronger sense even if they classify themselves as multiracial. This overlap of classifications indicates the multiracial populations' ability to shift between identities as articulated in Rockquemore and Brunzma's conception of a protean identity.^{xxcix} Furthermore, without having yet specifically addressed the factors used in this study or the issue of autonomy, the role of outside influence, society, family, racism and socialization already emerge as contributors to the identity development process.

6.2 Physical Appearance

The interviews confirmed the significant role that one's physical appearance plays in their identity development. Several of the participants mentioned that their physical appearance causes questions about their identity. Being questioned about one's identity exhibits the disconnect between social behavior and law. Though biraciality became legally recognized from the 'mark one or more' addition to the 2000 Census, society as a whole has not embraced this shift in racial classifications. Furthermore, categorizing individuals based upon descriptive characteristics, such as their physical appearance, begins at an early age for most Americans and

thereby becomes part of the normal process of socialization in terms of racial understandings. W.S. Carlos Poston describes this learned process of racial categorization in his model for biracial identity development by including it as his first stage of personal identity. During this stage, children begin to notice and question the meaning of racial differences based on how people look. Christine Kerwin and Joseph G. Ponterotto also include this concept in their development model in their pre-school and entry to school phases. During these phases, children begin to notice physical similarities or differences between themselves and others based on characteristics like their skin color. They then begin to categorize themselves and their peers based on these similarities or differences in appearance.^{cc}

Therefore, the interview participants found themselves subject to this reliance on social categorization and people's inquiry of 'what are you?' or 'where are you from?' when their physical appearance did not fall in line with the historically accepted monoracial categories. This reliance on needing to classify according to physical appearance by asking 'what are you?' or 'where are you from?' found its roots in U.S. Census classifications of the 19th and 20th century. In particular, the use of Directive 15 that only allowed for (and legally recognized) monoracial classifications and the 1978 OMB policy that Maria P.P. Root describes as one that called for individuals to be categorized as "people in their community would" embedded the notion that one's physical appearance defines their identity.^{cci} Given the fact that some mixed-race individuals' physical appearance proves more ambiguous, they find themselves subject to questions about their identity.

Robin (Peruvian/white) in particular commented on this fact:

People knew I was Spanish and I didn't know how they knew that, I never had a Latin American figure, I wasn't petite, I don't have very dark skin, I have my dad's nose. Now in college everyone asks me where I'm from and I don't know why. My friends will say

its because of your dark hair and dark eyes and you have a Latin American figure but I have a very Scandinavian build so I would never think I looked Spanish.^{ccii}

In describing herself she touches on the idea of racialized bodies by distinguishing between a ‘Latin American figure’ and a ‘Scandinavian build.’ She implies that in her opinion a Latin American figure entails being petite whereas her Scandinavian heritage can be traced back to the Vikings, which exuded physical strength and stature. She sees herself more of a Scandinavian build because she is not petite and has broader shoulders. While the self-image she holds, in terms of seeing herself with a Scandinavian build, conflicts with her choice to embrace her Peruvian identity it also exemplifies the negotiation that Robin (Peruvian/white) went through concerning the relationship between her choice in identity, her self-image and the image society holds of her due to her physical appearance. She also specifically mentions being asked questions about where she is from while here at Virginia Tech, a predominantly white campus. Whiteness represents the norm at Virginia Tech meaning that Robin’s (Peruvian/white) subtle differences in appearance from ‘typical whiteness’ (i.e. her dark hair and dark eyes) is enough to cause people to question her identity in order to place her into an accepted racial category since they assume that she cannot be white. When multiracial people have physical characteristics that stand out from the majority reference group it becomes likely that their identity will be questioned. Heidi W. Durrow reflects this notion in her novel *The Girl Who Fell From the Sky*. Durrow’s protagonist, Rachel, is a biracial child of black and Danish heritage who moves in with her paternal black grandmother following the death of her mother and siblings. In doing so, Rachel spends her adolescence in a predominantly black setting. This makes the fact that she is light skinned with bright blue eyes stand out in comparison to the majority of her peers. Much like Robin’s (Peruvian/white) experiences of being questioned when surrounded by mostly whites, Rachel’s identity is questioned because she does not fit the physical understanding of

‘typical blackness.’ Durrow eloquently addresses this notion of Rachel’s blue eyes as the determinant for her questionable racial identity when she writes of a conversation between Rachel and a monoracial black character, Brick. Rachel asks Brick if he is black or ‘like her’ (i.e. biracial). Brick responds by saying that he is “black regular” and then asks Rachel, “Do you think people would ask you that if you didn’t have your mother’s eyes?”^{cciii} This indicates that Rachel’s blue eyes become the reason that her identity was questioned while Robin (Peruvian/white) has her identity questioned due to her perception of having a Latin American figure, dark hair and dark eyes that ‘looks Spanish’ even though she does not physically see herself that way.

Society’s reliance on racial categorization can also take on a more dominant form of imposing an identity on an individual, rather than only questioning them about it. As Suzanne Bost notes in *Mulattas and Mestizas*, individual choice in identity always exists alongside the assigned identity by society. U.S. history of assigning identities to members of the multiracial population, institutionalized in large part by the Census throughout the 19th and 20th century, continues to dominate identity development by forcing mixed-race individuals to negotiate their own choices in identity and the categories in which others place them.^{cciv}

Rhea, of black, white and Native American heritage, alluded to this negotiation between the individual and society in the identity development process. Rhea (black/white/Native American) had dark hair, dark eyes and caramel colored skin. She identifies exclusively as multiracial with no emphasis given on the separate races that make up her heritage. Her choice in an exclusive multiracial identity falls in line with Rockquemore and Brunnsma’s border identity in “The New Color Complex,” Kellina M. Craig-Henderson’s synthesizer in *Black Men in Interracial Relationships* and Maria P.P. Root’s third crossing in “The Multiracial

Experience.”^{ccv} However, despite having chosen a multiracial identity, Rhea (black/white/Native American) discussed that she has experienced an imposed identity of Spanish and Asian at different times. In each instance, the imposed identity focuses on specific physical characteristics. For instance, she says people assume a Spanish identity when her hair is straight, and likely due to the color of her skin. In contrast, she described herself as having almond-shaped eyes, which she believes explains why she is sometimes assumed to be Asian. Even further, she mentioned that when wearing her hair curly, more in the style of an Afro, people no longer assume she is Spanish or Asian, but rather identify her as African American. In all of these instances, society attempts to place Rhea (black/white/Native American) into a static racial category that she opposes. Additionally, the imposed identities become arbitrarily placed on her according to individual perceptions of the physical characteristic that stands out the most – for some people the assumed identity derives from her eye shape, for others skin color or her hair. Like Kym Ragusa describes in her autobiography *The Skin Between Us*, society’s perceptions of mixed-race individuals vary in terms of their physical appearance. Not all individuals will assume the same identity for a biracial person meaning that some may have to negotiate between their own choice in identity and several imposed identities, much like Rhea (black/white/Native American).^{ccvi}

Furthermore, the imposition of multiple identities results from the need for society to classify a multiracial person as a familiar race, which could offer further explanation for why Rhea (black/white/Native American) feels the effects of several imposed identities. Ki Mae Ponniah Heussner demonstrates this notion in her essay “A Little Plot of No-Man’s-Land.” Heussner, of Chinese, Malaysian and white heritage, describes an experience she had as a child when her answer to the ‘what are you?’ question did not satisfy her questioner. She described

herself as Malaysian to her peer, but that was not a heritage with which he was familiar. Therefore Malaysian did not represent a received category, as described by Benjamin Bailey in *Language, Race and Negotiation of Identity*, to which Heussner could be placed.^{ccvii} She had to provide another answer that her peer understood in order to satisfy him. She describes this situation in saying, “He had never heard of Malaysia, and he started to reel off other races, as though I was wrong and had to pick one with which he was familiar.”^{ccviii} Furthermore, the imposed identities reflect the historical remnants of arbitrarily placed monoracial categorization via the U.S. Census because Rhea (black/white/Native America) always experiences imposition of one racial identity, without acknowledgment of the fact that she could be multiracial.^{ccix} In “Everybody Seemed to Be Either White or Black, a Full Race,” Lisa Graham also illustrates imposition of monoracial identities as she notably comments that when society attempts to question one’s identity they only think of one race.^{ccx}

Flash, a former Marine of white and Korean descent, also talked about having an identity imposed on him. He had distinctive Korean facial features, darker skin and dark hair. He says:

I definitely look more Asian. Like if I was to fill out a form and other people noticed and I just checked Caucasian they’d be like ‘no you’re not, quit lying.’ So it’s like yea, I’m mixed, my dad’s got red hair but my mother is Korean. They’ll be like well ‘you’re Asian because you look Asian.’^{ccxi}

Flash (Korean/white) could choose a white identity given his multiracial heritage but his physical appearance would prevent that identity from being accepted. (He actually identified himself as mixed although he described having little involvement in Korean culture.) Since he looks Asian a monoracial white identity would be considered unauthentic. Anthony Appiah details this concept in his article “But Would that Still Be Me?” For racial minorities who cannot pass as white due to their physical appearance it becomes expected that they will embrace their racial minority status. Those that do not are considered inauthentic because they refuse to acknowledge

“something about themselves that they ought to acknowledge.”^{ccxii} On the other hand, those who do attempt to pass are considered to be dishonest. When Flash (Korean/white) says that people would tell him to ‘quit lying’ this alludes to the dishonesty that society associates with passing, which also contributes to its stereotypically negative connotation. For someone like Flash, who looks Asian, society would not allow him to have a white identity. An Asian American identity becomes imposed on him regardless of both his multiracial heritage and the fact that he identifies himself as multiracial.

Flash’s (Korean/white) inability to pass for white due to his physical appearance relates to the experiences of June Cross as described in her memoir *The Secret Daughter*. Cross, the child of a white mother and a black father, was given away by her mother at a young age once she became aware that Cross would not be able to pass for white. Therefore, Cross lived with a black family and developed a black racial identity. Society dictated that both Flash (Korean/white) and Cross could not identify as white because their physical appearances did not fall in line with the accepted view of what whiteness looks like. However, the generational differences between Cross and Flash’s (Korean/white) experiences also indicate a shift in racial understandings, as described by the racial formation theory.^{ccxiii} Growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, Cross did not have the option to legally identify herself as mixed-race. Between 1930 and 1960 federal classifications denied the option of multiraciality by classifying individuals of white and non-white parentage in the race of the non-white parent.^{ccxiv} While being aware of her multiracial heritage, Cross also felt the effects of hypodescent in terms of the social identity given her due to the fact that her father was black and her mother white. Now, in the 21st century, Flash has and embraces the option to legally identify himself as multiracial, even though he still feels the effects of imposed categorization.

Additionally, Flash's (Korean/white) description of not being allowed to identify as white and being told he is Asian because he looks Asian relates to society's view of the multiracial population that Michael C. Thornton describes as the problem approach in "Hidden Agendas, Identity Theories and Multiracial People." The problem approach views mixed-race people as 'the other' because they do not fit into the historically embedded racial hierarchy in U.S. society.^{ccxv} In order to alleviate this issue, Flash (Korean/white) has 'race done to him,' as Daniel A. Nakashima details in "A Rose by Any Other Name," by earning an imposed identity of Asian and the inability to identify as white, despite the fact that he actually chooses to identify himself as multiracial.^{ccxvi} These circumstances indicate the continuing attempts to protect whiteness by declaring who can be and who cannot be white. While no longer protected via legal means, whiteness remains unattainable for some due to their physical appearance, and in Flash's (Korean/white) case regardless of the fact that he does not seek it out.

Some of the interviewees described the significant role of appearance in terms of its contributions to the development of their own self-image. This self-image in turn reflects the racial identities they negotiate within themselves in relation to society. For example, Elena whose father is white and mother is English and Filipino, most strongly identifies with her Filipino heritage. She describes her appearance as one reason for this choice:

Myself and one of my younger cousins are the two darkest. We look the most Filipino out of all of us. I think that has played a lot into why I want to be so in tune with the Filipino side of it. With the dark hair, darker eyes and darker skin tone its more, it more identifies with me.^{ccxvii}

Though Elena's (Filipino/white) physical appearance would not immediately allude to her Filipino heritage, she did have olive colored skin, dark hair and dark eyes. It became apparent in her interview that her self-image as one of the darkest members of her family stems from the fact that other members have extremely pale white skin that she described as porcelain-like.

