HIDDEN AMONGST PEOPLE:
EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WHITE BIRACIAL INDIVIDUALS
WITH MICROAGGRESSIONS, HORIZONTAL HOSTILITIES
AND IDENTITY DENIAL
IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Education

By
Deborah M. Luckett

May 2022
HIDDEN AMONGST PEOPLE:
EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WHITE BIRACIAL INDIVIDUALS
WITH MICROAGGRESSIONS, HORIZONTAL HOSTILITIES
AND IDENTITIY DENIAL
IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

By
Deborah M. Luckett

Approved February, 24, 2022

Dr. Rick McCown, Ph.D.
Professor and Pierre Schouyer Endowed Chair,
School of Education, Department of Educational
Foundations and Leadership
(Committee Chair)

Dr. Lilliana Castrellón, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of
Educational Foundations and Leadership
Duquesne University
(Committee Member)

Dr. Audra Watson, Ph. D.
Director, WW Teaching Fellowships
(Committee Member)

Dr. Gretchen Generett, Ph. D.
Dean, School of Education

Dr. Darius Prier, Ph.D.
Department of Educational Foundations and
Leadership
Interim Department Chair
ABSTRACT

HIDDEN AMONGST PEOPLE:
EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WHITE BIRACIAL INDIVIDUALS
WITH MICROAGGRESSIONS, HORIZONTAL HOSTILITIES
AND IDENTITY DENIAL
IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

By
Deborah M. Luckett

May 2022

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Rick McCown

This qualitative dissertation explores the dissonance between critical race theory and culturally relevant pedagogical practices in the context of non-binary identity formation and identity denial for Black White Biracial (BWBR) individuals. This positioned subject study examines stories of five adult female members of this population. Utilizing Bell’s Storytelling for Social Justice Model (2020) the study reveals the stock, concealed, resistance and, emerging/transforming stories of participants as they recall experiences with monoracially instigated microaggressions and horizontal hostilities. The model provides analytic themes to examine the dissonance. The following questions will be explored:

*Primary Question: What socio/cultural interactions influence BWBR racial identity choices in educational settings?*
Secondary Question: What stories might BWBR people share about educational experiences with monoracially instigated microaggressions or horizontal hostility?

This study utilizes a positioned subject approach that uses the models for storytelling within a community to provide an understanding of recollected experiences. The data are analyzed against the theoretical lens and themes that challenge and question the presence of practices and behaviors that deny identity in the context of an environment of learning that is assumed to be inclusive.

Keywords: racial identity, monoracial, Biracial, Black White Biracial, binary logic, hypodescent, microaggressions, horizontal hostilities, identity denial, identity negotiation, identity formation, culturally relevant practices, critical race theory, autoethnography, counter storytelling, narrative inquiry
DEDICATION

To my parents, Clarence Timothy Matthews (1912-2018) and Jane Kelly Matthews (1934 -),

thank you for your lessons of strength and courage.

Thank you, too, for the box of crayons.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My enduring gratitude goes to Dr. Rick, McCown, Chair of my dissertation committee. Your continual spirit of scholarship, wisdom, coupled with a drive to support independence of thinking and the observation of my own internal academic voice were essential to this work. To my committee members, Dr. Audra Watson and Dr. Lilliana Castrellón, thank you for your insights into my work, for challenging me to think more deeply, and to continually empower me to interrogate the literature. This has been a personal journey and I am honored to have shared it with you.

To the Cohort of 2022, the pandemic tried to rattle our little band. We persevered. That will be the hallmark of our leadership.

To the co-laborers of my life who share workspaces and social spaces. Your support in cheering me I so important to me. I wish I could name everyone one of you separately. You know who you are, and you know your significance.

To my children, John, Alyssa, David, Mishka, Sarah, Joel, and the grandchildren, thank you for cheering me on. Never be defined by anyone but yourself!

Finally, and most importantly, to my husband Michael. You have been my champion, editor, coach, giver of napkins for thoughts, and unwavering supporter. You made this work! Your love and care have gone beyond the call of duty. You are my heart. Thank you.
# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... IV

DEDICATION ......................................................................................................................... VI

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .......................................................................................................... VII

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................ XI

PREFACE .............................................................................................................................. XII

CHAPTER 1 - AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM ............................................................ 1

- Limpieza de Sangre (Purity of blood) ........................................................................... 4
- Blood Quantum Laws ....................................................................................................... 5
- Miscegenation and Hypodescent .................................................................................... 7
- Understanding Socio/Cultural Perspectives on Black White Biracialness .................... 12
- Ambiguity of Biracialness vs. Monoracial Thinking/Binary Logic .................................. 12

CONNECTIONS TO SOCIOLOGY ..................................................................................... 13

- Communications Theory ............................................................................................... 15
- Biracial Identity and Anxiety .......................................................................................... 16
- Jackson’s Cultural Contracts .......................................................................................... 19

LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE .......................................................................................... 21

CONNECTIONS TO EDUCATION ................................................................................... 25

SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPLICATIONS ................................................................................... 26

- Microaggression and Horizontal Hostility ....................................................................... 26
- Education is a Monoracial System .................................................................................. 30

OUTCOMES TO CONSIDER ............................................................................................ 33

CHAPTER 2 – A REVIEW OF KNOWLEDGE FOR ACTION .................................................. 35

- Hypodescent .................................................................................................................. 35

THEORIES OF IDENTITY FORMATION ............................................................................. 39

- Adlerian Psychology ....................................................................................................... 39
- Rogerian or Non-Directive Psychology .......................................................................... 40

Comparison of Racial Identity Formation Models ............................................................ 40

Monoracial Identity Formation Models ............................................................................ 42

Biracial Identity Formation Models .................................................................................. 43

Gender and Biracial Identity ............................................................................................ 47

HYPODESCRIPT AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP ................................................................... 48

IDENTITY NEGOTIATION THEORY ................................................................................. 49

EDUCATORS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS BIRACIAL CHILDREN ............................................. 49

CONTEXTUAL RACIAL PRESENTATION ......................................................................... 52

CRITICAL RACE THEORY IN THE CONTEXT OF BIRACIALNESS .................................... 54

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY .............................................................................. 56

CRITICAL MIXED-RACE STUDIES .................................................................................. 57

IDENTITY DENIAL ............................................................................................................. 58

STORYTELLING AND FEMINISM FOR MARGINALIZED WOMEN OF COLOR ............. 60

NARRATIVE INQUIRY, COUNTER STORYTELLING AND STORYTELLING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE 61
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ........................................................................................................... 62

CHAPTER 3 – METHODS AND DESIGN FOR ACTION ....................................................................... 66

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................... 66
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .................................................................................................................... 67
DATA TO COLLECT ............................................................................................................................ 67
PARTICIPANTS .................................................................................................................................... 68
  Participant Descriptions ......................................................................................................................... 71
DESCRIPTIONS OF THE INSTRUMENTS .......................................................................................... 73
  Journey Line ...................................................................................................................................... 74
  Semi-Structured Interviews ..................................................................................................................... 75
  Optional Post Interview Group Conversation .......................................................................................... 77

PROCEDURES FOR INSTRUMENTS .................................................................................................... 77
  Journey Line Protocol ............................................................................................................................ 79
  Semi-Structured Interviews and Storytelling Exchange .......................................................................... 80
  Optional Post Interview Group Conversation .......................................................................................... 81

SPECIFIC PRACTICES TARGETED ...................................................................................................... 83

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS ...................................................................................................................... 85

INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................................................................... 85
SETTING .................................................................................................................................................. 85
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS ...................................................................................................................... 86
  Stories from Educational Settings ........................................................................................................... 87
  Understanding the Themes ......................................................................................................................... 90
  Stock or Majoritarian Stories ..................................................................................................................... 92
  Concealed Stories .................................................................................................................................. 95
    Dealing with Emotions ............................................................................................................................. 96
    Weariness of Compromise/Capitulation .................................................................................................. 99
    Denial of Identity by Others or Self-generated Denial of Identity ........................................................... 101
    Microaggressions .................................................................................................................................. 103
    Horizontal Hostilities ............................................................................................................................ 104
  Stories of Resistance .............................................................................................................................. 107
  Emerging/Transforming Stories ............................................................................................................... 110
  Learned Tools ....................................................................................................................................... 110

REFLECTING ON THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS – CONCLUDING COMMENTS ............................... 113

CHAPTER 5 – RECOMMENDED ACTIONS ......................................................................................... 114

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS ......................................................................................................... 114
  Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 114
  Revisiting the Theoretical Framework and Biracial Identity .................................................................... 114

IMPLICATIONS AND MOVING FORWARD ......................................................................................... 120
  Discussing Race in Education .................................................................................................................. 121

LIMITATIONS .......................................................................................................................................... 129

FUTURE STUDIES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MY LEADERSHIP ....................................................... 132

REFERENCES .......................................................................................................................................... 136

APPENDICES .......................................................................................................................................... 155
EXHIBIT A – JOURNEY LINE PROTOCOL .......................................................................................... 155
EXHIBIT B – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE ...................................................... 156
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14</td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 15</td>
<td></td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 16</td>
<td></td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

In ancient Rome, we were called *di colore*.

In the U.K. we were called “half-castes” until 2001.

In the United States we are referred to as “mulattoes,” “fancies,” “high yellows,” “half breeds” “red bones,” “oreos” and “half ni*****.”

In South Africa we were a crime until the end of apartheid in 1994 but still we struggle.

To use the phrase “You’re mixed” is an insult to us because “mixed” carries a null identity.

The ubiquitous “Check Other” implies an emptiness of identity.

In the end, we concede to whatever you assign to us because we do not want you to be uncomfortable. DML (2021)

Maria P.P. Root is the founding mother of mixed-race studies. She is responsible for policy changes in the collection of racial information on the United States Census for 2000.

**Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People**

By Maria P.P. Root (1996a)

*I Have the Right…*

Not to justify my existence in this world.
Not to keep the races separate within me.
Not to justify my ethnic legitimacy.
Not to be responsible for people’s discomfort with my physical ambiguity.

*I Have the Right. . .*

To identify myself differently than strangers expect me to identify.
To identify myself differently from how my parents identify me.
To identify myself differently than my brothers and sisters.
To identify myself differently in different situations.

*I Have the Right*

To create a vocabulary to communicate about being multiracial.
To change my identity over my lifetime . . . and more than once.
To have loyalties and identification with more than one group of people.
To freely choose whom I befriend and love.
Chapter 1- An Introduction to the Problem

In the wake of the election of the first Black White Biracial U.S. President in 2008 there are some who would point to color blurring and a movement of the United States into a “post racial society” (Richomme, 2012). The steady increase in the number of Biracial individuals is frequently considered another signpost pointing toward the reality of a raceless society (Anderson, 2015). An important delineation must be established for the purposes of this research: the differences between bicultural and Biracial. Monocultural individuals identify within the context of a single culture. Monoracial individuals identify within the construct of one race. Bicultural individuals identify within two cultural groups and Biracial individuals identify with two races. (Albuja, et al., 2019). For this study, the term Biracial will be used to discuss individuals with one African American parent and one European American (White) parent. The conventions of American Psychological Association (APA) formatting for race and ethnic identity for “people who belong to multiple racial or ethnic groups, the names of the specific groups are capitalized, but the terms “multiracial,” “biracial” . . . are lowercase (APA, 2020, p. 143).” For this work the capitalized use of “Biracial” will be the norm since to do otherwise is an acceptance of the logic of binary thinking and the assignment of an identity that is not true.

The experiences of Black White Biracial (BWBR) individuals are contradictions to the thinking about a post racial America. In his book, Dreams from My Father (2004), Barack Obama reflects,

When people who don’t know me well, Black or White, discover my background (and it is usually a discovery, for I ceased to advertise my mother’s race at the age of twelve or thirteen, when I began to suspect that by doing so, I was ingratiating myself to whites), I see the split-second adjustments they have to make, the
searching of my eyes for some telltale sign. They no longer know who I am. Privately, they guess at my troubled heart, I suppose – the mixed blood, the divided soul, the ghostly image of the tragic mulatto trapped between two worlds (p. xv).

Maria Root argues against a raceless society by saying, . . . “simply to advocate the abolition of the construct of race would lead to a similarly insidious means of ordering our society that perpetuates dispossession of people who have held ‘other status” (Root, 1992).

BWBR individuals and their mixed-race peers complicate racial categorization by redirecting discourse about colorblindness or post racial ideals to forwarding conversations about the complexity of race. There is a universal question that is common to the experience of many BWBR individuals, ‘What are you?’ (O’Hearn, 1998; Miville, et al. 2005; Williams, 2006; Williams, 2013). This question surfaces in those instances where an individual’s appearance does not appear to provide adequate traces for others to identify the person’s racial background. Determining identity is the expected outcome of asking the question (Anderson, 2015). This use of language, framed in a seemingly naïve question serves as a continual reminder to the BWBR individual that they do not fit neatly into existing racial strata or classifications (Anderson, 2015). This inability to remain in a status of both/and rather than either/or is a forced categorization that has a longstanding tradition in the United States and vestiges of this struggle with the language of race remain to this day.

**Understanding the historical contexts for marginalization**

There is a historical precedence for legislative and political determinations of race grounded in language. This quote from law professor, SpearIt, summarizes the argument,
The law enshrines racial vocabulary in constitutions, court opinions, statutes and particularly, U.S. Census survey questionnaires. This set of laws and legal documents have a profound influence on the way Americans conceive and speak of one another. At a minimum, they may be seen as providing society with a legal base of racial vocabulary (p. 471).

Racial vocabulary and its implementation as statute is not unique to the United States nor does it create a dilemma targeting only one marginalized group. The following sections will outline the historical presence and contexts for language that are motivated by a desire to create exclusivity and the practices and outcomes associated with them. The purpose in this discussion is not to suggest that the conceptual development of racism is a linear process that develops with uninterrupted consistency over time. That reasoning would be reductionist. The inclusion of these practices provides a context for language that emphasizes the use of collective traits, behaviors, or beliefs as a foundation for exclusion from the majority or separation within a minority (SpearIt, 2012).

In October of 1666, an Englishman named William Whittacre petitioned Virginia’s governor and colonial council for recompense for the loss of his slave, a “Mulata named Manuel” (Virginia, 1665). Manuel is one of the first people of Black White Biracial heritage recorded in English colonial North America. Manuel had won his freedom in 1665 through a 1664 petition of the courts when he declared himself to be a servant, not a slave. Virginia law dictated that Manuel’s good standing as a Christian disallowed his being held in slavery or involuntary servitude. He could though, be held in indentured servitude. This loophole of religious, not racial, determination by the law granted Manuel his freedom. The Virginia Assembly rewrote the law shortly after the decision to re-legislate statutes and make clear the
legal interpretations of the notions and actions regarding Biracial individuals held in slavery.

Henceforth these individuals would be grouped into bondage with their African counterparts and ancestors (Virginia, 1665). This early adoption for legal determinants of racial identity was internalized in Virginia’s Act XII:

   Whereas some doubts have arrisen [sic] whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or ffree [sic], Be it therefore enacted and declared by this present grand assembly, that all children borne [sic] in this country shalbe [sic] held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother (Hening, 1810).

The United States Naturalization Act of 1790 used exclusive language to define citizenship. This early American legislative commentary defined the parameters of citizenship as “any alien, being a free white person . . . may be admitted to become a citizen” (H.R. 40, Naturalization Bill, March 4, 1790). The word “race” first appears in the United States Constitution in the Fifteenth Amendment of 1870 (U.S. CONST. amend. XV, § 1). The word “color,” used for the first time in the 1850 U.S. census, is also used in this amendment (U.S. CONST. amend. XV, § 1; U.S. Census Bureau, 1850). “Race” as a census category appears for the first time in the 1900 Census survey (Gauthier, 2002). By adding language that defines how groups of people will be categorized within a structure of racism grounded in the context of not being White or White enough, a system is created that initiates philosophical gaps between Whites and non-Whites and perpetuates the language of a dominant culture.

**Limpieza de Sangre (Purity of blood)**

White Biracial individuals are not the only group to have their identity determined in legal terms. The marginalization of people based on race or purity of race in comparison to the
dominant cultural norms has precedence in other cultures, places, and times. In 1449, the Consejo de Toledo (Council of Toledo) notably enacted the concept of limpieza de sangre (purity of blood) to remove judeoconversos (Jewish converts) and moriscos (Moorish converts) from office (Hering-Torres, 2011). These religious-focused statutes were enacted to exclude Christians of Jewish and Moorish ancestry from engaging in Spanish society (Poole, 1999). By creating a system of elitism, group identity, and exclusivity a sense of dominance born of meritocracy tied to racial descent became the norm (Poole, 1999; Hering-Torres, 2011). This practice was a key driver for the Spanish Inquisition and exemplifies an obsession tied to a belief in unblemished lineage (Hering-Torres, 2011). These practices also form a foundational construct for early ideas about race with regards to superiority of some and inferiority of others (Mignolo, 2007).

**Blood Quantum Laws**

Kinship and belonging in pre-colonized Native American groups were historically determined by lineage, socio-cultural connections, or territory (Schmidt, 2011). This issue of identity began to shift when Europeans arrived in North America and administrative and regulatory practices of identity were enacted by federal statute and court cases (Schmidt, 2011). Present day physical anthropology was grounded in the work of Europeans such as Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), Johann Blumenbach (1752-1840), and American born Samuel Morton (1799-1851) (Mielke, et al., 2010). The Smithsonian Institution supported the work of Aleš Hrdlička (1869-1943) who claimed to have developed quantitative processes to differentiate mixed-blood Native American from full-blood Native American. Based on perceived phenotype alone these methods were used to decide land allotment cases on behalf of the U.S. States Attorneys. The results were used to overturn land sales from individuals deemed by federal law as being ineligible to sell since they were not full-blooded Native Americans (Beaulieu, 1984).
The European etymological concepts of blood were deeply associated with lineage, ancestry, inheritance, and claims to property and power. In contrast, Native American interpretations of the word did not identify any meanings in a physiological sense. (Meyer, 1999). Legal definitions for people of mixed blood heritage (Native and African) in colonial Virginia used blood to trace ancestry. Individuals with one-eighth African ancestry and one-half Indian ancestry were categorized then as “colored” or “mulatto” (Schmidt, 2011). Beginning in 1817, treaties between the United States and Native American groups began using language indicating “half-bloods”, “half-breeds”, and “quarter breeds” to grant benefits to mixed individuals.

Tribal membership, however, was not legalized or codified in any way at this time. The Tribal Enrollment and the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934 (25 U.S.C) utilizes language that defines “Indians” and the benefits to those persons fitting that definition (25 U.S.C. - 479). The IRA allows for tribes to form their own governing bodies and membership but still utilizes language that reflects the White dominated concepts of heritage based on the biology of blood. For example, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) utilizes blood quantum laws in its application processes. Currently, a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) is conferred on individuals by the BIA. Further, the blood quantum requirements differ by tribe (BIA, 1981). These blood quantum laws, like limpieza de sangre argue for exclusivity within a racial paradigm. Schmidt concludes by saying:

Race, ethnicity, and even identity are social constructs not easily established in human biology. How American Indian identity is defined, then, should not be based on exclusive criteria. However, tempting it may be to use Euro-American definitions of identity to maintain a cultural uniqueness, blood quantum is not the
solution. What is needed is to work toward a functional definition of identity, one of how to reconcile cultural affiliation and self-identification with exclusionary definitions based on biology, a necessity to effectively allocate limited federal funds, thus striking a balance between inclusivity and exclusivity. Identity is not something that can be cordoned off with definable, fixed boundaries. It must be in continual process, one that allows a fluid identity fixed in cultural construction, not something inherently and innately fixed in the human genome, defined by blood or any other facet of biology (real or imagined) (p. 8).

**Miscegenation and Hypodescent**

Using the United States as context, it is necessary to discuss miscegenation and amalgamation with regards to the blending or joining of racial groups. David A. Hollinger asks in his 2003 article about interracial mixing, “To what extent are the borders between communities of descent to be maintained and why?” (Hollinger, 2007). It is an important question to ask. For the context of further discussion, the focus will be on those borders between White and Black Americans. Further, there is a discussion framed, personally and academically, concerning the individuals born of the union of Black and White Americans who find themselves attempting to simultaneously navigate two races and one political identity.

Miscegenation is a term first used in a pamphlet appearing in 1864. Entitled *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Race*, this literary forgery sought to bring the topic of the intermixing Black and White races to the forefront of American political discourse to discredit the Lincoln administration prior to the 1864 re-election of Lincoln (Croly, 1864). *(Note: Historians consider this anonymously published document to be a literary forgery. It utilized false scientific thinking in an attempt to tarnish the presidential election candidate of 1864,*
Abraham Lincoln. The pamphlet was also accompanied by fictionalized announcements and engravings for a “Miscegenation Ball” supposedly held at Republican Headquarters in New York on September 22, 1864 (Kaplan, 1949). Non-miscegenation was an idea that cemented fully the beliefs and ideals of the Jim Crow South and growing anti-immigrant philosophies. The American ideal of a “melting pot” or as Ralph Waldo Emerson later referred to it as a “smelting pot” was a troublesome contradiction. The United States was to be imagined as a great experiment in cultural blending into an American ideal of oneness. This philosophy applied most certainly to ethnic groups that were White. White ethnic groups immigrating to the United States could be easily assimilated without troublesome ambiguities of unusual skin color, hair textures, or eye color. The “melting pot” did not apply to those of color and for those who existed as reminders of the colonial legal determinants of Virginia’s Act XII (Virginia, 1665).

In 1967, the United States Supreme Court decided unanimously in Loving v. Virginia (388 US1, 1967) the that the anti-miscegenation laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia were in direct violation of the Equal Protection Clause for the United States Constitution (388 US1, 1967). This Supreme Court decision coincides with the first time an eight-year-old girl born in Pittsburgh to a White mother and a Black father finally understood why the family never traveled to the deep South. Criminal statute was not a commonplace discussion in our household, but tacit conversations around vacations or visitations to family in Texas were noticed. My father always traveled to Texas alone. We did not vacation or travel to any place further south than Washington, D.C. My parents’ marriage was an arrestable offense in twenty-four states from my birth until I was eight years old (Map- The Leadup to Loving). It was not until the Loving decision that I understood why my mother never accompanied my father on visits to his family in Texas. It also framed my growing belief and understanding that my identity and existence were
troublesome for some people. Somehow, the language of laws determined that I was not acceptable and illegal.

Hypodescent, or *one drop rules*, emerged in colonial America to define racial heritage for Biracial and multiracial individuals and these rules remain as a commentary that exists to present-day (Hollinger, 2003). With a focus on similar blood quantum percentages, identifications such as *mulatto* (Biracial), *quadroon* (one-fourth Black), *octroon* (one-eighth Black), *quintroon* (one-sixteenth Black) and *quarteronné* (one-thirty-second Black) arose to the lexicon of racial categorization (Hollinger, 2003). These terms were in regular use until the 1940’s (Hollinger, 2003). As recently as 1985, a Louisiana circuit court ruled that a woman with a Black great-great-great-great grandmother could not identify herself as White on her passport. The case was rejected by the Louisiana Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to review the case (Doe, 1985). The assumptions of the rules of hypodescent determined that a single drop of Black blood makes a person Black (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Hypodescent maintains the fiction that Biracial individuals must be identified and categorized as monoracial, and that this categorization is grounded in association with the racial group in their heritage that has the lowest social status (Root, 1996).

The identification and classification of individuals by race is a practice that has existed in the United States since its inception in the form of the decennial censuses. The U.S. census historically expected census takers from 1790 to 1950 to determine for themselves the race of the individuals they counted (Gauthier, 2002). The census of 1960 was the first census where U.S. citizens were able to self-select their race (Pew, 2020). The work of Biracial researcher Maria P.P. Root was pivotal in changing the U.S. census of 2000 to allow individuals to select more than one race as a self-selected identity (Root, 1996).
Examining the Socio/Cultural Perspectives of Race and Identity

In 2019, The American Association of Biological Anthropologists (AABA), formerly the American Association of Physical Anthropology (AAPA) was charged with revising its 1996 statements on race. A portion of the revised statement follows here:

… human racial groups are not biological categories, “race” as a social reality - as a way of structuring societies and experiencing the world - is very real. The racial groups we recognize in the West have been socially, politically, and legally constructed over the last five centuries… The groupings of people that exist in our species are socially-defined, dynamic, and continually evolving - amalgamations of socially- and biologically-interacting individuals with constantly-shifting boundaries, reflecting the myriad ways that individuals, families, and other clusters of people create ties, move, trade, mate, reproduce, and shift their social identities and affiliations through time… While “race” is not biology, racism does affect our biology, especially our health and well-being. (AABA, 2019).

