

MULTIRACIAL GRADUATE STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES

by

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B.A., University of Cape Town, South Africa, 1997

M.S., Kansas State University, Kansas, 2010

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Department of Special Education, Counseling and Student Affairs
College of Education

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Abstract

The United States of America's demographic population has shifted vastly to include a "new" multiracial growing population. Multiracial individuals are those who self-identify as two or more races, which now reflects a very young population. Higher education institutions are noticing an influx of more and more multiracial individuals, and many institutions are grappling with how to recognize and to support this growing population. Specifically, higher education institutions need to understand how multiracial graduate students think about their own racial identities and how they navigate their graduate school experiences.

The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of multiracial graduate students' lived experiences. There is an imperative to understand the daily experiences of multiracial graduate students to allow these students to retell the stories of their everyday lives in graduate school. The theoretical framework used to guide this study was critical race theory. Narrative inquiry methodology was the methodology chosen to focus on the unique voices and experiences of the participants in this study. Narrative analysis was employed to make meaning of the data retrieved from self-reflective writing samples and two semi-structured individual interviews with each of three participants. The findings from this research revealed the ever-present importance of racism and colorism and their impact on racial identity, the continued challenges of the campus climate experienced by multiracial students at a predominantly White institution (PWI), the impact and influence of religion at a PWI, and how multiracial students manage different types of relationships with peers and faculty. Implications for research and practice are provided as a result of the insights gleaned through this research about the lived experiences of three multiracial graduate students at one predominantly White higher education institution.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my children who are multiracial and to their future lived experiences in higher education. It was their spirit and their uniqueness that have motivated me to complete this study. Also, to the many multiracial students I have encountered on campus, be it multiracial from in-country or from abroad, interacting with you and discussing our common struggles have made me persist in pursuing this topic. I hope this project will be a learning curve to all and many others who follow.

Prologue

As a graduate student within a college of education, I often wondered why there were so few students of color. I commenced studies within the United States with my master's degree, and during my studies, I met very few graduate students who resembled me. Moreover, as I progressed with my studies and transitioned into a doctoral degree in higher education, I noticed that I started asking critical questions about why there are such few diverse students. The same students I knew in my master's program were around for my doctoral program with extremely few new faces who are considered minority individuals or people of color, as termed here in the United States.

Upon meeting these individuals, we would talk about different programs and then discuss how we were treated in our various programs. Everyone's experiences differed dramatically depending on who their advisor was, who their faculty members were, and what environmental factors would undoubtedly affect their studies. In listening to these stories, I began inquiries into these experiences.

During my course, *The College Student and College Environment*, I created a workshop presentation that emerged from a case study. The workshop was titled "*Creating Inclusive Advising/Mentoring for Bicultural African-American Personalities in a Majority Mainstream Higher Education Environment*" and was created by studying the experiences of an individual who was international but living here permanently. From this case study, the workshop expanded such that I asked many questions surrounding the development of the student in general and within the college environment in particular. These questions pertained to the college environment and the factors that influence the environment, the student, and the success of the student. This case study was presented as a research presentation for graduate students, and upon

completion, I commenced asking more in-depth questions pertaining to bicultural students. This endeavor expanded to my decision to investigate the experiences of multiracial students.

In addition, my *Narrative Inquiry* course presented a perfect opportunity for me to conduct a study about the experiences of multiracial graduate students. Within this course I wrote my next paper: “*Through a Lens of Critical Race Theory: Inclusive Advising Narrative Experiences of Graduate Multiracial Students in Higher Education.*” In this study, I investigated the academic advising experiences of multiracial graduate students in higher education. I used the theoretical framework of critical race theory (CRT), which included storytelling and counter-narratives that complemented the methodology of narrative inquiry. Ultimately, I used narrative analysis and wrote stories pertaining to the experiences of my participants. The tenets of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) became evident in the experiences of my participants. The key tenets about multiracial graduate students that were exposed were: (1) racism is ever present in their everyday lives; (2) these students challenged institutional policies; and (3) the experiential knowledge of these students was noted. However, there were definitely additional factors present that related to race, such as interactions with mostly White advisors. I also discovered that the students primarily experienced prescriptive advising. That study primarily focused on academic advising experiences, rather than the race of the students.

All my previous experiences and inquiries have brought me full circle to where I am today. Now, I am focusing on multiracial students, their experiences, and the salience of race and racial discrimination within their daily lives. I have continued to use critical race theory and narrative inquiry in my research, since I believe that the combination of the two adequately gives voice to the lived experiences of these individuals. Most importantly, I wanted to understand their experiences and to know the types of strategies to implement in the future when working

with multiracial students. However, my reasoning for this particular study is two-fold since I have multiracial children, and these studies drive me in understanding what to expect in dealing with their future!

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Multiracialism is a very complex issue because it pertains to how multiracial people perceive themselves, how society perceives them, and how they interact with different racial groups within and outside of their cultural heritage. Multiracial students define themselves as people whom self-identify with two or more races, irrespective of their ethnicity and cultural heritage (Choi, Herrenkohl, Catalano, & Toumbourou, 2012). Since 2000, a noticeable increase in this population emerged, due to the change in how the United States Census allowed individuals to self-report. The United States Census allowed individuals to classify themselves as more than one racial category, as two or more races, which accounted for the reported increase in multiracial people. Noticeably, this population consisted of mostly young individuals. These individuals were American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders because they were the most likely individuals reporting themselves as individuals with two or more races (Jeffries, 2012). Subsequently, Lee and Bean (2004) perceived that this multiracial population would increase to at least 20% by 2050.

Due to a significant increase of multiracial students within the United States (Lee & Bean, 2004), I chose to focus this study on multiracial graduate students and their lived experiences. I employed critical race theory (CRT) as the theoretical framework to understand my participants' lived experiences as multiracial graduate students. In conjunction with this theoretical framework, narrative inquiry was used to study the experiences of the multiracial graduate students. Chapter One is structured as follows: (1) overview of the multiracial complexities; (2) trends in America; (3) purpose of the study and research question; (4) significance of the study; (5) methodology; and the (6) summary.

Overview of Multiracial Complexities

Multiracial people contend with many complexities because they self-identity as individuals with two or more races (Choi, Herrenkohl, Catalano, & Toumbourou, 2012). Many do not ascribe to one specific cultural heritage or ethnicity, which creates further complexities associated with this multiracial population. Part of the complexity, when it relates to multiracial identity, is that people want to stay within this category because it originated from the idea of multiculturalism (Terry, 2008). Multiculturalism was defined as a position or a movement that maintained diversity among culture, gender, ethnic and racial perceptions existing within a pluralistic society (Banks & Banks, 2007). As a result, the complexity of the multiracial identity requires specific models and approaches that pertain to and address their specific challenges.

Researchers who have addressed multiracial identity complexities have created various models to address the unique attributes of multiracial identities, including both stage and non-stage models (Terry, 2008). Stage models by Poston (1990), Kich (1992), Jacobs (1992) and Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995) denoted the development of multiracial individuals in a sequential order. These researchers observed the following: (1) multiracial individuals became aware of race, what it meant, and how it impacted them in society through the different stages (Poston, 1990); (2) there was often conflict in the choices made to adapt to at least one racial identity (Kich, 1992); (3) multiracial individuals noted the impact of skin color and how this forced them to choose a specific racial identity, and (4) sometimes the multiracial individual came to terms with all of the differing identities present (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995). According to Terry (2008), the work of Poston (1990), Jacobs (1992), and Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995) have three things in common: “(1) Multiracial adolescents develop an awareness of race and what race means to society at large; (2) the presentation of the choice and/or conflict of having to adopt one

particular race or ethnicity; and (3) the multiracial individual is able to integrate and appreciate all of his or her racial identities” (p. 20). However, one distinction was noted with Jacob’s (1992) stage models on identity development because it only described individuals up to 12 years of age (Terry, 2008).

There are two primary studies of multiracial identity that involve the use of non-stage models that do not assume a sequential order of development (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Rockquemore and Brunsma’s non-stage model (2002) revealed that there were differing dimensions present in the lives of multiracial individuals. They noted the importance of four identity types: (1) the race border identity whereby multiracial individuals exist between different racial classifications, (2) the singular identity whereby multiracial people choose a specific identity of either Black or White, (3) the protean identity whereby multiracial people are able to adapt to different identities of Black, White or multiracial, and (4) the transcendent identity, which manifests in multiracial individuals choosing to be raceless. The earlier study of LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) revealed 6 dimensions present within the study. These dimensions included (1) the belief that multiracial individuals can live within more than one specific group, (2) the idea that positive attitudes toward the inclusion of bicultural competence would benefit multiracial individuals, (3) the suggestion that knowledge of cultural beliefs and cultural practices would positively impact multiracial individuals, (4) the assertion that being proficient in a number of cultural group activities could assist with situational behaviors in different groups, (5) the importance of possessing ample social support from different groups with practical information, and (6) the ability to communicate proficiently both verbally and nonverbally in different cultures.

Besides the importance of stage and non-stage models, literature also reveals a number of theoretical approaches to studying multiracial student identity. These approaches include the following: (1) a linear racial identity approach (Jacobs, 1992; Kich, 1992; Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995; Poston, 1990); (2) a resolution approach (Kilson, 200; Roquequemoire & Brunnsma, 2002; Root, 1990; Wallace, 2001); (3) a problem approach (Park, 1928; Roquequemoire, Brunnsma & Delgado, 2009; Stonequist, 1935); (4) an equivalent approach (Cross, 1971; Erickson, 1968); (5) a variant approach (Brown, 1990; Gibbs, 1989; Herring, 1992; Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995; Poston, 1990; Standen, 1996; Stephan & Stephan, 1989); and (6) an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Renn, 2004, 2008; Root, 1990, 1996; Wijeyesinghe, 1992). Each of these six approaches explores the development and progression of multiracial student identity. Overall, various studies using these approaches provided me with important insights into multiracial student development within the college environment.

As the multiracial population increases across the United States, the number of multiracial individuals entering higher education will undoubtedly rise (Lee & Bean, 2004). Loudd (2011) observed that even though more diversity was noted on many college and university campuses, many institutions remain ill prepared to deal with diverse student bodies in the wake of changing demographic populations. Studies conducted by Lewis, Chesler, and Foreman (2000) and Chavous (2005) found that diversity issues continue to be a source of conflict at higher institutions, and that “symbolic racism” (Loudd, 2011, p. 12) continues to negatively affect students of color. According to Sears and Henry (2003), symbolic racism is perceived as a political system that consists of four main themes: “the beliefs that (a) Blacks no longer face much prejudice or discrimination, (b) Blacks’ failure to progress results from their unwillingness to work hard enough, (c) Blacks are demanding too much too fast, and (d) Blacks

have gotten more than they deserve” (p. 260). Contentious issues to consider for future research that flow from these studies but that are beyond the scope of this study are: (1) Who benefits from symbolic racism? (2) Does symbolic racism persist at predominantly White institutions (PWIs)? (3) Do graduate multiracial students continue to experience prejudice and discrimination within their daily lives at PWIs? and (4) Do minority students really receive sufficient benefits at PWIs?

The “marginal man” theory (Park, 1928; Stonequist, 1935) revealed how people of mixed race suffered from low self-esteem due to marginalization and isolation. Moreover, Herman (2009) researched racial categorization with social hierarchy as a focus and revealed that African Americans fell at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and that Hispanics and Asians fell above them, respectively, with non-Hispanic Europeans listed at the top. Consequently, multiracial individuals with a mixture of African American experienced similar experiences to monoracial Black individuals: (1) they were placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy; (2) they experienced similar incidents as their monoracial black counterparts; (3) they developed similar identities to the monoracial black individuals; and (4) their achievements were similar to Black monoracials (Herman, 2009). Another study by Herman (2010) revealed that perceptions of multiracial adolescents and concluded that (1) observers perceived half of multiracial adolescents as monoracials; (2) multiracial individuals who perceived themselves as Black were always nearly perceived as Black and not recognized as multiracial; and (3) the demographics and environment had no impact on observers’ racial perceptions. Herman’s study revealed the ambivalence observers had toward multiracial individuals as a distinct group even though they are a growing population in the United States.

Additional studies have revealed perceptions concerning the equality or inequality of White students in comparison to students of color. Bonilla-Silva and Foreman (2000) found that White students believed that no inequality exists and that any failure of students of color was due to their cultural deficiency. Furthermore, these researchers observed that PWIs have implemented new policies and practices to address these issues, but those interventions remained mostly superficial. Another study by Brayboy (2003) observed that PWIs regarded issues of diversity as low priority because they did not impact the everyday functions of the institution, and that everything continued to run as usual. Subsequently, Loudd (2011) suggested that institutions could make an impact if they “demonstrated a commitment to refocusing the historical legacies of institutional, epistemological, and societal racisms that pervade predominantly white colleges and universities” (Loudd, 2011, p. 13). Issues for future consideration that flow from these studies but that are beyond the scope of this study include: (1) How do White students understand inequities within a system that favors White privilege? (2) How can minority cultures be considered “culturally deficient?” (3) Why do institutions maintain diversity as low priority? and (4) Why have no penalties been applied to institutions that emphasize and maintain institutional racism?

Many students of color recognize that challenges related to low socioeconomic status, lack of appropriate preparation in high school, and greater alienation or isolation contributed to the challenges they faced on campuses (Loudd, 2011). A study conducted by Loo and Rolison (1986) found that because of these types of factors deterring the success of students of color in higher education, students of color were less likely to attend higher education institutions. Finally, Pewewardy and Frey (2002) showed that the marginalization experienced by students of color contributed to their feelings of not belonging at these institutions. Pertinent questions that

flow from this research but that are beyond the scope of this study include: (1) Why do students of color recognize the inequities present within institutions and society? (2) Why do students of color continue to be marginalized in the educational system? (3) Why should students of color feel that they do not belong in higher education institutions? (4) How can students of color overcome the challenges experienced in higher education? (5) How can students of color prevent the future marginalization of new minority students entering higher education? and (6) How can students of color promote systematic change against marginalization, inequities, and symbolic racism experienced within PWIs?

Multiracial graduate students form part of the “students of color” label attributed to students who are racial minorities in higher education. As a result, they might experience the aforementioned issues that are relevant to undergraduate students of color. To be sure, multiracial graduate students live in a world surrounded by complex issues and might also experience unique challenges not attributed to other monoracial groups. It is important to understand the experiences of multiracial graduate students in higher education in order to better support them and to equip them for success.

A study conducted by Chapman-Huls (2009) observed that multiracial students exercised the roles of pacifist, non-conformist, and activist to be successful in higher education. The pacifists accepted all individuals irrespective of their heritage. The non-conformists refused to identify their race on administrative forms, while the activists served to advocate for multiracial individuals and further supported issues pertaining to multiracial affairs. However, within the context of the “marginal man” theory and how multiracial students affiliate with differing ancestry groups, it became important for faculty working with these individuals to understand

how these integrated factors, especially race, affected the success of multiracial students in higher education.

MacDonald (2014) studied multiracial graduate students and their academic advising experiences at a predominately White institution. She found that her three participants replicated the roles of pacifist (Apolde, the passivist), non-conformist (Berlatte, the Optimist) and activist (Grange, the Activist) as discussed by Chapman-Huls (2009). However, the participants in MacDonald's (2014) study moved beyond these strategies and developed and enhanced their personalities to ensure their success.

The complexities for multiracial people from the previous discussion reveal that multiracial people does not create the problems associated with being multiracial. The perceptions of multiracial individuals and how they identify themselves or racially categorize themselves presents a dilemma for others in society. Researchers have studied the complexities surrounding multiracial identity development for decades. Six approaches, including stage and non-stage models, have addressed the multiracial identity phenomenon for decades. And presently, in today's society the multiracial individual continues to be an individual of ambiguity for the majority in society. From the earliest studies of the "marginal man" (Parks, 1928; Stonequist, 1935) discussing the marginalization and isolation of mixed race individuals, many other studies today still reveal that mixed race individuals continue to experience many challenges in society. Some of the challenges experienced by multiracial individuals replicate the challenges experienced by other people of color even though people of color are now being estimated to soon be the new majority in the US. Studies that focus on multiracial individuals reveal that these individuals need to progressively enhance their persona to be successful even though they are the fastest growing population in this country.

Trends in America

The trends in the demographics of America reveal that it is important that higher education institutions adequately prepare themselves to successfully educate multiracial students. The U.S. census data reveals that in a period of 10 years from 2000 to 2010, the multiracial population increased from approximately 2.4% of the population (6.8 million people) in 2000 to approximately 3% of the population in 2010 (John, 2012). The shift in the demographics of racial groups was due to an increase in interracial relationships and marriages (Koregen, 1999). The 1967 Supreme Court decision removing anti-miscegenation laws, which prevented mixed marriages, was a direct cause to the increase of interracial relationships, marriages and the birth of mixed children. A case in point was *Loving v. Virginia (1967)*, which legalized interracial marriages. Changes also occurred in the demographics of the U.S. because individuals identified and classified themselves differently on census documents, which led to the increase of racial categories on census documents (Kamimura, 2010). Consequently, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) determined and standardized five racial categories: (1) American Indian or Alaskan, (2) Asian or Pacific Islander, (3) Black or African American, (4) White, and (5) Hispanic (Office of Management and Budget, 1997). As a result, administrators need to become vigilant in preparing staff and faculty to educate, to advise, and to appropriately interact with an increasingly diverse multiracial student population in higher education. The changing demographics mean that institutions should be more prepared to “recruit, retain and graduate” (John, 2012, p. 6) this multiracial student population.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to understand multiracial graduate students' lived experiences. In this study, I explored the experiences of three multiracial graduate students and

gave voice to their perceptions of higher education. To that end, the guiding research question for this study was: “What are multiracial graduate students’ lived experiences?”

Significance of the Study

The experiences of multiracial students in higher education are unique, and they experience a complex identity development process. The process experienced is fluid, situational, and contextual, and institutions need to improve services and resources pertaining to this group. Multiracial students have had unique experiences at PWIs that included their perceptions regarding their race (Remedios & Chasteen, 2013), their relationship experiences (Bonam & Shih, 2009), and their friendships (Rude & Herda, 2010). A study into the history of land grant institutions reveals that there has always been a distinction in the treatment afforded to White and Black students at these institutions (Harris & Dreamal Worthen, 2004). Even though segregation ended, and Black students attended predominantly White land grant institutions, the services and resources available at these institutions often do not include people of color (Sharpe, 2005). Thus, predominantly White land grant institutions need to develop the required services and resources to support the fast growing multiracial college student population within their environments.

Studies exist about multiracial students, but most focus on undergraduate students. Research conducted from the National Science Foundation (2009) found that minority student graduate enrollment constitutes one third of the 28% of underrepresented minorities in the American population. Further, the underrepresented minority graduate students range from 25-40 years of age, and most astoundingly, only 11.9% of the minority doctoral candidates in 2006 were awarded their doctoral degree. This study emphasized the experiences of multiracial graduate students, since these students vary in age, can either be traditional or non-traditional,

might be working full-time, or frequently have more life experiences than undergraduate students. Consequently, insights and perceptions about racial identity and about higher education likely differ markedly between undergraduates (Chapman-Huls, 2009) and graduate students (MacDonald, 2014), and this study undoubtedly will add to the literature base. MacDonald (2014) studied the academic advising of graduate multiracial students and found a paucity of research focusing on multiracial graduate students and their academic advising. In my review of the literature for this study, I found more literature about undergraduate multiracial students and their varied experiences and racial identity development (Chapman-Huls, 2009; Renn, 2002; Roquequemoire & Brunisma, 2002) than about multiracial graduate students.

Methodology

In this study, conducted at a Midwestern land grant university that is predominantly White (“Sunflower University”), I employed narrative inquiry that consisted of qualitative data collection and narrative analysis. The sample consisted of three multiracial graduate students who responded to an announcement to participate in a study. There were particular criteria of which the prospective participants were to meet before being selected to participate in the study. The data collection methods included a screening tool, a demographic questionnaire, four participant self-reflection written responses, and two semi-structured interviews. The collection of thick, rich data afforded me the opportunity to identify the actual lived experiences of the three multiracial graduate students.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided an overview of this study on multiracial graduate students’ lived experiences. Multiracial individuals and students in particular traverse a precarious road within the environs of their everyday lives. They encounter daily complexities that include their

awareness of their racial identity, how they and others perceive them, how they fit and belong within society, how they should classify themselves on census documents, and who they will be with any group on any given day. Existing research reveals in-depth experiences and perceptions about race and the experiences of undergraduate students, but a paucity of information exists focusing on multiracial graduate students. In an earlier study, I explored the realm of academic advising of the graduate multiracial student experiences (MacDonald, 2014), and in this study, my focus is upon their lived experiences. This forms a continuous body of literature with a focus solely on graduate students to allow their voices and their opinions to be shared and heard. This chapter revealed and identified the need and purpose of this study for institutions of higher education in meeting the future demands and needs of multiracial graduate students.

Chapter 2 - Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to review the important concerns related to multiracial students. Multiracial students form part of a growing population of students entering into higher education, and it has become imperative for higher education institutions to recognize the needs of these students. To understand the current status of multiracial students, in this chapter I will review the impacts of the Morrill Acts upon higher education and then consider the history of multiracial individuals in the United States. From there, a discussion of trends in America will reveal the increase in multiracial individuals in the country because of the change to the census documents and how people self-identify. After that, the need to understand multiracial students will be discussed. Since race continues to play an important role in this country, understanding the social construction and categories for identification of multiracial individuals will also be reviewed. This review will lead into the factors influencing racial identity development for multiracial students in higher education. These factors are projected from within the theories and approaches used in understanding multiracial student identity development discussed thereafter. These theories and approaches reveal people's racial attitudes toward multiracial individuals and describe the strategies multiracial students employ to be successful.

The Impact of the Morrill Acts on Higher Education

The Morrill Acts served to benefit higher education within the U.S., but they did not serve to educate all individuals equally within the country. The two most important individuals that first created and then transformed land grant institutions were Jonathan Baldwin Turner and Justin Smith Morrill. The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 initiated Morrill's initiative to develop land grant institutions. Even though these two acts were created to benefit higher education, they

did not benefit all people, and much disparity was noted between White and Black land grant institutions (Sharpe, 2005).

Turner, as an educator, farmer, and editor of a newspaper, recognized the importance of educating farmers and mechanics. In 1850, Turner addressed the Illinois Teachers Institute and proposed that “higher education for the workingman, schooling in the practical pursuits of everyday, the opportunity to study almost any subject, experimentation and research by the education institution, enlightenment of the whole community by the college...” were imperative to the well-being of all people (Richter, 1962, p. 232). By 1853, Turner’s endeavors resulted in the Legislature of Illinois petitioning the United States Government to donate public lands and to donate at least \$500,000 for the creation of industrial universities (Richter, 1962). As a consequence, the University of Illinois in Champaign was constructed.

Along this same time period, Morrill was forging ahead with his idea of creating land grant colleges. In 1854, shortly after Turner won his battle in creating industrial universities, Morrill was still in the process of petitioning for land grant institutions to be created. Richter (1962) maintained that it is a disputed idea that Morrill’s idea for land grant institutions was original. In 1857, Morrill proposed the land grant idea to Congress but received opposition from three main groups: (1) the Western states, (2) the Eastern states, and the (3) Southern states. By 1859, the bill was accepted by Congress. But President Buchanan vetoed it. However, with the inception of the Civil War, new opportunities were forged by Morrill to realize his land grant institution idea.

The First Morrill Act

In 1862, the first Morrill Act was recognized. With the Civil War, Morrill understood that military training in the North became imperative. He included this idea of military training, along

with a specific curriculum, in his bill. As a result, President Lincoln signed the Land Grant Act, which offered “to give each state which accepted its provisions 30,000 acres of land, or land scrip, for each member of Congress from that state- to be sold to provide a permanent endowment for at least one college” (Richter, 1962, p. 234). James (1910) noted that the purpose of the first Morrill Act of 1862 was to “promote liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life” (p. 8). Consequently, the significant features of the Land Grant Act were to:

- Ensure that general instruction at the college was not hampered by federal control,
- Assure the mission and objectives of the institution were to serve agricultural education and mechanical arts,
- Maintain federal support for certain activities, and
- Maintain a distinction between European and the Land Grant Act in education because it promoted upward mobility for farmers. (Richter, 1962, p. 234)

Since Morrill included the aspect of military training at land grant institutions, he realized that educating the military through military instruction was pertinent as well (Whisman, 2011). Edmund (1910) believed that including military training at land grant institutions would assist the military in creating a reserve army of officers that could adequately lead the armed forces. Further, Edmund (1910) noted that the dual purpose of land grant institutions “have been highly successful in the solution of problems and in promoting the welfare of the people” (p. 198). The question that begged to be asked concerned whose welfare was being served! Sharpe (2005) revealed that inequalities existed between White and Black land grant institutions concerning White privilege and inadequate education provided to people of color.

The Second Morrill Act

The second Morrill Act of 1890 provided new opportunities for Blacks. With the onset of the Civil War, Davis (1933) observed that the second Morrill Act provided Blacks with new opportunities related to work responsibilities and new contacts which required educational attainment. Additional factors which contributed to the enlightenment of Blacks included: (1) the emancipation and increasing literacy of slaves; (2) the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865 which assisted in educating Blacks; (3) the positive impacts of philanthropic boards; (4) the Southern States requirement to pay \$110,000,000 in restitution to educating Blacks; and finally (5) the many sacrifices by heroic people (Wares, Chase, Cravath etc.) in ensuring that Blacks became educated (Davis, 1933).

The purpose of the second Morrill Act of 1890 was very similar to that of the Act of 1862, but it included educational aspects of agriculture, mechanic arts, home economics, English, mathematics, physical, natural and economic sciences to Blacks as well (Davis, 1933). Even though these same benefits were afforded to the White land grant institutions, Black land grant institutions experienced numerous difficulties. These difficulties included: (1) Blacks were not pleased with practical arts education since they observed the inequalities related to this education; (2) the Black youth developed a bias toward the agricultural and mechanic-arts instruction because they believed collegiate instruction should include cultural instruction; (3) elementary education for Blacks was extremely poor, and there were insufficient high schools; (4) many of the Southern states continued their racial prejudice toward Blacks because they believed that Blacks could not be educated; and (5) the state hampered Black collegiate educational attainment to prevent Blacks from teaching higher than their attained level of study (Davis, 1933). Du Bois (1967) noted that Blacks experienced these challenges because of the

removal of the northern troops from the South. These troops offered Blacks some protection that allowed them to have “fragile social, economic and political gains...to become full fledged American citizens” (Harris & Dreamal Worthen, 2004, p. 447). Harris and Dreamal Worthen (2004) believed that the 1890 Morrill Act, which granted segregated land for White and Black land grant institutions, was the catalyst that allowed the Southern and Border states the right to practice de jure and de facto racial discrimination.

The impact of the two Morrill Acts became apparent in how White and Black institutions were managed. Black land grant institutions continued to encounter inadequate funding, inadequate teacher training, limited extension activities for research, and land loss (Harris & Dreamal Worthen, 2004). However, there was also an impact on desegregation. In 1954, there was a mandate to desegregate schools and higher education institutions, which allowed Black land grant extension programs to be absorbed by White institutions (Schor, 1983). This action allowed Blacks to be trained as researchers and to attend White institutions. In 1967, Black land grant institutions were allowed to apply for various grants and to receive support from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). With this new support from the USDA, which amounted to \$283,000 annually, research could be conducted more effectively at all Black land grant institutions. By 1990, Black land grant institutions were receiving approximately \$49,300,000 annually (Harris & Dreamal Worthen, 2004), which allowed these institutions to implement additional programs for research and programs. The allotments set aside for Black land grant institutions were still inferior to allotments given to White land grant institutions. Consequently, by allowing for desegregation to occur, agricultural scientists and lobbyists could generate more appropriations for instruction and more complete maintenance for White land grant institutions (Harris & Dreamal Worthen, 2004).

In conclusion, the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 served a dual purpose: the first act allowed for the education of White farmers' children, the upward mobility of these farmers, and the improvement of agriculture and mechanics; whilst, the second act was primarily implemented to benefit land grant institutions but also served to enlighten and educate Blacks. Sharpe (2005) adequately revealed that an unjust system toward people of color was created by these two acts. In addition, Sharpe (2005) observed that the disparity in treatment suffered by people of color equates to that of "White privilege" (p. 37). "White privilege" included (1) differing land grant institutions for Whites and Blacks, (2) differing programs, curricula, and degrees offered at the two land grant institutions, and (3) differing salaries given to instructors at White and Black land grant institutions because of inadequate schooling provided to people of color (Sharpe, 2005). These types of disparities are still believed to be present within the educational system today. It is imperative for society to understand the history of people of color from the pre-Civil War era in order to better understand multiracial graduate students and their lived experiences in higher education today.

The History of Multiracial America

The history of a multiracial America dates back to the 17th century with the Native American-African-English personal contact that emerged within earlier North America (Potter, 2009). Multiracial individuals were not a new phenomenon, and they have been present from the very beginning of the North American settlement (Root, 1996). In 1619, Black indentured slaves traveled as servants to Virginia, and there they married Native American women (Talty, 2003). Another example is that of the interactions of Daniel Elfrye, an English captain of the London Company, who freely interacted with a mulatto woman onboard his ship. Elfrye received a reprimand from his employer because of his "too freely entertaining" of mulatto women (Potter,

2009). These examples clearly reveal that relationships and interactions between individuals of different races occurred frequently from many centuries ago. However, from this period onward, indentured slavery turned to involuntary and forced slavery for Africans. Ultimately, the historical context of America changed with regard to race.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, there were many events that transpired simultaneously, which contributed to multiracial America. First, there was increased slavery whereby Africans were forcibly removed and transported to North America, which led to their enslavement and relocation (Potter, 2009). Consequently, these enslaved Africans and Native Americans shared the same fate of slavery, worked together in the fields, lived together in common houses, and as a result, forged relationships. Due to the deaths of many Native American males through war and disease, there were a disproportionate number of African males present compared to Native American women. These males married the Native American women, and because Native Americans were matrilineal, these African males became a part of the Native American tribes (Minges, 2001). These marriages in turn produced offspring of racially mixed African American and Native American people. These individuals were regarded “as slaves, free people of color, Africans, or Indians to be the offspring of integrating cultures” (Potter, 2009, p. 26). In 1740, South Carolina created a slave code to address these interracial marriages: “...all Negroes and Indians, mulattos or mestizos who are now, or shall hereafter be in this province, and all their issue and offspring...shall be and they are hereby declared to be, and remain hereafter absolute slaves” (Minges, 2001, p. 455). As a result, all people of color were regarded as slaves by the code created by South Carolina, and it revealed that multiracial individuals already existed within this time period. There were many other cases and incidents, which revealed that multiracial individuals existed (case of Tony Pace, a Black man, and Mary Cox, a White

woman). Later the laws and codes culminated into the use of the “one-drop rule,” which defined any person with a single drop of blood from Black heritage as African (Potter, 2009).

Today, racial classification is noted by the five categories (1) American Indian or Alaskan, (2) Asian or Pacific Islander, (3) Black or African American, (4) White, and (5) Hispanic created by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) (1997). Racial identification became entrenched within the American society even though history revealed that mixed relationships and mixed people occurred many centuries ago. The relevance of understanding the trends of American history regarding the classification of people is salient to understanding multiracial individuals today.

The Multiracial Trend in the United States

The racial demographics within the United States changed drastically over many years because there was a racial blurring between individuals and a shift in the meaning of race (Potter, 2009). The past three decades in particular observed an influx of immigrants into the U.S. with an approximate number of 18 million people from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia (Williams, 2003). The United States Census Bureau (2001b) noted that in 2000, 10.4% of the U.S. population was foreign born, and 76.5% of this foreign born population originated from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia. Most importantly, the U.S. Census Bureau observed that in 1980, approximately 7 million people marked “other” on a census race question; in 1990, approximately 10 million marked “other;” and by 2000, over 15 million people marked “other” (Williams, 2003).

The changes in demographics revealed that European-descent individuals were no longer the dominant immigrant group in America. Since the 1960s, approximately 80% of immigrants to the United States revealed that their country of origin was Asia or Latin America. A 2005

census revealed that approximately 98 million people in America were of minority origin, and this total constituted a third of the total population of 296.4 million (U.S. Department of State, 2006). Due to these drastic changes, Korgen (1999) believed that by the middle of the 21st century, more than half of the population of the U.S. would no longer be of European descent.

Shifts in demographics of racial groups were also due to an increase in interracial relationships and marriages (Korgen, 1999). Some researchers contend that a change in racial demographics occurred because of the 1967 Supreme Court decision removing anti-miscegenation laws, which prevented mixed marriages. An example of the change was the case of *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), which legalized interracial marriage. Consequently there was an increase in interracial marriages, which led to an increase in multiracial births.

The racial changes in America caused high interest in how individuals identified and classified themselves on census documents. Kamimura (2010) noted that there was an increased emphasis on racial categories and how multiracials categorized them in higher education. In 1965, the Civil Rights Act and Equal Opportunity Commission required businesses to report the number of different individuals employed (Kamimura, 2010). This reporting was haphazard, and a more structured reporting manner was required. This led to the “standardization of racial groups” (Kamimura, 2010, p. 11). The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) determined five racial categories: (1) American Indian or Alaskan, (2) Asian or Pacific Islander, (3) Black or African American, (4) White, and (5) Hispanic (Office of Management and Budget, 1997). It was noted that the OMB only recognized one ethnicity, Hispanic or Latina/o, which was separate to the five racial categories. During this period, in order to distinguish the race of an individual, the OMB would choose “the race of an individual who marked more than one race by using the first race declared and, if mixed or multiracial was stated, a visit by a census surveyor would

determine a monoracial classification based on the ‘one-drop rule’ or ‘eyeball test’” (Kamimura, 2010, p. 12). The “one-drop rule” implied that any person with a single drop of blood from Black heritage would inevitably be considered Black (Roth, 2005).

Over the years, the U.S. Census has revealed an increase of people who mark two or more races on forms. In 2000, the U.S. Census revealed that 6.8 million people, or 2.4%, marked themselves as two or more races (John, 2012). In addition, 6% of Americans marked themselves as three or more races, and only 1% marked themselves as four or more races. Of the 6.8 million people, approximately 68% of Americans were below 35 years of age, and 42% of Americans were below 18 years of age for those who marked themselves as two or more races. During this census period, only 25% of Americans marked themselves as only one race. However, for the 2010 U.S. Census, the data collected presented a greater number of multiracial individuals (John, 2012). In this census, 3% or 9,000,073 Americans marked two or more races, 8% of Americans marked three or more races, and 1% marked themselves as four or more races (John, 2012).