Therefore, Elena's (Filipino/white) self-image represents one of darkness compared to other family members who have the same racial background. Acknowledging this 'darkness' within her became an avenue through which she began to embrace and align herself with her Filipino heritage. Skin tone has long played a role in racial identity development and in racial social classifications in U.S. society. In *Mixed Blood*, Paul R. Spickard discusses this issue in relation to several racial groups. In all instances, lighter skin tones represent a closer proximity to whiteness, and therefore something to be desired, while darker skin tones became a presumed indicator of inferiority. For instance, Spickard specifically discusses the Okinawan subset in Japanese society who was believed to be inferior savages due in large part to their darker complexion that did not adhere to commonly held notions of beauty.^{ccxviii} This notion significantly contributes to Elizabeth Yeoman and Dorothy L. Hurley's concept of color symbolism in which white represents the good and ideal beauty.^{ccxix} Elena (Filipino/white) makes distinctions between herself and other members of her family that do not have as dark of skin. In doing so, she aligns herself with her Filipino heritage. The fact that she makes this distinction confirms the ongoing social reliance on skin tone as an indicator of both beauty and racial classification.

Amanda (Filipino/white) also discussed her self-image in relation to her identity development. She commented on her eyes and how she distinguishes them from what she terms 'typical Asian eyes.' She says:

I've noticed after seeing a lot of Asian people my eyes are a lot more different from Chinese or Japanese or Korean people. I actually do have an eyelid rather than some people who don't even have one, well they have it but you can't see the crease. I guess that's why I can't really familiarize my appearance with Asians.^{ccxx}

The fact that she notices differences between her eyes and those she terms 'typically Asian' contributes a great deal to the fact that she sees herself as white. In identifying this difference

between her eyes and ‘typical Asian eyes’ Amanda (Filipino/white) appears to have spent time examining her own image in order to find a distinction between herself and Asian Americans. Anne Xuan Clark, of Vietnamese and white heritage, details that she did the same in her essay “What Are You?” She says, “I sit and look into the mirror. When I was little, I use to open my eyes as wide as possible to erase the traces of my mother’s ancestry.”^{ccxxxi} In comparing her physical image to others, Amanda (Filipino/white) employs what George J. McCall refers to as a “Not-Me” declaration of identity.^{ccxxii} By taking the time to study her image in comparison to other Asian Americans and finding a point of contrast Amanda (Filipino/white) implements her physical appearance as a means for which she can distinguish herself from her Asian heritage.

Finally, two interview participants made discouraging comments about the continued prevalence and desirability of whiteness. Elizabeth Yeoman in “How Does It Get Into My Imagination” and Dorothy L. Hurley in “Seeing White: Children of Color and the Disney Fairy Tale Princess” describe this prevailing notion of white superiority as color symbolism in which white becomes aligned with goodness and black or darkness with evil.^{ccxxiii} Robin (Peruvian/white) highlights the presumed normalcy of whiteness when she says, “When I was younger I always thought I was white. I thought everyone was white. I thought everyone who lived in the States was white.”^{ccxxiv} Robin’s (Peruvian/white) statement illustrates the dominance of whiteness in U.S. society by indicating it as the perceived norm of what people should be. Robin (Peruvian/white) is not alone in this understanding of white normalcy though; Laura Woods, a black and white biracial student at the University of Maryland describes similar sentiments from her childhood in the New York Times Article “Black? White? Asian? More Young Americans Choose All of the Above.” Woods states, “Until I was 8 years old, I thought I was white.”^{ccxxv} Both Robin (Peruvian/white) and Woods describe thinking this as young

children, and both have since moved past this notion of whiteness as normal in order to embrace their multiracial heritages. However, the implications of their statements confirm the continued social power possessed by whites. In *The Racial Middle*, Eileen O'Brien describes the prevalence of this power due to the fact that terms such as 'American' become equated with whiteness "because whites come from a multiplicity of nations and make up the majority of American society" while other racial groups are described as hyphenated Americans (i.e. Asian Americans, African Americans).^{ccxxvi} Therefore, as indicated by Robin's (Peruvian/white) understandings as a young girl, for many in the current generation the reference point of American and the reference point of white are one in the same.^{ccxxvii}

Elena (Filipino/white) highlights the role that dominant whiteness plays in individual desires and understandings of beauty that equal white womanhood. She says:

I want to have platinum blonde hair and blue eyes. I don't know. I guess a lot of people identify with that type of girl. There have been times when I've wished I didn't have brown eyes. Since coming to college I've had different times where I want blonde hair or have a lighter hair color so I can change my identity for a month, things like that. Every once and a while I think like why would you ever want to do that. But I have days.^{ccxxviii}

Elena (Filipino/white) illustrates the effects of centuries of history that maintained white superiority and the pristine notion of white womanhood through scientific racism ideologies and anti-miscegenation laws. While no longer legally maintained in our society, these effects continue to permeate social settings and representations of beauty in literature, film and television. Hurley offers commentary on this fact in her analysis of Disney fairytales in which the princesses are always white and their antagonists always reflect images of darkness that equate to people of color.^{ccxxix} Similar manifestations of white beauty and its effects on non-white women appear in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and the 2009 film *Precious*. In *The Bluest Eye* Morrison's protagonist Pecola Breedlove, an African American girl, views herself as ugly and covets blue eyes and the beauty of whiteness. In *Precious*, the protagonist Claireece

Jones is also an African American girl who is obese, illiterate and living in poverty. At points throughout the film, Jones is seen imagining herself as a beautiful thin, white girl with blonde hair – the complete opposite of her actual physical appearance.^{ccxxx} T. Deanen Sharpley-Whiting also notes this prevalence of white beauty in *Pimps Up, Ho's Down* by describing African American rapper Lil' Kim's desire to attain white standards of beauty via alleged use of skin-lightening procedures, wearing contacts and often presenting herself with straight hair.^{ccxxxii} Sharpley-Whiting notes that the prevalence of white standards of beauty “reinforces a hierarchy of beauty, as well as the notion of fixed racial categories.”^{ccxxxii}

For Robin (Peruvian/white) and Elena (Filipino/white), both of who are of partial white heritage, whiteness pervaded the identity development process and conflicted with both of their attempts to further embrace their minority cultures. Still, I would argue that these statements do not indicate a dominance of color symbolism in their identity development based on the amount of pride both showed for their respective minorities heritages (Robin's pride in her Peruvian background and Elena's pride in her Filipino background). Additionally, Robin (Peruvian/white) indicated equating white with normalcy at a young age, something she has since re-evaluated through the negotiation of her racial identity that focuses on her Peruvian heritage. Elena's (Filipino/white) articulation of the desire of white standards of beauty represents its continued prevalence but she also questions herself about such desires, as evident when she says ‘I think why would you ever want to do that.’ This indicates that she is aware of the conflict it creates with her identification as multiracial with emphasis on her Filipino heritage. Therefore, I argue that both acknowledge the lingering effects of white superiority but have negotiated their identities in such a way as to alleviate its dominance in their own developments. Still, I cannot

deny that their comments are discouraging in terms of race in U.S. society because they indicate the continued pervasiveness of whiteness and the power it holds.

Physical appearance becomes one of the most prominent areas of negotiation for a multiracial individual in terms of their identity. While each of the participants had chosen an identity for themselves they often described how society's perception of their physical appearance contrasts with their own choice. As Nikki Khanna and Cathryn Johnson note in "Passing as Black," the foundation of identity literature, as it relates to biraciality, relies on symbolic interactionism and this relationship between individual and society that must be acknowledged as having a dual role in the identity development process.^{ccxxxiii} Therefore, mixed-race individuals must negotiate their own identities between these poles of individual, in which they 'do race,' and society, in which they 'have race done to them.'^{ccxxxiv} However, as I have mentioned this same process of negotiation occurs for monoracial individuals as well. Still, for my participants, these negotiations varied as some used their physical appearance as a means through which they could develop their identities, others still find conflict between their choice and society's assignment of identities and two acknowledge the effects of history that promotes whiteness as something to desire and strive towards.

6.3 Group Associations and Social Networks

My interviews confirmed that racial identities often fall in line with both the racial composition of friends and racial dating preferences. Additionally, regional variation in terms of the access it offers to diverse groups of people (or lack thereof) also contributed to the role of social networks as a factor in the identity development process. For instance, Amanda (Filipino/white) who identifies as white said this, "There was no diversity. The only people I could interact with were white people."^{ccxxxv} In this quote she refers to her hometown of

Poquoson, VA. While considered a part of the Hampton Roads area of the state that includes more diverse cities such as Newport News, VA, Amanda describes Poquoson as a small, predominantly white town. She mentioned being one of only a few Asian American students in her school and that her grade in particular had no African Americans or Indians (Note: I use the term Indian here as she did during her interview, I am not sure if she was referring to Native Americans or people from India and do not want to make an assumption for either).

Due to this lack of diversity Amanda (Filipino/white) became isolated from her Filipino culture. Maria P.P. Root describes the effects of such isolation in “Factors Influencing the Variation in Racial and Ethnic Identity of Mixed-Heritage Persons of Asian Ancestry.” Root argues that identifying with a racial or ethnic heritage represents a symbolic attachment to that ethnic group that must be fostered through exposure and interaction with the group.^{ccxxxvi} Since Amanda (Filipino/white) did not have exposure to or interaction with Asians she associated herself with a predominantly white social network. She also became socialized within this network meaning that whites became the group she felt comfortable around. During her last two years of high school she attended Virginia Governor’s School and stated that she began to see people of different races due to the fact that students from surrounding cities, such as Hampton, VA and Newport News, VA, also attended. Still, given her socialization within a predominantly white social network for childhood and most of her adolescence she continued to associate most heavily with whites. She continues to maintain a predominantly white group of friends at Virginia Tech and prefers to date white men. On how these associations play a role in her identity formation she said, “I feel like if I had more Filipino or Asian friends I could relate to that culture and learn about it.”^{ccxxxvii} Therefore, Amanda (Filipino/white) acknowledges that the

lack of diversity in her social networks contributes to her dis-identification with her Asian heritage.

Amanda's (Filipino/white) lack of participation in social networks that included multiple races, particularly Asians or Filipinos, and its effects on her choice to identify with the white race directly parallels the experiences of two biracial Filipino and white sisters in Root's study. She articulates their experiences in "Factors Influencing the Variation in Racial and Ethnic Identity of Mixed-Heritage Persons of Asian Ancestry." She describes that the two sisters grew up in an area with few Asian Americans and had limited involvement with their Filipino culture. As a result, both of the sisters recognized their Filipino heritage but did not identify with it, and much like Amanda (Filipino/white) viewed themselves as white while not considering their racial minority position in U.S. society.^{ccxxxviii} Furthermore, Amanda's (Filipino/white) choice to identify as white supports Jennifer Lee and Frank D. Beans' argument in "Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification" that less diverse areas, such as her hometown of Poquoson, VA, tend to lead to lower levels of multiracial self-identification.^{ccxxxix}

Similarly, Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) keeps a predominantly white group of friends, and has since childhood, and also prefers to date white men. She too identifies more with her white heritage and says of herself, "I've just always identified with Caucasian people."^{ccxli} Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) grew up in Virginia Beach, VA and also spent a few years of her early childhood in New York. Both areas can be considered more urban and diverse, which would create access for her to interact with multiracial groups of people. However, she remained segregated from the available diversity to a large extent. For instance, while in New York she attended a private school that she characterized as predominantly white. This prevented her from interacting with other races in any great capacity. Furthermore, she grew up in a white

neighborhood in Virginia Beach in which she never had non-white neighbor. Therefore, in Lauren's (Nicaraguan/white) experience it was not a lack of access but a lack of involvement in multiracial groups due to the segregated choice in schools and neighborhoods by her parents, as acts of assimilation, which associated her with a predominantly white social group.

Lauren's (Nicaraguan/white) association and socialization in segregated social networks made it easier for her to identify with whites. Lori L. Tharps describes similar sentiments in her autobiography *Kinky Gazpacho*. Tharps grew up in a predominantly white town in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, went to predominantly white schools and was comfortable in 'mainstream culture,' which she declares to be a code for white people.^{ccxli} Due to these facts, she found it difficult to associate herself with blacks and felt unwanted by them once she got to college, despite the fact that she desperately wanted to authenticate her blackness. Lauren's (Nicaraguan/white) identity development in relation to her socialization in segregated social networks also reflects the experiences of Andrea Lee's protagonist in *Sarah Phillips*. Sarah, the title character, is described as a member of the black bourgeoisie who grew up in a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania suburb that remained segregated from other races and classes. As such, Sarah found it difficult to connect with black culture and described finding "it hard to picture the slaves as being any ancestors of [hers]."^{ccxlii} Both of these literary stories of identity development illustrate the importance of place as it relates to one's identity. Being segregated from multiracial groups, for Tharps, Sarah Phillips and Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) resulted in a lack of and difficulty in identifying with ethnic heritages.