According to Crenshaw, intersectionality describes a “lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects” (K. Crenshaw, June 10, 2017). Crenshaw’s pivotal legal study challenged the discourse of “the single-issue framework” (Crenshaw, 1989, p.25) that tends to center legalistic struggles in one social domain. She instead proposed an approach that recognized what is referred to as “the complexities of compoundedness” (Crenshaw, 1989). These “complexities of compoundedness” however, utilize a single identity framework to delineate their arguments. While intersectionality provides opportunities and multiple places of entry into issues of racism, discrimination, and denial, it does not allow for multiplicity of belonging within a single social/cultural domain (Gaither,
Intersectionality examines, for example, issues as they apply to individuals who occupy separate social domains, such as Black AND female or White AND male. Gaither questions how “multiply belonging may impact behavior and identification for people who have two or more identities coexisting within the same social domain” (Gaither, 2018, p.444), in this case Black AND White AND female. Gaither’s “multiplicity of belonging” offers a direct challenge to research that tends to focus on fixed notions of identity rather than the possibility of interrogating populations whose identities exist within the same social domain (Gaither, 2015; Gaither, 2018). Biracial research has largely ignored the intersectionality of being, for example, of BWBR and gender (Gaither, 2018). Making inquiries into multiple identification and group membership may allow for unique perspectives into the experiences of BWBR people. The intersectionality of not belonging is essential as well. Not being White or Black enough to belong to the two groups that one identifies with is disconcerting.

Racial identities are typically defined by binary logic. This binary thinking, that BWBR people have the same monoracial (either/or) understanding of their own identity, is a persistent conclusion for researchers. Several studies have concluded that BWBR and other Biracial individuals would choose a monoracial identification even if offered an option to align with multiple identities (Jones, 1990; McBride, 1996; Scales-Trent, 1995; Williams, 1995 as cited by Rockquemore, 1998). Rockquemore counters this thinking with the question, “What does Biracial identity mean?” Is there a singular way in which people with one Black and one White parent understand their racial identity or does “Biracial” have multiple meanings?” (Rockquemore, 1998).
Understanding Socio/Cultural Perspectives on Black White Biracialness

The historical and legal precedents for the determination of racial identity on behalf of Black White Biracial individuals are longstanding practices that, while no longer legal, are still enacted by many, consciously and unconsciously. Many Biracial Americans refuse to be blocked into the binary logic of monoracial identity models and frameworks. Scholarship has focused on the transitional and transactional nature of identity formation (e.g., Poston, 1990; Root, 1992; Ting-Toomey, 1992; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Shin & Sanchez, 2005; Renn, 2008; Eguchi & Starosta, 2012; Orbe, 2015). Jackson’s cultural contracts theory (1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2009) defines Biracial identity formation within the constructs of a process of negotiation in which one considers the “gain, loss, or exchange of his or her ability to interpret their own reality or worldview”. This extension and interrogation of race moving from a monoracial construct to a fluid and ambiguous process of racialization and social meaningfulness challenges monolithic categorizations and perceptions.

Ambiguity of Biracialness vs. Monoracial Thinking/Binary Logic

In 1917, the American Journal of Sociology published a paper claiming that the “best hope for the ‘Negro’ race was the mulatto, an individual born of a White parent and a Black parent, whose mixed blood would provide salvation for an entire race doomed to failure” (Reuter, 1917). As incongruous as these arguments seem in 2020, there are equally incongruous arguments about Black White Biracial individuals that require investigation and interrogation.

The development of an exclusively monoracial identity is the traditional expectation for Biracial individuals in the United States (Williams, 1999). This expectation has been historically grounded in the use of quantum laws and hypodescent (Sanchez, et al., 2011). Quantum laws, still in use by Native American tribal councils, support the idea that a certain quantity of ancestry
measured by blood defines membership. Hypodescent, ‘one drop’ laws and norms, argue that even the slightest quantity of ancestry that is non-White denies membership (Sanchez, et al., 2011). Through the presence in one’s background of even one “drop of Black blood,” a person, by default, becomes a member of the African American race (Rockquemore, 2002). The ambiguity that arises when perceivers attempt to categorize Black White Biracial individuals is compounded by the prototypes and processes grounded in perceptions of Afrocentrism or racial phenotypes (Sanchez, et al., 2011).

**Connections to Sociology**

The prodigious research study conducted in the late 1940s by psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark focused on self-concept of race in elementary age children (Clark & Clark, 1947). The investigation explored how monoracial African American children developed a sense of self. The study concluded that race was a driving factor in the development of racial identity in over 75% of the children in the study. However, later work by Amos Wilson challenged this notion of self-hatred by proposing a pair of psychological dispositions that were categorized as either “schizmic” or “restricted” (Wilson, 1978, p. 80). Schizmic living is described as an inclination by individuals to live within the middle class of American socioeconomic groups while embracing a schizoid sense of self that is White or Black (Wilson, 1978). Restrictive living was created to describe those individuals who are “denied access to socioeconomic resources primarily experienced by those with a lower class [sic] status” (Jackson, 1999, p. 36). This schism creates what Fanon refers to as a “psycho-existential complex” that arises from a constant experience of contrasting, comparing, and collocating race regarding the development of self (Fanon, 1952). Fanon asserts sociological and psychological structures that create an either/or status within a binary “zone of being;” in other words, by not being White, non-Whites are
forced to accept an existence of self that is always framed within a sense of “not” being (Fanon, 1952). Vernon Dixon, argued against this singular destiny described by Wilson by embracing the either/or approach to create a self-identity model that sought resolution in a theory of “cultural di-unity” (Dixon, 1976). His premise was for a both/and versus an either/or determination of identity. Dixon explains,

Accordingly, the real conflict, most likely occurring subconsciously in Black people, is that on the one hand, they have a sense of embodying two radically different identities, one White American, one African-oriented (Black); on the other, they have a sense of not embodying these same two identities. How do Black people resolve this conflict? Do they deny both these identities, assert affinity with both, or assert affinity with one and deny the other? (p. 33-34).

Dixon is clearly making an argument that from a cultural standpoint Blacks born in the United States should be able to claim a bicultural status.

Samaj (1981) developed a model of identity for monoracial Black people that outlines three levels of being: the alien, the diffused, and the collective identities. The alien identity is isolationist and functions within an independent sense of self. The diffused identity finds a sense of balance between being singular and independent and working within a framework of the collective. The collective identity sees itself as an African-centered individual living within an interconnected population (Samaj, 1981). These identity models serve to create a sense of self-awareness and are not intended to define a process for identity formation in monoracial people.

Self-control and its correlation to social order is a development of Anselm Straus’s research in 1978. Negotiated order is a way of navigating identity and its consequences. For those individuals who are misaligned to this expected behavior, the outcomes are seen as being
in some way deviant (Jackson, p. 43). The deliberate use of language in this navigation is central to Jackson’s communications theory.

**Communications Theory**

The premeditated use of language by therapists, sociologists, and educators is an understood practice of communications researchers. Andrea Rich describes the nature of language in racial interactions in her book, *Interracial Communication* (Rich, 1974) in the following way:

> As a cultural phenomenon, language of course, is learned. It is culturally induced and developed, and as such, reflects the values of the culture. Language enculturates the individual by predetermining how [s/he] sees the world (p. 130).

The use of language as it applies to racial identity development in monoracial individuals creates what Rich refers to as a “contraculture.” This term indicates “that which occurs as a result of an imposition of one culture on another” (Rich, p. 9). Rich’s recommendations include a careful attention to variables of power and language in the use of discordant prompts such as “Black” and “White” and the diametrically opposed imagery associated with those terms. Rich’s “contraculture” emerges through language. These communications create a system of co- and counter identities (Burke & Tully, 1977). This navigation of multiple selves within the context of communication is foundational to the subdiscipline of Black psychology (White & Parham, 1990).

The consideration of racial identity and its applications to communications research is essential. Communication patterns differ between monoracial Blacks and Whites, and these differences may lead to problems, tension, and situational discomfort (Kochman (1981); Asante, 1989; Giles, et al., 1991; Dickens, 1992). These studies indicate a need for situational awareness.
that Rattansi defines as a “critical re-reading of culture” (Rattansi, 1992). Ladson-Billings takes this declaration forward in her work on culturally relevant pedagogy by stating a need for a “theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their identity . . .” (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

**Biracial Identity and Anxiety**

The ambiguous worlds of BWBR individuals have not generally been considered as correlating factors for school-related issues regarding race (Baron et al., 1985; Cross, 1987; Phinney, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Graybill, 1997; Phinney & Devitch-Navarro, 1997; Hollins, 1999; Nieto, 2009). Helms (1993) delineates the differences between race and ethnicity by stating, “race is a concept that is derived from a genetic designation based on phenotypic characteristics” and ethnicity refers to “groups of people with common historical heritage, origin of place, and sharing of cultural expression such as manner of dress, art, music, food, literature, and other concrete manifestations”. The 2020 United States Census defines Black or African American as “people having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa”. White refers to “people having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.” The US Census of 1960 was the first census to allow individuals a choice to select their race rather than leaving it to the discretion of a census worker. The 2000 U.S. Census was the first census to allow Americans a choice in selecting more than one race. Racial determination has a predilection toward either/or designations.

Monoracial Black identity development models have a longstanding tendency to hold identity for monoracial Blacks in a deficit model of not being White; that is, they present deficit-deficiency models framed by the norms and values of White culture (White and Parham, 1990). Biracial identity models tend to be centralized in social identity research which posits the role
that society plays in the formation of identity (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003; Bracey, et al., 2004). When paired with social and policy-based practices of racial classification based on hypodescent, the BWBR individual has options accorded to them for identification that are based on the perceptions and determinations of others (Coleman & Carter, 2007). Brunsma and Rockquemore (2001) argue for identity options that include a singular identity, a border identity, a protean or situational identity capable of shifting, and a transcendent identity that does not accept race as a classification. These identity options are further broken down into validated and unvalidated. Coleman and Carter (2007) state,

> These new classifications acknowledge the idea that a Biracial identity develops as a result of combining and accepting both African American and European American categorizations yet occurs in a context of social interactions that can be validated or unvalidated by others (p. 104).

In other words, the perceptions and categorizations of others are determining factors in BWBR identity rather than self-verification or self-expression.

There is consensus among psychological researchers that BWBR individuals need to be free to identify as Biracial rather than monoracial to grow in confidence, competence, and psychological well-being (e.g., Poston, 1990; Kich, 1992; LaFromboise, et.al., 1993; Field, 1996). Clinical models indicate that Biracial individuals run the risk of more significant psychological problems arising from a sense of marginalization, lack of validation, and internalization of external prejudices and values (Stonequist, 1937; Gordon, 1964; Poston, 1990; Brown, 1990; Cross, 1991; Funderberg, 1994; Root, 1996; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003). There is a clear implication that societal pressures to identify as monoracial are a factor in the development of psychological distress in Black White Biracial individuals. A study of 61 Black
White Biracial individuals emphasized the need to understand the positive and negative outcomes of navigating the Black White Biracial identity process within the context of social constructs and language (Coleman & Carter, 2003).

Race, culture, language, and social constructs are key to all relationships (Williams, 1999). Counselor education researcher, Carmen Williams (1999) points to the power of language in counselor relationships. The ever-present variables of culture and race are undercurrents worth considering. They explain,

The segregation of these variables in counselor education programs into multicultural counseling courses is a subtle expression of racism: that race and culture are the sole province of non-Whites and do not affect White people. Indeed, the American myth of the melting pot has obfuscated dialogues on race, ethnicity, and culture among Whites and relegated such discussions primarily to those focusing on people of color. This is problematic because many White counselors have never explored how they too are affected by race, and how their failure to examine their own privileged racial/ethnic/cultural status compromises the therapeutic relationship (p. 35).

An examination of the literature has revealed a strong predilection for discussions about race in counselor education, health, and mental health services. The monoracial constructs of many of our existing systems seem to prevent further discourse in other areas, such as education.

Race, one of the most complicated and conflicted issues facing our country, is a scary topic. Monoracial individuals frequently enter interracial situations (that is to say, monoracially identified individuals in settings that predominantly consist of members of other monoracially
identified groups) with apprehension and a fear of miscommunication (e.g., Dovidio, et al., 2002; Richeson et al., 2005, Shelton et al., 2005a; Shelton et al., 2005b; Vorauer & Sakamoto, 2006; Kawakami, et al., 2009; Trawalter et al., 2009; Plaut, 2010; Toosi, et al., 2012). Monoracially identified White individuals enter these settings most often with concern for being viewed as prejudiced (e.g., Plant & Devine, 1998; Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Richeson & Shelton, 2003; Plant & Butz, 2006). Monoracially identified Black individuals frequently worry that they will be impacted by prejudice (e.g., Richeson et al., 2005; Mendes et al., 2008). The perceived expectations of these individuals in these settings impact the outcomes of these interactions in varying ways, both negatively and positively (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2002; Plant, 2004).

**Jackson’s Cultural Contracts**

Ronald Jackson’s theory of cultural contracts (Jackson, 1999, 2002) makes the argument for identity formation for Biracial individuals as an outcome of social and psychological interactions grounded in tacit and implicit communications (Jackson, 1999). The development of identity, according to Jackson, occurs at the nexus of three disciplines, race, ethnicity, and culture. Jackson points repeatedly to communication as a catalyst for building a sense of identity (Jackson, 1999). This conclusion is supported further by the Third Culture Building (TCB) Framework of Starosta and Olorunnisola (1995) of Howard University in their work on intercultural communication. This study serves to identify varying planes of communicated perspectives that span a continuum from the micro (personal) to the macro (social) levels of interaction. These categories of communication, intracultural, interpersonal, rhetorical, and mass media serve to create a process “by which two or more entities come to take account of each other, to extract and to process messages one from the other, and ultimately to respond to the symbolic realities of another entity who has been differentially socialized” (Chen & Starosta,
The TCB Framework consists of ten progressive stages of awareness and mirrors closely the negotiated process of Jackson’s theories on cultural negotiation. In progressive steps two individuals, A and B, learn about one another (see Fig. 1).

**Figure 1**

*Third Culture Building Framework (Starosta & Olorunnisola, 1995)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Action Occurring by A or B and/or A and B (A=Person 1, B= Person 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A notices B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A makes self known to B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A seeks information about B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>B engages with A in process already identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A and B start to question their values, mores, and attitudes as they relate to each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A and B replace some attitudes, mores, and values and modify others to more nearly resemble the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A and B integrate new and revised attitudes mores and values into existing paradigms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A and B renegotiate their relationship in light of changing circumstances and contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Some of these renegotiated aspects of the relationship become permanent and self-perpetuating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A and B adopt the revised identity as their primary identity and transmit their new identity to a subsequent generation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The interactions between individuals engaged in building the relationship are not one-sided but include discourse and exchange between both individuals, as indicated in Figure 1. Jackson’s cultural contracts theory also explores the development of identity as a series of negotiated alignments. Jackson (2002) states,

> The I-Other dialectic that is implicit in the exploration of racially and socially asymmetrical identities can best be accounted for by examining the notion of cultural contracts as manifested products of identity negotiation during communication with others. . . the assumption is that cultural difference translates into cultural conflict and therefore, something must be done with conflict (p.362).

The opportunity to negotiate a process of identity recognition rather than one-side assignment is worth considering.
Black White Biracial individuals have a unique opportunity to self-select their racial identities (Coleman & Carter, 2007). A large majority of the research conducted on Biracial identity finds that society and interactions with others may significantly influence how individuals choose to identify (Poston, 1990; Root, 1990, 1996, 1998; Funderberg, 1994; Chen, 2018). Ronald Jackson’s theory of cultural contracts (Jackson, 1999, 2002) makes the argument for identity formation for Biracial individuals as an outcome of social and psychological interactions grounded in tacit and implicit communications (Jackson, 1999).

**Leadership Perspective**

The American writer and motivational speaker, Simon Sinek, discusses the idea that leadership can be considered from three perspectives: understanding what leaders do, how leaders do their work, and, finally, why leaders do what they do (Sinek, 2009). A UNESCO report on school leadership indicates that school leadership has the second largest impact on student learning outcomes behind only classroom teaching (UNESCO, 2018). The National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (Jenlick, 2006) argue for the redefining of school leadership programs by concluding the following:

Learning to lead, that is, leadership preparation, may be examined as moving from a more formal, traditional orientation as often characterized from a positivistic epistemological orientation wherein knowledge-for-practice is codified and delivered. In contrast, learning to lead for the scholar-practitioner is concerned less with transitional orientations of knowledge and inquiry and more with engaging in a “new epistemology” of knowledge and practice articulated through the inquiry as praxis. In this sense, learning to lead is situated in the place of practice and works to transform social practice and address social issues and problems in the school and larger societal contexts (p. 3).
The power of relationships and language has been demonstrated in counselor education (Williams, 1999), communication theory (Jackson, 1999, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 2019), and identity formation theories (e.g., Poston, 1991; Renn, 2008). Therefore, it stands to reason that leadership from the classroom and administrative offices has the potential to hold an essential role in the support of the BWBR child.

My own personal perspective grants me entrance into this research. I am a Black White Biracial American woman. I do not identify within a monoracial construct (an example of Rockquemore & Brunsma’s border identity, 2002). I embrace my own racial ambiguity and, after many, many years, acknowledge the pain that this social ambiguity has caused. My reflection on my own identity development as a Black White Biracial woman paralleled by my own successful career as an educator grant me the positional authority to interrogate the research, policy, and realities of racial contracts and identity development from the perspective of a Black White Biracial individual. My roles of classroom educator, educational leader, and most currently as an enrollee in a scholar-practitioner program place me firmly in the center of Simon Sinek Golden Circle situated at the perspective of “Why do as I do?” (Sinek, 2009).

Like many children entering kindergarten, my worldview had been held safely within the confines of our home. My first solo-social experience was framed by the on-going curious question, ‘You’re the one that has the White mother, right?’ So, I began to learn from others that words like “black” and “white” are used to define people. One day, out of curiosity and maybe even a need to satisfy my mind, I got out my Crayola crayons and a sheet of paper. I carefully chose a white crayon and a black crayon. I made a dense scribble with the black crayon and then added another dense scribble with the white crayon over the black crayon. Now for the test, does my hand match the color I see? The disappointment I felt, and my subsequent choice of action
remain clear in my mind. The people downstairs were not my parents because I was not gray, I am adopted, and I must leave to go find my real parents. Clutching that piece of paper, I went to deliver the news to my mother and father. I was asked for proof, and I produced the crayon evidence. My mother very patiently asked that I get the Crayola No. 64 box and bring it down to the dining room table. I obliged and the next minutes became a foundational lesson of my life. With great care she helped me select crayons that were close to her skin tone and my father’s. I held the crayons next to their hands. All the while my mother reminded me “these are sticks of wax, not people. It will not be perfect but let’s do our best.” Using the same procedure and reasoning that I had used, we worked to mix the wax tones on the same piece of paper then compared the colors. She said, “You are not made of crayons. Crayons are made of wax. We are not crayons. We are all people. Do you see that you are a part of both of us?” My young mind learned then that ambiguity should not be complicated.

Nevertheless, outside of home, I grew up with constant reminders that I was not whole, only half, incomplete in some way. I have grown to battle against those who refuse to see my entirety. Some of that battle was borne out by systemic practices of hypodescent, one-drop conversations with other people that argued if I had one drop of Black blood in me then I was Black. I always argued back for the reverse logic applying to my so-called White blood. Why can’t I be both? Why do I have to choose because I am told or expected to choose? Other parts of the battle were supported by non-binary notions of both/and rather than either/or. The perceptions of others have long influenced how I see myself, how I identify, and how I am perceived.

In 1963, James Baldwin delivered a speech “The Negro Child – His Self-Image” (Baldwin, 1963). This speech was published later as “A Talk to Teachers (Baldwin, 1963).
Baldwin makes the following observation and argument for disrupting the systems of education by challenging the roles of educators and leaders:

The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions…What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change and fight it – at no matter what risk. This is the only hope that society has. This is the only way societies change.

bell hooks urges educators to consider education as “the practice of freedom…To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential.” (hooks, 1994). The reality of education is a socio/cultural system designed to perpetuate the structural frameworks of society (Freire, 1973; hooks, 2009; hooks, 2013). As educators and educational leaders, we have it within our power to address the unyielding systems that serve to shape the identities of students as learners. More importantly there is the ability of educators to impact the mental health and self-esteem of students. The concepts of self are central to models of identity development (Eriksson, 1963; Poston, 1990; Jackson, 1991; Root, 1994; Rockquemore et al., 2002; Renn, 2008; Toomey, 2015). The self directs and oversees the processing of information, directs intentions, decision-making, motivation and will to engage in academic and social activities (Whisler, 1991). What self-directed decisions can educational leaders engage in as they work to create supportive environments of BWBR individuals in their care?
Connections to Education

Educator relationships with students are framed by their own principles of mind, thought and consciousness (Suarez et al., 1987). This metacognitive understanding of one’s own state of mind is pivotal to educator-student relationships (Whisler, 1991):

Early negative childhood experiences produce insecure thought and belief systems that later interact with school and community experiences, resulting in varying levels of alienation or, at least, "estrangement" from a natural state of mental health or higher, agentic self. When students encounter situations that trigger their insecure thought systems, they lose their objective perspective, perceive things negatively, and mistakenly conclude that their interpretations are an accurate account of what is happening. This often leads to acting out behaviors and/or learning problems. When teachers react by judging, criticizing, or punishing, students' initial conditioned interpretations are confirmed, setting up a self-fulfilling cycle in which students demonstrate low self-concept, lack of motivation, poor judgment, and lack of self-control (p. 22).

A careful reflection on the connections of historical language, identity formation, negotiation and communication theories results in a conclusion for interrogating the role of education in these matters. Shulman (1986,1987) builds a case for the influence of pedagogical knowledge and expertise for educators and Ladson-Billings (Ladson-Billings, 1995) expands that pedagogical knowledge to incorporate race and culture. Critical Race theories build an argument for how race is constructed, communicated, and socialized using andragogical principles (Shuford, 2001). Hud-Aleem & Countryman (2008) make the following recommendations to educators and therapists working with BWBR children:
need to understand their own attitudes about people who are different from themselves as well as their attitudes toward interracial relationships. Such awareness is needed to maintain a nonjudgmental perspective. Avoiding biased language is extremely important in forming and maintaining relationships with families (p. 43).

Social Justice Implications

Racial identity invalidation is one of the most significant stressors facing BWBR people (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004; Shih & Sanchez, 2005; Townsend et al., 2009). Educational leaders, of any monoracially identified status, who are unaware of the development of racial identity of Biracial individuals and the associative relationships to social and communicative practices have an opportunity to press pause. The following will discuss issues faced by BWBR individuals and the role educational leaders are obligated to model courageous action and responsiveness in their professional and personal lives by creating and supporting policies, programs and practices that do not perpetuate systemic racism or exclusion of others.

Microaggression and Horizontal Hostility

Monoracial children can recognize their racial in-group as early as age three (Gaither et al., 2019). By age five, children are able to apply ‘White is good’ reasoning, that is, that there are positive outcomes toward in-group stereotypes and negative outcomes to out-group associations (Clark & Clark, 1947; Ambady et al., 2001). Likewise, the concept of “horizontal hostility,” an internal conflict that can occur within monoracially identified Black individuals or groups interacting with BWBR individuals may create experiences of “(in)authenticity and rejection” (Kennedy, 1970; Lorde, 1978; Campion, 2018). “Horizontal hostilities” are defined within Critical Mixed-Race Studies as, “racial invalidation,
multiracial microaggressions, and monoracism” that are instigated by non-Whites toward other marginalized individuals (Townsend et al., 2009; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Song & Aspinall, 2012; Franco et al., 2016). The ability of mixed-race children to navigate and embody these norms is learned through observation of the social statues applied to those two groups (e.g., Milner, 1984; Cameron et al., 2001; Nesdale & Fless, 2001).