The demographic trends in America reveal that it is important that higher education institutions prepare themselves adequately to successfully educate multiracial students in colleges and universities. The census data revealed that in a period of 10 years, the multiracial population exploded, and it will continue to grow in years to come. Thus, administrators in higher education need to become vigilant in preparing staff and faculty to educate, to advise, and to appropriately interact with an increasingly diverse multiracial student population on higher education campuses. Finally, to meet the challenges related to multiracial students, institutions should be more prepared to “recruit, retain and graduate” them (John, 2012, p. 6).

The Need to Understand Multiracial Students

Multiracial individuals are perceived as complex due to the different cultural and ethnic heritages they own. Due to these complexities, which often affect identity development, many people believe that multiracial individuals suffer from low self-esteem and alienation because they do not know where they belong. Studies conducted by Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935) on the “marginal man” theory revealed that people of mixed race suffered from low self-esteem due to marginalization and isolation. The following passage revealed the extent of division experienced by a multiracial individual:

His racial status is continually called in question; naturally his attention is called upon himself to an excessive degree; thus increased sensitiveness, self-consciousness, and race-consciousness, an indefinable malaise, inferiority, and various compensatory mechanisms, are common traits in the marginal person.
(Stonequist, 1935, p. 6)

Even though Stonequist’s study reported that mixed or multiracial people were marginalized and isolated because of the continuous questioning of their heritage, Herman (2009) revealed that the perspective of the “marginal man” could be associated with how the person is racially categorized. With respect to social norms, Herman (2009) revealed that African Americans fell at the bottom of the social hierarchy and that Hispanics and Asians fell above them, respectively, with non-Hispanic Europeans listed on the top. As a result, multiracial individuals with predominantly Black heritage experienced the following similar to monoracial Black individuals: (1) they were placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy; (2) they experienced similar incidents as their monoracial black counterparts; (3) they developed similar identities to the monoracial black individuals; and (4) their achievement was similar to Black

monoracials (Herman, 2009). Most salient was the understanding that within multiracial groups, there was a distinction of affiliation toward differing ancestries: “Those with some Black or Hispanic ancestry are far more likely to report being Black or Hispanic than those with some Asian ancestry are to report being Asian or those with some White ancestry are to report being White” (Herman, 2009, p. 24).

A study conducted by Herman (2010) revealed the perceptions of others concerning multiracial adolescents. This study revealed the following: (1) observers perceived half of multiracial adolescents as monoracials; (2) multiracial individuals who perceived themselves as Black were always nearly perceived as Black and not recognized as multiracial; and (3) the demographics and environment had no impact on observers’ racial perceptions. Herman’s study revealed the ambivalence observers had toward multiracial individuals as a distinct group even though they are a growing population in the United States. Herman (2010) distinctly noted that multiracial individuals reacted differently to questions concerning their race, which was why researchers should consider the “differences between racial ancestry, the geno-phenotypical racial group(s) which make up a target’s family tree; racial identification, the group or groups a target uses to identify himself/herself racially or ethnically; and racial identity, the set of roles and behaviors a target uses to exhibit his/her connection with a particular culture” (p. 59). Most importantly, even though Herman (2010) observed that more people ascribed to multiracial self-identification, observers still negotiated how to perceive multiracialism according to social norms. Ultimately, this negotiation process directly impacted how multiracial adolescents perceived them.

Chapman-Huls (2009) observed that multiracial students exercised the roles of pacifist, non-conformist, and activist to be successful in higher education. The pacifists accepted all

individuals irrespective of their heritage. The non-conformists refused to identify their race on administrative forms, while the activists served to advocate for multiracial individuals and further supported issues pertaining to multiracial affairs. However, within the context of the “marginal man” theory and how multiracial students affiliate with differing ancestry groups, it became important for faculty working with these individuals to understand how these integrated factors, especially race, affected the success of multiracial students in higher education.

MacDonald (2014) conducted a study on multiracial graduate students focusing on their academic advising experiences at a predominantly White institution. Critical race theory was used as the theoretical framework in conjunction with narrative inquiry to extrapolate storytelling experiences in narrative form. MacDonald (2014) found that her three participants replicated the roles of pacifist (Apolde, the passivist), non-conformist (Berlatte, the Optimist) and activist (Grange, the Activist) as discussed by Chapman-Huls (2009). The participants in MacDonald’s (2014) study moved beyond these strategies and developed and enhanced their personalities to ensure their success. These multiracial students were graduates within a doctoral program with one recent doctoral graduate, and consequently, their development along the path of student development was more advanced. They inadvertently espoused characteristics reflected in Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) vectors of development, which led to individualization. The achievement of a sense of individualization, sense of direction, persistence, self-understanding, values, close relationships, and intellectual competence motivated these multiracial graduate students to become advocates for their own success (MacDonald, 2014).

The Subject of Race

The subject of race remains a contested discussion in many spheres of everyday life for particular individuals. Since the focus of this study is on understanding the complexities of multiracial graduate students and their lived experiences, race is a key factor that impacts their lives. Race as a social construction (Haney-Lopez, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1986) supported the development of racial categories that espouses “racial formation”. Inadvertently, race as a social construction places importance upon social systems, and their meaning attributing value to physical features and ancestry (Haney-Lopez, 1994). Leach (2005) maintains that race is prevalent and present within today’s society because “racial discrimination and racist political movements persist” and have developed into a “new racism” (p. 432). As a result, understanding the origins of race and how prevalent it is in today’s society is key to understanding the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students.

The Social Construction of Race and Racial Categories

Race is an important factor which influences policy and practice within the United States (Kamimura, 2010). The racial grouping and classification of people undoubtedly influences social interactions and determines a social hierarchy (Starr, 1992). These social categories and social hierarchies influence educational institutions, citizenship, human and civil rights, public health and social services available to all people living within the U.S. (Kamimura, 2010). Understanding these racial categories influences how multiracial individuals are perceived, because they do not “fit” within the normal racial categories provided by OMB. As a result, those individuals with multiracial backgrounds continued to experience difficulty and complexity with their “place” in higher education (Root, 1996). The historical context of racial categorization helps provide understanding about multiracial identification.

Spickard (1992) noted that a Swedish botanist and taxonomist, Carolus Linnaeus, who categorized people as part of the animal kingdom, created the origin of the racial categories. Additionally, a researcher Blumenbach added to the racial categories of humans and added subsections to race such as Caucasian, African, Oriental, and American Indian. Further, in 1795, Blumenbach added geographical locations to his racial categories, which now included a Malay race. Consequently, these insertions added symmetry to the racial categories with dominance featured toward the Caucasian category (Kamimura, 2010).

Classification of the human race continued into the 19th century. Ripley (1899) categorized the Europeans into three distinct groups: Teutonic, Alpine, and Mediterranean. These categories were later altered based on geography and phenotype, which resulted in the Teutonic race being regarded as the “great” Nordic race (Banks, 1995). This new race was recognized as people with blue eyes, blonde hair, fair skin, and a straight nose. Historical achievements of people of the Nordic “race” were later attributed to the Caucasian race.

Additional racial classifications of people in America included the concept of the “one-drop rule.” The “one-drop rule” was applied to anyone with a single drop of blood from Black heritage to be categorized as African (Roth, 2005) and applied in cases for people with mixed heritage. During the 1890s, this rule gained prominence when Homer Plessy, an “octoroon” (one-eighth Black and seven-eighths White), refused to give up his seat on a train reserved for Whites. This action resulted in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Supreme Court’s ruling which set a precedent for using the “one-drop rule.” Consequently, multiracial people with a single drop of blood, consisting of Black heritage, were deemed subordinate to the Caucasian race, within United States law. This process of subordination of people and especially multiracial individuals during American history was called hypodescent (Kamimura, 2010). According to

Omi and Winant (1986), the phenomenon of hypodescent allowed the legal system to recognize super-ordinate racial groups of people and to allow certain benefits and advantages to be given to them within the system of politics, education, and economic and social power. Due to this phenomenon, the United States government did not need to develop separate racial categories for multiracial people. As mentioned earlier, a change only occurred in the 2000 census, allowing individuals to mark two or more races because of the increased number of people marking “other” on various documents.

The phenomenon of hypodescent was influenced by the study of hybrid degeneracy. Hybrid degeneracy meant that people of multiracial backgrounds were regarded as inferior to either of their parents’ races (Nakashima, 1992). As a result, this theory influenced anti-miscegenation laws within America, which forbade marriage between White and non-White individuals. Anti-miscegenation laws were invalidated in 1967 by the landmark case of *Loving v. Virginia*, which noted that these laws were unconstitutional. Barnett (1964) described anti-miscegenation laws as those that prohibited interracial marriage between individuals from different races. Furthermore, Barnett (1964) revealed that these laws not only prohibited marriages between White and Black individuals, but also prohibited marriages between Caucasians and Orientals, Indian, West Indian, or people of Malaysian ancestry. If these laws were not obeyed, there was some form of punishment given (Barnett, 1964).

Race in Today’s Society

According to Banks, Jr. (2008), race was perceived as a biological and scientific category when in fact it was a socially constructed category deemed important by society. This social construction permitted the White race to maintain separation between people through various laws enacted that prevented intermarriages between people of different races (Banks, Jr., 2008).

As discussed earlier, these laws were repealed in 1967 by the landmark case of *Loving v. Virginia*. It should be noted that the elimination of anti-miscegenation laws banning interracial marriages was repealed in 2000 by Alabama (Banks, Jr., 2008). Consequently, there has been an increase of interracial marriages, which has led to an increase of multiracial children born to these marriages.

Classification of these multiracial children took different forms. Though most of these children were classified according to the mother's ethnicity, multiracial children were assigned to the race of the father due to patriarchy, whereas "biracial offspring of a White parent were assigned the race of the non-White parent" (Banks, Jr., 2008, p. 17). Williams (1999) noted:

Racial identity is an individual's own choice. It is this concept that flies in the face of social constructions of race. The idea that individuals have a right to define their own experience, to create their own personal meaning, to frame their own identity, and to claim an "I" that is uniquely their own, shakes up many people's most dearly held beliefs about race. Courage to claim one's own experience despite resistance and judgment from others allows biracial people...to begin to forge an authentic self. (Williams, 1999, p. 34)

Even though individuals should have the right to self-identify, this need to constantly determine where they belonged inevitably led to factors that influenced multiracial individuals' identity.

Factors Influencing Racial Identity Development for Multiracial Students

A small body of research has described the experiences of multiracial students and how they develop their multiracial identities (Kilson, 2001; Renn, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2008; Roquequemoire & Brunsma, 2002; Wallace, 2001; Wijeyesinghe, 2001). Among the studies and research conducted, three themes have emerged which are pertinent to understanding the

development of multiracial students. These three themes are: physical appearance, cultural knowledge, and peer culture.

Physical appearance is believed to be the foremost influential factor that has shaped multiracial individuals' perceptions because it includes how they look, their hair color, their skin tone, the shape of their eyes and nose, etc., and it was often the first characteristic to be perceived by others (Renn, 2008). The physical appearance of a multiracial student often denotes where that individual belongs in a student organization, in interactions with peers, and often within the classroom. Moreover, in her study, Renn (2004) observed that cultural assumptions often occurred in the classroom with professors because students were often classified according to appearance, and frequently mixed race students were confronted with ignorance and hostility about their heritage. Root (1990) also observed that multiracial students' identity was definitely influenced by how others perceived them because of their appearance. Often multiracial students needed to contend with the campus racial climate because many others do not know how to classify them and often questioned their heritage (Renn, 2008).

The second factor is that of cultural knowledge. Cultural knowledge is influenced by one's interactions with parents, other family members, and the community before even entering college (Renn, 2008). Multiracial students enter college with a diverse level of cultural knowledge because of their heritage and background. However, some of their cultural traits could be stronger than others depending on the exposure they received at home. Renn (2000, 2004) found that cultural knowledge included components of authenticity, legitimacy, and fitting in. Some students used the opportunity of enrolling in various courses in higher education to learn more about their biracial or multiracial heritage (Renn, 2008). This coursework assisted biracial and multiracial students in becoming more confident in knowing and understanding who

they were, and according to Poston (1990), in developing a new “appreciation” level. Together physical appearance and cultural knowledge are two aspects of multiracial identity that influence multiracial individuals development.

Peer culture is a final factor that influences multiracial student identity development. According to a study by Wijeyesinghe (2001), students’ social and historical contexts influence their racial identity development. Renn (2000, 2004) and Wallace (2001) found that support from other biracial and multiracial students affected multiracial identity development. In addition, Renn (2000) observed that some students could move freely between different student groups, while others could not. This degree of movement between groups depended on the type of college attended by these students, and it also included the physical appearance of the multiracial students. Consequently, some institutions practiced definitive delineations between groups, which prevented membership in more than one organization (Renn, 2008).

In conclusion, these three factors are pertinent to the racial identity development of biracial and, more so, multiracial students in higher education. A study conducted by Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) revealed that appearance, social networks, socialization factors, and familial context affected racial choices. Most importantly, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) determined that physical attributes did not “predict identity choices...however, socially perceived appearance emerged as an important and influential factor in determining what racial identity was chosen” (p. 57). Clearly, the appearance and physical attributes of multiracial students plays a prominent role in how they are perceived, how they are treated, and how they relate to peers and faculty. Moreover, there are distinct markers between a multiracial student with Black and White heritage, Black and Indian heritage, White and Asian heritage, Black and Asian heritage, and Indian and Asian heritage.

Theories on Multiracial Student Development

Multiracial identity development is considered a very complex process because multiracial individuals possess more than one heritage, and they are often excluded from a more monoracial society (Terry, 2008). Throughout the history of America, racial mixing had been present and has increased since Civil Rights legislation was enacted, which banned state laws prohibiting interracial marriages (Roquequema, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). To understand the various types of theories involved in multiracial student development, it is necessary to understand the history of mixed-race people in America. Thornton and Watson (1995) developed a framework of mixed-race identity, and Roquequema, Brunsma, and Delgado (2009) expanded this mixed-race framework. In total, there are six theoretical approaches: (1) the linear approach, (2) the resolution approach, (3) the problem approach, (4) the equivalent approach, (5) the variant approach, and (6) the ecological approach. All six of these approaches were explored below to reveal the changes that have occurred over time regarding multiracial identity development.

Linear Racial Identity Development Approach

The linear racial identity development approach is linked to the positive development of a healthy identity of oneself and is mainly focused on monoracial identity development (Erickson, 1968). This process occurs via linear racial identity development, which includes multiple stages of development, with one stage following the next until a positive identity is achieved. The theoretical models of Poston (1990), Jacobs (1992), Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995), and Kich (1992) all represent the linear approach to racial identity development.

The stages of development differ considerably between the aforementioned linear approaches. Poston's (1990) model focuses on the identity development of multiracial

individuals and how they progress from one stage to another. Jacob's (1992) model concentrates on the skin color awareness of multiracial individuals and how it leads them to make a specific choice. Kich's (1992) model emphasizes the awareness of difference that multiracial individuals experience and how this awareness assists them in choosing an identity. Finally, Kerwin and Ponterotto's (1995) model focuses on the stages in education and how multiracial individuals develop to accept the different racial parts of their identity. These linear models are very important because they provide some insight into how multiracial individuals develop their identity from early childhood into adulthood (Kamimura, 2010). Most of the development of many young adults occurs within the college years, and it is imperative for higher education professionals to be aware of this development.

Resolution Racial Identity Approach

The resolution approach differs from the linear approach because it discusses various strategies for developing a healthy racial identity. This approach forms a basis toward resolving and understanding multiracial identity. More importantly, it allows multiracial individuals to explore other identities while at college as they meet other college students. Within this resolution approach, emphasis is placed upon the following researchers' work: Root (1990), Wallace (2001), Kilson (2001), and Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002).

Root (1990) discussed four strategies: (1) acceptance of the identity society assigns; (2) identification with both racial groups; (3) identification with a single race group; and (4) identification with a new racial group. The strategies that were identified by Root (1990) were geared toward the realization that children with parents of different racial groups live within a society that is structured according to monoracial categories, which inherently creates borderlands (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). However, Root (1990) pointed out that

these borderlands offered the individual the opportunity of moving freely between different racial groups as a multiracial individual. Many years later, Root (1996) developed additional strategies to deal with the borderlands crossing of multiracial individuals. These strategies form part of the ecological approach, which will be discussed later.

Wallace (2001) offered visual representations as strategies, and these were outlined as follows: (1) *Home base/Visitor's base*, where an individual lives in one community but also identifies with another; (2) *Both feet in both worlds*, which describes an individual who is grounded in the different racial communities; (3) *Life on the border*, which portrays an individual who is multifaceted with the realization that s/he possesses a mixed identity; and (4) *Shifting identity gears*, which reveals an identity that does not place racial categories or stigmas at the forefront of one's own established individuality. This final strategy allowed for the development of other identities, such as gender, to become visible within a social context (Kamimura, 2010).

Finally, Kilson (2001) discussed his strategies as: (1) *Monoracial identity of color*, which represents a direct labeling associated with people of color; (2) *Biracial or multiracial identity*, which reveals having one or more racial identities; (3) *Border identity*, which reveals the individual denied choice of a specific identity according to any races; (4) *Raceless identity*, which reveals an individual transcending the racial categories and labels given within society; and (5) *Multiple descriptors*, which relies on the situation and context in which the multiracial individual can choose the most salient identity to be represented. These strategies are very similar to those of Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002); however, Rockquemore and Brunnsma used the following labels in their theory: Singular Identity, Race Border Identity, Protean Identity, and Transcendent Identity.

In summary, the resolution approach is important because it “reframes multiracial identity formation as an active set of options for multiracial individuals to explore, rather than a process of linear development” (Kamimura, 2010, p. 38). Additionally, there is another benefit to this approach: it allows multiracial students to claim one identity but also to experiment with another (Kamimura, 2010). It also recognizes the changes that college students will experience. From a student affairs perspective, students can choose an identity and explore it while in college (Root, 1990). Furthermore, through involvement in various student organizations, such as service learning organizations, cultural centers and organizations, religious groups, and the Greek system (Kamimura, 2010), students can have the opportunity to explore, to adjust to, and to learn about their different identities (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995).

Problem Racial Identity Approach

The problem approach considers mixed-race origin to be a problem for multiracial individuals living in a monoracial society (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). This approach developed within the Jim Crow era when researchers tried to explain the racial identity of people of mixed-race within a segregated society. Rockquemore, Brunsma and Delgado (2009) observed that many states observed the “one-drop rule” as law, and as a result, theories that followed the problem approach phenomenon considered the deficits, dilemmas, and negative experiences of multiracial individuals.

Robert Park’s (1928) marginal man theory encompassed the study of American multiracial individuals who were bounded by the “one-drop rule,” because they consisted of both Black/White heritages. These multiracial individuals were forced to accept a particular status despite having a heritage of both Black and White. Stonequist (1935) observed that multiracial individuals’ awareness of the conflict of two or more races became a personal conflict

(Rochequemore, Brunnsma, & Delgado, 2009). Consequently, the marginal man experienced three stages: (1) the introduction stage allowed the multiracial individual to experience assimilation into both parents' races and cultures; (2) the crisis stage occurred because the multiracial individual recognized the conflict between the two cultures that became his/her existence; and (3) the adjustment stage occurred when the multiracial individual understood where s/he belonged in the social sphere of society (Stonequist, 1935). However, since the United States experienced segregation, it became more apparent that the marginal man became part of the subordinate groups (Blacks), and at the very least, this person became isolated and withdrawn from society (Rochequemore, Brunnsma, & Delgado, 2009).

In summary, the problem approach addressed the historical and social context of American history that segregated those who were not White into a society. The outcome of this approach reveals that multiracial individuals needed to choose a particular heritage that closely matched their physical appearance. In most cases, the multiracial individuals became part of the Black monoracial group in society. The equivalent racial identity approach, discussed below, focused on multiracial individuals being Black and accepting and creating a positive image of being Black.

Equivalent Racial Identity Approach

During the 1960s, theorists began to reevaluate their perceptions about Blackness and the "one-drop rule." Many researchers believed that mixed-race people were automatically part of the Black population. However, the Black group included mixed race individuals. Also, everyone was deemed to possess a positive image about being Black (Rochequemore, Brunnsma, & Delgado, 2009). Those individuals that developed mental health issues because of their mixed-race origins were perceived as internalizing racialized views about being Black. Consequently,

therapeutic models drove the equivalent approach to assist individuals about their Black/White heritage and to understand their racial identity as being Black (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009).

Erickson's (1968) developmental framework of ego identity formation treated multiracial individuals as equivalent to Blacks. Erickson (1968) believed that the task of adolescence was to form a stable identity or "a sense of personal sameness and historical continuity" (p. 328). Moreover, Erickson's (1968) model included experimental and exploratory stages for the individual to achieve commitment in certain areas of life. Accordingly, the development of racial identity was equated to that of ego identity formation because of the elements of exploration and experimentation.

Another model considered within this equivalent approach is Cross' Nigrescence model (1971) that represented the transformation of a Negro-to-Black mentality. Cross' (1971) model included five stages: (1) preencounter stage, which recognized the existence of race; (2) encounter stage, which forced individuals to encounter a racialized event; (3) immersion and emersion, which allowed individuals to be immersed in Blackness and experience emersion from being proud of who they were by showing emotions; (4) internalization, which consisted of a sense of harmony by moving through the various stages and realizing that they were proud of being Black; and finally, (5) the internalization-commitment stage in which individuals struggled with maintaining pride in being Black because this stage involved "an active expression of Black identity" (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009, p. 18).

In conclusion, the models discussed within the equivalent approach reveal the perception that racial identity is linear. This perception was due to its historical context and its social moment, which reflected and assumed that multiracial individuals would inevitably enclose their

Black identity as before. However, in the variant approach that follows, most of the researchers were multiracial and mixed-race individuals, and they wanted to understand their own heritage and identity development. This changed the avenue of research from focusing on multiracial individuals not having a healthy identity towards including personal and theoretical perspectives to explain the multiracial identity.

Variant Racial Identity Approach

During the 1980s and 1990s, other researchers emerged whose sole focus was studying mixed-race individuals (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). These researchers, who were mostly mixed-race, sought to explain that “biracial” or “multiracial” individuals developed healthy identities within multiple ancestries, cultures, and varying locations. These scholars separated their work from the problem and equivalent approaches by challenging the assumptions about mixed-race people from a personal, experiential, and theoretical perspective (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). Maria Root’s (1992) book, *Racially Mixed People in America*, is an example of work that best illustrates the difference between the variant approach and the equivalent approach. From this seminal work, researchers propagated the distinction of multiracial individuals as a distinct group worthy of theoretical study.

Studies conducted by Gibbs (1989) and Herring (1992) revealed challenges experienced by multiracial individuals in combining their mixed heritages. These researchers had two main themes in common: First, they observed that biracial or multiracial individuals needed to develop dual cultural heritages and that they developed a positive self-image simultaneously; and, second, they needed to develop a stable and competent racial identity with the fusion of all their other heritages present. Gibbs (1989) recognized that biracial individuals needed to traverse five major psychosocial challenges to achieve a sense of self: (1) conflicts about dual racial/ethnic

identity; (2) conflicts about their social marginality; (3) conflicts about their sexuality and choice of sexual partners; (4) conflicts about separation from their parents; and (5) conflicts about their education and career choices. These challenges seemed problematic within the variant approach regarding the development of a biracial or multiracial identity. However, it should be noted that the variant approach revealed that the Black identity was considered an “over-identification with the Black parent” (Rockquemore, Brunσμα, & Delgado, 2009), which contributed to the challenges experienced by biracial and multiracial individuals trying to develop a competent racial identity.

Additional researchers associated with the variant approach were Poston (1990), Kich (1992), Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995), Stephan and Stephan (1989), Brown (1990) and Standen (1996). Since Poston (1990) is most noted with this approach, the following section describes this researcher’s work along with Kich (1992), Stephan and Stephan (1989), Brown (1990) and Standen (1996).

Poston (1990) was most recognized because of his biracial identity development model (BIDM). Similar to other researchers within this variant approach, Poston (1990) focused on addressing the challenges experienced by individuals consolidating or integrating more than two racial identities into one solid and competent identity. It should be noted that the BIDM followed previous models such as Cross’s Nigrescence model (1995), but within Poston’s (1990) model, there was an integration and development toward a multiracial identity (Rockquemore, Brunσμα, & Delgado, 2009). Poston’s (1990) stages of multiracial development were noted as: (1) personal identity, where this identity was developed from a young age; (2) choice of group affiliation, where individuals were forced to choose where they belonged; (3) enmeshment/denial stage, where individuals experienced conflict and confusion due to their denial of one aspect of

identity; (4) appreciation stage, where individuals appreciated all their different identities; and (5) integration stage, where individuals reached a true sense of multiracial identity.

Both Kich (1992) and Stephan and Stephan (1989) had three stages of development in their models. Kich (1992) included a three stage developmental model which included: (1) awareness of differences and dissonance, (2) struggle for acceptance by others, and (3) self-acceptance and assertion of an interracial identity. Stephan and Stephan (1989) discovered the following about individuals with a mixed heritage: (1) the identification with heritage was subjective and situational; (2) for ethnic identity to be realized, additional cultural exposure was required; and (3) exposure in bicultural homes did not have negative effects on multiracial children. The stages of Stephan and Stephan (1989) revealed that multiracial individuals were challenged with subject and situational viewpoints, cultural exposure, and the bicultural family exposure at home which did not have a negative impact on their development, whereas Kich (1992) revealed that multiracial individuals were challenged with awareness of their multiracialism along with a struggle to choose and be a part of, and finally to accept, their multiracial identity.

A study conducted by Brown (1990) found that many individuals regarded themselves as interracial, but due to the pressure from society, most associated and identified as Black. Brown (1990) noted “the compartmentalization into public and private identities seemed to help participants preserve their interracial self-perception while conforming to societal pressure to disregard their White roots” (p. 127). One conflict that became noticeable was that this occurred “when external audiences would misidentify individuals” (John, 2012, p. 48).

Standen (1996) conducted a study of biracial Korean American students, and many of them observed that being Korean was important to them. Many of these participants, when asked

to complete a questionnaire, identified themselves with many races because they believed they would be entitled to benefits (John, 2012). Standen (1996) noted that “moving away from biracial identity as psychological malady or as a marginalized position within the societal context provides a more accurate picture of the way in which biracial people operate” (p. 259).

The variant approach revealed the struggles and challenges experienced by mixed-race individuals, but it also revealed the outcome of achieving a multiracial identity. This was a positive step toward revealing that multiracial individuals do have a separate and unique process in achieving their racial identity. In moving toward the ecological approach, researchers noted that there is more involved in achieving a mixed-race identity, that the process is fluid and transitional, and that racial identity does not influence multiracial development.

Ecological Racial Identity Approach

The ecological racial identity approach is the most recent approach concerning mixed-race identity development (Rockquemore, Brunσμα, & Delgado, 2009). The assumptions that comprise this approach are: (1) mixed-race individuals developed their identity based on the impact of the environment and location, (2) there are no stages that underscored the development of mixed-race individuals, and (3) there is no privilege awarded to any racial identity over another racial identity, because it would replicate the flaws from previous models (Rockquemore, Brunσμα, & Delgado, 2009). Consequently, the ecological approach focused its attention on the context surrounding identity development, and not on a specific racial identity outcome.

Rockquemore, Brunσμα and Delgado (2009) suggested the following about the ecological approach on multiracial identity development:

It's only the ecological approach that (a) allows for the full range of racial identities that have been well documented in the literature, (b) focuses on the social factors that influence racial identity developmental stages, and (c) allows for contextual shifting of identities, multiple simultaneous identities and no racial identity. It is precisely the focus of the pathways toward different racial identities, as opposed to a circumscribed end point, that make ecological theories useful in the post-Civil Rights racial landscape. (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009, p. 23)

Essentially, the description offered by Rockquemore et al. (2009) underscored the assumptions outlined by the ecological approach. It is imperative to understand the essential difference of the ecological approach. In it, there is no end point to determining racial identity, because identities change over time.

The origin of the ecological approach was traced back to work conducted by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Root (1990, 1996). Root (1996) was considered the pioneer of the ecological approach on multiracial identity development. Root (1996) proposed four strategies: “(a) acceptance of the identity society assigned, (b) identification with both racial groups, (c) identification with a single racial group, and (d) identification as a new racial group” (p. 199). As a result, Root (1996) considered “border crossings” (p. xxii) which “is a part of the process of connecting to ourselves and to others in a way perhaps both more apparent and more accessible to multiracial people than to their monoracial counterparts” (p. xxii). In order to explain this phenomenon, Root (1996) suggested four types of border crossings:

- “both feet in both groups”
- “situation ethnicity and situational race”

- “sits on the border”
- “one creates a home camp.” (Root, 1996, pp. xxi-xxii)

It should be noted that Root continued her seminal work on multiracial identity development and refined “the ecological framework for understanding multiracial identity” (Root, 2003) by including border crossing along with “historical race relations, sexual orientation, gender, class, community attitudes, racial categorization, family functioning, and the individual’s personality traits and aptitudes” (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009, p. 20).

In recent years, Renn (2004) determined that there are several patterns of multiracial identity. Those patterns include the following:

- Monoracial identity, in which the individual associated with the parent of color if there was another parent who was White;
- Multiple monoracial identities, in which the individual determined a private self-identification;
- Extraracial identity, in which the individual refused to conform to societal norms on the construction of race; and
- Situational identity, in which individuals changed according to the context.

The patterns discussed by Renn (2004) were established from a study including fifty-six students from six institutions, where the researcher found that 48 percent identified across two patterns, 23 percent revealed an extraracial identity, and 61 percent revealed situational identities (Renn, 2008). Consequently, patterns included gender, class, year, and heritage combinations, which ultimately revealed that multiracial students associated their identity across several patterns (Renn, 2008).

Another study within the ecological approach is that conducted by Wijeyesinghe (1992). Wijeyesinghe (1992) established the Factor Model of Multiracial Identity (FMMI) to understand multiracial individuals and found that society did influence choice in their identity development. Accordingly, the FMMI has eight factors that affect racial identity: “(a) racial ancestry, (b) early experiences and socialization, (c) cultural attachment, (d) physical appearance, (e) social and historical context, (f) political awareness and orientation, (g) other social identities, and (h) spirituality” (Wijeyesinghe, 2001, p. 137). Wijeyesinghe (2001) explored how multiracial Black and White adults interacted with the broader social environment. The study revealed that the person’s heritage might not coincide with the person’s established racial identity. This idea met the premise of the ecological approach in that racial identity was not considered a factor in establishing how multiracial individuals developed their identity.

Overall, all the studies within the ecological approach revealed the challenges of multiracial identity development, but they also met the assumptions that determined the characteristics of following this approach. Most importantly, it should be noted that not any of these studies within the ecological approach revealed any stages of development, nor did they assert the importance of one racial identity over the other. What they did agree on was that the environment and location impacted racial identity development.

Summary of All Approaches

In conclusion, all of the approaches used to describe multiracial identity development recognize a specific pattern toward achieving a full multiracial identity. The linear approach considers the importance of developing a healthy and positive racial identity in stages before attaining a multiracial identity. The problem approach recognizes the challenges and difficulties multiracial individuals experience before attaining a sense of self and accepting their multiracial

identity; the emphasis is placed on the adjustment of a stable identity and positive perception of self. The equivalent approach considers the importance of student development alongside that of racial development. As a result, this approach equates student development to racial identity development and determines that mixed-race individuals formed part of the Black community and should accept their Blackness (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). The variant approach recognizes that mixed-race individuals who ascribed to a multiracial identity have separate and distinct experiences from monoracial experiences. The researchers within this variant approach realized that multiracial individuals developed a positive, healthy and stable perception of self, which included their different heritages and racial identities. Finally, the ecological approach, which was the most recent approach that was developed, recognized that mixed-race individuals were affected and influenced by their environment and their location of development. Moreover, they recognized that one racial identity did not supersede another racial identity, and that the multiracial identity development had no end.

Racial Attitudes toward Multiracial Individuals

According to Chapman-Huls (2009), very little information exists concerning racial attitudes toward multiracial individuals. However, some studies during the 1990's directed counselors to the needs of biracial children (Chapman-Huls, 2009). Harris (2002) conducted a study that focused on the personal perceptions of school counselors toward biracial students. Three hundred and twenty-eight school counselors were served with a 25-item questionnaire that addressed their backgrounds, their experience working with multicultural students, and their perceptions of biracial students. The study revealed that biracial students experienced more trouble and added challenges depending on how society perceived the family (Harris, 2002).

Jackman, Wagner, and Johnson (2001) created the “Attitudes Toward Multiracial Children Scale” (AMCS) that assessed adults’ perceptions of multiracial students. This questionnaire consists of a 43-item scale and was administered to college psychology students. The results revealed that people of color had higher AMCS scores compared to white students. Moreover, it became apparent that this scale could be used to address adults’ perceptions of multiracial students (Jackman, Wagner, & Johnson, 2001).

An interesting study conducted by Neto and Paiva (1998) provided insight into the color attitudes of children of mixed-race between Black and White parents. The study employed a Preschool Racial Attitude Measure II (PRAM II) and the Color Meaning Test II (CMT II), which revealed that there was a tendency to apply positive attitudes toward light-skinned children compared to darker-skinned children. However, Black and biracial children applied less bias toward children who were lighter or darker skinned (Neto & Paiva, 1998). The researchers noted that the perception of biracial students differed considerably compared to White participants in that they exhibited more positive attitudes toward children of all races. These findings revealed that additional research into racial attitudes toward multiracial individuals was warranted. Moreover, it justified future studies for particular research on racial attitudes toward multiracial children, since they are a subgroup distinguished from monoracial and biracial groups.

Multiracial Student College Experiences

Multiracial student experiences became salient due to the changing demographics on U.S. campuses and due to the fact that the U.S. Census revealed that there was a definite increase in the multiracial population. The literature reveals a vast array of experiences of multiracial students on college campuses. These experiences include the following: college experiences (Chapman, 2005), lack of understanding (Nishimura, 1998), forced choice of identity (Sanchez,

2010), racial microaggressions (Johnston & Nadal, 2010), and experiences of prejudice and racial discrimination (Brackett, Marcus, McKenzie, Mullins, Tang & Allen, 2006).