Drawing from Root's articulation of social networks that may potentially isolate an individual from aspects of their heritage and the importance of place and segregation as represented by *Kinky Gazpacho* and *Sarah Phillips*, group associations and social networks

prove to play a significant role in the identity development process for both monoracial and multiracial people.^{ccxliii} As Amanda (Filipino/white) and Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) illustrate, the same proved true for my sample. To demonstrate further, Tiki (black/Korean) had caramel colored skin, dark hair and dark eyes. She identifies herself as multiracial, but more specifically as black and Korean. She stated in her interview that she would never call herself Korean and black due to the fact that she better identifies with African Americans. This indicates that Tiki (black/Korean) identifies along the Continuum of Biracial Identity (COBI) that Kerry Ann Rockquemore and Tracey Laszloffy describe in *Raising Biracial Children*. The COBI recognizes the possibility that multiracial individuals may develop blended identities that acknowledge mixed-race heritage but put emphasis on one monoracial heritage more than another.^{ccxliv}

Tiki (black/Korean) grew up with her maternal black grandmother in a racially segregated all black community. She informed me that all of her friends in school and in her community were black. Growing up in this environment did not allow her the opportunity to become involved in multiracial groups. Since coming to Virginia Tech she still maintains a predominantly black group of friends and prefers to date black men with darker skin. She commented on her choice to stay within a predominantly black group once she came to college and declared her opinion on the accepting nature of the black community when she said, “It’s so crazy and I’m here and there are so many different races and you have the option to be friends with whomever you want but I think that black people are more accepting than any other race.”^{ccxlv} Tiki (black/Korean) also commented on the level of comfort that she feels around African Americans in comparison to other races by mentioning that it’s difficult for her to make friends with people of other races. This implies that Tiki’s (black/Korean) socialization within a predominantly African American network throughout her life contributes to her choice of

socially defining herself as black and Korean. While she mentioned that she fully recognizes her multiracial heritage, her involvement in black culture more than any other reflects the way she chooses to present herself to others.

The experiences of Amanda (Filipino/white), Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) and Tiki (black/Korean) support the notion that associating with a predominantly monoracial group will affect a multiracial individual's identity development by leading to a stronger alignment with that group. The same pattern emerged for individuals who identify as multiracial. For instance, Mike has a white mother and a black father. He had light brown skin, dark eyes and shoulder length dreadlocks. He exclusively identifies himself as multiracial in conjunction with Maria P.P. Root's third crossing and Kerry Ann Rockquemore and David Brunnsma's border identity, both of which describe an individual living on the border of their racial worlds by identifying as mixed-race with no mention of or emphasis on their distinct racial backgrounds.^{ccxlvii} Mike (black/white) grew up in Northern Virginia, an urban and diverse area that would allow for access to multiracial groups and networks. He mentioned that as a young child he associated mostly with black children but that as he progressed through adolescence and young adulthood he began to form friendships with more diverse groups. He specifically mentioned associating with "every possible race from black African, Caribbean, Asian, Spanish."^{ccxlvii} He further added that even at Virginia Tech, despite it being a predominantly white school,

the majority of my friends are not white, the majority of my friends are not black. They're actually Greek or Chinese or from Tanzania, Indian, a lot from the Caribbean and even people from the Caribbean are not black, they're Indian and black or native and black or whatever.^{ccxlviii}

In specifically listing ethnicities of his social network Mike (black/white) exemplifies his disapproval of the static racial categorization found in U.S. society. By U.S. social standards, Mike's (black/white) friends would not be classified according to these ethnic origins; for

instance, his Greek friend would likely be considered white, his Chinese friend would be Asian and the multiracial individuals from the Caribbean would most likely be socially assumed to be black despite their mixed-race heritage. In distinguishing his friends via ethnic origins rather than U.S. racial classification standards, Mike (black/white) uses his social network as a means through which he can negotiate his own racial identity in such a way that does focus on specific races. I would argue that this contributes to his border identity, in which he does not define himself through specific racial terminology. Therefore, Mike's (black/white) multiracial social network not only includes a variety of monoracial individuals but also mixed-race individuals. This pattern continues for his dating preferences as well. As such, he became socialized not only in an interracial family but also in a multiracial social network, which contributes to his own self-identification of exclusively mixed-race. Mike's (black/white) choice to identify as multiracial supports Jennifer Lee and Frank D. Beans' argument in "Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification" that more diverse areas, such as Northern Virginia, tend to lead to higher levels of multiracial self-identification.^{ccxlix}

Mike's (black/white) involvement in multiracial social networks while identifying as mixed-race also falls in line with the transitions of identity developments on the national level, as discussed in the New York Times article "Black? White? Asian? More Young Americans Choose All of the Above." This article focuses on students in the Multiracial and Biracial Student Association at the University of Maryland who developed friendships based on their similarities in identifying as multiracial and in an attempt to show "their mixed-race pride."^{cccl} Furthermore, they have formed friendships with monoracial individuals who are in interracial relationships as well. They also actively socialize with each other outside of meetings through movie nights, dinners and parties. This illustrates the relationship between multiracial

camaraderie and multiracial self-identifications and supports the argument that involvement in multiracial social networks will influence the negotiation of a multiracial identity in mixed-race people. By not associating with a predominantly monoracial group, these University of Maryland students embrace and promote their choice to identify as mixed-race much like Mike (black/white) does within his multiracial social network.

While the interviews confirmed that identity formation often reflects the socialization within either a predominantly monoracial or multiracial network, other issues also emerged as contributing factors that promote or limit the social networks available to individuals. Regional differences and the presence of or lack of diversity plays a role in the types of people available to multiracial individuals. Furthermore, de facto segregation within regions and neighborhoods emerged as a limitation for the opportunity to build multiracial social networks. Decisions by one's parents also affect one's network, as evident by Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) being sent to a private school, due to the fact that these decisions represent acts of assimilation that promote socialization within white culture.

6.4 Family

France Winddance Twine presents families as an important micro level site in which race becomes presented to children in *A White Side of Black Britain*.^{ccli} Socialization begins at home with the family and includes one's initial comprehension of race and racial differences between members of society. Therefore, family becomes the first contributing factor to one's racial identity development. Tracey Laszloffy and Kerry Ann Rockquemore confirm this argument in "What About the Children? Exploring Misconceptions and Realities about Mixed-Race Children." They state, "families are the first place that children learn to think and feel about race, negotiate their racial identities, understand their connection to racial groups, and navigate a

social world that claims to be colorblind, yet is replete with individual and institutional racism.”^{cccli} Some of the analysis presented thus far has already highlighted the role families may play in this development process, as evident by Amanda (Filipino/white) being told she is Asian American and Lauren (Nicarguan/white) being predominantly exposed to whiteness in school and at home due to her parents sending her to a private school and living in a segregated community. In this section, I aim to further analyze the specific role of family in identity formation.

One important role of family in the racial identity development for multiracial individuals concerns the level of communication that acknowledges race, racial difference and racism as part of the child’s socialization. Twine argues that families who actively engage their children with these issues are racially literate.^{cccliii} On the other hand, Kerry Ann Rockquemore, Tracey Laszloffy and Julia Noveske argue in “It All Starts at Home” that families who adopt a colorblind or post-racial perspective to these issues will likely socialize their children to “identify as mixed-race with an emphasis upon whiteness” or “orient their children to identify as white.”^{cccliv} I would further argue that parents who adopt these perspectives on racial issues promote acts of assimilation. The discussions from Lauren’s (Nicaraguan/white) interview supported this argument. Lauren (Nicarguan/white) described that she tends to identify herself as Hispanic and white on standardized forms but she clearly sees herself as white and associates herself with whiteness to a much greater extent than her Nicaraguan heritage. She learned this and adopted it as her racial identity from her parents. Her parents placed her in predominantly white settings throughout her life and didn’t talk to her about race. She says, “they didn’t really talk about it a lot, I never had any issues growing up with it. I was surrounding mostly by Caucasian people growing up and pretty much identified with that race and never saw myself as

Hispanic.”^{cclv} By not discussing issues of race with Lauren (Nicaraguan/white), her parents proved that they were not conscious of race and white privilege, making it impossible for them to relay the information to their daughter. Instead, they chose to keep her in predominantly white settings and to ignore race as if it is not a salient issue. This caused Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) to view herself as white while viewing race as something that does not affect her because it only relates to people of color.^{cclvi} When I asked her to specifically comment on the role that her parents played in forming her racial identity she indicated this fact by explaining, “I think they’ve done a good job of knowing that race isn’t what matters in a person. It’s more what’s inside.”^{cclvii} However, what her parents actually accomplished by not discussing race and not making it a salient issue is that Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) assimilated into white culture. In doing so, she fostered her own white privilege that neglects the reality of race because she believes it does not apply to her.

Furthermore, by not exposing Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) to her Nicaraguan heritage to any great extent, not acknowledging racial differences or racism and promoting a colorblind philosophy of race as unimportant her parents racially socialized her to embrace whiteness. In turn, this led to Lauren dis-identifying with her Nicaraguan heritage and distancing herself from non-whites. Similar circumstances occurred for one of Kellina M. Craig-Henderson’s participants in *Black Men in Interracial Relationships*. This participant socialized his biracial children to identify with their white heritage more so than their black, which resulted in the children dis-identifying with other black children.^{cclviii}

Rockquemore, Laszloffy and Noveske further argue in “It All Starts At Home” that families who do engage their children with issues of race become more likely to socialize them into acknowledging their minority heritage. This stems from the recognition by the family that

the child will likely be classified as a minority by society.^{cclix} Riley, whose mother is white and father is Filipino and Chamorro, provided support for this argument through the discussions pertaining to her family during her interview. Riley (Filipino/Chamorro/white) had dark hair, dark eyes and a tanned skin tone. As representative of Craig-Henderson's minority identifier Riley exclusively identifies herself as a Pacific Islander and informed me that her mother told her to classify herself that way at a young age, likely due to the fact that her dark hair, eyes and tanned skin would lead to society assuming such an identity for her in most instances.^{cclx} She further explained that her parents, despite being separated, were open with her about issues of race and their interracial relationship. She described being informed about her white grandparents' discomfort with her parents' relationship. She also mentioned that her parents talked to her about their experiences so she would remain aware of things she could anticipate as she grew up.

Riley's (Filipino/Chamorro/white) parents chose to expose her to the realities of race, racism and racial categorization much like the Peebles, a white and black interracial couple, as described in the New York Times article "Black and White and Married in the Deep South: A Shifting Image." The Peebles have two black and white biracial children and tell them that they are "black, white and just right."^{cclxi} Mrs. Peebles further comments in the article that she and her husband specifically found housing in a diverse, multiracial neighborhood and that they are teaching their kids "all of it, all their history" so that they will be aware of perceptions and treatment they may receive as they mature into adulthood.^{cclxii} Therefore, like the Peebles, Riley's (Filipino/Chamorro/white) parents proved racially literate in that they acknowledged racial difference, prejudice and discrimination with her.^{cclxiii} They managed to do this despite being separated and thus executed effective racial socialization that made Riley

(Filipino/Chamorro/white) aware of how others would perceive her so that she could develop a healthy monoracial identity that she autonomously continues to embrace to this day.^{cclxiv}

A second theme of one family member in particular playing a significant role in the identity development of some participants emerged. Mary C. Waters refers to this pattern in “Choosing an Ancestry” by describing one’s selective identification as a result of the information provided by family members about their ancestors in terms of who they are.^{cclxv} For Tiki (black/Korean) this family member was her black grandmother. Tiki’s (black/Korean) parents were not heavily involved in her life due to their frequent incarcerations so her grandmother became the focal point of her family. Her grandmother lived in an all black neighborhood that provided her with a predominantly black social network that I have already discussed as a contributor to her identity. However, her grandmother also instilled a pride in her that embraced both her multiraciality and her blackness. As such, Tiki (black/Korean) identifies as multiracial by presenting herself as black and Korean but openly claims to feel more comfortable around and identify more with the African American community. This appears in large part to derive from Tiki’s (black/Korean) grandmother by way of how her grandmother helped her cope with her multiracial heritage within a predominantly black community.