Microaggressions (Sue, et al., 2007), are intentional or unintentional comments or actions that communicate antagonistic, condescending, or racist messaging to another person. Horizontal hostilities (Campion, 2019) are microaggressions that are experienced by BWBR people through encounters in the Black community that result in a sense of rejection from a collective Black identity. One study exploring microaggressions experienced by Biracial individuals found that there were five categories of microaggressions commonly experienced by these individuals (Nadal, et al., 2010). A secondary study also determined that there were microaggressions that appeared to be unique to Black White Biracial individuals (Nadal, et al. 2010). Commentary focusing on the individual’s status as a racialized ideal as well as commentary that focused attention on the phenotype of the Black White Biracial person as being unusual or contradictory were explored. Colorism is a frequent microaggression that is instigated within family systems that questions skin tone becomes a component of identity denial or isolation for BWBR individuals (Johnston and Nadal, 2010) or horizontal hostilities (Campion, 2019). Experiences shared by participants in this study on recollected stories in educational and socio-cultural settings can be categorized and reflected in the findings of Nadal, et al. (2010) (Figure 2).
**Figure 2**

*Figure 2: Nadal (2010) BWBR Microaggressions and Personal Recollections of Examples*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Microaggressions experienced by Biracial people (Nadal, 2010)</th>
<th>Sample statements that demonstrate Nadal’s microaggression category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Exclusion or isolation** | *You are not Black enough.*  
*You are not White enough.*  
*You are not enough.* |
| **Exotification or objectification** | *What are you?*  
*It must be interesting to a poster child for unity.* |
| **Assumption of identity or mistaken identity** | *I cannot stand White people.*  
*Black people always have an attitude about something, don’t they?* |
| **Denial of Biracial identity** | *Stop being so sensitive about race!*  
*You do know you can’t be White, right?*  
*You know you are really Black so get over it.*  
*Well, really, we are all mixed-up too! I mean I am Irish and Italian. I get the experience of being two things.* |
| **Pathologizing of identity and experiences** | *She has issues because she is mixed.*  
*I feel sorry for mixed kids because they don’t know what they are.* |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microaggressions unique to BWBR individuals (Nadal, 2010)</th>
<th>Sample statements that demonstrate Nadal’s microaggression category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Racialized ideal** | *I think BWBR people are beautiful and what we should strive for as a society.*  
*You are the best of both worlds.* |
| **Colorism** | *You have the “long-good-hair-light skinned disease.”*  
*You are as close as a man can get without actually going over to the other side.* |

Note: Microaggressions are experienced by many marginalized individuals. The top set of reflections aligned to Nadal’s microaggression categories are in the context of BWBR individuals. The second section are those microaggressions experienced by and unique to BWBR people. The second column of this chart includes statements from the firsthand experiences and exchanges with monoracially identified individuals throughout a lifetime. Some microaggressive commentary and action directed toward BWBR people are seemingly innocent when spoken, but to the recipient of the comment or action the effects can be long-lasting.

While culturally relevant pedagogical (CRP) practices focus on the reduction of racist thinking and microaggressions, an examination and interrogation of CRP reveals a stark
omission for conversation around BWBR children. While identity development and validation are important tenets of culturally relevant pedagogical practices (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2010; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011), one must ask what assumptions are being made about what culture(s) and what pedagogies are relevant to the learning environment? Educational leaders can influence the culture and policy of the school community. Institutional practices do not regularly promote or accommodate Biracial identities (Renn, 2009). The ill effects of mis-categorization of identity (Barreto, 2002; Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005; Shih & Sanchez, 2005) or denial of identity (Townsend, 2009) have been discussed. The marginalization and/or de-validation of any group of learners is in and of itself cause for concern. If that marginalization and/or de-validation of identity occurs in the classroom or school, it is even more disconcerting and worthy of interrogation and careful inquiry.

Black White Biracial children demonstrate high levels of cognitive flexibility (Gaither, 2018). This ability to navigate between identities is indicative that the processes of managing and alternating between conflicting identities can encourage the ability to amalgamate contradictory concepts, a tendency that is inherent to creativity (Goctowska et al. 2014). However, BWBR people are also often challenged or denied membership into the groups with which they identify. These experiences, referred to as identity denial (Albuja, et al, 2019), have been shown to have psychophysiological impacts on cortisol recovery, heightened depression, lower satisfaction with life (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Huynh et al., 2011), and decreased self-esteem and motivation (Townsend et al., 2009; Williams & Mohammed, 2009; Kim et al., 2014). Black White Biracial people experience more frequent identity denial experiences than bicultural individuals and have expectations for this denial to occur in those situations where their own ambiguous phenotypes or group membership are called into question (Gaither et al., 2018). These
experiences of denial can manifest as personal interactions with people. However, other contexts for denial of identity exist within our systems and policies (Townsend et al., 2009). Demographic questionnaires that require the respondent to select only one race engage in implied microaggressive practices that constrain the expression of one’s chosen identity (Townsend et al., 2009). Albuja, et al.(2019b) put forth the following when discussing these types of interactions:

Very few programs are in place to attend to the needs of those with “border” identities such as bicultural and Biracial individuals. These populations could be affirmed through inclusive demographic forms that allow for multiple identifications or support dual identity development in school and mental health institutions. (p.1182)

Facilitated reflection about the impacts of identity denial, microaggressions, horizontal hostilities, and BWBR identity formation in preparatory programs, such as counseling or education is warranted. Demographic forms are the most easily remedied microaggressions. The experiences of having to choose which part of your identity will be ignored or left out can be troubling for some. This simplistic shift in policy around gathering racial data could be a first step for educational leaders as they endeavor to address enacting policies that do not reproduce or sustain intentional or unintentional forms for racism.

**Education is a Monoracial System**

Monoracially identified individuals who are more cognizant of their own biases are more likely to engage in color conscious discussions that acknowledge these biases (Perry et al., 2019). This is to say that being aware of one’s own biases can contribute to the ability to engage in discussions about race. This reflexiveness is unfortunately uncommon and so race remains a central categorization bias that perpetuates inequality because of the longstanding connections to
use of hypodescent (Root, 1996; Brunsma, 2005) and the priorities of ‘whiteness’ (Omi & Winant, 1986, p.63). Ladson Billings (2001) challenges:

Typically, White, middle-class prospective teachers have little to no understanding of their own culture. Notions of Whiteness are taken for granted. They rarely are interrogated. But being White is not merely about biology. It is about choosing a system of privilege and power (p. 81).

This system that places a prevalence for Whiteness is a key issue bear in mind.

Ninety-seven percent of America’s approximately 3.5 million educators are monoracially identified. This monoracial group consists of White (79%), Black (7%), or Hispanic (9%), Asian (2%) educators who identify as monoracial (NCES, 2020). Additionally, about 76% of all educators are female while 24% are male (NCES, 2020). These individuals are key figures in the racial contracts regarding race as a binary, non-ambiguous construct that holds a status quo relationship between epistemological (knowledge), spatial (policy and law), and cognitive dispositions (beliefs). This contract maintains principles of “whiteness,” “not Whiteness,” “monoracial,” “either but not both” as undeniable ideals that are difficult to break (Leonardo, 2015). Likewise, the use of hypodescent, conscious or unconscious, extends to use by minority perceivers in that the assigned identity of Biracial individuals as monoracial is a result of feelings of borne of a mutually shared solidarity (Craig & Richeson, 2016) and the belief in a linked fate for feelings of subordination and exploitation (Dawson, 1994).

Since the 2000 US Census, when Americans had the choice to select more than one race as their identification status (Root, 1996; US Census, 2000), less than four percent of the population identifies as such. Of this small group about one-third identify as Black White Biracial (Bola, 2020). Educators identifying as belonging to two or more races is reported at only
two percent of all educators (NCES, 2020). By the fall of 2029, the National Center for Educational Statistics predicts that about 6% of America’s 51.1 million students will be identified as multiracial (NCES, 2020). How many of these students will be Black White Biracial? How many Black White Biracial educators will be present and equipped by their own lived experiences to support these students? How many are present now? What can be learned from a careful examination of the experiences of this group of individuals that can shed light on creating a more inclusive educational experience?

The growth of this demographic group, coupled with the ill-effects of identity denial, the impact of relationships and intentional language, and reflective practices concerning bias on identity development are more than interesting to consider; denial of identity has the potential to impact a sense of group membership, well-being and, ownership of self in varying contexts (Gaither, et al., 2012). Factoring in the already imbalanced demographics of American educators and the unconscious and conscious use of cultural practices of hypodescent demonstrated to continue with monoracially identified Black and White individuals (Ho, et al., 2017; Skinner, et al., 2019) the battle for a fluid identity becomes even more hard-pressed. With hypodescent as a catalyst, the role that any social environment, its monoracial actors, and the subsequent interactions with BWBR children in classrooms play in the development of intersecting racial identities, in this case, BWBR children, is a matter of social justice and the focus of this work. The literature regarding the psychological experiences of BWBR individuals largely centers on binary, either/or constructs. These social and cultural behaviors are important to consider. While the literature continues to grow, it remains limited. The opportunity to examine the thoughts, practices, and reflections of BWBR individuals and their journeys toward the formation of their racial identities in the contexts of formal education settings and life itself may offer additional
themes surrounding the conscious or unconscious role of educators in the racial identity development of BWBR children. Given the limited literature around this interplay of language, social norms, and bias, the driving question for this work and further discussion is: What stories might emerge?

**Outcomes to Consider**

Building a sense of purpose for the role of educational experiences for those who sit in the spaces of border identities will necessitate new learning for educational leaders so they may gain critical insights into more responsive uses of pedagogy, communication, and sense of self relative to others. We do not live in a raceless society. The expanding numbers of mixed-race individuals in American society may seem to argue that race is no longer an issue since so many are now in an apparent state of racelessness. Author Malcom Gladwell, a Black White Biracial individual himself, shares that “when you mix black and white, you don’t obliterate those categories” (p. 123). Belonging to more than one race underscores the realities and conspicuousness of race.

Delgado and Stefanicic (2001) argue that the structure of systems within the law or other societal constructs impose certain behaviors or actions upon the individuals who operate within those systems. This is a case of ‘every system is perfectly designed to deliver the results it produces.’ (Langley, et al., p.79). To solve a problem, we must first understand the problem from a user-centered space. The practices associated with the problem must also be examined. As discussed thus far, the historical precedents and habitus of norms for hypodescent and binary logic are pervasive in societal interactions. Identity theories and practices point to feelings of anxiety, compromised social contracts, and misguided communication for Black White Biracial individuals. Biases towards BWBR individuals originating in misconceptions about biracialness
exist within the structures of society. When the educational society is also a monoracial infrastructure that engages in practices of microaggressive behaviors or horizontal hostilities toward Black White Biracial individuals the matter flares into one of leadership grounded in social justice. We are far from being in a post-racial society. What impact might this lack of understanding have on the identity development of BWBR students? Educational leaders have an obligation, both personal and professional, to monitor their own biases and interactions with their Biracial students. Additionally, there is an ethical and moral obligation to lead others in doing the same. This problem of practice requires advocacy from a perspective of social justice. This newfound perspective can provide insight into the respect, care, and consideration for the relationships that educational leaders have with their learners.

The research questions for this study will focus attention on the experiences of adult members of this demographic group. Biracial identity formation models indicate a journey that is responsive to formative experiences, social interactions, cultural expectations, and personal choices. With these contributing factors in mind, the following questions will be explored:

**Primary Question:** What socio/cultural interactions influence BWBR racial identity choices in educational setting?

**Secondary Question:** What stories might BWBR people share about educational experiences with monoracially instigated microaggressions or horizontal hostility?
Chapter 2 – A Review of Knowledge for Action

This chapter will serve to discuss the literature that frames the discourse around Black White Biracialness. The argument will begin with building understanding for the literature that discusses engrained societal practices of hypodescent. Following this exploration, it will be necessary to examine the continuum of identity theories. This review will examine general identity formation (e.g., Adlerian and Rogerian theories), monoracial identity development (e.g., Helms, Cross) and finally biracial identity development theories, (e.g., Cross, Poston, Brunsma.) This foundation will serve to deepen discussions in the literature regarding the role of gender in biracial identification and the impact of attitudes and biases towards BWBR children on group membership within monoracial constructs. The literature will then turn to examine how language impacts the processes of identity negotiation (e.g., Ting-Toomey). Finally, a prevalent conundrum of this problem of practice will be discussed; the disconnect between the philosophies of critical race theory (CRT) and culturally relevant pedagogy in the context of the denial of identity to BWBR individuals who claim an identity that is in an ambiguous space. The methodologies of CRT focus keenly on the use of storytelling as a tool for improvement. These deliberations will then lead to a discussion about the theoretical framework as a driving set of questions for this study. This line of argumentation building through a review of the literature is essential to understanding and communicating perspectives on the identities of BWBR people, the practices that cling to binary logic, resistance to ambiguity in racial conversations, and the uniquely malleable nature of Biracial identity.

Hypodescent

Black White Biracial (BWBR) individuals have a longstanding history of marginalization (Root, 1996; Brunsma, 2006). Research of socio-cultural norms and mores indicates a
categorization preference referred to as hypodescent. Hypodescent is a term used in social sciences to explain the racially oriented labelling practice that assigns racial identity based on the perceived lower status of one parent. This categorization bias can trace its roots back to the early American colonies (Virginia, 1665), slavery, its subsequent legalistic views on colorism (Hunter, 2005), and the United States Census language from the 1790 through the 1950 (U.S, Census, 2002). This use of culturally accepted “one drop rules” helps to provide saliency and legitimacy to a practice of sustaining a racially dominant group. The “One Drop Rule” defined individuals with at least one drop of Black blood as being categorized as Black, regardless of any other ancestry (Graham, 1999). This practice has deep-rooted historical precedence in the United States (Davis, 1991) explains,

In the 1850s the strong fears of abolition and slave insurrections resulted in growing hostility toward miscegenation, mulattoes, concubinage, passing, manumission, and of the implicit rule granting free mulattoes a special, in-between status in the lower South. . . Thus, the South came together in strong support of [the rules of hypodescent] in order to defend slavery. (p. 49)

The ‘One Drop Rule’ worked within existing power dynamics to “limit Black access to resources, political power and to maintain the myth of White racial purity” (Hunter, 2005, p.18). White people had a firm hold on what it means to be White, Black and Biracial in the United States (Perkins, 2014).

A failure to interrogate the use of hypodescent among both monoracially identified groups integral to the identity of BWBR individuals would be errant; in other words, any further discussion about the practice must include discussion about its use by Whites and Blacks. Discrimination by skin tone, or colorism, while documented in educational settings is little
understood (Hunter, 2015). The lighter-skinned phenotype for many BWBR individuals, a preferred status for job placement, placed a presumed higher value on these fairer skinned people (Kerr, 2005). A marker of wealth in the slave owning families was the ability to purchase light-skinned “fancy slaves” with longer hair and European features (Kerr, 2005, p. 273). Colorism is a form of discrimination based on skin tone that emerged from American and European colonialist practices (Hunter, 2012). Research has shown that lighter-skin tones are privileged and rewarded (Hunter, 2012).

The significance of BWBR individuals within the Black community has consequences and implications for the political power of the Black community. The 1997 Federal Measures of Race and Ethnicity and the Implications for the 2000 Census testimonies of the 105th Congress heard months’ long discourse and arguments for and against the inclusion of Biracial and multiracial categories and the ability to check a box or self-select racial background in the upcoming 2000 census (Federal measures of race and ethnicity and the implications for the 2000 census, 1997). Representatives of the Black Caucus and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) argued against the use of federal documents to collect details about individuals of more than one race,

Concerned that the addition of a multiracial category may have unanticipated adverse consequences, resulting in Blacks being placed even lower in the existing American hierarchy....[The multiracial initiative has] potential disorganizing and negative effects on Black Americans [and would] distort public understanding of their condition....Directive 15 is appropriately viewed as part of the judicial, legislative, and administrative machinery that has been constructed over time to combat and eradicate racial discrimination. It is important to remind ourselves that this anti-discrimination capability
was achieved at great cost. The sacrifices of the Civil Rights Movement...were not in vain.... We are opposed to any action by the OMB which will result in the disaggregation of the current Black population (cited in Williams, 2006: 47-48).

A prominent African American senator put forth this statement during the 105th Congressional sessions:

I believe that the inclusion of a multiracial or biracial classification is counterproductive to effectively enforcing the civil rights laws of this country. Directive 15 has been indispensable in facilitating the information required to move the Nation’s equal opportunity agenda forward. The data compiled under this policy have been used to enforce requirements of the Voting Rights Act, to review State redistricting plans, to establish and evaluate programs and plans to get rid of discrimination both in the public and private sectors, to monitor and enforce desegregation plans in the public schools, to assist minority businesses under the Minority Business Development Program, and to monitor and enforce the Fair Housing Act (Federal Measures of Race and Ethnicity and the Implications for the 2000 Census, 1997 record).

The idea that Biracial individuals should be categorized as monoracial individuals and that any action to permit an ambiguous status is a blatant argument that utilizes antiquated notions of hypodescent to gain political and economic power.

Due to the historical and legal designations of hypodescent, BWBR individuals have been assumed by Whites to be Black (Rockquemore & Laszlofý, 2003). The rules of hypodescent have also been upheld within the Black community (Rockquemore & Laszlofý, 2003; Gaither, Pauker, et al., 2016). Ho and Kteily proposed a model for the use of hypodescent
among Blacks based on a sense of linked fate and a desire to maintain solidarity with perceived members of the ingroup (Thomsen, et al., 2010). There is additional research to support the actions of minority members witnessing discrimination against members of another marginalized group, in this case BWBR individuals, then this solidarity is characterized as a stigma-based solidarity (Craig & Richardson, 2016).

**Theories of Identity Formation**

Identity, or sense of self, is key to human nature. The role of language in the development of self is equally important. A discussion about identity formation theories that consider this intersection of self in the context of language follows as an effort to frame later discussion about identity formation theories that are specific to BWBR individuals.

**Adlerian Psychology**

Alfred Adler, a former colleague of Sigmund Freud, was the developer of an approach to psychiatry called individual psychology. Adlerian therapy focuses on the individual’s ability to identify and overcome obstacles and feelings of inferiority to contribute in positive ways to the greater social interest. The therapist’s role is to interpret the impact of unhelpful past experiences and family dynamics on the individual’s thoughts or feelings. Adler focused on a holistic sense of self as indivisible and felt strongly that all “psychological processes and their manifestations can be understood only from the individual context and that all psychological insight begins with the individual” (Hoffman, 1994, p. 87). This theory works to engage individuals in overcoming feelings of inferiority to benefit the social group. Adler also held to the concept of Gemeinschaftsgefühl, described by Ansbacher as a “community feeling or social interest” and is “the potential for human beings to live in harmony with the systems into which they have been born (Ansbacher, 1992)”. Gemeinschaftsgefühl is also described by Dinkmeyer et al. (1987) as
“one’s willingness to cooperate with others for the common good” (p. 10) and by Sweeny as “each person’s striving to make a place for himself or herself and to feel belongingness” (p.8). This sense of community framed Adler’s thinking about education. Adler posited that education is a process of engaging students to ensure that they orient themselves ever outward toward the world, things, and other people. Adlerian theory encompasses four main levels of development: engagement, assessment, insight, and reorientation (Derobertis, 2014).

**Rogerian or Non-Directive Psychology**

In the mid 1940’s, Dr. Carl Rogers developed an alternative form of psychotherapy, referred to as non-directive psychotherapy (Snyder, 1945; Rogers, C.R., 1959). In this method of psychotherapy, the practitioner is intentionally cautious about not overlaying their own sense of values or standards on the client (Snyder, 1945). “As a result, the client is not forced into a position of defending what he believes to be desirable goals and is therefore able to focus his efforts on an unprejudiced evaluation” (Snyder, p.193). Rogers approach to relationship therapy argues strongly for the restricted use of language that implies to the client a sense of conversion, recommendation, or censure. It is essential to the client that this experience is not self-directed but rather self-determined learning. Motivation and desire are the emotional drivers in non-directive psychological therapies (Snyder, 1945; Rogers, 1959).

**Comparison of Racial Identity Formation Models**

It is important to keep in mind that an interrogation of Biracial identity must use a dual set of lenses to examine and explore racial identity development. Therefore, an understanding of Black, White, and Biracial identity formation from an historical perspective is warranted. Not taking this route is a practice in hypodescent that implies Biracial identity can only be questioned
in the context of marginalization or monoracially. The chart in Figure 3 provides a comparative examination of the seminal identity formation theories.

**Figure 3**

*Side by Side Comparison of Racial Identity Models*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Identity Formation of Children</th>
<th>Monoracial – White Identity Formation</th>
<th>Monoracial – Black Identity Formation</th>
<th>Biracial Identity Formation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust v. mistrust</td>
<td>Contact status</td>
<td>Pre-encounter status</td>
<td>Personal identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy v. shame and doubt</td>
<td>Disintegration status</td>
<td>Encounter status</td>
<td>Choice of group categorization in a monoracial construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative v. guilt</td>
<td>Pseudo-independence status</td>
<td>Immersion/emersion status</td>
<td>Enmeshment and denial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry v. inferiority</td>
<td>Immersion/emersion status</td>
<td>Internalization status</td>
<td>Appreciation of multiple identity and exploration of heritages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity v. role confusion</td>
<td>Autonomy status</td>
<td>Internalization/commitment</td>
<td>Integration and valuing of multiracial identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy v. isolation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generativity v. stagnation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego integrity v. despair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of the categorization bias of hypodescent persists among monoracial Black and White perceivers (Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008; Ho et al., 2011; Sanchez et al., 2011; Chen & Ratliff, 2015; Roberts & Gelman, 2015; Ho et al., 2017). While hypodescent is a practice attributed primarily to monoracial White perceivers to consciously or unconsciously maintain a socially dominant status to create stratified social frameworks of separation, the very same practice has been suggested with monoracial Black perceivers. This practice by Black perceivers generally maintains levels of inclusion rather than exclusion and perpetuates a sense of
egalitarianism (Ho et al., 2017), racially linked fate (Dawson, 1994) and stigma-based solidarity (Craig & Richeson, 2016). The notions of hypodescent for racial categorization point mainly to a substantiated bias towards social constructs of belonging based on held stereotypes about race (Harris, 1964; Davis, 1991; Nicholas & Skinner, 2017). The practice of trait hypodescent, perceived appearance, and racial categorization based on facial stimuli also contributes to how monoracial perceivers interact with BWBR individuals (Skinner, Perry, Gaither, 2020). Determinations for perception of identity based on tacit and implicit biases create a social identity threat that seeks to potentially undermine the process of racial identity development for BWBR individuals (Gaither et al., 2013).

**Monoracial Identity Formation Models**

While it appears to some monoracial individuals that BWBR individuals have a unique opportunity to self-select their racial identities (Stephan, 1992; Williams, 1996; Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002a) this perceived concept of self-selection is actually an extension of one-drop rules coupled with color grading (light skinned ethnic groups have fewer barriers than darker skinned groups) and is in essence not a choice but rather an assigned identity (Lewis Jr. & Ford-Robertson, 2010). The development of identity is essential to building independence and self-esteem. Erikson (1963) indicates that during adolescence it is important for the individual to establish personal identity, autonomy, and independence, build relationships with others who are similar and commit to career choices. Two identities are in the processes of development, that of a personal identity in tandem with an ability to develop a healthy racial identity.

Racial identity models (see Fig. 1) have been suggested for monoracially identified individuals by Stonequist (1937), Cross (1971), and Morten and Atkinson (1983). The
limitations of each of these models is that Black White Biracial people are held up as marginalized at best because of their failure to assume firm identities (Poston 1990). The models predict that BWBR persons will not maintain a sense of culture or values over the course of their lives. Further they assume a period of rejection by the BWBR individual of the dominant and minority parent as well as not allowing for an integrated sense of self (Poston, 1990). All the models account for an acceptance of the individual into the minority culture of the minority parent. This sense of welcome is usually more often an experience of victimization and ostracization. The sense of self-actualization never occurs for these people because of the unique character of the journey of BWBR persons.

**Biracial Identity Formation Models**

Stonequist introduced the initial model of Biracial identity (Stonequist, 1937). Called the Marginal Person Model (Stonequist,1937) the framework utilized White family norms to reference the development of Biracial individuals. Stonequist’s premise was Biracial people are problematic because of their mixed-race status. The uncertainty and ambiguity of living in two worlds presents marginalized psyches incapable of conforming to a monoracial construct for race and culture (Stonequist, 1937).

Carlos Poston (1991) presented an identity model to discuss the interrelationships between personal identity (PI) and reference group orientation (RGO) at varying stages: personal identity, choice of group categorization, enmeshment/denial, appreciation, and integration. According to Poston, children are essentially unmindful of differences between races and therefore unaffected by its social, historical, and political impacts and consequences. The development of identity, according to Poston rests in the nurturing of self-esteem and self-worth that exists through experiences with others, primarily family (Poston, 1991). During adolescence,
racial identity issues become more apparent. Crisis and alienation from being expected to choose a monoracial identity assaults the child from all angles. Trait hypodescent and hypodescent expect Black White Biracial individuals to conform to social and racial categories that force them to deny their non-binary nature (Cruz-Janzen, 2000).