Chapman (2005) studied the student experiences of thirteen multiracial graduate students concerning their perspective on the college campus environment and how it affects their racial identity development. The major themes that surfaced in this study included the college experience, the vision for the future, and the laying of the foundation for multiracial students. Chapman concluded that participants recognized the effects between their experience and their racial identity and that the environments at higher education institutions provided these individuals the opportunity to challenge these assumptions about multiracial individuals and to learn new information about their heritage. The findings in this study revealed that early childhood experiences lay the foundation for racial identity development before these students enter into college. Chapman (2005) also found that coursework along with peer and instructor interaction affected multiracial graduate students' racial identity development within the college environment.

Nishimura (1998) explored multiracial undergraduate student support at one university in the Midwest. The focus of the study was on the attitudes of multiracial students about their experiences in college environments. Nishimura (1998) found that race and color did not matter, and that lack of understanding of the multiracial student experiences occurred from monoracial parents. Consequently, multiracial students struggled with the challenges presented, because they often experienced discomfort with monoracial minority groups.

Research by Sands and Schuh (2004) focused on the exclusion aspect from many facets of multiracial individuals' lives. These researchers conducted a study with six students to help identify strategies to improve the retention of biracial students. This case study had goals which

were three-fold: first, the researchers intended to learn about biracial student experiences; second, they wanted to understand the racial identity within these experiences; and third, they hoped to learn valuable lessons to inform institutional policy which would aid in making recommendations to improve biracial student retention (Sands & Schuh, 2004). The findings of this study included insights about: (1) the perceived identity of biracial students; (2) the lack of diversity on campuses which forced biracial students to choose a peer group; (3) the biracial students' refusal to be involved with the Office of Minority Student Affairs because they felt excluded from activities; and finally, (4) the biracial students felt forced to choose a racial identity because of how society perceived them (Sands & Schuh, 2004).

Johnston and Nadal (2010) followed in the footsteps of Sue (2010) in exploring microaggressions and forms of oppression and discrimination experienced by some individuals. These researchers found specific social identity markers: (1) race, (2) sexual orientation and transgender, (3) gender, (4) ability, and (5) religion. Racial microaggressions are perceived as verbal or behavioral insults, which can be negative, hostile and intentionally harmful to particular members of society who do not fit into the mainstream (Sue, et al., 2007). Furthermore, microaggressions are noticeable as: (1) microassaults, typically unconscious remarks that were rude and hurtful; (2) microinsults, typically intentional ways of verbalizing an attack on someone's social identity; and (3) microinvalidation, typically unconscious comments that invalidated someone's existence (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). However, Johnston and Nadal (2010) noted that multiracial individuals were not included in the literature concerning microaggressions, because it was attributed to monoracism. Consequently, Johnston and Nadal (2010) crafted five categories of multiracial microaggressions:

- Exclusion or isolation, e.g., excluded from family, forced racial identity choice;

- Exoticization and objectification, e.g., treated like an object, comments on physical appearance;
- Assumption of monoracial identity, e.g., questioning the relation to the parent;
- Denial of multiracial reality, e.g., pressure from monoracial groups of identity; and
- Pathologizing of identity and experiences, e.g., individual is seen as psychologically maladjusted, confused about identity. (Johnston & Nadal, 2010, p. 132)

If multiracial microaggressions are specific to the multiracial group, it can be surmised that the experiences of racial prejudice and “racial disadvantage” (Brackett et al., 2006, p. 443) are specific to multiracial individuals as well. Brackett et al. (2006) conducted a study that compared the different perceptions of White (n=222), Black (n=99) and White-Black multiracial (n=45) at a Southern land grant institution. The study focused on three areas: the greater campus, interactions with instructors, and other peers. This study determined that multiracial students experienced more prejudice compared to their monoracial White and Black peers. The researchers contended that the reasons for these experiences were: (1) the number of multiracial students on the Southern university campus was small, and these students would inadvertently experience “many other forms of discrimination” (Brackett et al., 2006, p. 442); (2) the location of the university in the south continued to experience societal perception of prohibition of interracial marriages even though antimiscegenation laws were repealed and Alabama repealed its law in 2000; and (3) physical appearance played an important role that affected the perception of multiracial students by other monoracial groups of students, which resulted in discrimination experienced from these groups (Brackett et al., 2006).

In summary, the aforementioned studies revealed that multiracial students at colleges and universities travel a completely separate and unique road compared to their monoracial peers.

Even though the multiracial population is the fastest growing population within the U.S., literature continuously reveals that colleges and universities fail to understand the background of multiracial students. Due to this lack of understanding by college and university staff, faculty and peers, multiracial students experience many challenges such as feeling excluded and being exposed to multiracial microaggressions. Consequently, these negative experiences revealed that institutions might not be well prepared to adequately ensure the success of multiracial students within their environments. As a result, if problems are not rectified in order to improve the services for and the support of multiracial students within higher education, there might be a decline of these students entering college and university settings.

Graduate Students' Experiences

In this section, I explored the experiences of doctoral graduate students, and then narrowed it to find the experiences related specifically to multiracial graduate students. The intent here is to show that focusing a study on multiracial graduate students and their lived experiences is valid, relevant and poignant.

There are a number of studies that explore graduate students' experiences. The following studies reveal the experiences of doctoral graduate student experiences in their degree programs. The first study by Nettles (1998) included both minority and white student experiences. This study focused on the different ethnic groups of doctoral students and their specific experiences. Nettles (1998) selected four institutions from which random doctoral students would be selected. The study included 1,352 students of which 313 (23.2 percent) were Black, 143 (10.6 percent) students were Hispanic, and 931 (68.9 percent) were White (Nettles, 1998). Approximately 95 percent of this sample (Black, Hispanic and White) of doctoral graduate students completed half of their coursework. A survey instrument, the Doctoral Student Survey (DSS) was mailed to all

the participants in the study. The response rate to the same was 74.1 percent. This study revealed that Black and Hispanic doctoral students received lower doctoral grade point averages compared to their White peers, and that both Black and Hispanic doctoral students perceived their graduate schools as racially discriminatory (Nettles, 1998). However, it should be noted that Hispanics received more financial aid than Black and White doctoral students because of their social economic standing (SES). Overall, this study also revealed that Hispanic doctoral students originated from better SES backgrounds, and that Black doctoral students came from the poorest SES backgrounds (Nettles, 1998). Consequently, Nettles (1998) noted that Black doctoral graduate students required the most intervention to be successful in doctoral programs of study.

In a study conducted by Nyquist, Manning, Wulf, Austin, Sprague, Fraser, Calcagno, and Woodford (1999), these researchers found that there were three main common experiences with graduate students. Their research included 99 participants from three institutions considered as Research I institutions, and ended with 68 participants four years later in their research pool. These participants were individuals from Research I institutions that had teaching assistantships at some point during their graduate program of study (Nyquist et. al., 1999). The common themes found in their research regarding graduate student experiences were: (1) the tensions these graduate students experienced regarding the values practiced in higher education, (2) the continuous mixed messages these graduates receive regarding the priorities of graduate school from faculty, and (3) the continuous implicit and explicit search of support during their studies (Nyquist et.al., 1999). This research revealed to the researchers that the universities' value of research over teaching, an exceeding amount of graduate teaching assistants to teach classes for faculty to do research, and the low mentoring and support these teaching assistants received,

added to the dismay, isolation, devaluing and pressure that the graduate students experienced (Nyquist et.al., 1999).

A study conducted by Gardner (2006) revealed the experiences of doctoral students and their socialization in the chemistry and history programs of study at a very high research activity university. Gardner (2006) studied 20 doctoral students to understand “the socialization processes that influence their success and how these processes differ by year in the degree program and disciplinary culture” (p. 723). There were five main themes that surfaced: (1) the ambiguity experienced in the programmatic guidelines or impediments to success; (2) the balance required for graduate school requirements and meeting personal and social demands; (3) the value of reaching independence as the graduate student progresses through studies; (4) the development of cognitive, personal, and professional success during graduate school; and (5) the support needed from faculty, peers, and the financial requirements to be successful in their degree program of study (Gardner, 2006). This study revealed that socialization for these doctoral students were complex because of the presence of five co-existing cultures: (1) the graduate student experience and the values expressed during graduate study; (2) the institutional culture regarding the day-to-day norms and of governing graduate students work; (3) the disciplinary culture regarding the expressed culture and behaviors expressed to graduate students to achieve membership; (4) the departmental culture derived from the institutional mission and how this impacts graduate students; and (5) the individual culture derived from the graduate students’ background, knowledge and skills, and how this individual culture operates with, alongside or against the other cultures present (Gardner, 2006). Overall, a graduate student’s culture can assist in the success or demise of that graduate student in higher education.

A study conducted by MacDonald (2014) on multiracial graduate students focusing on their academic advising experiences at one PWI revealed that these students developed their own racial identity. Critical race theory was used as the theoretical framework in conjunction with narrative inquiry to extrapolate story-telling experiences in narrative form. MacDonald (2014) found that her three participants replicated the roles of pacifist (Apolde, the passivist), non-conformist (Berlatte, the Optimist) and activist (Grange, the Activist) as discussed by Chapman-Huls (2009). However, these participants in MacDonald's (2014) study also moved beyond these strategies and developed and enhanced their personalities to ensure their success. Further, it was noted that race and ethnicity played a prominent role in self-advocacy to ensure success, and that their academic advising experiences were inconsistent and menial (MacDonald, 2014). These multiracial students were doctoral graduates and within a higher degree status, and consequently, their development along the path of student development were more advanced. The most salient problems determined in MacDonald's (2014) study revealed that race and ethnicity played a prominent role in self-advocacy to ensure success, and that their academic advising experiences were inconsistent and menial.

In summary, the graduate students' college experiences reveal discrepancies to what is real and practiced and what is perceived. Graduate students enter into graduate school prepared to learn and to practice the knowledge learned within graduate study, but there are many sacrifices from the individual during the process. Nettles (1998) revealed that different doctoral students from different backgrounds and ethnicities experienced graduate school completely differently. White students received the highest doctoral graduate point average, Hispanics received the most financial aid, Hispanics and Blacks perceived racial discrimination, and Blacks remained at the bottom of the strata requiring the most intervention to be successful (Nettles,

1998). Nyquist et.al. (1999) focused on the intent of graduate students as they enter into graduate school and how their intentions changed over time. Their study revealed that the continued mixed messages, doubt, sacrifice between graduate life and the social life was too great, and that support toward study was non-existent. These participants were teaching assistants during their graduate program of study, and no distinction was expressly made according the race and ethnicity of the participants. The participants in Gardner's (2006) study consisted of 20 doctoral students in the chemistry and history programs. These participants were not distinguished according to race and ethnicity and focused on their socialization into the culture of their departments. This study also revealed the ambiguity experienced in graduate study, the emphasis on support needed from faculty to be successful, and the balance among graduate study and personal life demands, amongst others (Gardner, 2006). The final study of MacDonald (2014) focused on the academic advising experiences of three doctoral multiracial students. This study revealed that the participants needed to development a strong sense of self to advocate for their own success within their graduate program, and they recognized that racial discrimination is present within their environments. Thus, Nettles (1998) study and MacDonald's (2014) study included different racial/ethnicities of participants to recognize the needs of doctoral students, whereas Nyquist et.al. (1999) and Gardner's (2006) studies focus on the general experience of graduate students during their programs of study. There is a paucity of research with varied racial and ethnic participants in graduate school sharing their experiences so that higher education can adequately meet the needs of all graduates in advanced study. From Nettles (1998) and MacDonald's (2014) studies, it becomes apparent that minority students observe racial discrimination within their experiences. From this perspective of exploring graduate students

experiences in their programs of study, this study will undoubtedly add to the literature base to support the needs of multiracial graduate students within higher education.

Critical Race Theory: A Theoretical Framework

In order to have a clear understanding of the experiences of multiracial graduate students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs), it is imperative to understand the theory that frames this study. Critical race theory (CRT) is used as a strategy to explore race, racism and inequality, and how it impacts the daily lives of multiracial graduate students in higher education. In this study, CRT assisted in explaining how environmental and social factors act as components within the experiences of multiracial graduate students at PWIs. Most importantly, CRT draws information from many disciplines and has a focus on race, racism, social and environmental issues that affects multiracial graduate students.

With the use of CRT, one can view the strengths of multiracial graduate students rather than using the deficit models often ascribed to students of color (Hall, 2010). Furthermore, CRT provides the opportunity to explore and to analyze counter-narratives and stories of experiences that reveal the strengths of multiracial graduate students at PWIs. Subsequently, with the use of CRT as a research tool, the major components of CRT assist in understanding the problems experienced by multiracial graduate students, and in conjunction with narrative inquiry methodology, help in exploring the issues regarding race and racism within relationships developed with faculty, peers and other multiracial graduate students.

The Historical Lens of Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory developed around the mid-1970s with the scholarly work of Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado (Ladson-Billings, 2003). These theorists questioned the slow progress of racial reform within the United States, and as a result, formed the civil

rights legal perspective. One of the components of CRT developed from “Critical Legal Studies” (CLS) focused heavily on Gramsci’s (1971) study of “hegemony” and served as the foundation for describing the continued oppressive practices in the United States (Ladson-Billings, 2003). Gramsci (1971) believed that the existing dominant group asserted its values and ideology over the marginalized group, and convinced them that its norms and values were considered as normal. Nesbit (2006) supported the claim by Gramsci (1971) that “educational systems institutions are generally a middle-class domain” (p.177) and as a result, support the middle-class. Moreover, Tate (1997) observed that the CLS movement consisted of mostly White scholars. One could only assume that the perspective within the CLS movement from White scholars continued to not adequately perceive the inequities present within the U.S. system as through the eyes of scholars of color.

CLS was guided by two major principles: the first related to the internal inconsistencies of society and the legal realm, and the second related to far left radical goals (Hall, 2010). According to Ladson-Billings (2003), “CLS scholars critiqued mainstream legal ideology for its portrayal of U.S. society as a meritocracy but failed to include racism in the critique” (p. 8). As a result, CRT scholars realized that CLS needed to be advanced to expose the race and racism embedded within the U.S. system. Tate (1997) mentioned that many scholars of color “noted the limitations of achieving justice using dominant conceptions of race, racism and social equality” (p. 206). In 1989, the two movements diverged when CRT scholars held their first conference.

Derrick Bell was regarded as the forerunner for the emergence of CRT since he was concerned about the lack of haste to create racial reforms within the legal system (Hall, 2010). However, Kimberle Crenshaw, a Harvard law student, also sparked interest in the role of race, and after the departure of Bell, Crenshaw led a boycott and developed an alternative course that

focused on the study of race and law (Tate, 1997). Tate (1997) observed that Crenshaw and other law students recruited various activists to host lectures on race. These actions brought together scholars such as Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda, and Charles Lawrence, and these scholars together further developed CRT. Bell's goal with CRT was to achieve racial justice for the marginalized groups through political activism. As a result, Bell's work constituted a standard by which to pursue and to discuss CRT through narrative stories to promote critical thinking of events experienced (Tate, 1997). Most importantly, Bell's work included the concept of interest convergence, which recognized that Whites would not recognize the interests of African Americans unless they benefited somehow. Moreover, it became apparent that many Whites would not support any policies that threatened the status quo reflective of White privilege (Tate, 1997). All of these principles were paramount to the development of CRT. Thus, Tate (1997) recognized that Derrick Bell was "arguably the most influential source of thought critical of traditional civil rights discourse and the premier example of CRT" (p. 211).

Critical Race Theory

The theoretical framework of CRT was chosen for this study, because it primarily challenges the issues concerning race and racism within our current society. The review of literature revealed many challenges experienced by multiracial students within the college and outside of the college environment. Multiracial individuals experience factors such as hypodescent, negative attitudes because of physical appearance, microaggressions because of their culture, peer influence that leads to isolation from groups of people, and continued prejudice and discrimination from other monoracial groups of students. Ultimately, the core issue surrounding the challenges experienced by multiracial students was due to the culture of race and

racism. As a result, the use of CRT as a framework for this study serves to illuminate and to bring attention to the continued challenges experienced by multiracial students today.

Critical race theory reflects a movement of scholars studying and transforming the issues related to race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Additional features considered by CRT include questioning the foundations of the liberal order, “including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 3). According to Valdes, Culp, and Harris (2002), critical race theorists aim to “expose and dismantle this social and legal status quo from an explicitly race-conscious and critical outsider perspective” (Valdes, McCristal Culp, & Harris, 2002, p. 1). Carter (2008) recognized that CRT challenges the existing system and ideology, because it reveals the social inequality that persists within the U.S. that prevents all people from attaining upward mobility. Most importantly, Villalpando and Bernal (2002) recognized that CRT views policies and policymaking from a historical perspective and aims to deconstruct their racial content. Thus, the ultimate goal of CRT is to recognize the various types of racism, discrimination, and prejudice that exist within the American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

The Components of Critical Race Theory. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) questioned the parameters set within the educational schooling system and recognized that there were three areas of importance revealing social inequity: (1) race exists daily within our lives and is entrenched in society; (2) property rights are pervasive within the US society; and (3) an intersection exists between property rights and race. Due to these perceptions, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) created six primary components for CRT: (1) interconnectivity of race and racism; (2) the dominant ideology of meritocracy, neutrality, objectivity, and colorblindness is challenged; (3) commitment to social justice; (4) centrality of experiential knowledge; (5)

utilization of interdisciplinary approaches; and (6) Whiteness as property (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). However, over the years and with continued examination, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) observed five basic components of critical race theory: (1) racism was ordinary; (2) racism recognizes Whites as more important than people of color; (3) race is a social construction; (4) there is differential racialization depending on need; and (5) people of color possess a unique voice.

The first component, racism is ordinary, consists of several salient features. First is the notion of the ordinariness of race is incurable. The second feature pertains to interest convergence, the idea that Whites reveal low interest in eliminating racism. The third component maintains that race and racism are part of social thought and social practice. The fourth component, that of different racialization, suggests that different minority groups hold significance for the dominant group in society at certain time periods, and this changes over time. The final component, the voice of color, reveals that different minority groups possess differing histories, stories, experiences and expressions. Ultimately, this final component relates to “legal storytelling” that encourages minorities or people of color to express and write about their experiences.

Relevance of Critical Race Theory. CRT is a viable framework for this study because it challenges the status quo, it acts as a framework to be a change agent in the world, and it considers the aspects of race and racism embedded within the U.S. system that affects people of color’s lives (Hall, 2010), and it “puts forth race as an explanatory tool for the persistence of inequality” (Ladson-Billings, 2003, p. 132). Yosso (2005) recognized that the CRT framework for education attempts to show that race and racism, as well as the traditional perceptions of minorities in society, intersects to deny communities of color their full rights. Furthermore, CRT

seeks to explain, to challenge and to change the inequities that exist within society. More importantly, CRT seeks to expose continued racism in different policies, institutions, professions and curricula studied by students. Thus, the use of the CRT framework with its five components, as explained by Delgado and Stephancic (2001), provides a key analytic tool for understanding the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students in higher education. Race, racism, racial discrimination, racial microaggressions and the oppression of people of color persist within today's society, and the use of this framework within the study might expose inequities experienced by multiracial graduate students at PWIs.

Summary

What are multiracial graduate students lived experiences? This is a very important question in today's educational context, especially since the multiracial population is the fastest growing population in the United States (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). There is an increase of multiracial students attending higher education in the undergraduate programs, and some of these students are entering into graduate programs. As a consequence, higher education needs to improve services and resources available for the recruitment, retention, and graduation of these students (John, 2012). The literature on the history of higher education reveals that the impacts of the Morrill Acts were far reaching. The multiracial trend in the United States expanded with the influx of immigrants into the country (Williams, 2003). This created a shift in the demographics in the country, and with interracial relationships and marriages, led to an increase in multiracial births (Korgen, 1999). Presently, multiracial individuals deal with the factors of physical appearance, cultural knowledge, and peer culture, all of which influence their racial identity. Most importantly, "the topic of mixed race persons provides us with a vehicle for examining ideologies surrounding race, race relations, and the role of social sciences in the

deconstruction of race” (Root, 1992b, p. 10). In considering the complexities surrounding race relations, race and the need to deconstruct race in society, critical race theory (CRT) as the theoretical framework was used to explore the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students in higher education.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology used for this qualitative narrative inquiry study. I collected and analyzed data about the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students. This narrative inquiry study includes data from questionnaires, written accounts, and semi-structured interviews with three multiracial individuals who were graduate students at a midwestern predominantly White land grant institution. This chapter is organized in the following way: (1) the primary research question; (2) the research design; (3) narrative inquiry; (4) the research site; (5) the sampling strategy; (6) the participants; (7) gaining access; (8) data collection; (9) data analysis; (10) researcher reflexivity; (11) my role; (12) ethical considerations; (13) trustworthiness; and (14) the summary.

Research Question

The guiding research question for this study was: “What are multiracial graduate students’ lived experiences?” The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of multiracial graduate students’ lived experiences, because there is an increase of this population of students entering into higher education. As a result, there is an imperative to understand the daily experiences of multiracial graduate students and to allow these students to retell the stories of their everyday lives, which in turn would allow higher education institutions to meet their needs and to provide them with the services they require.

Research Design

I chose narrative inquiry as the research design for this study, so that I could more fully understand the experiences of individuals in context to their environments and to delve deeper into the societal inequities that continue to thrive within society. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) said the following about narrative inquiry:

Narrative inquiry is an old practice that may feel new to us for a variety of reasons. Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 35).

By recognizing the importance of "lived out and told stories" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 35) of different individuals, narrative inquiry is powerful in research because it acts as a methodological tool and as a form of analysis to allow the participants' experiences to be showcased.

Narrative inquiry "tends to transcend a number of different approaches and traditions such as biography, autobiography, life story and, more recently, life course research" (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007, p. 460). Anderson-Thompkins (2009) observed that narrative inquiry allows for "various observational and evaluative positions" (p. 62) and "participant observation and a blending of several types of data collection, gathered by a process of observing, analyzing and interpretation" (p. 62). This study focused on the "life story" (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007, p. 460) of three multiracial graduate students.

Reissman (2008) referred to narrative inquiry as "a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form" (p. 11). Moreover, Reissman (2008) noted that narrative inquiry "is grounded in the study of the particular; the analyst is interested in how a speaker or writer assembles and sequences events and uses language and/or visual images to communicate meaning, that is, make particular points to an audience" (p. 11). Thus, narrative inquiry is perceived as only one component of a field of conducting research similar to case-

centered research (Reissman, 2008). Consequently, the “cases” of study can consist of individuals, identity groups, communities, organizations, and nations (Reissman, 2008). Narrative inquiry performs varied functions: (1) it can be studied as an account of analytical units, instead of fragmented thematic categories; (2) it can generate “categories” in a case-centered study; and (3) it promotes the reader to think extensively and beyond the text thus propagating future research by other researchers (Reissman, 2008; Reissman, 1993). In summary Reissman (2008) stated, “Narrative inquiry in the human sciences is a twentieth century development; the field has realist, postmodern, and constructionist strands, and scholars and practitioners disagree on origins and ways to conduct analysis” (p. 13).

Polkinghorne (1995) refer to narrative inquiry as “a subset of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe human action” (p. 5). Most importantly, Polkinghorne (2010) noted, “Narrative inquiries produce storied description of a practice process carried out in a concrete life space...they do not produce a list of techniques or procedures that are promised to work in every setting” (p. 396). The life space will be discussed in more detail later within the description of transition of narrative inquiry. The life space often refers to three dimensions: the (1) temporal dimension, (2) personal-social dimension, and (3) place dimension (Polkinghorne, 2010).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recognized that narrative inquiry includes the reconstruction of people’s experiences within a social context. Narrative inquiry comprises both method and phenomena in a particular study and commences in the experiences of lives of individuals understood in story form both lived and told (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Thus, the experience of the individual becomes known as the story, which then allows researchers the opportunity to explore the “stories lived and told” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20).

Sometimes, the researcher's life becomes intertwined in the narrative of the participants during the social inquiry because of the everyday life experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In summary, narrative inquiry is varied; it depends on the perspective of the writer, and it definitely changes over time. In my understanding, narrative inquiry is best described as a qualitative design (Creswell, 2007), comprised of both a method and a phenomena (Reissman, 2008), written in storied form (Reissman, Narrative Analysis, 1993), and that describes human action (Polkinghorne, 1995) in a life space (Xu & Connelly, 2010) encompassing the day-to-day lived experiences of people in society (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The positive aspects of this methodology is outlined by Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) in the following way:

- People tell stories naturally, since they love to share about themselves.
- In-depth rich and thick data collection is possible with narrated events.
- Narrators of stories often reveal their role in an event, so this assists with gaining in-depth meaning and reflection.
- Often in stories, various truths are revealed and anything hidden becomes visible in rich, thick data collection and in-depth interpretation. (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007, pp. 466-467)

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study was CRT. According to Delgado and Stephancic (2001), critical race theory “questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law” (p. 3). CRT was also perceived to challenge the mainstream perspective and ideology, which maintains and perpetuates the social inequality that exists within the United States (Carter, 2008). As a result, researchers recognized that “critical race scholars (as well as

fiction writers and various other kinds of storytellers) use the power of stories and persuasion to illustrate and critique the ways Americans typically see race” (Anderson-Thompkins, 2009, p. 55). In addition, researchers observed that “legal storytelling” is a means by which experiences of minorities were revealed within the law (Derek Bell , 1990). Legal storytelling acts as a form of counter story, which negates the mainstream thinking to reveal the hidden truth. Thus, CRT and narrative inquiry intersects at the use of storytelling.

The Intersections between Narrative inquiry and Critical Race Theory

The intersection between narrative inquiry and critical race theory occurs through relaying the importance of “storying” the experiences of lived lives in narrative form. It is a way in which meaning is interpreted from the experiences, which is understood by predetermined steps (Anderson-Thompkins, 2009). In essence, the act of storytelling in the form of narrative plays a pivotal role in critical race theory because it reveals the social problem experienced by the participants through the narrative (Anderson-Thompkins, 2009). The stories presented originate from the shared participants’ experiences that reveal their social problem, and this informs the counter stories. The function of counter story is to reveal the misconceptions and actions of those that continue to marginalize certain groups of people for their own selfish gain (Delgado & Stephancic, 2001).

Counter story refers to the use of “personal testimonies, dialogues, fictional accounts, parables, and chronicles whose aim is to acknowledge and counter the bundles of presuppositions, received wisdoms, and shared understandings that the dominant race brings to the discussion of race issues” (Delgado & Stephancic, 2005, p. 10). Delgado and Stephancic (2001) argued the importance and relevance of counter stories as follows: (1) they serve to give a voice to minority communities by revealing similar experiences; (2) they reveal injustice which

can be contested; (3) once written, they begin “a process of adjustment,” which in turn, reveals “neglected evidence”; and (4) they serve as a “cure for silencing” (Delgado & Stephancic, 2001, pp. 43-44). Overall, the use of narratives as counter stories in critical race theory reflects the notion that these theorists are very aware of the importance of narrative stories to promote change. Significantly, strong narratives and powerful stories can affect the status quo and create change by bringing attention to the injustices that continue to persist within society (Delgado and Stephancic, 2001). As a result, counter story becomes a tool, which serves to expose systematic racism within society (Anderson-Thompkins, 2009) and that challenges the stories provided by the majority in society (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Research Site

This study was conducted at Sunflower University (pseudonym), a Midwestern University that is a predominantly White land grant institution. Some achievements noted at this university include being recognized as one of the happiest schools to attend because of its excellent student health center (9.2 out of 10), overall student experience (9.8 out of 10), and students who would attend this school again (9.9 out of 10) (Huffington Post, 2013). In 2011, this university received an award from the Carnegie Foundation for its community engagement. The university boasts an active Black Student Union that in the last seven years has received five awards for recognition as an outstanding black student government in the Big 12 Conference in 2012. In 2013, Sunflower University boasted a total of more than 24,581 students, and in 2014, the student population increased with a new record enrollment of 24,766.

It is important to note that the minority student population (Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, and multiracial students excluding White) has been increasing in the last couple of years. In 2013, the minority student population of students who

identify as Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, Hawaiian/Pacific islanders or multiracial consisted of 3,458. In the fall of 2014, the minority student population increased to 3,579. Thus, in the fall of 2013, the minority student body consisted of 13.9 percent, and in the fall of 2014, this group had increased to 14.5 percent.

During this time period, the international student enrollment at this university also increased. In the fall of 2013, the international student population consisted of 2106 students. This number increased by 141 students, which increased the international student enrollment to 2247 in fall 2014. Accordingly, these international students represent more than 100 countries and six continents.

At that time that data collection commenced, there were approximately 650 enrolled students who identified as multiracial. To disaggregate further, undergraduate multiracial students consisted of 580 students, graduate multiracial students consisted of only 59 individuals, and veterinary medicine enrolled a total of only 11 multiracial students. Within this campus community, the multiracial population is very small in comparison to the overall number of students enrolled.

Sampling Strategy

I used purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007) in this narrative inquiry study. Creswell (2007) observed that a researcher chooses individuals and locations for study if they can purposefully inform the research study and promote an understanding of the research problem. Within purposeful sampling, the strategy of criteria sampling was employed. Criteria sampling (Creswell, 2007) requires that participants meet certain criteria. This study focused on multiracial graduate students, and as such, the relevant criteria for this study were as follows: (1) the participants must be enrolled in a graduate program or a recent graduate within six months of

completion of their degree, (2) the participants must self-identify as multiracial graduate students, and (3) the participants must have attended Sunflower University, a predominantly White land grant institution. To identify participants who met this criteria, I sought permission from the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) to gain access to prospective participants.

Upon receiving permission to proceed with the study, I sent open invitations university-wide via the Sunflower Today online newsletter, sent daily to the campus community, to attract attention to this study. I did not receive permission to send open invitations to graduate students directly via the Sunflower Graduate student listserv. I had access to 650 multiracial students, but since this study focused on graduate student experiences, only a total of 59 multiracial graduate students comprised the research pool. I also asked some minority professors in different programs to forward the invitations to multiracial graduate students whom they were aware of in their respective programs. The invitations that I sent out formed part of my recruitment strategy, which occurred over a couple of weeks. Over the course of a couple of weeks, only three participants responded. After receiving their responses, I sent each the self-identification screening tool and the consent form. Upon receipt of the self-identification screening tool and the consent form from the prospective candidates, I ascertained that all three met the criteria for inclusion, and I asked them to complete a demographic questionnaire. Upon reviewing the demographic information of the prospective candidates, I chose these three individuals to participate in the study.

The participants consisted of two multiracial graduate students still attending Sunflower University, and a multiracial graduate student who recently graduated from another PWI in the fall of 2014. The multiracial graduate student who graduated in fall 2014 commenced her

doctoral program at Sunflower University but transferred to another PWI in the middle of her studies. She met the criteria for participation because a portion of her doctoral graduate degree was completed at Sunflower University. These participants self-identified as multiracial graduate students and/or recognized that they have parents with two or more racial identities. They were granted confidentiality (Creswell, 2007) to protect their identity, and this process helped me to build stronger rapport with my participants. Even though I managed to recruit only three individuals to my study, a “good” narrative study can “focus on a single individual (or two or three individuals)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 214). The three participants selected in this study were provided pseudonyms of MJ, Mia and Kay. More in depth profiles of the participants are presented in Chapter 4.

Data Collection

For this narrative inquiry study, the data collection included four reflections and two interviews with each of the three participants. These methods assisted me in forming my narrative stories of the participants’ lived experiences. The most important data came from the two interviews conducted with each participant, which is consistent with narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). Even though I have included participant reflections as a method to collect data, the information received from these reflections supported the information shared in the interviews, but they also provided me with additional self-written quotes. By using both of these data collection methods, I astutely incorporated the narrative inquiry method to investigate and to understand the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students through the use of a story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Reissman, 2008).

Reflections

Each of the participants was required to complete at least four reflections of experiences encountered in their lives. The reflection instruction sheet was sent out on February 1, 2014 to all three participants. The participants were asked to complete each reflection prompt within one week of receipt of the email containing the instructions for writing the reflections. Reflections were written between the first week of February 2014 and the first week of March 2014. On Sunday of each week, I sent a reminder of the prompt writing to proceed for that specific week. The participants returned the minimum 1-page reflection no later than the Saturday of that week.

The reflection prompts related to the background of the participants and the relationships between: (1) the participant and the faculty advisor, monoracial graduate students, and other multiracial graduate students, (2) the past life experiences of the participant, (3) the perceptions of the multiracial graduate students about Sunflower University, and (4) the challenges and successes experienced at Sunflower University (See Appendix). These topics were chosen because of my past research I conducted in *Through a lens of critical race theory: Inclusive academic advising of graduate multiracial students in higher education* (MacDonald, 2014). In that research, I studied the academic advising experiences of graduate multiracial students and found a paucity of research focusing on that topic (MacDonald, 2014). This research study extended that study by facilitating discussions on the participants' everyday experiences regarding their specific challenges, relationship difficulties experienced with different individuals and their advisors, and their ideas on what needs to be incorporated to focus on their needs.

Interviews

I conducted two interviews with each of the participants in this study. Weiss (1994) stated, “We can learn through interviewing, about people’s interior experiences. We can learn what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions. We can learn how events affected their thoughts and feelings” (p. 1). Furthermore, Mishler (1986) asserted that narrative interviewing requires more than a stimulus and a response and suggested the following:

Looking at how interviewees connect their responses into a sustained account, that is, a story, brings out problems and possibilities of interviewing that are not visible when attention is restricted to question-answer exchanges. (p. 67)

These two statements represent my goals for the interviews with the participants. As a result, I relied heavily on the interview narration by the participants to share the experiences and meanings related to their identities as multiracial graduate students. The interviews were semi-structured and conversational (inviting responses) in nature to allow the participants a comfortable environment in which to share experiences.

For this study, I used an informal narrative conversational interview (Mishler, 1996) along with a general interview guide approach (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). McNamara (2009) asserted that the general interview guide exists to ensure that all participants were asked the same questions, with the same ideas and themes to avoid any discrepancies, and that the emphasis would still be on open conversation to allow participants flexibility and comfort.

I interviewed each participant twice, and each interview lasted for at least one hour. By arranging two interviews with each participant, I was striving to ensure that rich and thick data were collected. Each interview was recorded digitally to allow for accurate verbatim transcription. Audio transcription of each interview lasted for a minimum of two to three hours.