She described getting teased while growing up because she looked different from the black kids in her neighborhood. She told me that her grandmother reassured her that despite looking different there was nothing wrong with her. More importantly though, her grandmother included her in the idea of a collective African American struggle. For example, Tiki (black/Korean) said that her grandmother would tell her, “you know what, they talk about Jesus Christ girl, they going to talk about you, don’t worry about that. That’s how we made it, don’t even pay that no attention.”^{cclxvi} In this instance, the ‘we’ her grandmother refers to is the black

community as a whole. Furthermore, she is alluding to the prejudice and discrimination experienced by the black community and relating it to Tiki's (black/Korean) experiences of being teased due to her mixed-race heritage. In doing so, Tiki's (black/Korean) grandmother helped her negotiate an identity that accepts her multiracial heritage while simultaneously embracing her African American roots. This provided a place of refuge for Tiki (black/Korean) when she experienced prejudice in her interactions with monoracial black peers due to her multiracial heritage. Maria P.P. Root describes that family members who successfully provide these ideas of refuge, safety and love play a critical role in the identity development process for mixed-race individuals by allowing for the development of integrated identities.^{cclxvii} This proved true in Tiki's (black/Korean) experiences because she was able to develop an identity that embraces both of her racial heritages while simultaneously finding a strong connection with African American culture.

Elena (Filipino/white) also exhibited this notion in referring to her relationship with her Filipino grandfather. She told me that her grandfather was born in the Philippines and that she talks to him extensively about his heritage and his life experiences. She conveyed great pride in her grandfather and what he has been able to accomplish in his life. She says:

I've talked to him a lot about what he went through growing up and his culture and his family. I really respect him for how he built up his career and his life and his family. He's told me, when he was little, when he was my age, he used to go around and sell shoes for a penny barefoot and that's what he did. And then he ended up joining the Navy and he was stationed in England and that's how he met my grandma. They ended up moving here because my grandpa was promoted to be the head chef at the White House for 28 years. He's a phenomenal chef and it just blows my mind to think about how people here who grow up with everything can't get to that point and he came from a country where he had absolutely nothing and he had a title that people would just love to have.^{cclxviii}

By having such a strong relationship with her grandfather, that allows her to continuously learn about her Filipino heritage from his experiences in the Philippines and abroad, Elena

(Filipino/white) developed her own pride and desire to know more about her Filipino culture that dominates her multiracial heritage. Elena (Filipino/white) also alluded to the desire to want to spread the knowledge she is learning about her Filipino heritage and the pride she holds in this heritage to others. In this sense, Elena's (Filipino/white) relationship with her grandfather provided the catalyst for her to want to differentiate herself and expose others in her life to Filipino culture. She accomplishes this by talking about her grandfather and what he was able to achieve, introducing friends to traditional Filipino foods and embracing the aspects of her Filipino heritage that distinguish her from whiteness. Yen Le Espiritu found similar convictions of wanting to uplift the Filipino reputation in U.S. society in her collection of essays in *Filipino American Lives*. In particular, one essayist, Juanita Santos, writes that she worked to show U.S. society that "Filipinos are as knowledgeable and cultured as they are."^{cclxix} She further says, "I wanted respect for my people. I wanted to project a positive image of the Filipinos and my native country."^{cclxx} Elena (Filipino/white) found a similar sense of pride in her Filipino heritage due to what her grandfather was able to accomplish in his life. Therefore, she seeks to promote this positive image through her own identity and involvement with people who do not possess knowledge or understanding of Filipino history, traditions or culture.

The absence of family members also contributes to the identity development process. Absentee parents increase the likelihood that the multiracial individual will not be exposed to the racial heritage of the missing parent, which could cause them to feel uncomfortable around that race.^{cclxxi} Eric (black/white) brought up the issue of feeling uncomfortable around his father and the rest of the black side of his family during his interview. Eric (black/white) socially identifies himself as white, although he embraces the option to sometimes check multiracial on forms and applications. Eric's (black/white) parents divorced when he was 8 years old but he says that they

still get along with each other. His father remarried an African American woman a few years ago, and although he remains close with his father, he described feeling uncomfortable when he says, “When I hang out with my dad’s side of the family or any other setting where it’s predominantly black I feel pretty out of place.”^{cclxxii} He also described getting occasional calls or birthday cards from this side of his family but did not feel he had a huge personal involvement with them.

In contrast, when speaking of the white side of his family he says, “I feel like because of hanging out with my mom’s side of the family has made me more comfortable around that race – I feel that has contributed more to my racial identity than genetics has.”^{cclxxiii} Likely due to his parents’ divorce and his father remarrying an African American woman Eric (black/white) has not spent much time with the African American side of his family and therefore has not been exposed to or embraced African American culture. Furthermore, as I have already discussed, he distinguishes between white and black modes of behavior and language by ascribing to black stereotypes of ‘authentic’ black behavior seen on television and the notion that all African Americans use improper language via Ebonics. In doing so Eric (black/white) perpetuates color symbolism by positioning white behavior and language as better than black culture.^{cclxxiv} He described what he views as his inability to authentically ‘act black’ or ‘talk black’ which further distances him from black culture and pushes him to embrace whiteness. Between Eric’s (black/white) failed attempts to ‘authentically’ act black that perpetuate stereotypes of black inferiority, his parents’ divorce that resulted in him living with his white mother and his father remarrying a black woman and his socialization within predominantly white social networks he has become effectively isolated from African American culture. Maria P.P. Root argues that identification with one’s ethnic heritage requires strong relationships with members of that

group, both familial and otherwise, that occur through steady interaction.^{cclxxxv} Eric (black/white) did not develop a strong relationship with the black side of his family due to his parents' divorce and throughout his life the isolation from black culture steadily increased. This increase occurred due to the fact that he lived with his white mother, did not foster relationships with his black family outside of his father, maintained a predominantly white group of friends and felt unable to fit into African American culture due to his lack of real knowledge about it. Rather, Eric (black/white) relied on African American stereotypes that he learned through television and other social media in order to try and 'perform' blackness that did not cultivate into acceptance and feelings of comfort around blacks. All of these factors contributed to increasing levels of isolation from African Americans and a lack of true cultural knowledge that perpetuate Eric's (black/white) choice to identify as white.^{cclxxxvi}

Similarly, Tiki (black/Korean) described feeling uncomfortable around one side of her family, the Korean side. Of her Korean family she said, "I always felt, because I was never really around them that much and whenever we did see them it was kind of weird."^{cclxxxvii} She continues, "And even to this day they don't speak great English, so it's like when we (referring to herself and her sister) come around you we don't speak Korean. They aren't as accepting as the black side of my family at all. They just make you feel kind of weird."^{cclxxxviii} Tiki's (black/Korean) Korean father has been incarcerated for most of her life, which led to her living and being raised by her black grandmother in a predominantly black neighborhood in Maryland. By not having her father around, Tiki (black/Korean) did not spend a great deal of time with her Korean family and therefore was not exposed to Korean culture or traditions. In contrast, by living with her black grandmother Tiki (black/Korean) became enmeshed in African American culture. Furthermore, the language barrier between herself and her Korean family members makes it

difficult for them to communicate. Eileen O'Brien notes individuals may feel estranged from racial groups if these two circumstances are present in *The Racial Middle*. She argues that the 'language barrier' between individuals who do not speak an ethnic language and their family members who still fluently do, and additionally may not speak English at all, represents one of the primary reasons that individuals may feel uncomfortable around parts of their family. This causes them to seek out an identity that does not focus as heavily on that culture.^{cclxxix}

Additionally, while I cannot say this for sure because she did not mention conflict between the two directly, she implies that the two sides of her family may not get along when she says that the Korean side of her family is not as accepting. James P. Allen and Eugene Turner note the significantly small number of multiracial people with Korean and black heritage in "Bridging 1990 and 2000 Census Race Data: Fractional Assignment of Multiracial Populations." Specifically, they articulate that less than 10,000 multiracial individuals of black and Korean heritage were identified in 1990, making them an extremely small percentage when compared to the U.S. population as a whole.^{cclxxx} This also coincides with higher recorded rates of Korean and non-black intermarriage, especially with whites and other Asian ethnicities.^{cclxxxii} The low rate of Korean/black intermarriage may be due to the conflict between Koreans and blacks in recent decades, as described by Kyeyoung Park in "Use and Abuse of Race and Culture."^{cclxxxiii} Tensions between Koreans and African Americans have occurred nationwide in predominantly urban areas, with both groups claiming cultural differences in behavior as perpetrators of the conflict. For instance, Park articulates that both African and Americans "claim that cultural differences account for the majority of disputes involving merchants and customers" with Koreans appearing to be rude and suspicious of their African American customers and African Americans appearing to act inappropriately in Korean stores.^{cclxxxiiii} Hye-Kyung Ryoo

confirms this argument in saying “relations between African Americans and Korean Americans have been defined mainly by negative interactions between Korean merchants and black consumers in urban communities.”^{cclxxxiv} Such tension has perpetuated stereotypes of both groups, led to boycotts of businesses and acts of violence. In particular, Korean prejudice against African Americans has been documented and may further explain the reason behind Tiki (black/Korean) not feeling accepted by her Korean family. Ronald Weitzer notes such prejudice in “Racial Prejudice Among Korean Merchants in African American Neighborhoods.” Weitzer’s study focuses on the Washington, D.C. region that includes Northern Virginia and Maryland, which also represents the region in which Tiki (black/Korean) was born and raised. Weitzer finds that Korean Americans hold prejudicial views of African Americans that include notions of blacks as dangerous and criminals. He further concludes that many Koreans deny the existence of historical and contemporary discrimination against African Americans by relying on stereotypes that find them to be lazy, unintelligent, undeserving of and reliant on welfare or in possession of other inherent moral flaws.^{cclxxxv}

The racial conflict between the two groups could implicate that Tiki’s (black/Korean) Korean relatives did not approve of her father’s interracial relationship with her black mother and thus do not accept her as willingly as her black grandmother. While I cannot solidly conclude that Tiki’s (black/Korean) Korean family held the racist sentiments towards African Americans that Weitzer describes in his study, it could be possible and could help to explain why Tiki (black/Korean) feels ‘weird’ around them, why she does not find them to be accepting and why she was raised by her black grandmother as opposed to growing up with any Korean relatives. As such, ramifications of these cultural tensions could contribute to Tiki’s

(black/Korean) lack of involvement with her Korean family thereby causing her to align herself more with African Americans.

The role of family in the racial identity development of mixed-race individuals cannot be denied due to the fact that families, and parents in particular, begin the socialization process for children. Whether parents choose to acknowledge race and socialize their children to understand racial differences, prejudice, discrimination and racism affects the negotiation of identities for individuals who have multiple racial heritages. Additionally, the presence or absence of family members plays a role in affecting exposure to and knowledge of one's ancestry, culture and traditions.

6.5 Region

In the results offered thus far, region emerged as playing a large role in how one's physical appearance, group networks and family contribute to racial identity formation. For example, region affected the racial make-up of many of the participant's group networks, such as Tiki (black/Korean) growing up in an exclusively black neighborhood and school system in Maryland. Residential segregation even within diverse regions also affected identity as illustrated by Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) being raised in a white neighborhood where she never had a racial minority neighbor in Virginia Beach, VA.

While the role of region permeates in these factors, when asked specifically about regional differences the participants especially acknowledged how they receive different reactions and perceptions from society within different regions. They also commented on the diversity, or lack thereof, between regions as well. In terms of reactions received Riley (Filipino/Chamorro/white) provides a great example. She says:

I've driven through places before and gone to pump gas and just felt weird because people stare at you and you're not sure if its one of those things where I look different

from what they're used to or if its just because I'm a pretty girl stopping through to get gas. You never really know.^{cclxxxvi}

When I questioned her as to what type of places she was referring to, she said very rural places off of Interstate 81 between Roanoke, VA and Lynchburg, VA. This type of reaction contrasts to the way in which she described her hometown of Hampton, VA when she says, "It's very diverse. I never felt slighted that way in any area."^{cclxxxvii} When Riley (Filipino/Chamorro/white) says 'I look different from what they're used to' she indicates the distinction between urban and rural regions. Urban regions tend to be more diverse which makes it more likely that mixed-race individuals will not physically 'stand out' because the representation of racial minorities and multiracial individuals is higher. Heidi Durrow addresses this connection between diversity and multiracial individuals in her novel *The Girl Who Fell From the Sky*. Durrow's protagonist, Rachel, is light skinned black with blue eyes. When Rachel lived with her black father, white mother and siblings on military bases her physical appearance, and the fact that she had blue eyes, did not automatically make her stand out from the people around her. In contrast, when she moves to Portland to live with her black grandmother the combination of being light skinned with blue eyes suddenly becomes something that distinguishes her from both her black and white peers. Similarly, Riley (Filipino/Chamorro/white) finds her darker hair, eyes and skin tone as something that distinguishes her from the white majority in less diverse areas.