Maria P.P. Root, a pioneer in Biracial research posited a theory for four adoption stances for bi-racial individuals as they navigate life: move within and between Black and White communities concurrently; change identity based on context or situation; adopt a border identity; live within a monoracial identity (Root, 1996). Daniel (2002) proposed an extended model of Root by identifying a synthesized identity and a functional identity for Biracial individuals to be adept at navigating multi-racial and multinational spaces. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) went further to offer a model that consists of a singular identity, a protean identity, a transcendent identity, and a border identity. This model melds choice and physical appearance (regardless of physical ambiguity) with social interactions that include personal connections as well as rejection by Whites and acceptance by Blacks. Later work by Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2003) highlight the impact that society and relationships have on Black White Biracial identity and interrogates the influence of personal narrative in the exploration of racial identity.

In all models the development of a non-binary racial identity is influenced by the self and others (Figure 4).
### Theories of Biracial Identity Development

These theories offered a construct that permits a non-binary sense of self that is supported by personal experience, ecological and social interactions, and ongoing change borne of ambiguity and color-consciousness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resolutions for Resolving Otherness Model</td>
<td>Root (1990)</td>
<td>Experiencing a sense of otherness within a monoracially focused society has permitted the emergence of new identities that are non-binary or multiple. These identities challenge norms. There are four resolutions of this otherness that can be adopted: acceptance in societal assignment, identification with both groups, identification with one group, identification as a new group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model of Biracial Identity Development</td>
<td>Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995)</td>
<td>Similar age-based development model that also incorporates interactions with monoracial individuals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Early models pointed toward deficiencies within the individual that perpetuated the belief in the Black White Biracial person as troubled or in need of directive support from others (Stonequist, 1937). Later models establish that the awareness of racial identity emerging as early as age three (e.g., Aboud, 1988; Hirschfeld, 1995; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2002; Dunham, Chen, & Banaji, 2013). Contextual influences such as family, friends (Figure 5) can influence how a Black White Biracial person chooses to self-identify and navigate racial category labels (e.g., Herman, 2004; Porter & Washington, 1993; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2001; Root, 1997, as quoted in Gaither, et al., 2014). The monoracial identities shown in Figures 5 and 6 are represented by a square and a circle with a solid outline. The Black White Biracial identity is
represented by a square within a circle with a dotted outline. Contextual influences are indicated by arrows.

*Figure 5*

*Influences of Non-Binary Racial Identity*

Current models account for flexibility of thinking and self-determination suggest the development of a more malleable and fluid non-binary racial identity (e.g., Kerwin & Ponteretto, 1995; Rockquemore, et al. 2009; Gaither, 2014). In these racial identity models (Figure 6) the Black White Biracial individual makes self-directed choices that are context-based and centered on transactional and translational relationships and non-binary logic. This is where the truly malleable and changeable nature of Black White Biracial identities appears as individuals learn to navigate multiple monoracial and/or biracial domains simultaneously or in response to a given situation (Renn, 2000; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002)
Gender and Biracial Identity

Racial identification occurs through two processes; labels determined by others and labels determined by the self (Root, 1992, 1996; Funderburg, 1994; Brunsma, 2005). Much of the literature points to cultural influences such as family, peers, and environmental factors (Townsend, et al., 2009; Davenport, 2016). There is a gap in the literature however around the influences of non-racial social identities and racial labeling. These non-racial identities can be categorized as gender, socioeconomic status, and religion (Davenport, 2016). To add to this discussion is a tendency toward a phenomenon called “gendered colorism” (Davenport, 2016), that is to say, there is a stronger effect brought about by skin color stratification on the lives of women more so than men (Hall, 2017). Keith et al. (2010) state that “issues of racial identity, skin color, and attractiveness are central concerns for women” (p.54).

A study of survey responses from 37,000 biracial individuals found that for the BWBR population women are twice as likely as BWBR men to embrace a biracial identity (Davenport, 2016). Identity theories point to a tendency for the self to be composed of multiple identities and
these multiple points of being are deeply influenced by relationships to one another (Burke, 1980). Social identities, for example, gender or role, can hold sway over one’s overall outlook (Davenport, 2016). Racial identity is fundamental to the structural determination of the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993). For BWBR individuals who exist in the borderlands of racial identity, research suggests that those borders are less flexible for men (Telles, 2004; Villarreal, 2010; Ho, et al., 2011; Penner & Sapperstein, 2013).

**Hypodescent and Group Membership**

Prior studies have established that monoracially identified Whites and Blacks use hypodescent, a categorization bias that associates BWBR people more with their racially lower status parents than their racially higher status parent to maintain the status quo hierarchy (e.g., Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Sanchez et al., 2011; Ho & Kteily, 2017; Chen et al., 2018). The experience of BWBR individuals has been characterized as living in between spaces that offer little to no choice about their racial identity (Root, 1990; Waters, 1990). The cultural norm of hypodescent has led to many Biracial identity formation models that maintain the binary logic of being Black or Biracial (Cross, 1971; Hall, 1980; Morten & Atkinson, 1983; Brown, 1990; Miller & Miller, 1990; Poston, 1990; Bowles, 1993; Gibbs, 1997).

Membership, assigned or accepted, is often influenced by social networks and appearance (Hall, 1980; Root, 1990; Rockquemore, 2002). Adding to the dilemma of choice is the most recent argument for Biracial identity formation that considers exploration and self-understanding as a range of possibilities for Biracial people (Rockquemore, 2002). Biracial individuals choose to identify in many varying ways, from identifying with the race of only one of their birth parents; selecting a border identity that is an exclusive blend of their two parents; a protean identity that is flexible and interchangeable depending on the social context or community or a
transcendent racial identity that defies categorization as a race and instead embraces humanity as an identity (Rockquemore, 2002). While racial self-understanding is generally bound in the context of choices made by the individual it is equally poignant to recognize that racial identity for Biracial people is more frequently not a true choice but rather a selection made as a matter of consequence or outcomes from existing structural parameters or expectations.

**Identity Negotiation Theory**

Jackson’s (2002a) assumptions and propositions detail the character, procedures, norms, power structures, and consequences of action that occur during these negotiations. Ting-Toomey carries Jackson’s cultural negotiation theory to the next level in the development of the Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) (Ting-Toomey, 1986, 1993, 1999, 2005b). This theory proposes that human beings seek to have positive identity confirmation through communication. Similar to Jackson’s assumptions and propositions, Ting-Toomey offers ten core suppositions bound by practices of mindfulness as the common thread joining awareness, culturally sensitive knowledge, and interpersonal dynamics (Ting-Toomey, 2015).

**Educators’ Attitudes Towards Biracial Children**

Mindsets and feelings of acceptance within a group can impact children’s ability to problem-solve or think creatively. Children in a laboratory setting were impacted by how they compared themselves to other children in different social groups (Rhodes & Brinkman, 2008; Cimpian, et al., 2012). Pittinsky, et al., (2001) found that children are particularly vulnerable to “stereotype threat”. Gaither, et al., (2018) followed the reasoning of these notions to explore the impact of thinking about self-identity using multiple lenses on children’s ability to develop flexible thinking. Three studies (Gaither, 2018) examined children ages 6 to 7 years old. The children were primed into two groups, Multiple-Identities or Multiple Physical Traits. Multiple
Identity primed children were primed to be able to view themselves in multiple social scenarios while those children primed with Multiple Physical Traits recognized that they shared similar physical traits with others. Gaither’s study concluded that the children primed with Multiple-Identities expressed more flexible thinking as an output of their intentionally focused efforts to view themselves as multifaceted individuals (Gaither, 2018). Gaither states:

By asking children to reflect earlier on during development about their multiple identities, children could experience a positive affirmation and shift how they see outgroup members in their social worlds. Moreover, research suggests that ‘colorblind’ parenting and educational strategies are not necessarily effective; instead, conversations that facilitate open discussions about racism and intergroup conflict may be more beneficial. (p.8).

This possibility for reflection on racial identity at younger ages is an activity that provides internal confirmation and valuation.

Poston (1990) recommends in his discourse on Biracial identity development that counselors carefully examine their personal stances and opinions on BWBR children. Maria Root revealed in her work with therapists engaged in working with Biracial individuals that the therapists themselves held beliefs that interfered with therapy (Root, 1994). Nishimura (1995) found health professionals held beliefs about interracial marriages and the children of these marriages. Jackman, Wagner, and Johnson concluded that the psychological and psychosocial development of children/adolescents is influenced by environmental factors such as norms and values grounded in long held habits and practices (Jackman, et al., 2001; Bordieu, 2007). These attitudes warrant a careful examination since Biracial children are more vulnerable to social and psychological problems than their monoracial complements. Biracial children are more
susceptible to obstacles of low self-esteem, guilt for identifying with one parent’s race over the other, rejection of identity, and social exclusion (Gibbs & Moskowitz-Sweet, 1991; Winn & Priest, 1993). Despite the challenges indicated by numerous studies regarding the challenges BWBR individuals there has been little work done to understand the beliefs and expectations that others have for these individuals (Root, 1990).

The Attitudes Toward Multicultural Children Scale (AMCS) (see Fig. 3) developed by Jackman, Wagner, and Johnson (2001) is one of the first attempts to begin to measure adult beliefs regarding the psychosocial and racial identity development of multicultural children. Themes emerging from this study were:

- social marginality
- belonging
- education/academic performance
- aspirations
- dual-identity conflict
- gender conflict
- autonomy/separation from parents
- guilt and disloyalty
- behavior
- self-esteem

These themes were then used to create a 43-item instrument to allow respondents to rate how relevant each area was to the healthy development of multicultural children. An additional instrument, the Quick Discrimination Index (QDI) (Ponteretto, et al., 1995) was utilized to assess cognitive attitudes about racial diversity and women’s equity issues (Jackman, et al., 2001). The results of the study on the implementation of the tools indicate that there is a strong support for its use with adults’ attitudes regarding the psychosocial development of multiracial children. Results from the AMCS (Figure 7) and QDI were compared, and indicators suggest comparable results with the racial attitudes factors and lower correlations to gender factors (Jackman, et al., 2001).
Figure 7

Attitudes Toward Multi-Racial Children Scale

doi: 10.1037/t16756-000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have a positive image of self (SE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Have difficulty discussing their racial background with others (SE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are leaders in school (SE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Will have difficulty adjusting to adulthood (SE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Identify with the racial heritage of each parent (MH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Are confused concerning their racial identity (SE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Feel awkward in social situations (SE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Are popular with children of the opposite sex (PA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Enjoy participating in the cultural celebrations of both parents' racial heritages (MH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Benefit from having parents of different racial backgrounds (MI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Think that other children are better than they are (PA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Prefer to follow the cultural practices of only one parent (MH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Are confused by the differing cultural traditions of their parents (PA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Are respected by their classmates (PA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Resent being the offspring of parents from different racial backgrounds (PA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Have a good relationship with both parents (MH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Feel ashamed of their mixed racial heritage (PA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Will graduate from high school and attend college (PA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Are proud of their multiracial identity (PA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Are satisfied with their physical appearance (PA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Possess a multiracial identity that is based on each parent's race (MI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Benefit from learning the customs of both parents' racial backgrounds (MI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Will grow up to be successful adults (PA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SE = self-esteem, F = unnamed factors, MH = multiracial heritage, PA = psychosocial adjustment, MI = multiracial identity, and NL = no loading.

Contextual Racial Presentation

“Recent research has highlighted the fact that social context can significantly alter how Biracial individuals racially identify, forcing them to navigate between their different racial identities subconsciously” (e.g., Chiao et al., 2006; Cheng & Lee, 2009). Black White Biracial individuals who present with a phenotype of lighter skin or texture of hair are confusing to monoracial observers. Paulus & Wentrus (2017) share the following in their study of evaluation of faces and group membership,

Faces are important carriers of information: They inform interaction partners about many aspects that are relevant for social interactions. . . faces are often characterized by the presence of several evaluation-relevant features at once (e.g., emotional expression and
ethnicity). Emotional expression and group membership work independently to contribute to implicit evaluation (p. 143).

Social identity priming is influenced or swayed by the environment (Gaither, 2015). Historically, this environmental influencing of racial identity as well as the associated choices and consequences has been called passing. Passing has been historically viewed as an intentional effort by a Black White Biracial individual or a phenotypically ambiguous person to live as White, denying and foregoing their Black heritage and living in such a way as to make others believe they are monoracially White. Movies such as “Pinky” (Kazan, 1949), “Imitation of Life” (Stahl, 1934; Sirk, 1959), and “Passing” (Hall, 2021) have attempted to portray the experiences of BWBR people trying to pass. In all these instances obfuscation of the minority racial identity is deliberate. However, a study by Albuja et al. (2018) refers to this occurrence instead as contextual racial presentation (CRP) (Albuja, et al., 2018). This behavior has historically been frowned upon as many consider it a misrepresentation of one’s true identity. Albuja, et al. posit that this behavior is often a matter of circumstance, an unplanned outcome of a particular situation in which the BWBR person finds themselves perceived in a monoracial role. Many BWBR individuals identify fully with both races of their parents and do not view this switching back and forth as malicious or dishonest (Albuja, et al., 2018). Monoracial identity frameworks fail to describe the malleability of BWBR identities. The seemingly back-and-forth nature of BWBR racial identities is natural and can be influenced by the perceptions of others. The study concluded that the perceptions of monoracial individuals, in this case Whites, regarding contextual racial presentation is that this becomes a violation of trust in the BWBR person. There is a perception that the BWBR person is attempting to gain some level of privilege and therefore must enact some sort of social cost to the BWBR person (Albuja, et al., 2018). Given that the
majority of educators are White, this particular study holds a great deal of impact for BWBR learners.

**Critical Race Theory in the Context of Biracialness**

Anderson (2015) points to a tendency for many to believe that the United States is moving beyond race. There is a complexity to the notions of a post-racial nation. While the increasing numbers of BWBR individuals may argue that there is a push to live as a nation beyond the confines of race, there is a contradictory argument to be made that the experiences of BWBR people shine a light on the significance of race. For many BWBR people diminishing the meaning of race and its categories highlights the notability of race.

Critical Race Theory has realistic and idealistic perspectives in its critiques: the critiques of liberalism and the roles of systemic and structural determinism (Bell, 1987, Crenshaw et al., 1995, Ladson-Billings, 1999; Anderson, 2015). Structural determinism in critical race theory discusses the frameworks that delineate policy in such a way as to prevent movement toward change with regards to attitudes, practices, material conditions or economic implications (Hickman, 2003; Saks, 2003). In other words, the system is designed to deliver status quo results and circumstances of inequity. Hypodescent (legal statutes for blackness) and racial integrity laws (legal statutes for whiteness) are examples of structural norms that shape and determine racial identification (Wadlington, 2003). These laws also helped to shape immigration policies to perpetuate the concepts of monoracialism as a qualifying factor for citizenship. Those applying for citizenship that were determined to be “half-breeds” were denied citizenship by the courts (Okizaki, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Critical race theory has evolved to address these systemic issues.
Critical race theory also calls into question liberalistic policies that fail to ‘address anything except the most obvious and crude versions of racism’ (Gillborn, 2008). One such policy is the construction of colorblindness. The Multicultural Category Movement of the early 2000s sought to eliminate racial categories from the U.S. Census (Williams, 2006). Nakashima (1996) points out that this is reductionist thinking about race and biracial/multiracial people by saying:

Many multiracial people feel that the assertion that mixed race people are models of multiculturalism or bridges between groups is an unrealistic and unfair expectation and that it threatens to erase the significance of race and racial oppression in this society. It also contributes to a resentment toward multiracial people and the mixed-race movement by drawing attention away from persisting inequality and focusing instead on the feel-good idea of a raceless or color-blind society. (p. 94)

Critical race theory should provide the tools for educational leaders to consider the ubiquitous ‘What are you?’ inquiry that is so prevalent in the lived experiences of BWBR people. Positioning this constant questioning of identity within the monoracial systems and practices of educations, Miller (1992) posits that ‘biracial individuals directly highlight the structure or racial dichotomization because they do not belong to either of two mutually exclusive groups yet lack a socially legitimized group that describes their biracial origins’ (p. 35). Socially conscious practices that embrace those students whose heritage is of the oppressor and the oppressed are difficult histories to traverse. Colorblind policies cannot be enacted and systemic ignorance for the presence to BWBR learners is also problematic. Critical race theory can confront racism head-on and provide for provocative discourse and identity building.
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

During the 1980s a collection of terms emerged to describe pedagogical strategies utilized by educators to create a sense of connection between home life and the classroom. Strategies such as cultural congruence (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981), cultural appropriateness (Au & Jordan, 1981) cultural compatibility (Jordan, 1985; Vogt et al., 1987), culturally aware or mitigating cultural discontinuity (Macias, 1987), cultural synchronization (Irvine, 1990), and cultural responsiveness (Cazden & Legget, 1981; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Pewewardy, 1993) became central conversations for the practices of educators. The research done to bring life to this analysis of appreciating the diversity of the classroom focused primarily in small, indigenous groups of Hawaiian and Native American students and their White teachers.

In 1995 Gloria Ladson-Billings challenged the notion of the objective researcher by examining the nexus of education and African American culture. By questioning the role of the researcher as a “native anthropologist” (Ladson-Billings, 1995), Ladson-Billings used her positional authority as a Black woman along with the work of feminist Patricia Hill Collins (1991) to design and implement a three-year study regarding the impact of eight educators on the achievement of African American students (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009). Her work elicited a new term, culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), an approach intended to build awareness of and sensitivity for the ways to bridge the worlds of home and classroom. Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) focuses on the need for effective educators to be inclusive and unprejudiced about the “cultural (emphasis added) diversity” of their students (Brown-Jeffy, 2011). Irvine (1990) argued that race and culture are not the same. Culture and race may have some similarities, an absolute focus on culture denies the realities of race. In the case of Irvine’s work, “Black Americans have a distinct culture founded on identifiable norms, language,
behaviors, and attitudes . . .” (Irvine, 1990, p.23). The focus on culture alone is “incongruous and contradictory” and creates cultural aversions and miscues for educators, administrators, and students in our classrooms (Irvine, 1990). Race should be considered as a component in the enactment of culturally relevant pedagogy. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper suggest a framework for culturally relevant pedagogy that embraces critical race theory as a strategy to create a holistic learning environment that, among other things, acknowledges the identities of students (Brown-Jeffy, 2011). The framework aligns identity development, cultural heritage, multiple perspectives, and affirmation of the social and cultural capital that sits with the learners (Brown-Jeffy, 2011). This intersectionality has the potential to create a space of acceptance and multiplicity, a key component of the identity development processes of BWBR individuals.

**Critical Mixed-Race Studies**

The processes of probing Black White Biracialness bring a dissonance regarding the implications for existence beyond the categories of ‘either/or.’ Racial binary theorist, Lewis Gordon states, “In spite of contemporary resistance to ‘binary’ analyses, a critical discussion of mixed-race categories calls for an understanding of how binary logic functions in discourses of race and racism” (Gordon, 1996). Gordon further posits that prevailing binary logic creates a continuum of racial reasoning that places whiteness as the normal state of being raceless within all power structures (Gordon, 1996). This hierarchical thinking argues that White is a state of virtue and “not white” is in a place of deficit. This either/or paradigm is pushed when challenged by a Black White Biracial person who claims both races as a part of their identity (Gordon, 1997).

The emerging field of Critical Mixed-Race Studies (CMRS) considers racial consciousness for racially mixed people and endeavors to challenge traditional monoracial

There are perceived disadvantages to being Black White Biracial (BWBR). Commonly viewed as enigmatic, anomalous, exotic, and possessing a sense of otherness, BWBR individuals are caught in the crosshairs of friends and strangers alike who want to categorize and pigeonhole. The ensuing confusion of classification has historically resulted in BWBR people being characterized as tragic, troubled, and disconcerting in monoracial constructs (DuBois, 1903; Zack, 1993; Root, 1996; Ifekwunigwe, 1999). The BWBR individual is also problematic historically. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, or socially entrenched dispositions, is reflected in the legal vocabulary and statues of the United States and other countries. These internalized practices and language, borne by time honored usage and outcomes, are beneficial to those in the accepted power structures (Akrivou & Di San Giorgio, 2014).

**Identity Denial**

Identity threats are commonplace experiences for individuals with marginalized identities. These experiences can present a multitude of negative outcomes. Identity threats are defined as situations that “. . . make salient a conflict between one’s current context and a
marginalized identity one has” (Slepian, Jacoby-Senghor, 2021). One type of identity threat is identity denial (Albuja, et al., 2019). Those experiencing identity denial are frequently not granted membership in the groups with which they identify.

These experiences are common for individuals who identify with two groups within one identity domain (in the case of this work, the binary domains of being Black or White). The belief that race is a biological construct is enhanced using arguments for the use of practices of hypodescent (one drop rules) thereby creating an unwillingness to accept the ability of BWBR people to exist as members of two racial groups simultaneously (Sanchez, et al., 2014; Ho, et al., 2015). This denial of membership in a racial group that is relevant to one’s identity may be impactful in that it may pose a threat to additional components of concept of self (Albuja, et al., 2019).

Research has indicated that frequent identity denial correlates to a diminished sense of freedom in selecting identity as well as on-going sense of conflict between the two identities. BWBR individuals may anticipate identity denial to occur with more frequency because of ambiguous phenotype and questioned group membership (Gaither, et al., 2018). Cultural and racial norms are not always accepting or supportive of people who navigate between two groups within one social domain. The opportunities for acceptance of the racial identity(ies) are questioned and challenged by others, when the personal identification of a BWBR person does not align with how they are perceived by others (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Cheng & Lee, 2009; Townsend et al., 2009). While not all BWBR individuals identify as such, the prevention of choice and the forced determinations of others is a denial of identity for those who do make that decision. This rejection of self is counter to the development of identity and a cause for concern.
Storytelling and Feminism for Marginalized Women of Color

The historical context for feminism reaches as far back as the early to mid 1800s. As history moves forward there remains a strong presence that the work toward engendered equality was driven predominantly by White women (Stange, et al., 2011). Critical Race Theory (CRT) has within its approach a desire to utilize narrative to interrogate and find solutions for racial dilemmas across disciplines. Early iterations of CRT consolidated the experiences of people of color without regard to gender. This early failing of the scholarship community gave rise Critical Race Feminism (CRF) (Clark, 2007). This lens of analysis helps to bring a multi-faceted examination that considers the intersections of gender and race and challenges head-on the systems of patriarchy and whiteness that are engrained in the mainstream ways of thinking (Crenshaw, 1989). As with CRT, Critical Race Feminism also utilizes the power of narrative to bring to light the stories of women marginalized by traditional feminist thinking (Clark, 2007).

The interdependence of feminist activism and critical race theory presents pathways for BWBR women to form relationships within the localized context of this study and share their experiences with marginalization in educational settings (Chaudhary & Dutt, 2020). Gilligan’s ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982) provides a foundation for a liberatory ethic of care (Dutt & Kohfeldt, 2018) that brings together the interconnected structures of human beings (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), transformative community change (Berkes & Ross, 2013), and empowerment through solidarity (Case & Hunter, 2012; Dutt, 2018). With this need to connect as a paramount need for social justice, listening to the stories of BWBR individuals, who may also be predominantly female, brings this quote from Tredway and Generett to mind, ‘telling stories has a dual purpose…the simple act of sharing stories and experiences as a way of relating to and informing one another’ (Tredway & Generett, 2015).
The aim of this study is to collect personal narratives about the role of education and other social experiences in the racial identity formation of BWBR individuals. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) discuss the power of narratives,

The concepts that govern our thoughts are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts add structure to what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. (p.3)

Storytelling is a method of exploration that provides a sense of empowerment, personal connections, and engagement as a community of learners (Bell, 2010, 2020). Experience is an essential component to the work of John Dewey (1986). By combining personal and social experiences of BWBR identification within a monoracial or Biracial construct, participants can think with continuity (Dewey, 1934,1938). Alasdair MacIntyre’s concept of narrative unity (1981) sits as a catalyst for Clandinin and Connelley’s work on narrative inquiry as a methodology for qualitative research (Clandinin, 2000). Narrative inquiry explores the boundaries that exist between the “grand narrative” and the “narrative inquiry” (Clandinin, p. 29). The lines of communication, or tensions, which focus on temporality, people, action, certainty, and context (Clandinin, 2000) parallel Bell’s story types of stock stories, concealed stories, resistance stories, and emerging /transforming stories (Bell, 2020, p. 17). Bell’s Storytelling Project Model (2010, 2020) acknowledges the tensions of time, people, context, etc.
to create intentional spaces for reflection on the systems of racism, stigma-based solidarity, identity denial, hypodescent, and identity for BWBR individuals. Narrative inquiry in the context of storytelling can allow for inquiries into self-identification that are “three-dimensional,” traveling ‘inward, outward, backward, forward, and situated within place (Clandinin, 2000, p. 49). Solórzano and Yosso, similarly describe counter storytelling as a methodology that offers space to articulate experiences beyond a deficit model of thinking (Solórzano, 2002). Bell’s “Stock Stories” (2020) reinforce commonly held beliefs and biases about race and racism. In this study, these stories buttress hypodescent, attitudes about interracial marriage and children, binary logic, and identity denial. Counter storytelling can decenter these tendencies and bring to light the voices and experiences of individuals not often considered (Solórzano, 2002).