Since there were three participants, and six interviews in total, the time it took to complete audio transcription lasted anywhere between 12 hours to 18 hours. The time difference occurred because it depended on how much information was shared by each participant. The transcriptions included pauses, sighs, and fluctuations of the participants' voices. Transcription of the first interview commenced the evening after the interview was completed so that I could make notes of any important nuances observed during the interview. The day after completing the transcription of the first interview, the interview transcript was sent to the participant for member checking (Creswell, 2007). Member checking "involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). I included member checking because it allows the participants to check the transcribed data to ensure accuracy and credibility of the data (Creswell, 2007) and is considered "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). This exact process was followed for the second interview. In addition, the second interview allowed for verification of the participants' written reflections and clarification from questions asked in the first interview, before commencing with additional questions asked from the general interview guide (Creswell, 2007).

Timeline

As mentioned earlier, the data collection process began in Spring 2014. The participants were required to write the narrative reflection prompts after the screening tool, the consent form, and the demographic tool were completed. The writing of self-reflections occurred first. By gaining this information from the participants, I used the data to construct first person narrative accounts about the history of the person. Furthermore, these data elements assisted in the construction of interview questions that I asked during the interview process. Two interviews

were conducted with each participant. The period between the first and second interview consisted of at least one week to allow the participant an opportunity to reflect upon the first interview. With the reflection accounts and the two interview accounts from the participants, I hoped to receive rich and thick data to reach saturation of the data elements (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Even though data saturation (Creswell, 2007), which is used commonly for finding themes and categories to inform the researcher that “additional new information obtained does not further provide insight into the category” (p. 160), was irrelevant to narrative analysis in creating stories, it did provide insight and assist me in recognizing the overarching pertinent events within the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students. However, what is most relevant to developing a “good” narrative study is recognizing “a significant issue related to this individual’s life” (Creswell, 2007, p. 214) and “developing a chronological story that connects [the] different phases or aspects of a story” (Creswell, 2007, p. 215).

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study was fluid and began with my receipt of the first self-reflection until the last interview was completed. However, since the data elements were many including the biographical information received from the demographic questionnaire, the four reflections, and the two interviews, data analysis progressed into a complex technique of narrative analysis. At the end of every stage, a narrative was sent for review by the participants to ensure I maintained the integrity of what they shared in their narrative writing and interviews.

For this study, it was imperative to decide on the correct type of analysis to use with narrative inquiry. Polkinghorne (1995) referred to two distinct types of narrative inquiry analyses: paradigmatic reasoning that employs analysis of narratives, and narrative reasoning that employs narrative analysis. Since this research focused on understanding the lived

experiences of multiracial graduate students, it became apparent that both would need to be utilized in this study.

Narrative reasoning or cognition is designed to understand the human action, which is the “outcome of the interaction of a person’s previous learning experiences, present-situated presses, and proposed goals and purposes” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11). Accordingly, narrative reasoning includes special characteristics: (1) it focuses on special characteristics of certain actions; (2) it notices the differences and diversity of people’s behavior; (3) it places diverse information into context central to a specific action; (4) it does not reduce itself to descriptions of events and generalities of stories; and (5) it moves from case to case instead of case to generalization (specific) (Polkinghorne, 1995). Researchers conducting narrative analysis have the opportunity to organize data elements into developmental stories instead of separating out the different themes, as noted in analysis of narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15). Within narrative analysis, plot plays a central role, since it provides an explanation of what occurs throughout the development of the story. Consequently, “as the plot begins to take form, the events and happenings that are crucial to the story’s denouement become apparent” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 16). Within narrative analysis, the plot is very important since the different events lead the audience to the final part of the event, the denouement, where everything is tightly woven together and revealed.

Polkinghorne (1995) used seven criteria developed by Dollard (1935) for judging the process of a life history. They served as guidelines to Polkinghorne (1995) for developing a narrative:

- (1) The researcher must include descriptions of the cultural context where the event occurred.

- (2) The researcher needed to describe the character of the protagonist, which placed temporal limits on life.
- (3) The researcher must attend to the setting, describe the general cultural environment, and similarly pay attention to other characters affecting the actions of the protagonist.
- (4) Even though the cultural setting, the physical description, and the characters that affected the protagonist were described, the researcher needed to decide on a series of events designed to achieve the set goals of the inquiry.
- (5) Further, the researcher needed to attend to the historical continuity of the characters.
- (6) The researcher needed to include an outcome of the narrative analysis—a temporal period, including a beginning, middle and end.
- (7) Finally, the researcher needs to ensure that the narrative analysis “makes the generation of the researched occurrence plausible and understandable” (p. 18).
(Polkinghorne, 1995, pp. 16-18).

By following the guidelines set forth by Polkinghorne (1995), I thoroughly read my participants' information, starting with their biographical information. By reading and rereading the information, I created and placed the experiences of the participants on a continuum from the past to the present. Since information included their background, elementary, middle, and high school experiences, and then moved into their university experiences and into the present, their life stories became visible as a whole. Consequently, I understood the experiences of the characters and their cultural and historical backgrounds but needed to find a setting in which to place their experiences. To move the process further, I began searching for and providing key

words: “because of” and “in order to” (Polkinghorne, 1995). This process allowed for continuity to be added into the set of chronological events while creating the narrative. This attempt of writing reflected what Murry (1986) perceived as “life construction” (p. 277), which might not echo or represent “truth” or “reality” because it mirrored the events and life experiences of the participants. However, since the events followed all the experiences of the participants, no distinction was made between lived and perceived experiences. The purpose of this study was to inform the reader of the actual lived experiences of all three participants, excluding the perceived experiences.

Next, I decided to use paradigmatic reasoning (Polkinghorne, 1995) as a form of data analysis for this study. Paradigmatic reasoning or cognition considers certain events belonging to specific categories, concepts, or themes (Polkinghorne, 1995). Thus, in this type of cognition, the emphasis is on a sense of belonging to a particular category. Polkinghorne (1995) noted that paradigmatic reasoning by humans might be considered as ordered experiences, which can be consistent (p. 10). As a result, paradigmatic analysis, also known as analysis of narrative, “results in descriptions of themes that hold across the stories or in taxonomies of types of stories, character, or settings” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12). In simple terms, stories can consist of varied themes and categories, which are experienced within certain settings. Consequently, these stories allow researchers the opportunity to conduct the analysis of narrative by studying the different themes within these experiences. Indeed, I identified categories through the use of structural coding (Labov, 1972; Reissman, 1989; Robichaux, 2003) and themes were determined, but in using this method of analysis of narrative, they reduced the richness of the experiences of the participants’ lived experiences. Consequently, extensive information from their earlier life that influenced their identities were eliminated, and because the study became too focused on

graduate life in higher education the voices of the participants and their key experiences during their life were lost. Thus, by employing a very narrow and focused analysis of narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995) to this study, its overall portrayal of data lacked substance, because this “life construction” (Murry, 1986) became more of information reduction with emphasis on higher education life events. Extensive participant profiles were created to reveal the experiences of the multiracial graduate students beyond higher education, but these remained minimal and obscure because the “universal plot” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 79) was absent. This second type of analysis of narrative focusing on paradigmatic reasoning reduced and minimized the lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students and proved ineffective.

With continuous reminders to myself that narrative inquiry was my qualitative design, I refocused on the stories used to reveal the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students. Within narrative inquiry, there is a life space (Xu & Connelly, 2010) through which events transpire noted as specific time periods, the interactions between participants or people with others, and a specific location in which certain events transpire influenced by history or culture (Polkinghorne, 2010). Therefore, by focusing on the whole lived experiences of my participants, a key focus became consideration of the temporal dimension, personal-social dimension, and the place dimension, which is referred to as a life space (Xu & Connelly, 2010). Subsequently, I employed narrative analysis with a focus on storytelling and used my framework of critical race theory to reveal the inconsistencies displayed within society toward marginal individuals. In doing this, narrative reasoning with the goal of understanding human action and understanding their learning experiences, present challenges and successes with future goals or understanding (Polkinghorne, 1995) became pertinent in the analysis. By now, I realized that in solely utilizing the narrative reasoning and paradigmatic reasoning employed by Polkinghorne (1995), certain

events within the experiences of the multiracial graduate students included lived and perceived experiences. I was interested in the lived experiences only and required a data analysis process that would allow me to distinguish between the two. In deciding on which narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995; Rosenthal, 1993) process to employ, the method developed by Rosenthal (1993) seemed better suited. This method was best suited because a focus beyond the actual and perceived experience of the participant was required; I was only interested in the actual lived experiences of the participants. Consequently, I moved away from Polkinghorne (1995), and followed the process discussed by Rosenthal (1993). A discussion revealing the procedure for this specific narrative analysis (Rosenthal, 1993) follows.

Rosenthal (1993) developed a method of narrative analysis, which incorporated Schütze's (1983) procedure that included "objective hermeneutics and focuses on the structural difference between lived and narrated life history" (Apitzsch & Siouti, 2007). In this process, Rosenthal (1993) recognized two types of analyses in the lived experiences: (1) analysis of the "lived life" recognized through the biographical history of the individual, and (2) the analysis of the storied lived experience. There were five steps in biographical narrative interviews: (1) analysis of biographical data, (2) thematic analysis of the life story of the participant, (3) rebuilding the life history of the participant, (4) analysis of the separate individual written parts of the life story and life history, and (5) a comparison between the life history and life story (Fischer-Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1997, p. 152). These steps were modified and later included: (1) the analysis of biographical information, (2) thematic analysis, (3) a reconstruction of the history of the life actually lived by individuals, (4) analysis of individual texts from the life story and life history, (5) a comparison between perceived and observed narratives and actual lived experiences, and (6) the formation of different types of narratives (Rosenthal & Fischer-Rosenthal, 2004).

In order to understand the nuances of the process outlined by Rosenthal and Fischer-Rosenthal (2004), it is imperative to understand the meanings attributed to life story and life history. According to Goodson and Sikes (2001), a life story entails a starting point with a basic examination of the lived experiences, whereas life history solidifies the experiences within a social and historical context with particular emphasis on the power relations within society. In addition, Moen (2006) states “storytelling is a natural way of recounting experience” (p. 56) because it is part of “structuring” (p. 56) our experiences within adulthood. As such, Bruner (1984) noted that there are three levels of narratives: life can be lived, life can be experienced and life can be told. Within these renderings of different levels of narratives, Goodson (1992) asserts that a distinct relationship is present between the life lived and experienced compared to the life told and written in text. The life told represents the expressions influenced by “cultural conventions of telling, by the audience, and by the social context” (Moen, 2006, p. 63). These expressions can also include perceptions held by individuals about their different lived experiences. Consequently, these perceptions can lead to different truths about lived experiences, of which Denzin (1989) notes that there are narratives about lived/remembered events and events about how they were experienced. These truths lead to a distinction between facts, facilities and fiction (Moen, 2006). The facts represent the actual event, the facilities portray how these facts were lived and experienced, and the fiction relates to a story that includes both fact and facilities.

In this research study, I was particularly interested in the factual accounts of the lived experiences of the participants. Though, research reveals that there exists a close proximity between actual lived experiences and perceived/observed experiences, and as a consequence a narrative can include both of these within a fictional account. There was no fiction included into the lived experiences of my participants, since it focused on actual lived events. During the

analysis of distinction between the life story and the life history, and the perceived/observed experiences and the lived experiences researcher reflexivity played a prominent role. Thus, careful consideration was given to the selection of texts to represent the lived experience in comparison to the perceived experience. Below are representations of what was lived experiences and perceived/observed experiences for each of the participants MJ, Kay and Mia. In

MJ: Examples of the lived experiences

We grew up poor in Sacramento. I grew up in the same house my whole life; it was a two-bedroom house.

MJ: Examples of perceived/observed experiences

A lot of big cities are segregated by race, but it seems like Sacramento was segregated by income more than race.

Kay: Examples of the lived experiences

When I was about 7 years old I had my first racial experience. Someone said, “Go back on the ship to where you come from!”

Kay: Examples of perceived/observed experiences

Through the years as a child I believed there would be a “golden box” for me to choose, but this was not the case.

Mia: Examples of the lived experiences

We are an immigrant family, and we are not a typical American family.

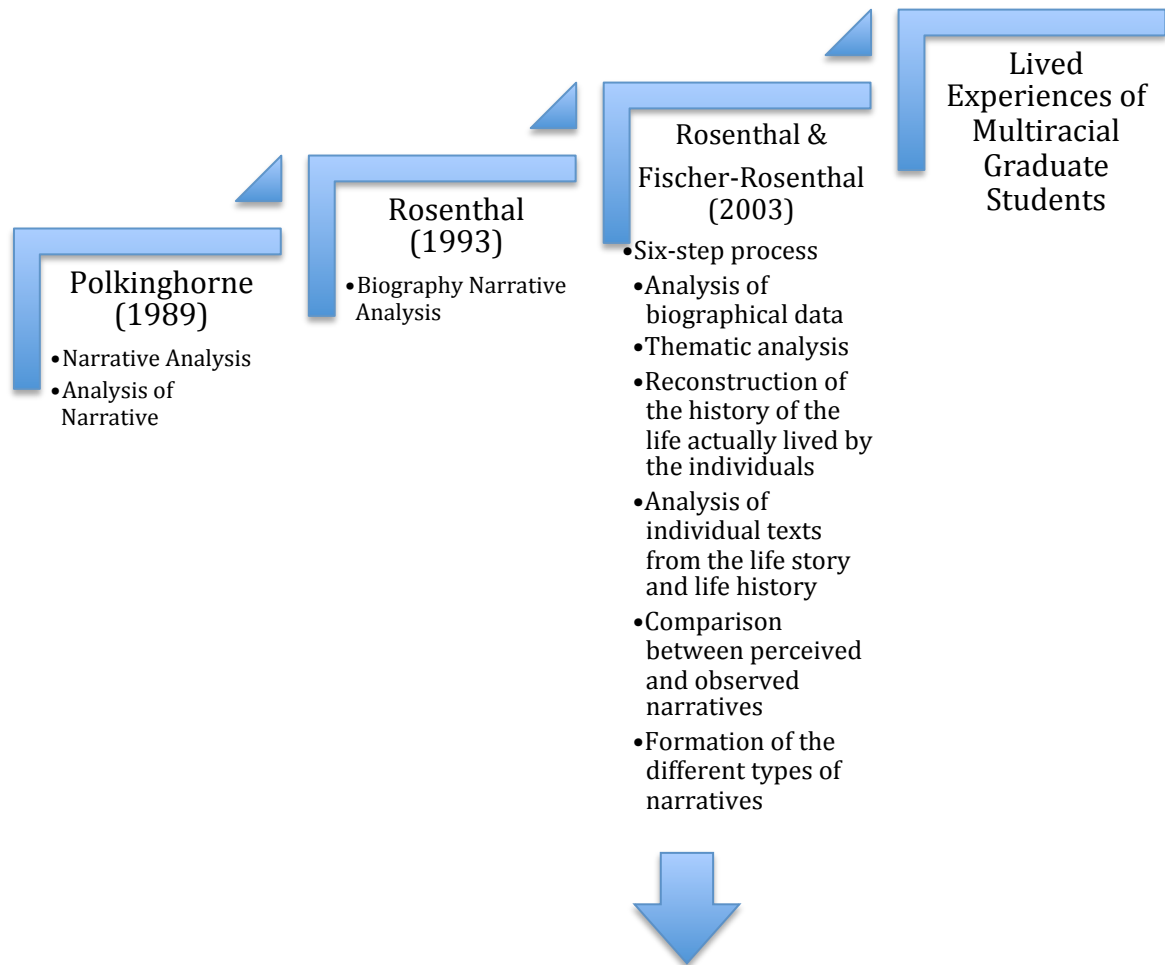
Mia: Examples of perceived/observed experiences

So, in elementary school it was all about being international, the girl with the accent and not knowing how to fit in.

In chapter 4, the lived experiences of the participants were used as narratives, excluding the perceived/observed experiences as determined by myself, the researcher.

The following figure 3.1 illustrates the process of analysis for this research study.

Figure 3.1 Process of Analysis



Lived Experiences vs. Perceived Experiences

The six step process (Rosenthal & Fischer-Rosenthal, 2004) developed from “biographical research in the German social sciences” (Apitzsch & Siouti, 2007, p. 4), which is a complex process of both methodological and theoretical approaches (Apitzsch & Siouti, 2007). Biographical research included biographical material (Apitzsch & Siouti, 2007), because the biography became recognized as a social construct (Kohli, 1985) that could be used as “a design template for subjective self-representation and self-authentication (Apitzsch & Siouti, 2007, p. 4). The biography as a social construct “constitutes both social reality and the subjects’ worlds of

knowledge and experience, and which is constantly affirmed and transformed within the dialectical relationship between life history knowledge and experiences and patterns presented by society” (Fischer-Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1997, p.138). Later, the biographical research migrated to become the biographical narrative interview process that was utilized in the final data analysis of this research project.

Upon following the six steps outlined by Rosenthal and Fischer-Rosenthal (2004), I focused on the actual lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students storied accounts shared. However, this was not the end of my analysis, because I needed to view the lived experiences from a critical race perspective analyzing whether any of the five tenets were present. There are five tenets of critical race theory: (1) racism is ordinary and occurs everyday; (2) racism recognizes Whites as more important than people of color; (3) race is considered as a social construct; (4) different racialization is attributed to separate events depending on need; and (5) people of color do not possess a voice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). By analyzing the individual texts again, and by rereading extensively about the tenets of critical race theory, (Hartlep, 2009; Wing, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, Esquilin, 2007), I observed several tenets of critical race theory. From each lived experience story of my three participants, I focused on every section or paragraph to observe what experiences were revealed in each section and what tenet was associated with it. I made a note of each tenet associated with each paragraph in the margin of the lived experience. Consequently, the words uttered by each participant represented the plot (story) and interconnectivity (Brooks, 1984) of the narrative story representing their lived experience. Most importantly, the words uttered by each participant originated from their own “voice” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) and signified the key concern

within their narrative. These words represent the title given to each participant's narrative lived experience, represented in Chapter 4.

In summary to the data analysis section, it is important to note that the data analysis process of the lived experiences of all three multiracial graduate students became complex. It started with narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995), then moved into analysis of narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995), and then migrated into using the process of biographical narrative analysis (Rosenthal & Fischer-Rosenthal, 2004), which included a six step process including narrative and thematic analysis as a start similar to Polkinghorne (1995). Ultimately, the data analysis process by Rosenthal and Fischer-Rosenthal (2004) assisted with my focusing solely on the lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students, which was the purpose of this study.

Researcher Reflexivity

In the prologue, I discussed my perspective and growth from my master's program, along with my developing research to my doctoral program. I have noted that my children are multiracial, and because of this, I do have a special interest in this topic. Finally, I discussed my perception of my heritage and myself. I am from South Africa, and during the segregation stage of that country and in line with the racial categories attributed to the people in that country, I fell within the category of "Coloured"¹ according to South African terminology. The social hierarchy within this country reflected from top to bottom: Caucasian, Indian, Coloured, and then Black. However, it should be realized that the multitude of "Coloured" people included different heritages. My own heritage consists of: (1) my father with ancestry dating back to Java,

¹ Coloured is used in terms of South Africa classifying people of mixed racial heritage, especially KhoiSan, African, Malay, and Chinese as stated in the Oxford Dictionary Online at <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/coloured>.

Indonesia² (grandfather), “Coloured” (my grandmother), and (2) my mother’s heritage consisted of Griqua³ (a blend with European ancestry). Overall, I formed part of a multiracial “Coloured” group of people from South Africa. Many people here in the States perceive that I am African American because of my physical features and skin color. I do not assume the heritage of African American because I do not ascribe to American history, nor do I belong to the African American racial category within the United States. Even though there are similarities between the history of this country and South Africa, I was not born and raised in this country. More aptly, I do self-identity as two or more races thus placing me within the “racial” category of multiracial.

As the researcher in this study, it was my role to be aware of my assumptions and beliefs and how these perceptions affected this research. My heritage and background undoubtedly affected my perceptions of the data collected. As a result, I have implemented reflexivity, which demands “both an other and some self-conscious awareness of the process of self-scrutiny” (Chiseri-Strater, 1996, p. 130). By being reflexive, the knowledge I have gained through my life experiences assisted in my understanding of the new knowledge produced through this study, which aided in gaining insight into the multiracial graduate students’ lived experiences. Most importantly, being reflexive involved “an ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within the research in order to produce more accurate analyses of our research” (Pillow, 2003, p. 178).

² My grandfather’s heritage is Cape Malay, when the Dutch East Indian Companies brought slaves to Cape Town from the Dutch East Indies (known as Indonesia today) found at <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people-south-africa/cape-malay>.

³ The Griqua group (commonly referred to as “Bastaards”) was a mixed group of people between the KhoiSan and the Dutch Settlers with European ancestry. By the 1950’s the descendants of KhoiSan were referred to as “Coloured”. This was found at <http://www.sawestcoast.com/history.html>.

Ethical Considerations

In order to minimize ethical concerns within this narrative inquiry study, the following steps were taken:

- I assigned pseudonyms to all participants and to the university to ensure confidentiality.
- In order to gain the trust of the participants, the purpose of the study was explained to them in its entirety.
- All information was ensured to be confidential and not shared “off the record.”
- Finally, I did not share extensive personal information or experiences with the participants during the interview process.

Trustworthiness

Many researchers have attempted to explain the importance of trustworthiness in narrative research. Clandinin and Connelly (1990), Mishler (1995) and Polkinghorne (1995) all referred to the importance of trustworthiness in narrative research, but as Loh (2013) argued, the concerns regarding trustworthiness in qualitative research continue to this day. Consequently, all of the aforementioned researchers cited Lincoln and Guba (1985) as the primary source for discussing trustworthiness. As such, the trustworthiness criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were expressly followed within this study. These trustworthiness criteria developed as a method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to promote “fairness, sharing of knowledge, and fostering social action” (Creswell, 2007, p. 212; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). These criteria included: (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, and (4) confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility flows from internal validity and is a factor in verifying the outcomes of the study (Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that achieving credibility is extremely

pertinent to the study to promote trustworthiness and includes specific provisions practiced by researchers to promote the confidence of credibility. Credibility for this particular study was gained in the following manner:

- Peer review was conducted by my committee members. This relates to peer scrutiny of the research conducted within this study (Creswell, 2007; Shenton, 2004).
- I conducted member checks with the participants to ensure the accuracy of the data collected (Creswell, 2007). I accomplished these member checks by sending the participants a copy of their own transcribed interviews. I followed the same process with my written storied accounts (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Shenton, 2004).
- I collected rich and thick data for this study through the four self-reflection accounts and the two semi-structured interviews with each participant (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).
- I openly discussed my heritage and my understanding of race and racism within the “Researcher Reflexivity” section. That section serves as my “reflexive commentary” (Shenton, 2004, p. 68) in which I clarified my “past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208).
- I incorporated data triangulation (Creswell, 2007; Shenton, 2004) by using different data sources from each of my participants. Shenton (2004) maintains that the use of different sources reinforces information received in each source and act as a supporting tool to verify information received from participants.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the applicability of this study to other situations (Shenton, 2004). The technique that is often applied to ensure transferability includes thick descriptions of the

events and participants that are collected during the study. Shenton (2004) noted that transferability is important because the in-depth descriptions provided from the data allows the reader ample understanding of the participants' experiences. My creation of the extensive and descriptive participant descriptions, which outline the participants' family backgrounds, and my revealing details about my first meeting with each participant provides readers with the opportunity to understand what I experienced in the two interview meetings and exposes the readers to rich and thick descriptions of events.

Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted the close ties between credibility and dependability, which can be achieved by using "overlapping methods." The overlapping methods I am referring to in this research project include narrative inquiry (method and tool) and critical race theory (tool). In addition, these researchers believe that the depth of credibility used in the study supports dependability directly. Shenton (2004) observed that the dependability of a study is achieved by "reporting in detail, thereby ensuring a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results" (p. 71). One technique used for this study to increase dependability consisted of the creation of an audit trail (Carcary, 2009). The audit trail consisted of the following process: (1) examining how the data were collected and maintained (Loh, 2013), (2) ensuring that transparency materialized within the writing about the methodology and analysis of this study (Koch, 2006), (3) and maintaining all records including the self-reflections, two semi-structured interviews, the screening tool and participant questionnaire (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the issue of objectivity (Shenton, 2004). The researcher needs to ensure that the findings of the study relate to the experiences shared by the participants of the study. Confirmability can be increased when the researcher admits to his or her own assumptions and predispositions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In my discussion of credibility, extensive provisions were stated and one of them was member checking (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Shenton, 2004). One technique used to increase confirmability is to check that the findings, recommendations, and interpretations match the data collected within the study (Loh, 2013). A colleague acted in the capacity as a peer reviewer (Shenton, 2004) and engaged in peer debriefing (Creswell, 2007) to ensure that the findings, recommendations, and interpretation matched the data collected in the study.

Limitation of the Research Design

There were several limitations noted in the research design of this study. These are noted as follows:

- The research site presented a small population of multiracial graduate students from which to attract potential participants to the study. An alternative would have been to reach out to another PWI or land grant institution to get a broader pool of participants. In addition, this would have allowed me to have a broader selection of participants with different ethnicities.
- Even though narrative inquiry allows the use of a small sample size of three to five individuals (Creswell, 2007), additional participants would have provided richer data for this study.
- Even though data collection occurred within the time period of approximately eight weeks, additional time allotted to include a focus group with the participants could have

revealed more similar or dissimilar perspectives, ideas, and opinions from the participants.

Summary

My study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of multiracial graduate students and their lived experiences. Throughout this process, I served as an active participant by listening to individuals share their experiences and voice their opinions. I collected data through semi-structured interviews and reflective journal responses written by the participants. By collecting two different types of data, I was able to validate the information shared in the different sources and to create narratives mirroring their experiences. The narratives are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 – The Lived Experiences of Multiracial Graduate Students

The guiding research question for this study was: “What are multiracial graduate students’ lived experiences?” In order to understand the complexity of the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students, narrative analysis and analysis of narrative (Rosenthal & Fischer-Rosenthal, 2004), which is incorporated into a six-step process, was utilized to reveal the participants’ backgrounds, elementary and secondary experiences, and their salient undergraduate and graduate experiences. The participants’ earlier life experiences directly influenced their graduate student lives within education and influenced their interactions with the people around them. This chapter will include brief participant descriptions, and it will reveal each participant’s lived experience as a multiracial individual in narrative form. Thereafter, the findings using analysis of narrative reveals and illuminates the experiences of the multiracial graduate students within this study.

Participant Descriptions

The participant descriptions include biographical information and descriptions of how the participants presented themselves upon our first meeting for the first interview. I have included descriptions of physical attributes as well, to allow visualizations for the reader. There were three multiracial graduate students in this research study, and their ages ranged from 30 to 33 years. The participants included two females (Kay and Mia) and one male (MJ).

MJ

MJ is 33 years old. He identifies as Chinese, Black, and White because of his parents’ heritage. His mother is Chinese and is originally from China, and his father is Black and White and is from the Midwest. MJ’s mom completed an associate’s degree, and his father completed a

general education degree (GED); together, their income ranged from \$81,000-\$100,000. His parents divorced when he was only two years old, and his mom raised him. His childhood was spent on the west coast where he lived in poverty with his family.

When I met MJ for the first time to conduct our first interview, I remember thinking that I expected him to be much taller. MJ is medium height with a slim build, but he represents himself as a strong, young adult. This can easily be attributed to MJ's constant boasting about his sports activities in high school and at the university. His hair color is black in artificial light where we conducted our first interview and is cut short because it is so straight. MJ has unusually high cheekbones, which I found fascinating in that they reveal that he is not just Asian looking because of the shape of his eyes. The shape of his face seems like an inverted triangle but rounded at the edges, presenting a longitudinal point toward his narrow, squared jawline. He is caramel brown in skin color, and definitely is not as fair skinned as some other Chinese Asians nor as black as some African American. His physical appearance accounts for the variety or blends of heritages people often attribute to him.

For our second meeting, MJ had a very short haircut and wore his glasses, which revealed an intellectual who was tired from working long hours in the lab and from being busy with his studies. Even though he was exhausted, MJ was sharp within the second interview and so much more comfortable conversing more openly about himself. What was most striking about MJ was his humor throughout the process of both interviews, because he needed to think about himself in ways he never thought of previously.

Kay

Kay is 31 years old and is married to a Caucasian male; they have one baby girl who is approximately four months old. Kay graduated with an advanced doctoral degree in December

2013. She was born in Germany and spent eight years of her life there. Her parents only completed high school, and both served in the US Army, which accounted for Kay's childhood experiences living in two different countries: the US and Germany. Her parents' income ranged from \$61,000 - \$80,000. Kay's mom is White, and her father is African American. She identifies as Black and White, or biracial/multiracial. She noted that people usually perceive her as Black.

When I met Kay the first time, I was surprised to see her even though I never formed an opinion of how she looked physically. She greeted me with so much excitement and seemed completely ready for our interview. I walked into her office and saw a cane behind the door and some pictures on the wall. Her office is extremely small, and I wondered how someone could work comfortably in a closet. She stepped toward her desk with a limp, which explained why she has a cane in her office. Kay is tall, thin and fair skinned. She has a small round face with high cheekbones, thin pinkish and medium-sized lips, and a short nose. Her hair was cut very short on her head, and the pictures she showed me of herself when she was younger revealed a young girl with much longer hair. Her hair is medium to dark brown, though being cut short, it appears dark brown to black, and is very curly. She mentioned that she had her hair cut short after the birth of her baby to make it more manageable for her, because she did not have much time to deal with it as she cared for her baby girl. Kay is a naturally talkative person with a wealth of information and knowledge, which she shared frankly within our first interview. There was no hesitation or fear in her demeanor. She shared so much information about herself, her past experiences, her thoughts and perceptions, and her philosophy. Kay is extremely knowledgeable about race, racism, and diversity issues, and her ability to overcoming the life challenges that she has faced explains why she is a success story today.

Mia

Mia is 30 years old and is married to a Caucasian male with an Italian heritage. She identifies as multiracial, because she is Asian (Chinese) and White. Her mother is Caucasian with British and Irish ancestry, whilst her father is Asian Chinese. Mia immigrated with her family to the US when she was five years old. They lived on the east coast for a couple of months before permanently moving to the Midwest. Both of her parents successfully completed doctoral degrees, and their combined income surpasses \$100,000. Mia shared that “in NZ [New Zealand] and in my home life, race was not something we talked about or thought a lot about. Events transpired as they did which may have been upsetting, but we didn’t spend time discussing them openly.”

Upon meeting Mia and standing next to her in the hallway, I felt like a giant. I’m not that tall, but standing next to Mia, I sure felt tall. On that day, she wore a black suit and looked extremely professional and ready for her interview. Even though Mia has a Caucasian mother, everything about her looks Chinese Asian. She even admitted that and doesn’t understand why some people do not recognize that about her. Mia has an oval face, is fair skinned, and her physical features resemble that of her Chinese heritage. She has a small and somewhat pointy nose, thin to medium lips, and medium to high cheekbones that define her face. Her hair is soot black, straight, and hangs below her shoulders. If I had not known or read the profile of her heritage, I would have thought she was solely Chinese American. It was soothing when Mia laughed at one point in our conversation and even pointed to her hands that were small with short fingers, which to her delineates her Chinese heritage. Mia was very nervous and seemed cautious in how she presented her information during our first interview. Her reticence was unfortunate, because there was some interesting information shared during our talk. But, to maintain a

comfortable level, I did not exert any pressure in securing additional information. Luckily upon our second meeting, Mia was more relaxed and comfortable, and she boasted a new look. She had cut her soot black straight hair into a bob, shaped to her neck in the back with long straight pointy sides. This quick image change increased her confidence and demeanor and somehow made her seem taller. It was a good day for our interview in which Mia revealed so much about herself, her experiences, and her personal thoughts and ideas, which allowed me to revisit some initial ideas from our first interview.

Narrative Analysis: The Lived Experiences of Multiracial Graduate Students

The three lived experience narratives about my participants reveal their actual encounters of different events throughout their lives. This chapter reveals the participants' experiences on a continuum of their life, which includes the past, present and future perspective. A title was chosen from their own "voice" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) to represent each participant and her or his life experience. Their experiences reveal key issues related to racial identity, physical appearance, racial categorization, the role of religion, and how these issues impact their lives on campus.

MJ

Self-identified Multiracial as Chinese, Black, and White

"Because I am multiracial"

We grew up poor in Sacramento. I grew up in the same house my whole life; it was a two-bedroom house. My mom is Chinese, and my dad is Black and White. My sister, my mom, and I lived in the house because my parents got divorced when I was about two years old. I wouldn't say that I grew up in the ghetto, but let's just say that most people got free lunch at my schools. I have gone to public schools my whole life, which consisted of the local elementary,

middle, and high school. These schools were pretty “mixed up” (*different people with different race and ethnicities*) and a lot of my friends were multiracial, so I experienced a pretty diverse environment. For college, I didn’t want to go too far, so I decided to go to a public university in Santa Cruz, California.

My sister and I do not look that Black so we were never totally accepted by our Black peers growing up. As a result of my mixed heritage, I have had multiple instances in which race has come up in a conversation, and I have said that I am $\frac{1}{4}$ Black to a Black person. Some Black people will get excited, some will be indifferent, but a surprising number of people will be snobbish about being Black. I have gotten responses along the lines of, “ $\frac{1}{4}$ Black? Why would you even bring that up?” Or, “You’re not Black,” or “How can you call yourself Black?” I never called myself Black; I called myself $\frac{1}{4}$ Black (which I am genetically). Things were different when I was growing up in Sacramento; the Black kids think you’re not Black, the Asians think you’re Asian, the Whites...they don’t care and whatever.... And that was then, and now it’s no big deal. I know what I am.

In middle school, I do remember that this was the age that students started to segregate according to their race. I remember a lot of the Hispanics would hang out together more, and the same applied to the Asians and Blacks. This changed in high school, because everyone became friends with everyone. I had a unique high school, because it literally bordered a bad part of town with a nice part of town. If you walked south a block from my high school, you entered into a poor neighborhood. If you walked north a block, you entered into a rich neighborhood. My school was also a performing arts magnet school, and in combining all of these elements together, we literally had kids from the ghetto and rich kids (and everything in-between) attending this school. I really enjoyed high school. I played sports year round, and I was in

several clubs. I played basketball, swam, and played soccer. Additionally, I was in the chess club and the math club. Through all of these extracurricular activities, I had made friends with just about every demographic that my school had to offer. Several years after high school, I found out that a couple of Asians didn't like me because I played sports. A friend of mine told me this, and he must have known the two people that didn't like me (this friend was also Asian). I found this weird, because I either never knew who these two people were, or I had forgotten who they were by the time that I had heard this story.