The option to express and participate in ethnic culture also proves easier in urban, diverse regions. Several of the participants commented on the presence of ethnic restaurants, grocery stores and prominent organizations in more diverse areas. For instance, Elena (Filipino/white) described being able to go to ethnic restaurants in Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. but not having that option in her extremely small hometown of Edinburg, VA. Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) also commented on the presence of Latino-oriented grocery stores in larger

cities, while Amanda (Filipino/white) described the large Filipino presence and the Filipino American Center in more diverse cities of Virginia Beach, VA and Norfolk, VA that contrasts the predominantly white city of Poquoson, VA where she grew up. These participants found points of contrast between their rural, predominantly white hometowns and larger areas in the state. These larger areas offer more opportunity for mixed-race people to expose themselves to their ethnic culture and thus increase their cultural knowledge. In “The Diversity of Biracial Individuals,” Christine C. Iijima Hall and Trude I. Cooke Turner argue that possessing cultural knowledge about one’s ethnic heritage could include knowledge of the language, music, history and foods.^{ccclxxxviii} Additionally, Hall and Turner argue that high levels of cultural knowledge may potentially increase the likelihood of mixed-race individuals identifying with parts of their ethnic heritage by aiding in an individual’s acceptance or feelings of comfort around the ethnic group. In essence, diversity in more urban, larger regions could lead to a multiracial individual being “more apt to experience more of his or her culture, have more positive experiences and be more accepting of his or her racial background.”^{ccclxxxix} Still, with some of the participants not living in these areas and only being able to visit them the exposure to cultural knowledge and diversity remains low, which becomes a factor in their identity development.

Lower levels of exposure to diversity also affect the participants due to the fact that they are all currently living in Blacksburg, VA. In a city where whites make up the majority, and on a college campus that the *Collegiate Times* notes to be 71.6% white, my participants found themselves negotiating their identities within the relationship of their individual choices and whiteness with restricted access to cultural knowledge when compared to the diversity offered in larger regions of the state.^{ccxc} For instance, Eric (black/white) says:

I had much more exposure to other cultures in Northern Virginia and I’m not sure that it changed me in terms of how I acted, but it was just a reminder that not everyone around

you is white. I guess it's almost possible to forget about diversity and it's just not on your mind as much in a place like Blacksburg in comparison to NOVA.^{ccxcxi}

Regional diversity in relation to multiracial identity development varies within the state of Virginia, as indicated by the comments from the interviewees above, but also at the nation-wide level. Susan Saulny finds that increases in multiracial identification are occurring in the Mid-West and in the South in “Black and White and Married in the Deep South: A Shifting Image.”^{ccxcii} In particular, she notes that the mixed-race population doubled in the past decade in North Carolina, grew by up to 80% in Georgia, Kentucky and Tennessee and up to 70% in Mississippi, Indiana, Iowa and South Dakota.^{ccxciii} In addition, Jennifer Lee and Frank D. Bean find that increasing rates of multiracial identification occur in areas with higher levels of diversity and immigration, particularly in California, New York, Texas, Florida and Hawaii.^{ccxciv} The presence of diversity increases the opportunities for mixed-race individuals to build multiracial social networks and immerse themselves in aspects of their minority cultures by joining ethnic organizations, attending ethnic events and enjoying ethnic cuisines. Higher levels of diversity also lead to less questioning or assignment of identities by society members because those of multiracial heritage do not tend to ‘stand out’ as much.

With nation-wide increases in multiracial identification, in conjunction with continued increases in immigration, levels of diversity are growing. This proves true even in areas of the country historically driven by racism and white superiority, such as the Deep South.^{ccxcv} These changes in demographics and the increased levels of diversity that they bring with them will continue to have an impact on U.S. society and likely contribute to the shift in racial understandings that has begun to recognize the multiracial population and the options for fluidity that they possess in their identity development. However, regional diversity alone does not indicate the identity that will develop for multiracial individuals. Rather, I would argue region

contributes to identity development via its effects on how mixed-race individuals are socially classified based on their physical appearance, the types of people and groups available for networking and the decisions made by one's family as to whether they will expose them to diverse areas or not.

6.6 Autonomy

In addition to exploring variation and contributing factors in the identity development process, I also explored the issue of autonomy in choosing one's identity with the interview participants. Throughout this work I have posited biracialism as a racial project that opposes the historical power of forcing arbitrary monoracial categorization on mixed-race individuals. I have further argued that its influence continues to increase since the addition of the 'mark one or more option' to the 2000 Census began to transform racial understandings and classifications in U.S. society. I used Diana T. Sanchez's conceptualization of autonomy from "How Do Forced-Choice Dilemmas Affect Multiracial People?" This conceptualization defines autonomy as "the extent to which multiracial people feel as though they can choose their racial identification freely."^{ccxcvi} Sanchez further argues that autonomy in racial identification "refers to global, internal feelings about the extent to which an individual feels personal control and freedom over his or her identity choices."^{ccxcvii} Biracialism, as the representation of the increase in autonomous self-identification, continues to grow in U.S. society as evident by 2.4% of the U.S. population choosing to identify as two or more races on the 2000 Census.^{ccxcviii} From recent releases of 2010 Census data this trend continued with 2.9% of the U.S. population choosing to identify as two or more races, an increase of 32% during the decade.^{ccxcix} Still, while possessing autonomy allows for mixed-race individuals to feel in control over their identity and the ways in which they present themselves to others, it continues to be hindered by the historical remnants of forced

monoracial categorization in social settings. In order to analyze the extent to which the interview participants in this study possess autonomy in choosing their own racial identities I asked them to comment on whether or not they think having the choice is important and the level to which they actually feel that they possess it, regardless of their views on its importance.

Overwhelmingly the sample articulated the importance of autonomy. Elena (Filipino/white) commented on the matter by way of comparing her choice in identity to her biological heritage by saying:

So like if someone told me you're half Caucasian and only 25% Filipino and 25% English so if you fill out a paper you need to put Caucasian? I'd have a major problem with that. I think that's my choice, I don't think someone needs to identify that for me. I would say I'm much more Filipino than I am Caucasian even though I'm percentage wise more Caucasian than I am Filipino.^{ccc}

In this declaration Elena (Filipino/white) makes several noteworthy distinctions. First, and perhaps most importantly, she discredits the use of biological determinism as a means for racial identification. Despite the fact that she would be biologically considered $\frac{3}{4}$ white she chooses to embrace her multiracial ethnic heritage, especially through pride in her Filipino roots. Still, I would argue that her mentioning of blood quantum signifies the remnants of its historical use as a means for classifying members of the multiracial population. Measuring blood quantum, as a personification of scientific racism, dominated the classification of mixed-race people throughout the 19th and much of the 20th century by forcing them into monoracial categorizations as a means to maintain the racial hierarchy that promoted white as superior.^{ccci} The fact that Elena (Filipino/white) comments on the biological proportions of her racial heritage indicates that blood and genetic levels of membership in racial groups continues to be an issue that multiracial people must address. However, Elena (Filipino/white) discredits the use biological

determinism, which contributes to the dismantling of its continued effects on identity development.

Elena (Filipino/white) also distinguishes between her white heritages by referring to herself as both Caucasian and English. Elena's (Filipino/white) father, whom she refers to as Caucasian, grew up in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. On the other hand, her mother, whom she refers to as English and Filipino, was born in London, England and spent most of her life abroad until she came to Virginia for college. In distinguishing between the two, Elena (Filipino/white) equates the term Caucasian with American whiteness and chooses to embrace what Mary C. Waters calls a symbolic identity in "Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?" by referring to herself as English due to her mother's British heritage. Waters defines a symbolic identity as one that "is individualistic in nature and without real social cost for the individual."^{ccci} By U.S. racial classifications Elena's (Filipino/white) mother would either have a Filipino identity imposed on her due to the notion of hypodescent or would be considered both white and Filipino with little acknowledgement of her Anglo heritage. However, for Elena (Filipino/white) the decision to distinguish between the two in conjunction with acknowledgement of her Filipino heritage presents her choice, which she finds important to possess, in her identity negotiation within U.S. society.

Mike (black/white) expressed equally as strong of an opinion in saying:

Nobody should tell me who I am, that's for me to decide. I don't believe in people telling you what you are. You're born by yourself, you'll more than likely die by yourself – you're responsible for your own success and your own failures. Therefore somebody should not tell you who you are. For me, I chose how to racially identify myself and nobody will ever tell me how to racially identify myself because they will get a boatload of cuss words.^{ccci}

Mike's (black/white) arguments for the importance of autonomy stem from the doctrine of American individualism, which Leslie Carr discusses in *Colorblind Racism* as the liberal

doctrines of freedom that hold individuals responsible for their own achievements and failures within the capitalist economic system used in our nation.^{ccciv} For Mike (black/white), each individual must be held accountable for the decisions made in their lives and one such decision includes their racial identity. Mike (black/white) opposes the imposition or assumption of identity for multiracial individuals, including himself, and therefore argues for the importance of autonomy in identity formation. Mike's (black/white) argument for the importance of autonomy also exemplifies the foundations of the multiracial movement in which activists contested the forced categorization of the multiracial population that had long discriminated against their right to choose.^{cccv} Similar sentiments were echoed in Susan Saulny's article "Black? White? Asian? More Young Americans Choose All of the Above." Saulny finds that multiracial young adults are "rejecting the color lines that have defined Americans for generations in favor of a much more fluid sense of identity."^{cccvi} To do so, the mixed-race population, led in large part by college-age students, continues to contest the racial hierarchy in U.S. society by declaring their right to choose their own identities and negotiating their identities in such a way as to contribute to the growth of biracialism. Mike (black/white) and Elena's (Filipino/white) comments indicate that this trend is occurring on Virginia Tech's campus as well. Their comments are very much in line with those that Saulny quoted from the University of Maryland. For instance, Laura Woods noted that as part of the fight for racial autonomy in multiracial identity development, "people have the right not to acknowledge everything" but stresses to multiracial individuals "don't do it because society tells you that you can't."^{cccvii} The focus of these students, and those in this study who possess racial autonomy, is to assert their freedom to identify according to their own choices.

While only offering a couple of examples, other participants noted the importance as well. However, finding it important to have and actually having it do not necessarily coincide. Therefore, I explicitly asked the interviewees to describe the extent to which they feel they have the ability to choose their own identity. In response, five participants appear to have high levels of autonomy when it comes to choosing their own racial identities and thus contribute to the racial project of biracialism that opposes the imposition of racial categorization and acknowledges the fluidity in identity options for mixed-race individuals. In particular Riley (Filipino/Chamorro/white) expressed possessing such autonomy by identifying herself exclusively as a monoracial Pacific Islander. Even though her mother told her to identify as a Pacific Islander as a child, in an attempt to recognize the likelihood that society would view her as such, Riley (Filipino/Chamorro/white) made the choice to maintain that identity for herself through adolescence and into young adulthood. She says, “I think I do have a lot of control. Like my mom stated growing up that I fill this out on the forms but I could’ve easily been like well, I want to be Caucasian because I live with you and I’m predominantly with you but I’ve chosen my cultural identity because I have the choice to.”^{ccviii} This quote indicates that Riley (Filipino/Chamorro/white) rejected both the availability to pass for white via choosing a white identity and the option to identify as multiracial. Furthermore, she rejected the option to shift her identity to embrace either multiraciality or whiteness after being told by her mother to identify as a Pacific Islander. She lived in a diverse area (Hampton, VA), maintained a multiracial social network and feels that her personality better reflects the personality of her father despite the fact that she lived with her white mother growing up. Given all of these circumstances, Riley (Filipino/Chamorro/white) exhibits cultural knowledge about her Pacific Islander heritage that she gained through interaction and exposure to multiracial groups and her ethnic family in

particular by maintaining strong relationships with her father and his side of the family despite the fact that she grew up with her white mother. Therefore, Riley (Filipino/Chamorro/white) validates the arguments by Maria P.P. Root and Christine C. Iijima Hall and Trude I. Cooke Turner that cultural knowledge and exposure are necessary to the development of racial identities that include incorporation of ethnic backgrounds.^{cccix}

Furthermore, she did not indicate any inclination of choosing a Pacific Islander identity due to the fact that others would force that identity on her, or arbitrarily place her into that category. I would argue that Riley has successfully negotiated her identity between her individual choice and the outside influence of society, physical appearance and family members to autonomously form a healthy monoracial identity. In doing so, she has effectively contested the history of imposed monoracial categorization and turned it into something that she chooses to be proud of and acknowledge. She was also able to take the lessons that she learned from her racially literate parents to internalize the reactions she would likely receive from society and the effects of racism to negotiate her identity in such a way that she could assert her choice to monoracially identify.^{cccx} In doing so, she also validates Rockquemore and Laszloffy's argument that children who become exposed to the realities of race and racism by their parents will be more likely to embrace their minority heritage.^{cccxi}

Mike (black/white) also exhibited autonomy in choosing his own racial identity in saying, "I have all the control, it's me who identifies myself and the government can make me pay taxes and things like that but they can't force me to identify myself, nobody can. I think people have their control in how they want to identify themselves, I know how I do."^{cccxii} Mike (black/white) identifies himself as exclusively multiracial and developed that identity within a diverse social network while growing up in the diverse area of Northern Virginia. Mike (black/white) provides

support for the project of biracialism in that he opposes imposed racial classifications and chooses to adamantly and vocally identify as multiracial even though he knows that society will continue to perceive him as a minority (African American) due to his physical appearance. Of this he says, “people do obviously perceive me as a minority but I think it’s until I talk to them that they no longer perceive that. Do I really care? No, I don’t really care if they think I’m a minority or not.”^{cccxi} I would argue he has successfully negotiated his identity in opposition to what he recognizes to be the pattern of social identification that does not allow for individual choice or fluidity in the identity development process for those of multiracial heritage.