Charmaz argues for the effectiveness of this layered approach, “Reality is multiple, processual, and constructed – but constructed under certain conditions” (Charmaz, 2008). Identity formation models and Biracial identity models point to the unerring connection between the lived experience of BWBR individuals in the context of family, social, and cultural interactions, and experiences (Stonequist, 1937; Erikson, 1950; Cross, 1971, rev. 1991; Atkinson et al., 1983; Helms, 1984; Root, 1990; Poston, 1991; Kich, 1992; Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Renn, 2004, 2004). The narratives of BWBR individuals that recount, reflect, and reconstruct their journeys towards racial identity formation may provide critical insight into themes and patterns of teaching, learning, and leadership.

**Theoretical Framework**

The literature has shown strong evidence for the presence of historical practices and cultural preferences that disallow or challenge the identity decisions of Black White Biracial (BWBR) people. Identity denial for BWBR individuals has been shown to manifest itself in the
presence of biases towards the use of hypodescent, stigma-based solidarity, membership
assignment, and the power dynamics of the binary logic of monoracially derived systems that do
not acknowledge or tolerate the ambiguity of the border identities of BWBR people. Culturally
relevant pedagogy and its ensuing practices is intended to recognize and acknowledge who
learners are in the context of the classroom. Educators are asked to understand the cultures of
their learners. While the reasoning is sound there are underlying factors that ask for
consideration about what influences the ability of educators to be able to come to an
understanding about cultures that are different than their own.

The demographic composition of current American educators is compounded by the
evidence that they are predominantly White and overwhelmingly White women. This imbalance
of race and gender creates a mismatch that has the potential for great influence on policy and
practice (Omi, 1994, 2015; Leonardo, 2013). The American classroom experience for BWBR
learners is further influenced by the presence of a monoracialized system that continues to
promote binary thinking about racial identity (Leonardo, 2013). The binary, “either/or,” logic of
monoracial thinking tends to coerce BWBR individuals into identifying with their minority
identity (Franco, et al., 2016). Racial categorization practices for BWBR individuals tend to rest
first with perceived phenotype, which is appearance (Miville, et al., 2005; Lewis, 2016). Identity
denial based on perceived appearance, the practices of hypodescent, and the sense of monoracial
superiority that is present in ethnocentric monoculturalism (Sue, et al., 1999; Sue & Sue, 2004),
the inability to recognize the inherent biases that creates a strong adherence (Bordieu, 2007) to
one’s cultural heritage, history, values, language, beliefs, religion, and traditions is further
concretized. So, the question arises, which culture is dominating or determining the culture of
another?
Critical Race Theory (CRT) seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain a marginalized position/status (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000) for those outside of the parameters of the dynamic. The literature has demonstrated an intolerance and inattention among monoracial individuals toward accepting the ambiguous identity development and subsequent dual identity choices of BWBR individuals (Cross, 1971; Hall, 1980; Morten & Atkinson, 1983; Brown, 1990; Miller & Miller, 1990; Poston, 1990; Root, 1990; Bowles, 1993; Gibbs, 1997; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2000; Rockquemore, 2002; Sanchez et al., 2011; Ho & Kteily, 2017; Chen et al., 2018). People define their identity largely through the groups to which they are granted membership (Jackman, et al., 2001; Albuja, et al., 2017; Campion, 2019). The implementation of culturally relevant practices within the construct of a predominantly White system grounded in binary thinking about race is precisely the structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspect of education that warrants careful examination in the context of the experiences of BWBR individuals. The presence of monoracially instigated microaggressions, horizontal hostilities, and the oftentimes overt denial of a BWBR identity is counter to the objectives of culturally relevant pedagogical practices. The graphic in Figure 8 helps to synthesize this thinking:
This line of inquiry was framed within a careful argument built through a dissection of a multifaceted problem of practice. To understand the problem and its possible impacts it is necessary to deconstruct long-lived practices of hypodescent, conscious and unconscious predilections and institutions designed to perpetuate monoracialized, binary thinking and power. This framework driven by literature and actionable knowledge for leading from a place of social justice was utilized to frame the selection of subjects, methods, interactions, and the collection and analysis of the shared experiences of BWBR people in this qualitative study. That process will be described in the next chapter.
Chapter 3 – Methods and Design for Action

Introduction

Scientific philosopher Thomas Kuhn influenced the world with his thinking about the nature of academic thought. Kuhn introduced the concepts of paradigm, models, standards, and ways of examining ideas or things (Kuhn, 1970). In his book, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1970) Kuhn makes the following statement:

Since no paradigm ever solves all of the problems it defines and since no two paradigms leave all the same problems unsolved, paradigm debates always involve the question:

Which problem is it more significant to have solved? (p. 46)

The review of literature has led to a subsequent study that requires an interrogation of the paradigm of monoracial frameworks within educational practices and the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogical practices. These inclusionary practices are intended to support marginalized students. However, the literature has shown a notable exemption to Black White Biracial individuals. Kuhn’s questions about which problem is more significant are interesting to consider in the context of BWBR learners. While this population is still a small fraction of the larger population of students, the number of students in this group is expected to grow significantly (Pew, 2020). Therefore, it is a reasonable argument that more should be understood about the apparent marginalization of a group of students in classrooms and with educators that are presumably engaged in practices meant to include them. This chapter will serve to establish the parameters of the research by discussing the driving questions, expectations for participants, instruments, procedures, data collection, data analysis, and methodology.
Research Questions

As demonstrated by the theoretical framework, the purpose of critical race theory is to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain a marginalized or subordinate status for some individuals. Education, as a system, has been shown to be predominantly monoracialized and operating within the context of binary logic as well as a lack of understanding about the racial identity development of Black White Biracial (BWBR) individuals. Culturally relevant pedagogy is intended to institute and encourage practices and mindsets that acknowledge the identities of children, their perceptions of their identities, and the significance of those perceptions in a global construct.

The literature supports the existence of interactions of BWBR individuals with monoracially instigated microaggressions and horizontal hostilities, and overt identity denial through biases and misunderstandings about the nature of Biracial identity development as a fluid, ever-changing process impacted by multiple socio-cultural constructs. Therefore, it was reasonable to gather a better understanding of the first-hand experiences of BWBR individuals in educational settings rather than solely the formal classroom. The central research question and subordinate inquiry for this study were:

**Primary Question:** What socio/cultural interactions influence BWBR racial identity choices in educational settings?

**Secondary Question:** What stories might BWBR people share about educational experiences with monoracially instigated microaggressions or horizontal hostility?

Data to Collect

All data collection sessions and conversations occurred in an online, virtual environment using Zoom. Participants engaged in one-to-one sessions with the researcher using two instruments (journey line and semi-structured interviews). Participants were invited to engage in
an optional post interview group conversation following the journey line and interviews. All participants agreed to this additional session. This is a positioned subject approach; therefore, a colleague was required to assist in the processes of conducting the journey line discussion and semi-structured interview with the researcher using the established protocols, procedures, and prompts. This colleague was provided with a copy of the dissertation proposal, instruments, and stamped informed consent documents to be aware of all research as well as established and approved protocols and procedures. The researcher conducted all other interactions. All participants self-selected an alias first name to use as their identifier for all courses of study.

**Participants**

Data were collected through the generation of artifacts and semi-structured interviews with adults as well as interpretive analyses of audio and video recordings using manual and computer software. This exploratory study was designed to generate an understanding about longstanding problems within a group. This work explored the recalled stories of five adult female, BWBR individuals and their experiences in socio-cultural and educational settings. The rationale for including BWBR adults and not children in this work was twofold. First, Biracial identity development models indicate that children’s identities will fluctuate over time. Secondly, the ability of children, for the purpose of this study, to share reflective stories of Biracial identity formation in the context of possible emotional and negative experiences is cause for concern and warrants care.

There was a dilemma to this study found in an argument to be made that from the perspectives of hypodescent and binary logic. There are some who may feel that many people are of mixed-race ancestry. There is also a tendency from some to engage in a quid pro quo argument that being of mixed-race ancestry is the same as being multi-ethnic or multi-cultural.
For the purposes of this study, the researcher focused on the generational and social (racial) circumstances of those individuals who have one Black and one White biological parent.

There was an additional opportunity in this study for my own contribution to the data collected. To be a BWBR researcher and participant in a study of BWBR people is a unique opportunity. Cole & Knowles (2001) define autoethnography as a design that “places the self within a sociocultural context”. Autoethnography uses the self as a starting point or vantage point from which to explore broader sociocultural elements, issues, or constructs” (p.16). Reed-Danahay challenges social justice researchers to utilize autoethnographies to examine and inquire more deeply into the stories of self to understand culture (Reed-Danahay, 2017). Educational institutions are fertile places for understanding the interactions of power, culture, and systemic traditions (Reed-Danahay, 2017). The concept of reflexivity, or self-awareness is a strategy that requires the researcher to be keenly aware of their own positioning to understand the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity (Bordieu, 2000, 2005). Anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner used the term “native ethnographer” as she worked to reveal the stories of her own group without reflecting on her own contributions (Ortner, 1996). To push positionality as a researcher even further, the positioned-subject approach critical to the efforts of researchers such as George Theoharis (2007) were combined with autoethnographic principles to guide the study and permit the inclusion of my own personal narrative (Theoharis, 2007). By placing myself in the roles of researcher AND participant I became a positioned subject in the study and used my own BWBR background to interpret and relate to the experiences of other BWBR people as they shared their life trajectories.

The following assumptions were made about participants in the study:

- BWBR individuals are individuals with one parent identifying as monoracially White and one parent identifying as monoracially Black.
• Participants were aware of their parents' monoracial identification.

• Participants were aware of their own choices to self-identify as BWBR (racially ambiguous).

• Participants had an awareness about the impact the words and actions of others have had on their journey towards their BWBR identity.

• Participants were able to speak to and reflect on their experiences in formal and informal learning spaces.

• Participants were willing to discuss and share their lives and lived experiences.

• Participants were willing to become a contributing member of a community engaged in learning about Biracial identity formation, identity denial, monoracially instigated microaggressions, horizontal hostilities, and the impact of hypodescent on identity for BWBR people.

Using a targeted sampling approach, participants were recruited for this exploratory study using collaborative networking and snowball sampling through acquaintance referral. For eight weeks beginning in December of 2020, I participated in a forum series called, “Mixed Race Women of Color as Leaders”. Not all the women in this group claimed a Black White Biracial identity but my on-going network contact with these women provided an opportunity for collaborative recruitment either through the network or by second level contacts and referrals. Additionally, acquaintances and colleagues indicated their willingness to participate or refer participants that met the criteria for the study. Upon Internal Review Board approval for exempt status to begin the study, recruitment commenced. A Calendly link was included as part of the Informed Consent documents with the stipulation that using the link to schedule an interview session was a preliminary indication of consent to participate.

Initially, there were no specific considerations for the gender of the participants. Once recruitment commenced and participants made their interest in participating known, it became apparent that all participants identified as female. There is suggested evidence in the literature
that points to connections between gender and its effects on BWBR racial categorizations (Simpson, 2020). Females in this demographic are more likely to identity as BWBR than males (Rockquemore, 2002; Davenport, 2016). Additionally, there was the fortunate circumstance that all but one of the participants worked in educational fields. Two have experience teaching in a traditional public-school setting; one currently teaches while the other is retired from the classroom. Another participant currently teaches in a higher education setting, and two work to provide professional learning for educators. One of these two is also an educator with prior classroom experience.

**Participant Descriptions**

The participants range in age from mid-thirties to mid-sixties. All identify as female and have indicated their agreement to be identified using the gender-based pronouns of ‘she,’ ‘her’ and ‘hers.’ They live in California, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. Four participants work as educators, and one is a utilities supervisor. Three members of this study are military veterans. While veteran status held no bearing on the study, I thought it interesting to include in light of my own status as a military parent. Their descriptions appear here in the order that they entered the study. Each participant description is identified by a self-selected alias first name. This self-selection of an alias for the study was an extension of the positioned subject approach; if the researcher was able to select an alias, then it stands to reason that all participants should have the same opportunity. The chart (Figure 9) serves as a visual representation of the information presented in the narrative as well. The narrative descriptions of each participant were gathered from interviews and are indicative of the participants’ descriptions of themselves.
Figure 9
Chart of Participant Descriptions (in alphabetical order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hippolyta</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Utilities Supervisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayne</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Doctoral Student/Program Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>Instructional Designer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>Secondary Educator</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Retired educator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jayne is a doctoral student. Jayne identifies her mother as being English (White) and her father as Black. Jayne claims a Black White Biracial identity but is extremely aware of the privilege of her appearance and is always careful not to “claim more of a BWBR identity” than she feels is warranted or acceptable in her determination or the determination of those around her. Jayne is cautious of stepping into Black spaces since she fears being challenged or appearing to over claim her identity and belonging.

Marie is an instructional designer and former classroom educator. Marie identifies her mother as White, but “Black by injection” and her father as Black. Marie has shared that her father identifies as Black but may also be a BWBR individual and not willing to identify as such. She therefore claims his stance that he is Black, and, by that argument, she claims a BWBR identity for herself while reluctantly accepting a categorization of Black by others.

Olivia is a retired public educator. Olivia identifies her mother as White and her father as Black. Olivia solely claims a BWBR identity and is extremely frustrated that others either challenge her to accept a categorization of Black and “get over it” or question the importance of a desire to claim both identities. She is aware that her physical appearance causes some to accept her as White and others to question her legitimacy to be in Black spaces.
Mariah is a secondary educator. She identified her mother as Black and her father as White. Mariah claims a BWBR identity and is also keenly aware how confusing her physical appearance is for many individuals. Mariah is generally perceived as “being White” yet revels in that moment when others learn the truth of her background. Mariah is comfortable in Black spaces but tries not to “rock the boat” by demanding the right to belong.

Hippolyta is a utilities supervisor. She identifies her mother as White and her father as Black. Hippolyta is a self-described fighter. Privately Hippolyta claims a BWBR identity but admittedly takes pleasure in challenging the status quo of other people’s perceptions. She has a sharp wit and intellect and willingly engages everyone she encounters in conversations about race, diversity, and personal experiences. Hippolyta prefers to live in a self-determined definition of identity but recognizes that there have been times in her life when embracing the perceptions or categorizations of others has worked to her advantage.

**Descriptions of the Instruments**

Strategies found in the Pedagogy of the Griot (Tredway and Generrett, 2015) and the Community Learning Exchange (CLE) (Guajardo, et al., 2016) provided additional opportunities to prompt stories from participants that clearly communicated their experiences and journeys. Guajardo’s, et.al Community Learning Exchange holds at its core the axiom that those most intimately familiar with an issue are the ones best suited to interrogate the situation to formulate solutions (Guajardo, et al., 2016, p.25). The *Pedagogy of the Griot* opens with the statement, “The task in story mapping is to uncover, recover, tell, and retell the stories of community to develop a road map for future action and advocacy (Tredway, 2015, p.1). It is the intent and hope of this study to create trusted spaces that foster intimate storytelling to “uncover, recover, tell,
and retell” (Tredway, 2015, p.1) the recalled stories of BWBR individuals in formal and informal educational settings and situations.

A community of learners was convened to share and add to developing stories that aligned to Bell’s Story-Telling Project Model (2020). Semi-structured interviews that utilized pre-determined prompts as catalysts for discourse served to continue and expand the reflection conducted in the journey line protocol. This space had the following norms (Tredway, 2015) that were shared with participants:

- a space of safety, confidentiality, and trust
- respect for stories and the storytellers
- empowerment through collaboration
- honesty in discourse
- foster relationships

The work of the group used the prescribed instruments and was intended to produce purposeful, goodwill discourse about possibly sensitive topics. While the topics recalled negative experiences, the work was buffered and supported by a set of agreed upon outcomes. These guidelines helped to create authenticity of thought and conversation in a healthy environment of collaboration. With these established steps, the study commenced and utilized two instances of data collection.

**Journey Line**

The study began with the use of a journey line protocol (Guajardo, 2016) to serve as a foundational point of reflection for each individual’s story about their identity development in the context of formal learning and community interactions with other individuals. Dynamic reflection, the act of reflecting in solitude and with others, allows for participants to consider,
unpack, examine, and modify their educational experiences. This self-generated artifact helped participants begin to tell their story. The researcher provided direction to the participants but did not engage in the actual creation of that participant’s journey line artifact. A colleague helped to support and direct the researcher using the same directions and protocols to create the artifact that was reflective of the researcher’s experiences.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

The semi-structured interview was the culminating experience for the essential components of this study. These interviews followed the generation of the journey line artifact. The journey line was a pre-interview strategy that served as a catalyst for discourse that included or moved beyond the interview prompts. The objective of the semi-structured interview was to provide an additional narrative foundation that provided greater discourse and story-telling opportunities in a community setting. The interviews utilized a pre-determined schedule of prompts designed to elicit responses that characterized the essential elements of Bell’s Storytelling Model (2020) and the Counter-Storytelling Model of Solórzano and Yosso (2002). Tredway and Generett (2015) outlined a strategy for story-mapping that creates space “to uncover, recover, tell, and retell the stories of a community. By utilizing the two story-telling frameworks in the context of autobiographical reflections and semi-structured interviews, stories could be analyzed more intimately for commonalities, themes, and perspectives. The chart in Figure 10 shows a comparison of the two models.
Figure 10
Side by Side Comparison of Story-Telling Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stock Stories (perceived reality of the experiences of BWBR individuals)</td>
<td>Personal stories or narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concealed Stories (the unknown truths about the experiences of BWBR individuals)</td>
<td>Other people’s stories or narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance Stories (ways BWBR individuals have challenged/not challenged forced identity)</td>
<td>Composite stories or narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Stories (transformative analysis of the discourse)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: This chart is not meant to indicate a one-to-one direct relationship between models but a visualization of the components of the two models. Bell’s Model provided more detailed descriptors for the types of stories shared. This characteristic of Bell’s model provided more insight into the more general descriptors of Solórzano and Yosso)

The examination of multiple story-telling frameworks offered a more substantive analysis of the problems in the context of the theoretical framework. Prompts that were reflective of each type of story in Bell’s model were asked of the participant. Additional prompts were created to encourage additional conversation or to prompt participants’ thinking and deepen responses. Qualitative coding strategies and outcomes were anticipated to be eclectic. An initial examination was conducted by aligning patterns in language to descriptors of the story types in Bell’s Model. These preliminary codes were then compared across instruments and then compared across participants to further develop patterns of language. Words used by participants were further analyzed for evidence of emotion and common themes emerged across all story types. The prevalence of emotion appearing in those stories categorized as concealed stories was particularly prominent (Figure 12).
Optional Post Interview Group Conversation

There was a unique opportunity in this study to further the one-to-one discourse between the participants by convening a voluntary post interview conversation for the purpose of hearing and sharing collective experiences. The opportunity to corroborate experiences through the stories of others is at the core of the Community Learning Exchange efforts of Guajardo et al. (2016). In this voluntary space, the participants can be given the role of facilitators of the conversations by prompting their own questions and inquiries into the experiences of this BWBR group. A benefit of this approach is that the researcher was not creating the framework for the discourse. The participants created and directed the conversation. There was no vested interest of the researcher in the answers except as a member of a group of BWBR people sharing their collective voices. The questions/topics were framed as areas that participants wanted to ask other BWBR women. Questions were formulated beforehand, by the participants, to preserve the sense of trusted community. This session was attended by three of the five participants and lasted about one and a half hours. The session audio was recorded but actual video was not captured.

Procedures for Instruments

All sessions were scheduled by the participants by using a Calendly link provided to them in the Informed Consent documentation. The use of the link served as the initial indication of consent to participate. At the start of each session, permission to record was secured and the participant was reminded of their right to withdraw from the study. This reminder was read to the participant and was part of the recording for each session.

The journey line and semi-structured interviews were conducted in an online video conferencing system using Zoom. The first two instances for data collection occurred in one
online session of about 75 to 90 minutes in length, with the first session (Part A) being the journey line and the secondary session the semi-structured interview (Part B).

All data collected were de-identified and given alias identifiers. The identifiers were self-selected alias first names chosen by each participant following the permission to record and informed consent right to withdraw conversation. This alias identifier was assigned to each participant to organize individually generated artifacts. The identifiers were also used to align each participant to multiple artifacts generated within a single protocol, e.g., journey line response, digital recording, and field notes from one-to-one discussion will be assigned the same identifier. All sessions were recorded digitally, transcribed, and stored in a password protected OneDrive location. A separate file folder for each participant’s data was created using their self-selected alias and kept in a secure, password protected cloud-based location. Within each folder, the files associated with their Zoom recording, transcript, and journey line artifact were kept. There was a double redundancy for file maintenance with files in a secured OneDrive location as well as a biometric password protected external storage system. One-on-one conversations with the researcher were recorded digitally and stored in a secure One Drive location with appropriate identifiers to align journey line protocol artifacts to a digital recording. These recordings were transcribed and filed digitally with de-identifying self-selected names in a password protected OneDrive location. The initial intent was to delete the video recordings after transcription. During analysis it became apparent that in addition to actual words used there were data to be interpreted in hearing the voices and watching the exchanges and body language present in the videos. Deleting these video files would have impeded the deeper analysis of the transcripts. The digital recordings were deleted at the completion of the data analysis processes. The same
procedures were utilized for the session between the researcher (positioned subject) and collaborating colleague.

**Journey Line Protocol**

The journey line exercise took between 10 to 15 minutes for most participants to complete; one participant, Mariah took about 25 minutes because ‘she had a lot to say and loves talking about being biracial’. There was a pre-determined prompt for this journey line (see Appendix A: Journey Line Protocol). The outcome of each journey line became a personal narrative that served as a catalyst for the secondary session and the semi-structured interviews. The form of the journey line was left to the discretion of each participant.

The journey line protocol was facilitated in such a way as to ensure a personal, reflective response. Participants were directed in on-screen text and in verbal directives to reflect on their own Black White Biracial identity processes during their years of education. This reflection extended to an identification of experiences of high or low importance in four key timeframes: prior to entering school, during elementary school (ages 5-10), middle school/junior high school (ages 11-14), and high school (ages 15-19), and, if appropriate continuing educational experiences. Participants were given several options for capturing these experiences in a manner that best suited their own ability, personality, or creativity. Possible methods suggested were handwritten reflection on paper, a PowerPoint slide, a picture with captions. The intent was for participants to generate a representation of reflection on experiences and recollections that served two purposes. One purpose was to provide time to internally engage in reflection. The secondary purpose was to be able to create an artifact to share during the semi-structured interviews. The graphic organizer included in the appendix was intended as a tool to initiate thinking about the protocol not as a sole directive for how to respond. Participants took time to reflect on small,
recollected experiences and were then prompted to reflect more deeply on a single experience. The researcher muted and turned off the camera so as not to provide any discomfort or influence of the interviewee as they worked. Participants took about 10 to 15 minutes for the entire exercise. This Part A followed by Part B format was used for all participants except Hippolyta. This participant joined the Zoom session on a phone and was not comfortable with being able to master documents on the device. When asked if Part A could be submitted later, the researcher agreed. This participant’s Part A (Journey Line) submission was completed a day later. There was no significant impact to the character or flow of the Part B, semi structured interview. This artifact and its accompanying narrative were either emailed to the researcher or uploaded to a secured OneDrive location as a .doc or .pdf file.

**Semi-Structured Interviews and Storytelling Exchange**

Four pre-determined prompts were utilized to help shape conversations and storytelling (Appendix B) outcomes. These prompts helped to frame the types of counter stories described by Bell (2020), stock, concealed, resistance, and transforming/emergent. The semi-structured interviews, Part B, continued in Zoom and lasted from 60 to 75 minutes after the Part A, Journey Line. The participants were directed to share the longer narratives from the journey line protocol. This sharing provided an opportunity for additional discussion prior to the interview.

The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted in an online setting and transcribed using Otter-AI and Zoom transcribing software. The double redundancy for transcription provided an additional precaution in terms of capturing missing language. This backup strategy was useful for Jayne’s interview, in particular. This participant chose to wear earbuds for the conversation. Unknown to either of us, the Otter-AI software program did not capture all her words when wearing the earbuds. The Zoom transcription was able to capture
everything so, when confirmed by the video and both transcriptions, a faithful rendering was established. All digital recordings and transcripts were uploaded to a password protected cloud-based site for storage during the research. Participants were granted access to their own artifacts with an opportunity for further discussion if requested. No participants asked to follow through on this option. This secondary portion of the online session lasted an additional 60 to 90 minutes after the journey line session.