I entered into a public university close to where I lived to complete my undergraduate degree. When I was visiting my hometown one winter break during my second year, some friends met up with me to play basketball, and one person there was a White guy who was on our high school basketball team with me. He was a year behind me, so I asked him how he liked college. His reply, that I will never forget was, "I miss real Black people." I could instantly relate. Black people to us acted the same as everyone else. We realized that people from similar economic backgrounds tend to act the same. But in college, the Black people we met seemed to act like they were out of a movie or something...like they were playing a role or acting a part. We figured out that these kids were from well-off families, and they were trying to "act Black." We both had the same experience at the college level, even though I went to Santa Cruz (California), and my White friend moved to Colorado.

In comparison to my undergraduate school and its "hippy" nature, Sunflower University does have a different feel to it. People are friendly, and it kind of has a family feel to it, in as much as 25,000 random people can feel like a family. As a graduate student at Sunflower University, I noticed this "friendliness" at Sunflower when I was trying to use analytical equipment from other departments. I have also been trained in two different departments on how

to use their instruments, and now I can go to these two departments and use their equipment unsupervised.

On a negative note, the lack of diversity at Sunflower University is very noticeable. The lack of color on campus, especially among the professors, is noticeable to me, as well. My department is about ½ American and ½ Chinese in student enrollment. We have one Black faculty member in our department who is not American, because he is from somewhere in Africa. And, we have one Black student. We have no Black American faculty in our department. This past year they took department pictures, and I don't know who selected the pictures, but they were all White males in the picture. There were lots of complaints, and so my advisor mentioned that those with the most diversity probably should get into the picture.

There is a big difference coming from California to here. This is the "Bible Belt," and that is no joke. Google the "Bible Belt." This is definitely the "Bible Belt." And it is definitely apparent. Back from where I grew up, there were lots of different people. You might have someone who is Catholic across the street, someone who is Hindu living next to you, and others who are all mixed up (*racially and ethnically*), and so you grow up with these people. My friends and I we all grew up together, played together, went to each other's houses where our parents cooked for us. Whatever your religion, it did not matter. And you might not agree with another's religion, but it was okay. It is not like here where it's like, "That religion is evil and blah, blah." It feels like the Christians hate every other religion, like there is no tolerance in Kansas for people believing something different. And that's how things are like here. Maybe it's just me, because I feel the extreme side from what I'm used to and what I was exposed to. I definitely know that it is all super Christian out here. Even when I leave campus, it's super conservative. It's completely different.

During my first semester here, I was determined to prove that I belonged in a PhD program. I understood almost nothing. I worked in industry for many years before coming back to school. I was lost in the departmental seminars, but over time, I was able to grasp more and more from presentations. I think a lot of the problem was that my brain was not trained for research. I had never read a peer-reviewed journal article before. I was not used to watching presentations on scientific research. Over time I learned how to read articles; I now know how to skim through them, what to look for, and what to ignore. I thought I was going to kick butt in graduate school from day one. I was completely wrong. School started out challenging, but it definitely improved. Now things are great. My research is going well. I attend conferences, I ask questions at the end of presentations. I get very good grades, and I have won awards and fellowships.

My advisor is a White woman in her field. Although she is White, she is also a minority in her field [because of her gender]. She's successful now, and she's a mom. They (my advisor and her husband) have two older kids. One is a senior in high school, and the other one is maybe a freshman or sophomore...or maybe like 8th grade. I've met the younger one, but I did not have a conversation with him or anything. My relationship with my advisor is great. I picked this school, because I wanted to work for her. She is already established, i.e. not a young professor, so she does not pressure us to work super hard or pump out data as fast as we can. She is well funded, and she looks out for her students' best interest. She knows that I want to go back to industry, so she recommended that I attend two specific conferences instead of two other ones that I was thinking about attending. We both worked in industry before coming back to school.

Most of my friends from back home do not have their higher education degree and did not attend college because they could not afford it. I grew up in a poor area and we couldn't

really afford anything. If we plan a vacation, like camping or something, they can't afford it. They don't have degrees, and they have kids. So, when we plan on going somewhere, I inform them a year in advance, so they can start saving for it. And then I have another group of friends in the Bay area from my stay there for six years, and those are like my old college buddies. They are my work, post-college friends, and they tend to be a little more educated. It is much easier to plan and to go on trips with this group compared to my hometown friends. Unfortunately, my friends (the PhD students) here at Sunflower University... We don't have time for trips. We get along great, and we just like to kick it and go and have fun. We'll go out, we go to the bars, we have poker night, and we hang out. We'll go to restaurants or something, but it also depends on how busy we are. Once a month, we hang out, and we socialize, but it's only particular graduate students. All the Chinese people... They hang out together. A lot of the times those people do stuff together. But when we have a poker night, we invite everyone. Basically, all of my interactions is with non-multiracial students. I only know two other multiracial graduate students. Of the two multiracial students that I know, one is American, and one has dual citizenship from the U.S. and the Philippines. We definitely don't talk about being multiracial. Initially, we asked each other, "What are you?" and I responded, "Chinese, Black, and White."

There is a group of international students that I met at Sunflower University. Here on campus, they are international; they are from other countries. They would ask, "What country are you from?", I would reply, "Like this one?" No one has ever asked me that before I moved here to this town and state. And now I get it all the time. It was a bit upsetting at first, and I would get mad because it did bother me a little bit at some level. My girlfriend, who is Filipino, shared her story about arriving at LAX and noticing all these Asians, and she wondered, "Where are all the Americans?" I laughed out loud and then I mentioned to her that they are American.

I'm pretty secure in who I am. I am not Chinese, I am not Black, and I am not White. I am Chinese, Black, and White. I don't have any identity crisis, and maybe all of this is easy for me to say because I am multiracial. I definitely identify as mixed. I don't try to fit into any one group. I make friends with whomever I make friends with; I don't try to psychoanalyze why I make the friends I do. I don't worry if my friends are a diverse enough group. And that thing [reference to Blackness as advantage on applications], I will always use that to my advantage. I have no moral judgment. I remember when the Cosby show first started, and it was a big deal. Now there are several sitcoms with Black, Mexican, and Asian middle class families. I definitely noticed that there are mixed couples on TV ads and movies now. My Dad is super happy now to see how his mixed kids have grown up. He observed how we got good grades, made lots of friends, participated in extracurricular activities...all while not having any racial issues. And if you ask me what I hope for, I don't really know. I didn't really experience any adversity, so I guess that I hope most people feel this way (*not experience any adversity*).

Kay

Self-identified Multiracial/Biracial as Black and White

“I never passed”

My mother is a white woman from Wisconsin, and my father is a black man from Illinois. Both of my parents were in the service. My father was in the Army, and my mother was in the Air Force. The military was a way to escape, because both of them grew up poor. My parents were married and eight years later I was born on a military base in Frankfurt, Germany. I have two siblings. My older sister is 10 years older than me. She has a different father, although my dad thought of her as his own. She is White. My younger sister is 18 months younger than me,

and we share the same racial background, but she is lighter skinned with lighter brown hair. I see myself as biracial, and she views herself as non-raced.

When I was about 7 years old I had my first racial experience. Someone said, “Go back on the ship to where you came from!” I didn’t know what this was all about. At that time, I didn’t have any defense mechanisms. Before Wisconsin, we lived in Germany, and we had people there from all over the world. And who you were besides being an American wasn’t important. So, going into this environment where looks mattered, I didn’t know what to do.

When I was about 8 years old, my aunt mentioned to me that I was Black. I did not understand this concept, and so my aunt explained further. She is my mom’s sister-in-law, and she is White. My aunt mentioned that God bakes children and people in an oven. However, He made an error when He baked people for too long, and they turned out Black. Then He tried again, and He baked more people, and this time He baked them too White. Finally, He baked people that looked like me that were not too Black and not too White but were just right with a light brown skin. At eight years old this made me feel better, because I did not understand the differences... I believed I was a “golden child,” and did not comprehend the issues concerning race until I moved into the rural areas.

My experiences at school have not been spectacular. An elementary teacher mentioned to the class that she would call out all the racial categories and that we needed to raise our hand if we fit that box. I looked at her sheet to find where I belonged with all the categories, so that I would be ready to answer and to raise my hand. There was no “Golden” box. The teacher went through the whole list, and everyone was raising his or her hand for the categories. At the end, the teacher called out my name and told me, “Kay, you are Black.”

During middle school and high school, I was in the band, and the band consisted of a diverse group of students, because we lived in a diverse neighboring town. I became the “teacher’s pet” because I worked hard and was very smart. I wasn’t popular and did not “fit in” with the popular kids. I had three issues I contended with during middle school and high school: understanding my racial identity, dealing with weight problems, and being smart.

From August 2000 to May 2005, I pursued my undergraduate studies at Sunflower University. Some of my favorite experiences were living in the dorms, being part of the marching band, and studying abroad. During my freshman year, I lived in an intensive study floor, and I became great friends with most of the women on my wing. I am still friends with a few of those women today.

I learned early on while at Sunflower University that people didn’t expect too much out of me academically. Many of my friends dropped out of the university when it came time to search for apartments, and I surmised that it had something to do with the climate at Sunflower University. I experienced culture shock because Sunflower had so many White students. While working at the cafeteria, I developed what is called a “mixed Dar” because I would search out for other mixed people, and then we would look at each other and acknowledge each other by giving each other a look as if to say, “I know you are someone like me!”

I was part of the marching band, and only 7 students out of the 300-person marching band were students of color. Most of them (White) thought that I was an affirmative action case or an athlete. I was neither of those things. I felt often that I had to prove myself in my work, and I did not like feeling like an exception to the rule. With large class sizes and lack of mentorship, it was so easy to feel invisible. With lack of mentorship at Sunflower University, I was lucky Dr. Jay (pseudonym) found me. He took me in and guided me from my junior year on; he helped me

navigate this predominately White university through a portion of my doctoral work. I know that many other students of color do not have mentorship and may feel as though they can't succeed.

Presently, I work at Sunflower University, and I have realized that there has been “not much change,” There is “no integration,” and there is “no recruitment of diversity.” There is “no ideal Sunflower University 2025” because it is not real. Thinking about what it really means makes me angry. I do realize that my current teaching is my form of “agency,” because this is how I promote change. Sometimes I get little teacher love notes from students sharing their experiences. On occasion, students will report understanding what I was talking about in class and see it in everything they do. I don't know if they take action on what they see, but at least I know they are now seeing disparities between different people.

During my studies at my other public university, I had a great number of associates [as friends], but maybe a total of five friends that were more like brothers or sisters to me. My friends are like-minded. We are able to share all kinds of experiences. I flourished in the environment at the public university where I completed my master's degree and where I completed my doctoral degree. Most of the students there were Turkish international students and White students, and they were all sociology students who knew better than to question race or to ask where you were from or what you were. Most of these students were studying about multiracial student experiences, and so they were aware of the challenges we experience.

I purposely searched for a school that focused on diversity and for a graduate advisor who does similar research that I do. I sought out Dr. Chance (pseudonym). Dr. Chance's areas of interest are multiracial families, multiracial churches, and race. I study race and multiracial identity. He was a perfect fit for me. Dr. Chance has challenged me and has helped me to grow into the academic that I am today. I feel that we have a very good relationship, something like a

mentorship. He is almost like an uncle. I think he is a positive influence. He is very active, he saw how hard I worked, and he respected that. And he saw that I was serious, and this was when the personal relationship started building.

Dr. Chance has supported my faith as a Christian. He has shown me that you can be a scholar and a follower of Christ. I was like his minion I guess because he told me.... We attend the same church. And he told me he wasn't going to do anymore race studies, because he's going to do more Christian studies. And he said, "Kay, this is now your job to kind of do this." I was taken under his wing, and he mentioned, "Your turn." Presently, he is helping me and writing recommendations for me to Christian schools.

I am a blend; I see myself and identify myself as biracial. I think that your skin color does push you toward one side or the other with regard to racial identity. I know that my skin color is light enough that I may be seen as something ambiguous rather than seen as Black. And being Black in our society gives you a lot more deficits and obstacles. Society is pushing me more toward being Black than toward being White. I can be multiracial, biracial, or Black. I can't be White, simply because I do not have the physical appearance of looking White! I recognize that racial identity is prescribed in society, and it's others' perceptions of you concerning the color of your skin. Because of this, I have three identities: (1) the political identity, (2) the social identity, and (3) the personal identity. The political identity is the person who observes the inequities and who suffers ill treatment because of having light skin. The social person is the teaching professional, and the social identity is the person I truly am, the one who hangs out at home in pajamas and who talks casually to my friends and who I know understands me. But there is a wall of division between others and me, especially when I am questioned about who I am. One of my colleagues kept mentioning to me, "You should dye your hair blonde" and all these things.

And then she mentioned that I should straighten my hair. This is an African-American woman with dark skin, and she has an issue with her skin. She wants to be White, and I confronted her on her obsession about whiteness. I don't have her issues; I don't want to be White.

I navigate society by studying about race and by recognizing that my light skin affords me some privileges within society. Now, there is this new kind of racism that I call modern racism where instead of acknowledging and tolerating difference, we push it aside. It's not a big deal anymore. And by not paying attention to that difference, we also do not pay attention to that inequality, and we do not pay attention to stratification. We do not involve people's everyday experiences. We say it is not a big deal. Historical atrocities and inequalities have contributed to where we are today. These things are not of the past. They are still today. And by being color-blind, you are just saying that, "Oh, I don't want to see it." At least I know that my gorgeous baby with her baby blue eyes will be treated much better. She will be treated very, very well because she looks the part of the dominant group. She looks White. She might have a little curl come up later on, but they will think that it's adorable rather than nappy. I never passed completely. My sister passed, and now at least my daughter passes!

Mia

Self-identified Multiracial as Asian (Chinese) and White

"You're an outsider"

My father is Chinese, his heritage is from China, and my mother is Caucasian, consisting of Irish and British. My sister and I were both born in New Zealand. In 1985, when I was about 5 years old, my family emigrated from New Zealand to the United States to pursue job

opportunities. Both of my parents have PhDs, so they value education. We lived in Maryland for a year and then came to Kansas.

We are an immigrant family, and we are not a typical American family. There's always a stereotype of an Asian immigrant family emphasizing education, and math in particular. I would say that we fell into that stereotype, because my father would have me practice math before meeting my friends at the pool. When it came to holidays, it was difficult to understand when friends became irritated because they "had to visit their families." I would think: "Gosh, you are so lucky because you can see them." The last time we went back to New Zealand was for my honeymoon at Christmas 2008. We try to go back every 4-5 years or so. It's really expensive, and so we can't go as much as we want.

By middle school and high school, I had grown up here so I felt more like I fit in. When I entered into 8th grade, an African boy, who was new to our school, used a racial slur to my face. I was taken aback by his words given that he was an immigrant, too. During middle school and high school, I dated African American boys, and the African American girls did not approve. They said I wasn't "Black enough to date a Black guy." I had two boyfriends who were African American, and we ended up breaking up because these girls were so mean. I had a lot of problems with that group of girls, and I was never friends with those girls. I avoided talking to the African American guys after that, because it was just like too much trouble. They were all in the same group. Eventually I veered away from those boys that I liked. The other kids in school, besides this particular clique with their specific group dynamic, treated me like I was like them. They were all great, and there was no mention of race and of not being the right race. It was weird!

When I entered into Sunflower University, I have had many successes. Academically, I was able to do well in my bachelors, masters, and doctoral classes. I have always felt guided and supported by the faculty mentors I had and currently have doing my doctoral work. I really appreciate the encouragement faculty give students on this campus to get involved, to write, and to do research.

Unfortunately, I have witnessed one professor who wanted to use enrollment management strategies to exclude Chinese students from her class because of their presentation skills. It is my understanding that in China, students are not taught how to give oral presentations. I am reminded of microaggressions because I have heard some faculty make some off handed comments where they do not think they are being racist or stereotyping people, but they are. Some microaggressions include lumping all Chinese students into one group with comments such as “Oh the Chinese” and “the Chinese.” Faculty would think twice before saying, “I don’t want Black students in my class” or before lumping all Hispanic students into one group. They would never make racist comments against American minority students, but somehow it’s okay to say, “Oh, I have a Chinese student in my class.”

Minority classification is very important when granting scholarships. Sunflower University does an excellent job of financially supporting minorities, especially African American, Hispanic American, and American Indian minorities. These groups have been historically underrepresented on campus, so I realize that this is where the scholarship focus needs to be. However, this can make other groups of minority students feel as if their experiences do not matter, that they are fine, and that they might as well be part of the “majority” population. I have felt left out of the minority discussion, because I do not fall into one of these categories. As a result, I am lumped into the “majority” population or discarded into the minority “just fine”

students. It is bothersome that scholarships and other financial support that are listed for “minority” groups really only apply to a few groups. For those who do not qualify, it leaves us wondering, “If I am not a minority, then what am I?” I hope that as more resources become available, this will change.

There is also a lot of formal support for students who are religiously affiliated - Christian or Catholic - to get involved with campus organizations, and there is a campus climate that favors these religious groups. Students who are not part of these religious groups can feel alone, and at times, ostracized in discussions. The other day I consciously counted the number of times references to the Christian religion came up in regular conversation from “bless your heart” to “someone above was looking out for you” and “please pray for her.” There were eight occasions this happened in a one-day span. It is most uncomfortable not being Christian in a state that highly values religion. God and praying can come up in nearly every conversation and situation. If you let on that you are not Christian, there can be the risk of loss of respect, a lot of questions, and attempts to convert. Non-Christians are often left going along with the conversation and pretending they believe. I brush these comments off knowing that these expressions are probably part of the Kansas culture, but they can cause discomfort. I’m also left feeling like I’m “in the closet” religiously speaking because I am not a Christian, and I worry that people would treat me differently if they knew.

One of my friends is currently completing the MPA program. She is Chinese and works very hard to improve her English, although her language skills are very good. She wants to improve her English, and she has told me there are very few opportunities for her to practice her English in an organized manner. The one opportunity she has found is Bible study; however, she is not interested in this because she is not Christian. She has said that this Bible study is actively

promoted to international students, which is aggravating to her. She wishes there were more secular opportunities for international students to practice English.

The relationships I have with my graduate faculty advisors have been very good. I have felt supported and respected. In all cases, my graduate faculty advisors have been multiracial. My undergraduate advisor was not multiracial; he was Caucasian. He was also excellent. We developed a close relationship and still correspond with one another. My doctoral advisor and I are both pretty direct people, and I appreciate that part of her personality. If there is a question or an issue, we get it finished and taken care of quickly. She encourages me to get through the program quickly and to read and to be knowledgeable about my area. She is very hands-on, which I can appreciate since I also want to get done quickly. Right now, I work full-time and am studying part-time. I am not completing the program as quickly as my advisor or I would like in an ideal world, but we have both accepted it. She understands my life circumstances, and we are moving on with a timeline that works in my life.

My worst advising experience was during my Bachelor of Science degree. I initially was pre-med and intended to become a psychiatrist. My pre-med advisor told me I would “never be a successful doctor” and would “never get through med school” unless I took more classes. She was not willing to consider that I was trying to balance work and still get good grades. In the end, I left the pre-med field, because she convinced me that she was right – that I couldn’t be a doctor. At that point, I was only 18 years old.

Most of the challenges that I have experienced at Sunflower University are because I am multiracial, I am an immigrant, and I am not Christian. While I have not experienced overt racism at Sunflower University, I do feel as if there is an element of infantilization that is projected onto Asian women. I have on several occasions been treated as if I am a naïve child

and have not been respected for my personal decisions. I believe I have to defend myself more than others. I have had to learn to be assertive whilst polite so as not to fall out of the gender stereotype of being sufficiently feminine.

When people see me, they are not sure in what race to classify me. I have been asked if I am “Filipino,” “Hawaiian,” “Native Alaskan,” or “one type of Asian.” I don’t mind not being put in a box, like a category. I’ve got dual citizenship. I am an American because I have spent pretty much my whole life here, but I am also a KIWI. I don’t want to lose that tie. To this day, random strangers at a store continue to ask, “Are you Filipino?” I would reply, “Do I really need to talk to you about my history? I don’t even know you.” Sometimes it’s nice to talk about it, but if it’s a complete stranger, depending on the day, it means you’re an outsider!

Summary

The three stories above reveal the experiences of the multiracial graduate students. These stories were placed on a continuum that included their background information, their elementary, secondary and university experiences, and finally included their ideas and hopes for the future. These stories only included their actual lived experiences, which emphasizes and reinforces the purpose of this study. The following section of analysis of narrative discusses the lived experiences of the participants in relation to CRT and the past literature used in this study.

Analysis of Narrative: The Findings

The findings of this study reveal that racism, racial microaggressions, colorism, religious practices, and the campus environment influences the perceptions and lived experiences of multiracial graduate students. Even though the participants’ lived experiences were revealed in narrative analysis, this section expands to draw specific attention to the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) that surface within the lived experiences of the participants. The data presented in

this section are retrieved from the narratives of the participants but specifically emphasize the participants' counter-narratives, which dismantle the perspective of the majority societal views (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). All three participants' lived experiences serve as a counter-narrative to society's perspective that everyone receives equal opportunities and that racism and discrimination do not exist within everyday experiences. However, with the use of CRT as a tool, my data reveal that race, racism, and colorism still form part of both the macro and micro echelons of society that adversely impact minority individuals' daily lived experiences (Bimper, 2014; Vasquez Heilig, Brown & Brown, 2012).

Finding 1: Racism as a Socially Constructed, Everyday Event for Multiracial Graduate Students in their Counter-Narratives

One central tenet that is featured in the lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students in this study is the everyday occurrence of race and racism in today's society (Bimper, 2014; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). There are many ways in which race and racism are salient within the daily lives of multiracial graduate students (Omi & Winant, 1994). Additional, subtle ways of recognizing race and racism can occur by examining the racial microaggressions (Hartlep, 2009; Wing, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, Esquilin, 2007) experienced within the lives of the participants. Most of the participants' experiences fall within the context of education, and Vasquez Heilig, Brown and Brown (2012) observed that "unequal and oppressive social relationships [occur] among different racial groups" (p. 407) within educational environments. The following sections will explore the experiences of all three participants to thoroughly observe and to note how these events impacted their lived experiences. The three areas to be considered within this context are physical appearance, racial categorization, and racial identity.

Physical Appearance. Physical appearance is believed to be the foremost influential factor that has shaped perceptions of multiracial individuals, because it includes how they look, their hair color, their skin tone, the shape of their eyes and nose, etc., and it is often the first characteristic to be perceived by others (Renn, 2008). A noticeable account in all three participants' lived experiences is their encounters with how they look and how they are perceived. Comments within the narratives reveal the subtleties to their appearance or the overt statements made about their appearance over the course of their lives. The accounts presented over time reveal that instances where looks mattered, or color mattered, materialized from a young age to their present daily lives.

MJ shared quite a bit about the experiences related to physical appearance that he and his sister encountered as young children:

My sister and I do not look that Black so we were never totally accepted by our Black peers growing up. As a result of my mixed heritage, I have had multiple instances in which race has come up in a conversation, and I have said that I am $\frac{1}{4}$ Black to a Black person. Some Black people will get excited, some will be indifferent, but a surprising number of people will be snobbish about being Black. I have gotten responses along the lines of, "1/4 Black? Why would you even bring that up?" Or, "You're not Black," or "How can you call yourself Black?" I never called myself Black; I called myself $\frac{1}{4}$ Black (which I am genetically).

The statement above reveals how others perceived and treated MJ because of his physical appearance, which ultimately determined where others believed that he belonged as an individual. However, one observes that MJ thinks of himself as mixed because he stated that genetically, he is " $\frac{1}{4}$ Black". He also admitted, "I know what I am." Most

importantly, MJ recognized that his experiences were group specific. He said, “The Black kids think you’re not Black, the Asians think you’re Asian, the Whites they don’t care and whatever...”

Mia spoke about her experiences and their impact on her with regard to her physical appearance and especially her skin color. This happened during her middle to high school years, which made schooling extremely hard for her. It was hard for her because of the ambiguity of her physical appearance and how it impacted her relationships with different groups of people. Mia shared the following:

By middle school and high school, I had grown up here so I felt more like I fit in. When I entered into 8th grade, an African boy who was new to our school used a racial slur to my face. I was taken aback by his words given that he was an immigrant, too. During middle and high school, I dated African American boys, and the African American girls did not approve. They said I wasn’t “Black enough to date a Black guy.” I had two boyfriends who were African American, and we ended up breaking up because these girls were so mean. I had a lot of problems with that group of girls, and I was never friends with those girls. I avoided talking to the African American guys after that because it was just like too much trouble. They were all in the same group. Eventually I veered away from those boys that I liked. The other kids in school, besides this particular clique with their specific group dynamic, treated me like I was like them. They were all great and there was no mention of race, and not being the right race... It was weird!

Mia recognized that her relationships were group-specific. She “had a lot of problems” with African American girls, because they “were all in the same group.” Yet, with the rest of the “kids in school,” she was treated like she “was like them.” She never had any issues with the other ethnicities in school, and “there was no mention of race, and not being the right race.”

As an adult on campus, Kay revealed an experience with a colleague regarding her physical appearance. This colleague wanted Kay to change her image to match the color of her skin and to present a different image. Kay would not have it because she is comfortable the way she is:

One of my colleagues kept mentioning to me, “You should dye your hair blonde” and all these things. And then she mentioned that I should straighten my hair. This is an African-American woman with dark skin, and she has an issue with her skin. She wants to be White, and I confronted her on her obsession about whiteness. I don’t have her issues; I don’t want to be White.

Kay recognized who she is and is aware of the color of her skin. She further discussed her understanding of the challenges related to her skin color in her daily life. Kay is also aware of how society perceives her other physical attributes beyond her skin color:

I navigate society by studying about race and by recognizing that my light skin affords me some privileges within society. I know that my skin color is light enough that I may be seen as something ambiguous rather than something Black. And being Black in our society gives you a lot more deficits and obstacles. Now, there is this new kind of racism that I call modern racism where instead of acknowledging and tolerating difference, we push it aside. It’s not a big deal anymore. And by not paying attention to that difference, we also do not pay

attention to that inequality, and we do not pay attention to stratification. We do not involve people's everyday experiences. We say it is not a big deal. Historical atrocities and inequalities have contributed to where we are today. These things are not of the past. They are still today. And by being color-blind, you are just saying that, "Oh, I don't want to see it."

Because of Kay's advanced studies in race, she was able to navigate the challenges she faced in society. She is completely aware that racism still exists in the daily lives of minority and multiracial individuals and that some people choose to be "color-blind."

In the aforementioned quotes, it becomes apparent that racial encounters regarding skin color occur from an early age for multiracial individuals. MJ's experience reflected these experiences when he was young, Mia revealed her experiences from middle to high school, and Kay's experiences started from a very young age and persisted into adulthood. These multiracial experiences reinforce the idea that racism, skin color, discrimination, and unequal status occur in different social groups from different ages (Vasquez Heilig, Brown & Brown, 2012). Harris (2008) noted that even though there is an ever growing anti-race discourse, "racism has not disappeared," and as such "continues to shape the life chances of persons according to race" (p. 2). This attribute reinforces Renn's (2008) research that physical appearance is an influential factor that shapes perceptions of multiracial individuals because of their hair color, their skin tone, the shape of their eyes and nose, etc., and it is often the first characteristic to be perceived by others. Further, in an earlier study, Renn (2004) observed that physical appearance influenced cultural assumptions that were made about multiracial students within the higher education environment.

Racial categorization. Race is closely intertwined with the perception of racial categorization, because it extends to racial grouping and classification of people that impact social interactions and determine social hierarchy (Starr, 1992). Racial categories further impact individuals “fit” and belonging within society. Root (1996) observed that these racial categorizations and the ambiguity of multiracial individuals impact their “place” in higher education. The societal constructions of the “one-drop rule” (Roth, 2005) and “hypodescent” (Nakashima, 1992) allowed Whites the opportunity of separating different groups of people from each other, but this was overturned with the landmark case of *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). Today the OMB allows individuals to classify and to categorize themselves in the U.S. census, which resulted in 3% of Americans marking themselves as two or more races in the 2010 U.S. census. However, multiracial individuals continue to experience the ambiguity attributed to the need for the expansion of racial categories because many believe “the advocates of multiracial categories were white mothers that were particularly interested in distancing their multiracial children from the societal injury of being black in America” (Powell, 1996, p. 795). The participants in this study revealed quite distinct narratives of lived experiences related to racial categorization.

MJ revealed his experiences with racial categorization from the perspective of when he was a child with this phenomenon to his recent experiences as an adult. As a child, MJ noticed “the Black kids think you’re not Black, the Asians think you’re Asian, the Whites they don’t care and whatever...” This might seem conventional from his perspective when MJ was a child, but it differs considerably to his perspective and understanding now as an adult:

They [international students] would say, “What country are you from?” and I would reply, “Like this one?” No one has ever asked me that before I moved here

to this town and state. And now I get it all the time. It was a bit upsetting at first, and I would get mad because it did bother me a little bit at some level.

MJ points out that international students questioning his heritage, and placing him in the category of an international, “was a bit upsetting at first.” But in his narrative in Chapter 4, he suggested that many internationals expect Americans to be the majority of the White population.

The experiences noted by Kay revealed quite distinctly the recognition of how society needed to impose racial categorization. She shared the following:

I may be seen as something ambiguous rather than something Black. And being Black in our society gives you a lot more deficits and obstacles. Society is pushing me more toward being Black than toward being White. I can be multiracial, biracial, or Black. I can't be White simply because I do not have the physical appearance of looking White!

This astute understanding of racial categorization reinforces Kay's understanding of society because of her racial studies in higher education. Moreover, it reaffirms the close connection of physical appearance as a strong influencer in how individuals are categorized and perceived in society (Renn, 2008).

Finally, Mia recognized the adverse consequences she experienced because of how she is perceived and categorized in society. Due to her mixed heritage, she stated, “I have felt left out of the minority discussion, because I do not fall into one of these categories. As a result, I am lumped into the ‘majority’ population or discarded into the minority ‘just fine’ students.” Because of her categorization, Mia is aware of the hardship she experiences in receiving scholarships or any other monetary support for school. This could explain why Mia stated, “I don't mind not being put in a box, like a category...” From this perspective, if she was placed

into one of the required boxes, maybe this could allow her to access scholarships or additional funding for her studies. However, the most frustrating experiences are when people classify Mia into different categories not close to what she believes she belongs to, and she believes that they (the strangers) do not have the right to question her heritage. She stated:

When people see me they are not sure what race to classify me in. I have been asked if I am “Filipino,” “Hawaiian,” “Native Alaskan,” or “one type of Asian.” To this day, random strangers at a store continue to ask, “Are you Filipino?” I would reply, “Do I really need to talk to you about my history? I don’t even know you.” Sometimes it’s nice to talk about it, but if it’s a complete stranger, depending on the day, it means you’re an outsider!

The assessment of Mia’s statement that “you’re an outsider” can be viewed as a catch 22. First, from Mia’s perspective, the individuals asking the intrusive questions can be viewed as “outsiders.” The second observation is that with others continually asking her where she belongs, she can be the “outsider.” This experience reinforces the dilemma faced by multiracial individuals in general and by the participants in this study in particular.

Racial identity. Rockquemore, Brunsma and Delgado (2009) determined that racial categorization has an impact on racial identity and the services, resources, and opportunities received within higher education. These researchers further noted that racial categorization and racial identity “interact, overlap and contradict each other when working with the mixed-race population” (Rockquemore et.al, 2009, p. 29). A limitation of this perspective lends itself to readers understanding that there is a distinction between racial category and racial identity when working with a “multiracial population” of a “mixed-race of people who checked off more than one race as their racial category” (Rockquemore et.al., 2009, p. 29). Most absurdly, these

researchers divulged that racial identities are manifested in application forms, census documents, admission forms and any other document that requires categorization (Rockquemore et.al., 2009). However, from the multiracial identity development approaches, Renn (2008) perceived that multiracial students associated their identity across several patterns. Further, Wijeyesinghe (2001) also noticed that the heritage of multiracial individuals might not coincide with their racial identity. Thus, it is noted that the racial identity and the racial categories prescribed to the participants within their lived experiences do not coincide with their (the multiracial graduate students) perceptions of themselves. Renn (2008) and Wijeyesinghe (2001) determined that environment and location impacted the racial identity development of multiracial individuals. Irrespective of these factors, for the multiracial individuals in this study, one racial identity did not necessarily supersede another racial identity; to them, multiracial identity development had no end, because it is fluid.

The narratives revealed from the three participants concerning their racial identity reveals the complexities associated with multiracial identity development. MJ astutely asserted that he has no problems with or concerns about whom he is and the mixtures of which he consists:

I'm pretty secure in who I am. I am not Chinese, I am not Black, and I am not White. I am Chinese, Black, and White. I don't have any identity crisis, and maybe all of this is easy for me to say because I am multiracial. I definitely identify as mixed. I don't try to fit into any one group. I make friends with whom I make friends with; I don't try to psychoanalyze why I make friends with whom I do. I don't worry if my friends are a diverse enough group.

Further, MJ asserted that he makes friends with anyone irrespective of their racial identity or ethnicity. Most importantly, MJ revealed that he has no "identity crisis" because his awareness

and knowledge of his background and mixtures allows him this ability. However, it is most noticeable that MJ realizes the advantage of one part of his mixture in his identity: “And that thing.... (referencing Blackness as advantage on applications) I will always use that to my advantage.”

Kay is very aware of how identities can and should be portrayed in society. Each identity portrayed can maximize her attributes to benefit Kay. This sentiment was revealed as follows:

I am a blend; I see myself and identify myself as biracial! I recognize that racial identity is prescribed in society, and it's the perception of other people of you concerning the color of your skin. Because of this, I have three identities: (1) the political identity, (2) the social identity, and (3) the personal identity. The political identity is the person who observes the inequities and who suffers ill treatment because of having light skin. The social person is the teaching professional, and the social identity is the person I truly am - the one who hangs out at home in pajamas and who talks casually to my friends and whom I know understands me.

Most importantly, Kay realizes that racial identity is not separate from skin color. These two factors work hand in hand, and the color of one's skin could either have a positive or a negative effect on the individual. Thus, Kay stated that her political identity “observes the inequities and who suffers ill treatment because of having light skin.” Kay knows she straddles the color-line barrier and understands how the racial category phenomenon and colorism becomes a dual-edged sword depending on whose perspective. Colorism is defined by and “involves discrimination against persons based on their physiognomy, regardless of their perceived racial identity” (Harris, 2008, p. 3).