Furthermore, I found Mike (black/white) to possess autonomy in his identity formation not only due to the fact that he opposes an imposed monoracial classification but also because he indicates that he actively promotes his multiracial identity. He indicates this fact in saying that others perceive him to be a minority until he talks to them which suggests that he does not hesitate to vocalize his choice to identify as biracial. In doing so, Mike (black/white) asserts his choice in identity through language, which Benjamin H. Bailey identified as a primary means through which individuals negotiate between individual choice and the imposition of an identity in *Race, Language and Negotiation of Identity*.^{cccxi} Additionally, Mike (black/white) appears to be a product of effective racial socialization in that he acknowledges the lingering effects of racism and imposed identities.^{cccxi} He does not deny that society will continue to place him into monoracial categories in an attempt to deny his multiracial heritage, but he actively opposes this practice by asserting and vocalizing that he has developed a multiracial identity.

Rhea (black/white/Native American) also identifies as exclusively multiracial and appeared to possess racial autonomy. She says, “You can’t put people in one category without any shades of gray. It’s not just black and white, there’s always gray with everything. If I don’t

have the chance to show who I am, physically as well as personality wise, then there's no point.^{cccxvi} This quote indicates Rhea's (black/white/Native American) opposition to imposed racial classifications, in saying 'if I don't have the chance to show who I am' she references the lack of acknowledgement given to the options available to biracial individuals in terms of how they want to identify themselves. Similarly to Mike (black/white), Rhea (black/white/Native American) not only opposes such social classifications but also combats them by choosing to identify herself as multiracial while being aware of the monoracial identities that society assumes for her. As such, she proves racially literate in that she remains aware of the historical effects of discrimination against multiracial individuals via forced monoracial categorization.^{cccxvii} Daniel A. Nakashima articulates in "A Rose by Any Other Name" that mixed-race people both 'do race' and 'have race done to them' and that they must negotiate between these two extremes in order to develop their own identities.^{cccxviii} Rhea (black/white/Native American), perhaps more than any other participant in this study, felt the effects of having 'race done to her.' She articulated having multiple monoracial identities imposed on her at different times and in different circumstances. She mentioned being assumed to be Spanish, Asian and African American, none of which represent the identity she has developed for herself.

In this sense, she has effectively taken back the implication of the 'what are you?' question and its effects in order to combat the racial hierarchy and autonomously assert herself as multiracial. This coincides with what Susan Saulny documented of the students on the University of Maryland's campus in "Black? White? Asian? More Young Americans Choose All of the Above."^{cccxix} Saulny notes that the students reject the implications of the 'what are you?' question by embracing it as something that they can use to learn about and socialize with each other. The students accomplish this by using it as an icebreaker game at the meetings of the

Multiracial and Biracial Student Association.^{cccxx} Doing so, the students successfully rearticulate the ‘what are you?’ question as something they can use to explore the heterogeneity within the mixed-race population. Simultaneously, they assert their role in the development of their identities by focusing on the importance of individual choice that rejects society’s reliance on arbitrarily placed monoracial classifications. Rhea (black/white/Native American) effectively emulates the behavior of these students by rejecting the negative implications of being questioned about her identity, having identities imposed on her and asserting her choice in contrast to such identities.

Robin (Peruvian/white) and Elena (Filipino/white) proved to possess autonomy as well. Unlike Riley (Filipino/Chamorro/white) who chooses to identify monoracially and Mike (black/white) and Rhea (black/white/Native American) who choose to identify as mixed-race with no emphasis on their racial admixtures, Robin (Peruvian/white) and Elena (Filipino/white) both identify as multiracial but put emphasis on their ethnic heritage. Robin (Peruvian/white) does so by embracing her Peruvian heritage in an attempt to combat racism and misunderstandings about Latino/a culture in U.S. society and says that her choice to do so is all in her power. In developing her identity and autonomously choosing to identify as multiracial with a focus on her Peruvian background, Robin (Peruvian/white) proves to be racially literate, as conceptualized by France Winddance Twine in *A White Side of Black Britain*, by acknowledging the continued prevalence of racism.^{cccxxi} She also actively opposes society’s attempts to label all Latino/as into a cohesive panethnic group, which Eileen O’Brien argues to be prevalent among members of the Latino/a population.^{cccxxii} This distinguishes Robin’s (Peruvian/white) experiences of imposed identities from many of the other participants in this study because she does see herself as a Latina, but the fact that society lumps her into this

categorization does not reflect the details of her Peruvian heritage. For many of the other participants, the imposed identities did not at all reflect their self-images. Therefore, Robin (Peruvian/white) has developed her identity in such a way that she autonomously differentiates herself as Peruvian in order to combat the generalizations by U.S. society that do not recognize the different cultures within the panethnic Latino/a classification.^{cccxxiii}

Elena (Filipino/white) identifies as multiracial but embraces her Filipino heritage to further her understanding of her family's history and says that she never lets other people's opinions or assumptions sway the way she chooses to present herself. Elena's (Filipino/white) heritage includes larger proportions of white than Filipino, but she combats the notion that this should indicate her alignment with white culture. Like the students in the University of Maryland's Multiracial and Biracial Student Association, Elena (Filipino/white) autonomously asserts her right to choose the way she identifies herself. Laura Woods, vice president of the group, declares that, "all society is trying to tear you apart and make you pick a side. I want us to have a say."^{cccxxiv} Elena (Filipino/white) effectively has her say and accomplished being able to do so by actively engaging herself in her Filipino culture and history as the means through which she negotiated between assumptions society makes about her and the way she wants to be seen. Furthermore, both Robin (Peruvian/white) and Elena (Filipino/white), despite having darker hair and eyes, could pass for white should they choose to do so. However, both oppose being categorized in contrast to their own self-images and advocate for the acknowledgement of fluidity in their identity development that is not merely a dichotomy between an exclusive multiracial or exclusive monoracial choice. This confirms that racial autonomy does not always indicate that individuals will develop a biracial identity, as espoused by the development models of W.S. Carlos Poston and Christine Kerwin and Joseph G. Ponterotto. Rather, Robin

(Peruvian/white) and Elena (Filipino/white) possessing autonomy exemplifies the fluidity of options in multiracial identification in conjunction with Rockquemore and Laszloffy's Continuum of Biracial Identity (COBI). The COBI recognizes individuals may develop identities that more heavily focus on one aspect of their heritage while simultaneously acknowledging their multiracial heritage.^{cccxxv}

Flash (Korean/white), Amanda (Filipino/white) and Tiki (black/Korean), I would argue, appear to still be negotiating their identities between their individual choices and society's assumptions based on their physical appearance. While they claim autonomy in their own choices, they have not yet successfully reconciled the relationship between those choices and society's categorization. For example, Flash (Korean/white) concedes, "other people might perceive me as being Asian even though I don't really know that much about it. Other than that though I have complete control for myself."^{cccxxvi} Similarly, Amanda (Filipino/white) expressed, "I have no control over what people think about me, but what I think of myself and which one I identify with, of course."^{cccxxvii} This indicates that Flash (Korean/white), in viewing himself as multiracial, and Amanda (Filipino/white), in viewing herself as white, have successfully 'done race' on the individual level. However, both still feel the effects of 'having race done to them' in that regardless of their own choices they earn imposed Asian American categorization.^{cccxxviii} Tiki (black/Korean) reiterated this idea in describing that she has control over how she sees herself but says, "to the way other people feel I don't because it's physical."^{cccxxix} For Flash (Korean/white), Amanda (Filipino/white) and Tiki (black/Korean) their distinct ethnic physical characteristics lead to them earning assumed Asian or African American classifications.

However, neither Flash (Korean/white) nor Amanda (Filipino/white) willingly embrace or view themselves as Asian Americans. Rather, both focused on being 'American' in their

interviews. Flash (Korean/white) and Amanda (Filipino/white) do not see themselves as Asian Americans because they both believe they have been completely 'Americanized.' However, as Eileen O'Brien notes in *The Racial Middle* the connection between 'American' and 'Americanization' is often synonymous with assimilation and embracing of whiteness.^{ccccxxx} Furthermore, as I have mentioned throughout this analysis, Maria P.P. Root and Christine C. Iijima Hall and Trude I. Cooke Turner argue that low levels of interaction with ethnic groups lead to isolation and low levels of cultural awareness that could contribute to Flash (Korean/white) and Amanda's (Filipino/white) desire to view themselves as simply American. Flash (Korean/white) and Amanda's (Filipino/white) conceptualization of being 'Americanized' could also stem from the parenting styles they experienced growing up. Both Flash (Korean/white) and Amanda (Filipino/white) mentioned that their parents did not expose them to their respective Asian cultures or require them to maintain Asian traditions and practices. Rather, their parents raised them to assimilate into 'mainstream America.' To Amy Chua, a Chinese American mother who wrote *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, Flash (Korean/white) and Amanda's (Filipino/white) parents represent Western parents. Chua is married to white man so her children are biracial with Asian and white heritages, just like Flash (Korean/white) and Amanda (Filipino/white). However, Chua emphasized the Chinese parenting style that she experienced as a child by instilling strict (by Western standards) rules, expectations and treatment for her two daughters. Such rules included that the girls could not attend sleepovers, watch TV or choose their own extracurricular activities.^{ccccxxxi} In contrast, Flash (Korean/white) and Amanda (Filipino/white) mentioned that their parents did not maintain Korean or Filipino traditions in their parenting style. I would argue that their parents attempted to follow the Western model, as articulated by Chua, that led to acts of assimilation for Flash (Korean/white)

and Amanda (Filipino/white). These acts of assimilation contributed to both dis-identifying with their Asian heritage despite that both still feel the effects of imposed Asian identities due to their physical appearance.

Tiki (black/Korean) does embrace her African American heritage and chooses a multiracial identity, but still finds conflict between her own choice and how society views her. In contrast to the participants discussed above, Flash (Korean/white), Amanda (Filipino/white) and Tiki (black/Korean) have not yet reconciled the disparity between these two circumstances and as such do not exhibit complete autonomy in their choices for racial self-identification. Even though all have successfully formed their own self-identity, they have not resolved how to effectively oppose society's reliance on monoracial classification, which Suzanne Bost, Benjamin H. Bailey and Daniel A. Nakashima argue must be addressed as part of the identity development process.^{cccxxxii}

Out of the remaining respondents who did not claim to possess the same levels of autonomy the reasons for why varied. Azi, of Swiss and Chilean descent and the only international student in the sample, shared that race does not define one completely in her country and that could be the reason that she doesn't feel autonomous in expressing an identity in U.S. culture. She also commented on the U.S. need to categorize individuals according to their race that conflicts with her upbringing in Chile by saying, "They want me to identify with something so I say I'm from there and there and don't ask me more. I think they just want to put you in a certain place so they can classify you."^{cccxxxiii} Though Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) found it important for multiracial individuals to be able to choose their own identity, she did not exude much autonomy for herself and described her racial identity as "just what I'm bubbling in on a standardized thing."^{cccxxxiv} She further detailed that she does not talk about or attempt to openly

present her choice in racial identity, which implies it holds little importance for her in her everyday life. Arguably, this could be the result of her lifestyle that predominantly associates with white culture in which race is often viewed as an issue of the past with little relevance for society in the 21st century. In this case, Lauren (Nicaraguan/white) exemplifies what Laszloffy and Rockquemore conceptualize as “the invisibility of whiteness” in “What About the Children?”^{cccxxxv} This implies that Lauren’s socialization in predominantly white settings led to her seeing herself as white and thus not viewing race as something she should be concerned about.^{cccxxxvi} On the other hand, while Eric (black/white) described autonomy as incredibly important he ultimately believes that the region and environment surrounding someone will affect their identity, thus indicating his lack of understanding in the role that individuals play in the identity development process. He says, “I think identity seems to be predicated more so on environment than just on genetics. I feel like you will have inclination to be with people of your own choice, but over time the environment will subconsciously affect your choices.”^{cccxxxvii} Eric (black/white) acknowledges the effects of societal factors, such as where one lives, but he does not relay an understanding of individual choice in the process, which underlines the existence of racial autonomy. As Bost, Bailey and Nakashima argue the negotiation of one’s identity occurs between the individual and society’s view of them; by not acknowledging the active role that individuals play in the development of an autonomous identity Eric (black/white) prevents himself from doing just that.^{cccxxxviii}

While several factors contribute to the identity development of multiracial individuals, autonomy in choosing one’s identity forms in large part from how the individual negotiates the relationship between him or herself and society as a whole. Individual choice in identity always exists alongside the assigned identity by society, as noted by Suzanne Bost in *Mulattas and*

Mestizas, Benjamin H. Bailey in *Race, Language and Negotiation of Identity* and others.^{ccccxxxix} In order to possess autonomy, and contribute to the racial project of biracialism, the individual must form their own racial self-image and enforce this choice in opposition to the assigned identities from society. In my analysis I found some of the participants to possess autonomy, some still in the process of negotiation between themselves and society and some who admitted to having none at all.