All artifacts, recordings, and transcripts were qualitatively coded by hand first and then files were uploaded to NVivo12 to take advantage of the search options, node and case analyses functions, and visualizations.

**Optional Post Interview Group Conversation**

This voluntary session was offered to all participants as a follow up opportunity to talk to other BWBR women and ask questions about navigating an ambiguous racial identity. The previously established norms were shared prior to the session. The session was audio-recorded and transcribed digitally. All participants were invited to take notes and use the chat feature to share thoughts and resources. The content of the session was driven by the participants and centered around their interest in the study as well as conversations with other BWBR people.

While data were generated in this session it was not required for the study. The prime goal was the creation of a community that allowed every member the chance to question, reflect, push, and listen to the stories of other BWBR people.

**Rationale**

The processes of identity development for BWBR people are deeply personal. Central to these processes are intrinsic and extrinsic experiences that determine how each individual responds and navigates the interactions of their own perceptions and exchanges with others (e.g.,
This qualitative study sought to explore those experiences.

There was an opportunity to engage in building the story of self, combined with the journey of self-realization characterized by Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) wherein the racial identity of BWBR individuals is fluid. There are four options for Biracial individuals in this model: *singular identity*, *border identity*, *protean identity*, and *transcendent identity*. These identities are simultaneously reflective and reactive. (Rockquemore, 2002). The ability to share stories that utilize this flexibility of thought in the context of identity was an important outcome to explore and is an internal strategy that challenges perspective and interactions.

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) describe counter-stories as the “method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told” (p.32). The concept of counter stories aligns well to Bell’s Story Telling Model (2020) that encourages a layered approach to stories of life that begin with a standardized or accepted set of tales, proceeds to the unknown or unspoken realities, and ends with exploring ways to challenge and change systems (Bell, 2020). The stories we tell are deeply personal. Bell shares the following statement “Stories are one of the most meaningful and personal ways that we learn about the world. . .” (Bell, 2020). Reflective narratives on the development and maintenance of these essential identities in the context of the formal and informal learning space provided insights into the navigation of identity. It also provided insight into exposing systemic practices and behaviors within educational and cultural institutions. This information has the potential to help bridge the gaps between the intent of critical race theory and culturally relevant practices. The graphic in Figure 11 serves to solidify the types of stories in the context of the seemingly missing pieces of culturally relevant pedagogical practices in the context of interactions with BWBR people.
Specific Practices Targeted

Navigating a Black White Biracial identity is not simplistic. The decision to live and identify in a place of ambiguity relative to others who, at times, insist to the contrary, creates many complications that induce stress, alienation, and constant contradiction. Multiple practices must be targeted and considered. The misunderstandings of Biracial identity formation as a malleable constructive process may be difficult for monoracial educators, White and Black, invested in their own monoracial ethno-culturalistic (Sue, 2004) values. Conscious and unconscious adherence to outlived norms of hypodescent further “color” the interactions. These misunderstandings can evidence themselves in the denial of identity to BWBR learners and monoracially instigated microaggressions (White to Biracial) or monoracially instigated horizontal hostilities (Black to Biracial). This qualitative study used narrative inquiry and storytelling approaches as methodologies to shed light on the lived experiences of a unique group.
Benchmarks to Monitor and Evaluate the Improvement Process

The individual and collective stories of the participants in this study were recorded digitally and transcribed using Otter-AI and Zoom transcription software. All data and information were de-identified and secured in a password protected, cloud-based service. The stories were qualitatively coded and analyzed using multiple lenses for alignment/misalignment to Biracial identity models, identity denial, themes to identify microaggressive language and behaviors and the impact on identity development, or themes to identify horizontal hostilities and the impact on identity development. The personal experience of the researcher as a BWBR individual provided a keen lens of empathetic understanding to support the analysis of verbal and non-verbal data.
Chapter 4 – Findings

Introduction

In Chapter 4 I will present the stories captured in the journey line artifacts or shared during the semi-structured interviews and/or post interview group conversation. Participant educational experiences with microaggressions, horizontal hostilities, identity denial, and race are included. The outcomes and emergent themes of the analyses and close readings of the artifacts and interviews from participants will be shared and correlated to the stock, concealed, resistance and emerging components of Bell’s Storytelling Model (2020). These emergent themes include but are not limited to common experiences and emotions such as anger, denial experiences, self-advocacy, and frustration. Processes for analysis will be discussed. Commentary from participants will be included and discussed in the context of the review of literature and the theoretical framework.

Setting

This study was conducted and completed in adherence with the COVID-19 safety protocols of Duquesne University and its Internal Review Board. All artifacts were generated and shared using a pre-designed template or email. Semi-structured interviews were scheduled through an online scheduling software and conducted using Zoom, video conferencing software. All sessions utilized the Community of Learners protocols for normative relationship building (Tredway, 2015). Session transcripts have been edited for flow of thought and ease of reading but contain the original intent of the speaker(s). The words of participants have been italicized for ease of reading. While these statements are reproduced here as block quotes, they are data collected through the journey line artifacts, semi-structured interviews, or the optional post
interview group conversation and therefore do require citation or inclusion in the reference section. The attribution of the statements is indicated by the participant’s chosen alias name.

**Discussion of Findings**

Black White Biracial author Lise Funderburg shared the following in the introduction of her book, Black, White, Other (Funderburg, 1994):

For all Americans, not just the biracial ones, nothing about life or identity is so clear-cut or guaranteed - and certainly nothing that has to do with the issue of race. Such sweeping generalizations reflect the laziness of a society that, if given the choice, will often oversimplify rather than appreciate complexities and coexisting realities (p. 10).

The core of every story shared in this study is that these are stories of women working against that tendency to oversimplify. In every instance, each participant has a voice that says ‘I am tired of having to legitimize my identity for others. I am angered about dealing with constant challenges and questions, as well as the conscious and unconscious biases of others as a matter of course for my day-to-day existence!’ These are conversations between sisters-in-arms. The ability to connect over life stories creates a deep emotional connection that is remembered and felt. Analysis had to be conducted with care. Recordings were replayed and re-examined. The positioned subject approach allowed for a cultural intuitiveness that had a perspective to hear and consider the personal connections, shared hurts, shared joys, and lived sameness. This perspective did not always show up in computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) programs therefore manually analysis was essential in order to attend to words not said, body language, moments of rapport, or in shared moments of eye contact that spoke of understanding between speakers.
This study was intended to reveal experiences in educational settings. What was uncovered are stories that spill over, pooling into every place - social, cultural, personal, educational. Each participant has asked that I share those voices within this work.

**Stories from Educational Settings**

Participants agreed that there are many experiences that occur in social spaces. There was also conversation around the delineation between these social spaces and educational settings since learning continues to occur in those social spaces. Jayne considered the following during her interview,

*Why is it that there should be a difference? Are there only certain spaces for learning? Are there places that have been anointed for the processes of learning? So, is it that when you enter this door there are certain things that are supposed to occur and therefore, this is what learning looks like in this space? And I know for myself I found similar instances where I was thinking, ‘Where are the lines between some of these spaces?’ I'm not really limiting it to that K-12 space. But it's interesting to think how language should begin to show up in some of these conversations.*

While there was much discussion around the idea of where learning occurs, each participant was asked to share a story related specifically to conversations either about race that occurred in a more traditional school settings or experiences that resulted in hurts or emotional responses.

Jayne continued her thoughts about educational settings and discussions about race,

*When you first mentioned that question, ‘What does race look like in the educational setting?’ I think what comes to mind is it's usually full of binary choices. So, like Black, White, or what I see a lot is it’s limited to just people of color and White people. Or there is this idea that either it's (race) is not talked about at all, or it is touched on but with a*
very monoracial focus and a sense of, ‘Okay people of color have these experiences White people have these experiences, or let's talk about these things from the standpoint of a person of color or White person. And it's interesting, because I'm thinking about this, I didn't write about this on the activity, but what I'm thinking about is in elementary school, a lot of my friends were actually two or more races and I don't know how they would identify back then, compared to how they identify now but what I would perceive to be that multiracial or biracial, and we didn't really talk about it. And so, I'm wondering if we were to embrace you know, race conversations at younger ages to be able to say like, ‘Oh, I am this and this and maybe even that’ it might be able to shape consciousness early in life.

The group wanted to be certain there were stories shared from experiences in school. The majority of these stories appeared in the journey line artifacts. It is interesting to note that each experience related here involved a White teacher. Marie recalled an experience from high school in her journey line artifact,

In 9th Grade, I think it was world history, we had a day where we were to bring food into class representing our ‘culture’. This was a really hard assignment because who was I going to pick? We are made up of so many different cultures, but I was never particularly “married” to anything. Some of the kids were bringing in Russian, Chinese, some European things. In my mind, I thought, ‘I don’t know anything of African Culture and overall, my family ate regular American foods (unless I wanted to bring in something stereotypical). So, I decided to go with Italian. My grandmother was Irish and Italian, and I loved Italian food. My teacher questioned me about if I was really Italian and a couple of classmates also looked at me with the side eye. I don’t remember what I made or much
about the presentation that went with it, but I do remember being questioned and also not being able to pick just one thing.

Jayne’s journey line also shared the following story,

I was new to my high school. When people, especially teachers, first met my mom, they would comment that we ‘look the same – have the same smile’ but would distinguish that my mom has darker skin. I knew they were taking me apart in front of me. That was really hurtful.

Mariah shares this experience from an English class,

I was in my 10th grade English class. I was patiently and excitedly waiting to begin our unit on the Civil Rights Movement. My teacher, a White female, proceeds to ask the class in a sarcastic tone. "Okay, who in here considers themselves Black?” I think she was trying to approach the movement with a woke point of view. Perhaps, she was going to follow with something like, "None of you can understand the struggles....", but we'll never know. My hand slowly rose and naturally, the class began to laugh. Her face began to redden. She wasn't sure if she should yell at me or if she just embarrassed herself. I started to say, "No, I really am.", but the rest of the class was far ahead and began defending me as they knew my family. This is a moment I will never forget. I think she learned that day the dangers of making assumptions about students, but I also learned that the world will never truly see all of me.

Olivia’s memory of a middle school math teacher, a White male, was included in her journey line,
I was struggling with Algebra and my teacher, Mr. H. said to me ‘You are not trying hard enough. I know you have to have some ability. I have seen your mother. The White part of you should be able to do this math. Why isn’t your White part kicking in?’

To this day I have awful anxiety issues when doing mathematics and I hear Mr. H.’s voice telling me that my struggle is linked to race and not being White enough. Or enough of anything.

Hippolyta shared a story of humiliation (Note: Hippolyta shared that her mother later made a visit to the school to have words with the teacher and the nurse!)

One time, a seventh-grade teacher asked the nurse to send a note home and told my mother I needed to be bathed better because I had dark brown spots on me. My mother told the teacher and the school nurse that that was my color!

These direct experiences from the more traditional settings of school were not the only events for participants. As discussion of the themes around Bell’s Story Model (2020) emerge, a pattern emerged that challenged the spaces often considered as educational settings and the impacts these incidents had, and still have, is clear.

**Understanding the Themes**

A careful analysis of the journey line artifacts and interviews using an emic approach to interpretation of word and more nuanced communications was essential to this study. Since the researcher is also a participant, the ability to understand and relate to others in the study from a deep level of personal experience and comradeship is a valuable tool for analysis. The following themes emerged from all artifacts and interviews. In comparison to the types of stories illustrated by Bell (2020), the themes below are indicative of Concealed, Resistance, and Transforming/Emerging Stories (Figure 12).
Figure 12

Bells Story-Telling Model for Social Justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bell’s Story-Telling Model (2020)</th>
<th>Stock Stories (perceived reality of the experiences of BWBR individuals)</th>
<th>Concealed Stories (the unknown truths about the experiences of BWBR individuals)</th>
<th>Resistance Stories (ways BWBR individuals have challenged/not challenged forced identity)</th>
<th>Emerging Stories (transformative analysis of the discourse)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The table of themes (Figure 13) was helpful in sorting and categorizing responses as they aligned to Bell’s Story-Telling Model.

Figure 13

Emergent themes compared to Bell’s Storytelling Model with participant prevalence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Prevalent Emerging Themes</th>
<th>Jayne</th>
<th>Hippolyta</th>
<th>Mariah</th>
<th>Marie</th>
<th>Olivia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concealed</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weariness of compromise/capitulation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of identity from others</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of identity self-generated</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Microaggressions</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Horizontal Hostilities</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>“The Box”</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The Question”</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responses to direct challenges/questions</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent/Transforming</td>
<td>Learned Tools</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humor to cope</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-advocacy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logic/Reasoning to cope</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family as teacher</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adverse experiences in educational settings</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: An emic approach permitted an analysis of the tone of voice, body language, and facial expressions of participants in addition to actual language and corresponding statements. For the purposes of the following narrative, language-based examples from the artifacts and/or interviews are included. These examples capture the spoken or written language of participants. Evidence gathered from tone of voice, mutually shared body language and confirmations is
difficult to capture in narrative form. The above chart does reflect the presence of those types of verbal, written, and non-verbal exchanges.)

I would like to share insights gained regarding the journeys of these women as they worked through emotions and the feelings of denial, microaggressions and horizontal hostilities.

**Stock or Majoritarian Stories**

Critical race methodology can utilize a counter storytelling structure that serves to bring the nuanced and unspoken to light. Ladson-Billings’ concept of CRT as “an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 19) is a catalyst to the genesis of these initial stories. The following reflections demonstrate the kinds of statements and interactions that echo “majoritarian stories” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) i.e., those ideas about marginalized groups that are believed to be true, that participants relate regarding what others believe, think, or say about BWBR individuals. The origins of these stories rest in concepts of privilege, deficit, biases, or long held stereotypes. Majoritarian stories distort and silence by making assumptions (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The unsettling fact of all these stories is that, in all cases, these comments have been made directly to participants and are a shared experience that showed up in reflection about exchanges with others.

In Bell’s Storytelling Model, majoritarian stories are referred to as stock stories (Bell, 2020). Two common stock stories that were shared among participants are connected to the notions of hypodescent being the law or that Black White Biracialness is exotic or sexualized in some way. Three of the participants explicitly mentioned commentary from monoracial individuals regarding the “law stating that we have to be Black” (Hippolyta) or “you’ve got those
bedroom eyes” (Marie) or “you are a dream to White and Black guys because you are as close as they can get without actually crossing over into another race” (Olivia).

Additional commentary shared in interviews or artifacts reveals the following majoritarian or stock statements or behaviors from monoracial individuals:

Olivia shared,

Many people think that sharing their own stories of experiencing difficulties or hurtful comments from others because of their ethnicity is the same as what we go through. Another thing is that people think we must be really good at navigating two worlds and that it must somehow be fun to switch back and forth whenever we want to.

Jayne responds,

I think about going back into history with some of the, you know, early movies about the tragic mulatta I think that's an example of one that comes to my mind a lot or that people think about like, ‘Oh, wow. I know someone who is biracial, they don't know who they really are, or they can pass and have this privilege and for that they don't have the same experiences around race or racism. Then there's also this huge thing around privilege. And that comes into play in a sense of well, thinking about like, how people who are biracial, just like I mentioned, don't have the same experiences around race or racism and so there's a disconnect that I think that people may feel sometimes around biracial people. And then there's this constant. I mentioned earlier about this idea that being biracial is too nuanced so just simplify it and just pick one. I know that comes up quite a bit, even within the educational settings.

Mariah recalls the following:
I think that sometimes people think more like it being the best of both worlds versus like being the worst of both worlds. Or, you know, depending on how you present. It's like, well, why doesn't she just say she's White? Like, why would you even bring that up? So, I think because of the way I present that's something that I've encountered often. Another thing is people thinking, ‘she thinks she's black, but she's not, she's White.’ Then, if you're dealing with the whole colorism thing then you're not dark enough, you know, it's like kind of what's for me. I think what why even say those things or disclose what you are thinking that I should maybe squash that part of myself to suit you.

Hippolyta reflects on the following,

. . . that idea that Black or White monoracial people have about us is that we can flip sides, right? Like it's like, I could just flip a switch and I can say to myself, ‘Oh, I'm gonna go over here or I'm gonna go over there. No, you know. There are some places where I'm not comfortable. And it's not always because I'm uncomfortable. Sometimes it is. But most times it's because I'm made to feel uncomfortable. I walk into, you know, a party or any kind of social gathering that has lots of White people or lots of Black people. We went to see a Tyler Perry play. And when we walked in people began looking at me and I heard someone say, ‘Why are you here? I'm feeling very uncomfortable. Everyone's looking at us and saying, ‘Why are you here?’ And it's like, well, wait a minute. I belong here.

Marie shared this experience in her interview,

. . . that I will be OK if you decide to make me what you need me to be. That I won’t mind. You know, I had a girlfriend in well, this was college, but she was dating some guy. She was a White girl. She was dating this guy and she was like, ‘I want you to meet my friend
Marie, and well, she's Black. Well, sort of.’ She knew I was Black White Biracial but now I was like, oh, now I'm black. It's okay to change how you talk about me. I didn't think they thought about it much, but I think as far as she's kind of sorta, yeah. But my friend I think said it in a negative way. Yeah. You know, she was she was trying to explain me to her, this guy instead of a double date or whatever. And but it was very negative like, Oh, she's kind of black. He probably wouldn't be interested, you know?

Concealed Stories

Bell describes concealed stories as the “cultural wealth of a community” (Bell, 2020, p. 45). These stories communicate the struggles, challenges and often the trauma of dehumanization. Concealed stories by BWBR individuals are shared outside of the hearing of the dominant groups. These stories may be shared with family members, but this study has found a sense of belonging in a community that shares the same tales. These stories can serve to help those in dominant groups develop a new ear to hear the voices of BWBR people. Using NVivo visualization software to analyze all nodes, data, and memos, a hierarchy map summary (Figure 14) shows a preponderance of evidence to support the negative impacts of language and emotion recalled in the Concealed stories of this study group. This is an interesting confirmation of literature that points to psychological and physiological impacts for BWBR individuals (Poston, 1990; Chen, 1991; Root, 1994; Rockquemore, 1998; Williams, 1999; Coleman, 2007; Townsend, 2009; Nadal, 2011; Gaither, 2013; Gaither, 2014; Perkins, 2014; Franco, 2017; Ho et. al., 2017; Skinner, et al., 2020).
The data used to create this tree map summary include coded responses from interviews, journey lines, and a consideration of tone of voice, facial expressions, mutual agreements, and other non-verbal communications occurring when discussing and sharing concealed stories. While this study did not intentionally employ critical discourse analysis as a methodology, the positioned subject approach coupled with the researcher’s own identity as a Black White Biracial individual offered a cultural intuitiveness that supported a deeper understanding built by solidarity. The following section will provide participants concealed stories about emotions and experiences.

**Dealing with Emotions**

Anger was an emotion commonly felt by all participants. At the core of feelings of anger in many situations is the inability to acquire a thing, a feeling, a goal. In this instance there was the denial of identity that presented in a lack of care, concern, or critical intelligence about the
BWBR identity formation, stock stories, or misunderstandings regarding antiquated blood law practices and exclusionary beliefs. Anger or ‘being mad’ was a subject that showed up frequently in recollections of childhood experiences and, for some, it became a tool to cope with adverse situations. The following are examples taken from participants’ interviews and journey line artifacts.

Hippolyta shares that,

I got mad when I went to the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEP) station right there in Pittsburgh. The White chick behind the desk real rudely turned the paper around and said you picked too many races you can only pick one. I said but I'm not one. ‘Well, you have to pick one.’ I said you pick one. I dare you.

Olivia recalls,

One thing I heard in school a lot was, ‘Well, you don't talk black. Someone I knew used to tell me that all the time. She's like, well, you don't talk Black. You don't act Black.’ What does that mean? To act or be a certain way? But there are educators who walk into a space, and they make very quick assumptions about the children in their room, based on how those children look, or how they speak or how they act. So culturally relevant pedagogy says that Black students have a different cultural way of being sometimes to be loud. White teachers hear, ‘That's okay. That's part of the culture.’ And I get mad when I hear some of this stuff. Because it's not real, it's a stereotype. A family member said to me ‘... part of your problem is because you never learned how to be Black. You’re just too much like your mother.’ And I used to think well, okay, I like my mom. She's cool. And I thought it was like a personality thing early on. Now I know what was meant by that and it is so hurtful and makes me angry.
Frustration is a natural consequence of denial. A racially ambiguous identity that claims its non-binary status of both/and rather than either/or yet lives within a social construct that says race is inconsequential is frustrating. What follows are examples of the voice of frustration found in some unlikely places.

Mariah recalls a graduate class on culturally relevant pedagogy by sharing,

In graduate school, we really explored our identity markers. We were being taught about how a majority of teachers educating students of color were White and that we needed to be culturally aware. This was an uncomfortable situation for me because I know my racial identity, but the instructor and other educators in the room challenged my identity. It seemed mad to try to explain. If the other teachers in the room couldn’t get it, then how would 15-year-olds.

Hippolyta thinks about the long-standing prevalence of this feeling by saying,

I’m still having these problems. It breaks your heart. It's just it's wrong. And I think you know, I'm not less than, I'm not different. I'm not the oddball you know. You don't want us because we're not Black. You don't want us because we're not White, but you definitely don't want us showing up mixed either.

Olivia voices frustration about antiquated ways of defining identity for Black White Biracial people by sharing,

I used to get very frustrated by the kind of one drop conversations. I still hear that argument used by family members and colleagues in education. ‘Why is this such a big deal? You know you are Black. Why can’t you accept that and get over it?’

Marie’s frustration is in the never-ending explanations. She shares,
I hate to explain it. And I had a conversation with a friend you know, saying, ‘You don't have to explain who you are to anyone. People can look at you and see that you're, you're Black. The most thing that you have to explain is, ‘Oh, I'm from Barbados, originally.’ You know but people look at me and they have no idea. No idea. I get offended. And people get mad that I get offended. But I but I'm not what you think I am. Nobody is calling you something you're not!

Jayne’s anxiety about her identity being questioned or challenged is a common experience. All participants discussed what was referred to as THE QUESTION and how they respond or feel when asked ‘What are you?’,

When I get asked that question, I have, I feel an emotional response. I usually get like really hot, and my chest hurts, or my heart starts to go faster. Then I instantly think in my head like, ‘Why do why do people think that question is okay?’ And I often reframe the question and I say, ‘Are you asking me about my identity, my racial identity? If so, I'm happy to share that with you.’ So, I kind of correct the question. But over time, you know, that you learned to do that and that's because you have more confidence about being able to answer that question. But yeah, I remember when I got that question when I was younger, I would just answer or sometimes I would say something like ‘multiracial’ or there'd also be points of time where I might say to a person in a smart aleck kind of way, I'm human. So, yeah, it definitely is a triggering question.

Weariness of Compromise/Capitulation

Gilligan’s ethics of care describes a tendency in women to build ethical responses grounded in relationship building (Gilligan, 1982). Orbe, et al., examined the identity negotiation of Black White Biracial women and found that communication and relationships are central to
the cultural contracts that Biracial women situate themselves within conceptualizations of race (Orbe et al., 2015). Identity negotiation is framed by historical contexts of hypodescent and more modern-day agreements of a post-racial society (Orbe, et al., 2015). Cultural Contracts Theory (Hecht, et al. 2003; Jackson, 2002a) describes three forms of cultural contracts: ready-to-sign (RTS), quasi-completed (QC), and co-created (CC). The capitulation and compromise practiced by participants is a prime example of QC agreements. These arrangements are attempts to “maintain the status quo and asserting one’s identity within existing structures” (Jackson, 2002b). This type of negotiated identity results in BWBR women tending to move between groups out of a sense of self-preservation or preservation of relationships with others. This stance takes a toll which is heard in the following stories.

Mariah shares her journey of navigation by saying,

I always have this thing like, what am I allowed to do and say depending on who I'm with’, like even though I am biracial. It's like if I were with more people who were Black presenting if they didn't know or like how are they going to feel if I say something that or do something that even though it's natural for me or comfortable for me or something I grew up with that they might be offended because they're viewing me as White more.

Olivia shared her frustration with giving in for the sake of others by sharing,

. . . a lot of it comes from almost a sense of capitulation,’ fine!’ Or compromise. ‘Fine!’

If that is where you want me to be then, fine. I'll be there. I don't want to cause concern, or I don't want to upset you. I don't want to upset anybody around here or give the appearance that I'm trying to be offensive by being in a space that you don't feel I belong in; even though I know I belong in that space.