Mia defined her identity, not in the form of color or racial categorization, but rather as one rooted in country affiliation. She said, “I’ve got dual citizenship. I am an American because I have spent pretty much my whole life here, but I am also a KIWI. I don’t want to lose that tie.” Mia’s perspective of racial identity reveals the idea that multiracial identity development has no end; there are no boundaries, and identity development occurs not only from the perspective of racial categorization but also from ethnicity or birthright.

Summary

The three tenets explored above regarding racism occur every day, race is socially constructed, and the narratives and voice of the participants forming the counter narratives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) showcased that the lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students in this study are invaluable. Within their counter-narratives, their “experiential knowledge” (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado & Crenshaw, 1993, p. 6) legitimizes their voice, because there is a commonality of experiences among multiracial individuals. By allowing multiracial graduate students the opportunity to share their experiences via their narratives, critical race theory and its tools “empower participants because it may enable them to critically reflect upon their social conditions and provide them with a voice that challenges the dominant discourse and stories that have been based on White norms and privileges” (Singer, 2009, p. 105-106).

Finding 2: Racism influencing Campus Climate and Diversity with White Privilege superseding Multiracial Graduate Students

The central tenet that surfaced in this section of the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students was White dominance and racism superseding the importance over people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). With this tenet, Whites are not interested in eliminating

racism from the macro culture within society. As a result, the campus climate becomes an eminent environment where racism is practiced within different capacities. Consequently, in observing the central tenet of White dominance over people of color, the campus racial climate with its four dimensions becomes a useful tool to analyze the racism within the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students (Summer, 2012). These dimensions include: (1) the institutional and historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion, (2) structural diversity, (3) the psychological climate, and (4) the behavioral climate (Summer, 2012). Race plays a key phenomenon in the campus racial climate. The findings within this section will inevitably reveal the impact of the dimensions of the campus racial climate on diversity and its support of White privilege over multiracial graduate students.

Institutional and historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion. Other research has revealed that the institutional and historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion impacted how people of color were treated (Griffin, Muñiz & Espinoza, 2012). Further, researchers have observed that institutions that ignored past racial inequities might indirectly perpetuate the same racial inequities of the past by ignoring the true value of diversity. The lived experiences of the three participants in this research reveal these components.

MJ revealed an experience that occurred in the past year within his department. Pictures were taken of the students and faculty, and after these pictures were taken, there were many complaints:

This past year they took department pictures, and I don't know who selected the pictures, but they were all White males in the picture. There were lots of complaints, and so my advisor mentioned that those with the most diversity probably should get into the picture.

The statement by the advisor of “those with the most diversity probably should get into the picture” reveals the purpose that people of color serve to the White majority in the predominantly White university.

In Kay’s experiences, she has witnessed the campus environment of Sunflower University from a student perspective and now as a present employee. Kay shared her lived experience from the perspective of a current employee who originally was a student:

Presently, I work at Sunflower University, and I have realized that there has been “not much change,” there is “no integration,” and there is “no recruitment of diversity.” There is “no ideal Sunflower University 2025,” because it is not real.

Thinking about what it really means makes me angry.

Many years later as a professional in the field, Kay still witnesses the age-old practices of racism and White dominance. Time has passed from when she was a student at Sunflower University to those experiences now as an adult who is working professionally within the Sunflower campus environment.

The lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students in this study reflect what some researchers have shared about various institutions. For instance, Griffin, Munoz, and Espinoza (2012) stated, “An institution with an unacknowledged history of segregation may be perceived as not valuing diversity or equity and may not be willing to engage in or offer strong support for efforts to diversify graduate education” (p. 540).

Structural diversity. This dimension reveals that structures within the university system benefit some groups of individuals and that such benefits “become embedded into these organizational structural processes” (Milem, Chang & Antonia, 2005, p. 18). Structural diversity includes components of budget allocations, curriculum design, reward structures, and admissions

into colleges (Griffin, Muñiz & Espinoza, 2012). The experiences revealed by the participants in this study reflect structural inequities.

Mia recognized inequities regarding who is allowed to receive benefits from the university as opposed to those who are excluded within the institutional policy and the historical legacy of this predominantly White University:

Sunflower University does an excellent job of financially supporting minorities, especially African American, Hispanic American, and American Indian minorities. These groups have been historically underrepresented on campus so I realize that this is where the scholarship focus needs to be. However, this can make other groups of minority students feel as if their experiences do not matter, that they are fine, and that they might as well be part of the “majority” population.

This revelation reveals that Mia noticed that even though she is a multiracial individual who is part of the greater group of people of color, she is excluded from the minority groups of individuals who are eligible to receive financial support. As a result, she poignantly observed that it not only affects her but many other minority students who straggle the middle line.

MJ also shared his lived experience as a multiracial graduate student within his department. The information shared is staggering with his observation of the low diversity of individuals within his department. However, MJ realized that it is not only a problem recognizable within his department, but that it is also recognizable university-wide:

On a negative note, the lack of diversity at Sunflower University is very noticeable. The lack of color on campus, especially among the professors, is noticeable to me, as well. My department is about ½ American and ½ Chinese in

student enrollment. We have one Black faculty in our department who is not American because he is from somewhere in Africa, and we have one Black student. We have no Black American faculty in our department.

The lack of diversity within MJ's department reinforces inequitable admission processes practiced by Sunflower University. MJ did not stipulate the difference of ethnicity of "1/2 American," but since he mentioned in his lived experience that the majority of individuals in a picture contained White male students, one can conclude that the majority of American students within his department are White.

Kay revealed her lived experience as an undergraduate student at Sunflower University. Kay was raised in a diverse town with a variety of people, and she recognized the difference in population demographics when she started her undergraduate education:

I experienced culture shock because Sunflower had so many White students.

While working at the cafeteria, I developed what is called a "mixed dar" because I would search out for other mixed people, and then we would look at each other and acknowledge each other by giving each other a look... I know you are someone like me!

As a result of this low diversity of people of color on the university campus, Kay actively looked for individuals, and especially "mixed people" like herself. This action reflects the in-group relationship dynamics present between people of color.

Psychological climate. The dimension of the psychological climate depicts the beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of people within the community regarding issues of race (Griffin, Muñiz & Espinoza, 2012). Components noted within this dimension include perceptions of discrimination and racial conflict, individual perspectives on group relations, and attitudes

toward different individuals from different racial/ethnic groups (Griffin, Muñiz & Espinoza, 2012; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999). Some examples of the psychological climate are noted in the lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students in this study.

For instance, MJ experienced a hard reality when he entered into graduate school in his first semester. He mentioned the challenges he experienced and how he overcame them. However, he worked hard to “prove” himself within his environment. He said, “During my first semester here, I was determined to prove that I belonged in a PhD program. I understood almost nothing... School started out challenging but it definitely improved.” Luckily for MJ, his schooling improved and resulted in him receiving awards and accolades for his hard work.

Kay’s lived experiences highlight how others perceived her because of her racial mixture. She was perceived as “an affirmative action case or an athlete,” but she “was neither of those things.” She shared the following:

I was part of the marching band and only seven students out of a 300-person marching band were students of color. Most of them (White) thought that I was an affirmative action case or an athlete. I was neither of those things. I felt often that I had to prove myself in my work, and I did not like feeling like an exception to the rule, with large class sizes, and lack of mentorship, and it was so easy to feel invisible.

Similarly to MJ, Kay revealed that she had to “prove” herself within her studies as well. Further, she recognized that there was a lack of mentorship for people like herself within the environment of Sunflower University, and because of her minority status, she stated that “it was easy to feel invisible.”

The lived experiences of Mia reveal her observation of how certain groups of individuals are perceived within the university environment. The perception is dire because one professor “wanted to use enrollment management strategies” to eliminate students from a particular class. But this is not just any student; it is a specific group of Chinese students. She relayed the following:

I have witnessed one professor who wanted to use enrollment management strategies to not have any Chinese students in her class because of their presentation skills. It is my understanding that, in China, students are not taught how to give oral presentations. I am reminded of micro aggressions because I have heard some faculty make some off-handed comments where they do not think they are being racist or stereotyping people, but they are. Some micro aggressions include lumping all Chinese students into one group with comments such as “Oh the Chinese” and “the Chinese.” Faculty would think twice before saying, “I don’t want Black students in my class” or before lumping all Hispanic students into one group. They would never make racist comments against American minority students, but somehow it’s okay to say, “Oh, I have a Chinese student in my class.”

This experience is closely tied to the history of inclusion and exclusion based on institutional policy within a campus environment. This example of Mia’s reveals that some faculty specifically wish to exclude Chinese students within their classes by using enrollment management, which is a university practice of allowing or disallowing students from entering specific classes (Griffin, Muñoz & Espinoza, 2012).

Behavioral climate. The psychological dimension directly impacts the behavioral dimension. The behavioral climate is defined as “actual reports of general social interaction, interaction between and among individuals from different racial/ethnic backgrounds, and the nature of relations between and among groups on campus” (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999, p. 37). The examples presented below illustrate different types of social and group interactions between individuals of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

First, MJ portrayed the image of how he interacts with his doctoral peers in the department. They tend to have different activities within any given month. Some of these activities include going to restaurants, bars or just playing poker. He shared the following:

We (PhD graduate students) get along great, and we just like to kick it and to go and have fun. We'll go out, we go to the bars, we have poker night, and we hang out. We'll go to restaurants or something, but it also depends on how busy we are. Once a month, we hang out, we socialize... but its only particular graduate students. All the Chinese people, they hang out together. A lot of the times those people do stuff together. But when we have a poker night, we invite everyone.

This quote demonstrates that there is a divide among the doctoral graduate students. The Chinese students form their own group and “hang out together,” and they (the Chinese students) are distinct from the “particular graduate students.” But the way that MJ portrayed his relationship with other multiracial students changed. MJ only knows two other multiracial students from a different academic program. He described his relationship with them in the following way:

Basically, all of my interaction is with non-multiracial students. I only know two other multiracial graduate students. Of the two multiracial students that I know, one is American and one has dual citizenship from the U.S. and the Philippines. We definitely don't talk about being multiracial. Initially, we asked each other, "What are you?" and I responded, "Chinese, Black, and White."

This experience reveals the limitation of MJ with other multiracial students. Moreover, when they do meet, their relationship is constrained by their racial mixture and heritage. MJ stipulates that it is best to get the inquiry to racial background out of the way because "we definitely don't talk about being multiracial."

Kay considered her social interaction at Sunflower University from the perspective of mentoring and support. She mentioned that the support she found assisted her in "navigating this predominantly White University." As a result, it helped her succeed:

I was lucky Dr. Jay (pseudonym) found me. He took me in and guided me from my junior year on, and he helped me navigate through a portion of my doctoral graduate school while I attended Sunflower University. I know that many other students of color do not have mentorship and may feel as though they can't succeed.

Unfortunately, Kay's experiences revealed that if there was more support for students like her or other students of color, there would be a greater success rate and fewer dropouts as Kay noted in her narrative.

Finally, Mia considered her lived experience as a multiracial graduate student from the perspective of experiencing "infantilization" because of her Asian heritage. Even though she

recognized that she did not experience much racism within the Sunflower campus climate, she was aware that she needed to “defend herself more than others” did:

While I have not experienced overt racism at Sunflower University, I do feel as if there is an element of infantilization that is projected onto Asian women. I have on several occasions been treated as if I am a naïve child and without respect for my personal decisions. I believe I have to defend myself more than others. I have had to learn to be assertive whilst polite so as not to fall out of the gender stereotype of being sufficiently feminine.

Mia exposed several issues that are concerning within this statement. Not only did Mia reveal that because of her Asian heritage she was perceived as an “Asian” with the general stereotype of manner attributed to Asian women, she also disclosed the issue of gender and its role within the campus environment.

Summary

Through the use of the campus racial climate dimensions, I have explored the racism of White dominance over people of color within Sunflower University. The challenges experienced by the multiracial graduate students in this study serves as a reminder that racism continues to thrive at Sunflower University. Several examples within every dimension of the campus racial climate portray a negative aspect of being multiracial, or a person of color, within a predominantly White institution. Kay referred to Sunflower University 2025 not being real because diversity is not valued. This perspective coincides with the institutional and historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of certain groups of individuals discussed earlier. MJ revealed that the picture taken in his department demonstrates the Whiteness present that draws strong

objections. Finally, Mia's experiences reveal the inequities present because of her Asian American heritages, and the gender stereotypes associated with being an Asian American female.

Finding 3: Racism and Religious Dominance and their Impact on Multiracial Graduate Students

The finding of race and religion surfaced unexpectedly within the data. There were no expressed questions to the multiracial graduate students regarding religion and race within their environments. Research reveals that Christian privilege is prevalent among the campus environments in higher education within the United States, and those who suffer are the marginalized individuals who do not openly express or identify with organized religion on their university campuses (Bowman & Smedly, 2013). Emerson and Smith (2000) explored how some evangelical Christians demonstrate that their individualist views deter them from clear thinking and practices regarding racial inequalities in American society. Researchers have also recognized that some Christian evangelicals practice ideals that express non-race neutral sentiments through vehemently defending White culture (Transby & Hartman, 2008). With critical race theory as a tool within which to study this finding, racism does become apparent regarding religion. Research by Bowman and Smedly (2013) revealed that students who do not associate with organized religion on a university campus display the lowest university satisfaction. Second, the study from Emerson and Smith (2000) evolved into what race scholars call "principled conservatism" (Sniderman & Carmines, 1997) in which evangelical views combine with race. The lived experiences of the participants in this study revealed the impact of religion within the campus racial climate environment.

MJ spoke about his understanding of the impact of religion within the lives of people in the Midwest in the following way:

There is a big difference coming from California to here. This is the “Bible Belt,” and that is no joke. Google the “Bible Belt.” This is definitely the “Bible Belt.” And it is definitely apparent. Back from where I grew up, there were lots of different people. You might have someone who is Catholic across the street, Hindu next to you, and all mixed up and so you grow up with these people. My friends and I all grew up together, played together, went to each other’s houses, and our parents cooked for us. Whatever your religion, it did not matter. And you might not agree with another’s religion but it was okay.

MJ did not stop here after comparing Kansas to California and how people differ from this state to another. From the state where MJ domiciled, people interacted freely with each other irrespective of religious difference or opinion. However, he observed that the same religious tolerance experienced on the west coast is not practiced in the Midwest. He said:

It is not like here where it’s like, “That religion is evil and blah, blah.” It feels like the Christians hate every other religion, like there is no tolerance in Kansas for people believing something different. And that’s how things are like here. Maybe it’s just me because I feel the extreme side from what I’m used to and what I was exposed to. Definitely know that it is all super Christian out here. Even when I leave campus, it’s super conservative. It’s completely different.

The overall perspective gleaned from this direct and candid lived experience of the influence of religion within the environment reveals MJ’s perspective on the conservative nature of where he lives and study. He stated that he “feel(s) the extreme side from what I’m used to and what I was

exposed to.” Further, he recognized that the environment is “super Christian” because it is “super conservative” on and off campus.

Kay on the other hand, revealed that she practices Christianity, and it is part of her research as well. Kay did not expressly speak of the campus environment and the impact of religion on her experience, but she did speak of receiving support as a Christian researcher studying the issues on race. She shared the following:

Dr. Chance has supported my faith as a Christian. He has shown me that you can be a scholar and a follower of Christ. I was like his minion I guess because he told me... We attend the same church. And he told me he wasn't going to do anymore race studies because he's going to do more Christian studies. And he mentioned “Kay, this is now your job to kind of do this.” And I was under his wing, and he like mentioned, “Your turn.” Presently, he is helping me and writing recommendations for me to Christian schools.

These experiences reveal that religion and being a scholar at the same time is very important to Kay. With Dr. Chance, she has received the support and encouragement to continue her studies in the area of religion and race studies.

Unlike Kay and her positive experiences regarding the importance of religion and her research studies, Mia did not perceive religion in such a positive light. Mia is not Christian, but she works with many people who are religious. And within this quandary on a daily occurrence, she in fact lives a double life of participating within a religious environment. As a result, Mia recognized that she lives a life “in the closet” and fears how coming out of the closet might impact her daily experiences:

There is also a lot of formal support for students who are religiously affiliated Christian or Catholic to get involved with campus organizations and a campus climate that favors these religious groups. Students who are not part of these religious groups can feel alone and at times ostracized in discussions. The other day I consciously counted the number of times references to the Christian religion came up in regular conversation from “bless your heart” to “someone above was looking out for you” and “please pray for her.” There were eight occasions this happened in a one-day span. It is most uncomfortable not being Christian in a state that highly values religion. God and praying can come up in nearly every conversation and situation. If you let on you are not Christian, there can be the risk of loss of respect, a lot of questions, and attempts to convert. Non-Christians are often left going along with the conversation and pretending they believe. I brush these comments off knowing that these expressions are probably part of the Kansas culture, but they can cause discomfort. I’m also left feeling like I’m “in the closet” religiously speaking because I am not a Christian and would worry that people would treat me differently, if they knew.

Mia explained her dilemma so emotionally within her surroundings of a Christian and religious-based campus environment. She was so surrounded by people using religious language indiscriminately that one day she decided to count how many occasions’ religious anecdotes were used in conversation. A total of “eight times this happened in a one-day span.” Mia was astounded by this phenomenon especially since there is a distinction between church and state. Apparently, that notion does not apply within higher education. She realized that as a “non-Christian” she is “often left going along with the conversation and pretending” that she believes.

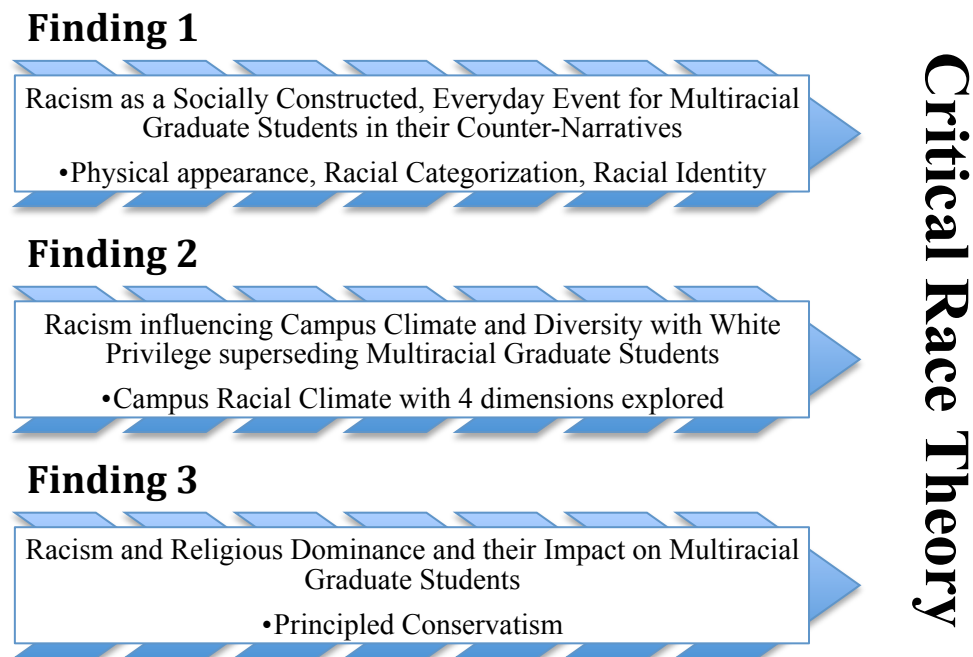
Mia was consciously hiding a portion of her identity from the people with whom she associates daily for fear of being treated differently.

Summary

The experiences of religious dominance within the campus environment left the multiracial graduate students isolated from full participation and feeling like they belong unequivocally. This did not apply to Kay since she practices Christianity and studies about race and religion with her past mentor and advisor. However, both MJ and Mia described their experiences with “principled conservatism” within the environment of Sunflower University, and MJ expressly noted that the same conservatism within the campus environment applies to the surrounding community and also to the state.

The following figure 4.1 illustrates how analysis of narrative was linked to CRT.

Figure 4.1 Findings Related to Critical Race Theory



Summary

The data presented in this chapter reveal the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students at Sunflower University. The lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students were explored by utilizing both narrative and analysis of narrative within a six-step process of biographical narrative analysis (Rosenthal & Fischer-Rosenthal, 2004). The participant descriptions provide interesting information concerning the participants' biographical information and our first encounters during the interviews. In addition, the information contained within the participant descriptions reveals the participants as mature multiracial individuals who present mature racial identities, and personalities. Even though the interviews with MJ and Mia started off with uncertainty of what and how much to share, by the second interview, both participants were comfortable and sure of themselves. This allowed for more rich and thick data to be collected. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the findings of this study for future research.

Chapter 5 – Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of this study and to make meaning of them in the context of existing literature and the theoretical framework used for this study. The lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students at Sunflower University were presented in Chapter 4. The synthesis of the three distinct participants' lived experiences presented three discussion points to be explored in this chapter. Thereafter, the implications for research and practice follow, along with some limitations of the study and the conclusion.

Discussion

The present study revealed that the CRT tenets (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) occurred within different periods during the lives of the multiracial graduate students in this study. There were three main findings that surfaced in the lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students: (1) racism, racial microaggressions and colorism occurred frequently with their lived experiences, either overtly or covertly, which noticeably did not impact these individuals' racial identity development, (2) the sense of belonging, fit, isolation and proving oneself in studies or work surfaced because of the campus environment, and (3) surprisingly, the impact of religion on the multiracial graduate students' lived experiences within the campus environment surfaced, which definitely will add to the literature base of multiracial graduate students in higher education. The discussion that follows will occur from the CRT perspective to shed light on the experiences of multiracial graduate students and their distinct lived experiences. These critical race theories reveal that race and racism still form part of both the macro and micro echelon of today's society (Bimper, 2014; Vasquez Heilig, Brown & Brown, 2012).

The Power Struggle Within Multiracial Experiences: Racism, Racial Categorization, and Colorism

Students are very aware that racism abounds and that it is “so commonplace within the school walls that when it appears, few are surprised” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 26). The awareness becomes more acute for students attending predominantly White schools, and unfortunately “for such students, feeling culturally alienated, being physically isolated, and remaining silenced are common experiences” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 26). By my providing the multiracial graduate students in this study with the opportunity to share their lived experiences, they were able to counter the predominantly White perspective that racism no longer exists within society. Within the lived experiences of the participants within this study, the key factors of racism, racial categorization, and colorism became evident. Of these three elements, colorism was most prevalent because it relates back to physical appearance, and how others perceive to label and apply a category, respectively, to multiracial individuals. Additionally, we can observe that CRT does not directly address the experiences of multiracial individuals because “mixed-race identity does not dislodge white supremacy, but it does re-create quasi-new racial strata” (Montgomery, 2012, p. 11). Thus, an expansion of CRT is required to address specifically the nuanced experiences related to multiracial individuals within Multiracial Critical Theory. The reasoning behind this relates to the expanding boundaries found within whiteness studies that would in years to come include “traditional Whites, new White immigrants, assimilated Latinos, some light skinned multiracials and some Asian Americans” (Bonilla-Silva & Embrick, 2006, p. 33).

Racism has not disappeared from society; racism continuously shapes persons of color experiences, though talking about racism is becoming a taboo (Harris, 2008). Racism is defined

as the discrimination of people of color due their racial identity, mixed heritages, non-European physical appearance, and their ancestry (Harris, 2008). Earlier discussions on racial categorization have revealed that racial categorization within the U.S. reinforces the White hierarchy (Powell, 1996). As such, racial categorization was another procedure within society that reinforced the status quo of White dominance. And now, in recent years, today's society has transcended racism, because it is considered too taboo to talk about, With the inclusion of recognizing multiracial categorization by allowing individuals to choose more than one race, the new racism is considered "colorism." Colorism is defined by and "involves discrimination against persons based on their physiognomy, regardless of their perceived racial identity" (Harris, 2008, p. 3). Within colorism, there exists a hierarchy, which is the same concept that rules racism: "Light skin is prized over dark skin, and European facial features and body shapes are prized over African features and body shapes" (Harris, 2008, p. 3). Hunter (2007) described colorism as a persistent problem within the U.S. society because it is "a process that privileges light-skinned people of color over dark in areas such as income, education, housing, and the marriage market" (p. 237).

A study conducted by Hunter (2007) included African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans and their perception of skin color. For African Americans, colorism found its roots in slavery. African Americans with lighter brown skin were afforded more privileges, such as working in the house instead of working out in the fields, by White slave owners, (Davis, 1991). Latinos experienced colorism because of the color-caste system in Mexico and the degree of racial miscegenation, and as a result, the light-skinned Spanish descent people accrued all the power and resources over the darker skinned Indian descent Mexicans (Hunter, 2007).

For Asian Americans, colorism originated differently throughout history. Asian Americans (Indians, Filipinos and Vietnamese) were influenced by European history because of colonialism, and the European tendencies of light skin tone value were enforced within their colonies (Hunter, 2007; Karnow, 1989; Rafael, 2000). Additionally, Asian American groups associated light skin with those who worked inside, and the working poor developed darker skin tone from maintaining manual laborer tasks (Hunter, 2007). Consequently, all three of these groups (Indians, Filipinos and Vietnamese) with their ideas and perceptions of colorism “internalized the colonial and slavery value systems and learned to valorize light skin tones and Anglo facial features” (Hunter, 2007, p. 239). Does colorism only pertain to minority groups and their perceptions?

Today, there is also White colorism (Hannon, 2014). White colorism is synonymous to “white racism” because of the historical and institutionalized power dynamics exuded “from racist beliefs and actions of whites with the prejudicial attitudes of other groups” (Hannon, 2014, p. 1). Recently, Hannon (2014) observed that “white racism” or “white colorism” has become a sociological phenomenon because it supports white hegemony and supports intraracial colorism. Thus, it has become noted that “white racism” allows White individuals the opportunity to discriminate toward people of color based on their different shades of skin tone (Hannon, 2014). Bonilva-Silva (2003) observed that with the whitening of Hispanics or “Latin Americanization of Whiteness in the United States” the “preference for people who are light-skinned will become a more important factor in all kinds of social transactions” (p. 352). A study conducted by Maddox and Gray (2002) found that Black and White participants were aware of a distinction between lighter and darker skinned Blacks. Many studies with “cross-race observation of skin tone” (Hannon, 2014) revealed that lighter skinned African Americans benefitted more than

darker skinned African Americans. One such study conducted by Hannon, Defina and Bruch (2013) found that darker African American women interviewed and assessed by white interviewers in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth were more likely to be suspended from school by approximately three times more than their light-skinned peers. Ultimately, the study conducted by Hannon (2014) revealed that white racial prejudice exuded by white individuals could directly create unequal entrance to economic status, societal interaction, and cultural resources available to people of color. This study found that White adults equated intelligence to lighter skinned people of color, which directly impacted White teachers' level of expectations for these lighter skinned students (Hannon, 2014). Thus, "white racism" and "white colorism" should attract more attention because it works in maintaining an unequal society that favors White privilege (Hannon, 2014).

Lack of Diversity, Campus Racial Climate, and "White Racism"

Diversity remains a contested issue within higher education to this day. There remains some who support diversity initiatives (Dodson, 2009; Smedly & Mittman, 2011) and the good they promote within higher education, and then there are those who defy the use of diversity and perceive it as another form of discrimination (Clegg & Rosenberg, 2012). Those who support diversity recognize the impact of a color-blind racial ideology (Neville, Poteat, Lewis & Spanierman, 2014) and of race neutrality (Morfin, Perez, Parker, Lynn, & Arrona, 2006) within higher education, which impact the progress of people of color within higher education. Recently, there has been discussion on what is perceived to be a sufficient level of diversity within higher education to promote change (Bowman, 2013), but this literature is sparse because of the debate surrounding diversity.

Diversity is defined as any action that strives for inclusivity within a university setting (Dodson, 2009). These actions can include accepting more diverse minority students into a university setting, it can recognize the unique racial composition of student organizations on campus, and it can include recognizing how students self-identify within a university setting. Research reveals that the multiracial student population is increasing, but overall the U.S. demographics reveal a growing heterogeneous society (Bowman, 2013). Since 2000 to 2010, non-Hispanic Whites increased by 1.2%, Hispanics/Latinos increased by 43%, Asians increased by 43%, Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders increased by 35%, and two or more races who self-identify as multiracial increased by 32% (Bowman, 2013; Humes et.al., 2011). Most significantly, foreign-born individuals increased by 223% from 1970 to 2000 (Bowman, 2013). With these dynamic trends within the U.S., the society has become pluralistic with a diverse range of backgrounds, cultures, heritages, and worldviews. Significantly, a percentage of these individuals will be entering into colleges and universities, and within these environments, students will have a “unique opportunity to have meaningful interactions and friendships with people who are different from themselves, which can result in a host of educational benefits” (Bowman, 2013, p. 875). Most importantly, with exposure to diversity, research suggests that college students will likely increase their cognitive skills (Bowman, 2010a), leadership skills (Denson & Zhang, 2010), civic engagement (Bowman, 2011), self-concept (Chang, Denson, Saenz, & Misa, 2006), sense of belonging (Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008), cultural awareness (Denson, 2009), and intergroup attitudes (Bowman, 2013). In one study, interracial contact in creating friendships revealed a reduced racial prejudice toward students from different racial groups (Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011).

A recent study revealed the benefits of decreased color-blind racial ideology among White students with more exposure to students of color. Neville, Poteat, Lewis and Spanierman (2014) conducted a longitudinal study with 857 White students concerning color-blind racial ideology (CBRI). They wanted to examine these students' gender, diversity attitudes, and college diversity experiences, and they found that there was a relationship between gender and diversity attitudes concerning their CBRI. Moreover, Neville and colleagues (2014) found that women and students with greater diversity exposure experienced a huge decrease in CBRI over the time period of the college experiences; they also found that students who completed more diversity courses and had more exposure or who were friends with Black students experienced a decrease in CBRI. Most importantly, those students who had Latino friends showed a decrease in CBRI compared to those who did not have any Latino friends (Neville et. al., 2014). These benefits noted here regarding diversity are all good and well, but many institutions have still not increased their diversity within their campus environments.

In 2003, the disparities between minority students of color and majority White students on higher education campuses became even more evident after major legal cases. These legal cases questioned race-based admissions practices to increase diversity and to adhere to affirmative action within higher education. The cases by *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) and *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003) brought into question the use of race-based diversity initiatives to increase minority enrollment into higher education. The decision in *Grutter* upheld race-base admissions, whereas the *Gratz* decision encouraged moving away from a point-based minority system to ensure that underrepresented minorities entered into higher education. But then, the University of Texas moved to a race-based admission practice as well. These decisions allowed universities the

opportunity to actively recruit minority students into their higher education environments, but this did not occur (Bowman, 2013).

Presently, students of color remain severely underrepresented within higher education (Garces, 2012). From the entire U.S. population in 2008, underrepresented college students consist of Latinos (16%), only 4% of who are enrolled in graduate school. And African Americans constitute only 12% of the U.S. population (Garces, 2012). In 2007, within the doctoral programs, only 4% of Latinos received doctorates, whereas only 6% of African Americans were granted doctoral degrees (Garces, 2012). This represents stark contrasts to the general population of an increasing minority population that is presumed to be 54% of the entire U.S. population by midcentury (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

The reasons for the institutions not practicing or increasing diversity rapidly within their environments could be one of many. Some researchers believe it is because of the practice of race neutrality (Morfin, Perez, Parker, Lynn & Arrona, 2006), the campus racial climate influence (Griffin, Muñiz, & Espinoza, 2012), and because “diversity” is not good for education (Clegg, & Rosenberg, 2012). Morfin, Perez, Parker, Lynn and Arrona (2006) found that the landmark cases of *Grutter* and *Gratz* permitted institutions to practice “symbolic affirmative action” that ultimately appeared as diversity initiatives, but they were not. The institutions missed the opportunity to use the outcomes of these legal cases to entrench affirmative action that would permit them to move into a broader definition of diversity (Morfin et. al., 2006). Accordingly, Anderson (2002) interpreted these actions as a prime example of institutional racism.

In a research report conducted by the American Council on Education’s (2001) Annual Status Report of Minorities in Higher Education, data suggested that students of color managed a

3% increase in undergraduate level, and a 5% increase of graduate students during 1997. This academic progress increased by 2000 to 2001 with White students obtaining 74.7% of bachelor degrees and students of color obtaining 25.3% of the total number of awarded bachelor degrees (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). According to the statistics revealed earlier concerning the students' academic progress in higher education compared to their population growth, the demographics of progress is dismal. Selingo (2005, p. A21) revealed that with the *Grutter* case, institutions had the opportunity to increase diversity and to support affirmative action procedures, but "the conservative local and state political context may be a factor in stopping many institutions from implementing the diversity standard as a compelling government interest in admissions" (Morfin et. al., 2006, p. 260).

With regard to the campus racial climate, Griffin, Muñiz, and Espinoza (2012) found that there is a dearth of underrepresented "Black, Latino, and Native American students among our nation's Ph.D.'s" (p. 560). Furthermore, these researchers maintained that Graduate Diversity Officer's (GDO's) should be responsible for coordinating diversity initiatives at the graduate level, campus-wide, and within particular colleges and departments (Griffin, Muñiz, & Espinoza, 2012). However, many GDO's recognize that diversity within the communities are limited, that there is little diversity and much racism experienced within campus environments. Moreover, there is limited support from senior leadership and faculty (Griffin, Muñiz, & Espinoza, 2012). Finally, Clegg and Rosenberg (2012) revealed that they do not support diversity initiatives for ten reasons. They maintained that diversity equates to the following: discrimination, a quota system, racial profiling, customer preference in recognizing minorities over Whites, diversity is not a benefit to Blacks, diversity does not lead to a good education for all students, diversity

creates a mismatch of students within one environment, diversity reinforces racism and stereotyping, and diversity ultimately leads to devaluing of people (Clegg & Rosenberg, 2012).