Chapter 7

Discussion and Conclusion

As this thesis indicates, the multiracial population has become a topic of increased interest in recent decades. This interest developed in large part from the multiracial movement that began in the 1980s. Activists in this movement attempted to alter the racial classification system via the U.S. Census. Since then, this opposition to rigid racial classifications and the institutionalized racial hierarchy within U.S. society led, not only to federal recognition in the Census but also to increased scholarship in social science as a means to understand biraciality and identity formation of biracial individuals. In order to understand these events, one must begin with a critical analysis of the conquest narratives of all non-white groups throughout U.S. history that not only resulted in a hierarchal system of white as superior but also labor and sexual exploitation that produced the multiracial population. Scientific racism, anti-miscegenation legislation and federally imposed racial categorization of multiracial individuals became the dominant philosophies of race and racial relations in order to maintain this hierarchy. As the racial formation theory used for this project describes, shifts in the understandings of the racial order begin with opposition on the micro level. Such opposition appeared towards the end of the 20th century in the dismantling of anti-miscegenation laws and the activism of the multiracial movement in order to transform racial understandings in U.S. society by recognizing the mixed-race population to a greater extent. The ‘mark one or more’ addition to the 2000 Census illustrates the beginning of this transformation in racial understandings. However, I have argued that in order to actively combat the racialized hierarchy embedded within our society, mixed-race individuals must have developed autonomy in their self-identification. Biracialism, defined as the presence of this autonomy, has the power to oppose this hierarchy and contribute to the battle

against white hegemony in our society. In order to explore the presence of biracialism in the identity of mixed-raced individuals, I considered factors that contribute to the identity development process and critically analyzed whether or not a sample of mixed-race Virginia Tech students demonstrated racial autonomy.

The interviews confirmed that the factors included in this study do play a significant role in the identity development process. While varying in degree within individuals, overall the effects of physical appearance, group associations and social networks, family and region all contribute to why variations exist among the racial identities of multiracial people. Furthermore, I found these factors to play a role in whether or not the interview participants demonstrated that they possessed racial autonomy by way of successfully negotiating between their choices in self-identification and social imposition of identities.

Physical appearance emerged as a significant contributor to identity development for the interviewees in that it affects self-image and choice in identification as well as the perceptions and categorization received from others. Early stages of development and socialization heavily rely on people's desire to compare and categorize others based on similarities and differences in how they look. This proved especially pertinent to the experiences of the sample due to the fact that the physical appearance of the interviewees often caused them to be questioned about their racial identity. Furthermore, in many instances the participants not only received questions about their identities, but also felt the effect of having someone else assume an identity (or identities) for them, despite the fact that self-identification became federally attainable via the 'mark one or more' addition to the 2000 Census. This indicates the continued disparity between social interaction and law. In response, some of the participants proved able to autonomously exert their choice in identity against those that were socially imposed. For others, the disconnect

between self-image and social perceptions emerged as the prominent hindrance to their possession of racial autonomy.

Group associations and social networks significantly contributed to the identity development of the interview participants due to the fact that they represent a primary means of socialization. Overall, variations in identity reflected whether or not the participant was socialized in a monoracial or multiracial group. One key point concerning group associations and social networks included the issue of access. For some participants, the racial make-up of the regions or segregation within regions in schools or housing prevented them from being able to effectively immerse themselves into diverse groups. In these cases, the participants participated in predominantly monoracial groups, which influenced their identity development in ways that aligned them with one race over others. In contrast, participating in diverse social networks appeared to increase the likelihood of asserting a multiracial identity for other participants.

The role of family also contributed to the identity formations of the interview participants due to their involvement in the socialization process as well. The structure of the family, decisions to expose and/or involve children in diverse and ethnic situations, the strength of relationship between family members and the adaptation of racial literacy all emerged as important ways in which family affects identity development. Families who maintained open communication about the contemporary effects of racism and racial differences tended to influence greater awareness of their children's ethnic heritages, thus instilling pride in these aspects of their identity. On the other hand, families who adopted a colorblind philosophy to race by not acknowledging it or claiming it to be unimportant tended to influence their child's inclination towards assimilating to and desiring whiteness. In these instances, the parents socialized the participants into perpetuating whiteness rather than developing an autonomous

identity that would oppose its effects of creating the racial hierarchy in U.S. society. The structure of families, in terms of physical and/or emotional distance from one side of the family, due to divorce or other circumstances also influenced identity development by making participants feel more comfortable around one side of their families than the other. This, in turn, contributed to the participants more strongly identifying with one race over another. Similarly, participants who acknowledged a strong relationship with one family member in particular tended to embrace the race of that individual and thus embrace one aspect of their heritage more than others. While this research found each of these factors to play a role in the identity development process overall, it's important to note that the degree to which these factors affected individual identities varied. Not all participants expressed the contributing roles of all factors nor did these factors affect individuals in the same ways.

In analyzing the data from the interviews other important concepts emerged in addition and at times in relation to the factors specifically addressed in the research design. First, identity development must be characterized as a process that progresses over time throughout one's life. One should note that this process occurs for members of both the monoracial and multiracial populations, though this study focused on multiraciality to a much greater extent. Throughout this process, individuals seek to negotiate their self-images and society's perceptions of them through their lived experiences in order to reach a holistic view of themselves. While the individual can actively control certain aspects of their experiences, other aspects are out of their control. For instance, one may be able to choose to either actively engage or disengage with certain groups in terms of their friendships and relationships. However, these circumstances also become subject to influences outside of their control depending where they live, decisions made by their parents and the willingness of others to form relationships with them. Similarly, one may

develop a positive sense of self in relation to their physical appearance and genuinely be happy with their phenotypic and other physical attributes.

However, as part of the identity development process, they must also evaluate and come to terms with the ways in which others will perceive, react to and attempt to categorize their physical appearance. A dichotomy of control also occurs in relation to one's family. While the individual has the prerogative to seek knowledge of and interaction with their entire family as a part of his or her identity development circumstances may prevent this from occurring. Such circumstances could include divorce, distance in terms of where they live or incarceration, as evident by the participants in this study. Other circumstances could be present as well, including death or family conflict. Therefore, multiracial identity development should not be viewed simply as a choice made by the individual. This study confirms the complexity of biraciality and identity development that requires acknowledgment of factors both within and outside of the individual's power, both for the individual and for researchers like myself.

A second issue that I need to comment on concerns the prevalence of whiteness as the dominant and presumably appropriate reference group. I attempted to present a historical analysis that traces the dominance of whiteness throughout the literature review of this work, in addition to the practices and ideologies that maintain it. However, its appearance (either direct or indirect) in the interviews proves to be both disturbing in my own opinion and evidence of its continued prevalence in U.S. society. Whiteness emerged in the interviews as the norm in terms of it equating to Americanism and what can be considered 'authentically American.' When Robin (Peruvian/white) mentioned thinking as a child that everyone who lived in the United States was white she illustrates this idea. Whiteness also emerged as an image of ideal beauty that could potentially make women and men with darker skin tones and hair feel the need to

compare themselves to or desire to embody. Additionally, the continued occurrence of assimilation presented itself in the interviews. Several of the participants articulated their involvement in acts of assimilation in order to assert their choice in embracing whiteness.

White superiority also manifest indirectly in the interviews when participants mentioned stereotypes against racial minorities that rely on notions of inferiority among such populations. In some instances, the participants articulated witnessing or feeling the effects of such stereotypes. In others, the participants themselves held stereotypical images of racial minority groups that contributed to the development of their own identities that tended to embrace whiteness. Lastly, whiteness emerged as something that could not be attained for some participants, regardless of whether they wanted to or not. This illustrates the continued occurrences of macro level attempts to protect the sanctity of whiteness in social settings and interactions that stem from the ideologies of scientific racism and the enactment of anti-miscegenation laws. These instances in which the dominance of whiteness was either directly mentioned or simply alluded to by the interview participants is disheartening. This is especially true in a time when colorblind and post-racial discourses continue to increase in popularity as representative of our society's current racial understandings.

This study also focused on the presence of autonomy in racial self-identification as a potential combatant to the prevalence of whiteness that I just discussed. I have identified racial autonomy as a concept that opposes the history of multiracial individuals having an identity assigned to them without recognition of their own choice in the development of that identity. As such, I argue that when a multiracial individual has autonomy in their racial self-identification they contribute to a racial project that opposes the racial and economic hierarchy present in U.S. society. However, this opposition relies on the fact that the individual has not simply chosen an

identity for himself or herself but that they actively articulate and enforce that identity regardless of society's perceptions. In doing so, the individual has successfully navigated the relationship between their role and that of society in their identity formation and could autonomously choose an exclusively multiracial or monoracial identity, as well as, a multiracial identity that embraces a specific heritage more than others. Nearly half of the sample indicated autonomy in their identity development and therefore contribute to biracialism in its ability to oppose historical inequalities. Some of the participants did not appear to possess autonomy at all and a few, I argued, still appear to be negotiating the relationship between their own choices and society's reliance on imposed racial categorization. Autonomy in multiracial self-identification is likely to further increase as individuals continue to traverse the lines between their heritages, their self-images and current social understandings of race. With such increases, in conjunction with the continued growth of the multiracial population nation-wide, I see identity development becoming an avenue through which opposition to historical notions of white superiority and a racialized hierarchy can grow that will foster further shifts in the macro level understandings of race in our society.

7.1 Suggestions for Future Research

Given these conclusions, this study can effectively contribute to the scholarship on multiracial studies and the identity formation literature. I would suggest that future research could build on these conclusions in ways that will further develop the role of social factors in the identity development process that must be negotiated in relation to the role of the individual. Future research could benefit from continuing to empirically study the role of physical appearance, group associations as well as social networks and family as agents of socialization. Furthermore, an analysis of how one's knowledge of the histories of race, racial classifications

and racism in U.S. society affect their identity development could provide noteworthy contributions as well.

Additionally, given the results that emerged concerning region within this study, I would recommend a further examination of region that incorporates levels of residential and school segregation, immigration and diversity within the context of biracial identity. Being able to explore regional differences within the state of Virginia, albeit on a small scale, proved to be valuable to this work. Therefore, extending this idea to future research that could include more regions, smaller regions (such as cities or counties) or larger regions (such as the south, west or the northeast) could produce significant results that will benefit the field and continue to move the scholarship within it progressively forward. The shifting demographics in the U.S. will likely continue to play a role in the reporting of multiracial identity and variations in identity. Especially as the 2010 Census data continues to be released and analyzed, changes in the racial make-up of regions could affect the findings of future studies.

Additionally, since identity development occurs as a process over one's lifetime by adjusting to the changes in people's experiences, I would recommend further incorporation of longitudinal studies as well. Such work could better theorize the process of negotiation that mixed-race individuals go through in developing their identities and could also further the analysis of autonomy in self-identifications as a means to oppose the racial hierarchy we are all still subject to in U.S. society. Longitudinal studies would also build on the scholarship of development models, much of which surfaced in the 1990s, in order to reflect the more recent recognition of the possibility of multiple identities developing for this population.