Hippolyta voices her perspective in having enough in her statement,
After a while you get to the point where I don't have the energy for this. It's almost like we compromise. It's like, you know, what do you want me to be? I'm not gonna do whatever makes you happy. So, you become a resistor... the poster child for resistance.

**Denial of Identity by Others or Self-generated Denial of Identity**

A sense of belonging is one of the most frequently studied constructs among BWBR individuals in the United States (e.g., Kelcholiver & Leslie, 2007; Skinner, et al.,2020). Identity formation models point directly towards healthy identity and its correlation to sense of self as an individual and a group member. Denial of access to a space of belonging is painful and one of the most prevalent enduring hurts for all participants. These denials can also appear as microaggressions and/or horizontal hostilities (Nadal, 2007) as witnessed in the accompanying stories.

Mariah and Jayne share a common story of the outcome for exploring Black spaces.

In high school I joined the youth NAACP. There’s a fantastic picture somewhere of us all together. I stand out like a sore thumb. When we went to a conference in Philadelphia one year, many of the other kids asked why I was in the NAACP. I explained my background, but they were not convinced.

Jayne mirrors her experience by sharing,

I met a friend my 2nd year who is biracial. She attended Black Student Union events and asked why I didn’t attend. I told her I didn’t feel Black enough. She would ask, ‘What’s Black enough’? I still struggle with feeling like I belong in Black-identified spaces.

Marie’s hope for recognition in Black spaces was turned sideways by a teacher in this story.

In sixth grade I remember doing a play. I honestly don’t really even remember why we were doing it. I have no idea. But my teacher Mrs. M. asked me to be Harriet Tubman in
something that we were doing. And I was so excited because she asked me to be Harriet Tubman over the other girl who was in my class who was mixed by the way too, but she was much darker skin than me and I was like, ‘Well, of course she's gonna pick her to be Harriet Tubman. And then she picked me to be Harriet Tubman! I was so excited! My aunt helped me make a little costume with a skirt and a shirt. You know, it wasn’t perfect, but obviously we attempted. I was excited because my teacher asked me to be Harriet Tubman and I was like, ‘Oh, look at her seeing me. You know what I mean?’ But she said to me that I was Black, and I needed to know more about being Black so that’s why she wanted me to do it.

Mariah shared in her interview,

Yes, like when I was little, I wished my skin was a little darker. Or that maybe I had curly big hair. My mom had hair like that. I wanted that too, so I didn't have to fight so much to prove, you know. So, to go back to sitting in like a room full of educators and they're teaching us that will our Black students are being mostly taught by White teachers. And we need to be culturally responsive and sensitive and just sitting in that realm. I just get really uncomfortable because nobody is in there looking at me like I'm a Black teacher. You know, they're considering that I'm a White teacher and that I wouldn't understand any, you know, and thinking that I need to teach myself Black culture to be relevant and inclusive, but they don't know that I grew up in Black culture.
Microaggressions

Microaggressions occur in subtle and direct ways. A glance, a comment meant to be inclusive or, to use one participant’s description, “to seem woke,” or comments that directly challenge or deny occur frequently. One that occur often was described as a feeling of “being deconstructed.” Marie and Mariah both related this experience by sharing the following,

Mariah shared in her journey line artifact,

I started noticing this in middle school and it still happens to this day. People will be like, ‘Oh, well, I guess if I look at your lips and your nose and your butt or they'll be like, ‘Oh, I could tell because of these things or those things,’ and I'm like, well, those are all features from my White Irish father. My mom also have a broad nose and I exactly have her nose. Stupid things like that are what I hear. So, it's strange when people try to assign those stereotypes to your Biracial identity as well. They start deconstructing you to your face. Or and then trying to reassemble you in a way that makes sense. ‘Oh, yeah. I guess if I look at your hair. Yeah, maybe. Or maybe it is, ‘You do have brown eyes.’ It is aggravating because I sometimes end up saying, It's not just my eyes! White people have brown eyes too!

Marie’s interview revealed the following,

You know somebody says what breed are you? or ‘What are you?.’ And it didn't dawn on me until I got older to be offended by that, right? I'm like a mixture, you know and then I can see they think I'm lacking when they look at you. Okay, well I’m mixed. Then they look at you. You know I get a lot of that like people are gonna be like disbelief of what I am. I'm having to prove to somebody what I am.
Four participants recalled experiences as young girls that continue into adulthood with exotification. These statements are comments made by monoracial individuals to romanticize BWBR stereotypes. Comments such as “I think BWBR children are so pretty and bring the best of both worlds together” place the individual at the center of the commentary outside of the norm. These exotifying comments are confusing to children and when coupled with overtly sexualized statements i.e., “bedroom eyes” or “hair that I can’t stop playing with” create feelings of discomfort and alarm. Each member of the study has had experiences within and beyond educational settings with exotification. For the participants mentioning this occurrence in the context of educational settings it occurred with each one as a matter of people “always playing with my hair,” “commenting on the color of my skin as being so pretty” or, a comment made to Olivia when in middle school by another Black student, “You have the long hair light skin disease.” Marie spoke directly to this issue by sharing,

‘The exotic.’ ‘You're very exotic.’ ‘You're so exotic.’ What makes me exotic? Because you don't know what I am. You know, you're not sure who I am, what I am, what the h***? Yeah, I've gotten that. A lot of those exotic comments. Those are the kinds of comments over sexualized comments that can occur with small children. ‘Oh, you look so exotic.’ ‘Oh, I think Black White biracial children, especially the girls, you're so beautiful.’ ‘You're so this You're so that.’ Those are microaggressions. I just hate it.

**Horizontal Hostilities**

Horizontal hostilities are comments and behaviors that are instigated by monoracially identified Black individuals and directed toward Black White Biracial people. These comments challenge the appearance or the ability of the BWBR person to be in Black spaces or to claim a
Black identity. These horizontal hostilities serve as reminders that perpetuate the feelings of not belonging. The following are stories relating experiences with horizontal hostilities.

Mariah shared,

I was raised in the Black church. In the Pentecostal church, hand clapping foot stomping! Other Black churches would come to visit and they're like, ‘Why are you here? Who are you here with little girl?’ Or like when I got to travel to other churches, you know? I tried to go to a church in Philly. My family had been there before, and we had been like fellowshipping with that church for 50 years. And, like, they knew my great grandfather. They knew my uncle who was my grandfather's brother, who's the pastor now, and I just went of my own accord. So, man, it was so uncomfortable. Yes, even people saying like, ‘What is this White girl doing in our church?’ It's like, well, you know, mostly predominantly Black community and church. And they were like, ‘Why are you here?’ Marie considered this experience,

I didn't think anything of it until I got to, I think maybe 11th or 12th grade was the first time it was kind of like, ‘Really? Wow!’ My sister liked to go on to the university campus. There were some Black girls that walked past. We were in a car, and they were like, Oh, those mixed b****s. They think that they're this that, and the other and I was like, is she talking about us? You know, I had never heard that before being from a small town, you know? ‘Oh, they think there's so much better than us!’

Olivia recalls an incident with a childhood friend by recalling,

We had grown up together on the same street and played together a lot. I always thought she was my friend. Our high school had a very small Black student body and at homecoming the Black Student Council would nominate one girl for the court and then
all vote for her so there would be representation from the Black student body on Homecoming Court. I was in the band and the members nominated me for court. I was at lunch one day when someone said something, really loud so everyone could hear it. They said, ‘Wow there are two Black girls running for Homecoming Court.” My friend looked at me and said so everyone could hear, “No, there is only one. The band girl is a half n*****. She can’t count because you can’t vote for half people!” Everyone laughed. I was broken-hearted because I really thought we were friends and that she understood. Even now, so many years later, I have never really forgiven her.

Jayne shares her story of horizontal hostilities by stating,

I mean, I think if I had to categorize my negative experiences, I've had more hurtful experiences from the Black community than I have from the White. I've had, you know, experiences from the White community, but the ones that have been either physically traumatic or emotionally, psychologically traumatic, have honestly been horizontal hostilities. And, you know, I struggled with that for a very, very long time. I'm like, ‘Well, at the very least, you know, give me some credit for some melanin? or ‘Can I at least peek in the door of the BSU?’ But no. And I gave up because you don’t people to see you as that White girl trying to get over.’

Olivia responded with another story,

‘. . . but it is specifically folks of color, specifically women, women of color, monoracial women of color who, in my experience, either have doubted or second guessed, or even specifically isolated me from spaces and whether that's intentional or unintentional, I don’t know. I think it could be intentional because they just look past that I say I'm Biracial and that causes a lot of pain and also makes me second guess myself and my
choices. Am I enough? Am I enough? I have to say that I'm blushing because sometimes I don't feel like I am, and I feel like that I'm an imposter. And so that ties into like imposter syndrome and all these things and it's like, well, what is enough and what does that even mean’

Stories of Resistance

The first research question of this study is: *What socio-cultural interactions influence BWBR racial identity choices in educational settings?* The stories and recollected experiences of these five participants bring the discussion back to the beginning and thinking about the impact of these involvements on choices. The participants asked that I bring their voices to others. The best way to explain their racial identity choices is to allow them to speak for themselves.

In her interview, Hippolyta said the following, “I'm not Black. I'm not White. I'm not confused. I'm me.” Olivia shared,

> People say you cannot claim to be both right, so it’s always been a lot of conversation around you have one drop of Black blood in you, so you are Black. I would say, but then the other logic, the other side of that that argument is if I've got one drop of White in me then I'm also White. So, from the time I was very little I choose to claim both.

Jayne’s entries in her journey line submission and later interview revealed these stories,

> I attended a country school with lots of cousins who would identify as biracial or multiracial so a lot of people at the school would often say like ‘Oh, you know Jayne and her family? Do you know Jayne's half black? And I was always quick to correct to say, ‘Well I’m not. I'm not half.’ It’s mixture and I still like I still do that now, where I don't want to overclaim and I don't want to overplay that I'm like more Black than I actually am. Because I don't think that's fair and by fair, I mean, I have a lot of privilege around
my skin color and how I can navigate the world. That is my experience. Being half would mean we're not really whole or have anything. To dividing ourselves in that way can feel very conflicting.

as well as,

… it gives me the autonomy and the authority to like say how I identify and it’s kind of is a little bit more memorable, I guess. But people still say I'm biracial when they are addressing me sometimes, but I think there's a nuance around the language and meaning. Some people choose to identify as biracial and some people choose to identify as mixed, multiracial etc. And so, with that there's a lot of power for people and how they choose to identify. And at the same time, I think that creates those categories where people are kind of like, oh, ‘But which word do I use? And it's too confusing. So, I'm just gonna say you're part Black or you're White, because I can't remember everything and it's just too much to remember. So, it does get confusing. I prefer to help with how people respond rather than them choosing for me.

A moment during Marie’s interview revealed the following thoughts,

People don't know what I am. They don't know what box to check off. They don't know how to classify me. My boss pulled me aside at one point, ‘Um, you know, I really hate to ask you this, I'm not sure, but we have this EEOC thing that we're doing, and I don't know what do to put you as. My response was, ‘Well put me as whatever you want to put, whatever you need, I don't care. You need you need another White person on a point the I should be White. Whatever you need.’

I don't care. Because people don't know me. I know who I am.

Mariah reflected on the longstanding pain by sharing this during her interview,
This is a conversation that never goes away for us. And I think other people aren't aware of how impactful that is. To always feel like you have to explain who you are. Or in some cases, the ‘what you are,’ you have questions but to always explain your presence in a space through the lens of race. I've talked to people that say, ‘Oh well race doesn't exist. You don't live in my skin. Yeah, I'm telling you. It may not exist as a biological construct, but it absolutely exists as an everyday construct for those of us that live in these ambiguous spaces.

There is an experience of forced categorization common to all participants. “Resisting the Box” is a moment of either denial by others, an intentional denial of some portion of self, or a desire to find ways to advocate for a BWBR identity. In this instance, for every participant, this moment coincided with registering for COVID-19 vaccinations. Participants reside in California, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. Self-reported and unsolicited recollections of the procedures for registration with their state showed that California did not ask for race at registration for the vaccine but then later, at the clinic, a race was assigned without asking for one participant. In North Carolina and Pennsylvania, the selection of more than one race was not an option. The inability to select a racial identity was frustrating to Olivia who shared,

...when you register for it, there's a box and it won't let you check more than one box.

And I found that I got really mad about that! I was literally sitting in front of the computer fuming. You got to be kidding me! You're gonna force me into this box, still?

Olivia’s recollection is indicative of many of the themes emerging from this study. However, the “checkbox” is policy in action and an occurrence that persists and points to a continuing dilemma for all participants in this group.
Emerging/Transforming Stories

Emerging/transforming stories (Bell, 2020) challenge the status quo of stock stories by offering an insider’s view. These stories of metamorphosis help to recognize what catalysts can arise from communities to enable voices, create self-agency, and unearth understanding and perspectives as opportunities to move forward. This reclamation of self is reflected in interview statements by Mariah and Jayne. Mariah shared,

We are hidden in amongst people. Navigating through the world of being like this. It’s like being able to see the world through many lenses. . . that comes along with who we are as people and makes you become more like fluid of a person in a way. . . maybe there's like an intuitiveness to how you read people or, when it feels hard to communicate. I feel that fluidity because it's so deeply emotional.

Jayne’s thoughts about how she has come to emerge into her BWBR identity,

I can adapt to different environments that I'm in, and I think that’s a superpower. Right? And at the same time, I think a lot about, erasure, and what am I transforming into in order to fit into different spaces or be accepted in different spaces. And then as a result, how does that impact me, positively or negatively? Sometimes it often seems like I'm doing things for other people to help them know more about me or to build their understanding.

Learned Tools

The poem called, “Making It Last: A Mustard Seed Pantoum” speaks to the growth and unexpected positivity that comes from mustard seeds. These small seeds grow to be “tall and joyous…unafraid to step into the unknown stories…and begin a journey of growing.” A story about crayons was shared in Chapter 1. This small occurrence was a mustard seed that grew to
help a young girl on her journey towards her racial identity. A key revelation for all participants is the notion that there are “learned tools” that have supported the development of a chosen racial identity as well as providing an overall sense of self that is able to cope with those ever-present thoughts of “I am not enough.” All agreed that these lessons were learned through a combination of experience, adversity, family, and friends.

Marie reflected on lessons from her mother in her interview by sharing,

... my mom was always like, well, first you're Marie. You know you're not your color. First you are yourself, right? And I really kind of grew up feeling that way that you know, I can be me. It is hard to get to that place though.

Jayne shared this thought during the group discussion,

I have a lot of privilege based on my skin color and how I present, I have learned that. My mom and I had conversations about, you know, what I can do with that and then also at the same time, recognizing that people may not accept me and it's not up to people accepting me and me being me. There are a lot of things around like colorism, that I grew up with even my family of how they would treat one another. And so, I saw things where I was like, this doesn't seem right, but I didn't have the language to deal with it. Now that I'm older and you know, I've learned a lot about different things. I can put words to it. Then balancing that with my experiences in education, where I learn a lot about diversity and identity and how those concepts tie into social justice and inclusion. So, with that, me as an educator, I'm often in spaces where I talk about my identity, and I create spaces for people to talk about theirs. And so, I'm always thinking like, where are those opportunities to do that in different spaces of education at all levels, you know, I'm in higher education?
Mariah shared her transformation from arguing to waiting to see what happens,

... it's just a constantly explaining yourself I think, you know, it’s the harsh reality of it. When I was younger, I used to be like real loud about it. And then like the older I got, the more I just wait to see what people say or how they decide to act. There's like certain realization that you have when you know that someone is having a problem with you. It’s the way they look at you . . . But then I think, ‘Yeah, we know, we see what you do when you look at us. I'm watching you!’ We want to have these conversations, but we can't have those conversations. When you do try to have a conversation, somebody ends up feeling awkward. They say, ‘I don't mean to offend.’ or ‘Well, now that you mention it!’ or they just sit there, like, I'm just gonna sit here and stare at you for a while.

Hippolyta has a candor and energy to her that is no nonsense. She says emphatically,” I don’t understand why so many of us don’t want to fight for who we are?” Later, in her interview, she added the following as she thought about her learned approach,

... because they want you to be in a box. Don't put me in a damn box! God doesn't want me in a box. He wants me to fly. Now. Don't put me in a box. Let me experience. Let me see. Well, that's not the way everybody does it. I'm not everybody else. That's right. I don't want that way because it’s stupid and I want what's comfortable and functional for me. And if that doesn't include you, bye-bye!

The ability for participants to reflect on learned tools for coping and navigating their experiences suggests the idea that educational spaces should provide opportunities for BWBR learners to practice these tools as well.
Reflecting on the Research Questions – Concluding Comments

The research questions were developed to guide the study. A key understanding about the importance of these questions surfaced during the first interview and continued to grow throughout all other exchanges with all participants. This understanding is that these stories are fraught with emotion. The data in this study are reflective of the lives and experiences of Black White Biracial women. The journeys related were difficult to confine into a single space and time. Educational settings often include spaces of safety, family, friends, and familiarity. What I have learned is that this is not a study conducted to place blame or cast aspersions toward the behaviors of others who question and challenge the ambiguous racial identity choices of BWBR people. The stories collected here responded to the research questions on many levels. It has been interesting to note that the majority of the responses and conversations gathered in this study have challenged my original notion of ‘educational settings.’

I chose to begin with a discussion around the evidence gathered relative to the experiences of BWBR people in educational settings, with the newly acquired perspective that educational settings, places where learning occurs, exist beyond the traditional spaces defined within educational leadership. Understanding the experiences and the learned tools of survival and how those impact the future of a person is paramount to this study. That perspective will certainly be discussed in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.
Chapter 5 – Recommended Actions

Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

In this chapter I will revisit the theoretical framework presented in this dissertation, reflect on the data presented in Chapter 4 in the context of the theoretical framework and existing literature, and make recommendations for the future actions of educational leaders focused on addressing social justice issues. I will also discuss and reflect on the limitations of the study as well as poignant lessons for my own leadership.

Revisiting the Theoretical Framework and Biracial Identity

This dissertation has been authored as a response to a personal journey of self-identification as a Black White Biracial woman. The journey has been long and often hurtful. As has been discussed, we do not live in a raceless society. Some argue that the rise in numbers of mixed-race individuals is indicative of a declining importance about race and that this expanding mixed-race population is the solution to the problems surrounding race. I must revisit Author Malcom Gladwell, a Black White Biracial individual, as he concludes that “when you mix Black and White, you don’t obliterate those categories” (p. 123). Existing in the intersectionality of more than one race does not erase racial discontinuity and disconnects; rather it emphasizes the conspicuousness and realities of race.

This is a problem of practice grounded in improvement science. Delgado and Stefanicic (2001) argue that the structure of systems within the law or other societal constructs impose certain behaviors or actions upon the individuals who operate within those systems. This is a case of “every system is perfectly designed to deliver the results it produces.” (Langley, et al., p.79). Biases towards BWBR individuals through the unconscious use of hypodescent,
misconceptions about biracialness, and binary thinking exist within the structures of society. We are far from being in a post-racial society. If that shift were even possible, it would be a continuation of racism in another form (Root, 1992; Gordon, 2004). Nakashima (1996) says the following:

. . . the assertion that mixed-race people are models of multiculturalism or bridges between groups is an unrealistic and unfair expectation . . . It also contributes to a resentment toward multiracial people. . . by drawing attention away from persisting inequality and focusing instead on the feel-good idea of a raceless or color-blind society. (p.94)

Biases toward interracial marriages still exist. In 2009, a Louisiana justice of the peace, Keith Bardwell of Tangipahoa Parish’s 8th Ward refused to marry several Black White interracial couples because “of his concern for the children” (Associated Press, 2009). In 2019, a wedding venue in Mississippi refused a Black White interracial couple access to their venue citing “Christian beliefs” as their motivation (Chiu, 2019). The BWBR offspring of these couples often continue to be the recipients of similar biases. Disenfranchising these individuals who, at best, have held the status of ‘other’ is a state of existing in “a special nightmare of exploitation and invisibility without reference” (Gordon, 2004). Black White Biracial individuals offer unique opportunities and spaces to discuss and share stories about race and racism. The opportunity to tell stories remains a key component to the philosophical foundations of Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) encompasses practices implemented in the classroom that acknowledge the identities of learners, their perceptions of themselves, and their ability to navigate the world. Educational settings do not exist solely in the isolation of the
classroom but transcend this formal setting, moving into multiple places and timelines as lessons learned (academic as well as social-cultural) are practiced and rehearsed. The educators and educational leaders of these spaces remain predominantly White and almost exclusively monoracial. The numbers of BWBR individuals who are educators is even more troubling since less than 2% of all U.S. teachers are identified as American Indian, Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, or two or more races (NCES, 2017). Statistically, the educational experiences of BWBR children are controlled by individuals with perceptions that are monoracial. Researcher Derald Sue states,

Whiteness and ethnocentric monoculturalism, culturally conditioned in all individuals from the moment of birth, maintain their power through their invisibility. . . people are conditioned and rewarded for remaining unaware and oblivious of how their beliefs and actions may unfairly oppress people of color, women, and other groups in society. . . the difficult process of deconstructing Whiteness and ethnocentric monoculturalism must begin (p.767-8).

Binary thinking about race, that is, the idea that race can only be considered as a categorization that is one race or another and never can it be in a state of being represented as two races in combination, can also be applied to Sue’s thought processes about deconstructing systemic thinking about BWBR people and their identities. Culturally relevant practices are being enacted and interpreted in ways that reflect the culture, biases, or understandings of the practitioner. Ladson-Billings (2001, p. 81) says, “Typically, White, middle-class prospective teachers have little to no understanding of their own culture. Notions of Whiteness are taken for granted. They rarely are interrogated.” Many educators and educational leaders work hard to develop a racialized critical consciousness for courses and instructional materials, but what
efforts are in place to allow for self-reflection on their personal understandings and perceptions of race? What impact does this uninformed practice have in the context of learners who are developing racial identities that are ambiguous rather than binary? A study on perceptions of elementary teachers of the experiences of BWBR children conducted in 2017 by Campbell and Jefferies concluded the following:

1. The limited literature focusing on racial identity at the elementary level coupled with the belief that young children have not begun to process the significance of racial identity supports the notion that scholarly scrutiny is unnecessary.

2. Data from this study suggest that teachers largely ignored the racial implications of their instructional choices thereby significantly reducing the complex racial identity development occurring in educational experiences.

These findings speak to a lack of efforts in place for educators to internalize an active understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices. The theoretical framework of this dissertation focuses on the conundrum formed at the nexus of CRT and CRP in the context of theories of Biracial identity development. The purpose of this dissertation is to shed light on the stories of BWBR individuals and their experiences in educational settings. These stories can serve to provide insight into teacher preparation programs. There are many educational researchers who point to a strong need for teacher preparation programs and teacher professional learning programs. Hearing these stories may provide in-depth opportunities for educational leaders to be better equipped to conduct discussions about race issues, understand the factors that promote social inequality, and develop foundational knowledge about the nature and history of race and racial classifications while also having spaces to wrestle with their own biases and misconceptions.
Identity is the thread running through critical race theory as a philosophy and culturally relevant pedagogy as a practice applied to BWBR learners. A commonality to the predominant identity development models is evidence supported by the empirical literature that between the ages of three to ten there are significant struggles for BWBR children coping with the inconsistencies of categorization/identification in all spaces, public and private. This tendency was captured in the recollections of all participants. Commentary included casual remembrances of incidents with family, friends, peers, and outsiders regarding choices, identity, appearance, and sense of belonging. A 2011 study by Rhina Williams revealed three significant findings about the teachers of Black White Biracial youth,

. . . their lack of awareness of the youth’s experiences, their failure to incorporate knowledge of biracial people into their teaching of related curriculum, and their tendency to categorize biracial students as monoracial, specifically Black, thus affecting their perceptions of the Biracial youth and their accompanying expectations. . . teachers appeared to be ignorant of the fact that Black biracial students might have experiences that differed from the experiences of Black students or White students (p. 190). Learners identifying as BWBR are frequently met with a sense of indifference for the students’ status as well as discomfort from others regarding discussions about race (Williams, 2011). Statements from participants in this study corroborated the empirical research time and time again regarding experiences with monoracial individuals in formal and informal educational settings. Biracial identity models all confirm that the language and socio-cultural interactions of those within the familial, educational, and social circles of BWBR people have a significant impact on their ability or willingness to navigate or circumnavigate a racial identity. Most Biracial identity models also characterize patterns along a continuum of flexibility of thought,
sense of self, and interactions within monoracial groups. One must press the question, ‘If monoracially identified educational leaders are lacking in awareness of their own racial identities in the context of one racial construct, then how would they able to equip themselves to support those learners who are seeking to build a sense of awareness for themselves across two racial constructs?