However, diversity is a necessity for students of color to be successful in higher education. Brown-Glaude (2009) based her book, *Doing Diversity in Higher Education: Faculty Leaders Share Challenges and Strategies*, on 12 case studies from 12 universities looking at how faculty can be “change agents” within their universities to encourage the growth of diversity. There are a prestigious universities featured in the book like Columbia University, Spellman College and Smith College, with a couple of state universities featuring as well (Dodson, 2009). The focus in the book by Brown-Glaude (2009) is that “voices of educators and scholars who advocate for diversity and espouse its benefits for education are rarely heard in public” (Dodson, 2009, p. 14). It becomes apparent that opponents to diversity move the discussion toward race, instead of expanding the definition of diversity toward women, gender, ethnicity and those with disabilities (Dodson, 2009). These opponents to diversity also tend to focus on the issue of discrimination, instead of discussing why there is low diversity on university campuses thus preventing an inclusive college environment (Dodson, 2009). A negative effect for faculty who advocate for diversity recognize that it “is often not rewarded especially when faculty members seek tenure” (Dodson, 2009, p. 14). Brown-Glaude (2009) mentioned that one faculty member refused to participate in the case study for fear of non-support of his program. The biggest setback for diversity could be considered the nomination and election of President Barack Obama as an African-American individual, because that communicated to some that diversity is no longer an issue (Brown-Glaude, 2009). Toward the end, Brown-Glaude (2009) recognized that with global education, diversity could change with competition.

Beyond the diversity initiative, there is the campus racial climate and “white racism,” which deters efforts in promoting inclusivity within higher education. Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, and Hart (2008) conducted a study wherein they considered the effects of color-blind racial attributes and social dominance factors to predict campus racial climate, and looked at the outcomes specifically toward people of color. Their study included 144 participants and included undergraduates, graduates and professional students at a predominantly White institution (Worthington, Navarro, Loewy & Hart, 2008). These researchers used two indicators, general campus climate (GCC) and racial-ethnic campus climate (RECC), with specific interest on the effects on students of color by color-blind racial attitudes. The results of this study revealed that the unawareness of racial privilege facilitated a connection between race and RECC and completely connected with race and GCC. This meant that the more color-blind racial attitudes that were practiced, the more these students perceived the general campus climate as positive, and the same applied to the social dominance perspective which also revealed a positive GCC (Worthington et.al, 2008). Worthington et.al. (2009) support the idea that the influence of color-blindness and the social dominance perspective within a predominantly White institution does impact the lived experiences of students of color and their perceptions of the campus racial climate.

In this, the three participants revealed their lived experiences within the campus climate of Sunflower University. The lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students revealed their challenges experienced with regard to the campus racial climate of Sunflower University through the exploration of the four dimensions: institutional and historical legacy, psychological climate, the behavioral climate, and the structural climate. These lived experiences exposed the continued practice of White racism within the campus climate of a predominantly White

university. In the first discussion, “white racism” and “white colorism” and their maintenance of White privilege were highlighted. Now, the campus racial climate and its dimensions explored in the previous chapter clearly revealed that the lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students in this study reflected the negative influence of “white racism” espousing White privilege (Hannon, 2014).

This study adequately revealed that with the inclusion of CRT along with the framework of the campus racial climate, the inequities present within the lived experiences of the three multiracial graduate students in this study at Sunflower University became apparent. The participants in this study have extensive life experiences from the academic and professional perspective, and for that reason, they would be considered nontraditional students. Thus, the experiences endured within the campus racial climate along with its lack of diversity and White racism would render any person of color as isolated and challenged to the point of proving oneself or defending oneself. This would inadvertently render any person’s psychological make-up as fragile. A study conducted by Cheng and Lee (2009) extended the perspective of multiracial graduate students’ lived experiences to their psychological well-being, because they recognized that there is a relationship between multiracial identities and the psychological make-up of these individuals. Cheng and Lee (2009) stated, “Individual beliefs, experiences, and recall powerfully shape how multiracialism is experienced” (p. 65). Though the participants within this study discussed positive attributes associated with Sunflower University in their lived experiences in Chapter 4, their challenges were overwhelmingly obvious and openly stated.

Finally, the counterstory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) created and depicted of the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students denies the general campus climate as positive perceived by mostly Whites and supports Worthington and colleagues’ (2009) assertion that

additional lived experiences of students of color with different ethnicities are required. The “voice” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) of the multiracial graduate students are acutely present and strong in relating their lived experiences and their challenges endured within the campus racial climate of Sunflower University.

Divided by Religion: The “Bible Belt”

An unexpected finding of this study relates to religion and its presence in the lives of the multiracial graduate students in this study. Existing literature does not address religion in the lives of multiracial graduate students in higher education, but religion is alive and well in the lives of many students of various races on university campuses. The lived experiences of the multiracial graduate students in this study made it apparent that Christianity within the university experience needed to be discussed.

Religion within the confines of the university environment has flourished within recent years with renewed interest (Mayrl & Oeur, 2009). According to Finder (2007), there is more religious activity among students on university campuses now compared to 100 years ago. Mayrl and Oeur (2009) conducted a review of religion within higher education and focused on three areas: (1) undergraduate students’ religious commitments, (2) the effect of college students’ religious commitments, and (3) how students’ religious commitments impact both student personal and academic outcomes.

With regard to undergraduate students religious commitments, research from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) (2004) found that 83% of students are affiliated with some religious denomination. Further results from HERI (2004) revealed that 79% of students believed in God, while only 9% revealed that they were non-Christian. Additional research into religious belief by race and ethnicity revealed the following: 95% of African American freshmen believed

in God, with only 84% by Latinos, 78% by Whites, and 68% by Asian Americans (Bartlett, 2005). HERI (2004) also found that 81% of freshmen attend religious services, with 69% reporting that they pray occasionally, and 28% revealing that they pray daily. Thus, it becomes apparent that belief in God, worship or religious services attendance, and prayer differ significantly according to race and ethnicity between Blacks, Whites, Hispanics and Asians. Even though there are differences in the amount of religion practiced by different ethnicities of college students as freshmen, religion is vibrant on university campuses (Mayrl & Oeur, 2009).

The second interest of Mayrl and Oeur (2009) extends to the effect of college students' religious commitments. Mayrl and Oeur (2009) found that students' religious practice declines over time within the campus environment. HERI (2004) found that only 56% of college students revealed "no change" in their religious beliefs, practices, and convictions. A study conducted by Uecker, Regnerus and Vaaler (2007) demonstrated that the interplay of a shift of demographics of students entering into college could be the reason why there is a decline in religious practices of students.

Finally, with the consideration of religious commitments on the students' personal and academic outcomes, Mayrl and Oeur (2009) found contrasting results. What became evident was that "religious students appear to be more satisfied with their college experience" (p. 268). Additional findings in this section as one example revealed that over zealous students with strong fundamentalist beliefs suffered in their education with more negative consequences for girls (Sherkat & Darnell, 1999), that fundamentalists attained lower education (Darnell & Sherkat, 1997), and that too much religion could be a bad thing (Bryant, 2004). Other studies revealed that strong religiosity reduced risky behavior (Astin, 1993; Mooney, 2005). Some studies actually found that those who practiced strong religiosity had negative effects as well. For

instance, there appears to be a strong decline in religious practice, religious salience, and disaffiliation from religion (Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler (2007, p. 1677) for those who embraced strong religiosity. Furthermore, some students who attended church weekly continued to drink and to smoke marijuana as much as those who did not attend church (Nagel & Sgoutas-Emch, 2007). Overall, even though there is a strong presence of religion in higher education, religious practices mean different things to different students at different times. Consequently, religion varies for students from different racial and ethnic groups.

From the perspective of religion and ethnicity being of vital importance to the understanding of student religion on campus, a literature review conducted by Kim (2011) found that there is a disconnect between religion and ethnicity research even though religion and ethnicity are in fact “deeply connect(ed)” (p. 312). History reveals that when immigrants move into the U.S., they bring along and transplant their religious views from the old country (Kim, 2009). In doing so, the immigrants “rebuild their old church, synagogue, temple, or mosque [which] helps immigrants establish their ethnic identity, community, and settle in the new land” (Kim, 2009, p. 312).

However, maintenance of their old ways declines because of assimilation and secularization models. With assimilating, the new immigrants need to compete and fight for available resources to become a part of the society (Park, 1926; 1950). And along with secularization, the traditional religious belief system evaporates, and religion that used to be at the forefront of human development “has disappeared in the era of science and general enlightenment” (Hayden, 1987, p. 587). But even though many immigrants arrived into the country, through assimilation and secularization an Anglo-centric worldview flourished (Kim, 2009). With this worldview, all immigrant ethnic minorities needed to assimilate into the White

Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) culture. The WASP culture consists of a majority White Protestant middle class (Portes & Zhou, 1993). As a result, “the immigrant minority has little agency, preference, and choice in this process, [and] they are expected to willingly shed their ethnicity to be accepted into the WASP majority, and it is understood that doing so would be in their best interest (Yang, 1999, p. 42-45).

The following statistics reveal how different ethnic group, upon their immigration to the U.S., have changed their religious foundation. From a 2007 report, in Vietnam, Christian Protestants made up 1% of the population, but 13% of the Vietnamese have converted to Christianity in the U.S. (Park, 2009, p. 68). In Japan, Christians made up 1% of the homeland population, but in the U.S., approximately 43% of the Japanese population is Christian (Park, 2009, p. 73). The immigrants from South Korea constitute about three quarters of the membership of the Protestant Christian faith in the U.S., whereas only one quarter of Koreans practice Christianity in their homeland (Park, 2009, p. 75). These numbers reinforce the notion that immigrants of minority status assimilated into the majority culture upon arrival in the U.S., which is the WASP culture. Within this WASP culture, Christianity is practiced the most even though other immigrants are importing religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, and Islam (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000) into the U.S. As a result, with strong roots planted into the soil of Christianity within the WASP culture, Christian privilege exists.

Christian privilege is entrenched within every facet of the United States of America. Siefert (2007) defined Christian privilege as “the conscious and subconscious advantages often afforded the Christian faith in America’s colleges and universities” (p. 11), and recognized that before colleges and universities can become inclusive, they need to recognize the presence of Christian privilege and then work to dismantle it. Often, where Christian privilege is practiced,

students from marginalized groups and secular students experience more challenges on university campuses (Bowman & Smedley, 2012).

Besides the presence of Christian privilege in higher education, there has also been “exposure to religious diversity” (Wuthnow, 2007, p. 101) that is drastically increasing within higher education. Laurence, the director of the Education as Transformation Project (1999), stated, “Students are in the process of discovering what it means to be in community as they develop their own worldviews. Students who develop a sense of [religious] pluralism during this critical time of their development can later play a key role in the building of a more stable and inclusive civil society” (p. 13). This kind of pluralism within higher education can be used for the greater good “of developing in our students the competence to live in a diverse world” (Bryant, 2011, p. 441).

Instead, for the past 150 years, a “Christian ethos continues to permeate many campus cultures” (Siefert, 2007, p. 11). Schlosser and Sedlacek (2003) noted that Christian students do not have to choose between attending to schoolwork or religious holidays, but secular or non-Christian students often do have to make such choices. Moreover, many privileged Christian individuals appear to be unwilling to recognize the spiritual and religious differences present within the campus environment. Siefert (2007) observed additional Christian privileges where Christian students refuse to share their “turf” with other non-Christian groups, colleges refuse to change the physical space of chapels to accommodate other non-Christian groups, and meal plans in residence hall dining centers do not consider the kosher practices of non-Christian students. Allport and Kramer (1946) revealed that students who experienced a strong religious upbringing revealed higher ethnic prejudice compared to nonreligious students. In contrast, Rokeach (1960) found that nonreligious students were less authoritarian, less ethnocentric, and

more humanitarian. Within this critical time period of student development, religious pluralism can assist with students developing a common religion and faith to assist with facilitating interaction between interracial groups of students because they have a common goal (Allport, 1954).

Many institutions recognize the prominence of spirituality and religion practiced within their environments. However, while some students become privileged, other students lead a life of exclusion, separation, marginalization, and isolation from the majority privileged students (Siefert, 2007). Some researchers have attempted to explain the religiosity, spirituality, and worldviews of students and how they impact them within the higher education environment. For instance, Mayhew and Bryant (2013) tried to understand the relationship between religiosity, spirituality, campus climate, and the worldview of 1071 undergraduate students at two college campuses, and they incorporated the “worldviews” of both religious and non-religious students. These researchers learned that nonreligious students did not enjoy the co-curricular activities related to religion and that the religious majority students do not recognize their Christian privilege within campus environments (Mayhew & Bryant, 2013).

Another extension of this study by Mayhew, Bowman and Bryant Rockenbach (2013) focused on the perceptions of campus climate from students with diverse worldviews. They found that students with majority worldviews (e.g. Protestants and Catholics) were more negative compared to students with minority worldviews (e.g. Muslims and Jews) and nonreligious students. The progression of these studies revealed that students with majority Christian worldviews experience Christian privilege within their campus environments. However, nonreligious students with varied worldviews, and often minority students, experience marginalization and silencing within campus environments.

Many of the majority Christian students are unaware of their privileges on their campuses, and as a result, they perceive their environments as negative toward their religious affiliations compared to nonreligious affiliated students (Bowman & Bryant Rockenbach, 2013). The negative attitude perceived by Christian students toward their religious affiliation could be a direct result of colleges and universities placing more emphasis on coursework, grades, and honor status, compared to placing an emphasis on the values of beliefs, spirituality, self-understanding, and emotional maturity (Astin, Astin & Lindholm, 2011). Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) found that 77% of first year students reported believing in God, and approximately 80% reported attending church at least once a week during their final year in high school. The Project on Spirituality conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI, 2005) found that 75% of students are searching for the meaning of life, 84% stated that they believed in the “sacredness of life,” 81% indicated that they are interested in spirituality, 74% revealed they discussed religion and spirituality with friends, and 64% admitted that spirituality is their “source of joy” (Rodgers & Love, 2007). This extensive study was conducted with only undergraduate students.

Graduate students’ perceptions of and experiences related to religion and spirituality differ from those of undergraduates, and since this current study focuses on graduate students, it is imperative to understand how they practice spirituality and religion in graduate school. Rodgers and Love (2007) conducted a study with 32 graduate students from three college student personnel programs in order to examine how these professionals are being trained to support undergraduate students regarding their explorations of spirituality. Their findings revealed that these graduate students had a need to first understand and to communicate about their own spirituality, they needed to establish their own self-knowledge about spirituality before working

with undergraduate students, and finally, the institution and the program played a salient role in assisting students to explore spirituality within their studies (Rodgers & Love, 2007).

Surprisingly, Rodgers and Love (2007) found that graduate students' perceptions mirrored the discussion of HERI (2005) that described "spirituality as an inner private process whereas religion is seen as an outward public practice in a particular community of belief" (Rodgers & Love, 2007, p. 701). Consequently, there is a distinction between spirituality and religion that becomes evident. What the participants observed and referred to were the practice of Christian religion. As such, discussing the importance of religion became imminent within this section.

Religion is defined as "a shared system of beliefs, principles or doctrines related to a belief in and worship of a supernatural power or powers regarded as creator(s) and governor(s) of the universe" (Love, 2001, p. 8). Spirituality is defined as "seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness; transcending one's locus of centrality (i.e. recognizing concerns beyond oneself); connectedness to self and others through relationships and community; developing a sense of meaning, purpose, and direction; and openness to fostering a relationship with a higher power or center of value that transcends human existence and rational ways of knowing" (Bryant, Choi & Yasuno, 2003, p. 724; Love & Talbot, 1999). Thus, spirituality lends itself to a personal "inner" journey of self-exploration, whereas religion is the open practice of one's faith that can be imposed upon others. Additionally, religion has been described as being part of spirituality, but spirituality can stand alone without religion (Love, 2001). Bryant, Choi and Yasuno (2003) observed that religious college students tended to attend religious services, participate in religious events, clubs or groups, and engage in prayer. In their study of 3,680 first year undergraduate students from various racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, these researchers found within their study of 3,680 first year undergraduate students, from varying

racial and ethnic backgrounds and religious backgrounds that students decreased their religious activity, but they became more aware of their spirituality and of incorporating it into their lives. Some researchers believe that institutions and their practices influenced the decline of student religiosity within college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Institutional characteristics impacted the decline of college student religiosity within the campus environment. In a study conducted by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), institutional practices did impact student development with regard to religious values and practices. By comparing state schools to Protestant and Catholic college environments, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) found that declines in religious practices for students were less obvious. Consequently, they concluded “institutional characteristics probably do play a role in the degree to which religious preferences, attitudes, values, and behaviors change during college” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 303). Beyond the college environment, these researchers also determined that place of residence impacted and changed religious values and practices (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). However, what this study does not discuss is which group of students reduces or declines their religious practices and values the most: Whites, Blacks, Hispanics or Asians. Earlier, in the discussion on religion and ethnicity, it was found that religion meant different things to different people (Kim, 2011). For this reason, one would assume that there would be a difference in students’ religiosity based on their race and ethnicity and that how much it would decline in college environments would depend on their socialization to religion.

Research has revealed that religious belief and psychological well-being are more positive among Black students compared to White students. Blaine and Crocker (1995) conducted a study that involved 66 Black students, 59 White students, and 19 other participants that were Hispanic, Asian American, or Native American. In their study, 43% were Protestant, 48% were Catholic,

11 % were Jewish, and 13% described themselves with no religious affiliation (Blaine & Crocker, 1995). All of the participants were undergraduate students. Blaine and Crocker (1995) wanted to explore university students' religious belief salience and psychological well-being. A Gallup (1984) poll revealed that Blacks were more religiously active and members of a church/synagogue than Whites. Additional studies revealed that Blacks were more involved in public and private religious practices and valued religion much more than Whites (Blaine & Crocker, 1995; Malpass & Symonds, 1974). This research found Black students experienced a “salience of religious belief [that] was related to increased self-esteem and life satisfaction, and decreased depression and hopelessness” (Blaine & Crocker, 1995, p. 1039). Furthermore, for Black students, the research revealed that religious attributions and positive identity development influenced psychological well-being and religious belief (Blaine & Crocker, 1995). The researchers suggested that Blacks are more prone to religious belief and salience because it afforded them the ability “to cope with real, immediate disadvantages” (Blaine & Crocker, 1995, p. 1039) compared to their privileged White counterparts. Another reason could be that of religious socialization within African American families from a young age.

For African Americans, religion and spirituality form an integral part of their socialization (Gutierrez, Goodwin, Kirkinis & Mattis, 2014). A study conducted by Gutierrez, Goodwin, Krikinis, & Mattis (2014) explored the role and impact of family on religious and spiritual socialization among African Americans and consisted of 319 participants from the Midwest and Northeast. Additionally, this study involved “(1) exploring adults perceptions of the influence of their parents, grandparents, and siblings on their religious and spiritual lives, and (2) examining the extent to which those perceptions are associated with subjective religiosity, subjective spirituality, religious importance, and commitment to religious socialization in the community”

(Gutierrez et.al., 2014, p. 779). The findings revealed that all three generations of grandparents, parents, and siblings had a positive influence on the religion and values of the participants in the study. The person with the most influence was that of the mother. A few participants noted some influence in relation to their fathers who influenced their religion and values negatively (Gutierrez et.al., 2014). This study supports the view that parents and grandparents who are strongly religious clearly influence children and grandchildren, especially with regard to instilling a value for religion and their faith and the importance of attending religious services.

Asian Americans are one of the fastest growing populations in the U.S. and are regarded as the “model minority” (Ecklund & Park, 2005). As such, and with the mixture of Asian American in my study, it became imperative to study their views on religion. Asian Americans practice a variety of religions ranging from Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism, but the largest group practices the Christian religious tradition (Ecklund & Park, 2005). Some studies have found that Asian Americans, as immigrants assimilating to the WASP culture, have “opportunities for leadership and a sense of meaning and belonging, [and] resources that help individuals overcome a deficiency in social status” (Ecklund & Park, 2005, p. 3). A study conducted by Ecklund and Park (2005) included 29,000 participants from 30 communities in the U.S. The study revealed that the religious affiliation of Asian Americans mattered more compared to non-affiliation with civic participation and community volunteerism. Moreover, there was no more distinction between Asian American and those who practiced Eastern religions when it came to volunteering. In recent years, Asian American students from the 1990’s have become central to American evangelical Christianity. As such, Christian university organizations like Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC), The Navigators, and InterVarsity Christian

Fellowship invite, draw, and encourage many Asian American students to bible study groups, prayer meetings, and religious social events (Busto, 1996).

The research conducted by Busto (1996) presented the dangers for Asian American students who profess an atheist belief system or a Chinese Buddhist culture upon entering institutions for their first year of study and then change to become a “born again” Christian. Bob Wong was a devout Chinese Buddhist, but after a year of “intense prayer and prodding by his evangelical Christian friends,” he became a “born again” Christian (Busto, 1996). Research has found that many of these Asian American students join religious groups because they are structured, well-organized, and nurturing, and they keep them safe from the anxieties of alienation because of their race, ethnicity, and previous religious affiliations (Busto, 1996). Oddly enough, as Busto (1996) suggested, there is still no answer as to the effect for these Asian American individuals on their family front from changing religion to joining the WASP culture.

The literature about multiracial student spirituality in higher education is sparse. In the book, *Divided by Faith*, Emerson and Smith (2000) contended that evangelical Christians demonstrate perceptively how individualistic ideals and practices cloud sound judgment regarding racial inequalities in the U.S. Most importantly, the book focuses on the religious beliefs between Black and White Americans’ race relations, which they term as the “tale of paradox” (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Emerson and Smith (2000) maintained that, in order to understand White evangelical Christian thought, one needs to understand the cultural “toolkit” (Swidler, 1986), which explains their reality. The “toolkit” consists of three dimensions: (1) the first dimension explains the idea of free-will individualism whereby individuals “exist independent of structures and institutions, have free will, and are individually accountable for their actions” (Emerson & Smith, 2000, p. 76); (2) the second dimension relates to the idea that

the concept of race is “relationalism,” which exists in building strong relationships with other people based from the “personal relationship with Christ” (Tranby & Hartmann, 2008, p.343) idea; and (3) the third dimension relates to “anti-structuralism,” which is the unwillingness to accept that societal structures created the inequalities present in society (Emerson & Smith, 2000). What Emerson and Smith (2000) found was that some evangelical Christians, with their individualistic worldview and unwillingness to accept and admit that structural inequality caused the inequities suffered by Blacks, in fact, “help reinforce White evangelical views on race” (p. 344), maintain segregated congregations to be isolated from the “racial problem,” maintain racial inequality, and make suggestions that exaggerate the issue instead of solve the problem (Tranby & Hartmann, 2008, p. 344).

In a follow up study and book, *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race*, DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey and Chai Kim (2003) offered a solution to the rigid structure of religious organizations that divide Christians in America, by stating that multiracial congregations could solve the issue of race because “a Christian congregation should be multiracial (a congregation is defined as multiracial when no one group comprises more than 80 percent of the church body)” (Houston, 2004, p. 61). The premise of their study is set upon early church principles of Jesus Christ, who as an outsider, embraced Gentiles, tax collectors, and women into his congregation. It is important to note that religious inclusion penetrated the racial divide and systemic White racism for some period during the Great Awakening of the 18th century, the Reconstruction of the 19th century, and the Pentecostal movement in the twentieth century (Houston, 2004). However, the negative cultural attitudes and racial prejudice superseded the good intent of these religious movements by assimilating into the majority WASP culture. To reach the ideal multiracial congregation, DeYoung, Emerson,

Yancey and Chai Kim (2003) suggested that a “theology of oneness of humanity” could reconcile individuals to live in harmony, which would transform the worldview to a deeper level of “core belief” (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey & Chai Kim, 2003, p. 156). Though these researchers recommend the multiracial church as a means to solving the race problem, the book *United by Faith* does reveal continued racial issues that plague the church in American society today (Houston, 2004).

Summary

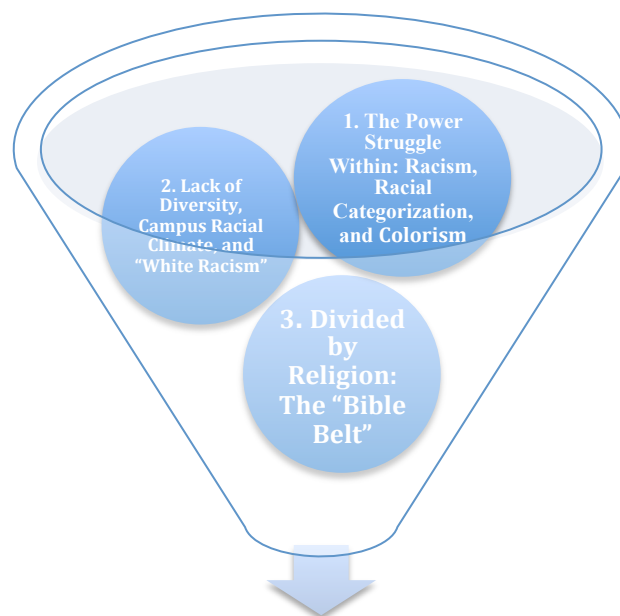
Within the context of religion and its impact on multiracial graduate students, the discussion revealed that Christianity is thriving within the university environment (Mayrl & Oeur, 2009). With an influx of immigrants assimilating and secularizing, the WASP culture began to dominate with the Christian religion (Kim, 2009). Consequently, Christian privilege materialized within the United States of America, and this migrated into the universities and college environments (Siefert, 2007). Students who practiced Christianity received its privileges within campus environments, whereas students who were not affiliated with Christianity, suffered isolation, marginalization, and silencing within their institutions (Mayhew, Bowman & Bryant Rockenbach, 2013).

Most of the existing research about religion in higher education focuses on undergraduate students, though at least one study has focused on graduate students. In their study, Rodgers and Love (2007) found that graduate students needed to understand their own spirituality and to build their self-knowledge about spirituality with the assistance of their institution and their programs. Additional research about religion suggests that African American students are considered the most religious, because religion forms part of their socialization from their family (Gutierrez, Goodwin, Kirkinis & Mattis, 2014). Many Asian American students have been

assimilated into the higher education environments and have become Christian (Ecklund & Park, 2005) as a result of Christian proselytizing on campus grounds. Even though issues related to religion and the multiracial church have been explored, challenges related to religion and multiracial students have not been addressed. I perceive this as a gap in the literature that needs to be explored in the future. Overall, the presence of White privilege overshadowed the experiences of students of color and multiracial students regarding religion with the WASP culture emphasizing Christianity.

The following figure 5.1 represents the discussion for this chapter 5. The three main discussion points were placed within a vortex illustrating the PWI environment. These events inevitably lead to the struggle between White privilege and Multiracial Sentience.

Figure 5.1 Discussion Points Placed within PWI Vortex



White Privilege versus Multiracial Sentience

White Privilege versus Multiracial Sentience

Through this current study, the presence of White privilege, White racism, and White colorism (Hannon, 2014) surfaced. White privilege is the recognition that Whites receive unacknowledged benefits within society that are “denied and protected” (McIntosh, 1989, p. 1) by ignoring racism that places individuals of minority status at a disadvantage. “White colorism” is similar to “White racism” and is defined as racist beliefs by White individuals with prejudices toward people from other racial and ethnic groups (Hannon, 2014). Both White colorism and White racism supports the White hegemonic system of inequity prevalent within the American society. Consequently, “White racism” allows White individuals the continued opportunity to discriminate toward people of color based on the different shades or color of their skin (Hannon, 2014).

Furthermore, with critical Whiteness theories, there is the understanding that the Jim Crow era still exists but in more subtle ways by justifying society’s structural dominance both its structural and cultural elements (Tranby & Hartmann, 2008). Within these two elements, the recognition of White Anglo-American culture exists as normative, and “White cultural interests are often confounded with national interests, further strengthening White dominance and power” (Tranby & Hartmann, 2008, p. 347). This White culture recognizes that everything else is inferior to Whites, which in turn creates Whiteness that can be “taken for granted” (Frankenberg, 1993). This “taken for granted” attitude leads to “color-blindness” (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). The three main discussion points are synergistic since every discussion point reverted back to White privilege, White racism, and White colorism.

There were some commonalities of experiences across all three participants in this study. These commonalities included: (1) physical appearance, racial categorization, racial identity and

its impact on them as multiracial individuals, (2) the impact of campus racial climate upon their experiences, and (3) the impact of religion.

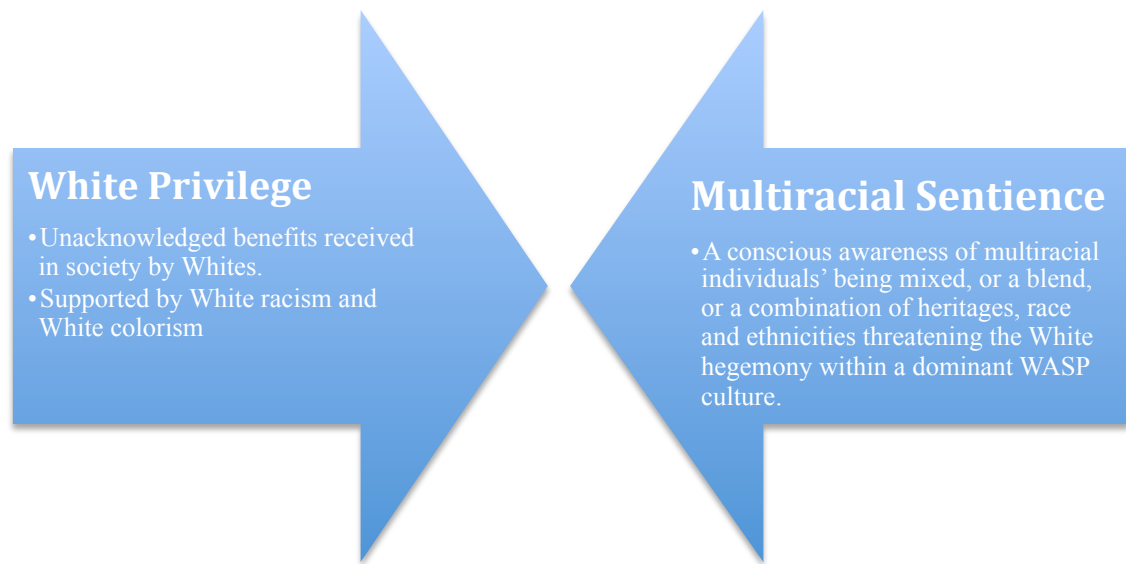
During all of their experiences from a young age, the multiracial participants were consciously aware that something was wrong with experiencing factors that alienated, isolated, marginalized, and diminished their voices. This has led me to coin the term “multiracial sentience” to represent the lived experiences of multiracial individuals. Multiracial sentience signifies a conscious awareness of multiracial individuals’ being mixed, or a blend, or a combination of heritages, race and ethnicities threatening the White hegemony within a dominant WASP culture. Multiracial sentience develops over time as multiracial individuals develop their identity and learn to accept their racial fluidity within society (Renn, 2008). Multiracial sentience allows multiracial individuals to see the hidden White racism and White privilege, to recognize its influences upon their lives, marginalization, and isolation suffered because of their different heritages, race and ethnicities. The lens developed by multiracial individuals are in opposition to White experiences, that live within the realm of receiving unearned benefits in society because of White Privilege. Multiracial sentience provides multiracial individuals with the aptitude to develop strategies of success to use within their daily lives to overcome the constant racism, racial microaggression, and white racism that they experience. These strategies were similar to the ones noted in MacDonald (2014) where the multiracial graduate students portrayed the roles of either passivist, optimist and self-advocate. Similarly, within this present study, my participants displayed these roles of behavior to help them succeed within their environment. In comparison to the study of Chapman-Huls (2009) who found that multiracial students exercised the roles of pacifist, non-conformist and activist, the study conducted by MacDonald (2014) specifically with mature graduate multiracial students

revealed and exercised more advanced roles that mostly portrayed self-advocacy. Overall, it became evident that the roles displayed depended upon the situation and event within which each multiracial individual experienced. This aspect clearly relates to the fluidity and complexity of the multiracial individual and their racial identity development. Multiracial sentience provides multiracial individuals the opportunity to be resilient in a “color-blind” White society that has ulterior motives to maintain a White hegemonic society. This determination of resilience stems from the individual’s learning and development, which occurs within a socially and culturally shaped environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Further, Vygotsky (1978) determined that the human learning and development also occurred psychologically. Consequently, now there has been a development and progression toward Critical Race Psychology, which did not exist at the time of Vygotsky. Critical Race Psychology derived from CRT because its tenets were originally designed from the psychological sciences, which challenged the “assumptions about agency and subjectivity in legal scholarship and jurisprudence” (Adams & Salter, 2011, p. 1358). Instead of tying Multiracial Sentience directly toward CRT, I chose Critical Race Psychology because it focuses on the consciousness of the individual. In using Critical Race Psychology, it draws upon the color-blind epistemology, and the “atomistic conception of racism that promotes colorblind ignorance about ongoing significance of racism- that constitute racial power” (Adams & Salter, 2011, p. 1355). Subsequently, Adams and Salter (2011) recognized that Critical Race Psychology would not be limited by generic topics of prejudice, stereotypes, and identity, but transcend beyond to include “the conscious application of racially positioned knowledge to topics across the entirety of psychological science” (Adams & Salter, 2011, p. 1361). With the inclusion and perspective of Critical Race Psychology, Multiracial Sentience is a consciousness used by multiracial individuals to successfully navigate this White hegemonic society. The

consciousness (sentience) within Critical Race Psychology relates to the identity consciousness, which includes critical reflexivity to understand the extent of racial identity formation and knowledge construction (Adams & Salter, 2011). By actively practicing multiracial sentience through the use of Critical Race Psychology by utilizing identity consciousness, critical reflexivity, and the awareness of racial fluidity (Adams & Salter, 2011) within different situations, events and experiences, these multiracial individuals would directly contradict the colorblind ideology with distinct choices made.

The following figure 5.2 represents my perspective on White Privilege versus Multiracial Sentience. The definitions for each terminology are expressly stated within the two larger arrows pointing toward each other. White privilege considers the unacknowledged benefits received and conferred upon White's within the dominant society, whereas multiracial sentience recognizes a conscious awareness of multiracial individuals being mixed, or a blend, or a combination of heritages, race and ethnicities, and because of this is threatening the White hegemony within the dominant WASP culture. Within the center where the two points of the two arrows would meet represent the additional and ongoing research for myself in the future. Between these two diverse experiences of White Privilege and Multiracial Sentience lies the answer in reaching harmony, tolerance and respect.

Figure 5.2 White Privilege and Multiracial Sentience



The Present Study: What are the Lived Experiences of Multiracial Graduate Students?

The counter stories of the multiracial graduate student participants presented the opportunity for examining their lived experiences from childhood to adulthood. The narratives of the participants revealed their sentiments from three perspectives, each participant relating their own: 1) “Because I am multiracial” presented MJ’s life experiences as someone viewing life through different lenses all the time because of his mixed heritages and race consisting of Chinese, Black and White; 2) “I never passed” revealed Kay’s story of a life straddling the Black-White divide, where you do not belong in either group from individuals belonging to each group, but Kay’s satisfaction is arrived at knowing that her child will not endure the line of division due to White acceptance because she (the child) passes; and 3) “You’re an outsider” revealed Mia’s dilemmas with how people perceive her from a young age to this present day as

an adult because at any time she can be the “outsider.” Or, the individual asking the questions is considered the “outsider.” Each of these participants astutely presented a multitude of experiences ranging from difficult to challenging.