Finally, approaching this topic from the perspective of monoracial populations could benefit the growing scholarship, particularly minority populations. As the racial formation theory

predicts, and as indicated in this work, contest between the multiracial population and minority populations persist. For instance, some scholars, such as Minkah Makalani, argue that multiraciality will harm monoracial populations, particularly African Americans. Others, such as Eugene Robinson, argue in contrast to Makalani and articulate the need to further assess the growing multiracial population as a significant group in U.S. society.^{cccxl} Further study of this fact and the issues of power at play within it, especially in regards to the continued prevalence of whiteness and the shared goal of battling its inequalities, could add valuable information to the political struggles within the topics of biraciality and racial equality. To better understand both of these positions, research that focuses on the identity development of the multiracial population and monoracial populations will strengthen the understanding of identity in general as well, as the contest between the groups. Both populations experience identity development as a process over a lifetime and both become subject to the relationship between their self-image and how others perceive them. Therefore, a relational analysis that addresses the similarities and differences experienced in the identity development process for members of both populations could offer valuable insight into how the two connect and perhaps help to explain why conflict exists between the two in terms of their political struggles for equality. Scholars could then further theorize how they both can contribute to the opposition of white superiority and inequalities on the macro levels of society.

Given my own personal attachment to this topic and my desire to continue to explore and understand it, I plan to implement some of the suggestions I offer in my future work. The scholarship and literature will continue to increase, and I believe that this study effectively contributes to that scholarship. As the multiracial population continues to grow I hope that

increases in racial autonomy will prove successful in helping to dismantle the racial hierarchy on which our society developed. I also hope to contribute to the documenting of its occurrence.

Appendix A – Interview Guide

General Questions

1. Please tell me a little about yourself and your family. (Probes to include all demographic/family information needed: name, age, where the interviewee is from, any siblings, parents married or separated, occupations of parents)
2. Describe your academic life while at Virginia Tech. (Probes: academic level, major, involvement in clubs and organizations)
3. Of what race are your parents?
4. Do you think race is important? (Probe: why or why not)
5. What does racial identity mean to you? (For example, how do you think one's race affects their identity formation)
6. How open were your parents with you about issues of race and identity? (Probes: did they discuss reactions to their relationship with you, how did they explain race to you, did you talk about racial issues often)
7. Could you comment on the role you think they played in forming your current racial identity (Probe: did they tell you to identify a certain way? Were they open with you about your multiracial heritage?) *factors for Q1, but better fit interview here
8. What about the role of the extended family outside of your parents? (Probes: any difference between how and if they talked about race with you, relationship between your parents and extended family) *factors for Q1, but better fit interview here

Research Question 1: Identity Variation and Influencing Factors

9. How do you currently racially identify yourself? (Probe: does your identification remain constant on forms asking for racial classification and your everyday life?)
10. Have you experienced any changes in your racial identity throughout your lifetime?
11. Do you know any other multiracial individuals who identify differently from you? (Probe: how do they identify?)
12. What role do you think your physical appearance (skin color, hair texture, facial features, body shape etc.) plays in the way you racially identify?
13. You mentioned that you grew up in [name of place/region], can you tell me about your friends and classmates? (Probes: racial composition of their friends, schools and neighborhood)

14. What role do you think these groups play in the way you racially identify?
15. Can you comment on the role of region? (Probe: have you had different experiences, received different reactions to your multiracial heritage or had to adjust your self-identification according to where you are?)
16. Are there any other issues that you believe play a role in determining how you racially identify? (Probe: depending on what they say, ask for more detail, could be education, personal relationships etc.)

Research Question 2: Autonomy in Identification

17. You mentioned that you racially identify as [their answer to Q. 11], will you describe to me whether or not you think it is important for you to make the choice for yourself? (Probe: why or why not?)
18. Having described its importance/lack of importance (depending on their answer to the previous question), can you now describe to what extent you feel that you have control over choosing your racial identity? (Probe: if they articulate that they don't feel they have a lot of control ask what prevents them from having it)
19. Do you find your choice of racial identity to be generally acknowledged by the people around you? (Probe: any differences between Blacksburg and where you grew up)
20. Do you think the people in your life and around you on a day-to-day basis accept and respect the choice you have made to racially identify as [their answer to Q. 11]?

End the interview by thanking them for their participation and ask if they have anything they would like to add to or clarify out of what they discussed during the interview and ask if they have any questions.

Ask them how they heard about the project and ask them to tell their friends.

Appendix B – Recruitment Ad for *Collegiate Times*

OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Sociology graduate student seeking participants for thesis research on bi/multiracial identity

Recruiting Virginia Tech students to participate in interviews

Only criteria:

- 1) must be 18+
- 2) have parents of different races

In addition to fulfilling my own research needs, the interview will offer an avenue for individuals to discuss their own racial identities and life experiences in a confidential environment

Contact Melissa at mfburgess@vt.edu to express interest in participating or to ask any questions

OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

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Contact Melissa at **mfburgess@vt.edu** to express interest in participating or to ask any questions

Appendix D – Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Bi/Multiracial Identity Development: Factors for Variation and Autonomy in Self-Identification

Investigators: Melissa Burgess, Master's Student in Department of Sociology
Dr. Anthony Kwame Harrison, Co-Chair of Committee
Dr. Paula Seniors, Co-Chair of Committee

I. Purpose of this Project

This study will seek to explore variations in the development of racial identities for biracial or multiracial Virginians in the 21st century. Simultaneously, this study will seek to explore the idea of autonomy and individual agency in the racial identity development of these individuals. In order to address these two research questions I am completing face-to-face interviews with multiracial students on the Virginia Tech campus. I anticipate interviewing 12-15 students, though more may be conducted. All of the participants are at least 18 years old and Virginia Tech students. Additionally, the participants are of a multiracial heritage with parents who belong to different racial classifications.

II. Procedures

Your participation in this research will only consist of one face-to-face interview. The interview will likely last around an hour, though it could be either shorter or longer depending on the depth of your answers. I will request that you try to be available for up to two hours to allow time to go over the project, receive your consent and to complete the interview. The interview will take place in the setting of your choice, given that it is a relatively quiet/private setting. The interview will also be scheduled at a time of your preference. The interviews will be audio recorded.

III. Risks

You will be in no physical danger while participating in this research. However, the possibility of emotional distress exists due to the fact that we will be discussing sensitive issues such as race, racial identity, racial acceptance, discrimination/prejudice, family and other personal issues. I cannot assess the level of emotional distress that you may or may not feel when discussing these issues; therefore, I offer two options to alleviate any distress you may incur. If any particular question I ask makes you feel too uncomfortable, you are free to refrain from answering it. Furthermore, should the entire interview become too uncomfortable or stressful you are free to withdraw yourself from the research at any time.

IV. Benefits

The most obvious benefit to participating to this research is that it offers you the ability to discuss issues of race, your racial identity, and past experiences freely and in a non-judgmental atmosphere. I am actively seeking to hear your voice, opinions, and thoughts in order to answer

my research questions and hope that my research will provide an opportunity for you to do so freely. Furthermore, the benefits of your participation in this study will include you having a role in a study that will further the understanding of multiracial identity at a time when multiracialism represents a popular social, racial, and political topic.

While I hope that you will enjoy these benefits, and perhaps more than I cannot identify, the benefits listed above are not promised as an incentive for your participation.

V. Extent of Confidentiality

Your confidentiality is guaranteed and will be of the utmost concern throughout the process of completing this research. While I will have identifiable information, including your name, I will not include this information in the written thesis. Rather, I will address you by a pseudonym of your choice.

Your interview will be audio recorded by digital voice recorder and recording software on my personal laptop. Upon the end of the interview I will personally transcribe your interview into a document on my personal laptop. Once transcription is complete I will delete the interview from the external recording device so that no one else will have access to it. Furthermore, no one else has access to my laptop and it is password protected with only myself knowing the password. All recordings and transcriptions of your interview will be destroyed when they are no longer needed for research.

However, it is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

The only other instance in which I will break this vow of confidentiality would be if I suspected you to be a threat to yourself or others based on the information you provide during your interview. In this instance, I will have to notify the appropriate authorities.

VI. Compensation

You will receive no compensation for participating in this research.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. Furthermore, you are free to not answer any questions that you choose during the course of the interview.

VIII. Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

To complete a face-to-face interview with the researcher concerning my racial identity development

IX. Subject's Permission

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all of my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent.

Subject Signature

Date

Pseudonym chosen for written thesis

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Melissa Burgess - (540) 589-9566, mfburges@vt.edu
Investigator

Dr. Anthony Kwame Harrison – (540) 231-4519, anharri5@vt.edu
Faculty Advisor

Dr. Paula Seniors – (540) 231-7205, pseniors@vt.edu
Faculty Advisor

Dr. John Ryan – (540) 231-9396, johnryan@vt.edu
Sociology Department Head

David M. Moore – (540) 231-4991, moored@vt.edu
Chair, Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Appendix E – Characteristics of Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Year	Major	Region	Mother's Race	Father's Race
Rhea	Female	18	Freshman	Animal & Poultry Science	Alexandria, VA	White/Native American	Black/Native America
Lauren	Female	19	N/A	Psychology	Virginia Beach, VA	White	Latino (Nicaraguan)
Elena	Female	19	Sophomore	Business Management	Edinburg, VA	White/Filipino	White
Amanda	Female	21	Junior	Psychology Human Development	Poquoson, VA	Filipino	White/Filipino
Tiki	Female	21	Senior	Human Development	Washington, D.C., Maryland	Black	Korean
Robin	Female	21	Senior	Psychology	Annandale, VA	Latina (Peruvian)	White
Riley	Female	22	Senior	Civil Engineering	Hampton, VA	White	Filipino/Chamorro
Azi	Female	26	PhD	Veterinary Sciences	Chile	White	Latino (Chilean)
Eric	Male	20	Sophomore	English	Herndon, VA, Sterling, VA	White	Black
Flash	Male	23	Freshman	Engineering	VA, travel in Marines	Korean	White
Mike	Male	31	Senior	BIT/Accounting	Northern Virginia	White	Black

Notes

ⁱ Diana T. Sanchez. "How Do Forced-Choice Dilemmas Affect Multiracial People? The Role of Identity Autonomy and Public Regard in Depressive Symptoms." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 40 (2010): 1,657-1,677.

ⁱⁱ Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. (New York, New York: Routledge, 1994): 53-54.

ⁱⁱⁱ Susan Saulny. "Black? White? Asian? More Young Americans Choose All of the Above," *New York Times*, January 29, 2011.

^{iv} Susan Saulny. "Black and White and Married in the Deep South: A Shifting Image." *New York Times*, March 19, 2011.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Sarah Watson. "More Students Identifying as Multiracial," *Collegiate Times*, February 18, 2011, Issue 20.

^{vii} Roger Sanjek. "Intermarriage and the Future of Races in the United States" In *Race* ed. by Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994): 103-130

^{viii} Kim M. Williams. *Mark One or More: Civil Rights in Multiracial America*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press. 2006).

^{ix} Project RACE. <<http://www.projectrace.com>> (April 11, 2010).

^x Association of MultiEthnic Americans, Inc. <<http://www.ameasite.org>> (April 4, 2011).

^{xi} Christine Kerwin and Joseph G. Ponterotto, "Biracial Identity Development: Theory and Research." In *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*, ed. by Joseph G. Ponterotto, J. Manuel Casas, Lisa A. Suzuki, and Charlene M. Alexander, (London, England: Sage Publications Inc., 1995): 199-215, W.S. Carlos Poston, "The Biracial Identity Development Model: A Needed Addition," *Journal of Counseling and Development* 69 (1990): 152-155.

^{xii} W. Lawrence Neuman. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. (Boston, Massachusetts: Pearson Education, Inc. 2006): 107.

^{xiii} Omi and Winant. *Racial Formation*: 53-76.

^{xiv} Omi and Winant. *Racial Formation*: 55.

^{xv} Omi and Winant. *Racial Formation*: 53-76.

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xvii} Rosalind S. Chou and Joe R. Feagin. *The Myth of the Model Minority: Asian Americans Facing Racism*. (Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2008): 4.

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- ^{xviii} Omi and Winant. *Racial Formation*: 62.
- ^{xix} Edward H. Spicer. *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960*. (Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1962): 279-360.
- ^{xx} Robert J. Berkhofer Jr. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1978): 115.
- ^{xxi} Spicer. *Cycles of Conquest*: 324.
- ^{xxii} Ibid.
- ^{xxiii} Berkhofer. *White Man's Indian*: 127.
- ^{xxiv} Spicer. *Cycles of Conquest*: 334-335.
- ^{xxv} Ibid.
- ^{xxvi} Stephen Steinberg. *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America*. (New York, New York: Atheneum, 1981): 4.
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