All participants in this study were asked two questions during their interviews, ‘What stories should be shared with educators?’ and ‘What do you think educators need to understand about this group?’ Mariah perhaps said it best when she referred to the experience of being BWBR as being ‘hidden in amongst people.’ This statement reflects a feeling of being outside the group or as was the experience of Mariah, being placed in a group with which she did not comfortably identify. Belonging or, in some cases, feeling of not belonging was a prevalent theme across all conversations.

This group of participants was composed primarily of educators. Only one participant did not have experience in traditional teaching, but she did serve as a management training expert for her utilities company. Two participants, Jayne, and Mariah, spoke of their personal experiences in professional development sessions and graduate level education courses on culturally relevant pedagogy. They shared statements about feeling ‘afraid,’ ‘uncomfortable,’ and ‘having my identity questioned or challenged’ by presenters and other attendees to the workshop or course. Their ability and willingness to contribute to the discussion as a member of a marginalized group was compromised. Mariah shared, ‘They are seeing me as White if they don’t know me and I don’t want to make anyone feel uncomfortable.’ In one graduate course, Jayne found her voice and wanted to open discourse around race and how it is discussed in the classroom. Jayne related that all the students in the course were White. She shared that she was challenged by peers in her
ability to occupy a Black space because she ‘doesn’t sound Black.’ The instructor remained silent. The monocultural stereotype for Black was alive in this course on culturally relevant pedagogical practices and was sufficient to silence her voice.

One place where voices were found was in community. In the one-to-one interviews and in the group conversation, participants shared a sense of reinforcement and liberation in not having to explain their emotions or frontload their stories with background context. Olivia shared that ‘this experience (the study) was important because I don’t have to explain anything. You already get it.’ The power of storytelling within a community of individuals was clearly empowering. When the storytelling is buttressed by empathy and shared experience, it can be dynamic and rousing.

**Implications and Moving Forward**

Denial of a self-identified, self-determined identity is an area that is especially hurtful to this BWBR group. Hypodescent persists as an ever-present unconscious bias playing out in many places and spaces. The validation and valuation of whiteness over non-whiteness, Black or White, accepted or challenged, one space or no space are all coerced or forced decisions that reflect binary logic. Non-binary thinking about race, that is ambiguity, particularly around race is difficult for some. This is a group that found safety with others but seeks to have open discourse without the guilt, discomfort, disbelief, and emotions that come with open discourse.

The goal of this study was to first understand the problem. This is the initial step in improvement science approaches. The literature points to a gap in understanding the experiences of BWBR in educational settings. Additionally, there are weaknesses in the literature to support instructional practices that acknowledge the biracial identity development processes of BWBR people. Informal conversations with colleagues in the field about this study have led to
discussions about the types of students included in professional learning sessions about culturally relevant approaches. A casual Zoom conversation with a longtime colleague was eye-opening. This individual is a White male administrator at a charter school in the area. This school serves neighborhoods that have high populations of students of color. He shared the following during our call as he was asking about this study (A.T., personal communication, November 11, 2020),

…in all the CRP work we have done with our staff I can honestly say we have never talked about Black White Biracial kids. Even in the workshops that I have led it isn’t a topic for discussion or something anyone asks about. I never really gave it any thought. I mean they are still Black, right?

This statement was clearly not intended to be insensitive, malicious, or racist in any way. Yet, after some headshaking I recognized that this was an unconscious declaration of naïveté and ignorance regarding the experiences of BWBR children. That this omission occurred in the context of professional learning sessions designed to directly address practice is even more unsettling.

**Discussing Race in Education**

Conversations about race occur in monoracial constructs of Black and White and binary logic that does not want to accept the possibilities that for some of our children race blurs the lines of compartmentalization. Conversations about race have a perception for some of being tools to lay blame or assign responsibility. Others see conversations about race as laying bare vulnerabilities. There is embarrassment. Afraid we may say the wrong things. Saying race is not real and therefore not a mitigating factor to consider ignores the realities of BWBR people. There are heightened emotions and anger at others about race. We want others more qualified than us to talk about race. Often, issues regarding problems stemming from race or pointing to race
resolve to have those best positioned as the spokespersons. The values being brought to the system have to be considered. Problems can no longer be framed in the condition of not meeting some standard or expectation that is determined by the majority. My role as an educational leader is to challenge thinking. As a BWBR educator I must challenge this thinking.

Bandura’s research on self-efficacy expands into discussions around implementing social change. People do not take on what they firmly believe is not within their power to do. The balance between personal efficacy and perceived efficacy is tenuous. Learning to lead is situated in the place of practice and works to transform social practice and address social issues. These changes require communication of new knowledge and new sets of competencies to the adopters (Bandura). It also requires the ability for self-reflection on one’s own ability to change. Educational leaders will also have to consider how they can support others in developing their own personal and professional efficacy. Ethnocentric monoculturalism consciously and unconsciously leans towards behaviors that reflect the norms and values of the majority. This majority weighs heavily its perceived collective efficacy to overcome opposing forces in judging the benefits they are likely to gain and the costs they may incur. Leveraging my experience and trusting in the community I know is a way toward creating spaces for other Black White Biracial educators to build a sense of community and purpose. This network can bring more Black White Biracial voices to the forefront of education as catalysts to consider culturally relevant approaches for Black White Biracial learners.

Reflection and open discourse are essential to move one’s thinking or practice from a state of unconscious consideration to one of conscious intentionality. Communication is also necessary. Starosta & Olorunnisola’s Third Culture Building (1995), Jackson’s Cultural Contracts (2002a), and Ting-Toomey’s Identity Negotiation (2005, 2015, 2019) theories speak to
the intersectionality of communication and internal reflection. Luft and Ingham’s Johari Window (Figure 15) is a good illustrative image to demonstrate the mindful processes of the three previously discussed models.

**Figure 15**

*The Johari Window. Self-disclosure and sharing (Luft & Ingham, 1955).*

![Johari Window Diagram](image)

The Johari Window helps to describe the journey of self-disclosure that my colleague could explore to understand his own thinking about the experiences and identities of BWBR people. Using an improvement science process, one can think of the ‘open’ window as the goal. The current situation is that this administrator’s understanding of BWBR children and the processes of their identity development is in several places, ‘hidden’ (known to himself but not shared with others), ‘blind’ (unknown to him but known to others) or ‘unknown’ (information not known to anyone). The excuses, ‘I never really gave it any thought. I mean they are still Black, right?’ are firmly entrenched in the hidden, blind, and unknown windows. Singleton & Linton (2006) outline a similar exercise for disclosure with their Racial Consciousness flowchart. In Figure 16, a Johari Window is conjoined with Singleton & Linton’s components for the stages of consciousness.
Bringing to light educational leaders’ conscious and unconscious biases and attitudes about BWBR people is a key step. The study by Albuja, et al. (2018) focused on the mistrust of White perceivers regarding BWBR individuals and contextual racial presentation characterizes the social penalties of unconscious biases. The study suggests that,

\[\ldots\] biracial people were socially penalized when they contextually presented themselves as White, Black, or Asian in academic settings. The students who contextually selected a monoracial identity \ldots were judged more negatively and were less liked than students who did not contextually present. \ldots Perceiving contextually racial presentation (CRP) as seeking self-gain does not seem to drive the social penalties. The CRP penalty was consistently mediated by lower perceived trustworthiness. \ldots Biracial people’s fluid experience of their identities violated established norms of stable identification that led to social penalties (p. 140).

Imagine a BWBR student who, to use one participant’s words, ‘shows up in a space presenting as White and because I don’t want to cause upset, I just don’t say otherwise.’ According to this study by Albuja, et al (2018) White perceivers are significantly more likely to enact social penalties of mistrust toward this BWBR student once the ‘truth’ is revealed.

124
Hypodescent is an antiquated legal statute generally considered to be a manifestation of power structures extending from the institutions of slavery, laws of segregation, and discrimination in, but not limited to, the United States. Psychological researchers have applied the principles of hypodescent in studies exploring perceptions and categorization of multiracial individuals beyond the United States (i.e., Brazil, Australia) (Halberstadt, et al., 2011; Ho et al., 2011; Chen & Couto, et al., 2018). Black White Biracial identity requires monoracial constructs and binary logic about race to be explored and discussed. Further, understanding the nature of microaggressions and horizontal hostilities in the context of BWBR individuals is required. The nuances of language were clear when talking to participants. However, the impact of body language was spoken to by every participant in this study when talking about ‘the look of their eyes as they scan my face and hair that let me know I am being deconstructed’ or ‘they are searching my face, my hair and even my butt to see if I (emphasis added) am the one that is correct about my identity.’ Barak Obama shared this same experience in the prologue to his book, Dreams from My Father (2004). Capturing the looks of deconstruction, questioning, confirming, or confusion are all too common. All participants agreed that this ability to notice ‘the look’ is a ‘superpower’ that must be learned, confirmed, and practiced. Developing a sense of humor to overcome anger and hurt, learning patience, becoming flexible and fluid, learning to accept what will not change, creating new definitions of adaptability, learning to preserve self above all else, and developing all this with a sense of self-advocacy are also key tools to being in a BWBR space. Educational settings offer the possibility of spaces to acquire these tools.

Participants in this study all concurred that conversations are necessary but also recognize that discourse is difficult. There are many misconceptions about BWBR individuals; getting those misconceptions out in the open requires uncomfortable talk. Singleton & Linton state,
“Educators typically have not examined and discussed race in their schools because they have feared not knowing how to go about the process correctly” (p. 21). bell hooks (1994) shares that educators should teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students”.

Social justice asks its practitioners to have the capacity to act, knowledge to inform, internal and external reflexivity, and a sense of empathy. Fostering empathy is often pointed to as a way to remedy and support conversations about race. Olivia mentioned in her interview that more than empathy is required in this situation. Empathy is generally described as an ability to understand by proxy the thoughts, feelings, and emotional or physical experiences of others. The metaphor of “learning to walk in another’s shoes” is frequently used to describe empathy. This metaphor is troubling in that walking in another’s shoes’ leaves the person at the center of this empathetic action effectively “shoeless.” This action reveals another conflict which seems to indicate that in order to practice empathy one person much have their ability to move within the constructs of their own reality to reshooulder it (or in this case, re-shoe it) for another person. In other words, empathy is currently imagined as one person being hobbled within their own reflexive and reactive processes in order to allow another to somehow engage in a voyeuristic experience. This is in direct opposition to Starosta and Olorunnisola’s Third Culture Building (1995) and Ting-Toomey’s Identify Negotiation Model (2005, 2019) that call for collaborative mindfulness and engagement when learning to navigate social differences, social realities, and social experiences.

Research has challenged this notion of empathy with evidence that empathy is not simply a vague sense of perceiving the emotions of another but an active interchange of physiological, social, and developmental processes (Gerdes, et al., 2011). The physiology of empathy is driven by involuntary brain activity and voluntary cognitive choices. The impact of voluntary cognitive
choices is supported by a 2011 psychological study found that race played a significant role in moderating and reducing empathetic reactions between White and Black partners (Forgiarini, et al., 2011). The White observers in this study demonstrated decreased empathetic reactions individuals perceived as being outside the group membership for White phenotypes (Cosmides, et al., 2003; Pletcher, et al., 2008; Forgiarini, et al., 2011). While empathy has controlled and uncontrolled parameters, there are opportunities to engage the involuntary brain activity in learning that can create empathetic action (Gerdes, et al., 2011). Dynamic relationships are a key toward change. Passive relationships in American culture sit in a place of waiting to interrupt the other speaker or framing the next response without listening. Dynamic relationships require mindful care to unlock. Mindfulness is a tool that can be utilized to engage the voluntary and cognitive domains of empathetic reactions. A purposeful application of a counter-storytelling community of educators can provide a place to engage in learning empathy as an active tool for social justice. In this situation empathy can be learned rather than assumed. The community can leverage the affective and cognitive domains of empathy in tandem with storytelling within the confines of trusted relationships to focus on building the skills of cognitive and verbal expressions of empathy (Fig. 17).
These findings speak to the need to share an understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices that is bound to building new competencies with intentionality. As a Black White Biracial educator with a focus on professional learning I am able to contribute knowledge and positional authority to engage in change. Teacher preparation programs and teacher professional learning programs that provide in-depth opportunities for knowledge building about the nature and history of race, racial classifications, binary logic and non-binary racial development, empathy, and monocultural ethnocentric perceptions will be required.
**Limitations**

The sample size of this study is small. Future opportunities may permit the inclusion of larger numbers of participants. While this sample is small is it not problematic. This study is content specific and focused on revealing social patterns unique to a group of individuals. The study is not intended to be generalized across a population. Future studies must bear in mind that this population is a fast-growing demographic group. The ability to self-identify across more than one race has grown in popularity. Future work with this group of individuals should consider the tendency to confuse ethnicity and race and consider the biases of the researchers that may influence analysis.

This population is currently a small percentage of the aggregate population of the United States. While college campuses may have larger numbers of BWBR people to recruit for studies, the benefit of this study was the ability to engage with mature adults. Biracial identity development models point to a sense of self that is still growing and changing with young adults. The opportunity to work with more mature adults was an advantage to the ability for participants to engage in meaningful reflections and conversations. Keeping the outcomes for future studies in mind will support sample size considerations and composition.

A key component of this study was my own positionality as a female BWBR person. A large majority of the initial literature encountered (empirical and theoretical) was authored by monoracially identified individuals. I found that I had a response to this limited perspective, and this became a lens of frustration that conclusions were being made by individuals that had no true concept of what it meant to be a member of two races. I then decided that I would add a focus to my own research and reading to try to include authors that also claimed at least a Biracial identity if not a BWBR identity. I felt this positionality would bring a sense of
understanding to whatever research articles I was reading at the time. This strategy also supported me in the decision to craft this study as an autoethnography using a positioned subject approach. Being the researcher and a participant simultaneously brought a unique lens that became useful during data collection and analysis. Since I understand living as a Black White Biracial woman and share many of the same experiences of the participants, I was positioned to be able to understand the nuances of language, body and facial expressions, and emotions. A strategy I used during data analysis was to re-watch all the Zoom interviews in one sitting. I simply listened and/or watched. Patterns and themes jumped out to me quickly. The positioned subject approach was powerful. There were moments as I read through transcripts that I almost forgot which alias was my own. There were a multitude of emotions that were brought to the surface of my thinking by the research and the interactions with others. I have questioned and challenged myself in doing this work, often feeling like an imposter. I hear the words of family members and friends who are confused about why this is important and, many times in this process, I have taken those whispered doubts to heart. I have found validation in the literature for my feelings of hurt, anger, frustration, and stubbornness. I had to be vigilant about balancing the voice of the researcher with the voice of the participant (self). This work was intimate and personal. It was not the space I expected to explore for my dissertation. I still worry that others will not care; that in the end these stories are dismissed.

Positionality is essential to this work. All participants agreed that there is a sense of safety and comfort in talking to other BWBR people. The ability to be in a community that requires no explanation of who or even what we are. We understand our superpowers of navigating and responding to ‘the look,’ ‘the stare,’ ‘the games,’ or ‘the emotions.’ Others do not understand. That emic vs. etic approach must be considered for future work. Learning the stories
helps to build bridges of empathy. The non-BWBR researcher, educational leader, or educator can enter into this work of supporting the malleable and flexible identity development of BWBR people. Breaking down barriers of binary logic and hypodescent must occur in tandem with understanding the power of monoracial thinking about self and others. Black White Biracial identity changes over time through to adulthood. Even then it continues to shift and change. Olivia, Marie, Hippolyta are more comfortable with Biracial. Jayne has found that in her position at a university ‘multicultural’ is more acceptable. Mariah recognizes her chosen identity is BWBR and her phenotype presents as White but revels in purposefully stepping into Black spaces just to watch the sparks fly. To be a monoracial person working with or on the behalf of BWBR people you must understand how and why the ‘current’ may or may not shift.

The tools utilized in this study have also provided a point of reflection in terms of their use and results. The journey line artifact was intended to be a point of entry into relationship building through finding common ground. The journey line activity generated information about experiences in educational settings as it was intended but I found that it was not required as a jumping off point for deeper relationship building since the participants found a sense of solidarity so quickly. The activity was conducted in an online setting and completed by participants independently. This resulted in a brevity and a one-sided perspective. This may have been a result of the time provided or the online setting itself.

There were self-imposed limitations to this study. There were ongoing points of pointing to a sense of ‘I am not enough’ as well as ‘Who am I to conduct this work.’ These feelings arise from a sense of the imposter syndrome that is common to the doctoral process but there were also tendencies to question my identity in the context of hypodescent, societal norms for non-binary thinking and imagined concern for the reactions of others. This feeling surfaced strongly.
as I read and considered study after study recounting the psychological trauma experienced by Black White Biracial people. Coupled with my own personal reflection and recollections of trauma this became emotionally draining and created upset frequently in the beginning.

A final reflection on the outcomes of this study focuses on the interrogation and challenges of systemic processes in the context of monoracial identities, constructs of “whiteness” and “blackness,” or power dynamics of “oppressor versus the oppressed.” All participants agreed that we are uncomfortable in those conversations that examine and confront undercurrents of privilege, power, and supremacy. There is recognition that for BWBR individuals, particularly female, phenotype (appearance) plays a role in categorization by others. It is just this categorization based on appearance or language patterns alone that is both confusing and infuriating. The decision to exist in the racially ambiguous space of accepting an identity that is both Black and White brings with it a difficulty in hearing that Whiteness is a problem. For that reason, I chose not to interrogate Whiteness without also interrogating Blackness. My White parent’s heritage is not something to be ashamed of. I refuse to deny it. I fully acknowledge that in this and other countries issues of race are catalyzed by power, dominance, and tradition. This study is about identity and the experiences of having an identity selected or assumed by others for me.

**Future Studies and Implications for My Leadership**

Storytelling is a powerful tool for learning. In my role as a professional learning designer, learning coach, and non-profit director I have always understood that the most impactful learning can come when participants in my care are able to connect through shared experiences. The opportunity to conduct this study as a positioned subject has reinforced for me the importance of community and building rapport. The principles of human-centered design and improvement
science both bring a mindfulness to the importance of the user; to reveal and explore ways to hear the voice of those closest to the problem. This was a life-changing experience for me. Many times, I felt the need to resign myself to the words of others that said, ‘You are not enough,’ ‘You are claiming more than you are. Just accept the categorizations,’ or ‘These experiences are unique to you alone. No one cares.’ I have learned that this experience is not unique to me. I have also learned that there are generational aspects to this research that are unsettling at best. I have heard other voices. I want to be able to continue bringing these and other voices like it to the forefront of conversations about race. Future steps include an opportunity to work with a BWBR colleague who is currently studying how BWBR women select affinity groups. This colleague and I share similar life experiences around our BWBR identity that remain consistent even though we are decades apart in age. Another opportunity took root in the experiences of the post interview conversation. The group would like to continue to meet, and I am planning on coordinating a recurring Zoom session organized to continue the work started. One of the secondary questions of the interview posed to participants was, ‘What questions or conversations would you like to ask other BWBR individuals?’

There is an opportunity here to extend the conversations to other BWBR people as well as friends, relatives, and colleagues of the group that are also racially ambiguous (Marie’s eleven-year-old son was very interested in the conversation I was having with his mother. He is a racially ambiguous child who is frequently bullied and teased about his hair and his skin color).

There are very few Black White Biracial educators. There is an opportunity here to gather their reflection on their roles regarding discussions about race as well as contributing to the non-binary racial development of Black White Biracial students in their care. The work of Rhina Williams (2011) and Campbell & Jefferies (2017) regarding the perceptions of monoracially
identified educators and their subsequent instructional choices that disregarded race is work that should be extended toward middle school children as well.

The impact of race in limiting and lessening feelings of empathy warrants exploration in the context of instructional practice. Educators that are not considering the racial implications of their instructional choices may require more intentionality of thought in planning as well as reflexive activity to support the development of their own empathetic reactions to students.

Finally, there is an opportunity to explore microaggressions and horizontal hostilities instigated by the monoracial members of BWBR families. All participants related instances of these interchanges with family. While characterized as teasing by some for others it remains hurtful to know that members of your own family can contribute to stressors as well. Colorism was the most often reported experience. It would be interesting to delve into this phenomenon to learn more about its prevalence and impact.

Future work for others should certainly continue and expand the work begun in this study. Additionally, the opportunity to talk directly to BWBR children to learn their stories could offer up even more data to add to professional learning sessions for educators.

I would like to conclude this chapter with a poem. The author is a BWBR poet, novel writer, and President of Interaction for Social Change. Kelly’s mother is Black and her father is White. This poem called Composite Soul (Bates, 2016) seems to do an eloquent job of capturing many of the emotions and character, such as defiance, humor, and celebration, which were revealed by participants in this study.

Today, I declare that I will not keep the races separate within me

I will polish off my veneer of black and white and dare you to see

ALL that is ME,
All that is REAL, and

ALL that is misunderstood, even by the ones that love me the deepest and love the “uniqueness”

Can you handle it?

You’ll watch my wild curls spring from my head, every frizz uncovered, every strand untamed, every piece unstraightened. You’ll watch me jump, bend, sway, and lift up my fist to fierce soul and hip hop, deep defiant rock and the sounds of steady African drums and off-cue Irish bagpipes

You’ll watch me over my lifetime love black men, white men, and women of every hue because I won’t fight their beauty or humanness

Can you handle it?

You’ll see me wearing big J Lo hoops on my ears with a long Janis Joplin dress hanging from my tan body

You’ll hear me talk trash with an urban roots accent, slapping my hands in loud laughter, and next talking quiet with plain words and no inflections, as the freckles rise from my face to yours

Will you accept this freedom and smile with joy?

Watching ME be ME

Watching me discard YOUR images of what you see, or want me to be

And still love me?

I carve up the black and white versions of me

And toss them to the fire

And take back out my true composite soul

Glistening, warm, and never fading

Today, the races are no longer separate within me

And I am ME,

And FREE

Can you handle it?
References


https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/esed5234-master/44


https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167202288007


Mims, L. C., & Williams, J. L. (2020). They told me what I was before I could tell them what I was: Black girls’ ethnic-racial identity development within multiple worlds. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 35(6), 754–779.


and Empirical Issues, Logan, UT.


Poole, Stafford. (1999). The politics of limpieza de sangre: Juan de Ovando and his circle in the reign of Philip II. *The Americas* 55.3. (pp. 359-89).


U.S. Const. amend. xv, § 1


Directions:
Think about your journey towards developing a sense of self as a Black White Biracial person. What experiences did you have during your education with other voices, actions, or opinions that denied, questioned, or challenged your racial identity? These experiences may have been of great importance or low importance. Add a short description to the story line. You may generate your journey line in any manner you wish. Some suggestions could include:

- Paper and pencil drawing with a handwritten paragraph
- A PowerPoint slide
- A drawing with captions

You may share your completed work digitally:
Take a picture and email to lucketttd@duq.edu
Scan and email to lucketttd@duq.edu
Take a screen shot and paste into a Word doc and email to lucketttd@duq.edu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior to school</th>
<th>Elementary School</th>
<th>Middle School/Junior High</th>
<th>High School and Beyond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Select one of these experiences and create a longer story from it.
**Exhibit B – Semi-Structured Interview Schedule**
Pre-Determined Prompts by Story Type 60 to 90 minutes

**Part B – Sharing the Journey Line**
Tell me about your experience with crafting your journey line. Would you like to share other details that may not have been captured? Do other people’s words or language show up in your journey line? What do you think about that?

**Part 2B – Interview with Required prompts and additional prompts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Types based on Bell (2020) and Solórzano y Yosso (2002)</th>
<th>Stock</th>
<th>Concealed</th>
<th>Resistance</th>
<th>Transforming/Emerging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prompts for all participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What are monoracial people’s ideas about BWBR people?</td>
<td>2. How do I feel when people ask me what I am?</td>
<td>3. What stories can you tell about resisting “the box”?</td>
<td>4. What stories should be shared with educators?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional prompts for unplanned responses and exchanges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why do people say I should choose a race?</th>
<th>How does it feel to be BWBR?</th>
<th>What stories can you tell about resisting categorization?</th>
<th>What stories can we share with others about BWBR people like us?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What stories do people usually tell about BWBR people?</td>
<td>How are BWBR experiences hidden?</td>
<td>What stories can you tell about the resisting the “What are you?” question?</td>
<td>What questions would you like to ask other BWBR people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What stories do you know about race and the classroom?</td>
<td>What happens to BWBR people in schools?</td>
<td>Tell me a story about a time you used your voice to choose your identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do people ask me what I am?</td>
<td>What are the untold stories of being BWBR?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>