From the narratives of the participants, the findings were determined in the participants lived experiences with the use of CRT as the theoretical framework. The first finding recognized the common experience of racism as an everyday occurrence because of its recognition as a social construction in society. Three aspects noted within this finding related to physical appearance, racial categorization, and racial identity. Each of the participants experienced these three aspects across their life span. An experience was chosen from each participant across their life span to show that the experiences with racism never ceased to exist.

The second finding revealed the three multiracial graduate students’ experiences with racism within the campus climate and how this impacts diversity because of White privilege. Within this finding, the campus racial climate was examined through the four dimensions of the campus racial climate. Each of the four dimensions was present within the experiences of the multiracial graduate students, and within each experience the multiracial graduate student was the lessor person experiencing difficulties. Consequently, the experiences within the campus climate of a predominantly White institution reveal that White privilege prevails, and that the campus racial climate with student of color challenges persists.

The third finding considered the impact of race and religious dominance within a predominantly White institution and how this impacts multiracial graduate students. Two of the participants, MJ and Mia, found it difficult to be within a dominant Christian religious environment. Kay did not perceive the environment as challenging, because she is an avid Christian religion follower and has incorporated this facet into her daily life of research and

study. Kay revealed the positives related to being Christian within the university environment, whereas MJ and Mia revealed the opposite. These individuals are not Christian and recognize the challenges that individuals who do not conform to the Christian religious principles face. MJ noticed the staunch and conservative nature on and off campus, and Mia observed how individuals referred to religion continuously throughout one day. As a result, Mia lives a closet life as a non-Christian to avoid receiving the backlash from other ardent Christian followers. Consequently, within a racially divided campus environment there exists division along the lines of religion with who practice the dominant Christian religion versus those who do not.

The experiences of multiracial graduate students accurately reveal that White privilege is evident within everyday life for individuals who do not meet the physical attributes or color attributes of the dominant White hegemonic society. Thus, within these experiences, I have observed a consciousness of multiracial individuals because of their awareness of the inequities and differences experienced throughout their lives. I have coined this consciousness as multiracial sentience. The key definition I attribute to multiracial sentience is as follows: Multiracial sentience signifies a conscious awareness of multiracial individuals' as being mixed, or a blend, or a combination of heritages, race and ethnicities threatening the White hegemony within a dominant WASP culture. With the recognition of the importance of multiracial individuals within society, would inevitably eliminate the divide between Black and White, or White and Black, and society's perception of each other would change with more tolerance toward each other. However, with a constant divide between people and the different race attributed to individuals within the importance of colorism, the systemic racism and White privilege would persist within daily life. I see multiracial individuals as the conqueror of the division between people from different race and heritages.

Limitations of the Study

Earlier in Chapter 3, I discussed the limitations of the research design, which included a small population of multiracial graduate students from the research site, a small sample size of three participants in this study, and additional time required to conduct research which could have included a focus group. Beyond the limitations of the research design, the following were additional limitations observed in conducting this important research.

- Observations of the participants within their working and study environment would have provided additional rich data regarding the interactions between these multiracial graduate students and others. In addition, these observations would have provided more lived experience observations by the researcher, which is not known to the participants.
- Even though I sent out an invitation via Sunflower Today, and sent targeted invitations to professors to send the invites to individual students meeting the criteria, additional personal visits with invitations to multicultural organizations could have resulted in a bigger pool of research participants and could have extended my search for participants for this study with more multiracial graduate students with different race and ethnicities.
- Besides using narrative inquiry for this study and focusing on lived experiences, another research design such as phenomenology with specific emphasis on hermeneutical phenomenology (van Manen, 1990) could have been used. Hermeneutical phenomenology describes the lived experiences (phenomenology) of the participants with an interpretational focus on the “texts” of lived experiences or life (hermeneutics) (van Manen, 1990). This research design would

include both a description and interpretation process conducted by the researcher (Creswell, 2007).

- This study could have been conducted as grounded theory because I found a common phenomenon experienced by the three multiracial graduate students, which I coined as multiracial sentience. But instead of thinking of this as a limitation, maybe this should be considered an opportunity to conduct future research and explore this phenomenon of multiracial sentience as a “development of a theory that might help explain practice or provide a framework for further research” (Creswell, 2007, p. 63).
- Within the framework of CRT, even though it addresses the racism experienced by multiracial individuals, another framework or an expansion of CRT should be created to address solely the unique experiences of multiracial individuals. One such framework can be regarded as Multiracial Critical Theory (MRCT) because there are frameworks that address Latinos/Latinas experiences with LatCrit (Hernández-Truyol, 1997), Asian American experiences with AsianCrit (Chang, 1993), and the general CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), which is most commonly used with African Americans.

These limitations were noted and have also assisted in my realizing that a new theory can be developed to consider the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students.

Implications for Institutional Policy and Practice

There are many institutional changes that Sunflower University should consider that could be instructive to other similar universities. The first is to increase the compositional diversity of the student body and the faculty, because multiracial graduate students have already

experienced challenges concerning their racial identities, their perceptions of their multiracial identities, and how those perceptions affect their understanding of the interactions with different individuals and their academic abilities. The second is to recognize that institutional racial diversity and racial categorization of multiracial students are salient, and that services need to be provided through mentoring to help develop these students through their college years of study. Thirdly, higher education institutions need to recognize the phenomenon of Christian privilege (Siefert, 2007) and the impact of the religious climate of colleges and universities within their environments, and how this might divide religious majority, religious minority, and the nonreligious students.

Diversity needs to be described more broadly at Sunflower University. By expanding the definition of diversity to include more minority groups not recognized and supported in higher education institutions, the campus climate will likely improve for all students and will reveal the all-thriving monoracial perceptions of racial segregation and systemic racism. Wann (2013) recognized that by defining diversity broadly by “integrating multiraciality critically might help campuses expose monoracial norms and move campuses towards greater inclusivity” (p. 187). With greater inclusivity, the perceptions of multiracial students would likely improve (Remedios & Chasteen, 2013), and the sense of belonging will improve for multiracial students (Ahnallen, Suyemoto & Carter, 2006).

Pike and Kuh (2006) found that lack of structural diversity among the student body at an institution leads to infrequent interactions of students from different backgrounds. These researchers recognized that the demographics within the U.S. are changing and that colleges and universities will admit more diverse students within their environments. Subsequently, Pike and Kuh (2006) wanted to examine “the relationships among the diversity of the student body (i.e.

structural diversity), interactions among the diverse groups of students (i.e. informal interactional diversity), and perceptions of the campus climate” (p. 426). Their data were retrieved from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in Spring 2001 of *The College Student Report* and from the IPEDS Fall 2000 data (Pike & Kuh, 2006). The sample included 45,000 seniors from more than 321 colleges and universities. The findings revealed that with increased diversity, there were more interactions between diverse students, and informal interactional diversity was also high because of the increased structural diversity on colleges and universities. Most importantly, there was a strong relationship between informal interactional diversity and structural diversity, because a more diverse student population exposed students to different viewpoints (Pike & Kuh, 2006). Consequently, structural diversity becomes an important factor on colleges and university campuses that can lead to and create many opportunities for diverse students to interact with each other. The interactions and friendships revealed by MJ in this study seem to support the experiences of MJ with his fellow doctoral peers. They spend quality time together beyond their department in outside fun environments, and this makes their friendships stronger. Though, the strong friendships are clearly noted with the American students who show up for the different events, while the Chinese students “do stuff together.”

Finally, in order to become inclusive within Sunflower University’s environment, pluralism needs to be practiced in recognizing a multitude of religions or secular worldviews of students. Waggoner (2011) maintained that “spiritual perspectives are forcefully at work in the academy...[H] igher education institutions can cultivate intellectual and cultural environments that enable comity, if not synergy among competing perspectives” (p. xi). Moreover, Waggoner (2011) recognized that both public and private institutions are impacted by different worldviews; religious or secular and both should be accepted within educational environments. Nash (2011)

suggested “we invite atheists to join us at the pluralistic table throughout the campus... [I]n a university, all voices, no matter how controversial and against the mainstream they might be, has a right to be heard and responded to” (p. 74-75). Consequently, the university needs to address the issue related to Christian privilege whereby the majority of the student body conforms to Christianity and are unaware of the unearned religious privilege afforded to them. Many students who are not part of the religious majority remain silent and marginalized (Siefert, 2007). In learning about their Christian privilege, recognizing their privilege, and understanding the historical privilege, the religious majority students and their worldviews can reduce their hostility and religiosity toward minority religious and nonreligious students within the campus environment.

Implications for the Methodological Field

In my search of finding the most suited data analysis process for this study, I experienced many difficulties in presenting the narratives of my participants with the sole focus on their lived experiences. Similarly, Hunter (2010) discussed her difficulties in finding the best suited narrative analysis for her studies. Richmond (2002) also discussed the difficulties in narrative research with the limitations of how researchers conduct their narrative analysis. Narrative inquiry is a methodology that has gained great interest and use, but there are many difficulties in using this process. The difficulties surface from no clear direction in researchers explicitly describing their analysis process (Hunter, 2010; Richmond, 2002). Moreover, these researchers recognize that the narrative inquiry field of conducting narrative analysis requires additional step-by-step accounts of conducting this type of analysis.

The main goal of narrative inquiry is to “sing up many truths/narratives” (Byrne-Armstrong, 2001, p. 112). As noted in my study, there are many truths to lived experiences of

individuals. Truths can be noted as actual lived experiences or as perceived lived experiences. Within my study, I focused solely on the actual lived experiences of my participants. Consequently, there is an opportunity for analyzing the perceived experiences of multiracial graduate students in future studies. But, in recognizing the many truths of narrative inquiry, many challenges are revealed. Gergen and Gergen (2003) observed the challenges related to validity and representation of narrative. This challenge arises from differing perspectives and the co-construction of narratives between participants and the researcher, which in turn questions the validity and representation of the narrative study (Hunter, 2010). Another challenge is a concern expressed by Fine (2003) who cautioned readers about the romanticizing of narratives and pointing out the “othering” of individuals. Within this approach, researchers are meant to be reflexive and aware of their writing process. This I have achieved within my writing by discussing reflexivity and how my history and experiences could impact the research. Furthermore, I have revealed how my research process became a part of my writing through the changes that materialized with regard to my data analysis process. Hopefully, with the step-by-step account of my writing process and research process, many other novice researchers who wish to undertake narrative inquiry and plan to conduct both narrative and analysis of narrative analyses, would find the data analysis section of great assistance.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study lends itself to several different directions to pursue in future research. In some instances, these future research recommendations could address the limitations of this study.

Increased Diversity Coursework in the Curriculum

Diversity is a very important issue within higher education. To this day, various debates continue about the validity and practices associated with diversity initiatives within campus

environments. The literature reviewed in this study clearly revealed the benefits attributed to undergraduate students and graduate students in higher education, especially within PWI's. A study that was recently conducted by Neville and colleagues (2014) revealed that scholars believe that one diversity course (e.g. Chang, 2002) taken by students could assist with the transformation of student perspectives concerning different racial groups in higher education. However, these researches believe that student affairs personnel, academic staff, and faculty should all encourage students to take numerous diversity courses throughout their college experiences. This will broaden students' horizons concerning the various aspects of diversity and will increase their worldviews. Within the data, Mia referred to teaching students more about diversity, so they can learn to value diversity. Should PWI's decide to increase their structural diversity within their institutions, they need to increase the diversity courses offered to students beyond just one requirement course per program. What would happen to graduate students' worldviews with an increase number of required diversity courses?

Multiracial Graduate Students' Interaction with Each Other at a Predominantly White University: Is Race a Factor?

In writing about the experiences of multiracial graduate students, MJ observed that he has very little to no interaction with other multiracial students. The same applied to Mia and Kay, and Sunflower University revealed that enrollment of multiracial student numbers is very low. MJ mentioned that in coming in contact with other multiracial students, they would get their racial mixture question out of the way, and not bother with it again. This made me wonder about multiracial graduate students', or for that matter, multiracial undergraduate students' interactions within a predominantly White university. Research on multiracial congregations (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey & Chai Kim, 2003) revealed that race still surfaced as a problem within the

church community and within the interaction of people in the American society. Since multiracial individuals consist of different racial and ethnic heritages, with different influences from their backgrounds, would race surface as a problem among these individuals within a predominantly White university where “White racism,” White privilege, and “White colorism” impact how multiracial individuals are perceived (Hannon, 2014)? This question requires further research.

Religious Impacts on Multiracial Students

Multiracial individuals consist of mixed heritages of various groups of mostly monoracial parents, but sometimes some parents can be biracial. With these mixed heritages comes mixed cultural norms, including various religions and traditions that are exercised at home, which these multiracial individuals tend to assume and to practice themselves. Depending on the religious or non-religious backgrounds of the multiracial individuals’ parents, the individual could assume this aspect of identity. Maybe because of the conflicting religions practiced by multiracial individuals’ parents, the individual could choose not to practice religion at all. How does an environment with conservative Christian norms in higher education institutions impact non-religious multiracial students on campus? Does it affect their multiracial identity development? Does it cause internal conflict? And, to what extent does it inhibit multiracial individuals’ willingness to reveal their true secular identity?

Multiracial Sentience

Previously, I have spoken about multiracial sentience in comparison to White privilege to counter the dominant hegemonic system. The definition I have attributed to multiracial sentience is a conscious awareness of multiracial individuals’ being mixed, or a blend, or a combination of heritages, race and ethnicities threatening the White hegemony within a dominant WASP culture.

There were several dimensions, which explain multiracial sentience as: (1) multiracial individuals recognizing White racism and White privilege, and to observe the influences upon their lives, (2) multiracial individuals developing strategies of success to use within their daily lives to be successful, (3) multiracial individuals becoming resilient with a strongly developed racial identity that diminishes the “color-blind” hypocrisy present within society. As a result, with multiracial sentience, multiracial individuals can successfully navigate the dominant White hegemonic society. The next step in my research would be to establish multiracial sentience with a large sample size of individuals consisting with two or more racial and heritages. Consequently, multiracial sentience would be a part of the ecological approach because of the fluid and complex racial development, and ever-changing identity because of choice, of multiracial individuals.

Multiracial Critical Theory

Critical race theory places the experiences of people of color in opposition to Whites who receive the unearned benefits within a dominant White hegemonic society using the tenets of CRT. With the creation of this theory, there originated several derivative theories, such as LatCrit and AsianCrit. Latino/a Critical Theory addresses the inequities suffered by Latinos/Latinas and Chicanos/Chicanas. Apparently, LatCrit is very similar to CRT (Delgado-Bernal, 2012) but more specifically it considers aspects often overlooked by CRT. Similarly, Chang (2003) developed Asian American Critical Theory, which is very similar to CRT (Liu, 2009), and considers the oppression considered by Asian Americans within the form of nativistic, violence and discriminatory racism (Chang, 1993). Since there exist critical theories addressing the oppression, discrimination, racism and prejudice suffered by different groups of people, so too does multiracial individuals with two or more race and heritages require a specific

theory to address their racism, discrimination and colorism effects on their lived experiences.

With this assertion, and alongside the recognition that “colorism” was prevalent within the lived experiences of multiracial people, a theory such as Multiracial Critical Theory (MRCT), or MultiracialCrit is definitely required.

Contribution to the Literature

This present study has revealed that there remains much work to be researched with regard to multiracial individuals. My study focused on multiracial graduate students because so much of the prior research has focused on undergraduate students. Though graduate multiracial students are mostly older, and mostly form part of the non-traditional group of students, their experiences are not less valuable compared to undergraduate multiracial students. The experiences of my three participants revealed that religion has a grave impact on their daily lives. Depending on the multiracial individuals’ backgrounds and mix of heritages, the importance of religion might or might not be that significant to them. Upon entering into a campus environment that is predominantly White and that emphasizes the Christian religion, multiracial individuals who are not Christian face additional unwarranted challenges. There is currently a literature base on multiracial congregations and churches, and how they operate within its environment with different people of different races and heritages. However, there was no literature that I could find revealing the experiences of multiracial graduate students and the impact of religion on their lives within a predominantly White campus environment. Reminiscing from the start of this project, my sole purpose was to understand the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students, and what I discovered was multiracial sentience and how religion does impact multiracial students. These were two discoveries I never anticipated!

Conclusion

The major findings in this study reveal that the diversity initiatives at Sunflower University need to be transformed to become inclusionary for all students within its land grant PWI environment. The multiracial graduate students in this study perceived a lack of diversity of both students and faculty and described its diversity initiatives as modest and exclusionary. There is a need to expand the definition of diversity to become more inclusive for both faculty and students of color. However, there is a limitation of the diversity definition that does not recognize multiracial students as minority students, because they are separated from the protected minority groups. This limited definition results in exclusionary practices that marginalize multiracial students within its campus environment.

Furthermore, religion impacts religious majority, religious minority, and nonreligious students within the campus environment. Religion is perceived as an extension of individuals' identities, and as such, falls within the purview of diversity. Thus, it would be prudent for Sunflower University to redefine its diversity component and to become more inclusive of all students and especially nonreligious students within its environment. To address these issues, the institution needs to recognize the dominance of Christian privilege and to work to eradicate these dominant views in order to become inclusive of religious minority and nonreligious students.

This study reveals that the campus racial climate impacts and influences the actions of multiracial graduate students working toward their graduate degrees within a land grant PWI. However, since these students are non-traditional and mature individuals beyond emerging adulthood, their identities are intact, they are aware of their academic abilities, and they seek mentoring in academic and professional development to be a success and achieve their goals. Unfortunately race and White privilege does impose challenges upon these multiracial graduate

students within their environment. A major contribution of this study to the literature is the salience of religion within the campus environment, which marginalizes nonreligious students and imposes challenges upon multiracial graduate students. Nonreligious students (e.g. Mia) live in fear of their secular beliefs because they could suffer retaliation for being nonreligious, and consequently they fear an adverse effect on their studies and on their career within a religious majority environment.

This research shows that multiracial graduate students live a fluid and complex life within a monoracial world. In order to move forward and to become an inclusive PWI, Sunflower University needs to take direct steps in having open dialogue concerning the needs of all students within its environment. At present, multiracial students are but a few in comparison to the large number of college attendees, and to attract more students to its environment, diversity initiatives need to be addressed appropriately.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Announcement

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Appendix A: Recruitment Announcement

Research Study Announcement In K-State Today

Grizelda MacDonald, a doctoral candidate in the College of Education, is seeking graduate students to participate within her dissertation research. The title of the research is *Multiracial Graduate Students' Lived Experiences in Higher Education*. This will be a wonderful opportunity for multiracial graduate students to share multiracial perspective about your experiences.

The purpose of the study is to understand graduate multiracial students' lived experiences in higher education. The study also seeks to understand and to give voice to this increasing population's needs in higher education. The criteria for participation in the study are: the graduate student self-identifies as a multiracial (two or more races) student; is currently enrolled in graduate study; and attends a land grant institution.

The doctoral research will include a screening tool, a demographic questionnaire with a consent form. Additionally, the research will involve journal reflections and interviews, which will explore the lived experiences of multiracial graduate students on a land grant and predominantly white institution.

Please contact Grizelda MacDonald at 785-532-7739 or email her at grizmac1@ksu.edu if you would like to participate. Additionally, you can contact Christy Craft, Associate Professor and MacDonald's advisor, for further information at 785-532-5941 or email her at ccraft@ksu.edu.

Appendix B: Recruitment Emails



College of Education
Department of Special Education,
Counseling and Student Affairs

Email Solicitation Letter for Study Participation

Title of Study: Multiracial Graduate Students' Lived Experiences in Higher Education

Dear Prospective Participants,

My name is Grizelda MacDonald. I am currently a Ph.D. Candidate in Student Affairs in Higher Education at Kansas State University. I am writing to ask if you would be interested in participating in my dissertation research on multiracial graduate students' lived experiences in higher education. I am looking for participants who *self-identity as multiracial individuals, are currently enrolled within graduate studies (masters' or doctoral program) and who have recently graduated from a graduate program*. I am interested in learning about your lived experiences as a multiracial graduate while enrolled at a predominantly white institution (PWI).

To actively participate within this study, I would require you to do the following:

- Complete a screening tool, which would take about 5-10 min to complete.
- Complete a demographic questionnaire about yourself, which would last no longer than 15 min.
- Write reflections about yourself and your past experiences.
- Participate in at least two 60 min interviews to ensure all information received was accurate.

As a prospective participant, you will be requested to read and sign a participant consent form, which will be the initial step within the study. There are no costs to participate within this study. You will receive no compensation or credit for your participation. The benefit of your participation will help inform colleges and higher education institutions about multiracial graduate students lived experiences.

If you are interested in participating within this study, and self-identify as a multiracial graduate student, please do not hesitate to contact me at grizmac1@ksu.edu, or call me at 785-226-0746 (cell). You may also contact my advisor Dr. Christy Craft at ccraft@ksu.edu , or call at 785-532-5941.

Thank you for your consideration of participating within this prospective study. I look forward to learning more about you and your lived experiences.

Sincerely,

Grizelda MacDonald
Ph.D. Candidate in Student Affairs in Higher Education
Tel: 785-226-0746 (cell)
Email: grizmac1@ksu.edu

Dr. Christy Craft
Associate Professor, SECSA
Tel: 785-532-5941
Email: ccraft@ksu.edu

Appendix C: Screening Tool Survey



College of Education
Department of Special Education,
Counseling and Student Affairs

Project Title: Multiracial Graduate Students' Lived Experiences in Higher Education.

Dear Participants,

I am looking for participants who *self-identity as multiracial individuals*, are *currently enrolled within graduate studies (masters' or doctoral program)* and *who have recently graduated from a graduate program*. I am interested in learning about your lived experiences as a multiracial graduate while enrolled at a land grant institution and a predominantly white institution (PWI). As a result, you have received this screening tool for completion to evaluate whether you meet the criteria required for this study.

Instructions: Please complete all the questions below. This screening tool should not take longer than five minutes to complete. All the information provided below will be kept confidential.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

Thank you for completing the screening tool.

1. **Name:**
2. **Email:**.....
3. **Phone Number:**.....
4. **Education:** Are you currently enrolled as a graduate student? Check all that apply.
 - a. Masters Student
 - b. Ph.D. Student
 - c. ED.D. Student
 - d. PSY. D. Student.....
 - d. Non-degree seeking student.....
 - e. Other.....
5. **Employment:** Are you currently employed? Check all that apply.
 - a. Graduate Research Assistant.....
 - b. Graduate Teaching Assistant.....
 - c. Graduate Assistant.....
 - d. Work Study
 - e. Instructor.....
 - f. Advisor
 - g. Unclassified Staff.....
 - h. Classified Staff.....
6. **Degree and Discipline:** Please write one that applies.
 - a. Ph.D/ ED.D/ Psy. D
 - b. MA/ MS
 - c. MFA
 - d. ED. S.
 - e. Other..... Please specify:
8. **Gender:** Please check the appropriate letter.

a. Male

b. Female

9. **Race:** What is your race? Please check one of the following.

..... a. **White (not Hispanic or Latino).** This person is someone who has origins from Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

..... b. **Black or African American (not Hispanic or Latino).** This person is someone with origins anywhere from the black racial groups in Africa.

..... c. **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (not Hispanic or Latino).** This person is someone with origins from people of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa or Pacific Islands.

..... d. **Asian (not Hispanic or Latino).** This person is someone with origins from the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian Subcontinent, e.g., Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, Vietnam and Taiwan.

..... e. **American Indian or Alaska Native (not Hispanic or Latino).** This person has origins from people of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation.

..... f. **Two or More Races (not Hispanic or Latino).** These are individuals who self- identify with two or more races named above. If you self-identify with Two or More Races, please list them:.....

..... g. **Other. Please Specify:**.....

10. Are you the first person in your family to go to college?

☐ Yes

☐ No

15. What is your cumulative GPA for your present graduate study?

☐ GPA:.....

Appendix D: Demographic Survey



College of Education
Department of Special Education,
Counseling and Student Affairs

Demographic Questionnaire

Project Title: Multiracial Graduate Students' Lived Experiences in Higher Education

Dear Participants,

I am looking for participants who *self-identity as multiracial individuals*, are *currently enrolled within graduate studies (masters' or doctoral program)* and *who have recently graduated from a graduate program*. I am interested in learning about your lived experiences as a multiracial graduate while enrolled at a land grant institution and predominantly white institution (PWI). As a result, you have received this screening tool for completion to evaluate whether you meet the criteria required for this study.

Instructions: Please complete all the questions below. This demographic questionnaire should not take longer than fifteen minutes to complete. All the information provided below will be kept confidential.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

Thank you for completing the demographic questionnaire.

1. **Name:**
2. **Age:**
3. **Year of Birth:**
4. **Gender:** a. Male:..... b. Female:
5. **How many years have you been studying?** :.....
6. **Education:** Are you currently enrolled as a graduate student? Check all that apply.
 - a. Masters Student
 - b. Ph.D. Student
 - c. ED.D. Student
 - d. PSY. D. Student.....
 - d. Non-degree seeking student.....
 - e. Other.....
7. **Employment:** Are you currently employed? Check all that apply.
 - a. Graduate Research Assistant.....
 - b. Graduate Teaching Assistant.....
 - c. Graduate Assistant.....
 - d. Work Study
 - e. Instructor.....
 - f. Advisor
 - g. Unclassified Staff.....
 - h. Classified Staff.....
8. **Degree and Discipline:** Please write one that applies.
 - a. Ph.D/ ED.D/ Psy. D
 - b. MA/ MS
 - c. MFA

d. ED. S.

e. Other..... Please specify:

9. What is your current GPA? Check only one.

..... a. > 3.0

..... b. 3.0- 3.2

..... c. 3.3- 3.5

..... d. 3.6- 3.8

..... e. 3.9- 4.0

10. What most accurately describes your neighborhood in which you live/work or attend school? Please check only one.

..... a. Rural

..... b. Suburban

..... c. Urban

11. Are you the first person to attend college/university in your family?

..... a. Yes

..... b. No

12. What is the highest level of education your mother completed?

..... a. High School

..... b. Associate degree

..... c. Bachelor degree

..... d. Master degree

..... e. Doctoral degree

..... f. Other, please specify:

..... g. Cannot Say

13. What is the highest level of education your father completed?

..... a. High School

..... b. Associate degree

..... c. Bachelor degree

..... d. Master degree

..... e. Doctoral degree

..... f. Other, please specify:

..... g. Cannot Say

14. **What is the income estimate of your parents?** Check one.

..... a. < 20,000

..... b. 21,000- 30,000

..... c. 31,000- 40,000

..... d. 41,000- 60,000

..... e. 61,000- 80,000

..... f. 81,000- 100,000

..... g. above 100,000

15. **Ethnicity:** Are you Hispanic or Latino?

..... a. Yes

..... b. No

16. **Race:** What is your race? Please check one of the following.

..... a. **White (not Hispanic or Latino).** This person is someone who has origins from Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

..... b. **Black or African American (not Hispanic or Latino).** This person is someone with origins anywhere from the black racial groups in Africa.

..... c. **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (not Hispanic or Latino).** This person is someone with origins from people of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa or Pacific Islands.

..... d. **Asian (not Hispanic or Latino).** This person is someone with origins from the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian Subcontinent, e.g., Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, Vietnam and Taiwan

..... e. **American Indian or Alaska Native (not Hispanic or Latino).** This person has origins from people of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation.

..... f. **Two or More Races (not Hispanic or Latino).** These are individuals who self- identify with two or more races named above. If you self-identify with Two or More Races, please list them:.....

..... g. **Other. Please Specify:**.....

17. How do other people perceive you, **according to ethnicity**? Check only one.

..... a. Hispanic or Latino

..... b. Not Hispanic or Latino

19. How do other people perceive you, **according to race**? Check only one.

..... a. White or Caucasian

..... b. Black or African American

..... c. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

..... d. Asian American

..... e. American Indian or Alaska Native

..... f. Two or More Races

20. What is the **race** of your mother? Check only one.

..... a. White or Caucasian

..... b. Black or African American

..... c. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

..... d. Asian American

..... e. American Indian or Alaska Native

..... f. Two or More Races

21. What is the **ethnicity** of your mother? Check only one.

..... a. Hispanic or Latino

..... b. Not Hispanic or Latino

22. What is the **race** of your father? Check only one.

..... a. White or Caucasian

..... b. Black or African American

..... c. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

..... d. Asian American

..... e. American Indian or Alaska Native

..... f. Two or More Races

23. What is the **ethnicity** of your father? Check only one.

..... a. Hispanic or Latino

..... b. Not Hispanic or Latino

24. Are you an **international student**? Check only one.

..... a. Yes

..... b. No

25. Are you an **in-state** or **out-of-state** student? Check only one.

..... a. Yes

..... b. No

Appendix E: Self- Reflection Prompts



College of Education
Department of Special Education,
Counseling and Student Affairs

Narrative Reflection Writing Prompts

Project Title: Multiracial Graduate Students Narrative Experiences in Higher Education

Dear Participants

We have reached the stage of writing self-reflection stories about your lived experiences. As you will recall, I was looking for participants who *self-identity as multiracial individuals*, who are *currently enrolled within graduate studies (masters' or doctoral program)* and *who have recently graduated from a graduate program*. I was also interested in learning about your lived experiences as a multiracial graduate student while enrolled at a land grant institution and a predominantly white institution (PWI).

Instructions:

1. Type a one-page narrative (storied) account for each experience related writing statement listed below.
2. Use Times New Roman, 12pt. font, with a double space between sentences.

Directions:

1. Reflect critically on *all your experiences* and provide ample examples of the challenges, successes, barriers and strategies you practice daily.
2. Each narrative statement (below) is required to be completed within **one week**. A detailed timetable with due dates for the reflections will be presented to you. There will be four weeks in total. It should be noted that the participants can finish the reflections earlier. However, the reflections should be sent to the researcher within the specific week of the prompted writing.

3. Email the self-reflections to the researcher once each reflection is completed. Please add the following in the email subject line: Research Project_Name_Self Reflection_Week 1.

The Narrative reflections for the four weeks are as follows:

Week 1: Tell us about your family life and your educational background.

Week 2: Tell us about the relationships you have with your faculty advisor, graduate students who are not multiracial students, and include the relationship with other multiracial graduate students.

Week 3: Tell us about your perceptions about this land grant institution. Include both positive and negative insights.

Week 4: Tell us about your successes and challenges that you experience while attending a land grant institution.

Please email me directly should you have any questions pertaining to the narrative self-reflections.

Thanking you in advance,

Grizelda MacDonald

PhD Candidate in Student Affairs in Higher Education

Email: grizmac1@ksu.edu

Appendix F: Interview Guide



College of Education
Department of Special Education,
Counseling and Student Affairs

Interview Protocol

Project Title: Multiracial Graduate Students Narrative Experiences in Higher Education

Dear Participants,

We have reached the stage of the interviews about your lived experiences. As you will recall, I was looking for participants who *self-identity as multiracial individuals*, who are *currently enrolled within graduate studies (masters' or doctoral program)* and *who have recently graduated from a graduate program*. I was also interested in learning about your lived experiences as a multiracial graduate student while enrolled at a land grant institution and a predominantly white institution (PWI).

Before we commence with the interview, I would like to review the consent form, which informs you about your rights as a participant in this study. At the end, I will require you to sign and date this consent form before we proceed. Thank you for your patience as we proceed.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

Participant Signature:.....

Date:

Venue:.....

Interviewer Signature:

Date:.....

Venue:.....

Thank you for participating in the interview process.

Interview Questions:

1. How would you describe your family as you were growing up?
 - ☐ What was special about your family?
2. How would you describe your hometown where you were raised?
 - ☐ What was unique about your hometown?
3. How would you describe your community where you lived as a child?
 - ☐ What was extraordinary about your community?
4. How would you describe your friends from your hometown?
 - ☐ What factors brought you together as friends?
5. How would you describe your friends on your university campus?
 - ☐ What factors brought you together as friends?
 - ☐ Is there a difference between the friends you had in your hometown compared to your friends on your university campus?
6. Describe the **positive and negative experiences** you had in your schooling life.
 - ☐ What were your experiences in elementary school?
 - ☐ What were your experiences in middle school?
 - ☐ What were your experiences in high school?
7. How would you **describe** your experiences on the university campus?
 - ☐ What were some positive experiences?
 - ☐ What were some negative experiences?
8. How do you **perceive** yourself according to your race?
 - ☐ What experiences influenced your perception?
 - ☐ Would you regard these influences as positive or negative?
9. How do **others perceive** you according to your race?

- ☐ Are their perceptions positive or negative?
- ☐ Why do you perceive it (their perceptions) as positive or negative?
- ☐ Are their perceptions about your race accurate? If not, why?

10. How does your **advisor perceive** you?

- ☐ Is your advisor's perception of you positive or negative? If yes, please explain. If no, please explain.

11. How do you **perceive** your advisor?

- ☐ Is your perception of your advisor positive or negative? If yes, please explain. If no, please explain.

12. How would you describe your **relationship** between you and your faculty advisor?

- ☐ Is your relationship positive or negative? Please explain.
- ☐ If your relationship is negative, what do you think would help improve this relationship?
- ☐ Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your relationship with your faculty advisor?

13. How would you describe your **relationship** with other multiracial graduate students on campus?

- ☐ Are you aware of other multiracial graduate students?
- ☐ Is your relationship positive or negative? Please explain.
- ☐ If your relationship is negative, what do you think is needed to help improve this relationship?
- ☐ Is there anything you would like to add regarding your relationship with other multiracial graduate students on campus?

14. How would you describe your **relationship** with graduate students who are not multiracial on campus?

- ☐ What groups of graduate students do you interact with most? For example: White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Asian American, American Indian, Hispanic or Mexican, International students etc.
- ☐ Is your relationship positive or negative? Please explain.
- ☐ If your relationship is negative, what do you think is needed to help improve this relationship?
- ☐ Is there anything you would like to add regarding your relationship with other graduate students who are not multiracial on campus?

15. What group of individuals do you have a **conducive/favorable relationship** with on campus? Please explain your answer.

- ☐ What factors support this conducive/favorable relationship?
- ☐ Is there anything else you would like to add about this relationship that makes it work so well?

<p>Thank you for participating in the interview process.</p>
